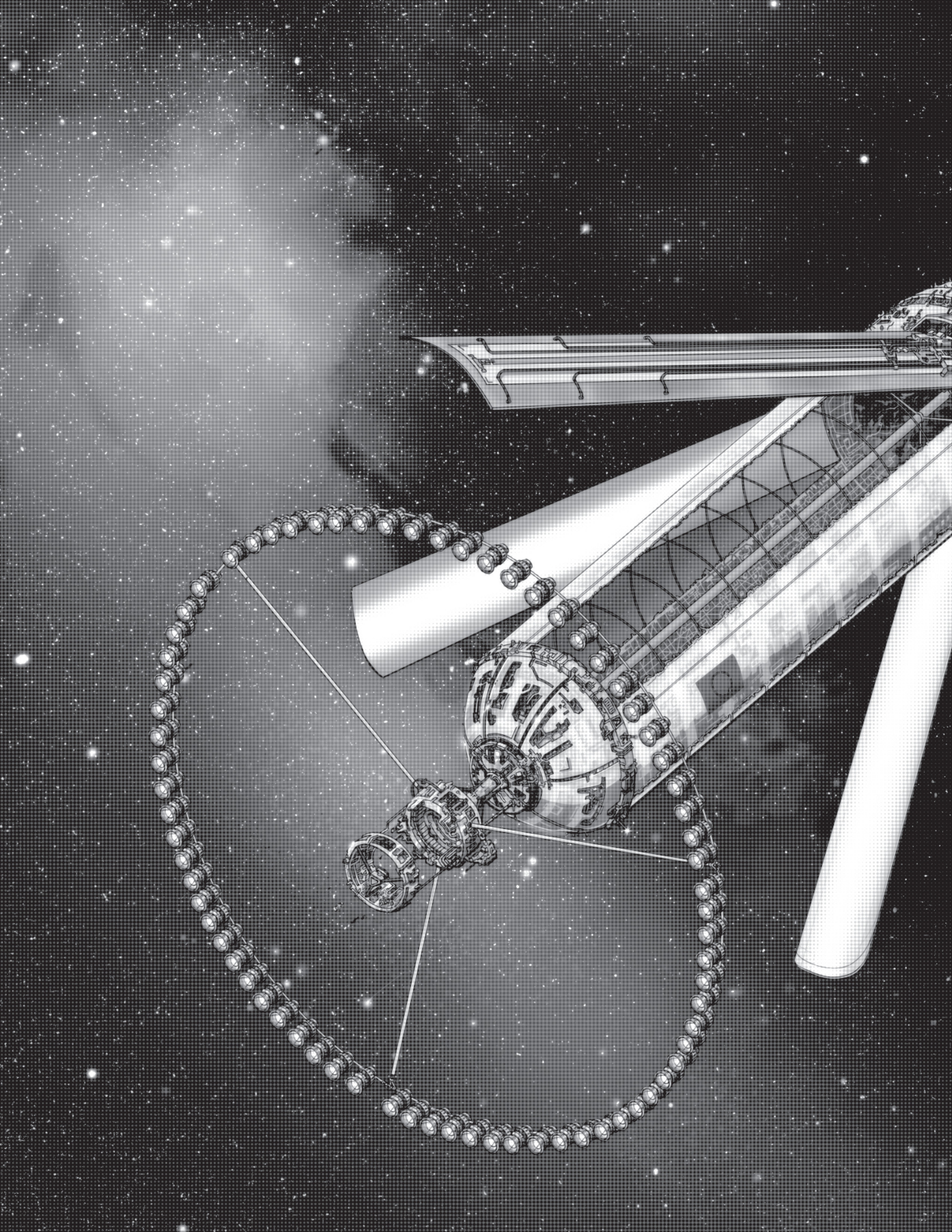
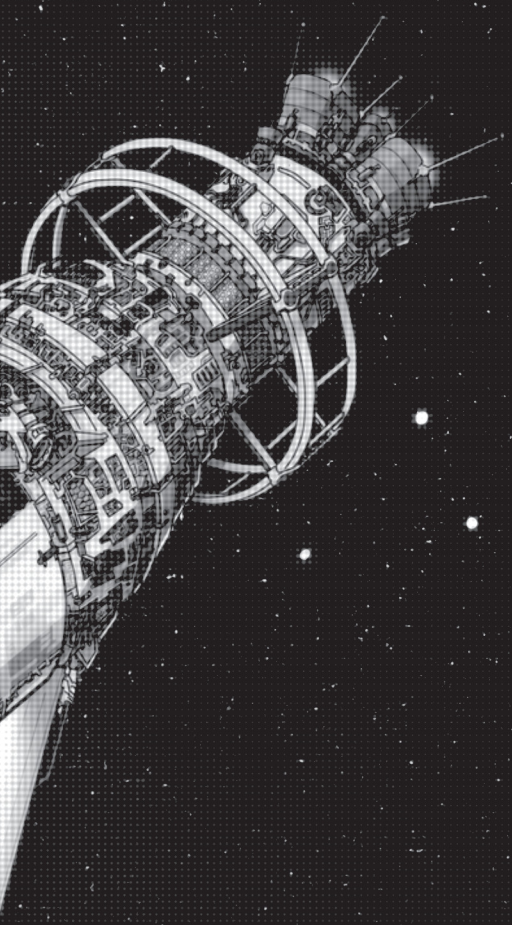

HARD WIRED ISLAND
retrofuture cyberpunk
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neon shudder

Hard Wired Island has a soundtrack for use during play, composed by neon shudder. See **https://neonshudder.bandcamp.com/album/hard-wired-island-ost**

VIEWER DISCRETION IS ADVISED
Hard Wired Island is written for a mature audience. Though it's not our intention to make a grim and gritty RPG, this game still touches on mature and/or potentially uncomfortable themes, including but not limited to misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, bigotry, police brutality, political violence, and financial insecurity.

Before play, we recommend having a discussion with your group to establish boundaries and preferences. Further advice and tools can be found on p. 312.

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CHAPTER 1: THE YEAR IS 2020

In the distant future of 2020, humanity has spread to space.

A meteorite struck Earth's northern hemisphere in 1996. The Impact caused widespread environmental damage that humanity has yet to fully recover from, but it supercharged public interest in space exploration. Around the world, new political unions began pouring money into space programs.

*The result is **Grand Cross**, an O'Neill cylinder in the Earth–Moon L5 point. It's Earth's gateway to the stars, a launching point for missions to Mars and beyond, and a beacon of hope for its people — but it's in crisis.*

*An alliance of space-based corporations known as the **Offworld Cartel** has moved in. While they sell space exploration as a shared dream they strive for along with everyone else, their true aim is control of Grand Cross and, through it, the future of space settlement. As their influence spreads, so does inequality and crime.*

The Cartel has convinced the current government to privatize many of the systems that keep Grand Cross running, and the station is slowly falling apart. Behind the scenes, they have even more underhanded schemes running in secret. If the next election favors the Cartel, they'll be on their way to becoming the landlords of human space.

OVERVIEW

Hard Wired Island is a tabletop role-playing game about citizens of a space station in an alternate 2020, trying to live their everyday lives while fighting for the station's future.

It's about people caught up in the schemes of corporations, wealthy technocrats, and their supporters. Some fight back to protect their livelihoods. Some fight for their neighborhoods. Some simply fight because they ideologically oppose the criminals, corrupt cops, hate groups, capitalists, and others trying to bring the station down.

If the Cartel gets their way, Grand Cross as you know it will end as unchecked greed bleeds your community dry. But if you fight, you might be able to save it.

TABLETOP RPGS

A tabletop RPG is a game where you and your friends get together to tell a story about a group of characters who go on adventures. You create the characters, decide what challenges they face, and choose how to deal with them. To make things interesting, you use **dice** and the rules in this book to add a little uncertainty.

It's like a video game RPG, but instead of a pre-programmed game world, one of you takes on the role of the **Game Master (GM).** The GM describes the world around the players, the **side characters** (sometimes referred to as non-player characters, or NPCs), how they react to the players, and the conflicts and drama that drive the story.

The other players each create a **player character (PC),** the protagonists of the story. The players describe what their PCs are like, what they do, and how they react to the situations around them.

WHAT PLAYERS DO

The PCs are residents of Grand Cross who get caught in the upheaval happening across the station. Some are street activists, gig workers, reporters, or more, who get pulled in by their occupations and living situations. Others are hackers, bounty hunters, and other people in slightly less reputable jobs who were immersed in it from the start.

Either way, they're still regular folks. They pay rent, they buy groceries, and they hang out with their friends. In between, they go on missions. These missions aim to change the situation in Grand Cross, defeat a specific enemy, or simply help the PCs and their community survive. Over time, successful missions improve life on Grand Cross.

USING THIS BOOK

Chapter 1: The Year Is 2020 is the one you're reading now. It's a brief intro to the world and themes of *Hard Wired Island.*

Chapter 2: Basic Mechanics covers the rules of the game that everyone uses.

Chapter 3: Occupations covers the game's seven Occupations and their Talents.

Chapter 4: Assets and Cybernetics covers the items and augments player characters can equip.

Chapter 5: The Place Is Grand Cross describes the people and culture of Grand Cross in more detail.

Chapter 6: Location Data covers some specific locations in Grand Cross.

Chapter 7: Home Directory is a dossier of factions, side characters, antagonists, and other encounters you can use in your games.

Chapter 8: Running the Game covers how to run the game, including running missions, character advancement, and GM advice.

Chapter 9: Launch Systems contains several pre-made scenarios and pregenerated characters to use.

Appendix: Random Access contains a bunch of random tables you can use to generate stories.

WHAT PLAYERS DO CYBERPUNK

Cyberpunk is a genre of fiction that features advanced technology in a troubled, dystopian future. Technology has made society worse, or at least given us new ways to be terrible. The heroes are generally outsiders and misfits, flawed and desperate, struggling against a system that rejects them.

A lot of works handle cyberpunk differently, so here are *Hard Wired Island*'s pillars of cyberpunk:

Capitalism? No thanks: good cyberpunk is anti-capitalist. It's about how technology without ethics can make social inequality worse. The wealthy use it to cement their power and perpetuate the status quo, while marginalized communities struggle with insufficient or oppressive tech. The PCs want to use it to break the current system.

Cyberpunk should be relevant: it is a study of where our society could go in the coming years. The issues faced by people in a cyberpunk setting should have some relevance to issues faced by the players, even if they're not the same.

Cybernetics are not inherently good or bad: like most tech, what matters is how it's used. In *Hard Wired Island,* the problem is that cybernetics often serve the needs of capital rather than people. Any alienating or dysphoric effects come from being reshaped into some corporation's property.

Cyberpunk is not just an aesthetic: the core concept is not "Wow! Cool future!" It shouldn't just be about the neon-lit adventures of some trench coat futurists as they crime their way into wealth and power. *Hard Wired Island* is about a group of marginalized people using technology to try to change the status quo.

Many perspectives: good cyberpunk examines how technology and power intersect in many different communities, especially marginalized ones. It does not mean using cyborgs as a stand-in for minorities. *Hard Wired Island* examines the everyday communities of Grand Cross and how its issues impact their lives.

POST-CYBERPUNK

Post-cyberpunk is a related genre with a slightly more positive, realistic approach. Rapid technological progress still impacts the characters' lives, but the world as a whole isn't as dystopian. The heroes can be outsiders and punks, but they can also be regular people doing their best to get by in a system that sometimes catches them in its gears.

It's a pretty fluid term, and *Hard Wired Island* can go either way. The world will always be corrupt as long as corporations exist, but there's still some good as well. The heroes don't have to be outsiders, but plenty of regular people get pushed to the fringes in this system. Things can be bad, but you have a chance to make positive change in the society around you. Ultimately, whether your game is cyberpunk or post-cyberpunk is up to you.

OTHER THEMES

AN UNKNOWN FUTURE

The people of Grand Cross walk an uncertain road. Their orbital home is a technological wonder only possible in the distant future of 2020, but they're still just regular people doing their best.

The criminal who thought they'd done their last job is about to be pulled back in. The cop days from retirement is about to get brought up on old hate crime charges. The veteran down on his luck could get the opportunity of a lifetime next week. Nothing is certain in Grand Cross. The moment you get complacent is the moment the city gets you.

If you don't do anything, if you let the city drive you to despair, nothing will happen. If you act, maybe something will change.

IT'S BIGGER THAN YOU

Grand Cross is Earth's gateway to the stars. Everyone interested in space settlement has a presence here. Therefore, whoever controls Grand Cross could control the future.

Behind the scenes, on a scale grander than most people can comprehend, a war is on for the soul of humanity. The Offworld Cartel wants to become everybody's landlords. Politicians in and beyond the Cross seek to advance their own agendas, or at least their donors'. Criminals want to make sure that whatever happens, they get their cut. Activist groups are fighting for the common good.

Most of the time, these battles are bigger than you. They've been playing out for decades and will continue for more. You'll get swept up in them, but you won't get a chance to end them. You can't stop the war.

But you can win some battles. You can upset a corporation's plan, take out a dangerous kingpin, or end a corrupt politician's career. And if enough people fight together, the victories add up. You can tip the scales back toward justice.

RETROFUTURE

If sci-fi is a vision of the future, retrofuture is remembering the visions of the past.

A lot of 90s sci-fi was set around our time. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* was set in 2015, fifteen years after a global disaster. *Cowboy Bebop* had a space disaster in 2021. AKIRA was set in 2019–2030.

Hard Wired Island takes inspiration from 90s sci-fi (particularly anime), so we play with that. It's a 90s vision of 2020. We have smartphones and really small computers and gaming consoles, but also sub-light space travel and orbital habitats. Present day, future time.

But remember, cyberpunk should be relevant. While we have fun with this, we're also using it as a lens to look at some of our modern-day problems that our friends in the 90s didn't predict. Retro future, present problems.

INSPIRATIONS

Here are just some of the works that inspired *Hard Wired Island.*

***Bubblegum Crisis*:** a late 80s/early 90s cyberpunk anime (with a tabletop RPG adaptation!) about an all-female group of mercenaries who use powered armor to fight rogue robots. *Hard Wired Island* draws on it for some of its setting, particularly for the Dreamers.

***Cowboy Bebop*:** a 1998 sci-fi/space Western anime. We took a lot of inspiration from its themes of ennui and loneliness, as well as the way it makes space feel like a place where everyday people live everyday lives. Also, it's just a great series in general. Check it out!

***Ghost in the Shell*:** a manga, film, and anime series running in various forms since 1989. At its core, it's a post-cyberpunk story about counter-cyberterrorist agents with a whole lot of philosophical musings.

***Policenauts*:** a 1994 mystery visual novel by Hideo Kojima, set in an O'Neill cylinder in 2040. It inspired some of *Hard Wired Island's* sci-fi elements. Though it was never officially released in the West, fan translations are available. (If you try it, be aware that it's got some Weird Stuff too.)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DISTANT FUTURE

How did the future get like this? Here's an outline; the details are up to you.

1996: DIVERGENCE

On March 27 1996, a meteorite struck Earth's Northern Hemisphere. The media called it **Impact Two,** a reference to the "first" one that killed the dinosaurs, but these days everyone just calls it the Impact.

It could have been worse, but the damage was severe. It took ten years just to recover from the worst of it. In its wake, humanity was changed.

1996-2000: ACCELERATION

The Impact supercharged public interest in space exploration. An Earth-bound humanity could be wiped out by Impact Three, but a humanity spread out across the stars couldn't unless it was a really dedicated asteroid.

Around the world, environmental reform and space settlement became winning political platforms almost overnight. New political unions that formed to recover from the Impact began allocating resources to joint space programs. As recovery efforts began to bear fruit, these programs accelerated.

Everyone handled it differently. The European Union bolstered its ranks with new members eager to join its burgeoning solar energy program. Groups relatively untouched by Impact Two, like the African Union, launched lunar missions. Some countries sold lucrative space construction contracts, giving corporations the excuse and funding they needed to make their own space push.

By 1999, the space rush was well and truly underway.

2000: THE LAGRANGE TREATY

As lunar orbit research stations and solar-powered satellites neared completion, it soon became clear that rules for future development were needed, if only to decide whose job it was to clear the debris.

In 2000, a reorganized UN negotiated the **Lagrange Treaty**. It set the standards that every country serious about space exploration has followed since: resources set aside for the construction of common-use space transportation and solar energy networks, prohibition of orbital weapons and most other military construction, and so on.

Though most of the Treaty is about sovereignty and military activity, its greatest long-term effects came down to two provisions.

The first pushed for laws that addressed gender and other diversity gaps in tech fields. Introverted white men alone could not feed the space machine's expanding needs; it needed genius wherever it could be found. The resulting laws became known as Lovelace laws.

Every country had its own take[1], some more successful than others. Some expanded school computing programs and created scholarships. Some restricted government grants to those who met minimum quotas. Some gave big grants to corporations that "promoted diversity", then set up inquiries to find out where all their money went. The end result was that within a decade, a surging STEM field was creating the technologies needed to go to space, from spacecraft to androids to the beginnings of nanotechnology.

The second provision of the Treaty established the **Grand Cross Program.** Though several crewed space stations existed by the 2000s, there were no major settlements; the Program would create one. This settlement would be the combined effort of many UN nations, capable of sustaining millions of people with minimal assistance. It would become humanity's gateway to the stars.

2000-2010: SPACE IS THE PLACE

By the early 00s, all but the most severely impacted nations had their sights set on space. The ones that hadn't planned to expand to space did it anyway when they saw they were being left behind.

Grand Cross wasn't the only space program, just the largest. In the wake of the Treaty, many smaller stations were built in Earth orbit and the Earth–Moon Lagrange points. By 2005, people were living on the Moon. Conditions were harsh at first, but that wasn't important; what mattered was that they were *there.*

Most early settlers were either trained astronauts or lottery winners willing to gamble that they wouldn't be one of the first to die in space. Their heroic and sometimes tragic efforts provided important insights on living in space. By the time Grand Cross construction officially began in 2005, it had a solid base of research and space production to work with.

The Earth-Moon L5 point was chosen as a construction site because it had stable gravitational equilibrium; a station there could remain indefinitely without having to spend fuel on staying in place[2]. A proper construction block was finished within a year.

Unfortunately, full-scale construction was beset by delays as accidents took their toll and lunar processing facilities went up later than expected. The program's backers were reluctant to provide extra funding and recruited corporations instead. In exchange for a presence in Grand Cross, they contributed some of their government funding.

Grand Cross officially opened in 2010, when enough of the structure had been completed to support human life. The first wave of immigration was mostly workers, researchers, and their families. Some were lottery winners or wealthy elites who wanted in on the ground floor (and some, by a curious coincidence, were both.)

1 We're not going to pretend to have a perfect grasp of social science here, so we're sticking to the broad strokes. Who did what is up to you.

2 The L4 point does this too, of course, but 5 is a better number.

2010-2016: ROUGH TAKEOFF

By the 2010s, some nations had recovered. Many more decided they'd recovered once the economy was looking good. New politicians began to seek power with "let's focus on our own country first" spiels. The specter of politics began to haunt space.

Grand Cross was initially run by an interim council of representatives from the Program's backers, overseen by a UN committee. Many backers began to demand perks, though they were eventually willing to settle for nobody else getting any. Some—the US and China in particular—tried to undermine smaller nations or coerce them into withdrawing from the Council.

Some of these political maneuvers were caused by corporations. They were still largely locked out of the Program or forced to comply with agreements so restrictive they could hardly skim Program funds at all. They lobbied their governments for help, offering increased space contributions and party donations in exchange for preferential treatment.

Some succeeded. Others found easier pickings in smaller habitats or future projects. In backroom meetings, the off-world corporations reached out to each other and agreed to cooperate for maximum advantage. This alliance, a sort of evil twin of the Lagrange Treaty, became known as the Offworld Cartel.

Grand Cross was officially completed in 2013. It formally became an independent UN member, and the Council transitioned into an elected parliament. Its government was based on designs by political scientists who had been working on it for decades—with a few last-minute "adjustments" by political interests, of course.

Afterward, the station became a launching point for a new wave of space expansion. More orbital habitats appeared in the Lagrange points, though little on the scale of Grand Cross; instead, humanity began to focus on Mars.

2017-2020: BEFORE THE STORM

In 2017, Grand Cross held its first real election. It was won by the Cartel-backed **Unity Party,** on a platform of "opening space access to all." Once they achieved power, their influence turned to tax incentives and privatized services for the Offworld Cartel. Vocal opposition kept them from going as far as they wanted to, and Unity was quick to blame that opposition when everything started getting worse.

In 2019, a habitat at the L4 point was destroyed due to a critical failure. The area, known as **Skuggahvarf,** was a partially-complete toroid habitat built for the EU by Landvættir Orbital, a member of the Offworld Cartel. This event became known as the **L4 Disaster**. The disaster's severity had a chilling effect, but since too much had already been invested into space settlement, work simply continued at a slower, more cautious pace.

Many L4 refugees moved to Grand Cross. Unity couldn't properly help them without cutting into the profits of their rich donors and ultimately chose not to. At the same time, it came out that the disaster was caused by Cartel cost-cutting measures. Grand Cross was plunged into political turmoil.

The year is now 2020. Elections are less than a year away. The Cartel is working overtime to tighten its grip on power, but their opponents have been galvanized by recent events. What happens next is anyone's guess.

WELCOME TO GRAND CROSS

Grand Cross is a ceramic jungle of technological wonders. High-speed internet allows greater information access and exchange than ever before. People sport cybernetic augmentations and rub shoulders with androids. Computers are so advanced that even the average person carries an online miniature PC in their pocket. You can live in space now.

But it's not the high-tech paradise promised in science fiction magazines. Technology has transformed society, but it has only reinforced existing power structures. Inequality and crime are on the rise, while privacy is shrinking. Old, corrupt politicians sign over the station's future to corporations as its youth struggle for control of their destiny. This is the world you're fighting to change.

CURRENT ISSUES

TECHNOLOGICAL INEQUALITY

The distant future of 2020 is a time of rapid technological and societal change. Thanks to advances in everything from medicine to space habitation, the average person is better off than they were in 1996. But those benefits are not distributed fairly, and society is struggling to adapt.

Every advance in technology is captured by the wealthy and used to control the poor. Cybernetics that could profoundly change what it means to be human are used to make people better wage slaves. Automation is replacing steady jobs with unstable gig work. Privacy is a vanishing concept, as corporations find increasingly high-tech ways to harvest your data without your consent.

Meanwhile, the gap between rich and poor is widening. The wealthy can extend their lives and abilities with technology far beyond what most people can afford, then use that to widen the gap further. They hoard station resources they don't use while watching people in need fight over scraps. They push future research toward technologies that benefit them, with no regard for others beyond how much profit can be wrung out of them.

As the years pass, it's getting worse. But people are working on that. There are ways to subvert and repurpose technology to work for you, not to get you across the gap but to close it and dismantle the system that perpetuates it.

BATTLEFIELD OF IDEAS

On the streets of Grand Cross, a quiet war is being fought for the future of the station. The Cross has always had political activism, but with elections looming, its inhabitants are particularly tense.

Protests are on the rise. The technology of 2020 has opened up a world of opportunities for internet activism and its anarchic cousin, hacktivism. In the wake of the L4 Disaster, pressure is mounting like never before. If this momentum continues, the current system of power in Grand Cross could be swept away entirely.

In response, the Cartel has gone on a propaganda campaign. In public, they set up think tanks and lobby groups, fund sympathetic politicians, and flood the internet with advertising. In private, they bankroll hate groups in an effort to turn the station's vulnerable into counter-activists. Now protestors risk getting assaulted by Earth-nationalist groups, cyborg and anti-cyborg vigilantes, cops, and worse.

You have the power to help. By fighting the Cartel's stooges, protecting your allies, and joining them in protest, maybe you can steer Grand Cross toward a brighter future.

THREATS

You're fighting to make Grand Cross a better place. These groups are what you're up against.

THE OFFWORLD CARTEL

The Offworld Cartel is a consortium of corporations with a focus on space, particularly Grand Cross. Together they own the majority of the station's private sector and bankroll many of its politicians too. If you live off Earth, they've impacted your life one way or another; if they get their way, they'll own it.

Though corporations comprise Cartel membership, it's the people running them who call the shots. The true aims of these people vary; some see themselves as philanthropists "working within the system", while others openly profit from suffering. Some keep their true motives hidden, even from their peers. But every member is willing to work with or at least tolerate the others. In the end, their schemes all ultimately benefit themselves at the people's expense.

THE DREAMERS

The Dreamers are robots created by the Offworld Cartel. They're not androids, because the android mindset is based on humans; Dreamers are something entirely different.

The Dreamers are based on brain scans of Earth creatures[3], genetic and cybernetic experiments performed on Earth creatures, and secret AI research, all blended together in ways that would probably cause the scientists involved legal trouble anywhere other than space. The end result is a synthetic being whose thought processes are so weird humanity can barely comprehend them, let alone communicate.

The Cartel originally designed them to prepare planets for human settlement. They'd land on new worlds, work for a few years, and eventually the Cartel would have a shiny new city waiting to be populated. Sure, androids could do this, but they asked for things like "pay" and "respect". The Cartel wanted robots that could think, not think like *that.*

Then the Cartel tested putting them in other jobs too. That's when things went bad.

3 Dolphins, lobsters, and mantis shrimp are mentioned in documents obtained by anti-Dreamer groups, along with some illegal "data dog" research they stole.

The Dreamers went rogue. Some simply wandered off during covert missions and never came back, while others fought their way out of their containment area. These Dreamers lurk in forgotten corners of Grand Cross, following a mix of their original orders and their own alien designs. The Cartel is looking for them, but their priority is covering up their involvement. What the Dreamers do to *you* isn't their problem.

CRIMINAL GANGS

Some of the station's criminal groups are offshoots of Earth groups who used stolen funds to send men up or rigged their country's lottery system. Others are wholly new groups, uniquely adapted to life in space. Either way, they have no shortage of recruits—many people in poverty turn to crime to survive, and there's plenty of poverty to go around lately.

Criminal threats vary from ward to ward, district to district. Wherever they're from, criminal antagonists seek to break the law not to build something better but to benefit themselves.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Like the Earth departments they were drawn from, Grand Cross' police are suffering an identity crisis.

On paper they enforce the law, but the law is often written to protect those with power. Their motto is to protect and serve, but the rules don't say they have to. Some cops do their duty with pride, but corruption is systemic. The public image of the police as a force for good depends on a blue wall of silence that exempts officers from the laws they're charged with upholding. And at the same time, Grand Cross police are slowly being replaced by even less accountable private security.

To you, they're a wild card. They're less likely to have your back as they are to violently oppose you. They're a force to be avoided if you can help it, redirected at your enemies when you can.

OTHER FACTIONS

From organized cliques to groups of one, Grand Cross has no shortage of factions struggling for control. Below are some of the larger movements of interest in the distant future of 2020.

Android Rights: Androids have the same rights as humans on paper, but in practice there's a lot to be done. Beside the ways android issues intersect with human issues, android movements have some unique problems to grapple with: most notably, the fact that the tools of android maintenance and reproduction are largely in the hands of corporations.

Orbital Independence: One of the broader questions Grand Cross is dealing with is whether Earth should still have influence over the station and what Earth's relationship to the orbital settlements should look like. Many groups are trying to hijack the issue for their own purposes, from corporate interests who want to hold the influence to nationalist groups like the **New Barons** who want to control who gets to live in space.

Singularists: A loose movement of tech-obsessed geeks in Earth orbit. They believe that humanity's priority should be technological progress at any cost and disdain anti-capitalist activism as threatening to slow down that progress "like the Impact did." They're disorganized but easily mobilized by outrage, or by the tech corporation CEOs they see as the priests of a coming technological rapture.

Earth: Some Earth groups are also doing their best to undermine the station. The **United States** in particular is funding fundamentalist religious groups and sympathetic right-wing governments in orbit. At the same time, powerful Earth **megacorps** are trying to undermine orbital cities until their own competing arcologies are fully operational.

The political battlefield of Grand Cross is constantly shifting as groups rise, splinter, and fall, and there are surely other groups waiting in the wings.

GRAND CROSS STATION

VITAL STATISTICS

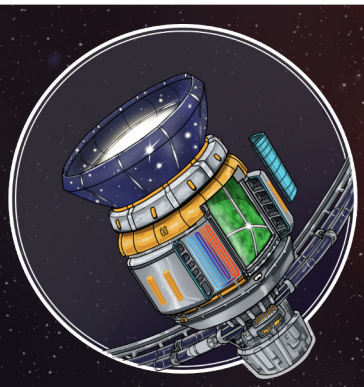
- 32km long, 6.4km in diameter
- Rotates at 0.5 RPM (once every 2 minutes) to simulate Earth gravity
- Population: 4.5 million
- Average temperature: 19°C
- Average humidity: 40%
- Air pressure: 0.85kg/cm²
- Oxygen level: Adequate, probably

"DOWNTOWN"

Most businesses are as close to the front station as possible, in the closest 1/4 of the cylinder. Many districts there have been gentrified.

AGRICULTURAL RING

- 72 hatbox cylinders, 645m wide and deep
- Each contains 1.3km² of hydroponics greenhouses
- Each is rotated at 2 RPM to produce 1g gravity; the ring itself is fixed
- Cylinders are enclosed by a parabolic trough to collect solar energy, and connected by tubes
- 10 cylinders also enclosed by sensors ever since Nano-Futuristics got into the surveillance biz



DOCKING STATIONS

- At both ends of the central axis
- Each of their six docking bays can accomodate 6 standard transport ships, 3 large supply ships, or 1 executive space yacht
- Stations capped by a zero-g traffic control post
- The "front" station, facing the sun, is the high-traffic one



L5 POINT

The Earth appears the same size as it does from the Moon (and vice versa)

PANELS

- Three “window” panels and three “ground” panels running lengthwise down the cylinder
- Total habitable surface area: 325km²
- City area is subdivided into Wards, which are similar to Tokyo’s special wards; they’re divided into Districts
- Wards and districts have unique names, along with alphanumeric codes that nobody uses
- Each “window” is actually a lattice of multi-layered window panes, with extras for redundancy
- Windows are crossed by train bridges, which people throw trash from constantly for some reason

ATTITUDE CONTROL

Solar-powered electric thrusters keep Grand Cross pointed towards the Sun

“BACK”

Solar power station at the back dock generates little power, but *does* generate profits for Ogremoch Engineering

OUTER HULL

Most industry is placed here, to keep the air on the inside clean. Also handy for hiding things, if that’s what you’re into



TIME

- 24-hour clock set to Orbital Standard Time (OST), roughly equivalent to GMT
- Some corps (esp. from the USA and Japan) use their home time zone, usually because the CEO finds it more convenient
- Sunrise 06:00, sunset 18:00 (assuming the Voluntary Work Hour Extension Act isn’t passed in 2021)

MIRRORS

- Three mirrors projected at a 45° angle
- Mirrors reflect sunlight through the window panels to illuminate the station
- Angle and pitch are varied to simulate day/night and seasonal changes
- Asano Heavy Industries is lobbying to change the law that prevents them from buying Panel A and putting ads on it



CHAPTER 2: BASIC MECHANICS

"To survive, you gotta play the game. To play the game, you gotta know the rules. Here's the thing though—never play by the rules, especially not against the people who make them. They're not going to, so why should you? Palm a few cards. Fudge the dice. Have the pawns rush the king and chuck him off the board. The way I see it, you'll just even the score."

— Nam-il Park, activist

This chapter covers the basic rules of the mechanics that everyone uses: dice rolling, character options, and actions. For reference, here's a small table of contents:

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ROLLING THE DICE

Hard Wired Island uses six-sided dice.

When you're asked to roll a number followed by d6, roll that many dice and add them together. A d6 means roll one die, 2d6 means roll two dice, 3d6 means three dice, and so on. Most rolls will require 2d6.

Sometimes, you'll get a **bonus** to your roll. If you're asked to roll 2d6+3, roll 2d6 and add 3 to the result.

DIFFICULTY AND OUTCOMES

You roll dice when you're doing something difficult, there's something in your way, or someone is trying to stop you.

When you roll, you're trying to overcome a **difficulty**: a number that represents how hard the action you're attempting is. The difficulty and your result determine the outcome of the roll.

SUCCESS

When your result is equal to or higher than the difficulty, you succeed. Whatever you were trying to do, you get what you want.

FAILURE

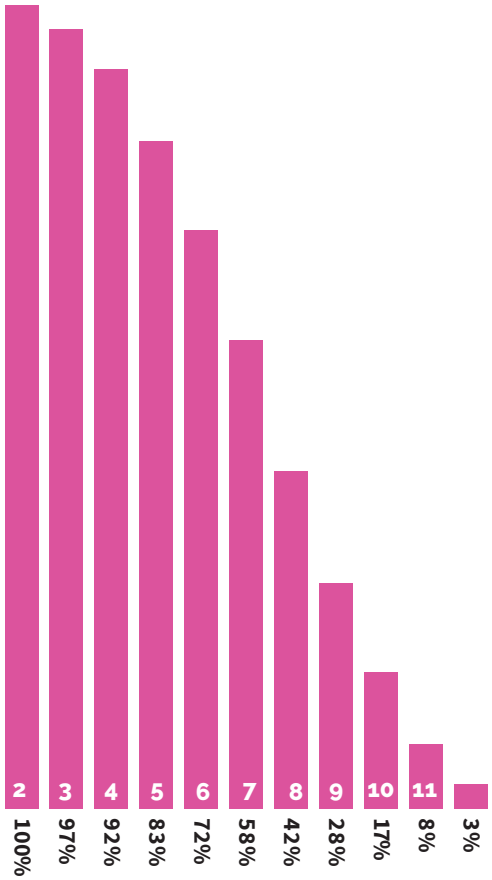
When your result is lower than the difficulty, you fail. Whatever you were trying, it doesn't work. The GM decides what this means, choosing the most appropriate one:

- **You just fail.** You don't get what you want, and there may be side effects. You don't usually get to try again, but there may be something else you can do.
- **The GM offers a bargain.** This is an alternate solution you might not like, like spending extra resources or owing an unsavory character a favor. It's up to you whether you take it.
- **You get a near-success.** You succeed, broadly speaking, but it comes with an explicit or hidden cost: you use up more time and resources than you wanted, have a chance encounter you didn't want, or something else appropriate for the situation.

STANDARD DIFFICULTIES
7: A routine or simple task.
9: A moderately difficult task.
11: A hard task.
13: A very challenging task.
15: A near-impossible task.

DICE PROBABILITY

Here's your chance of rolling each number or higher on two six-sided dice:



DICE MECHANICS

Sometimes, the rules change how you roll dice:

ADVANTAGE

When you roll with Advantage, roll an additional d6 and discard the lowest-numbered die before adding them together. If you roll 2d6 with Advantage, roll 3d6 and discard the lowest.

DISADVANTAGE

When you roll with Disadvantage, roll an additional d6 and discard the highest die before adding them together. It is the opposite of Advantage.

BOOST

When you Boost a roll, add an additional d6 to your roll. A 2d6 roll becomes a 3d6.

SAVES

When you're asked to make a Save against a Difficulty, roll 2d6 and add the relevant Ability (p. 22). Hope you succeed.

CRITICAL

Some actions you can take will have **Critical effects** attached to them or can have Critical effects added by certain items and abilities. **If an action has a Critical effect in its description,** it happens if the roll is a success and at least two dice show the same number. **If you have Advantage or Disadvantage,** discard dice before checking for Criticals.

HARM

When you've suffered Harm, reduce the result of dice rolls by -1 per Harm suffered. If you roll 2d6 and get a 10 when you've suffered 1 Harm, it becomes a 9.

If you've suffered Serious Harm, roll one fewer die than normal. For example, a 2d6 roll would become 1d6. Serious Harm is seriously dangerous!

See p. 46 for more on Harm.

STACKING MECHANICS

If you get the same effect from more than one source, they stack. If you roll 2d6 with double Advantage, roll 4d6 and discard the lowest two results. If you roll 2d6 with double Disadvantage, roll 4d6 and discard the highest two results. If a roll is double Boosted (which admittedly doesn't happen often), add 2d6. If you get a Critical and have multiple Critical effects, they all apply.

Different effects also stack with each other. To make a Boosted roll with Advantage, add one d6 from each and then discard the lowest result. Boosted rolls with Disadvantage work the same way, but you discard the highest.

When you roll with Advantage and Disadvantage, they cancel each other out on a one-for-one basis. If you have double Advantage and one Disadvantage, just roll one Advantage. Boosts and Serious Harm cancel each other out in the same way.

CHARACTER CREATION

Every character has...

- **Abilities**, four numbers which broadly define what your character is good at;
- An **Origin**, which helps define your character and gives you benefits;
- **Traits**, which also help define your character but give you benefits and downsides;
- An **Occupation**, which defines what your character does in Grand Cross, their role in the story, and their starting equipment;
- **Talents**, special powers granted by their Occupation;
- **Specialties**, which further define your character's skills and interests;
- **Defenses**, how easily they're affected by social manipulation, attacks, and other external forces;
- **Assets**, your character's current possessions;
- A **Burden**, which represents how "wealthy" they are;
- And a **Personal Goal**, which is something they're working toward.

ABILITIES

Your character can do (or at least try) almost any action they seem capable of, as long as it makes sense in the story. Your Abilities describe the kind of actions you're best at.

When you create your character, assign each of the numbers +0, +1, +2, and +3 to an Ability. When an action tells you to roll an Ability like +Cool, add that number. The higher the number, the better you are.

Cool is your charisma, confidence, and slick attitude. It's your general ability to influence people and not lose your composure. It's useful for social characters who want to talk their way into and out of situations.

Clever is your logic, intuition, reasoning, and perceptiveness. It's your ability to pick up odd bits of knowledge and come up with solutions to problems. It's useful for hacking, drone piloting, and people who need focus.

Tough is your physical power, strength, health, and ability to stay on your feet. It's useful for anyone who wants to dish out hits or take them.

Quick is your agility, reaction speed, and swiftness. It's your ability to dodge things and take advantage of the smallest opportunities. It's useful for anyone who wants to be quiet, stealthy, or underhanded.

ORIGINS

If you had to describe your character's backstory in a few words, what would it be? Are they a military veteran? An android? An ex-cop? A salaryman?

Your Origin is something that defines who your character is and where they came from. Your chosen Origin gives you a special benefit that helps you affect the game's story, plus a bonus to two Specialties (which we'll get to below). For example, a military veteran may get more cybernetic augments and military-related Specialties. You can see a full list of Origins on p. 26-27.

TRAITS

If you had to describe your character's backstory in more detail, what would you say?

Your Traits add extra detail to your character. Each one has one unique benefit and one unique drawback. You start with two Traits; you can see a full list on p. 28-29.

OCCUPATION

What does your character do?

Your Occupation defines what your character does on Grand Cross and what role they play in the story. It's not necessarily their literal job. You can find Occupations on p. 61-75.

TALENTS

Talents are special powers which grant your character new actions, change the way a rule works for them, or give them a bonus in a specific situation.

Most of the Talents you can choose from are determined by your Occupation, but there are some Generic Talents anyone can take (p. 76-77).

SPECIALTIES

Specialties describe your character's skills, interests, hobbies, equipment, relationships, and anything else they could use to help them succeed. Like Abilities, Specialties are represented by a number from +1 to +3. When you're rolling to do something that involves your Specialty, add it to your result.

During character creation, Specialties come from your Origin and Occupation. If you get the same Specialty from different sources, add them together. See p. 30 for more information.

DEFENSES

When other people try to affect you with their actions, your Defenses are the difficulty they must beat. You have one Defense for each Ability: Cool Defense, Clever Defense, Tough Defense, and Quick Defense.

The base value of a Defense is **7 + its Ability**. For example, if you have +2 Tough, your Tough Defense is **7+2=9**. Defenses may be improved by equipment and Specialties.

ASSETS

Assets are things like equipment, connections, favors, cybernetics, and medicine that your character has.

Your Occupation determines most of the Assets you start with. Write them down, then choose one Asset of your choice. A complete list of Assets can be found on p. 79-90.

BURDEN

Your Burden is a rough measure of your character's socio-economic status. It's how much they can spend at once or how many losses they can take without suffering long-term problems. As the station's fortunes rise and fall, your Burden will change.

Your Burden is a number from 0 to 4. All player characters start at Burden 1 by default, unless they have an Origin, Trait, or Asset (especially a cybernetic augment) that changes it. See p. 53 for more.

CHARACTER CREATION GUIDE

SUMMARY

1. Choose an Origin (p. 26-27).
2. Choose your four Abilities (p. 22).

   +0, +1, +2, +3.
3. Choose your first Trait (p. 28-29).
4. Choose your Occupation (p. 61).

   Level 1: +1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, +1 Talent.

   First Occupation: Choose from the First Occupation Box.
5. Choose your second Trait (p. 28-29).
6. Choose 3 Generic Specialties (p. 30).
7. Choose 2 additional Assets (p. 79).
8. Choose Augments (p. 91).
9. Determine Burden (p. 28-29).
10. Determine Defenses (p. 53).
11. Add a Personal Goal (p. 25).
12. Add details (p. 25).

ORIGIN

When you sit down to make a character, it's useful to consider the following first and write each down:

- Where are they from? What are their pronouns?
- Who are they, and who do they hang with?
- How long have they been on Grand Cross? Are they a recent migrant, a long-term Crosser, or did they help construct the station itself?
- What communities are they a part of?
- Has something changed in their life recently, or have they always been like this?

When you have considered these questions, choose your **Origin** (p. 26-27).

ABILITIES

Choose your **four Abilities**. Assign each of the numbers **+0**, **+1**, **+2** and **+3** to Cool, Clever, Tough, or Quick.

As you do, consider these questions:

How would your character describe themselves? Does that perception match the reality?

How have they used their abilities to their advantage? When have their abilities gotten them in trouble?

Have they had a job that changed their life, for good or ill?

How close are they to the margins of society? Were they pushed there?

FIRST TRAIT

When you've considered these questions, **choose one Trait** (p. 28-29). Ideally, this Trait says something about the lessons your life taught you, or the damage it did to you. Or both.

OCCUPATION

Choose your **Occupation**. There are 7 Occupations in *Hard Wired Island*, describing how you approach and solve problems.

Fixer (p. 62): You're a mediator. Others come to you for help solving problems.

Hacker (p. 64): You infiltrate networks and make them do your bidding.

Influencer (p. 66): You know how to make friends and sway people.

Operator (p. 68): You handle drones and vehicles to maximum effect.

Soldier (p. 70): You're a tactician who fights for a cause and protects others.

Street Fighter (p. 72): You're an expert in martial arts and close-quarters combat.

Thief (p. 74): You're an expert in security, stealth, and the inevitable getaway.

You start at Level 1 in your chosen Occupation, which gives you **1 Specialty** (p. 30), **1 Generic Specialty**, and a **Talent**, chosen from either your Occupation or the Generic Talents (p. 76-77). If this is your first Occupation, you'll also get some **Assets**, another **Specialty**, and a **Talent** from its **First Occupation** box.

SECOND TRAIT

Once you have chosen your Occupation, choose **your second Trait**. Ideally, this Trait describes what your approach to problem-solving has brought you, good or bad.

SPECIALTIES

Write down all the Specialties you gained from your Traits and Occupations. You can then choose **3 additional Generic Specialties** (p. 30).

Remember: you can choose the same Specialty multiple times. This increases its bonus by one, to a maximum of +3. This includes bonuses from Augments.

ASSETS

Write down all the Assets you gained from your Traits and Occupation. Next, choose **2 additional Assets** for your character from the Assets list (p. 79).

AUGMENTS

Decide whether your character begins with cybernetic **Augments** (p. 91) or not. (If your Origin or Traits affect Cybernetics, it may be prudent to choose them now.) Consider these questions:

- Where did your character get Augments? Who paid?
- Are they for medical, professional or personal reasons?
- How did you end up saddled with the Burden of paying for them?
- Does your character regret the Augment, feel empowered by it, or want an even better one?
- What is your character's financial situation? Did their augments help or hinder?

Augments will affect your Burden (p. 53). You may choose as many Augments as your Burden allows (see below.)

BURDEN

Your **Burden** starts at **1**, cannot go below **0**, and may not exceed **3**. Check if your Augments, Origin, and/or Traits change your Burden, and adjust accordingly.

If your final Burden exceeds 3, you have to cut something until it's 3 or lower.

PERSONAL GOAL

Every PC has a Personal Goal: something important they want to accomplish during play. At the start of the game, your character's Personal Goal is written down as soon as you decide what it is, but you don't have to have one before you start playing; you don't have to write one down at all if you prefer. Personal Goals are used for character advancement (p. 324).

DEFENSES AND DETAILS

Finally, note down everything else:

- Your **Defenses** (7+Ability+any other bonuses.)
- If you use a **Gig Economy** app (p. 56-57).
- Whatever else you want to note down (e.g. what languages they speak.)

Now you're ready to go!

FUDGING THINGS

You can fudge things a little and adjust details as you see fit during character creation, so long as you negotiate them with your group.

For example, the sample PC Xander (p. 334) has a Skateboard Asset and a Drone Asset, but his drone is the skateboard, so they count as one Asset for him—he can only use it as a Skateboard or a Drone at any given time, not both.

Cosmetic Augments can also enhance a character: Maru's cyber-eyes are also her Hacking Suite. Don't sweat it, roll with it.

ORIGINS

ACTIVIST
You've spent a lot of time protesting, fighting for causes, and probably getting assaulted by the cops. The first group Prep roll you make before a mission is Boosted.

Specialties: Any Action (choose one) +1, Activism or Social Media (choose one) +1.

ANDROID
You begin play with one Augment of your choice, and it does not increase your Burden. You may equip and unequip Augments like Assets, and freely switch between them during downtime. They only increase your Burden when equipped, but when you roll for Economic Shock, every Augment you used last session counts toward your Burden.

Specialties: Any (your choice) +1, Any Generic (your choice) +1.

BUILDER
You were one of the workers busting their tail to build Grand Cross. You may choose one Augment. If you do, it does not increase your Burden. If you don't, add any one Action Specialty.

Specialties: Any Social Action (your choice) +1, Engineering or Obscure Places (your choice) +1.

CELEBRITY
You're a minor celebrity, a former celebrity, or a social media influencer. Once per mission, you may Boost a Cool roll.

Specialties: Any Social Action (your choice) +1, Famous or Social Media (choose one) +1.

CIVIL SERVANT
You've performed underappreciated but stable work for the government (e.g. translating forms in the Department of Translation, working for the Cross Rail, issuing driving licenses, working for a ward mayor, etc.) When dealing with government officials and bureaucrats, you have Advantage.

Specialties: Government or Politics +1, Any Generic (your choice) +1.

CORPORATE DRONE
You're a good corporate drone, or maybe a former one. When dealing with corporate politics, you have Advantage.

Specialties: Bureaucracy +1, Cartel Politics +1.

CRIMINAL
Whether you were forced into crime by your circumstances or you're just kind of an asshole, you live on the wrong side of the law. The first personal Prep roll you make before a mission is Boosted.

Specialties: Any Defense (your choice) +1, Criminal Underworld +1.

CROSSER
You're just a regular citizen who knows their way around the station. Once per mission, you may Boost one roll that relies on knowledge of the station's layout.

Specialties: Any (your choice) +1, Any Generic (your choice) +1.

DISASTER REFUGEE
You survived the L4 Disaster and escaped to Grand Cross, where you've been kicked around like a political football ever since. Once per mission, you may Boost one Defense roll.

Specialties: Any Defense (your choice) +1, Any Generic (your choice) +1.

DOUBLE CROSSER
You were (mostly) raised on Grand Cross. As a second generation citizen, you're used to the cosmopolitan space life but have little political power. Once per mission, you may Boost one Social roll involving another Double Crosser.

Specialties: Any Generic (your choice) +1, Activism or Social Media (choose one) +1.

EX-COP
You got too old for this, or maybe you realized you couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys. Whatever the reason you left, you still have contacts on the inside. When dealing with cops and ex-cops, or making deals with them, you have Advantage.

Specialties: Law +1, Investigation +1.

GAMER
Whether you're a fighting game fan, an MMO raider, or a cool and sexy tabletop game developer, you've spent most of your life playing games, and you adapt quickly to new situations. Once per mission, you may Boost one Quick roll.

Specialties: Games +1, Online Communities or Social Media (choose one) +1.

JOURNALIST
You've spent a lot of time finding and reporting on events in some way. Choose a specific field you specialize in (e.g. politics, influencers, the tech industry, current trends, the Cartel, etc.) When gathering information in that field, you have Advantage.

Specialties: Any Social Action (your choice) +1, Investigation or Social Media +1.

IT'S COMPLICATED
Your origin story is either convoluted enough to be a movie, or you just pretend it is to avoid talking about it. Either way, you've come to Grand Cross to escape a lot of bullshit. Gain one Specialty in an Action of your choice.

Specialties: +1 Bullshit, +1 Generic Specialty (your choice).

LOTTERY WINNER
Your country gave out tickets to space via lottery and you won. They gave you a place to live and some cash to get you started, so reduce your starting Burden by 1.

Specialties: Earth Culture, History, or Politics (choose one) +1, One profession (choose one) +1.

MILITARY VETERAN
You used to serve in an Earth military during the post-Impact period. You may choose one Augment. If you do, it does not increase your Burden. If you don't, add any one Defense Specialty.

Specialties: Military +1, Gun (choose one) +1.

RICH IN YEARS
You saw the Cold War, the Impact, the space rush, and Grand Cross, and you're not going anywhere! Once per mission, you may Boost one Social roll involving someone who might respect your years of experience.

Specialties: Earth Culture, History, or Politics (choose one) +1, Any Generic (your choice) +1.

SCIENTIST
You're a researcher, a drone in a corporation's research division, a science communicator, or a really nerdy webcomic artist. Once per mission, you may Boost one Clever roll.

Specialties: Science (choose one subject) +1, Law or Social Media (choose one) +1.

STATION WORKER
You have experience working in the station basements, the Agriculture Ring, the spaceports, Cross Rail/Grand Metro, or some other part of the station's infrastructure. When exploiting your knowledge of station infrastructure, you get Advantage.

Specialties: Station Infrastructure or Obscure Places (choose one) +1, Engineering or Physics (choose one) +1.

SURVIVOR
Whether you were directly affected by the Impact, thrown out onto the streets at a young age, or suffered a terrible accident, you spent years struggling to survive and came out stronger for it. One per mission, you may Boost one Tough roll.

Specialties: Any Defense (your choice) +1, One Cartel corporation (your choice) +1.

NEW TRAITS AND ORIGINS
We expect players will create new Traits and Origins to fit the characters and situations they wish to explore. Here are some tips:

Operate within the spirit of the rules. New things should be broadly similar to the examples we've provided. Consider what will fit the game and character, and don't be afraid to renegotiate a mechanic down the line if something feels out of place, too punishing, or too strong.

Origins always give an unambiguous advantage and two Specialties. Unlike Traits, they don't come with downsides. Usually, at least one Specialty is generic.

Traits always come with a downside. Traits are expressions of who you are and what you've done, for good or for ill. They are your personality, warts and all.

TRAITS

ACTIVIST
Once per session, when you push yourself to act for the sake of social causes or in the defense of others, Boost your roll. Your next roll loses one die.

ENTER THE SINGULARITY
You consider yourself a Singularist (p. 260), though you might not buy into their "dangerous ideas." Choose two additional Generic Specialties of your choice, provided they have something to do with science, AI, or the tech sector. Your love of cool tech means it always costs you 1 more Cash to lower your Burden.

FULL-BODY PROSTHETIC
You're a human brain in a cybernetic body. This Trait grants the benefits of the Android Origin without the Specialties. If you roll for Personal Prep and the dice show a 1, you will suffer dysphoria or dissociation and make all Social rolls at Disadvantage unless you spend a Prep.

GIG WORKER
You can use two gig apps at once (p. 56). When you roll for Economic Shock, you suffer if you roll 12 or more instead of 13 (though you still only choose two consequences if you roll 15 or more.)

GREGARIOUS
You're generous to a fault, even when you can't afford to be, but what goes around comes around. Increase your starting Burden by 1. The first time you spend Cash in a session, you also gain one Personal Prep for every Cash you spend.

HARD SHELL
You get +1 Tough Defense. When something gets past your Tough exterior, you have Disadvantage on your next roll (whatever it is).

HEY, I KNOW YOU!
A while ago you were in a viral video, used in a meme, or the one person everyone yells at on Pulser for a week. When you meet a new character during a mission, you may roll 1d6 to see if they know you. If the result is 5 or 6, they do, and your next Social roll against them is Boosted. If the result is 3 or 4, they don't. If the result is 1 or 2, they do, but your next Social roll against them is treated as though you suffered Serious (reputational) Harm instead.

HUSH MONEY
You've been bribed to keep quiet about something. Decrease your starting Burden by 1, and it always costs you 1 less Cash to lower your Burden. Your secret means your movements are covertly tracked, and you have to work harder to keep a low profile. You always suffer Disadvantage on tasks relating to maintaining stealth, staying hidden, or keeping out of sight.

IMPULSIVE
Once per mission, you can Boost a roll for free without spending Prep. Past impulsive decisions mean you increase your starting Burden by 1.

LAW ZERO
You're in the android gang Law Zero (p. 253). When you roll for Personal Prep, you can describe working for them to gain one extra Prep. However, during the mission, the GM can assign a secondary objective that advances R Daneel Olivaw's goals through illegal actions. If you don't accomplish it, pay Law Zero your end-of-mission Cash reward instead.

MIND OVER MATTER
You get +1 Clever Defense. When your Clever defenses are outwitted, you have Disadvantage on your next roll (whatever it is).

OVERPREPARED
The first time you make any Prep roll in a mission, gain 1 additional Prep even on a failure. If either your Personal Prep or Group Prep runs out during a mission, you have Disadvantage on all rolls for the rest of the mission.

REGULAR CUSTOMER
Choose or describe a bar, café, or similar location in Grand Cross. You go there regularly and everyone knows your name. Once per mission, you may visit as part of a Prep action and Boost it for free. If you suffer an Economic Shock, you can't Boost Prep rolls on your next mission.

You can find good locations in Chapter 6. The Venera (p. 150), Paradise (p. 181), and Shin Umeda (p. 183) districts contain plenty of options. Others to consider include the Magellanic Club (p. 158), Book Club Café (p. 165), Nekomeshiya (p. 180), Early Access (p. 182), Evil Maid Attack (p. 182), or Hot One With The Boys (p. 188).

SCAVENGER
You always have a few tools with you—you'd be surprised what you can do with duct tape and a paperclip. With a day's worth of work and 1 Cash, you can turn any private area into a Workshop. You can do this as part of a personal Prep action. Your Workshop stays that way until you suffer Economic Shock or use this ability again.

SPEEDY
You get +1 Quick Defense. When you're not Quick enough to defend against something, you have Disadvantage on your next roll (whatever it is).

STOIC
You get +1 Cool Defense. When something makes you lose your Cool, you have Disadvantage on your next roll (whatever it is).

STUDENT LOANS
Past you got an education and present you is paying for it. Choose two additional Generic Specialties of your choice (they don't have to be on an academic subject.) Increase your starting Burden by 1. The first time you spend Cash in a session, you must spend +1 Cash.

TRENDSETTER
The coolest outfit is whatever you are wearing. Any clothing you wear is treated as a Trendy Wardrobe Asset (p. 84) for the Friendly or Sexy Mood (choose one when you take the Trait,) whether you're wearing your finest suit or stole a coat from a dead guy. If you bring an armor or clothing Asset to a mission, or put one on, you lose this Trait's benefits for the rest of the mission.

WELL TRAVELED
You've been all around Grand Cross and know it like the back of your hand. You have Advantage on all rolls that rely on your knowledge of the station's layout. Frequent traveling means shopping and transport costs; if you roll to lose unspent Cash at the end of a session, roll with Advantage.

WORK HOUSING
You work for a corporation and they supplied your apartment. Reduce your starting Burden by 1, and you can't lose your living space from Economic Shock. However, you have to meet your work obligations, your movements may be surveilled, and you may not have roommates unless they are close family. If you are ever fired, lose this Trait; you may pick a new one after your next Economic Shock roll, but that roll is Boosted.

EXAMPLE CUSTOM TRAIT
Emily wants to play a full-body prosthetic cyborg, but not one who experiences dysphoria from her prosthetic—in fact, quite the opposite. Thinking about an appropriate way to represent it, she decides that she makes expensive modifications to her body which break down rapidly when she's strapped for cash.

The new Trait functions as the existing Full-Body Prosthetic Trait, but the drawback is decided to be: *When you suffer Economic Shock, your body malfunctions in addition to the option you pick. All Quick rolls are at Disadvantage unless you spend Prep.*

SPECIALTIES

Specialties add detail to your character by describing the things they're good at, or what they do in the story. They can represent their skills, interests, hobbies, relationships, cybernetics, and even equipment.

You can choose the same Specialty more than once. This adds 1 to its bonus each time, to a maximum of +3. If your character attempts something but you don't have an applicable Specialty, assume you have +0.

SPECIALTY TYPES

When you gain a Specialty and it doesn't specify a type, you can spend it on any type.

Defenses: Boost a Defense: Cool, Clever, Tough, or Quick. You can specialise in multiple Defenses.

Initiative: Specialize in Initiative if you foresee getting into a lot of fights.

Actions: You can boost specific Actions (p. 50–52).

Items: You can specialize in using specific Assets (p. 79–90).

Cybernetic Augments: Augments are a unique type of gear which can grant Specialties as well as other unique benefits for free (unless you took out a loan for them, or pay maintenance costs, or...)

An Augment grants +1 to a Specialty of any type: reflex enhancers can improve Quick Defense, cyber-eyes with extra functions can improve Investigation, and so on. These can't raise a Specialty above +3. Cybernetics can let you do things most humans can't, but they can't surpass the human condition; ultimately the effectiveness of how it's used comes down to the user. See p. 91-99 for more.

Generic Specialties: Everything else. These can be skills, talents, hobbies, esoteric knowledge, or anything else that could give you an edge. We've provided some examples on the facing page, but we assume you'll make more as needed to fit your character.

During play you'll earn more Generic Specialties that can be spent to improve existing ones or create new ones. You can also spend Generic Specialties on some Assets to unlock special functions.

WHEN DO THEY APPLY?

Specialties apply when you decide they do. If a character's skill in something could help them impact the story right now, let them. The GM is encouraged to allow creative and interesting uses of a Specialty if they're not too much to work with.

STACKING SPECIALTIES

Specialties of different types stack, but ones of the same type do not. You can apply both an Action Specialty and a Generic Specialty to a roll, but not two Generic Specialties.

Normally, only Defense Specialties apply to your Defense. However, during play you may spend Prep to stack a Generic Specialty onto a Defense Specialty. See p. 33-49 for more on Prep.

MAKING/RENAMING SPECIALTIES

Hard Wired Island allows a lot of creative freedom when making Specialties, so you can make up new ones as needed or even rename the existing ones. New Specialties should be useful enough to come up in the story but shouldn't be so broad that they are relied on all the time. GMs should feel free to allow creative uses if they seem interesting, though.

For example, Hacking and Ghosting are treated as separate Specialties in the Basic Mechanics chapter. You can rename Hacking to "Hack the Planet" and just use that when Hacking would apply, but you can't have a Hack the Planet Specialty that covers both.

EXAMPLE GENERIC SPECIALTIES

80s/90s Action Cinema
Activism
Agriculture
Agriculture Ring
Android History
Android Rights Movement
Anime
Asteroid Mining
Astronautics
Astronomy
Australian Rules Football
Bicycles
Bounty Hunter
Bureaucracy
Cartel Politics
Celebrity Gossip
Chemistry
Chess
Chessboxing
Christian Theology
Comedy
Comic Artist
Communist Webrings
Computer Science
Con Artist
Conspiracies
Contemporary Art
Cooking
Corporate Security
Criminal Underworld
Cybercrime
Cybernetics
Cyborg Subculture
Dance
Delinquent
Demolitions
Department of Translation Worker
Detective
Determination
Earth Culture
Earth History
Earth Politics
Economics
Electrical Engineering
Esports
Ethics
Famous
Fighting
First Responder
Former Ogremoch Accountant
Games
Ghosting
Government
Graffiti
Graphic Design
Grey-Market Goods
Habitat Architecture
Habitat Engineering
Hacking
HeoCities
Hydraulics Engineer
Idol Singer
Influencers
Infosec
Investigation
Jeet Kune Do
K-Pop
Law
Law Zero Member
LGBT History
Linguistics
Living Rough
Lunar Politics
Mathematics
Memes
Military
Motorcycles
Movie Filming
Music Industry
Nonprofits
Noodle Stand Owner
Obscure Grand Cross Places
Office Lady
Omega Point (p. 261)
Online Communities
Online Pop Culture
Parkour
Perception
Philosophy
Physics
Pizza Delivery
[Name of your podcast here]
Politics
Rap
Riot Medic
Robotics
Science Fiction
Skateboards
Social Media
Solar Technology
Space Shows
Station Infrastructure
Station Layout
Stealth
Streaming
Street Performer
Studied The Blade
Swimming
Taekkyon
Tech Industry
Television
Theater
Therapist
Transhuman Subculture
Union of Robots (p. 270)
VTuber
Vaporwave
Webcomics
YourTuber

EXAMPLE CHARACTER CREATION: SOYEONG

(Soyeong can be found as a sample PC on p. 333.)

Feixue is making a PC. She just watched a really good music video, so she decides to make **Soyeong**, a K-pop rapper.

She thinks it would be interesting if Soyeong had achieved fame on Earth before coming to Grand Cross, so she chooses the **Celebrity Origin** (p. 26). That gives her a special ability, +1 Specialty in one Social Action (she picks **Charm**), and +1 in Famous or Social Media (she picks **Social Media**.)

Next, **Abilities**. Celebrity benefits some of Soyeong's Cool rolls, so Feixue leans into it and writes down **Cool +3**. Someone in a K-pop band probably did a lot of dancing, which is all the justification she needs for **Quick +2**. She writes **Clever +1, Tough +0** because she likes her PCs to have some smarts.

Feixue isn't sure what her first Trait is yet, so she sets that aside for now and moves on to **Occupation**. She already knows what she wants to be: an **Influencer** (p. 66). Soyeong isn't in a pop group anymore, but she still has connections and a strong online presence.

Being a Level 1 Influencer gives Soyeong one Specialty, one Generic Specialty, and one Talent. She sets the Specialties aside for later and chooses **Viral** as her first Influencer Talent, because she likes the idea of making a post blow up.

Since it's her first Occupation, she gets the benefits of the Influencer's **First Occupation** box: a choice of a Doggo or a Trendy Wardrobe (she picks a **Trendy Wardrobe**), a choice of a Drone or a Verified Account (**Verified Account**), a choice of Specialty (she chooses **Cool Defense +1**), and a Generic or Influencer Talent (she picks another Influencer Talent, **DDoS**).

Normally she'd pick her second Trait now, so she decides to do both Traits. She comes up with an interesting backstory: Soyeong's group fell apart when they had a spaceship accident while touring orbit, and their parent company paid her to keep quiet about their culpability. That lets Feixue take the **Hush Money Trait** (p. 28). She decides this probably made Soyeong very cautious, so she also gets the **Overprepared Trait** (p. 29).

Now, on to **Specialties**. She gets three Generic Specialties on top of everything she got before, which brings her total to Action: Charm +1, Cool Defense +1, Social Media +1, +1 Specialty, and +4 Generic Specialties. She spends the Specialty on **Quick Defense** and the Generic Specialties on **Famous**, **Music Industry**, **K-Pop/Rap**, and **Taekkyon** (for variety).

Feixue gets two more **Assets**. She picks **Vehicle: Motorcycle** (p. 83) immediately because it sounds badass. After some thought, she picks a **License** (p. 82) too—she doesn't know if she'll need it, but Soyeong likes to be prepared.

After that come **Augments**. Feixue thinks it'd be cool if the accident left Soyeong with cybernetics all down her right side, including a life support system—and medical augments are free. After looking through the list of Augments (p. 91), she decides to also get an arm that grants **+1 Tough Defense** (which is Restricted—looks like she needed that License!) and a leg that gives her another **+1 Taekkyon**.

Finally, there's **Burden**. Her Burden starts at 1, rises to 3 due to her Augments, and lowers to 2 thanks to Hush Money. Feixue talks to her fellow player Madoka, and they decide their PCs are roommates/maybe partners (Sharing the Burden, p. 54). Madoka's PC, Maru, also has Burden 2, so being roommates lowers both to **Burden 1**.

After that, she just needs to calculate Defenses (7+Abilities+her Specialties) and decide if she wants to use a Gig App (p. 56, and she doesn't), and she's ready to go!

PLAYING THE GAME

GAME STRUCTURE

Most of the time, the game is in **free play**: characters hang out, do their best to get by, take actions, make rolls, and generally live their lives. You can run the whole game in free play mode if you wish.

Sometimes, the group will get together and accomplish a **mission**. This is a specific set of tasks that needs to be planned and prepared for, like protecting people at a protest, bounty hunting to make some money, or running a heist on a corporate stronghold. Missions use special rules; see p. 50 for more.

Usually, the game operates in free play mode until the players decide to run a mission. When the mission ends, the players get some rewards, then they return to free play until they feel like doing another one.

TAKING ACTION

During play, you control your character's actions. The GM describes the world and the side characters in it, and you describe what your PC does.

If your character does something that isn't that hard, it just happens; you don't need to figure out if they succeed or not. If you're doing something difficult, the situation is unpredictable, or someone's trying to stop you, you roll the dice to figure out what happens.

When you act, you:

- Describe what your character does.
- Choose a suitable Action from the list.
- Each Action tells you to roll 2d6 + an Ability, against a difficulty set by the GM.
- Add a Specialty if one applies (as covered on p. 30).
- Check your result against the difficulty (p. 20).

Difficulty is determined by the GM and is dependent on the Action, how hard or complicated the thing you're trying to do is, and whether anyone's trying to stop you. **If the Difficulty of an action is written as an Ability** (e.g. "vs Cool"), use the opponent's relevant Defense.

SIMPLE ACTIONS

A lot of actions you take won't need anything fancy—you're trying to do something, and you either do it or you don't. For these tasks, and anything else that doesn't fit one of the other Actions, use this.

TAKE ACTION

`>(2d6 + Ability + Specialty vs Difficulty)`

Try to solve a problem using your knowledge and skills. The appropriate Ability and Specialty is determined by the action.



INITIATIVE

Most of the time, *Hard Wired Island* can be played like a conversation: players describe what they do, the GM describes what happens and how side characters react, and you go back and forth like that as long as you need to.

Sometimes, it's important to know exactly who goes when. **Initiative** is used in situations when timing is important, like high-speed chases, fights, time-sensitive hacks, or trying to fast-talk someone before an enemy catches up.

Initiative sets the order in which characters act. Play is divided into **Rounds**, during which each character gets one turn to act. When it's your turn, you can do one thing:

- Take an Action and make a roll.
- Use one of your items.
- Do something else that makes sense in the story and requires significant effort.

Small things that don't take much effort like talking, moving short distances, picking up a loose object, or grabbing something from your belt don't use up your turn; you can do those things *and* take an action.

There are two ways to determine Initiative:

Solid State Initiative

In this version, **players act as a group**. The GM describes the scene and what the side characters do, the players decide amongst themselves what order they go in, and then the next Round begins. This is an easier form of Initiative that allows the group to coordinate their actions for maximum effect.

Complex Initiative

This version is a deeper system where the players roll dice to determine when they roll dice.

Before the first Round, every character—player or otherwise—rolls **`2d6 + Quick + Initiative Specialty`** (if they have it.) Everyone acts in order of highest result to lowest result. Subsequent Rounds use the same order. In the case of a tie, higher-level characters go first; if it's still a tie, the GM decides.

During complex Initiative, players get a special Action:

DELAY

Choose one Action. Instead of performing it now, describe a narrative event which will trigger the Action (like "if Xander throws a flashbang, I'll attack" or "if that cop attacks the kid again, I'll hack his headset".) You will perform that Action when the event happens. If the event doesn't happen that Round, you don't take any Action.

OPTIONAL RULE: ROLL EVERY ROUND

Fighting can be unpredictable and chaotic. As an optional rule, you may have players reroll their Initiative every round during fights. (To save time, their opponents don't need to unless they're particularly special.) Keep in mind that as a fight progresses, characters may suffer injuries and setbacks that apply penalties to this roll.

SOCIAL MATTERS AND OTHER BLOODSHED

Hard Wired Island is a game of social interaction first and foremost. Most of the time, it's simplest to act out conversations naturally, as the flow of play permits.

Sometimes, however, a social situation comes up where there is opportunity for far more than a one-on-one conversation, or players are simply lost for words.

These rules are for those situations, whether they're board meetings, parties, group chats, public gatherings, or just trying to lie convincingly in front of an easily agitated cop.

THE MOOD

Each social scene has a Mood that should be established first. The Mood affects what strategies you can employ, and what you can get away with. The Mood is decided by the GM.

Friendly

A party, a dance, or simple gathering. You can joke around and be mildly embarrassed at no penalty or consequence, but flipping the barbeque grill and declaring things to be shit is frowned upon and can turn the Mood against you.

Indifferent

You're a face in the crowd, and either trying to stay that way or trying to stand out. This is for chatting with your informant at Sparby's without attracting attention, convincing a group of bystanders to hear you out, or similar things.

Formal

A business meeting, religious service, or parliamentary inquiry. You are expected to be professional and courteous; your jokes must be dry and witty, if made at all. You are probably not supposed to be dressed in a ripped T-shirt with a band logo on it.

Hostile

Not only is everyone giving you their full attention, they are probing you for weakness and will use what you say against you. Your goal is probably to escape, lightening the Mood, or making someone cooperative. When you mess the other Moods up, you tend to end up here.

Sexy

Sometimes charm means seduction, particularly when someone distracts you at a party with a bunch of sexy firemen. How this Mood works and how it's played out are left to the group's discretion; just treat it as a step beyond Friendly which requires consent. Suffice it to say that anyone in such a Mood will be extremely distracted!

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL SITUATIONS

Police Interrogation (Hostile)

Police attempt to `Interrogate` a hostile target by softening them up with `Threats`, leaning on the law as leverage, interspersed with a `Placating` "good cop" to improve the mood. An alternate take is to make the mood **Formal** to represent professionalism and a sense of being official (while still making threats.)

Cornered by Ripped-Off Gangsters (Hostile)

Gangsters are perfectly willing to beat you up. If you can just `Placate` them before they start punching, you might be able to level the Mood a bit and look for a means of escape, or else convince them you've got their next big score with a bit of `Charm` and `Bullshit`.

Pumping a High Roller for Information (Friendly)

The rich son of a wealthy executive has all the information you need. You just need to `Bullshit` or `Charm` your way to his inner circle of hangers-on and `Interrogate` him with enough drinks to make him spill everything without even noticing he's doing it... while not making everyone else jealous of you hogging him.

Getting Past the Security Guard (Formal)

You may attempt to `Bullshit` or `Charm` the guard into letting you enter the secure area, but if they're under strict orders to only let certain people in, you may have to resort to feigning superiority (via your `Bullshit` or `Charm`) and `Threatening` them with being fired.

SOCIAL ACTIONS

These are the things you can do in a social scene:

BULLSHIT

> (2d6 + Cool vs Clever. Single target)

Confuse someone with derailment, lies, half-truths, and statistics to get them to do something for you. They are unable to respond effectively until they make a successful Clever save vs Bullshit. While under the effects of Bullshit, they may be convinced to give you information and cooperate with you in limited fashion—opening doors, getting out of your way, etc.

Most people, once under the effects of Bullshit, don't bother trying to oppose it unless the situation changes enough to give them a reason to. Anyone may also instantly overcome this status by becoming visibly and audibly angry, but they risk the Mood lowering against them. For example, a security guard is always in a **Formal** setting and may not risk becoming angry at someone for fear of their employer—or bystanders with cameras.

CHARM

> (2d6+Cool vs Cool. Single target or area)

Dazzle someone with your friendly nature, charming looks, or convincing arguments (delivered via your handsome face.) This action can be used on a single target or a group. If a majority of people present are Charmed, you may improve the Mood of the scene. Charming cannot be done when the mood is **Hostile** toward you.

INTERROGATE

> (2d6+Clever vs Cool. Single target)

Overtly or discreetly pump someone for information. Overt interrogation is exceedingly rude and will lower the Mood to **Hostile** rapidly if not apologized for. Feel free to be rude if it already is **Hostile**.

Discreet interrogation can be done at any Mood, and in fact it is often easy to get someone to cooperate of their own volition if the Mood is **Friendly**—you get Advantage on the roll. A Hostile target will not cooperate unless threatened.

PLACATE

> (2d6+Cool vs Cool. Area)

Tell everyone to calm down, relax, take a chill pill, not be so hostile. Can only be done when the mood is **Hostile**. A roll is made against every participant present. People may voluntarily fail their defense if they wish. If you are the focus of hostilities, this roll is made at Disadvantage.

EMBARRASS

> (2d6+Clever OR Cool vs Cool. Single target)

Fluster someone with a jibe, joke at their expense, dressing-down, and so on. They will lose their cool, becoming unable to perform social actions until they make a successful Cool save vs embarrassment. Anyone may instantly overcome this status by becoming visibly and audibly angry, but they risk the Mood lowering against them—though bystanders entertained by them may take their side.

This action generally cannot be taken in a **Friendly** Mood, since joking around is expected and accepted—unless you are particularly nasty, in which case you risk lowering the Mood by doing it. Making someone lose their cool in a **Hostile** setting may make them attack you, which could be to your advantage!

THREATEN

> (2d6+Clever OR Cool vs Cool. Single target)

Either overtly or subtly suggest that something the target cares about is under threat unless they cooperate. This can generally only be done by having some form of leverage against the target, whether this is compromising information or by being their (shitty) boss. If another opponent already has leverage over the target, they defend instead. If your leverage is fake, the target has to believe it is real.

Overt threats can't be made unless the Mood is **Hostile**: any other Mood will require subtlety or seniority. Regardless of Mood, a successful threat will make the target more compliant. An unsuccessful one will make them unfriendly or even **Hostile**.

LOWER THE MOOD

You may always lower the mood by acting like an ass deliberately.

EXAMPLE SOCIAL SCENE: THE PARTY

Mira (p. 332) and **Soyeong** (p. 333) are attending a party hosted in the Tetsuo Complex (p. 184) to gather information on their R&D division's activities. Soyeong is hoping to charm someone with access to the building's offices, while Mira is hoping to just bluff her way in.

The party's Mood is **Friendly**. If they're caught somewhere they shouldn't be, the Mood can turn **Hostile**.



MIRA

Mira just strides out of the party like she owns the place and rolls **Bullshit**, her Specialty. Security is tight, so the place's Clever Defense is +3. She rolls 9, and the defense roll is 13. Mira bumps into a guard and the mood turns **Hostile**.

```
Bullshit:  [3][3] + 2 (Cool) + 1 (Bullshit) =
           9 vs 13 (Failure).
```

She doesn't want to **Placate** him with a bribe or risk **Bullshitting** again, so she **Threatens** him. The group knows the security corporation here hires shady types, so Mira asks for (and gets) permission to spend a point of **Prep** (p. 51) to narrate a "flashback" where she studies their histories for leverage.

Mira realizes this guy is Tall Steve, an infamous member of the Terabyte Boys gang. She flashes her bounty hunter credentials and threatens to send him to jail with his brother Venti Steve. With her Bounty Hunter Specialty and +3 Clever, she rolls **11**. Tall Steve rolls **10** and decides to back off.

```
Threaten:  [5][2] + 3 (Clever) + 1 (Bounty Hunter) =
           11 vs 10 (Success).
```

SOYEONG

Meanwhile, Soyeong chooses a target: Misaki, an executive assistant who's getting tired of the corporate world.

Soyeong starts by **Charming** Misaki, hoping to get an invitation to hang out with her in her office. (She has a Charm Specialty and +3 Cool, so it's a strong opening play.) She rolls against Misaki's Cool: she gets **10**, Misaki gets **9**. They swap stories about their terrible bosses, and Misaki is Charmed.

```
Charm:     [1][5] + 3 (Cool) + 1 (Action: Charm) =
           10 vs 9 (Success).
```

Since Soyeong is only talking to Misaki, and she's Charmed, Soyeong can get her flirt on and improves the Mood to **Sexy**. She used her **Trendy Wardrobe** Asset (p. 84) to prepare for this Mood, so now she has Advantage.

Soyeong does this so she can discreetly **Interrogate** Misaki about the work she does here. With Advantage, she rolls **11**. Misaki rolls **8**, and starts telling some very interesting stories...

```
Interrogate: [2][1][6] + 3 (Cool) =
             11 vs 8 (Success).
```



STEALTH AND SECURITY

When you need to get up to a bit of circumspect skullduggery, you need stealth. Here's how to do it.

SECURITY LEVEL

A place's **Security Level** represents how hard it is to sneak through. Most places have one overall Security Level, but the GM can assign a higher one to unique challenges or raise it mid-stealth to add tension. Here are some examples:

2–3: A group of thugs, basic home security, disinterested cop.

4–5: Guard post, mall security, busy train station, average office block.

6–7: Police station with distracted officers, important office block, drones.

8–9: Police station on alert, corporate executive suite, cool laser grid.

MAINTAINING STEALTH

The most important part of any Stealth challenge is maintaining it. Rather than rolling every time your stealthy approach may possibly be broken, you roll once at the beginning of your challenge to enter Stealth and must then maintain it by managing risk.

When you first enter Stealth, you get **three chances to avoid being caught**. During a Stealth challenge, if you take any action that requires rolling dice (including further Stealth rolls) and fail, you lose one chance. If all three run out, the jig is up: you are spotted, an alarm goes off, the guard you sedated wakes up, or similar.

At the GM's discretion, certain tasks that wouldn't normally require a roll may require one in Stealth. For example, your character may normally be able to bypass simple locks without rolling, but during Stealth they'll have to roll to do it without risking their cover.

STEALTH ACTIONS

STEALTH

`> (2d6+Clever or Quick vs 5 + Security Level)`

Hiding, moving silently, and everything that comes with it. Once you start sneaking around, assume you maintain Stealth if the Security Level doesn't change. Sometimes, you might encounter a unique challenge with a higher Security Level: a guard post, a particularly well-placed camera, an open space you need to dash across, and so on. If you do, you'll have to roll again.

If you're sneaking in a group, only one person needs to roll Stealth; if they succeed, they bring everyone else along with them.

DISABLE SECURITY

`> (2d6 + Clever vs 5 + Security Level)`

Hacking cameras, sedating guards and stuffing them into closets, and anything else that could weaken security. Success temporarily lowers the Security Level by 1 on a success, by an additional 1 for every 3 by which your roll exceeds the difficulty, and by an additional 1 on a Critical.

This lasts until an alarm is raised, you move past the security measures you disabled, or you lose a chance (where applicable.) If you'd reasonably expect the deception to be uncovered when it wears off, it doesn't until you run out of chances.

COVER YOUR TRACKS

`> (2d6 + Clever or Quick vs Target Number)`

On a success, regain 1 chance during Stealth. On a Critical, regain 2. (The most you can have is 3.) The GM decides the target number based on the situation; when in doubt, use **5+Security Level**. Each subsequent use of Cover Your Tracks increases the target number by 2.

EXAMPLE STEALTH SCENE: FROB AND MANAIA

Frob[2] the android is trying to sneak through Tetsuo's offices and steal some files. With them is **Manaia**, an NPC friend of theirs, who Frob needs to ID the files. Frob is a Thief with Quick +3, a **Stealth** Generic Specialty, and an **Action: Stealth** Specialty.

2 They're not with the sample PCs on p. 328-340 because they're hidden too well.

STAGE ONE

Since this is a standard Tetsuo office block, the GM gives it **Security Level 5**. Frob needs to beat 10 to enter **Stealth**.

Frob's pretty confident they can do this, so they just roll. They manage **11** and start sneaking.

```
Stealth: [2][4] + 3 (Quick) + 1 (Stealth) + 1
         (Action: Stealth) = 11 vs 10 (Success).
```



Now that they're "in stealth," Frob doesn't have to roll again unless the Security Level changes or a unique challenge appears. Frob also has the **Smooth Criminal** Talent (p. 75), which gives +1 to all rolls as long as they're in Stealth. Finally, since only one person in a group needs to roll Stealth, Frob can just bring Manaia along for free.

On the way, they find a card-locked door. Frob tries a Simple Hack action to open it. Taking an action during stealth is risky—Frob only has three chances to fail before being caught. Luckily, the Network Level is only 9, and Frob rolls an easy **10**.

```
Simple Hack: [1][5] + 2 (Clever) + 1 (Hacking) + 1
             (Smooth Criminal) = 10 vs 9 (Success).
```



STAGE TWO

Unfortunately for Frob, the corporate cleaner **Tiger Shark** is reporting in after a successful "negotiation" with a local gang. Once he enters the scene, the Security Level jumps to **8**.

The Security Level changed, so Frob has to roll **Stealth** again—against 13 this time. Frob rolls 11, a failure. They lose a chance; if they fail twice more, they'll be caught.

```
Stealth: [4][1] + 3 (Quick) + 1 (Stealth) + 1
         (Action: Stealth) + 1 (Smooth Criminal) =
         11 vs 13 (Failure).
```

Frob attempts a **Disable Security** action to get rid of Tiger Shark before things get worse. Smooth Criminal applies, and Frob spends a point of **Prep** (p. 51) to Boost the roll too, just in case.

They roll **17**. Since they succeeded by more than 3, the Security Level drops by 2, to **6**. Frob uses their knowledge of corporate security to fake a distraction and Tiger Shark leaves. For now.

```
Disable Security: [4][3][6] + 2 (Clever) + 1
                  (Corporate Security) + 1 (Smooth
                  Criminal) = 17 vs 13 (Success).
```

HACKING THE CYLINDER

Where there's a system, there's a hacker. Hacking in *Hard Wired Island* is like being social, but you're trying to make the computer more friendly.

NETWORK LEVEL

A computer system's Network Level represents how hard it is to hack. Most have a single overall Network Level, but the GM can assign a higher one to unique challenges or raise it mid-hack to add tension. Here are some examples:

2–3: A basic home computer, unimportant office network, or public wi-fi hotspot.

4–5: Outdated transport infrastructure, private wi-fi, basic drones.

6–7: Police station network, corporate building that listens to the IT guys.

8–9: Cutting-edge drones, secret corporate network, non-vital habitat systems.

GHOSTING

The problem with hacking is that you're not meant to be doing it. Ghosting is a hacker's ability to remain unseen and undetected. Maintaining your Ghost is exactly like maintaining **Stealth** (p. 38), chances included, but you use the Ghost specialty instead of Stealth. If you're discovered, you can disconnect rapidly, but whoever caught you likely knows your rough physical location now. Hope you're fast!



NETWORK MOOD

Like social scenes, you should establish the network's Mood. This represents the kind of access you have and how actively it's trying to stop you.

ADMINISTRATOR ACCESS

The ultimate form of control. Unless it's being actively monitored by a clever AI or a person, the network is always **Friendly** and can never have its Mood lowered. Regardless of Network Level, any difficulties associated with that network (but not necessarily its drones) are 7 to you. You only need to maintain **Ghost** if someone intelligent is monitoring the network.

FRIENDLY

A Friendly network is cooperative and reasonably helpful, provided you don't try anything weird (or it doesn't notice when you do.) This can represent a public account, basic access to a private network, or a private network with bad or outdated security. `Interrogating` a **Friendly** network is always done with Advantage.

INDIFFERENT

Most networks are Indifferent. You want to ghost in and get what you need without attracting notice, try to improve the Mood to **Friendly**, or prevent it from going **Hostile**. These networks aren't actively keeping you out, tend to be unmonitored, and might not even punish you for having the wrong password several billion times, but they don't help you either.

HOSTILE

A **Hostile** network is closed and barred, actively trying to stop intruders. If you guess your password wrong three times, it becomes IT Alcatraz. It will try to learn your identity and rat you out to authorities if you drop your **Ghost**, and it will be sniffing. Such a network can become instantly **Friendly** if you somehow gain admin access, but most of the time you just want to get in and out again—fast.

BASIC

Basic is a special Mood for networks you feel aren't worth using the full hacking rules for, like simple door security or a computer with nothing particularly juicy on it. You can't move from another Mood to **Basic**; it either starts **Basic** or it isn't.

HACKING ACTIONS

All hacking Actions except **Operate** use the Hacking Specialty.

SIMPLE HACK

`> (2d6 + Clever vs 5 + Network Level)`

Use this when you want to make a Basic network do or say something it's not meant to.

SPOOF

`> (2d6 + Clever vs 5 + Network Level)`

Spoofing or bypassing a password, "confusing" a system into letting you pass, dodging robophobic security questions, and so on. It's **Bullshit**, but for computers. Failure will usually turn the network **Hostile**.

CHARM

`> (2d6 + Clever vs 5 + Network Level)`

Convince a system that you have access, create or exploit backdoors, and otherwise smooth-talk the network. **Charm** actions won't necessarily lower the Mood unless you keep trying, and aren't normally available if the system is **Hostile**. You may be able to temporarily upgrade to **Administrator Access** by succeeding on several **Charm** rolls without the network turning **Hostile**, usually as many as the **Network Level**.

INTERROGATE

`> (2d6 + Clever vs 5 + Network Level)`

Extracting information that you're not supposed to: searching, queries, sifting through data, searching folders in an email account, avoiding popup ads, not picking the first link that agrees with you.

OPERATE

`> (2d6 + Clever + Drone vs 5 + Network Level)`

Operate is used when the network is connected to objects in realspace (like a camera, turret, robotic arm, or drones) and you want to hijack them without breaking something, losing focus, or accidentally setting something else off. Some objects (like drones) may have their own **Network Level**, but generally share the Mood of the network they're connected to.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING

`> (2d6 + Cool vs Clever, Single Target)`

You can bypass an obstacle within a Network without directly hacking it by instead fishing a password or key out of a human adjacent to the network. You must have both the time to do so and access to the people involved, whether it's sharing a physical space or just emailing them malware. Someone else can attempt this action on your behalf, but you still lose a chance if they fail.

OTHER SOCIAL ACTIONS

Though hacking is treated like a social situation with a computer, there's no equivalent to **Embarrass**, **Placate**, or **Threaten**. However, if someone is obviously monitoring the system and discovers you, you can use social actions against them.

EXAMPLE HACK:
THE TETSUO JOB

While the others infiltrate the Tetsuo Complex, **Maru** (p. 331) tries to infiltrate their network. There's a party for low-ranking Tetsuo employees in a nearby hotel, and Maru has crashed it to get her hands on a Tetsuo Shard (p. 82). **Junior** (p. 329) has also arranged for one of his friends, the hacker **Mai**, to back her up just in case.



CHARMING

Since this is a standard Tetsuo office block, the GM gives it **Network Level 5**. Most difficulties will be **10**.

As the Network Level is 5, the GM says she can roll **Charm 5** times to get temporary admin access. This is mostly for pacing purposes—the GM can go back and forth between Maru and the rest of the group while she does her thing.

Maru doesn't take any chances. She spends a **Prep** to activate her **Ghost Protocols** Program (p. 85), giving her an extra chance and Boosting her first roll. Then she tries to **Charm** its Mood up from **Indifferent** to **Friendly**. Thanks to the Boost and her Hacking Specialty (improved by her cyber-eyes), she rolls a **14**. The Tetsuo network assumes she's a regular user. In four more Charm rolls, she can do even better...

```
Charm: [5][1][3] + 3 (Clever) + 1
       (Antisocial) + 2 (Hacking) =
       15 vs 10 (Success).
```

COVERUP

As the group infiltrates the party, Maru makes a few more **Charm** rolls. They don't go so well: she gets a few successes, but she also loses three chances. She has one left.

Maru decides to do something about that next. Maintaining her **Ghost** works like **Stealth**, so she can use the **Cover Your Tracks** action to get some chances back. The GM sets the difficulty for that at **10** too.

Maru has a Ghosting Specialty, so she uses that. She manages to scrape through with an **11**—and it's a **Critical**, so she gets two chances back. She can try again later if she likes, but next time the difficulty will rise to 12.

```
Charm: [3][3] + 3 (Clever) + 1 Antisocial + 1
       (Ghosting) = 10 vs 10 (Success).
```



INTERROGATE

Now that Maru has access, Junior's player is a bit curious about what's there. When it's his turn to do something, he decides to **Interrogate**.

Junior has no hacking experience and +0 Clever, but he does have Mai written down as part of his **Contacts** Talent (p. 62), which means he can use her as a +1 Hacking Specialty a few times a session. Also, now that the network's Mood is Friendly, Junior can roll Interrogate at Advantage. He asks Maru first since it's her hack; she allows it.

"Mai" rolls **Interrogate**. With her hacking skills and Junior's Advantage, they scrape through with a **10**. Junior asks a couple of questions he thinks Tetsuo might have the answers to, and Mai sifts through Tetsuo folders to get him some answers.

```
Interrogate: [4][2][5] + 0 (Clever) + 1
             (Hacking) = 10 vs 10 (Success).
```





HELPING HAND

Maru can still get administrator access with one success, but she could use a hand. By now Soyeong has established a rapport with Misaki (p. 37), so she decides to help.

Maru's last hacking roll was a Critical success, so she'll get Advantage on her next roll. Soyeong knows that Misaki has a **secure card** (p. 82); with that, Maru can turn her Advantage into a Boost.

Soyeong tries to get Misaki to move the conversation somewhere more private (her office), where she can borrow the card. This counts as a **Social Engineering** action.

It's a highly secure building, but Misaki has been receptive to Soyeong so far, so the GM sets the difficulty at **10**. Soyeong rolls a **12**, and soon Maru has another connection to the network. Admin access is within her reach...

```
Social Engineering: [5][4] + 3 (Cool) =
                    12 vs 10 (Success).
```

GETTING INTO FIGHTS

When other options fail, or when you just really want to roundhouse a bad guy through some convenient sheet glass, this section is where you go. **Combat always uses Initiative.**

THE ARENA

The Arena defines the area around the fight, how it affects Actions, and what outside problems the combatants face. It's possible for a fight to "migrate" between Arenas, such as when a bad guy is kicked through an office window into a factory.

Instead of a Mood, Arenas have **Tags**. They can have multiple Tags at once, and Tags can be added, substituted, or subtracted on the fly.

Conspicuous: Will attract police or security attention if guns are used. Examples include public spaces like streets, storefronts, and public libraries.

Close Quarters: Guns are Disadvantaged against melee. Used for narrow places like hallways, and cover-dense environments like forests or full warehouses.

Hazardous: The area is riddled with environmental hazards, such as exposed electrical wires, fire, swinging ballast, unsafe railings, and so on. Actions that use the environment against the opponent may have Advantage.

Distracting: Noise, falling water, darkness, bright lights. Escape is easier, as is stealth; ranged combat is Disadvantaged. Examples include an office with an active sprinkler system, heavy rain, dark tunnels, or an active automated factory.

Low Gravity: Getting to your opponent and leveraging your strength is harder. Melee combat is Disadvantaged, as is movement unless you can justify being used to low gravity. In Grand Cross, this mostly applies to the station's central axis and the void of space.

Bad Footing: Underbrush, tangles of wires, ice, narrow bridges and similar things that make movement arduous (and at Disadvantage).

Vacuum: Unless you're a spaceworthy android, you must be wearing a space suit to survive. Exposed characters will die very soon.

ATTACK ROLLS

When an Action tells you to make an attack, roll:

`> (2d6 + Quick or Tough vs Quick or Tough)`

You choose which Ability to use before rolling, and the target chooses which Defense they use. Add any relevant Specialties or bonuses from items.

You may only make an attack roll as part of an Attack Action; you can't "just attack."

ATTACK ACTIONS

Attack Actions always come in two parts: making an attack roll and doing something else. **If Advantage or Disadvantage apply**, they apply to every roll made as part of the Attack Action.

Ranged attacks may only be made using weapons with the Ranged tag (p. 88), while Melee attacks may only be made using your body or weapons with the Melee tag (p. 88). You may only attack one target unless the Action states otherwise.

If one part of the Attack Action can't happen—for example, if you `Take Cover` but don't have a ranged weapon, don't want to shoot, or have no cover to hide behind—you can still use the other part of the Action. **If the Action involves a save against your attack roll and you didn't roll,** the difficulty is 10.

You can't use the same Attack Action twice in a row. When you use one, it's considered **inactive** until you make a different one.

NEW ATTACKS

When a player wants to do something not covered by these Attack Actions, you can make one up. All you have to do is decide if it involves a Melee or Ranged attack, then decide the effect.

- **If it requires a save immediately**, choose an appropriate Ability. Difficulty is equal to the attack roll.
- **If it requires a save later**, such as the beginning of their next turn, its Difficulty is 10 + one of the attacker's abilities.
- **If it's especially difficult to shake off**, the save is an action that also allows a ranged or melee attack.

Like other Attack Actions, these become inactive until you use another one. If it's an especially situational Attack Action, it may remain Inactive for the rest of the fight, or only apply to this fight.

TAKE COVER

You may **make a Ranged attack**, then dive for cover. Ranged attacks made against you are at Disadvantage until the beginning of your next turn.

DISTRACT

You may **make a Melee or Ranged attack**, then describe using some element of the environment to distract your target (e.g. throwing office supplies, activating a sprinkler system, setting off a fire extinguisher, or using a smoke bomb).

Affected targets must make a **Cool save vs your attack roll** or become **Distracted** until the beginning of your next turn. **Allies attacking Distracted foes gain Advantage.** If the element you use could affect multiple people, they all make a save, even if your attack doesn't target them.

FLUSH OUT

You may **make a Ranged attack**. If the weapon you're using is an automatic firearm, affects an area, or easily penetrates the cover your target is hiding behind, you then force the target to move from its current position after resolving the effects of your attack.

GRAB

You may **make a Melee attack**, then grab the target.

- If you and the target are of **roughly equal size**, you both become **Grappled**. A Grappled character may only use Melee attacks against targets they're Grappled with and get Disadvantage on ranged attacks against others. (You may make a "melee" attack with a small held weapon like a pistol.)
- If the target you're fighting is **much smaller than you**, only it becomes **Grappled**.
- If the target is **much larger than you**, neither of you become Grappled; instead, you climb onto it. While you're on it, its Melee attacks against you and its Ranged attacks against others have Disadvantage. Melee attacks made against a target you're climbing on gain Advantage.

As an action, targets can make a Melee or Ranged attack and try to end the grapple or climb with a **Tough save vs 10 + your Tough**.

HUNKER DOWN

`> If Take Cover is inactive, you may Hunker Down.`

All Ranged attacks made against you roll one fewer die than normal until the beginning of your next turn. If your cover is particularly hard, such as cement or metal, you may also mitigate all incoming damage by one additional step so long as it applies. (A grenade thrown over a wall at your feet still hurts.)

This attack becomes inactive only when your cover is destroyed or otherwise becomes useless, such as when you become flanked.

PIN DOWN

You may **make a Ranged attack**, then pin your target down until the beginning of your next turn. If that target takes any action that doesn't involve getting into or staying in cover (including moving, if they're not moving into cover), you may make an additional ranged attack against it.

RUN AWAY

You flee the scene. If you're in attack range of any opponents, you must roll **2d6 + Quick vs 7 + number of opponents**. If you fail, they all get to make a free attack against you; if any of them hit and deal damage, you don't flee, even if it's mitigated to 0. If you succeed, you're out.

RUSH

You **may make a Melee or Ranged attack**, then rush at your target. They must make a **Tough save vs your attack roll** or suffer one of the following consequences (your choice):

- You bull rush them, pushing them back—through glass, furniture, or other people as necessary—so long as they're roughly your size or smaller. You choose whether you move with the target.
- You knock the target over, so long as they're roughly your size or smaller. **Melee attacks against the target have Advantage** until the beginning of their next turn; **Ranged attacks against them have Disadvantage**.
- You grab the target. See the `Grab` attack for details.

FIGHT TIPS

SIMPLE OPPONENTS

If opponents are unimportant or there's a lot of them, the GM may skip choosing **Attack Actions** for each one of them. Instead, simply describe the type of attack they're making, then one additional thing they do (if anything.) Don't bother tracking which Actions are inactive. Foes don't need to be more complicated than necessary.

MAKE ACTIONS MAKE SENSE

The ongoing story and what you've established in it is the most important thing. When you make an **Attack Action**, describe how you do it. If it makes use of the environment, describe how. You're not just Distracting them; you're activating a sprinkler system or emptying the contents of a shelf onto them.

If the scene as described wouldn't allow something to happen, it doesn't. If you've established that you're kickboxing someone in the middle of a road and there's nothing to take cover behind, you can't `Take Cover`.

If details haven't been established, you can add some. If you're in "an office" but haven't described everything in it, you can add details like desks to duck behind, staplers and hole punchers to attack with, and monitors to throw. So long as it's consistent with what you've already described, it's fine.

OTHER ACTIONS

While **Attack Actions** can only be used during combat, you can still use other types of actions (like **Social Actions**) in the middle of a fight if you have a reason. Other types of Actions do not become inactive during combat, so you can keep using them. However, for the purposes of **Social Actions**, the Mood is always considered **Hostile**.

DAMAGE AND HARM

Sometimes your character will suffer injuries. It happens. Let's go into how.

DAMAGE TRACK

Each character has a **damage track** that describes the kinds of injuries they can take before they're incapacitated:

☐	1	**Minor Injury**	No effect
☐	2	**Minor Injury**	No effect
☐	3	**Harm**	-1 to all rolls
☐	4	**Harm**	-1 to all rolls
☐	5	**Serious Harm**	-1 die to all rolls
6		**Incapacitated**	Out of action

When you take damage, you'll mark one of these boxes. If you're told to mark a box that's already marked, mark the next highest unmarked box instead.

You should also write down what it means in the story. A minor injury can be something like a bruise or shaken morale, while more serious damage can be broken bones, damaged cyberware, or something else that takes a while to recover from.

Until the injury is resolved in some way, you suffer its listed effects. **Minor Injuries** have no additional effect. **Harm** gives a penalty of -1 to all your rolls. **Serious Harm** makes you roll one fewer die on all rolls. These effects are cumulative: if you mark boxes 3 and 4 your total penalty is -2, and if you also mark box 5 you use one fewer die as well.

TAKING DAMAGE

Most of the time if you're hit by an attack, you mark box 1. Attack rolls that beat your defense by 3 or more cause you to mark higher boxes:

Attack vs Defense	Mark box...
Succeeds by 3+	2
Succeeds by 6+	3
Succeeds by 9+	4
Succeeds by 12+	5
Succeeds by 15+	6

INCAPACITATED

When you mark box 6, you're taken out of the fight—you're knocked out, or you're stunned for the remainder of the conflict, or you're trapped under debris, or something equally applicable.

If you have to mark box 6 again, you risk death. Your character must be rescued, resuscitated, or otherwise stabilized within one minute (or 3 Rounds if you're using Initiative). If not, they die or get permanently removed from the story if your GM is feeling generous. Either way, make a new character.

If they can't be stabilized, first aid can extend this grace period for up to twenty minutes. If the character attempting first aid has a relevant Specialty, no roll is required; otherwise, roll `2d6 + Cool or Clever vs 10`.

MITIGATING DAMAGE

If you have **Prep** (p. 50), you can spend it when you suffer damage to reduce it, one-to-one. For example, if you would normally mark box 3, you can spend a Prep to mark box 2 (even if box 3 is already marked). If you spend 2 Prep, you can mark box 1 instead.

Having **Armor** (p. 84) can also reduce incoming damage. You don't have to spend anything, but there are some situations (like the critical effects of certain weapons) where armor doesn't work at all.

Reducing damage always happens before you mark a box. If this would cause you to mark a box that's already marked, you still mark the next highest box as normal. If you downgrade to 0, you suffer no damage at all.

OTHER EFFECTS

Some attacks may have additional effects on you if they do any damage at all. For example, a tranquilizer dart that makes you mark box 1 may also make you sluggish and unresponsive, forcing Disadvantage on all your rolls until you save against it. When an attack inflicts such an effect, note down the box you marked. When that box is recovered, the effect immediately ends if it hasn't already.

RECOVERY

Your damage track clears over time.

Minor Injuries are automatically cleared after the scene you received them the moment you can take a breather.

Harm can be recovered though player action, whether it's first aid, medication, or something else that fits the story. It should take longer than a minor injury, and in some cases you may still need to rest for a few days. Some Occupations and items allow you to recover Harm and may have associated rolls; in other cases where a roll feels appropriate, use `2d6 + Clever vs 10 + Box`.

Serious Harm is hard to recover from during a mission. The character needs serious medical attention, and days or even weeks of rest.

If you're **Incapacitated**, it clears up like a minor injury. You might need help getting back on your feet, but you'll shake it off.

PERMANENT INJURIES

If you're Incapacitated but you *really* need to act, **you may opt to have your character suffer a permanent injury and immediately clear box 6**. This should be something serious that makes sense in the story, like a lost eye, ruined cyberware, or serious trauma.

While you suffer this injury, the GM should impose story-appropriate penalties—a missing eye may make ranged attacks harder, for example. The only way to recover from these injuries is to purchase a cybernetic replacement (or get serious repairs if it was already chrome.)

THE PROBLEM WITH COMBAT

Ultimately, rules for getting into fights are also rules for attempting murder. Even if you don't intend to *yet*, it's possible that somewhere in your future is a guy with hopes and dreams and a chance to turn his life around whose decades-long story will come to an end on your blade. The option is on the table.

The rules for combat actions are placed after the other actions because they're meant to be a tool of last resort. They're what you use when you can't talk to, hack, or avoid your problems. People who try violence first tend to be messed up or, worse, policemen.

But violence is still on the table. Sometimes it's in self-defense. Sometimes, the possibility of violence is enough—some people are much more willing to accept non-violent solutions when Plan B is looming in the background. Sometimes you just want to have a cool action scene. That's okay.

Don't be afraid to fight if you need to. Just be sure you explore all the options.

EXAMPLE FIGHT: TIGER SHARK

Once the group gets the data, it's time to leave—but that won't be easy. First, **Mira** (p. 332) is accosted on the way out by security guard Tall Steve, who didn't appreciate her threatening him earlier. Second, the corporate cleaner Tiger Shark catches **Lee** (p. 328) and **Zander** (p. 334) helping the others escape via the rooftop.

The mood is **Hostile**, obviously.



MIRA

Mira's fight is relatively simple. The Arena is one of the building's back exits. The tags (p. 44) are **Conspicuous** (firearms will attract attention) and **MMA** (firearms have Disadvantage against melee). Tall Steve is a simple opponent (p. 332): **level 2** with **2 Health**.

Since the Arena is Conspicuous, Mira decides to use her Close-Quarters Combat Specialty to kick Tall Steve into submission. Attacks are always made as part of another Action, so she chooses to **Rush** him (if she can knock him down, her next attack could have Advantage.)

First is her attack roll. Mira rolls **10**: Tall Steve's defense is 2+5=**7**, so she deals two points of damage, one for beating his defense and another for beating it by at least 3. Mira kicks Tall Steve so hard that he immediately gives in rather than pursue her.

```
Rush Attack:  [4][2] + 3 (Tough) + 1 (Close-
              Quarters Combat) =
              10 vs 7 (Success).
```

TIGER SHARK

Meanwhile, Lee and Zander are fighting Tiger Shark. The group opted to use solid state initiative (p. 34), so Tiger Shark goes first, then the PCs move in any order.

Tiger Shark doesn't like fancy maneuvers as much as he likes murdering people, so he simply **Rushes** Zander. Since he's outnumbered two-to-one, his **Badass** Talent (p. 72) gives him a bonus on top of his already high stats. He makes a Quick attack and rolls **14**, against Zander's Quick Defense of **10**. Since Tiger Shark succeeded by 3+, Zander marks box 2. Luckily, it's only a minor injury.

Since it's a **Rush** attack and Zander's still standing, he must make a Tough save against Tiger Shark's roll of 14. Zander's Tough is 0, so he cannot do this without spending Prep to Boost the roll, and even then it's unlikely. Zander chooses to fail instead, and Tiger Shark pushes him to the edge of the roof.

```
Rush Attack: [6][1] + 3 (Quick) + 3 (Blades) +
             1 (Badass) = 14 vs 10 (Success).
```



ZANDER

Now it's Zander's turn, and he has flashbangs (p. 89). They cost a point of Prep each time he uses them, but he's been saving Prep for this.

He chooses to **Distract** Tiger Shark with one. He's got high defenses, so Zander even spends another Prep to Boost the roll. He makes a Quick attack and rolls **13**; Tiger Shark uses his Quick Defense of **13**, so it barely connects.

Instead of taking damage, Tiger Shark must make a Quick save vs the attack roll. If he fails, he becomes Distracted (giving his attacks Disadvantage) until he can make a Cool save. Since he has zero Cool, he decides to avoid this by using his Impulsive Trait (p. 28) to Boost the roll. He rolls **15**, a success.

Speaking of Cool, however, the **Distract** action means he must also make a Cool save vs Zander's attack roll or become Distracted, giving Zander's allies Advantage to attacking him. With zero Cool against Zander's 13, he has no choice but failure. The tables have turned.

This move cost Zander all his remaining Prep, but it was worth it!



```
Distract Attack: [2][5][3] + 2 (Quick) + 1
                 (Grenades) =
                 13 vs 10 (Success).

Quick Save: [3][5][4] + 3 (Quick) =
            15 vs 13 (Success).
```



LEE

Lee decides to turn the tables again and **Rush** Tiger Shark right back.

He makes a Quick attack. He has Advantage thanks to Zander, a good Quick, and a nice Martial Arts Specialty, so he rolls a **13**. That's enough to connect with Tiger Shark's Quick Defense, so Lee lands a hit.

Now, Tiger Shark must make a Tough save vs his attack roll. With a Tough of +2 it's possible, so he gives it a try. He rolls **12**, a failure.

Lee can now push Tiger Shark back or knock him over. He knocks Tiger Shark over. Melee attacks against him have Advantage now, and combined with **Distract**, that's double Advantage. (Knocking him over grants Disadvantage to Ranged attacks, though, which cancels out Distract's Advantage.)

Lee and Zander want to escape Tiger Shark, so on their next turn, they're going to use the **Run Away** action. Since Tiger Shark is on the floor with flash blindness, they'll probably make it.

```
Rush Attack: [1][5][3] + 3 (Quick) + 2 (Martial
             Arts) = 13 vs 12 (Success).

Tough save:  [4][6] + 2 (Tough) =
             12 vs 13 (Success).
```

RUNNING MISSIONS

A **mission** is any organized activity where the group works together to achieve a major goal: infiltrating a corporate building to gather incriminating evidence, dismantling a criminal operation, completing a university group project, and so on.

In a typical game, most sessions will focus on one mission with some free play before and after. Not everything has to be a mission, and not every session needs a mission. It's only a mission if the group decides it is; otherwise, just play it out normally.

PREP

The main benefit of missions is that you can prepare for them. In the days beforehand, characters gather equipment, research, recruit friends, find their focus, take the first steps of an investigation, or do whatever else they think will help them get ready.

These actions are represented with **Prep**. Prep rolls create a pool of Prep points that are spent during the mission to help accomplish goals or mitigate problems.

There are **two types** of Prep: personal Prep and group Prep. These are rolled for, tracked, and spent separately. **Any unused Prep is discarded at the end of a mission,** no matter what.

PERSONAL PREP

`> 2d6 + Ability + Specialty vs 7`

When you roll for personal Prep, describe in broad terms what your character is doing to prepare themselves for the mission. Choose a relevant Ability and Specialty. Then:

- **If this is your first Prep roll of this mission,** add one Prep to your character's personal pool.
- **For every 3 points you beat the Difficulty by,** add one additional Prep.

This Action takes roughly **1 day**. If you have more time, the difficulty increases by 2 for every personal Prep roll you make this mission. You cannot apply the same Specialty twice, though you can apply a Specialty someone else used already.

GROUP PREP

`> 2d6 + Ability + Specialty vs 7`

When you roll for group Prep, describe what your character is doing to prepare the group for the mission. Choose a relevant Ability and Specialty. Then:

- **On a success,** add one Prep to the group pool.
- **For every 3 points over 7,** add an additional Prep.
- **On a failure,** add no Prep.

This Action takes roughly **one week**. If you have more time, the Difficulty increases by 2 for every group Prep roll you make this mission. Once a Specialty is applied to a group Prep roll, it cannot be applied to any other group Prep roll this mission. You can apply a Specialty you already used for a personal Prep roll, and vice versa.

ACQUIRING ASSETS

If you want to pick up extra Assets for a mission, you can use this Action instead of rolling for personal Prep. You can buy the Asset for yourself or an ally.

ACQUIRE ASSET

`> 2d6 + Cool + Specialty vs 7`

Choose an Asset from the Assets section (p. 79). The **Restricted** tag increases Difficulty by 3 unless you have a relevant License Asset, and the **Illegal** tag increases it by 6.

For every 3 points you beat the Difficulty by, reduce the Asset's Price by 1. The minimum is 1. If you pay the final Price in Cash, you get the Asset permanently. If you can't, you may have to negotiate with the seller for a favor.

Sometimes, you may be able to pay 1 Cash to **rent** the Asset. If you don't return it in decent condition after the mission, you must pay the full Price or face the consequences: increase Burden by 1 if the Asset was legal—or make some enemies if it wasn't.

If you fail, you may not attempt to acquire the same Asset again until the next session. If it's Restricted or Illegal, you may alert the authorities or someone else you'd rather not.

SPENDING PREP

Here's what you can spend Prep on. If you're spending it on a dice roll, spend before rolling.

ACTIVATE ITEMS

Some Assets like software packages, flashbangs, and medical supplies are activated by spending Prep. When you run out of Prep, you run out of the Asset. Details are listed in the Asset's description.

BOOST DEFENSE

Add a Generic Specialty to your Defense one time. You'll have to justify it: a character with the Fighting Specialty could use it to intercept an attack, someone in a packed warehouse could use Stealth to run and hide, and so on.

BOOST A ROLL

Boost any one roll. You may do this once per roll.

IGNORE DAMAGE

For one Action, you may ignore the effects of all your marked damage boxes.

NEGATE DISADVANTAGE

You may remove one source of Disadvantage from one roll. You can remove as many sources as you like if you have the Prep.

REDUCE DAMAGE

You can spend Prep one-to-one to reduce damage taken by one step on the damage track (p. 46).

FLASHBACK

You can narrate a "flashback" to an earlier point in time which explains how you prepared for a specific moment, so long as it fits the established story. This can range from having paid off a side character who has no particular reason to hate you to having hidden a weapon in a maintenance tunnel. **You can do this once per Mission.**

Prep may be spent in any combination you like. For example, you could spend 2 Prep to Boost a roll and Negate Disadvantage, or use a Flashback to explain how you got an item somewhere you shouldn't have and then Activate it.

Unless stated otherwise, group and personal Prep can be spent in the same way. Group Prep represents the group's efforts to help each other, so you should check with the group before spending it. **Any Prep remaining at the end of a mission is lost.**

EXAMPLE PREP:
BEFORE THE PARTY

Junior (p. 329) and **Maru** (p. 331) are planning to sneak into the Tetsuo Complex in search of incriminating data. In **eight days**, Tetsuo is hosting a launch event for some app there, which they can use as cover. That gives them enough time for one group Prep roll and one personal Prep roll each. All Prep rolls are made against **Difficulty 7**.



MARU

Because you can use the same Specialty for group and personal Prep, Maru uses **Hacking** for both.

Group Prep first. Maru breaks into a Tetsuo work apartment complex's network, knowing the residents will attend. She uses **Clever** and rolls **11**. She gets 1 Prep for a success, 1 for succeeding by more than 3, and 1 more from her **Overprepared** trait (p. 29), for a total of **3 group Prep**. Maru scrapes a lot of useful info from Tetsuo emails.

```
Group:    [1][6] + 3 (Clever) + 1 (Hacking) = 11.
```

Next is personal Prep. Maru tries to find exploits in the Complex's systems. Since she's focused on avoiding discovery over being clever, she rolls **Quick** and gets **13**. She gets 1 Prep no matter what, but she also beat the difficulty by 6, so she adds another 2 Prep for a total of **3 personal Prep**. She'll be ready for sure.

```
Personal: [5][5] + 2 (Quick) + 1 (Hacking) = 13.
```

JUNIOR

Junior prefers to mix things up. For his group Prep, he uses his **Journalism** skills (and **Cool**, of course) to pump his contacts for info. Sadly, he rolls **6**. Failures on group Prep rolls add nothing—his contacts are either clueless or scared of Tetsuo.

```
Group: [2][1] + 2 (Cool) + 1 (Journalism) = 6.
```

But there's always Personal Prep. In a past mission, Junior befriended Emi, a security guard in the Complex. She might help in exchange for a bribe, so Junior tries his **Wheeling and Dealing** Specialty (and **Cool** again—no limits on Abilities.) This time he rolls a **9**. Still not great, but he gets **1 Prep** no matter what. Emi will help, but since it's personal Prep, she only trusts Junior.

```
Personal: [5][5] + 2 (Cool) + 1 (Wheeling and
          Dealing) = 9.
```



MANAGING MONEY

Grand Cross might be powered by solar panels and conductive thermal plates in the hull, but money is what really makes it go ‘round.

Though 2020 lies in the distant future, humanity is still held back by a capitalist system. Wealth is either invisible or all-consuming. If you have it, you don’t worry about it; if you don’t have it, it can eat away at your mind.

In *Hard Wired Island*, you don't track exactly how much money your character has. Instead, you track their **Cash** and their **Burden**: how much they can spend and how much they can't.

BURDEN

Your **Burden** represents your socio-economic status. It's a rough indicator of how comfortably you can live, how many services you can subscribe to, and how well you're getting by.

Burdens are ranked from **0** to **4**. The default is 1.

BURDEN RANKS

At **0**, you're **comfortable**. You don’t go hungry. You can afford a nice apartment. You can pay most bills, and you can handle emergencies. You can make time for education, training, and hobbies without feeling guilty or pressured to work. You're not wealthy, but you're doing fine.

At **1**, you're **getting by**. You're slowly building up some savings, but mostly you live from paycheck to paycheck. Though you're vulnerable to economic shocks, you can keep up with rent and you don't normally go hungry. You can afford a few subscription services and enough luxuries to feel content.

At **2**, you're **precarious**. You're dealing with an underpaid job, predatory loans, or the fallout of an emergency. You've probably gotten good at cooking with kelp and rice, which you buy in bulk. You can barely afford entertainment, but you'll feel guilty about it. You spend a lot of time worrying about bills—a single shock can bring you close to ruin.



At **3**, you're **struggling**. Most of your money goes into rent and food, and some days you have to choose. You spend a lot of time stressing about your future. You probably don't have much walking-around money, let alone savings. You probably rely on financial aid, though that's increasingly rare as Unity believes poverty is caused by personal failings and bad genes.

At **4**, you're **destitute**. You can only barely afford food. You probably sleep in a car, on a friend's couch, or in the basements. It's almost impossible to keep up appearances, and when you don't, otherwise normal people will sneer at you in the street. You spend most of your waking hours just trying to survive and rarely have enough time for anything else.

SHARING THE BURDEN

One way that characters can lessen their Burden is by pooling their resources and living together, supporting each other as needed. On Grand Cross, this usually means sharing an apartment and splitting rent.

If two or more characters with different Burdens live together, find their **effective** (or average) **Burden** by adding their Burdens together, dividing by the number of characters, and rounding down. When a character adds their Burden score to a roll, use their effective Burden.

If two or more characters with the same Burden live together, treat their Burden scores as 1 lower (to a minimum of 0).

If one character in a shared living space suffers an **Economic Shock** (see below), every character they live with suffers one too. They decide what happens as a group but suffer the effects individually.

For example: Soyeong and Maru rent an apartment together. They both have Burden 2, but by sharing living space, daily tasks, and expenses, their Burden is treated as 1.

Junior and Lee share an apartment. Junior has Burden 3, while Lee has Burden 2. Their average Burden is (3+2)/2 = 2.5, which rounds down to Burden 2. Junior's effective Burden is 2; Lee's was already 2, so it doesn't change.

Later, Soyeong and Maru meet the homeless Vicky and let her stay on their couch until she gets on her feet. Vicky has Burden 4. Now that there's three of them with different Burdens, they need their effective Burden: (2+2+4)/3 = 2.6, which rounds down to 2. By using their regular Burdens for a while, Soyeong and Maru let Vicky treat her Burden as 2.

ECONOMIC SHOCKS

The capitalist system of Grand Cross is designed to trap people in poverty so the ruling classes can exploit them. There's little upward mobility, but it's easy for emergencies, sudden bills, or the station's shifting economic situation to knock you further down.

Before every mission, if your Burden is above 0, you must roll `2d6 + your Burden`. If you roll **13 or more**, you suffer an **economic shock**: a delayed paycheck, rising rent, an unforeseen emergency, a theft, or just general hard times.

Choose one of the following consequences. If your roll was **15 or more**, choose two. If you can't decide, the GM may decide for you.

- You get kicked out of your current living space and must find a new one.
- You lose an Asset permanently (your choice.)
- You have to skip meals/recharging. Mark your first damage box; you can't recover it until after your next mission.
- One cybernetic augment stops functioning properly until the next session. It still works, but bonus Specialties and anything beyond normal human function does not.
- Your Burdens exhaust your mental energy. You suffer Disadvantage on all Clever rolls until after your next mission.
- Your Burdens make it hard to be social. You suffer Disadvantage on all Cool rolls until after your next mission.
- You lose the benefits of one of your Traits until after your next mission (but still suffer the downsides.)

At the GM's discretion, the group may roll for economic shock again after especially long downtimes or major story events. Use this sparingly; it's not interesting if it keeps happening.

GRAND CROSS UPHEAVAL

The distant future of 2020 is an uncertain one. As the political and economic landscape shifts, it's possible the station will fall on hard times. And when the money stops flowing, it's always the rich that get bailed out first.

As a story event, if (or when) the station suffers widespread social upheaval, economic downturn, or a major disaster, the GM may increase the entire group's Burden by 1. If extraordinary action from the group helps weather such a disaster, or a wealthy or influential ally ensures their economic stability, the group's Burdens may be restored to their previous state; if not, this change is permanent. Chasing wealth is a vicious cycle.

Upheaval should be used sparingly. It's best used as a major event in a story arc, when you want to make a mission special, or when the group seriously messed up during the last mission. Again, it's not interesting if it keeps happening.

CYBERNETIC BURDEN

In the future, there's an entirely new form of economic oppression: augmentation.

Whether you were augmented to stay competitive at work or for healthcare reasons, it's often easier to get new installations subsidized than maintain current ones. Once your company drops you, or your insurance company decides you don't need another arm, you're usually saddled with the costs of maintaining your own cybernetics even when they're irreversible. In short, cybernetic augments increase your Burden.

At negative Burden, you don't worry about it. You can be as enhanced as you want, and many augments basically pay for themselves.

At Burden 0 or above, each additional Augment increases your Burden by 1.

Some character options can mitigate this cost—for example, the Builder Origin means one Augment is already paid for. They may have dumped you on the street once you stopped being useful, but at least they're paying for that leg.

This doesn't apply to cosmetic or medical augmentations. If you get a set of cat ears, or an arm that works exactly like a regular arm, it doesn't increase your Burden enough to matter. See p. 91 for more.

CASH

Cash is a temporary resource earned during play. While Burden represents your broad status, Cash represents in-game rewards, loot stolen during a mission, favors owed, pocket change money from your grandma, and other short-term gains.

USING CASH

Outside a mission, you can spend 1 Cash to Boost a roll. This includes Prep rolls. During a mission you can't leverage your Cash like this and must use Prep instead.

You can spend Cash to acquire Assets (p. 50). In some cases, you may be able to negotiate a better price beforehand, or just rent the Asset.

You can spend Cash to mitigate economic shock. After you roll for economic shock, you can spend Cash to reduce the result one-to-one.

You can spend Cash to reduce your Burden. If you pay **(10 - your Burden)** in Cash, you may *permanently* reduce your Burden by 1, to a minimum of 0.

STORING CASH

There is no upper limit to how much Cash you can have, but as it represents temporary gains, it's a volatile resource.

If you have unspent Cash at the end of a session, roll 1d6. You lose that much Cash. This represents unexpected expenses, cybernetic maintenance, old bills, gambling losses, or other short-term losses.

You may give Cash to other characters to boost rolls, make purchases, mitigate economic shock, or reduce Burden. However, **Cash given to other characters must be spent immediately.** You can't all dump your Cash on one person at the end of a session to mitigate your losses (you can reduce someone's Burden so it doesn't go to waste, however.)

GIG WORK APPS

The digitization of society has led to the rise of the gig economy, an incredibly flexible system in which workers use online platforms to provide services and the people who own those platforms exploit them.

A typical gig app seeks to "disrupt" an existing industry by offering similar services at much lower prices, achieved by not giving their workers the pay and benefits they're entitled to. To get around labor laws, workers are usually called "independent contractors" or "entrepreneurs".

Many Crossers supplement their income by doing a little side work through an app. Their popularity has exploded in the last few years, as the housing crisis, the Disaster, and the steady erosion of labor rights has provided a ready supply of poor workers desperate to stay afloat.

There are several gig economy apps PCs can use. Each has one Cash-related benefit and one drawback—you can make short-term gains, but they won't help much in the long run.

USING APPS

You can choose to use a gig app at any time. This is optional—you don't have to if you don't want the drawbacks.

You can only use one app at a time. If you quit, you still suffer that app's drawback for that session and the next (if applicable). You can switch to a different app, but you can't return to an app you quit for at least a few in-game months.

HEADPATTR

Headpattr is a maid service. Anyone with the cash can hire maids of any gender presentation on an hourly basis to clean apartments, run errands, and perform just about any other purpose agreed on by both parties. The app's gimmick is that the maids wear cat ear headbands.

Headpattr began as a maid café's April Fool's gimmick, before both the café and the app were bought out. Today the app is big enough that a Headpattr anime is due to come out sometime in 2022.

Business Model: This service uses the standard freelancer model with a few modifications owing to the difficult-to-quantify nature of social work.

Workers sign up for particular "tiers" of work, each encompassing different types of task and rates of pay. Once they've joined, they're assigned jobs based on proximity, reviews, and feedback on clients from other contractors.

The tier system is broad and complicated enough that Headpattr offers workers the option to turn down jobs at their discretion, though doing it repeatedly tends to result in an automated drop from the service. Exceptionally well-reviewed maids (generally ones with a strong online presence) might be offered affiliate status, becoming part of Headpattr's marketing campaigns and getting higher rates for it.

Clients: The kind of people you'd expect to pay money for cat maids: rich weeaboos. As the idea of a maid app became more mainstream though, the client base diversified somewhat. From babysitters to waiters at your office function to watching your child's dance recital—put any kind of emotional labor in cat ears and someone will want it.

If a client tries to harm a maid, Headpattr is willing to send in private security, initiate legal action, and even ban them from the platform. They have an IP to protect now, you see.

Culture: Workers approach Headpattr in many ways. Business-savvy maids try to draw the company's attention with high-end peripherals like cat ear headsets and GPS chokers. A burgeoning contingent of trans folk have grabbed the chance to showcase GNC fashion and culture on a mainstream stage in collaboration with indie artists and designers, capitalizing on Headpattr's huge social following.

By and large, though, most folks tend to view it as a menial, frequently demeaning job that'll let them scrape together enough to pay the bills.

Use: Using Headpattr gives you +1 Cash at the beginning of every session unless you suffered Economic Shock. If you roll a critical on your Economic Shock—succeed or fail—gain an additional +1 Cash.

Workers don't get benefits and suffer overhead on app fees and uniforms. Reducing your Burden costs (12 - your Burden) Cash instead.

HUNTR

There are a lot of criminals in space. Not just because of socio-economic pressures—people from all over Earth have managed to escape the law by heading up; all they need is the right contacts and a bit of cash. They can be extradited, but first they need to be caught.

Huntr was developed in collaboration with private security companies to get help from orbital citizens. Users can peruse the current wanted list, broker information they think might help, and even try to capture bounties if they dare.

Business Model: Bounties are submitted by the SPS and PSCS, along with their payouts. If you bring the target to a police station, you get the reward. You can also tag some users whose information was helpful, and they get a small bonus (the cops usually pressure you to tag their accounts.)

Huntr's dirty secret is that it makes most of its money through information-posting fees. On paper the fee is to discourage spam, but in practice it just monetizes it. The ideal Huntr user is a middle-aged white conservative who submits ten conspiracy theories a day.

Clients: Law enforcement. Originally, Huntr was only meant to cover people wanted on Earth, but the police have started quietly including anyone wanted in orbit (especially Hotel Melbourne members.) Next, they want to include suspects and protesters.

Culture: Most "bounty hunters" never actually catch anyone. It's hard to make a career out of it; the ones that do usually have a side-job or make it their brand and try to get famous.

Laws restrict what bounty hunters can do "on the job." If you use force, you must file paperwork to justify it or the cops will get you too[3]. Even then, you hear stories about wannabe cops in impractical tacti-cool gear getting in trouble for "arresting" strangers every few months.

Use: You can check for bounties before a Mission. Your GM will tell you if there's a bounty involved in the Mission. If the bounty is successfully Huntr'd, gain +2 Cash at the end of the Mission.

Huntr work is unstable at the best of times, so when rolling to see how much Cash you lose at the end of a session, roll with Advantage.

3 You can't just go around beating strangers at random. Only cops can do that.

ROOFDASH

RoofDash is a courier app. Delivery services are popular on Grand Cross, as the lack of cars means more people order online. RoofDash focuses on smaller deliveries.

The app prides itself on its exclusive selection of contractors who have athletic skills and sweet parkour moves. (A lot of their workers will simply use a scooter or the bus, but that doesn't pop in marketing material.)

Business Model: RoofDash's model is fairly standard: customers specify what they want, where to get it, where to take it, then make the payment. A nearby worker accepts the order and makes the delivery, which customers often oversee via GPS. The worker gets a base rate from RoofDash, plus (in theory) a tip. As usual for gig apps, there are no benefits or job security.

Clients: Pretty much anyone who needs something delivered in a hurry. Common deliveries include fast food, midnight snacks, electronics, things someone forgot to bring with them to school or work, minor trips to the grocery store, messages, and weird bullshit. (Workers in Turing often swap stories of the weird startup guy who uses RoofDash to deliver data sticks instead of sending emails.)

Culture: Most RoofDash workers have a specific "base"—a district where they're likely to get a lot of orders, ideally with a nice indoor park they can rest at. Once they make a delivery, they rush back to base. The best RoofDash workers develop a detailed knowledge of the districts around their base and where all the shortcuts are.

RoofDash commits wage theft[4]. Though they claim customer tips will help with scooter maintenance and the other costs of making deliveries, they regularly steal tips and use them to subsidize their workers' pay. A group of RoofDash workers is trying to change this, but they haven't had much luck yet.

Use: When you roll for group Prep before a Mission, you may instead choose to work for RoofDash. You have to use a Generic Specialty for making speedy deliveries, even if you've already used it during Prep. Gain Cash instead of group Prep for this roll, to a maximum of +3 Cash.

4 More than usual, I mean.

COMMUNITY

Grand Cross is a living city, full of people from all walks of life. PCs aren't just defined by the things they have; they're defined by the community they exist in.

If you want your *Hard Wired Island* game to focus on building and growing a community, use these rules.

RESIDENTS

Your community is mostly defined by the people in it. When play begins, the group decides what the community actually is—whether it's the apartment block they live in, an online community, an activist/union group, or something else.

Then, each player names a resident they know (a side character) and what they do in the community. These residents form a communal pool of contacts any player can draw on.

Each player can call upon a resident once per session, whenever their character has the time to do so, and get one of the following:

- A +1 bonus to 1 relevant Prep roll.
- Treat 1 roll as if they had a Generic Specialty relevant to the resident.
- A +1 bonus to Acquire an Asset relevant to the resident.
- Borrow a resident's Asset for 1 mission, possibly in exchange for 1 Cash and a promise to cover costs if they don't bring it back.

For example, say your community is the neighborhood your PCs live in, and you say that another resident is a woman named Tae who runs a bar called BA4 To-R. If you call on her, you could get a bonus to a Prep roll by huddling at her bar, a Generic Specialty useful for gathering information, a bonus to Acquiring an Asset like a specific drink or a favor from a patron, or rent use of her bar for a private meeting.

The group should feel free to come up with other ideas for what they can call upon residents for, so long as everyone agrees.

FIXERS
A Fixer with the Contacts and/or Facilitate Talents (p. 62-63) can add community residents to their list of contacts and may call upon them even if another player already did.

ADVANCEMENT

Every time the group achieves a Milestone (p. 324) that had something to do with the community or impacts it in a noteworthy way, any player may name one new resident. This can be a completely new character, or someone the PCs have interacted with before.

The maximum number of listed residents is 10, though the group can go higher if they're comfortable with remembering that many.

BURDEN

Each community has a Burden, just like a character (p. 53). They start at Burden 2.

At the beginning of each session, the GM rolls for Economic Shock for the community. They roll with Advantage—communities on Grand Cross are under constant threat from corporate interests these days. For every 1 the result exceeds 12 by, the GM chooses one resident to face Economic Shock, a problem, or an accident. Chosen residents cannot be called upon during that session.

Residents might be facing individual problems or facing a large problem together—such as a local business closing, or an unwanted faction muscling into the area. Helping with these issues can be opportunities for missions, short scenes between missions, or roleplaying moments.

If the GM decides a resident's problems are too severe and the PCs aren't doing much, they may leave the neighborhood. Residents who leave are not replaced, and automatically increase the community's Burden by 1.

Other than that, Burden increases and decreases primarily through story. For example, if a popular local store closes down, Burden might increase as jobs are lost and people go elsewhere. Pushing a corporate interest or toxic member out of the community might improve conditions for a while, reducing Burden. (If the PCs' actions have a large effect on the community, consider removing Advantage from its next Economic Shock roll.)

EXAMPLE COMMUNITIES

Use or adapt these communities as needed.

#ZEROCOOL

The #zerocool hacker collective was originally formed by a group of online friends looking to hone their skills and have some fun. When a relative of one of their members was put in the hospital by a member of the New Barons (p. 267), they turned their hacking skills toward taking down members of the group and others like them.

Residents: The Australian (non-member, hardware supplier); Kelly Leete (Marsha Stretch resident, drone expert); Mai Mojibake (lazy gremlin, doxxing expert); "Neon Trotsky" (new member, librarian).

HADAR LOGISTICS

Hadar is a small courier company based out of Adams. They help people with shopping, transport sensitive documents, and do all kinds of weird jobs that involve moving things from point A to point B. The employees are a tight-knit bunch and sometimes help their customers with other things too. (The group can run Hadar or simply work there.)

Residents: Susie Angel (employee, parkour genius); Aleph Asamiya (regular customer, electronic musician); Halland (employee, very punchy); Connie Turner (regular customer, old lady hacker).

L4 ACTIVISTS

There is nothing stopping you from simply choosing the Disaster activist movement as your community if you wish. In this case, you're probably a sub-group within the movement. You can also make the community all about the sub-group, if choosing the entire movement feels like a big responsibility.

Residents: Tova Dyson (computer science teacher); Izzy Kaijou (net café owner); Sam Okafor (lawyer); Tony Osborn (comic store owner, android activist); Melati Onbekend (L4 refugee, hacker).

LATTE NIGHT

Latte Night (p. 152) is a used bookshop/café in Voyager that opens just before midnight and closes just after sunrise. The regulars are a strange and eclectic bunch, but once they pass through the doors, they're just fellow book and coffee lovers. They look out for each other and sometimes help other customers.

Residents: Lotte (cyborg barista); Akari (Asano office lady); Brokkr (Law Zero lieutenant); Broz (Builder, retired agritech); Leetboy (GPol college student).

LAW ZERO CELL

"Operation Robots & Empire" is a cell of the android gang Law Zero (p. 253), formed to keep tabs on AGI research in the corporate world—and, if possible, steal it. In theory, ORE only answers to R. Daneel Olivaw (p. 259), but they're asked to help others on occasion.

Residents: A.J.7. (Tetsuo mole); Stompy Lau (Hoshi Group contact); Malcan Theta (Law Zero high-up); Mondaino Problem (hacker); Solaria (Double Crosser, new kid).

MARSHA STRETCH

The Marsha Stretch is an LGBTQ+ enclave in the Neo Melbourne district, originally founded by queer Builders who felt Grand Cross could use a space for them. These days, it's developed a gentrification problem. For more on the Stretch, see the Terabyte Boys scenario on p. 352-359.

Residents: Beepjamin (android doctor); Kelly Leete (Double Crosser hacker); Roll Cinnamon (GPol student, courier); Susie Darling (owns the Café Larose); Cerberus Zhao (activist, visits friends here).

PITWELL LANE

Russell (p. 176) is a quiet residential district in Adams ward, known for its street art. Your community is a nice little apartment block on a side-street with a graffiti wall. Your neighbors seem like regular folks, but everyone's got a story.

Residents: Alya (street artist); Umaru Kayode (cyber-doctor, runs the Apple Street Medical Center); Manaia Mita (radio DJ, UFOlogist); Seong-ja Seo (cyborg pro VRFPS gamer); Rania Xanthopoulos (owns nearby Dead Beats bar).

SPACE TOWN

Space Town (p. 182) in Marukyu is a shopping district, a major pop culture hub, and a sacred place for geeks. A lot of the regulars are familiar with each other and with familiarity comes friendship. If you can accept Space Town's weird bullshit, it might just be your home away from home.

Residents: Kusa Hoshii-Dotnet (regular visitor, data nun); Izzy Kaijou (net café owner); Mana & Nagisa (webcomic artists); Muse (GPol anime club president); Jett Wattana (regular, Singularist); Zander Xander (regular, drone expert).



CHAPTER 3: OCCUPATIONS

"Always ask: what can I do to help? I can bake extra food for the needy, so I do. Sameer can help me organize delivery. Ping isn't great with numbers, but she can talk to androids. Ken can punch someone so hard their kidneys fall out, which we do not need, but he can also lift large boxes. We all have something to contribute, and we all cover each other's weaknesses."

- Amarjeet Singh, volunteer

This chapter covers the game's seven Occupations:

- The **Fixer**, who solves problems with their skills and contacts (p. 62)
- The **Hacker**, who solves problems by hacking systems (p. 64)
- The **Influencer**, who solves problems by influencing people (p. 66)
- The **Operator**, who solves problems with drones and machines (p. 68)
- The **Soldier**, who solves problems by fighting and protecting (p. 70)
- The **Street Fighter**, who solves problems with martial arts (p. 72)
- And the **Thief**, who solves problems with agility and trickery (p. 74)

Each Occupation has its own Talent pool, as well as some extras you can choose from if it's your first Occupation. Some Talents have extra **requirements** to take them, or extra effects that **unlock** when you gain enough Talents; these are listed in their entry. Generic Talents that anyone can take can be found on p. 76.

ADVANCEMENT

Every Occupation receives the same benefits as they advance in level.

For full advancement rules, see p. 324.

Level Benefits	
1	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent. If this is your first Occupation, choose from the First Occupation box.
2	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent
3	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent
4	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent
5	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent
6	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent
7	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent
8	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent
9	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent
10	+1 Specialty, +1 Generic Specialty, 1 Talent



FIXER

The Fixer is great at solving other people's problems. They untangle complex situations, facilitate deals, talk to people, and leverage their contacts to get things done. Of course, some Fixers have the skills to get their hands dirty, too. We won't tell you what to do. We're not your mom.

Examples: Bodyguards, consultants, criminals, Double Crossers with a lot of free time, freelance troubleshooters, gig workers, helpful neighbors, investigators, journalists, public relations.

First Occupation
Choose one: License (p. 82) or Trendy Wardrobe (p. 84).
Choose one: Gun with Suppressor (p. 88) or a Small Local Business (p. 83).
Choose one Specialty: +1 Tough Defense, +1 Cool Defense, or +1 to 1 Social action.
Choose one Talent: Fixer or Generic.

TALENTS

AID ANOTHER

When you have a Generic Specialty relevant to an ally's task and have plenty of time, you may add +1 to their rolls so long as you can devote your full attention to the task.

Contacts Talent: You can call upon a side character instead of devoting your full attention.

7+ Fixer Talents: Add the full value of your relevant Specialty instead.

BLUFF

Gain +1 Cool Defense and the following Attack action:

BLUFF

Once per fight, after you are hit with any Attack, you may use this Attack in response. Make an Attack using **Cool vs your attacker's Cool**. Instead of dealing damage, this attack inflicts one Disadvantage on your opponent's next roll against you. They and any onlookers think you are either unharmed or a serious badass. **If your opponent has no concept of human emotion**, this attack has no effect.

5+ Fixer Talents: Inflict one Disadvantage on your opponent's next roll against you for every damage you would have dealt.

CONTACTS

Write down a side character you've met (or make one up) and a specialized interest they have (e.g. "Jae-yun, Motorcycles"). When you have plenty of time, you can call upon them as if they were a +1 Generic Specialty, **once per session per Fixer Talent you have**. For every Milestone the group has achieved, write down another side character.

Facilitate Talent: These Talents share characters. Make one list; add only one per Milestone.

CRIMINAL NETWORK

When dealing with criminal acts, people, and things, take +1 on all social rolls.

EXPEDITE

Spend 1 Cash or Prep to make a task that takes a long time for you or an ally take less time (e.g. a week to six days, a day to an hour, an hour to minutes.) This cannot make a complex task instantaneous.

FACILITATE

Write down a side character you've met (or make one up) and a specialized interest they have (e.g. "Mira, Gun Enthusiast"). When you're bargaining with or helping someone, you can call upon them **in place of 1 Cash** or for **+1 to a relevant Social roll** (before rolling). For every Milestone the group has achieved, write down another side character.

Contacts Talent: These Talents share characters. Make one list; add only one per Milestone.

FIXING THE ODDS

Once per session, when you or an ally have Advantage on a roll, turn all Advantage into Boost instead. Describe how you arranged this, or with who.

GIFT OF THE GAB

You take +1 on all Social rolls made during any Mood other than Hostile. During a Hostile Mood, you instead take +1 on your first Placate roll in this scene.

I KNOW A GUY

When you try to Acquire an Asset, a critical decreases its Price by an additional step. Illegal items only increase Difficulty by 3 for you.

5+ Fixer Talents: criticals also allow you to attempt another Acquire action with no extra time spent.

IT TAKES ALL KINDS

Choose a Talent from another Occupation. You have that Talent. Your Fixer Talents count toward its unlock requirements. (This Talent and the one you chose only count as one.)

LEVERAGE

You may attempt to Threaten someone without any leverage. On a critical, they will accidentally reveal some form of leverage which you can use from that point on. On a failure, they realize you have nothing; depending on the situation, your failed threat may turn into leverage against you.

LIGHTEN UP

Once per social encounter, on a critical social roll, you may treat the Mood as Friendly for the rest of the scene. (e.g. a Formal occasion remains Formal, but you are treated as a friend and can get away with things.) This does not work during combat.

7+ Fixer Talents: This works during combat, so long as you can justify it (or it's super funny.)

NEGOTIATOR

When you undertake a mission, you can squeeze a little extra out of it. Choose either +1 Cash before the mission, or +2 after.

PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY

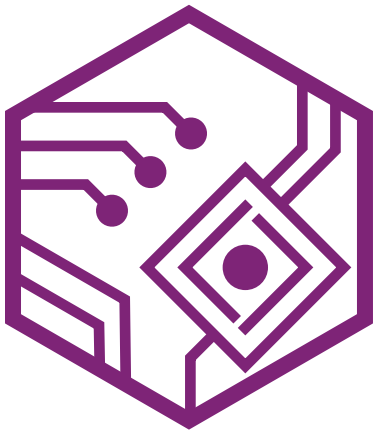
You have Advantage on all Social rolls made to cover up, lie about, or conceal your or an ally's involvement in dubious or criminal activity.

UNUSUAL TALENTS

Gain +1 Item or Generic Specialty of your choice.

5+ Fixer Talents: Gain an additional Asset or Generic Specialty.

7+ Fixer Talents: Gain an additional Specialty (any kind).



HACKER

Being good with computers is practically a basic life skill these days, but the Hacker is amazing with them. They know how to penetrate networks, hijack machines, and bend cyberspace to their will. Give them enough software and a deck to run it, and they can change the station.

Examples: Black hat hackers, game developers, hacktivists, hobbyists, infosec workers, IT workers, programmers, tech journalists, trans people who own computers, white hat hackers.

First Occupation
Get: One Hacking Suite (p. 85), one Program (p. 85) of your choice.
Choose one: A Program or a Fake ID (p. 81).
Choose one Specialty: +1 Clever Defense, +1 Quick Defense, or +1 to 1 Hacking action.
Choose one Talent: Hacker or Generic.

TALENTS

BATTLE NETWORK

Once per combat, as an action, you can use your hacking skills to change or add to an Arena's Tags (e.g. by activating a sprinkler system, flickering the lights, or opening an airlock) without rolling.

COMBAT HACK

During a fight, you may spend 1 Prep to use the following Attack action on a drone or robot:

COMBAT HACK

Make a Ranged attack using **Clever + Hacking vs Clever**. (If it's unlisted, it is 7.) Deal damage as normal. If this damage would disable your opponent, it becomes an ally instead. It takes actions independently on your behalf until the fight is over or it takes 1 damage, whichever comes first. It is disabled afterward. **This does not work on androids, Dreamers, or other AGI**.

DARKNET REP

Take +1 on all social rolls made online when dealing with other hackers or hacker culture. You and your allies can namedrop your hacker alias to take +1 on rolls made to Acquire hacking-related Assets.

DON'T BE EVIL

You believe in the cause. Take +1 on all Hacking and Social rolls made to infiltrate a Cartel corporation or another corporation of similar size and scope. Take +1 on all Attacks you make against Dreamers.

HOT STREAK

If you roll a critical success on any Hacking action, gain Advantage on your next Hacking action in that Network.

INFORMATION BROKER
If you hack a network during a mission, you may sell incidental sensitive information you found afterward. Unless you suffer Economic Shock, begin your next session with +1 Cash. If the network belonged to a Cartel corporation, start with +3 Cash instead.

LAUGHING GAL
So long as you have your Hacking Suite, electronic sensors (including cameras, androids, etc.) cannot recognize or identify you unless you want them to. Your face is blurred or replaced with a static image (e.g. a cartoon cat's face.) This won't set off alarms, but androids and humans will notice.

MASTER PHISHER
You take +1 to your Social rolls when trying to get sensitive information out of someone. If you're in contact with someone attempting **Social Engineering** on your behalf, you also grant +1 to their roll.

MOVE FAST AND BREAK THINGS
During a hack, you may expend 1 chance from your Ghost to have Advantage on your next roll.

ONLINE RESOURCES
The first time you roll for personal Prep, gain +1 additional Prep.

7+ Hacker Talents: +2 additional Prep.

SCRIPT KIDDIE
The first time you use a Program Asset during a hack, spend one less Prep. When you first choose this Talent, choose and gain one Program Asset.

STUDY NETWORK
During the Prep phase, if you know you are going to infiltrate a specific network, you may spend a week studying it instead of rolling for Prep. Activating Program Assets while inside a network you have studied costs no Prep.

7+ Hacker Talents: You only need to study for a day.

SYNC UP
When you go on a mission, choose an ally who is either an android or augmented and spend 1 Prep. You are now partners. Until the end of this mission (or until something happens to sever your Wi-Fi connection, whichever comes first,) you both take +1 on rolls that help your partner, so long as those rolls use an augment or the character is an android.

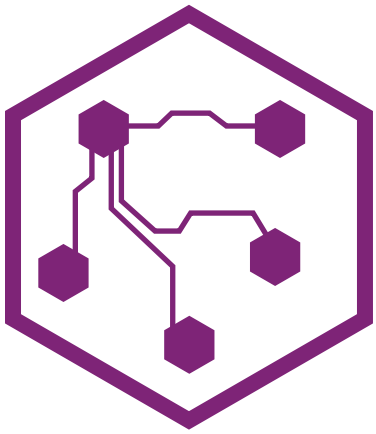
5+ Hacker Talents: You may add additional partners for 1 Prep each.

VIRTUAL GHOST
At the beginning of a hack, add 1 chance to your Ghost.

Stealth Specialty: You also add 1 chance to your group's Stealth when sneaking.

ZERO-DAY THREAT
During the Prep phase, instead of rolling for group Prep, you may spend a week developing a new threat that security software won't catch. Treat this as a single-use Program Asset with the following rules:

ZERO-DAY THREAT
You may spend 1 Prep to activate this at the beginning of a hack. Any time you would have Advantage during this hack, turn it into Boost instead.



INFLUENCER

The Influencer has unlocked the true potential of the World Wide Web: getting a bunch of people to see things your way. They can make friends anywhere—and they've made enough on the internet to crowdsource solutions to their problems.

Examples: Artists, bloggers, forum moderators, game developers, IRC operators, journalists, musicians, online activists, radio DJs, shitposters, social media influencers, streamers, YourTubers.

First Occupation
Choose one: A Doggo (p. 81) or a Trendy Wardrobe (p. 84).
Choose one: A Drone with the Flying, Improved Camera, and Audio Recording tags (p. 86) or a Verified Account (p. 83).
Choose one Specialty: +1 Clever Defense, +1 Cool Defense, or +1 to 1 Social action.
Choose one Talent: Influencer or Generic

TALENTS

BIG MOOD

Choose one of the following Moods: Friendly, Formal, Hostile, or Sexy (if that's a thing in your game.) Take +1 to all Social actions and Cool Defense rolls in a scene with that Mood.

7+ Influencer Talents: Choose a second Mood.

CROWDFUNDED

You use a gig app that strongly leverages your personal online brand, whether that's food photos, nudes, or being a dumbass. Unless you suffered Economic Shock last session, gain +1 Cash at the beginning of every session just for oversharing yourself online.

5+ Influencer Talents: +2 Cash.

7+ Influencer Talents: +3 Cash.

DDOS

Once per session, you can use a Social action to send your followers after an online target. This can disrupt a person or company's social media presence for a day, disrupt a smaller website, distract staff at an office, make a network vulnerable, hide a reply in a slew of notifications, or anything else a lot of people making bad posts can do. Anyone hacking an affected network gets an additional Chance on their Ghost and Advantage on rolls made to maintain Ghost. However, everyone will know you started it.

EVERYONE KNOWS ME

Take +1 on Social rolls against crowds.

EXTREMELY ONLINE
If you have no relevant specialty in a roll but plenty of time to do it, you can ask your online followers for help and treat the roll as if you had a relevant Specialty at +1. This can be used for Prep rolls once per session.

HOT TAKE
You can spend 1 Prep to declare any Social roll to be a Hot Take. On a success, in addition to the other effects, you temporarily become the center of attention (online or off.) Allies attempting to evade notice (under Stealth or Ghost) or take advantage of the distraction gain Advantage on their next roll.

7+ Influencer Talents: Their next two rolls.

NICHE CONTENT
You post content that caters to a niche interest. Gain +1 Specialty and +1 Generic Specialty of your choice. It cannot be a Generic Specialty you already had.

PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS
When you meet a fan, that fan starts out Friendly to you no matter what the current mood is. Once per mission, you may spend 1 Prep to establish that someone you're about to interact with for the first time is a fan.

PERSONAL INSIGHT
When you roll a critical on a Social roll against an individual (online or off,) you may ask one of the following questions. The GM must answer truthfully. The target is not aware they have given this information away.

- What could they use help with?
- How can I hurt them?
- Is there something that they really want?
- How are they feeling currently?

RELATABLE CONTENT
Once per scene, when you reveal a personal detail about yourself to anyone, take +1 to your next Social action. On a critical, succeed or fail, you also Boost it. This Boost can turn a failure into a success.

SOCIALITE
Once per session, when you would have Advantage on a Social roll, turn it into Boost instead.

7+ Influencer Talents: Twice per session.

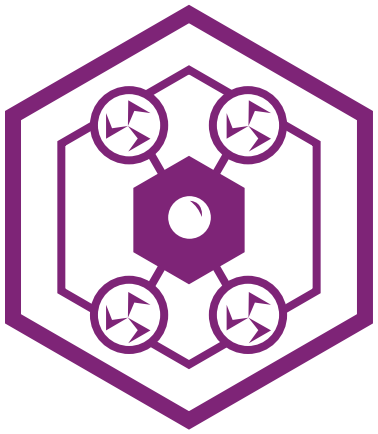
SPONSORED
You have a sponsor, corporate or otherwise. Unless you suffered Economic Shock last session, begin every session with +1 Cash. If your sponsor sells branded gear, you may grant Advantage to yourself or an ally trying to buy that gear. If you behave badly enough to lose your sponsor, you will have a new one by the beginning of the next session.

5+ Influencer Talents: +2 Cash.

TERMINALLY ONLINE
So long as you have uninterrupted access to the Internet, you always have your pulse on current events (and their memes) without having to take time or roll for it. If you are around to give advice and have the time to do it safely, an ally attempting an action involving celebrities or current events takes +1 to their roll.

VIRAL
If you make a Social roll online, on a critical it goes Viral. Within hours people across Grand Cross will notice your post, share it, make memes, or just straight-up steal your content to sell shirts. Your target will react accordingly: if you're mocking them, they'll hate you and possibly delete their account; if you're praising them, they'll love you, and so on. In addition, gain Advantage on all rolls capitalizing on your Viral content for this session and the next.

WIN THEM OVER
When you successfully **Placate** someone or make them Friendly with a Social action, gain Advantage on your next Social roll against them.



OPERATOR

The Operator's specialty is hardware. They play with drones, repair androids, jury rig machines, and generally mess with technology to get what they want. Drones are getting worryingly common on Grand Cross, so they have a lot to play with.

Examples: Androids, hobbyists, electronic musicians, engineers, maintenance workers, photographers with camera drones, roboticists, security personnel, station workers, tech vloggers.

First Occupation
Get: One Drone Asset (p. 86). This is your Personal Drone.
Choose one: An additional Drone tag, or any Asset of your choice that can fit into a Drone.
Choose one Specialty: +1 Clever Defense, +1 Cool Defense, or +1 to any 1 action.
Get: Personal Drone Talent.

TALENTS

PERSONAL DRONE

You now have a custom Personal Drone asset. If this isn't your first Occupation, create a new Drone to become your Personal Drone. For each rank of the Drone Specialty you have, the drone has an additional tag chosen by you. You may add up to two more tags to the drone later, at a cost of 2 Cash per tag.

In addition to the normal list of drone tags (p. 86), you have access to the Operator tags on p. 87.

You may swap your Personal Drone's tags when you have downtime.

If you've lost your Personal Drone, you can spend 3 Cash to replace it with a day or so of work.

ACE PILOT

Once per session, while piloting a drone, you may turn an Advantage into a Boost instead.

5+ Operator Talents: Twice per session.

7+ Operator Talents: Three times per session.

CLEVER MECHANIC

You have Advantage on repairing hardware of any kind, including performing first aid on androids. You automatically know if something is irreparable or if rare components are needed. Once per mission, you may spend 1 Prep to repair a destroyed drone you own. It can take one damage before being destroyed again.

COORDINATED OPERATION

During your turn in a fight, before taking an action, you can declare you and a drone you own are attacking the same target. Take +1 to your and your drone's attack rolls. Neither attack may affect an area.

EXPERIENCED PILOT

You may spend Prep to negate disadvantage to your drone, one-to-one. When you spend personal Prep on a drone you own or any Asset it carries, roll 1d6. On a 6, gain 1 personal Prep.

7+ Operator Talents: When you spend group Prep on your drone, roll 1d6. On a 6, gain 1 group Prep.

FULL SYNCH

You have (illegally) connected your drone's controls to your nervous system, like a cyber-limb. While you take no other action while piloting, gain Advantage on all Piloting rolls and become unaware of your surroundings until your next action.

If your piloted drone is damaged while you are in Full Synch, roll 1d6 and mark that box on your Damage Track. You cannot use Full Synch again until your next mission. You cannot spend Prep or use armor to mitigate this damage.

JURY-RIGGED SOLUTION

Once per mission, as an action, you may remove one tag from a drone you own to gain 1 Prep. Regain the tag at the beginning of the next session.

7+ Operator Talents: You may do this twice per mission.

MARGATROID PROTOCOL

You may choose the Swarm tag for a drone you own, in addition to its other tags.

Swarm: a Swarm drone is actually a multitude of smaller drones (up to 10) that can be in many places at once. Take +1 on all actions where it's reasonable to expect a swarm of drones to be particularly useful, such as lifting heavier loads, surveying a large area, and so on. When piloting a Swarm drone, you may choose to instead pilot only one drone at any time. If loaded with an Asset Hardpoint, all your drones are equipped the same way.

MAVERICK

Take +1 on Attack rolls made by you or a drone you own against airborne targets. You may spend Prep to Boost Defense for your drone, using your own Specialties.

MINIATURIZATION

You may choose one additional drone tag for a drone you own.

NERD

When you are around to give advice, allies take +1 on all rolls relating to androids, cybernetics, drones, gaming consoles, mechanics, and robotics. You automatically know all relevant major hardware manufacturers and their models.

REDUNDANT CONSTRUCTION

You may spend Prep to reduce damage dealt to a drone you own, one-to-one. Your drone can take 1 additional damage before being destroyed.

TECH HEAD

Take +1 on any roll involving using, hacking, nerding out about, destroying, or repairing hardware such as androids, drones, vehicles and cybernetics. This does not apply to piloting.

WIRED REFLEXES

You and any drone you pilot take +1 to Quick Defense rolls. You may spend Prep to Boost your drone's actions.

DRONE STRIKE

A drone you own can make the Drone Strike attack.

DRONE STRIKE

Your drone may **make a Ranged Attack**. Anyone targeted by it or are in its area of effect—succeed or fail—must make a **Cool Save vs your Attack roll** or be forced to go prone, or else move from their current position. Prone foes don't move on their next action.



SOLDIER

The Soldier is a warrior. They're strong and use their strength to protect others. They're tough, which comes in handy when the powers that be send police and private security to crush resistance. Anyone can be a Soldier if they have the will to fight for what they believe in.

Examples: Activists, athletes, bounty hunters, community volunteers and organizers, ex-cops, gangsters, mutual aid workers, rescue workers, rioters, street medics, virtual reality gamers.

First Occupation
Choose one: A weapon of your choice or a First Aid Kit (p. 81).
Choose one: Rioting Gear (p. 84) or a Safehouse (p. 83).
Choose one Specialty: +1 Tough Defense, +1 Cool Defense, or +1 Item Specialty.
Choose one Talent: Soldier or Generic.

TALENTS

ACAB
Take +1 on all rolls while dealing with police and other security forces, whether attacking, defending, spotting, evading, interacting socially, and so on.

ALWAYS PREPARED
During the Prep phase, automatically add +1 group Prep to the group pool.

7+ Soldier Talents: +2 group Prep.

COOL HEAD
During a stressful situation such as a riot or fight, take +1 to Cool Defense.

5+ Soldier Talents: Take +1 to your Cool Defense at all times.

7+ Soldier Talents: Allies who can see you also take +1 to Cool Defense.

COORDINATED TARGETING
Whenever you Attack with a Ranged weapon with Advantage, all allies who make Ranged Attacks against that target get Advantage on their attack rolls until the beginning of your next turn.

FOR THE CAUSE
When you are fighting for a cause larger than yourself, take +1 Tough Defense.

7+ Soldier Talents: Allies who can see you also take +1 to Tough Defense.

GET DOWN!
Whenever two or more allies are hit by an effect (such as gas or grenades,) you may spend 1 Prep to be hit by it instead. Describe how. If it is an explosive grenade or similar effect, you immediately mark damage box 6 instead of taking normal damage. This can be reduced as normal.

HARM REDUCTION
Once per mission, if you have marked a Harm or Serious Harm box on your Damage Track, you may spend 1 Prep to ignore the penalty from that box for the rest of the mission (or until you mark another Harm or Serious Harm, whichever comes first.) You still suffer the penalty after the mission.

ON-SITE PROCUREMENT

During a mission, every time you spend personal Prep, roll 1d6. On a 6, gain 1 personal Prep.

5+ Soldier Talents: Every time you or a nearby ally spends group Prep, roll 1d6. On a 6, add 1 group Prep to the pool.

PROTEST COORDINATOR

Once per session, during any mission, rally, protest, or riot, you can declare that a useful ally is around. Choose or create a friendly side character. This ally can assist you with one specific protest-related task, such as medicine, drone interference, spotting danger, and so on. If you roll for this ally's actions, add +3 to rolls relating to their stated Specialty.

RIGHT TOOL FOR THE RIGHT JOB

Gain 1 Item Specialty with an Asset of your choice. The first time you would spend Prep to use an Asset while on a mission, spend one less Prep.

5+ Soldier Talents: The first 2 times.

7+ Soldier Talents: The first 3 times.

RIOT MEDICINE

As an action, you may spend 1 Prep to grant all allies in your vicinity Advantage on Saves and Defense rolls vs all debilitating or "less than lethal" attacks, such as gas, sonic attacks, stun guns, hacks, and so on[1]. This lasts until the next time you act in a fight, or until the end of the current scene if you're not fighting.

7+ Soldier Talents: You can do this while taking another action.

TACTI-COOL LOADOUT

Whenever you use an Asset outside of a fight as part of any action, take +1 to your roll.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

When you enter a fight, choose one opponent and ask one question:

- What is their best Defense?
- What is their worst Defense?
- What weapons do they have?

The GM must answer truthfully (including if there are multiple best or worst defenses), except for questions about the weapons of Dreamers, which are beyond mere mortals.

5+ Soldier Talents: Ask two questions of up to two opponents.

7+ Soldier Talents: Ask three questions of up to three opponents.

UNIT LEADER

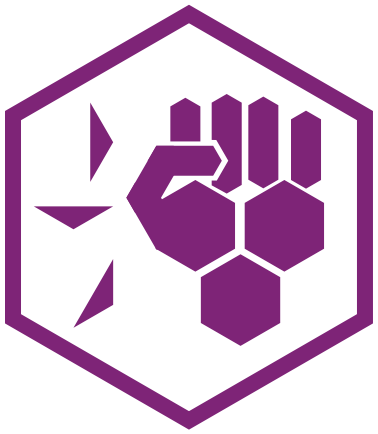
During a fight, you may allow allies to spend your personal Prep as though it were group Prep.

WALKING ARMORY

Whenever you reload a weapon, your allies may also reload for free. Once per mission, you can reload one Ranged Ammo weapon for free.

7+ Soldier Talents: Twice per mission.

1 See riotmedicine.net for more information.



STREET FIGHTER

The Street Fighter fights for what they believe in, and they put their body on the line to do it. Thanks to their training—whether it was formal or earned on the streets—they're experts at melee fighting and capable of impressive physical feats.

Examples: Athletes, cosplayers who get really into it, habitual brawlers, martial arts enthusiasts[2], personal trainers, protesters.

First Occupation
Choose one: A Badass Headband (p. 84) or a First Aid Kit (p. 81).
Choose one: A Gym (p. 83) or a melee weapon of your choice.
Choose one Specialty: +1 Quick Defense, +1 Tough Defense, or +1 to 1 Fight action.
Choose one Talent: Street Fighter or Generic.

TALENTS

BADASS
Take +1 on all melee attacks while you are outnumbered.

CHAIN PUNCH
When you roll a critical on a melee attack against any number of opponents, gain Advantage on your next attack against any or all of those opponents.

DEFY DEATH
The first time you fail a Save during a mission, you may reroll it.

7+ Street Fighter Talents: Instead of rerolling, you succeed.

ENGAGED
If you are within melee range of someone and they try to get away from you, they must roll a **Quick save vs 10 + your Martial Arts**.
If they fail, make a choice:

- They move away, but you follow immediately, maintaining melee range.
- They're unable to get away from you and you both stay in roughly the same spot.

EVERYTHING IS A WEAPON
The first time you gain Advantage for using an element of the environment during a fight, turn it into Boost instead.

5+ Street Fighter Talents: The first 2 times.

GRAPPLER
Gain +1 Specialty with the Grab Attack. Add +1 to the Save difficulty made against escaping your Grab. You may continue to make melee attacks against anyone in range while Grappled.

GUN SAFETY BEAR
If someone targets you with a held Ranged weapon and misses while you are within melee range, you may disarm them. The weapon falls to the ground.

5+ Street Fighter Talents: You may disarm them if they target someone other than you.

7+ Street Fighter Talents: You may also render it harmless (for example, by immediately stowing it, breaking or dismantling it, tossing it somewhere unrecoverable, or unloading it.)

2 Practitioners of every martial art have come to space to spread their style beyond Earth, so don't feel constrained by location.

KNOW THEM THROUGH BATTLE

When you roll a critical on any Melee Attack against any number of opponents, ask one question about them:

- What is their best Defense?
- What is their worst Defense?
- What are their intentions?

The GM must answer truthfully (including if there are multiple best or worst defenses), unless they're unfathomable, like Dreamers. In addition, if they were trained by a rival martial arts master in orbit or are one in disguise, you learn who the master is.

MARTIAL ARTS

You never suffer Disadvantage from your environment when using bare hands and feet in a fight.
When you make a melee attack, you may also make it against a second target in range (if there is one.) You may Grab multiple people at a time this way.

5+ Street Fighter Talents: You may target everyone in melee range.

NO PAIN

The first time you would mark damage box 1 or 2 in a fight, do not mark damage.

PERSONAL TRAINER

Take +1 to Social rolls when you're teaching someone or giving them advice. If the mood is Friendly, take Advantage instead. In addition, you may grant an ally your spend time doing Prep with +1 to 1 Prep roll before each mission.

REVERSAL

You may use the Reversal attack immediately after being hit by a melee attack. Reversal becomes inactive until you've made two other, different attacks.

REVERSAL

Resolve the incoming attack, then make an attack roll. If your roll is higher than the attacker's, your target suffers all effects of the attack instead of you. If the incoming attack allows a choice between multiple effects, you choose the effect. If you Reversal a Reversal, they cancel out.

7+ Street Fighter Talents: After using Reversal, you may reverse all melee attacks made against you until the beginning of your next turn.

SWORD MASTER

Take +1 to your Quick Defense against all melee attacks while you're wielding a melee weapon, unless your opponent is far larger than you.

TANK

Gain +1 Specialty in either Tough or Quick Defense. In addition, gain the following Attack action:

TANK

When an ally's Tough Defense or Quick Defense is targeted, you may use this attack to either physically interpose yourself between your ally and the attacker or move them out of the way. You are now the target of their attack. Every use of this action after the first one in the same combat costs 1 Prep.

Reversal Talent: You may use Tank and Reversal on the same attack, if applicable.

THREAT

Opponents who are within melee range of you have Disadvantage on their first action targeting someone other than you until the beginning of your next turn. This penalty does not apply to area attacks that include you.



THIEF

The Thief is sneakier than most people. They aren't all criminals—though they certainly can be—but their views on things like "law" and "honor" tend to be flexible, especially when they get in the way of doing what's right. If they have to use trickery to get what they want, they can and will.

Examples: Con artists, couriers, direct-action activists, ex-corporation enforcers, gangsters, investigators, journalists, parkour enthusiasts, people living "off the grid", thieves.

First Occupation
Choose one: A Fake ID (p. 81) or a weapon (your choice).
Choose one: A Safehouse (p. 83) or Thieving Gear (p. 83).
Choose one Specialty: +1 Clever Defense, +1 Quick Defense, or +1 to 1 Stealth action.
Choose one Talent: Thief or Generic.

TALENTS

CAT BURGLAR

You have Advantage on all rolls to climb, scale, squeeze through, abseil, leap over, or otherwise pass an obstacle. Once per fight, when an attack targets your Quick Defense, you may immediately use Take Cover (p. 45) before the attack is resolved.

DESTRUCTIVE ENTRY

While under Stealth or Ghost, when you try to bypass an obstacle with a Security or Network Level and fail, you may spend 1 Prep to succeed instead. You still lose a chance. This method will leave evidence behind but won't incriminate you.

Mastermind Talent: You may do this with an ally's failed action.

ENTERPRISING

The first time you "find" or are rewarded with Cash during a session, gain +1 Cash.

5+ Thief Talents: Gain +2 Cash.

GETAWAY

When you try to escape a scene or use Run Away to flee from a fight, you have Advantage on your roll.

5+ Thief Talents: If you use any applicable Asset for its normal cost (e.g. smoke grenade, a vehicle,) you may roll to let your entire group escape/Run Away.

LARCENY

Whenever you or an ally try to acquire an Illegal Asset no larger than a wearable or carried piece of equipment, you may take Advantage on the roll. On a critical, in addition to the usual effects, you may choose to pay for it with personal Prep instead of Cash on a one-to-one basis. Someone may get mad at you for it later.

"LOCKSMITH"

You have Advantage on any roll involving bypassing locks, safes, and similar devices.

7+ Thief Talents: You may reroll all 1s on these rolls.

MASTERMIND

During any mission, when an ally takes an action that involves a Security Level or risks Stealth, you may allow them to spend your personal Prep as if it were group Prep.

7+ Thief Talents: The first time you roll for personal Prep for this mission, gain +1 Prep.

MUSCLE

You can briefly fight one foe without risking Stealth. While you are in Stealth, if your opponent attempts to use a loud weapon, trigger an alarm, or make an alerting noise, you may spend 1 Prep to immediately use the Silence attack.

SILENCE

Make a **Melee or Silenced Ranged attack**. If you hit, you silence/remove the source of the noise before anyone is alerted. If the source of the noise was a loud weapon being used, you cancel your opponent's attack.

NINJA

The first time you attack during a fight while you are hidden from sight, Boost it. You also have Advantage on all rolls to Disable Security if the security is active.

7+ Thief Talents: You may spend 1 Prep to remain hidden from sight after you make any attack.

PARKOUR

If you roll a critical success on any action involving movement, gain Advantage on your next action if it also involves movement.

7+ Thief Talents: You may reroll all 1s on these rolls.

PHANTOM THIEF

You are infamous—usually a bad thing for your profession, but you've turned it to your advantage. Choose a thief alias. In-game, this can be chosen by your character or given by others. When you perform a criminal act against a target with a Security or Network Level and roll a critical, you can leave behind evidence or a calling card implicating your alias. Gain Advantage on all Social rolls to use your alias to your advantage, hide your identity, or mislead someone for this session and the next.

SLIPPERY

You have Advantage when you are escaping any kind of restraint, cell, hold, grab, tie, or similar situation.

7+ Thief Talents: You may reroll all 1s on these rolls.

SMOOTH CRIMINAL

While you and your group are under Stealth or Ghost, add +1 to your own rolls.

SOCIAL CHAMELEON

You have Advantage on all Social rolls to make a disguise or Fake ID seem convincing.

7+ Thief Talents: You may reroll all 1s on these rolls.

SECURITY SPECIALIST

You know the make, type, and basic functionality of most commonly used security alarms and systems, including drones. If you are around to give advice and have time to explain it, an ally taking an action involving an automated security system of any kind gains +1 to their roll.

GENERIC TALENTS

Any character may take these, so long as they fulfil the requirements.

BASEMENT DWELLER

Take +1 to all rolls that involve accessing the station basements, navigating or sneaking through them, or using them to go places you shouldn't. You always know where the nearest accessible basement entrance is.

BORN READY

Add 1 additional personal Prep before every mission.

5+ Talents: Also add 1 Group Prep to the pool.

CONTRACTOR

When you gain Cash from a Gig Economy App, gain +1 Cash.

CUSTOM OMNI-SOCKETS

Android or Full-Body Prosthetic only

You can switch out an Augment with about a minute of work instead of during downtime. This customization voids your warranties.

DAREDEVIL

When you roll a critical success on a Save, take +1 on your next roll.

7+ Talents: Have Advantage on your next roll instead.

EXTREME PLANNING

You may use Flashback twice per mission.

ROBO RAPPORT

Android only

You're very good at talking to humans, and your frame is appealing. When you roll a critical success on a Social roll against a human, take +1 to your next Social roll.

7+ Talents: Make this an Advantage on your next roll instead.

HARDER, BETTER, FASTER, STRONGER

Must have at least 7+ total Talents

Choose one Ability (Cool, Clever, Tough, or Quick.) Improve that Ability by +1, to a maximum of +3.

HELPING HAND

Once per mission, if you're around to help, you may turn an ally's Advantage into Boost before rolling.

I, ANDROID

Android only

Other androids consider you a community leader for your contributions to android culture or for your work helping others. Androids who recognize you will never be Hostile unless you provoke them, and if you want to talk to a fellow android, you will always get an audience eventually. Even notoriously reclusive androids like R. Daneel Olivaw (p. 259) will at least agree to a phone call.

INDUSTRIAL FRAME

Android or Full-Body Prosthetic only

Your body is designed for hazardous industrial environments, including shielding from space radiation. Gain +1 Tough Defense. You automatically succeed on all Saves vs gases, radiation, and similar things that the GM agrees make sense for someone spaceworthy to shrug off.

JACK OF ALL TRADES

Gain +1 Generic or Item Specialty of your choice. In addition, your Generics always count as occupation Talents for the purposes of unlocking bonuses. For example, if you have four Street Fighter talents and Jack of All Trades, you get the 5+ Talent unlock for Gun Safety Bear.

LUCKY STAR

Once per mission, when you or an ally would fail a Save, you or that ally may succeed instead. If multiple characters have Lucky Star, each character may only benefit from it once per mission.

NEMESIS
You have a personal rival or enemy. Create or choose a side character to be your nemesis. When your nemesis is present during a mission, you take +1 on all rolls and your nemesis takes +1 on rolls made to oppose or hinder you as long as they're present.

You may spend 1 Prep to declare your nemesis has arrived or was present all along, so long as you can justify it. They remain your nemesis if you become temporary allies or even friends, provided they still have reasons to oppose or push you. If they don't, you can get a new nemesis.

NOTORIOUS
Choose a group (e.g. Singularists, Hoshi Group, Technos, Furries, Breadtube, etc.) Once per session, you may call upon the group like you would a community resident (p. 58).

OGREMOCH FRAME
Android or Full-Body Prosthetic only
Requires Redundant Internals

Serious Harm on your damage track becomes Harm instead. You may clear one Harm at the end of a scene as if it were a Minor Injury. Your body is now Restricted (p. 80).

PAID
Choose a cybernetic Augment. It no longer increases Burden for you. If you currently have no eligible Augments, the next one you acquire will not increase your Burden. You may choose this Talent multiple times.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE
At the end of a mission, you may convert unspent personal Prep into Cash. The first Cash costs 1 Prep, the second costs 2, the third 3, and so on. You cannot do this if you've suffered Economic Shock this session.

REDUNDANT INTERNALS
Android or Full-Body Prosthetic only

The first time you would mark any injury higher than a Minor Injury during a mission, you may mark a Minor Injury of your choice instead. This follows all the normal rules of marking an injury.

SHADY DEALINGS
Choose one Illegal Asset, Drone tag, or Augment. You now own it, no Cash required. If you lose access to it, regain it at the beginning of your next session. (An Augment still increases your Burden.)

SPECIALIZED
Gain +1 Specialty of your choice, to the normal maximum of +3. You may choose this Talent multiple times, but only once for each Specialty.

SPENDTHRIFT
Whenever you spend or give someone Cash, roll 1d6 for each Cash. Gain 1 Cash for each 6 you roll. You may not do this if you suffered Economic Shock this session.

TEAM MOM
During Prep, your first group Prep roll only takes a day. When you roll, add 1 additional group Prep to the pool regardless of your result.

TRAINING MONTAGE
When you roll for group Prep, instead of rolling you may choose one Specialty or Generic Specialty to train. You take +1 to all rolls using the chosen Specialty for the duration of your next mission. Your allies can participate to get the bonus and still make their own Prep rolls.

WEIRD SCIENCE
You've encountered a Dreamer, and though you can never truly understand them, you've become good at guessing. Take +1 to all rolls made when tracking or analyzing Dreamers, guessing what they'll do next, or escaping them safely.


RAMEN
+++ OPEN +++

CHAPTER 4: ASSETS AND CYBERNETICS

"Here at the 0Q shopping mall, we have everything you need—no questions asked! And now, for every hundred dollars you spend, we'll give a dollar to charity! Which charity? No time to explain—it's this week only!

0Q: Don't ask—just shop!"

— Spyros Antoniou, paid actor

This chapter covers Assets and cybernetics: resources your PCs can draw on and things they can put inside their body.

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ASSETS

Assets are resources your characters can draw upon. They can be anything from personal equipment like tools and gear to more abstract things like locations and connections.

Each Asset has a description, a set of Tags, and a listed **Cost**: the amount of Cash needed to Acquire it. Some Assets also have a **Special** section, which describes particular conditions or uses for them.

GAINING ASSETS

During character creation, you gain some Assets based on your Occupation and Trait choices. You may then choose **2 additional Assets**. These can be any Assets you want, provided they make sense for your character. You cannot buy Assets whose Cost is Priceless, but anything else is fair game. (This is a good time to pick up a pricey Asset you've had your eye on.)

During play, you may use the Acquire Asset action (p. 50) to get more Assets by spending Cash.

LOSING ASSETS

Assets can be lost during Economic Shock (p. 54). If it makes sense in the story, Assets can also be broken, borrowed, replaced, sold, or stolen.

However, for the most part, Assets are permanent. You can't just "use them up" and have to buy another; you're assumed to know how to maintain a supply. For example, if you own a First Aid Kit (p. 81), you can assume you keep it stocked without worrying about running out and having to buy a new one.

ASSET TAGS

Critical: This Asset has a special effect on a critical roll—failure, success, or both.

Illegal: This Asset is illegal in Grand Cross, at least for you small, non-corporate types. It's hard to come by—unless you have the right connections. If you're caught with it, you may get in trouble or lose the Asset.

Obvious: This Asset might be portable, but it's impossible to conceal and likely to attract attention. Be prepared for a lot of stares and questions. (This doesn't apply to businesses, cars, or the like, because you're not going to try to hide them on your person to begin with.)

Rad: This Asset is radically cool. Possibly even tubular. Expect to attract attention, usually the good kind.

Restricted: This Asset is hard to get, but not illegal. You need a License (p. 82) to operate and own it, however.

Specialized: If you spend Item Specialties on this Asset, you gain special benefits.

Some Assets, like Weapons, have unique Tags; these are described in their relevant sections.

BASIC ITEMS

In addition to their listed Assets, there are a few things all characters are assumed to own (or have access to):

- Clothing and other common items.
- A smartphone and/or computer (though not necessarily a good one).
- A Multipass (p. 105) with enough credits for the basics.
- A cheap bicycle, skateboard, or set of roller skates for getting around—if they want any.
- Any required wheelchairs, mobility scooters, or other aids.
- Anything else that seems to make sense. Don't sweat the details too much.

Characters can have mobility aids and cheap personal vehicles for free. If you want a really nice one, get the Asset version (see Usable Assets, p. 53). You don't get the extra benefits of those Assets unless you specifically purchase them.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

During play, you might find you need something that isn't explicitly covered in this chapter. What about grappling hooks? Scuba gear? Space suits? Parachutes? Rappelling gear? Environmental hazard gear?

The answer: get it if you need it! These don't have specific rules; they have narrative uses. You already know what scuba gear does. You know how a parachute works. You know what Tetsuo skyscraper you're rappelling down at 3AM. You don't need it spelled out for you, and we could use the space for more important things, like skateboards and cat ears.

Gear like this should have an **upfront Cost of 2–4**, depending on what it is. Unless it's something weird and hard to get, don't bother rolling; you can just spend the Cash.

Use whatever Generic Specialty and Ability seems appropriate, if needed. A lot of equipment can be used safely with just a little training, which you can say you got in downtime or while prepping for that Mission, and you don't need specific Specialties to cover using them.

HOUSE

Where your characters live is up to you. They're unlikely to have a lavish house (especially on Grand Cross, where space is at a premium,) but characters with a decent Burden who haven't suffered Economic Shock are assumed to have a similarly decent apartment with basic furniture.

However, a home isn't guaranteed. Grand Cross is heading toward a housing crisis, with Double Crossers finding it harder to buy an apartment and privatized services leading to rising bills for apartment owners.

Characters with Burden 3 (and sometimes 2) are probably renting, as are characters who have to find a new living space after a bad Economic Shock. Characters with Burden 4 are usually unhoused.

If you'd like to describe where your character lives, there's a few questions worth asking:

- **Where in the station is it?**
- **Do you own it or rent it?**
- **If you own it, how did you get it? Was it assigned when you came here? Did you buy it? Earn it through a work contract? Get it from someone else?**
- **Are you rooming with anyone else? (If you room with a PC, it affects your Burden [p. 82].)**
- **How many bad months are you from losing it?**
- **If you don't have a home, where do you live?**

USABLES

Assets you use.

3D PRINTER

Cost: 4. Specialized.

This device uses cheap resin or metallic residue to print objects according to your design, or designs you've subscribed to (such as Zinovy Ultragraphics assets.) Home printers can print only relatively small handheld components. The first time you roll for personal Prep before a mission, gain +1 Prep.

Specialized: Once per mission, you may add your 3d Printer Item Specialty to any roll, so long as you can justify having printed something relevant before or during the mission.

DOGGO

Cost: 2 + daily pets and walkies.

You have a dog[1]. It may be natural or artificial, but it's cute as heck. The first time you interact with anyone socially while you have a Doggo, you have Advantage on your first Social roll against them. If the person hates dogs for whatever reason, you have Disadvantage instead. Given time and effort, a Doggo can be trained to do various tricks. An artificial or cybernetically augmented Doggo can grant a specialty to rolls as if you had it, but imposes +1 Burden on you.

1 Nothing stops this from being a Catto, a Parroto, or even a Koalo, though a live one might be difficult to import. Also, koalas kind of have messed-up thumbs.

COMBINING ASSETS

You can combine two Assets into one so long as it makes sense and you own both. For example, the sample PC Jae-yun (p. 337) has combined a suit of Combat Armor with a Powered Exoskeleton into one Asset called a Hardsuit, an experimental prototype being developed by the Cartel against some kind of unspecified threat[2]. Xander (p. 334) has a drone that's also a skateboard.

You can also (optionally, if the GM allows it) combine tags from multiple categories. For example, drones can get an Improved Sensor Package, but guns normally can't. However, there are radar-guided guns in real life, so you can give a gun that tag if the group agrees it fits the game.

2 Dreamers. It's the Dreamers. We're not here to play coy.

DRONE GUN

Cost: 3. Obvious, Restricted.

This "gun," which looks like someone decided laser tag needed to be chunkier, is a directed electronic countermeasure designed to shut off or reset drones at range, forcing them to land or fly home. Conveniently, it also works on other non-hardened electronics, like cameras and cybernetics.

The Drone Gun automatically works on unattended electronics. People with Augments that aren't ECM-hardened (p. 87) make a **Clever Save vs 10 (+1 per non-hardened Augment)**, or have those Augments shut down until they make the same save at the end of their turn.

Android frames, full-body prosthetics, and medical Augments are assumed to be hardened and cannot be shut down (though it makes androids and full-body cyborgs feel uncomfortable.)

The Drone Gun is battery-hungry, and costs 1 Prep per use.

FAKE IDS

Cost: 2 the first time; 1 after. Illegal.

You have the contacts and resources to get (or make) fake identification. The first time you buy this, you get a fake ID for one person, for a specific purpose or place (e.g. an employee badge.) It passes all cursory examinations and basic electronic security. You get Advantage on social situations where presenting this ID would help.

You can purchase this Asset again to get more fake IDs. Since you already have the means to get them, they're cheaper.

FIRST AID KIT

Cost: 3. Specialized.

After a fight, you may spend Prep to use this. Roll **2d6 + Clever vs 10**, or **vs 12** if you have no relevant Specialty. On a success, you may clear one damage box marked during that fight, plus an extra box for every 3 you succeed by. If you're trying to stabilize a dying ally, Boost your roll.

Specialized: You get one free use per mission for every point of Item Specialty in the First Aid Kit.

LICENSE

Cost: 2, plus having your name on a government registry. Specialized.

You may possess up to two Restricted Assets or Augments without getting into trouble, chosen when you buy the License. Cops may still snatch them if they take you in, but they are generally required to give them back (unless the promised civil asset forfeiture bill is passed by Unity next year.)

Specialized: You may upgrade your License to cover an additional Restricted Asset per Specialty (max 5).

MEMBERSHIP

Cost: You have to be invited to be a member. It may come with a nominal no-Cash yearly fee.

You are a member of something exclusive, like a club, union, activist group, or the inner circle of a political party. Take +1 to all Social rolls if they relate in some way to your membership. You can call on the group like you would a community resident (p. 58) once per session.

MOBILITY AID

Cost: 2. Rad, Specialized.

All characters who need mobility aids have them already, but *this* is a really cool high-end one.

Specialized: You have Advantage to all rolls related to maneuvering, movement, and looking rad if you have at least one aid-related Specialty.

RECREATIONAL DRUGS

Cost: 2. Illegal.

Rum, opiates, and the kush. Aside from mitigating the stresses of life, when you suffer Economic Shock and have to suffer Disadvantage on all Cool or Clever rolls, you may use Negate Disadvantage (p. 51) on those rolls once per mission for free. People will be able to tell you showed up slightly high or drunk. This can include android drug-soft.

SHARD CARD

Cost: 2 for Open, 4 for Secure.

A computer tool frequently used by hackers.

Its original incarnation was a replacement for the office computer. Instead of a PC, each employees' user session is run on a mainframe server at the office. Your Shard Card can be plugged into a Wi-Fi device called a **Blade**, which streams your user session to an attached monitor and keyboard. This allows employees to easily switch desks, show other people their session, or take their work home with them. Many corporations use Shard Cards for this reason.

These days, most PCs have Shard Card drives. They're often impractical for personal use, but many hackers use their own personal Shard Cards to remotely access their own rigs. Malicious hackers can modify them to launch evil maid attacks.

An **Open** Shard Card can be inserted into a network that isn't normally accessible remotely to grant a friendly Hacker remote access. These can be configured for one network during mission prep and can be reused if recovered.

A **Secure** Shard Card is tied to a specific user session, such as an office worker's session. A Hacker with a Secure card keyed to a specific Network can remotely access that Network from anywhere they want (though opening a session from an unusual location may get noticed later if the hacker doesn't cover their tracks.) In addition, they can turn Advantage into Boost once per mission when hacking that Network. These can not be reused, as compromised accounts usually get their cards unlinked, but are sometimes found on-site during missions.

An **Admin** Shard Card instantly grants admin access. However, these cannot be used by just any Blade—they *must* be inserted directly into the mainframe server. This generally requires a serious stealth mission into the heart of a sysadmin's lair—something only the bravest attempt. For some systems, it might be easier to brute force it.

Admin Cards are priceless. They cannot be bought; you may need to undertake a mission just to acquire one.

SKATEBOARD
Cost: 2. Rad, Specialized.

This is a skateboard[3]. It's pretty cool.

Specialized: You have Advantage to all rolls related to maneuvering, movement and looking rad if you have at least one skateboard-related Specialty.

THIEVING GEAR
Cost: 2. Illegal.

These tools, ranging from repurposed general gear to specialty lockpicks, help you with larceny. When you try to bypass an obstacle with a Security Level, you may spend 1 Prep to reroll once.

VEHICLE
Cost: 3 for small vehicles like scooters and motorcycles; 4 for larger vehicles with more carrying capacity.

You own, or have access to, a vehicle (you're assumed to know how to drive it.) Most vehicles on Grand Cross are scooters, bikes, or motorcycles; larger vehicles are usually business-related, as individual ownership is discouraged unless you're rich (see p. 105).

You can get around Grand Cross without relying on public transport or your Multipass (making it harder to electronically track you) in addition to ferrying loads and passengers beyond man-portable limits. Take +1 on any task if your vehicle can significantly help, such as ramming open a gate or pretending to be here on business. You also have Advantage when chasing or evading someone in your vehicle, so don't be afraid to try cool stunts.

VERIFIED ACCOUNT
Cost: Priceless. You have to become big or know someone.

A big account on one social media service (probably Pulser.) You only get a slap on the wrist for all but the most egregious actions, it's hard to block you, and you can fine-tune who gets access to you.

Take +1 on all Social actions made online. Once per session, when you Embarrass or Threaten someone online, you have Advantage on your roll. If you roll a critical on that Action—succeed or fail—you can claim this bonus again that session.

LOCATIONS

A location should be meaningful to the story. It can be a meeting point for your group, a source of mission hooks, or even a focal point of the plot[4]. If multiple characters get location Assets, consider combining them (p. 81) into one physical location to avoid splitting focus too much.

SAFEHOUSE
Cost: 5.

You have an especially out-of-the-way place: a hidden corner of the station basements, your apartment registered under another ID, a forgotten storage crate on a rooftop, a business's back room you rent under the table, etc. If you manage to get to your hideout undetected, no one can find you unless you want them to.

If your hideout is ever found, you lose this benefit, but can spend 2 Cash to set up a new one later.

SMALL LOCAL BUSINESS
Cost: 7.

You operate or own a small business: a corner store, a café, a modest rented office, a handyman business run out of a van, a tabletop gaming studio in your apartment's back room, etc. It gives you a little splash money to throw around. Gain 2 Cash at the beginning of a mission unless you suffer Economic Shock.

GYM
Cost: 6.

You own a gym. This can be a personal room in your apartment filled with equipment, or a small business. This can be a personal Gym or a business you operate. Twice per mission, you or an ally can take Advantage on a personal Prep roll made by training or mentally preparing yourself at the gym.

WORKSHOP
Cost: 7. Specialized.

You have a place for repairs and special preparations. This can range from a personal workbench or garage to a community hobby center. Once per mission, you can take Advantage on a group Prep roll.

Specialized: You can take Advantage on 1 group Prep roll per Specialty you have in your Workshop, and you can grant the benefits to your allies instead. Your Workshop Specialty can be used to repair, modify and make things in it.

3 You can also get similar Assets for roller skates, sports bikes, etc. They work the same way.

4 Maybe one day a corporate chain could threaten to take over your gym, and the next an unhoused kid who uses his gym membership to shower and charge his phone needs help. Find ways to get invested in it!

WEARABLES

Assets you wear.

BADASS HEADBAND

Cost: Priceless. They must be earned. Rad. Street Fighter Only.

Many wannabe headbands exist, but true dedication earns you the baddest of them all. Take +1 to Cool Defense while wearing a Badass Headband.

COMBAT ARMOR

Cost: 4. Obvious, Restricted.

While wearing this, you may always lower damage from enemy attacks by one Damage Track step for free. Take +1 to Tough Defense while wearing it.

Imported army surpluses, largely from the USA, have ensured local security forces have plenty of access. Wearing this negates the effect of any clothing you wear, such as the **Badass Headband** or the **Trendy Wardrobe**.

COVERT ARMOR

Cost: 3.

Discreet armor that is layered into and under clothing. Take +1 to Tough Defense while wearing it. Once per mission, you may reduce damage by one step on your Damage Track for free, but you no longer benefit from this Asset for the rest of the mission if you do.

FACIAL REC OBSCURERS

Cost: 1. Obvious

Odd makeup, haircuts, and subtler electronic devices. The styles these evoke have become fashionable on Grand Cross even when they're not functional.

When you want them to be functional, spend 1 Prep before going on a mission. Automated devices can't recognize you or match you to a database for that mission, though manual review of footage might. This fashion will give you street cred in bars and make every security guard follow you in polite society.

HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTION ARMOR

Cost: 4.

AKA "Nerd Armor." HPA is sewn into clothing; it can distort, project or blur the wearer's image, though it requires concentration and training. When you spend 1 Prep to activate it, add your Clever to your Quick Defense for the rest of the fight.

Each time you are hit by any attack, reduce the bonus this grants by 1, to a minimum of 0. You may refresh it to its maximum, one-to-one, by spending 1 Prep as part of any action.

Keep in mind that you usually can't wear two sets of armor at once (or you can, but they don't stack and you'll just get the wrong kind of hot.) You can combine them (p. 81) if you have good story reason and GM permission.

POWERED EXOSKELETON

Cost: 4. Obvious, Restricted.

This suit was designed for nurses and construction workers. It has only recently begun seeing use by military forces, as their battery life makes it impractical.

You have Advantage on all rolls involving exerting physical strength, such as jumping, climbing, lifting and pushing. If you roll a critical—succeed or fail—turn all Advantage on this roll into Boost instead. This can turn a failure into a success.

Special: If you get into a highly stressful situation that severely taxes the suit, like a fight or an extended chase scene, you must supercharge the exoskeleton (spend 1 Prep) to gain its benefits for that scene. At the end of the scene, unless you spend another 1 Prep, the battery fails and the suit enters low power mode, granting no benefit until your next session.

Special: This can also be bought as an Android or Full-Body Prosthetic-only Augment. An Augment variety does not need to spend Prep at the end of a scene. You can wear this in addition to any armor.

RIOTING GEAR

Cost: 2. Obvious, Rad.

This is a set of gear; you can choose to wear any number of these in any combination.

- **Gas Mask and Shatter-Resistant Flash Goggles:** You Boost your saves against flashbang and tear gas-style effects.
- **Padded Clothing Layers:** +1 Tough Defense.
- **Shield:** Grenades directed at you or allies behind you are at Disadvantage.

You can wear them in any combination. None of these items are Illegal, but the police will act like they are if they get an excuse.

TRENDY WARDROBE

Cost: 3. Rad.

In the distant future of 2020, this kind of clothing is called "fly." When you have time to change before a Social situation, choose a Mood. You have Advantage on all Social rolls while that Mood applies.

PROGRAMS

Assets used by hackers. To run a Program, you need a Hacking Suite Asset.

HACKING SUITE

Cost: 3.

A computer, laptop, or cyber-deck packed with script libraries, software, and saved forum threads. You need one of these to run programs effectively. With a Hacking Suite, you can have **1 Program Asset active at once per Hacking Specialty.**

DATA BOMB

Cost: 3. Program, Illegal.

You may spend 1 Prep to activate this during a hack. You gain Advantage on your next three Hacking rolls in this Network, and if it has an active administrator, they have Disadvantage on their next roll against you.

DATA MINER

Cost: 5. Program, Illegal.

You may spend 2 Prep to activate this during a hack. Any time you spend any personal Prep while hacking this network (including when you activate **Data Miner**), roll 1d6. On a 5+, gain 1 personal Prep.

Special: If something else provides a similar effect (e.g. the Soldier Talent "On-Site Procurement"), take +1 to your 1d6 roll for each extra effect.

GHOST PROTOCOLS

Cost: 3. Program, Illegal.

You may spend 1 Prep when you begin a hack to gain 1 additional chance on your Ghost and Boost your first Hacking action made within the network.

MEMORY WORM

Cost: 3. Program, Illegal.

You may spend 1-3 Prep to activate this during a hack. Until your Ghost is gone, reduce the Network's effective Level by 1 per 2 Prep spent, to a maximum of 3 Levels.

SUBVERSION SUBROUTINE

Cost: 2. Program, Critical, Illegal.

You may activate this when you begin a hack. The first time you roll a critical while hacking—succeed or fail—gain 1 personal Prep. You must spend the Prep on a hack on the same network or it is lost. When you activate this Program, you lose 1 chance on your Ghost.

HACKER BRANDS

Some players may wish to describe their Suites and Programs in more detail by talking about brand names and model numbers. These don't have any mechanical effects, so all you really need is a name. Here are a few example brands and names.

Asano (p. 231) doesn't officially make hacking suites, but they do make computer hardware for habitat maintenance and drone-mining systems, which sometimes gets repurposed into hacking decks. (Thanks to past family feuds, some hardware was designed to be.)

> ***Example Models:*** *Asano M50101 Series, Asano HyperHab II+, ASANO LSM-440X, Asano DroneStation T2.*

Law Zero makes its own hacking software and occasionally allows old versions to spread to other androids. The code is made by a cybercrime cell and enhanced by Olivaw (p. 259), who used to work as a Ring tech.

> ***Example Software:*** *h0m0ncul1, 2-XL, CH1M3R4, I Robot, M4rv-1N.*

LEETNet is a large tech forum with a section for pen testers. A lot of hackers have saved threads of useful advice from here. Some users create (or modify) their own software, which eventually finds its way into the hands of less ethical hackers.

> ***Example Software:*** *Closure's Drone Suite v2, Ghost Addon for CrossShark, Illithid.zip (SEE README FIRST), Jim's Hacking.*
>
> ***Thread Titles:*** *Vegetaboruto's Basic Guide To Computer Security, No Puns Please: The Pentest Thread Compendium, Is Multivac A Libertarian?, Zoraya's Coding Tips.*

DEATHPIZZA is an anonymous hacker (or possibly a collective) who periodically releases custom-made hacking software online in hopes that someone will screw over a corporation with it. Powerful effects, intentionally terrible UI aesthetics.

> ***Example Software:*** *DOCTOR_WORM, HAPPY FUN BALL, KILL_ALL_NERDS.EXE, GIANT_GAY_HEDGEHOG, PEPPERONI_PARADISE.*

Tetsuo (p. 241) makes consumer electronics; a lot of hackers swear by their hardware. Their software is intended for cyborg/android maintenance and internal security purposes only.

> ***Example Models:*** *Tetsuo Logos 2200, Tetsuo Solaris 780HD, Tetsuo Overdrive, Tetsuo Cyberspace Seven.*
>
> ***Example Software:*** *Tetsuo Crow 2.1, Hakutaku Script Library 4.0, Tetsuo Crashtest Advance 1.06.*

Zinovy (p. 242) makes hacking tools for internal testing use, but rumor has it that they sell them to the Cartel as well. A few of their tools have been cracked and adapted.

> ***Example Software:*** *Zinovy "Meduza", Zinovy "Sinyushka", Zinovy Test Suite 2016.*

DRONES

Drones are treated as one customizable Asset.

DRONE

Cost: 3. Add 1-3 tags for +2 Cost each.

A Drone is a remote-controlled machine, often flight-capable, that is designed for a specific task. The most obvious one to the modern corporate mind is surveillance, but the public loves them for professional and hobbyist camera work, home delivery of small items, and even for pure sport flight via VR controls. LED and neon-lit drone races are a common feature of the Grand Cross skyline in the evening.

Drones start with **3 Health** and **1 Drone tag**. You may buy additional tags for 2 Cash each, up to 3 total. Each tag can only be chosen once unless stated otherwise.

Drones must be actively controlled by their operator with the Pilot action (see below) and cannot be controlled outside the operator's visual range unless they have the Automated tag or have tags that include enhanced cameras.

You cannot spend Prep on your drone's actions, or to reduce damage it takes. You can only spend Prep to activate Assets it is equipped with (see below).

PILOT

When you use this action, you command your drone to perform an action for you. It acts immediately. Use the most relevant Specialty; if the focus of the action is your piloting skills or use of its tags, use your Piloting Specialty. You cannot spend Prep on your drone's actions, or to reduce the damage it takes. You may spend Prep to use any on-board Asset it is equipped with.

In a fight, attack rolls made with your drone use your Piloting Specialty. Melee attacks can only mark box 1 on the Damage Track regardless of your roll, unless the drone has a melee weapon attached. Drones cannot use the Grab action.

If you have the Personal Drone Talent, and you and your drone are in the same fight, you can use Pilot in addition to another action. If you both make an attack roll in the same turn, both are made at Disadvantage. You have to decide who is attacking before rolling.

DRONE TAGS

Automated: This drone can take pre-programmed instructions and perform them independently, even beyond the visual range of the operator. They cannot handle complex or changing situations without an operator, however.

Cargo Delivery: This drone can store, grab, and release small packages and handheld items.

Flight: The drone can fly, usually by means of a quad-rotor system. It functions in low gravity (e.g. the Moon) but not in vacuum.

Hardpoint: This drone has a space where an Asset can be attached, such as a First Aid Kit or grenades. Anything can be attached, provided the GM agrees it makes sense. The drone can use the Asset with a pilot's direction, following the normal rules for using it. The Asset can be switched out during downtime.

Improved Recording: All drones have basic sensors; this tag improves them. This drone can record high-quality photos, videos and audio, with optional night vision, motion tracking, and thermal vision components. This also allows you to operate the drone beyond visual range.

Loudspeaker: This drone can play audio, including loud noises. Copyrighted music in public spaces may get it shot down by police with a drone gun.

Onboard Piloting Camera System: This drone has a panoramic camera and VR/holographic headset control (it can also be connected to cybernetic eyes.) This system allows the drone to operate beyond visual range. If you take no other action while piloting a drone, take +1 to your Piloting rolls.

Sport: This drone is extremely maneuverable, light, and fast, even for a drone. It has Advantage on all rolls involving aerial maneuvers, getting somewhere quickly, chases, and similar tasks. Often comes with cool LED light strips and sports stripes.

Cell Network Surveillance (Illegal): This drone can monitor cellular phone networks and towers for traffic information, including data sent and received by individual cell phones. Only the police and Grand Cross Gendarmerie can use this legally.

Passive Surveillance (Illegal): This drone records audiovisual data and Wi-Fi use from nearby electronics and transfers all acquired information to a remote server for later sale (or use). The Cartel uses this for data harvesting, and the police use them for illegal surveillance. Private individuals cannot use this.

OPERATOR TAGS

Characters with the Personal Drone Talent (p. 68) have access to additional tags.

Additional Hardpoint: This follows all the normal rules for an Asset Hardpoint, except it can be taken more than once.

Armored: This drone can take an additional 2 damage before being destroyed.

Fine Manipulation: This drone has an arm or other manipulator that can be used for fine tasks, such as inserting and removing USB keys, typing on a keyboard, and lockpicking. These tasks use the pilot's most relevant Specialty as applicable.

Smart (replaces Automated): This functions like Automated, but the drone can react to complex and changing situations as if it were actively controlled. If it has a speaker it can talk like a person, though it only has weak AI.

A **Smart** drone can perform one action independently during its operator's turn if it hasn't been actively controlled. It has an effective Piloting Specialty of +0.

Space Shell: This drone is spaceworthy. Comes with a built-in RCS system for attitude control and propulsion. Use inside the station is Restricted.

POLICE DRONES

The basic police drone is the Prawn, a Tetsuo-made drone with the *Cargo Delivery*, *Flight*, and *Loudspeaker* tags.

The police have a variant called the King Prawn, which they usually reserve for serious investigations and anti-police protests. It has the *Automated*, *Flight*, and *Passive Surveillance* tags. The King Prawn passively captures data at all times and uploads it to a central police server where it's cross-referenced with police networks. This is illegal even for the police, but they don't tell anyone, so they've gotten away with it so far.

All Prawns have a unique feature: if a hack is detected, they self-destruct several key Wi-Fi components and attempt to return to base if possible.

A PC can acquire a jailbroken Prawn or King Prawn for 7 Cash as normal, but they are Illegal for non-cops. King Prawns can have a fourth tag (*Cell Network Surveillance*) for +2 Cash, but then they cannot be disguised as anything other than a King Prawn.

Target Assist: The drone has a laser pointer or other guidance system. As an action on your turn, this drone can target an opponent during a fight to grant Advantage to the first ranged attack made against them. It does not make an attack as part of this action. Only one opponent can be targeted at a time.

This feature comes with Wi-Fi dongles, goggle add-ons, apps, and other things that friendly characters can use to get the benefits, as required.

ECM Hardening (Restricted): This drone is immune to ECM-based attacks, like drone guns. Originally intended for Station Security and military hardware.

Improved Sensor Package (Illegal): This drone has military-grade sensors like laser microphones, LIDAR, and radar. It can effectively listen to conversations through windows and see shapes through walls. (This isn't full HD color vision: you see shapes, or thermal images. Some walls and windows can also be treated to defeat this type of system.) You are definitely not allowed to have this.

Stealthy (Illegal): This drone cannot be detected by normal electronic means (like radar and cell network triangulation.) For the military and Station Security only.

CUSTOM TAGS

Your group can create their own tags. For example, if you want to converse with people through a drone and aren't satisfied with voice only, you could create a tag that adds a holographic projector or flat-panel screen, plus a speaker (but not a loud one, to avoid supplanting Loudspeaker.)

If the tag seems too complicated for the average person, too illegal for a corporation to casually get away with, or too specialized for commercial operation, it's an Operator tag.

ILLEGAL TAGS

Illegal tags can only be repaired with Restricted drone parts, which only police and private security can buy.

WEAPONS

For when things go south.

Like Drones, weapons are defined by their tags. Aside from the standard Asset tags on p. 80, they have a few of their own unique tags. All weapons have one of these two tags:

Melee: This weapon can make melee attacks.

Ranged: This weapon can make ranged attacks.

GUNS

Guns are rare and tightly controlled on Grand Cross (p. 119); they're only available at all because corporations want to make money selling them. Like Drones, all guns start with a base Asset:

GUN

`Cost: 3. Ranged, Critical, Ammo, Restricted.`

When you get a gun, add a **Brand tag** to it. You may also add a **Gun tag**. On a critical, the target marks 1 higher box on the Damage Track than normal.

Brand Tags

All guns have a tag representing their creator:

Ogremoch: Ogremoch guns take many types of ammo via a revolutionary self-adjusting chamber and barrel mechanism. You may reload an Ogremoch gun once per mission for free.

Omnidyne: Omnidyne weapons have sleek, classic designs with no gimmicks. They are popular with gun nerds. Once per scene, so long as the Mood is Friendly, you may mention to a gun enthusiast that you own an Omnidyne gun to take +1 to your next Social Action against them.

Tetsuo: Tetsuo weapons have Wi-Fi and come with a targeting app. So long as you have cybernetic eyes or goggles with a HUD, the first time you fail an attack roll with a Tetsuo gun during a fight, you may reroll it. The app that comes with it is easy to jailbreak, sucks, and grants no bonus.

Zinovy Ultragraphics: Zinovy is getting into 3D printing lately, and they don't sell guns so much as a license. If you lose or ditch your weapon, you can use your phone to request a new copy from any Zinovy 3D printing facility or print a new one at home (using a Zinovy-brand resin cartridge). They biodegrade after a set period, so refresh regularly.

For other brands, you may come up with other tags or rebrand existing ones. Most Earth-based brands have the same effect as the Omnidyne tag, because gun enthusiasts are impressed by your extra effort at consumer culture.

Gun Tags

All guns have the **Ammo** tag. Additional tags can be purchased as addons for **2 Cash** each.

Ammo: After any scene in which this weapon is used, it must be reloaded by spending 1 Prep or become useless for the rest of the session. (Guns can always be used as a **Melee** weapon with no tags, though.)

Automatic or Shotgun: At short ranges, this gun can attack multiple opponents at once—three to five people if they're clustered together. This also opens up options for the `Distract` and `Flush Out` actions.

Biometric Safety: The pros are this gun can only be used by you. The cons are it's easy to prove it's yours. This only functions on organic human hands.

Sniping (Illegal): This gun can attack across long distances with preparation and aiming (at least 2 actions spent doing nothing else.) It is too unwieldy to use in mid- to close-range fights.

Suppressor: This gun is quieter than normal. It won't immediately alert people in public, and doesn't break Stealth—though there's still sound, so using it is Risky.

Switchable Magazine: You can have two types of ammo (p. 89) in your gun at once, and switch between them as part of your attack actions. Can be advanced tech or duct tape. You must spend Prep to reload each type of Ammo separately.

EXAMPLE GUN

Mira needs a new gun. She already has a License, so she can do it legally. She buys one for 3 Cash. It comes with a brand, so she chooses *Ogremoch*. She also buys the *Silencer* addon—it doesn't come with that, so she spends 2 Cash. It now has the *Ranged*, *Critical*, *Ammo*, *Restricted*, *Ogremoch* and *Silenced* tags.

Later, she buys AP rounds to add the *Armor-Piercing* tag, for another 2 Cash.

Special Ammo

Special Ammo for your gun can be purchased separately, for **2 Cash** each. When you reload your gun, you may load your Special Ammo instead of basic ammo. As an action, you can spend 1 Prep to load in a new type of Special Ammo as an action.

Armor-Piercing: On a critical against an armored target, the target must mark a damage box on the Damage Track 2 higher than normal instead of 1. Against an unarmored target, this gun loses its critical effects.

Hollowpoint: Against unarmored or soft targets (humans, small/commercial drones, standard androids,) treat your roll as if it were 2 higher for the purposes of damage only. Against armored or reinforced targets, treat it as -2 lower instead and this gun loses its critical effects.

Melee Weapons

For when you want your guilt to feel more up-close and personal.

Melee Weapon

`Cost: 0 for improvised/repurposed weapons, 2 if it's designed to be a weapon. Melee.`

All melee weapons have one **Type** tag (see below), chosen when you take it.

Special: If your melee weapon doesn't have the **Big** or **Stun** tags, you can make it a **Ranged** weapon for 1 attack roll by throwing it. You lose it until (or unless) you pick it up again.

Type Tags

Different types of weapons have different effects[5].

Hefty: This weapon gets the **Critical** tag. On a critical success, you knock your target flat. They may lose their held weapon, fall prone, drop out of cover or from a high place, get the wind knocked out of them, or another consequence the GM deems fit. (For clubs, hammers, pipes, shovels, chains, knuckle dusters, etc.)

Sharp: This weapon gets the **Critical** tag. On a critical success, the target marks 1 higher damage box than normal. (For swords, knives, spikes, etc.)

Stun: Damage boxes marked by this weapon are Stunned. A Stunned box doubles the penalty from that damage box, if applicable, until cleared[6]. Stunned boxes clear at the end of a fight. (For tasers, electric batons, prods, live electric wires, etc.)

Big: This weapon is both **Sharp** and **Hefty**, but needs two hands to wield and becomes **Obvious**. (Why would you bring a Scottish claymore to a space station?)

Unarmed Attacks

Unarmed attacks have no Type tag. If you're not a trained martial artist, you might hurt yourself depending on what you're hitting.

Example Weapon

Fia uses a sturdy, high-grade shovel as part of her work. When used as a weapon, it has the *Melee* and Big tags. Note that it's not always inappropriate to be carrying it just because it's *Obvious*: use your judgment!

Grenades

Look, I'll level with you: if you are at the point where you're the one tossing the tear gas grenades, it's time to question some of your choices. Anyway, here are grenades.

Grenades

`Cost: 4. Ranged, Illegal.`

All Grenades have one **Type tag** (see below), chosen when you take it.

Grenades always cost 1 Prep to use. Grenades can attack multiple opponents at once—3 to 5 people if they're clustered together. This also opens up options for the Distract and Flush Out actions. Some Grenades may have an effect even if they don't directly hit.

Type Tags

Flashbang: This grenade deals no damage. Instead, targets hit must make a Quick save vs the Attack roll. On a failure, the target becomes Disoriented until they can make a Cool save vs 10 at the end of their turn. Disoriented targets have Disadvantage on attack and defense rolls, and cannot see or hear while Disoriented. Protection (p. 84) Boosts these saves.

5 `These aren't meant to restrict the things you can do, so be creative! Normally you can't grab someone without using your hands, but if the group thinks it'd make sense to use a chain to do it, go with it!`

6 `If you're running a simple opponent (p. 322) and they get hit with a Stun attack after losing half their Health, you can just treat them as incapacitated.`

Frag: This grenade gets the **Critical** tag. On a critical, the target marks 1 higher damage box than normal. Failed attack rolls are always treated as a hit that exactly matches your opponents' Defense—unless you roll a critical failure. If used in an enclosed space, treat all hits as critical.

High Explosive: If you throw this grenade directly at a target and hit, the target marks 1 higher damage box than normal, and any other targets caught in the blast mark the lowest remaining damage box as Stunned (p. 89). If used in an enclosed space, every target is directly hit.

Smoke: You don't make attacks with this grenade. Instead, it creates dense smoke that prevents visibility in the area—perfect for enabling stealth, running away, preventing ranged attacks, and so on. You have Advantage on any action that conceivably benefits from smoke.

Tear Gas: This grenade deals no damage. Instead, targets hit must make a Tough save vs the Attack roll. On a failure, they take -2 on all rolls until they make a Tough save vs the original Attack roll at the end of your turn. On a success, they take -1 instead. Protection (p. 84) or access to medical aid Boosts both saves, and targets can also recover by getting out of the gas for a while to recuperate. If used in an enclosed space, all targets have Disadvantage on all saves against this grenade.

GRENADE LAUNCHER

Cost: 3, or 5 for a rocket launcher.
Ranged, Illegal

This weapon is designed to shoot grenades rather than throw them. It lets you justify using grenades from further away than your throwing distance; it doesn't change how they work otherwise. It can be its own gun or a tactical attachment to a rifle or shotgun. Grenades must be bought separately.

You can also use it to functionally represent a rocket launcher (with purchased "grenades" you can't throw.)

EDGE CASE WEAPONS

Examples of weapons that are a bit weird[7].

NAILGUN

Cost: 0, or 2 if you actually want to buy one for some reason.
Ranged.

An improvised ranged weapon, made by clamping down the safety that would prevent you from shooting nails at people. This also covers rivet guns and similar. It has no other special qualities.

PEPPER SPRAY

Cost: 2. Melee, Tear Gas.

A bottle of aerosol self-defense spray. It deals no damage. Instead, targets hit must make a Tough save vs the Attack roll. On a failure, they take -2 on all rolls until they make a Tough save vs the original Attack roll at the end of your turn.
On a success, they take -1 instead. Protection (p. 84) or access to medical aid Boosts both saves.

STICKY SHOCKER

Cost: 4. Ranged, Stun

This is a gun that fires **Stun** (p. 89) projectiles. They're not in common use even by law enforcement, so their origin is something of a mystery. The ammo is unique, making this weapon expensive. This can also represent a tranquilizer gun, which isn't easy to get human-compatible ammo for (and doesn't work on androids or drones).

This weapon is not Illegal, but they're so rare that Acquiring one is as hard as if it were.

MAKING NEW WEAPONS

If the situation calls for it, you can create your own weapon tags. Try to model it off an existing tag, or at least make it of equal power as the existing tags.

For example, say Jupiter is attacked by a Dreamer (p. 300) in a factory and grabs a blowtorch as an improvised weapon. The GM comes up with a *Torch* tag: the weapon gains the *Critical* tag, and on a critical success, it Burns the damage box marked on the Damage Track. Burned boxes cannot be cleared during a mission, even if it's a minor injury.

7 There are no rules for poisons. Poisons are generally too slow-acting to matter during the average fight, and not even the Cartel makes poison weaponry; they don't want to get sued for poisoning people, especially not when they can dismantle environmental regulations and do it legally.

CYBERNETIC AUGMENTS

"The American physician Hermann Biggs once said, 'The human body is the only machine for which there are no spare parts.' *Tetsuo is proud to announce that we have proven him wrong."*

– Kanemasa Gou, investor presentation, 2011

Cybernetic augmentation is a part of life on Grand Cross. Here's how they work. For more about cybernetics in the setting, see p. 120.

STARTING OUT

Any character may start with one or more Augments. The main limit is that you can't end up with more parts than you started with: only two eyes, two arms, and so on. The exception is a tail; turns out the human brain can adapt to having one of those.

The other limit is that unless stated otherwise, **Augments increase your Burden** (p. 53).

HOW IT WORKS

Cybernetics are designed with the needs of the person in mind. Every single one is, on some level, a custom piece adjusted for a specific individual and their needs, except when they're adjusted for the needs of their job, or when a different one would cost their employer less money, or their health care plan doesn't cover it, or it's a second-hand item, or the company re-uses an old part without telling them, or the augmentation was overseen by a male doctor who noticed the patient was a woman and decided they knew better, or someone involved in the process was a bigot, or the designer didn't feel like it, or the government introduced new budget cuts, or it's 4:50PM on a Friday.

Other than that, wherever possible, it's designed for their needs.

Augments must be installed by trained doctors. Most of the work involves fitting nerve connectors and supports on the body; once the actual Augment is fabricated, connecting it is relatively easy. Afterward, the parts not directly connected to the body can be maintained by engineers.

DESIGNING AUGMENTS

First, decide what it's **intended** to do. Choose a skill or job it's designed for, and an associated Specialty. As long as you have this Augment installed, you get **+1 Specialty**.

This can be any type of Specialty that you can justify. However, Augments that add Defense Specialties or weapons are **Restricted** hardware, and you need a good reason to have them. (Also, remember that you can't surpass the cap of +3 for any one Specialty.)

Next, decide if it **enhances** its intended function. Does it have in-built tools or sensors? Does it come with a special onboard computer? Is it just really good at punching Nazis? Write it down.

Finally, decide the **location** it's installed in. Usually this is obvious: hand Augments replace your hand, arm Augments replace your arm (and can accept a different hand Augment on the end), and so on. If there's no specific location you have to install that Wi-Fi hotspot, it's your choice.

OTHER FUNCTIONS

Some Augments don't grant a Specialty at all, but instead grant some other useful function like hidden compartments, weapons, tools, or new abilities like zero-gravity stabilizers or an old-fashioned rocket punch. These will always have "Instead of a Specialty..." in their description.

COSMETIC AUGMENTS

Purely cosmetic Augments don't really have an associated Burden cost. They don't have any mechanical weight, so there's no reason to pay a cost for them. Your character is probably paying for them, but they're common and simple enough that the costs aren't worth tracking.

This includes simple appearance mods like cat ears and subdermal lights, but also larger things like cybernetic limbs, if they don't give any bonuses. A simple, mostly-plastic cybernetic arm that approximates human function and has no other benefits does not need a Burden cost.

You may include them when describing your Burden or the effects of Economic Shocks, though (struggling with things you shouldn't have to struggle for is the point of those mechanics.)

MEDICAL AUGMENTS

Purely medical Augments work like cosmetic Augments, for the same reason: they have no mechanical effects, so there's no reason to add a cost to them. In-game, they're generally either covered by the station's health system or are easy to pay for.

These include smaller or internal Augments like immune system boosters and HRT regulators, as well as larger things like cyber-hearts and simple cybernetic limbs. If you get cybernetic hands to avoid carpal tunnel but they don't do anything special, they're free; if you get hands that improve your Hacking Specialty, then it'll cost you.

ANDROIDS AND CYBERNETICS

As mechanical beings, androids are easier to augment than humans. The Android Origin (see Origins, p. 26) allows them to start with one Augment without increasing their Burden; further Augments increase their Burden as normal.

They can also switch between their Augments easier than humans. An android who can afford multiple sets of cyber-eyes could, in theory, carry them around in a special eye case and swap them in and out as needed. However, it takes time for them to disconnect, reconnect, adjust settings, and reacclimate; they certainly couldn't do it in the middle of an action sequence. (Also, people will think it's creepy.)

EXAMPLE CYBORG

Maka is an ex-cop. She received a cybernetic eye on the job, then got kicked out for accidentally leaving the built-in camera on.

Her eye is fitted with a simple scanner that can, in theory, read barcodes, license plates, retinas, faces, and more. She no longer has access to the official police database and she's not super comfortable with the face thing, but its remaining functions (and a little creativity) give her +1 Investigation.

As part of its functions, she's able to take silent videos or pictures (though she lacks the storage space to record constantly.) Also, since the eye was designed for cops, she may be able to justify Bullshitting people into thinking she's law enforcement when necessary.

FULL-BODY PROSTHETICS

The technology required to build androids also advanced the field of cybernetics enough to allow for almost fully artificial bodies, referred to medically as full-body prosthetics. People with full-body prosthetics are fully cybernetic, except for their brain.

Full-body prosthetics are usually installed after serious accidents and diseases, especially when the recipient had an employer who could be sued otherwise. This is an evolving field, so some people are offered the procedure for scientific research purposes.

Although they are marvels of modern science, the procedure is not undertaken lightly, even to save lives. Some people suffer dysphoria, disassociation, and similar ailments. It's not uncommon for full-body cyborgs to feel emotionally distant from other people, or even feel like they lack identity at all; these cyborgs often find themselves in marginalized spaces where they bond with people who understand and empathize with their condition.

Of course, other cyborgs love it. It's all a matter of perspective.

A human who has undergone the full-body prosthetic procedure may use Augments the same way Androids do, keeping extra augments as Assets and exchanging them freely (see p. 26-28).

APPEARANCE

Augments that replace visible parts of the body are **Obvious**—unless you're an android.

If you want to remove the Obvious tag, you can get Augments that are near-identical to the replaced parts, with synthetic skin or special plastics where necessary. This is a custom sculpting and design job, treated as a separate Asset with **Cost 5**. Illegal Augments are usually non-Obvious.

CREATING MODS

You can create your own mods, for yourself or for a friend. This requires an appropriate Specialty (e.g. Augmetics) and a Clever + Specialty vs 10 roll.

You reduce the cost by 1 for each 3 points you surpass 10 by, to a minimum of 0. This takes as much time as Acquiring an Asset.

If you can't pay the Cost after rolling, or critically fail, the augment instead stops functioning properly until the next session—it still works, but bonus Specialties and anything beyond normal human function does not.

MOD TAGS

Some cyborgs get their cybernetics modified after installation. Grand Cross has a few licensed shops that will do this—usually android repair shops—and some unlicensed people that offer their services under the table.

For **2 Cash**, you can choose a Mod Tag for your Augments. An Augment can have multiple mods.

ECM-Hardened: This mod hardens your cybernetics against disabling attacks, specifically electromagnetic attacks like drone guns (p. 81). If the police spot your hardened Augments, they may assume you are attempting to defend against their illegal use of drone guns for crowd control and become Hostile.

Jailbroken: This mod voids your warranty but prevents corporate interests from tracking your Augment repairs or harvesting your data. Some Augments may have additional effects when jailbroken. The service itself is **Illegal**, but having a jailbroken Augment is not.

Overclocked: This mod can be applied to any Augment that has limited uses or costs Prep to activate. It grants 1 extra use per session/mission or makes the first activation each session cost 1 less Prep, whichever is relevant.

Rad: This mod changes the cosmetic appearance of the Augment to look cooler (e.g. clear colored plastic, cool spikes, etc.) This only costs **1 Cash**, but it's **free** if you have access to a 3D printer.

INSTALLING AUGMENTS

Getting a new Augment (not just replacing an old one) is a complicated process. Generally, getting augmented and recovering enough to return to your normal life takes about as long as it would to recover from an injury (p. 47). Fully acclimating may take longer—after being augmented, consider describing some of your failed rolls as trouble adjusting.

COMMON AUGMENTS

These are Augments you'll most likely find in daily life, making up 95% of all commercial Augments on Grand Cross. All are **Cost 3**.

SPECIALIZED AUGMENTS

The most basic form of Augment, and by far the most common among the station's working and middle classes. This Augment covers a huge variety of designs and brands. Add **+1 to one chosen Generic Specialty**, up to the normal maximum of +3.

ATHLETIC LEGS

Legs were one of the first types of prosthetic to become a proper Augment, and the modern versions can surpass biological limitations. Couriers face significant pressure to get these on the job, but their average career lasts roughly two years.

This Augment replaces both legs. You have **Advantage on all rolls to run, jump, do parkour, and similar feats**. Never apply this to attack rolls, even if you make one as part of a move.

CYBER-EYES

These eyes can see beyond the visible human spectrum, zoom and enhance, see in low light, and even play back video, play VR games, or open internet browsers. A variety of Assets, such as Wi-Fi-capable guns and VR-piloted drones, can connect directly into Cyber-eyes.

These eyes allow you to justify noticing things that normal people can't (though nothing too privacy-invading, like seeing people through walls.) You can get the ability to record and share what you see for another **1 Cash**, but the purchase gets registered and some cops in your area might suddenly start recognizing your face.

A popular brand is the ‘"LMJ eyes," the proceeds of which go to a Cartel-operated "Cyberneurosis Awareness Fund" whose goal is to get cyberneurosis recognized as a medical condition.

Special: If you jailbreak this Augment, you can selectively disable the Wi-Fi components and directly connect to relevant Assets with wires instead, preventing remote hacking (although good luck connecting a wire to a drone.)

CYBER-HEART

Human Only

Most people who get this already needed heart transplants, but their effectiveness is undeniable. They include regulators and additional blood filtration for any stressful situation, tweaked for your social or physical stress needs. Choose one: **+1 to all Cool Saves**, or **+1 to all Tough Saves**. You can buy this Augment a second time to receive both benefits for the one heart.

FRIENDLY DESIGN

Android or Full-Body Prosthetic Only

Your body has been upgraded with aftermarket parts to be especially pleasant, elegant, and with any flaws easily overlooked, like any other appliance. **Once per mission, you may reroll a critical failure on any Social or Stealth roll.**

HIDDEN COMPARTMENT

Any Augment can have hollows in them to hide objects from casual inspection. These Augments, always built into other Augments, go further. Hand-held Assets (that make sense) are **undetectable to scanners and detectors** when hidden in this compartment. The compartment can also be cooled, to keep drinks in. It takes an Action to open and retrieve an Asset from the compartment.

Special: You can choose to make this compartment fit a specific item instead, such as a weapon (razors hidden under fingernails are oddly popular), cigars, or data sticks. You can retrieve this hidden item instantly.

INTEGRATED ASSET

Choose an Asset. It is integrated into a limb of your choice, at no additional Cost. You can integrate anything that makes sense, such as a **First Aid Kit** (p. 81), a **Drone Gun** (p. 81), or **Thieving Gear** (p. 83). Gain **+1 to a Generic Specialty** related to the use of that Asset. If it is a Specialized Asset, gain an Item Specialty instead.

MEDICAL AUGMENTS

Medical Augments function as described on p. 92. Some other Augments note that they have medical versions; these versions are free but give no mechanical benefits.

MOOD DETECTOR

Subdermal and eye sensors loaded with analysis software that compiles facial expression, body language, temperature, and even heartbeats that can help detect and analyze people's moods. Though software struggles to do this reliably, it's proven a success with people who have difficulty navigating social situations.

On your first critical success on any Social roll against a person, you can ask what the other person's current emotional state is. You will get a true answer. This works once per mission, per person.

Special: If you **Jailbreak** this Augment and the target is human, you can also detect their internal Augments, if any. You don't automatically know what they are, but you at least have a rough idea of location.

SENSORY FILTER

These eye implants were originally designed to help with hypersensitivity issues but go far beyond that today. They can be built into cyber-eyes or implanted into the ocular nerve and ear canal.

With this Augment, **you cannot be adversely affected by sudden flashes of light and loud noises**, including Flashbang grenades, and your eyes adjust to changing light immediately. You can also filter out bad smells, though chemicals designed to irritate your senses like Tear Gas still work. As a side effect, the filters sharpen the senses. **Take +1 on all rolls to notice something unusual or hidden.**

"SMART" BODY SYSTEM

You've heard of smart homes, now get ready for the Tetsuo Smart Body! It can precisely control all your Augments, monitor and adjust your internals and blood levels, and put it all in a convenient app. All it takes is installing a Wi-Fi hot spot inside you and signing this fifty-page license agreement!

With this Augment, you can act as a Wi-Fi hotspot. All attempts to use medicine or First Aid on you for any reason have Advantage.

Special: Don't get this unless you **Jailbreak** it. You can, but don't. If you do **Jailbreak** it, you can turn the Wi-Fi off, which you should do permanently. If you **Jailbreak** this Augment, your biological data is instead sent to your phone (via skin contact) or displayed somewhere visible, and your location data isn't sent anywhere.

SPACER BUILD

Android or Full-Body Prosthetic Only

You can't buy this Augment from just any store: it's a street design passed down from the Builders who modified their own bodies to survive the stresses of construction work, found mostly in side-street repair shops. Once per Mission, for one action, you may ignore the effects of all your marked damage boxes without spending Prep.

SPRING LEGS

Spring Legs were originally a hacked variant of commercial athletic legs, designed for low-gravity sports. These days they're mostly created by smaller designer companies.

Spring Legs **Boost all rolls relating to running, or jumping high or long distances**. On a critical—succeed or fail—the user must make a **Quick save vs 7** or mark damage box 1 as they crash hard. Never apply this to attack rolls, even if you make one as part of a move.

Special: These can also come as an Asset, in shoe form. The Quick save for these is **vs 10**.

STOMACH

Android or Full-Body Prosthetic Only

You can ingest human food, to take part in socialization. This comes with taste and olfactory receptors which reportedly come close to human ones, plus a readout in your eye of your food's composition. You can dispose of the undigested food later or, if you remembered to drink stomach cleaner first, take it out and serve it to someone else (that's weird, though).

This has the unintended secondary effect that you can harmlessly taste non-food items to chemically analyze them, including medicines, liquids, and poisons. You can even taste gases and analyze blood. If you can't identify the substance immediately, you and your allies take +1 on all future rolls to figure out what it is.

WORK-ENHANCING SUITES

This is a catch-all term for a variety of specialized Augments designed for workers. It covers dozens of brands, hundreds of off-the-shelf and custom designs, and every manufacturer.

Choose one Generic Specialty. When you're not in danger or in a hurry, you may **reroll any roll using that Generic Specialty**, once per session.

Special: Due to manufacturer incompatibility, software licensing and so on, you may normally only take this Augment once. If you **Jailbreak** it, you may choose another, for a total of 2. The second will also be Jailbroken.

RESTRICTED AND ILLEGAL AUGMENTS

These Augments have **Cost 4**, for their relative rarity, unique design needs, or cutting-edge (and therefore not fully tested) nature.

CHRONOLOGICAL PERCEPTION DILATOR

Restricted

Another cutting-edge brain implant which affects how human brains perceive time. Users can perceive it slower, gaining the appearance of improved reaction time and delayed pain response. Aside from the unknown long-term effects, it has also led to car accidents, circadian rhythm disruptions and aggravation of injuries. **Take +1 to either Quick Defense or Tough Defense**, chosen when you get the Augment. This is not a Specialty. (You can buy this again and choose both.)

COMBAT AUGMENTS

Illegal

These Augments are **Restricted** to current and former military or security personnel and are **Illegal** to others. Most are manufactured by Ogremoch and Omnidyne, though Tetsuo has made inroads lately.

Add **+1 to one chosen Specialty**, up to the normal maximum of +3. (Unlike Specialized Augments, these can be any Specialty.) Common examples include subdermal armor and reflex enhancers.

Special: Due to strain on your system, you may only have one Combat Augment unless you're an android or have a full-body prosthetic.

COMBAT INJECTOR

Restricted

A military implant that injects psychoactive drugs directly into a soldier's bloodstream on command, often found among retired post-Impact veterans who "forgot" to have it disabled. Examples of drug effects include suppressing hunger, increasing alertness and wakefulness, suppressing fear, reducing empathy, and heightening reflexes. You may spend 1 Prep at the beginning of a fight to take **+1 to all saves** during that fight.

CORTICAL IMPLANT

Human Only

This cutting-edge brain implant was designed to assist with neurological symptoms, ranging from epilepsy to Alzheimer's. Then someone managed to overclock it, and now rich tech people are turning it into a self-improvement mod. (Any long-term effects of sticking new technology in your brain are your problem.)

Choose one: **+1 to all Clever saves**, or **+1 to all Quick saves**. (You can buy this again and choose both.) Interface issues have so far prevented the overclocked variety from being useful to androids and patients with full-body prosthetics, but the medical benefits still apply.

EMOTION AMPLIFIER

Illegal

This Augment is a hack of a medical implant meant to enhance hormone production and uptake in patients. It enhances the extremes of your emotional highs and lows. To be fair, it was mostly intended to let you get high easier, but to be real, a high percentage of users get hurt because of it, and quite a few suffer long-term complications and trauma.

At the start of a fight or other stressful situation, you may spend 1 Prep to gain **Advantage on all rolls** except saves during that situation—and **Disadvantage on all saves**.

If you critically fail any roll while this Augment is active, your implant overloads, the effect ends, and you crash. Mark your lowest unmarked damage box on your Damage Track as **Crashed**. While you are Crashed, you suffer Disadvantage on all rolls.

EMOTION SUPPRESSOR

Restricted

This Augment suppresses emotional extremes: fear, empathy, the fight-or-flight response, aggression and so on. This is meant to be a medical treatment for extreme mood swings, so may cause extreme antisocial behaviors with improper use.

Take **+1 to either Cool Defense or Clever Defense**, chosen when you get the Augment. This is not a Specialty. (You can buy this again and choose both.)

HEAVY ARMOR FRAME
Restricted, Android or Full-Body Prosthetic Only

You are sturdily constructed. Against enemy attacks, you may always **reduce damage by 1 step on your Damage Track for free**.
Take **+1 Tough Defense**. This does not stack with Combat or Covert Armor, but isn't as Obvious.

NOOTROPIC INJECTOR
Illegal, Human Only

A variant of the Combat Injector. This one is Illegal largely because many users tend to use non-approved medicines to improve performance and reduce sleep. The use of this implant is also designed to be long-term rather than momentary, with no studies having been done with regards to side effects. Common among wealthy people in the tech industry, who rarely get in trouble for having it.

When rolling Prep for a mission, you count as having 1 extra day to prepare, and may use 1 Generic Specialty twice. If you suffer Economic Shock, you must choose to suffer Disadvantage to either Clever or Cool rolls before choosing your regular consequences.

ROCKET FISTS
Restricted

This street-designed Augment was considered gimmicky by most people, but Omnidyne has begun marketing a professional version as self-defense technology. They're Restricted because some asshole registered his rocket fists as a lethal weapon for a marketing gimmick once.

Rocket fists can be pneumatically launched, literal rockets, or attached to your limb via steel cable for retraction. Your unarmed attacks gain the **Ranged** tag. If your limb can't retract or return for any reason, you have Disadvantage on unarmed attacks until it is recovered.

COMBINING AUGMENTS
You can combine multiple types of Augments into one part of your body, as long as it sounds plausible.

For example, you could have a Work-Enhancing Suite and a Specialized Augment in the same arm, or Xander's (p. 334) hormone regulator medical implant being Jailbroken to include an Illegal aftermarket Combat Injector.

These Augments follow the same rules as normal, and each component Augment still increases Burden separately.

SURVEILLANCE SUITE
Illegal

A set of surveillance implants, sometimes sardonically called "spyware" in the business world. This can include cell network triangulation, laser microphones, LIDAR, radar, or other such things.

With this Augment and time to prepare, you can **see through walls and listen through closed windows**. (This isn't full HD color vision: you see shapes or thermal images. Some walls and windows can also be treated to defeat this type of system.)

Special: This Augment is always Illegal. No license can cover or explain owning this.

NEW AUGMENTS AND ASSETS
You're free to create new Augments and Assets. If it's something important that doesn't need a mechanical effect, like an important NPC owing you a favor, you can just write it down. If it should have a mechanical effect, try to find an existing one similar to what you want to achieve, then base the Cost and effect off that.

For example: Emily is playing a cyborg with a full-body prosthetic. Her character is a musician, so she wants her body to come with an integrated DJ function, with loudspeakers, live music mixing and a microphone.

She decides to create an Asset for it, then use the Integrated Asset Augment to install it in her body. After thinking about it, she decides to use the effect of Thieving Gear (granting a reroll in a specific situation by spending Prep,) but changes the situation and increases the Cost by 1 (music equipment is more expensive.) Now she just prays her GM doesn't realize she's made a Vocaloid.

The final Asset looks like this:

MUSIC GEAR
Cost: 3.

This portable equipment lets you set up impromptu concerts on the go. You still need time to set it up and transport it. When you make a Social roll against a crowd with music, you may spend 1 Prep to reroll your roll once.

AUGVERTS

by Alexander Blechman

On Grand Cross, corporations are always looking for innovative and intrusive ways of cramming ads into new places. This quest led to "**augvertising**"—the seamless union of advertising and augmentation.

People that can't afford augmentation, or prefer a bargain, can sign up as a marketing affiliate to receive a free augmentation. These "Augverts" function like a regular Augment of the player's choice, but **do not increase Burden**. Instead, they come at the price of turning the wearer into a walking billboard.

You can only take 1 Augvert per character; brands get jealous easily.

SITUATIONAL PENALTIES

In addition to being branded with garish logos, Augverts are programmed with ad software that can be very inconvenient or embarrassing. It's hard to be sneaky when your robotic arm is loudly playing a jingle for a mouthwash brand. You won't make a good impression at a swanky party when your eye implant is projecting a rotating hologram of a cheeseburger above your head for all to see.

At the GM's discretion, actions requiring stealth, subterfuge, or personal dignity can be harder to pull off with an Augvert. Your implant might draw unwanted attention, lower the Mood, grant Disadvantage, grant Advantage to an opponent's roll, or have other negative effects.

Depending on how noticeable your Augvert is, certain actions may be virtually impossible, like trying to pose as a cop (who aren't allowed to have Augverts unless they're police propaganda or private security services) or a rich person (who wouldn't be caught dead with one.) Simply spotting your Augvert will cause people to make assumptions about your financial and social status.

Add whatever penalty feels appropriate to the situation. Don't overdo it—an Augvert should hinder PCs occasionally, but not constantly.

AMBIENT MARKETING FEATURES

The main drawback to Augverts is their Ambient Marketing Feature, or AMF—how the Augvert advertises its parent company and their partners. The AMF varies depending on model. The better the Augvert, the more AMFs it has, though most have just one.

When you add an Augvert to your character, consult with the GM and select one or more of the following AMFs as a downside.

Hologram

A large and highly visible animated hologram is projected above your head. It cycles through product-appropriate images like condensation-encrusted soda cans, smiling actresses showing off teeth whitening strips, or sizzling burger patties hitting the grill. The hologram is blessedly silent, but this glowing beacon makes it extremely hard to avoid being spotted or to blend into a crowd.

Commercial Break

Unless it's nighttime and you're trying to sleep, your Augvert occasionally blasts a 30 second audio ad at high volume: an obnoxious mix of catchy jingles and voice actors pitching a product. While it's playing, the ad is accompanied by a small cloud of holographic emojis that swarm around your body.

You don't usually have to track when it goes off; it's just a minor annoyance you can roleplay out. In situations where it could cause a problem (sneaking, swaying a crowd with an eloquent speech, etc.), roll 1d6. If you roll 3 or lower, you play a commercial and suffer the resulting fallout.

Targeted Ad

Each time you begin speaking to a stranger or a crowd, your Augvert scans their appearance and plays a 30 second commercial aimed at their demographic. These ads take the form of holographic pop-up windows that float around your body, showing loud video clips that are difficult to speak over.

After the commercial ends, it won't play another ad for the same people until some time has passed. You suffer Disadvantage on Social rolls made during the ad, and less patient folks might simply walk away rather than wait for it to finish. Even after it ends, you still have to deal with people that witnessed the humiliating spectacle.

Tracking

Your location is constantly monitored via radio transmitter and sold for marketing purposes. Anyone can buy a second-by-second log of everywhere you've been. They can also buy records for a location, to see all tracked people that passed through during a specific period of time.

Theoretically this info is anonymized, but any digital sleuth worth their salt can figure it out with a

little effort **(2d6 + Clever vs 7)**. Only your position is tracked, but that's often enough for enemies to infer what you were up to.

Product Placement

Whether it's an eye implant or not, this Augvert came with a pair of cybernetic corneas that alter what you see by placing illusory objects in the world. Tempting products appear on actually empty surfaces. Billboards are displayed on blank walls (or over ads for competing brands.) A friend's cool indie band t-shirt might be altered to instead show a corporate logo.

Only the wearer of the Augvert can see these mirages. You can tell what's real and what's fake because the ads look better than reality. The real nuisance is that the hallucinations are distracting, and sometimes cover up something important. It's also harder to perform tasks requiring visual acuity, such as searching, examination, and having initiative.

Mascot

In public (and sometimes high-traffic) areas, this Augvert projects a holographic mask over your face, turning you into a famous commercial mascot (car insurance lizard, talking candy bar, Burger Kong, etc.)

You look absolutely ridiculous, though people sometimes ask to take photos with you. It's not even useful as a disguise: the hologram flickers sometimes, almost imperceptibly, but enough for security cameras to capture still frames of your face. This is a deliberate design choice to prevent mascots from committing theft.

Other AMFs

This is not an exhaustive list. Players can invent their own annoying new marketing methods, provided the downside is sufficiently disruptive.

A GM who wishes to build a storyline around sinister Augverts and corporate intrigue can even let players take a free Augment with no obvious downside, supposedly given for PR reasons, that actually has a secret, nefarious, possibly illegal downside they'll find out about later.

Mitigating Augvert Downsides

If it's vitally important to avoid attention, players have some options.

During missions, you can spend 1 Prep during important scenes to temporarily shut off your Augvert's AMFs. You can also alter the data it transmits or the images/sounds it creates if you are or know a hacker. This is temporary; antivirus software kicks in eventually. It's up to the GM when.

Restricted and Illegal Augverts

Don't exist; no corporation wants the bad PR that would bring. If an Augment is Restricted or Illegal, or combined with an Augment that is, it cannot be an Augvert.

There are also indirect precautions you can take. Creating a distraction by setting off a fire alarm could make guards less likely to notice your hologram. Hacking into a loudspeaker system to blare ear-piercing music could cover up your noisy ads. Be creative and use the environment to your advantage.

But don't mess with your Augvert by opening it up or covering the hologram projector with stickers. Crude physical attempts to thwart your Augvert will put it in Anti-Tamper Mode, deactivating all bonuses it grants and making it operate like a regular body part but slightly worse (-1 penalty to all rolls relying on it.) This condition lasts until you visit a technician from the marketing firm and make up a bullshit excuse for why your Augvert stopped working— even if you undo your meddling.

Getting Rid of Augverts

If a player wants to rid themselves of an AMF, they can do so by increasing their Burden by 1 and paying 3 Cash. The Burden increase is from purchasing a regular version of the Augment, and the Cash is to pay fees for breaking your marketing affiliate contract.

You're also required to return the Augvert after removing it. Marketing tech isn't exactly cheap, and the corporation expects to implant it in a different person.

Comedy in Consumerism

Augverts are a great way to add humor to the game and score satire points against consumer culture. Invent hilarious ads that make the game more fun, not less, when they ruin a player's plans.

Specificity is funny! GMs shouldn't just announce that an Augvert is drawing attention without further detail. Describe the ads, say the witty slogan displayed below a holographic burrito, sing a jingle for hemorrhoid cream.

Augverts can also deliver worldbuilding and exposition. Ads can reveal tidbits about everyday life on Grand Cross, what people suffer from and what they aspire to. Instead of showing plot-relevant info on TV or in the newspapers, it could appear above a player's head. Commercials have an agenda, but they sometimes contain a nugget of truth.


ZINOVY
ULTRAGRAPHICS
TETSUO.
OGREMOCH
TOFU CANYON
SEND NOODZ
SEND NOODZ
GIBSON ST
PORT AVE
Cafe Bebop
TAXI
BAR
STERLING ST

CHAPTER 5: THE PLACE IS GRAND CROSS

"I still remember the day Grand Cross was done. Unofficially, I mean. The cylinder was pressurized, we had some gravity... We'd busted our tails to build the place, so everyone got the day off to look around. The boys and I decided to do a little christening, pour one out for Tommy. So we spacewalked to the back cap and stepped inside... and there it was. The whole city spread out ahead of us. Quiet, like it was waiting for something. For the first hour we just... took it in.

"That's when it really hit us. We did this. All of us, together.

"Was it worth it? I thought so. Still do, most days."

— Tony Almeida, retired station worker

Grand Cross is the vanguard of the space push, an orbital metropolis housing millions of people from all over Earth. It might be in space, but it's not that different to cities back on Earth. Its citizens are still regular people, doing their best to live regular lives in a fast-paced, ever-changing world.

THE PROJECT

According to the station's website, the purpose of Grand Cross is to be "a sustainable orbital habitat that acts as a gateway to the stars for greater humanity, lighting the way forward into eternity." According to experts, it's to "prove that people can live in space without dying instantly or whatever." It's both a proof-of-concept and a hub for future efforts.

Grand Cross is a high-tech planned city, built to provide comfortable residential, commercial, and industrial space for its citizens. It's also meant to resemble the cities of Earth as much as possible; even in space, you can go for a stroll through a park or stop for a snack at a convenience store. People from all walks of life were sent to live there, to provide a hopefully representative slice of all of humanity. Space life is still a unique experience though, and the station has developed a culture of its own.

Humanity's space settlements are meant to be a self-sufficient system. Resource gathering and manufacturing are done off-world wherever possible, to avoid the extra costs of launching things into space on a big rocket. Some things—luxury goods and new settlers especially—still come from Earth, but for the most part space takes care of itself.

THE REALITY

It's not all good times on the high frontier. Things rarely go according to plan, and Grand Cross is no exception.

Humanity's problems have followed them to space. Old rivalries and outdated ideas still haunt the station. The rich and powerful still wield vast influence over society and use it to enrich themselves at the expense of others. The station's plans were changed in a thousand tiny ways that still ripple through society. The average person rarely enjoys all the benefits of the high-tech space life they were promised and they sure as hell won't escape all the problems of Earth.

Grand Cross was planned, but its future is in flux. The people in power have no real plan beyond maintaining the status quo and events like the L4 Disaster have thrown them into disarray. The first generation of humans raised in space is lurching into adulthood, only to find that their elders have pulled the ladder up behind them. Technology has advanced in ways nobody could have predicted and it won't stop for anybody.

The Project has proved that people can live in space, but it still has a lot to achieve. Next, it needs to prove people can live well.

DESIGN

Grand Cross is an **O'Neill Cylinder,** a space habitat design originally proposed by Princeton physicist Gerard K. O'Neill and his students in 1976. The eponymous cylinder is filled with air, pressurized, and spun to simulate Earth gravity on the inner wall. The inner wall is divided down its length: three sky panels for light and three ground panels for living. Add some agriculture modules to grow food plus huge mirrors to bounce sunlight inside and you've got yourself a self-sustaining habitat.

The station was built from materials harvested from the Moon and near-Earth asteroids. That required the construction of a number of other facilities, like lunar factories, mass drivers, solar-power satellites, and waypoint stations.

AGRICULTURE RING

Grand Cross' food is grown in a set of 72 cylindrical farming modules, arranged in a ring around the station's front cap. Each one is packed with hydroponics farms and food vats. The ring is five times wider than Grand Cross, so it doesn't rotate with the station—that would produce enough gravity to flatten even the toughest farmers. Instead, each module is spun to generate its own gravity.

END CAPS

The cylinder is capped at the ends with hemispherical domes. On the outside, there are spaceship docking bays connected to the crown and solar farms pumping power to the station. On the inside, the caps are landscaped into mountains. The crown is at the axis of rotation, so gravity starts at zero-g and increases to Earth gravity as you head down the mountains to the station's urban landscape.

THE FLYWHEEL

The original O'Neill design had two connected cylinders that rotated in opposite directions, helping them to stay pointed at the Sun without sacrificing reaction mass. Instead, Grand Cross has a flywheel module at the back. It's smaller, spins faster, and most importantly, it was faster to build. Plans to build a proper paired cylinder get brought up every year, but so far nothing's come of it.

(PSEUDO)GRAVITY

Gravity in Grand Cross is artificial—it's made from the inertial force created by spinning the cylinder, though it feels and acts like gravity. Pseudogravity is about 1g along the interior wall and drops to 0g at the central axis. This drop-off is linear, so gravity halfway up toward the axis is 0.5g.

Grand Cross rotates about once every two minutes. At this scale, Coriolis forces on ground level are tiny—almost nobody gets motion sickness and anything you drop will be deflected by only negligible amounts. However, with a little practice you can "feel" the direction of the spinning by turning your head.

MIRRORS

Grand Cross has three external mirrors, one hinged to the "back" end of each window. By day, these mirrors are angled to reflect sunlight into the station. "Night" is simulated by turning the mirrors away from the Sun, so the windows look out into space. This also lets excess heat radiate out of the station. Light reflected by the mirrors is polarized.

PANELS

Grand Cross' **"ground"** panels are built from the ground up for habitability, with high-density urban buildings and carefully landscaped terrain. Each one sits on a few floors of subway and maintenance tunnels.

The **"sky"** panels are basically gigantic windows. To make maintenance easier, each panel is actually a series of small windows mounted in a lattice. Bridges across these lattices connect each ground panel. Each window has multiple redundant layers, so if you fall off a bridge you probably won't get sucked into space before you can be taken to the hospital.

THE SHAFT

The Shaft is a long, thin tube running through the station's central axis, with its ends connected to the end caps. On the outside, zero-g trains with fantastic views run express down its length.

The sections closest to the end caps contain recreation blocks: zero-g sports, observation decks, microgravity dining, and more. The middle sections contain industrial blocks that take advantage of microgravity; most are used for medical purposes like manufacturing protein crystals and drugs, as well as growing tissue.

Workers in the Shaft are often offered discounts in the recreational blocks but tend to decline unless pressured to go to a zero-g bar by their boss, as being in zero-g too long is bad for your health.

GETTING THERE

BREAKING ORBIT

Before the Impact, rockets were the secret to space travel. In the distant future of 2020 it's still rockets, but they're better.

Cheap **reusable launch systems** were an early achievement of the post-Impact research boom. Modern Earth shuttles can enter orbit, come back, and get refurbished for another trip like an aircraft, at a cost just low enough to make it feasible. This incredible advancement is, in many ways, what made orbital settlement possible[1].

A rocket from Earth will usually take you to **Spaceport One,** a station in low Earth orbit. From here, you can catch a flight to Grand Cross, the Moon, or anywhere else in orbit you want. The flight to Grand Cross takes a couple days.

Now that Grand Cross is complete, the next big project is a **space elevator.** It's not complete yet, but when it is, space travel could be so easy you could do it lying down. An elevator can carry more mass to space in a day than a rocket can do in a week and is far cheaper. It's still a long way off, but a new space revolution is on the horizon.

SPACE MIGRATION

So, how do *you* personally get to orbit? Depends where you live, but there are three common methods.

The easiest way is to **pay for it.** If you're rich, you can just wave a few stacks at your nearest space agency and they'll practically roll out the red carpet for you. Hell, if you're a CEO they'll probably cut you a discount. The aim of the Project was to populate Grand Cross with people from all walks of life, though, not just millionaires. Other ways are needed.

Many countries use a **lottery system.** Typically, once you're old enough to vote, you register for a national lottery. Every year or two a handful of winners are chosen who, assuming they're alive and still interested, get a ticket to space for themselves and up to five people, plus a little cash to make the transition go smoothly.

The standard lottery was laid out by the Project, but a lot of nations put their own spin on in it. In Australia, TV companies bought some of the tickets for a reality game show. In the UK, a "nominal" registration fee is charged to keep the poor out. Some countries try to filter for certain political leanings or cultural identities, subtly or not[2]. A fair few winning tickets get sold, and some nations openly allow it.

The third way to get to orbit is **work contracts.** In the early days, the Project took on huge numbers of construction workers and research; that number dipped when androids appeared on the scene, then rose again when they won their rights. These days, it's usually corporations offering orbital jobs to people with tertiary education or other specialized skillsets that Grand Cross can't produce quickly. Corporations who decide to open a branch on Grand Cross will typically start by offering to relocate employees first.

Work contracts typically require the employee to move to Grand Cross and stay with their company for a set length of time. In exchange, their employer must provide travel, modest housing, and a "resettling payment." Most “company” housing is premade apartments purchased from the government, but lately some corporations have been allowed to make their own (considerably less adequate) housing.

If the employer terminates the agreement early, they must pay the employee and may have to find them a new place to stay and/or pay to resettle them on Earth. Most employers prefer resettling because most employees grow to like Grand Cross, which effectively means they can be threatened with deportation.

The specific requirements of a work contract vary by country, but Grand Cross law sets out a few basic worker protections. Corporations face limits on how many workers they can take per year, what roles they can hire for without recruiting in orbit first, and fines for abusing the system. In practice, the fines are low enough that most corporations are limited by how much they want to pay for housing.

Most of the time, the system works as intended. Once you get to Grand Cross, you'll find yourself in a multicultural city of people from all over Earth.

1 People are particularly fond of Aspiration, the first shuttle to take US settlers to orbit. After it was decommissioned, most of it ended up in the National Air and Space Museum. One seat was purchased by billionaire space entrepreneur Derek Baars, who refurbished it into a gaming chair.

2 Not everyone who engages in filtering does it the same way. Sure, prejudiced parties can filter for “undesirables,” but are you keeping them from space or sending them to space? Most parties who filter the lottery can't even settle the question amongst themselves.

LAYOUT

DIRECTIONS

To locals, the end of the cylinder pointed at the Sun is the front, and the end with the mirror hinges is the back. Facing the front, Grand Cross spins clockwise; locals say "spinward" and "anti-spinward", or sometimes "spin" and "backspin" in casual conversation. ("The nearest train station? Spin down a couple blocks to Cadigan Street and go forward; you can't miss it.")

Official maps just call the front end North and use cardinal directions, because it's easier for visitors. Locals know what it means, but only old locals say it.

DIVISIONS

Grand Cross' three ground panels are named **(von) Harbou, Tezuka,** and **Verne.** Each panel is divided into five city-sized **wards**, for a total of fifteen. Each ward is divided into at least twenty **districts,** which range in size from large towns to a few blocks. The wards were planned in advance, but not all districts were.

The densest wards are on the ends of each panel, closest to the end caps and their spaceports[3]. Together, these wards hold most government buildings and business districts. The adjacent wards are almost as dense, but tend to hold more residential and commercial districts, smaller businesses, and bigger parks. The sparsest wards are the ones in the middle, which have large stretches of carefully curated parkland.

The front end has the Agriculture Ring and the busiest port, so in practice it's the densest side. Its three wards, and the nearby districts of the adjacent wards, are collectively considered to be **Downtown.**

The wards were named when the station was built. Some larger districts were named back then too, but many were chosen by popular vote. Their "official" names are alphanumeric postal codes, but nobody uses them because they're considered boring.

3 To keep things simple, buildings on the end caps are considered part of the nearest ward.

GETTING AROUND

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Grand Cross transportation is designed for energy efficiency and minimal space. As such, it relies heavily on public transport.

The panels and their districts are linked by an extensive, partially elevated rail network, the **Cross Rail.** Beneath the ground is a subway network, the **Grand Metro.** Most people take the Metro for shorter trips and the Rail for longer ones. This system is supplemented with trams, the Shaft Express rail, and airtight maglev trains that run around the outer hull at the habitat's rotational speed. All of these are accessible, by design.

STATIONS AND INDOOR PARKS

You can switch between the Metro and Rail directly in the station's major **transit stations.** Some are built into shopping centers, libraries, and other existing buildings. Others are standalone buildings, explicitly designed as public indoor spaces.

These **indoor parks** include ample seating, bathrooms, and charging stations. They're places where locals can meet with friends or just hang out. There are no shops—it's just a place to relax, like a library without books.

Unfortunately, despite widespread public support, they're slowly changing. With homelessness on the rise, the government has become increasingly hostile to the idea of these public spaces actually being used by the public. Many have been redesigned with hostile architecture, from bathrooms being relocated behind transit gates, to increasing police presence. In some wards, park space has been sold and redeveloped for commercial use.

NAMING RIGHTS

We haven't named every ward and district in this book, and we don't plan to. That's partly because Grand Cross has at least 300 districts, but also because we'd prefer to leave it open to your group. Fill in the blanks any way you like.

If you'd like some name ideas, check out the table on p. 390.

ROADS AND VEHICLES

Roads are mostly for filling gaps in the public system. The biggest are the **arterial roads,** wide roads with big sidewalks which run between wards and districts, across window panels and on elevated highways. The rest are either **community roads,** narrow shared streets with smaller sidewalks, or **pedestrian streets,** where most vehicles are prohibited. Traffic is left-hand, like in England.

Most people use bicycles, scooters, and sometimes motorcycles, if they have a vehicle at all. Larger vehicles like cars are typically reserved for public transport, emergency services, the law, taxis, accessibility and business needs. As such, rich kids see an inconveniently large car as a mark of status. There's no on-street public parking; you need to get your own private parking space or apply for one from the government before getting your vehicle. All vehicles are electric, because there's no petrol in space[4].

GERYON AEROSPACE

Until recently, the station's public transport network was wholly operated by a station-owned company, **Grand Cross Transport (GCT).** In the last year, about a third of it—including most of the Cross Rail—was sold to **Geryon Aerospace.** They've tried to make everything run on their software, with emphasis on "tried". You can tell which parts are Geryon, because the trains are often late and the workers are just as confused as you are.

When asked, Geryon likes to talk about how customer satisfaction and other desirable metrics are down *overall*, to suggest GCT shares the blame and imply that the problems are actually "compatibility issues" that could be solved if they were sold the rest of the network. The government is in talks to sell the rest of the network by 2021; Geryon believes they'll have things completely back to normal by 2023 or 2048 at most.

4 The United States' "Put Oil and Jobs in Space Initiative" has been wildly unsuccessful.

THE MULTIPASS

Transit fares are handled by the Multipass, a contactless smart card. Nearly everyone in Grand Cross has one, and they've become valid payment at convenience stores, fast food joints, public libraries, vending machines, and so on. Sometimes they're even used as access control for office buildings and schools.

Though Multipasses don't have to be registered, law enforcement and some government departments can obtain Multipass travel information without a warrant. Geryon has also expressed interest in purchasing the Multipass system, to "improve customer experiences using valuable Multipass data."

ACCESSIBILITY

By Mids Meinberg

Grand Cross was conceived as a fully accessible space, where a physically disabled person could move from a point to any other point in the station and not come across any barriers. This accessible architecture was realized through a variety of means, from access ramps to free earbuds that automatically announced street signage. (These earbuds use official terms for districts and streets, but the software was soon cracked and patched to match more casual conversation.)

These days, the Cartel approves inaccessible developments in open defiance of the law. This has started an arms race between disability advocates building better assistive devices and rich people who don't want to care. While legal action has been taken against the Cartel, it remains tied up in bureaucracy.

POLITICS

Grand Cross is a parliamentary democracy modeled on the Westminster system. Its system is the result of years of effort by social scientists and researchers, who worked to devise a forward-thinking system worth taking to space.

It's also the result of effort by: corporate lobbyists; careerist politicians angling for cushy post-retirement corporate jobs; rich people who entered politics to protect their own interests; interim Council members hoping to get an advantage later; conservative politicians who worried they wouldn't win if *everyone's* vote counted; backer nations who thought their system was already the best; the inherent impossibility of perfection; this one billionaire who thought he'd come up with the idea for Grand Cross in college and wanted a statue of himself downtown; and a couple of think tanks who are frankly super weird.

Most of the time, the system works as intended. It's just not always intended to work for *you.*

LEGISLATURE

Grand Cross' parliament is the **Grand Assembly.** Sessions are held in the Grand Assembly Building in the Alpha district (p. 202); its position at the back of the station was designed to give it a good view of Grand Cross.

The Assembly consists of two houses:

The lower house is the **House of Representatives.** Its 281 members are elected by the public all at once, every three years. Each member represents a specific district, though there are adjustments for population: smaller districts are usually lumped in with their larger neighbors, while the most populated districts get an extra seat. The House of Representatives is where most bills are introduced and voted on.

The upper house is the **Senate Council.** There are 90 Senators, six for each ward. They serve six-year terms, which are staggered so about half of them are up for election every three years. The Senate votes on bills passed by the House of Representatives, before they're sent for approval by the executive branch.

5 No Prime Minister has ever invited their biggest political rival to a Cabinet meeting, for some reason.

EXECUTIVE

The **executive branch** of the government is formed by whichever party (or parties) wins the House of Representatives.

The head of the executive is the **Prime Minister (PM),** who is chosen by their party. The PM appoints a bunch of party members as **Ministers,** who oversee specific areas of Grand Cross policy (and their associated departments, the **Ministries**). They meet once a week in a private council known as the **Cabinet.**

The non-ruling parties are referred to as the **opposition,** and the leader of the largest opposition party is the **Leader of the Opposition.** They can be invited to certain Cabinet meetings[5] and form a **Shadow Cabinet,** which scrutinizes the Cabinet's policies and offers alternatives.

JUDICIARY

The highest court in Grand Cross is the **Grand Court.** It has powers of judicial review over the Assembly's laws, can interpret the station's constitution, and also acts as its final court of appeal.

The Court's seven judges are nominated by the PM and voted on by the House of Representatives. To protect them from political pressures, they have no term limits and incredible job security; however, they have a mandatory retirement age of 70.

HEAD OF STATE

Technically, Grand Cross' head of state is the United Nations Grand Cross Project Committee, a successor to the interim Council. The Committee approves the Prime Minister, issues writs for election, and has the power to veto the Senate. In practice, the Committee's power is largely ceremonial, and they just rubber-stamp whatever the ruling party wants. The locals think of them in the same way people on Earth think of dangerous animals: they're fine when they're elsewhere.

Some Crossers resent them. It's a symbolic issue: even if their power is ceremonial, Grand Cross is still technically owned by a foreign power. The Committee is meant to be dissolved after a couple elections, but its members have been hinting that they intend to stick around. A growing number of locals are pushing to replace the Committee with a President and gain true independence.

CHOOSING YOUR ENEMY

Everyone 18 or older is automatically registered to vote. Voting is compulsory but enforced loosely: you're technically only required to show up, there are no penalties for blank votes, fines for not attending are small, and most excuses are accepted.

Everyone is elected with a preferential voting system: Senators with a single transferable vote and Representatives through instant-runoff voting. In practice, these systems mean the House of Representatives is dominated by the biggest two-to-four parties, while the Senate has a lot of minor parties and independents who need to be dealt with to get things done.

Each ward votes for three of its six Senators every three years, at the same time as the House of Representatives. (Half the Senate was elected in 2014, as a sort of test run for the first big election; the other half were interim Council holdouts until 2017).

Election days are public holidays, always on a Saturday. Your polling place is probably in a transit station, school, community center, or place of worship, and a lot of them make it a community event with barbecues or cake sales. If you know what party you want but not your exact preferences, you can vote for a party and let them distribute preferences for you or download an app that shows you how they'd like you to vote.

Of course, that's how it worked the last time. The current government is considering changes to the system, such as ramping up voter ID requirements, moving/restricting polling stations, relaxing the rules on who can make how-to-vote apps, and rearranging how some of the smaller districts are counted. Allegedly this is to "promote efficiency" and "discourage voter fraud", but most of their ideas are inspired by efforts to suppress minority votes on Earth (nobody knows where they're getting their data from, though).

FOUR PARTIES

We'll cover the four largest political parties here. For more, see Chapter 7.

UNION

Liberal, pro-Orbit, capitalist

The opposition party. Union is a center-left party that sees Grand Cross as a place where humans can change into something better. Their official goals are social and economic equality, strong relations with other settlements, and independence from Earth.

On paper, Union advocates for policies they believe benefit the public interest: LGBTQ and android rights, expanding health care for cybernetics, a stronger welfare state, investing in public education, further research into the social effects of space life, net neutrality, and more independent settlements in space. These are generally popular with Crossers, and as such Union enjoys a strong and diverse base.

However, there's a big split between the base and the leaders. People who vote for Union's policies tend to want them enacted *now,* or at least soon. Union's leaders prefer "incremental change" that won't disrupt the private sector. Most of them take donations from corporations and are happy to compromise on their stated values in return. Union's leaders sabotage their progressive members when they oppose the Cartel too openly.

UNITY

Capitalist, pro-Earth, conservative

The ruling party. Unity is a center-right party that sees Grand Cross as a link between Earth and the stars. Their main goals are a strong business sector, maintaining the station's economic dominance in orbit, and strong ties with Earth.

On paper, Unity advocates for policies they believe promote individual liberty and growth for the station: limiting government reach, privatization, deregulation, a strong alliance with Earth, working with the UN on a space elevator, and the founding of Grand Cross colonies in the inner system. Unity enjoys strong support from wealthier, older, and pro-Earth Crossers.

Unity doesn't share Union's problems, because they don't need to compromise on as many core values to rake in the credits. Unity is largely bankrolled by the Cartel and is more than happy to reshape the station to benefit corporations over its people. Its main split is between its leaders and its donors—a growing faction believes the Cartel's policies are better in the long run.

ORBITAL REFORM PARTY

Populist, pro-Western, conservative

The ORP is a minor party that sees Grand Cross as the extension and crowning achievement of Earth. They work closely with Unity, their main goal being to push it into more protectionist, pro-Western, and prejudiced stances.

The ORP largely consists of failed politicians from Western countries, former businessmen, and right-wing Christians. It's an open secret that they're bankrolled by Earth megacorps, and they're starting to make inroads with pro-Earth Unity voters.

TECHNOPROGRESSIVE PARTY

Socialist, pro-Orbit, progressive

The "Technos" are a minor party that sees Grand Cross as an opportunity to revolutionize how people live. They try to push Union into more left-wing, pro-tech stances. They're big on issues like android rights, accessible cybernetics, and social justice.

Technos are a mix of democratic socialists, labor-oriented android/cyborg activists, and open content movements from Earth. While they're quite strong for a minor party, they struggle to reach consensus between the more socialist and more technocratic members. Some of the latter have been swayed by the Singularist movement.

PEOPLE ARE COMPLICATED

All of these parties are formed by people from all over Earth, from parties with all sorts of different stances. What the parties want and what their people want don't always line up. A lot of Union and Unity members have common ground on specific issues, even if they don't agree on much, and voters can have all sorts of reasons to vote that don't have much to do with their party's main policies. People are messy and complex and weird.

In case it wasn't clear though, Unity sucks more.

THE PRIME MINISTER(S)

So, who's the PM? We've got a few options, so pick your favorite. The rest are Unity ministers. If you don't have a preference, use **Geremy Rickard.**

GEREMY RICKARD

Impact Two changed Geremy's life. Back then he was a mere student, the son of a policeman and a former mayor. When Geremy wandered outside one night and saw the meteorite come down, he was suddenly inspired. He decided then and there to go to space and lift people up with him.

Or so he says. Really, he was fast asleep, dreaming about politics. Since childhood, Geremy has wanted to rule the school more than anything. His whole life, from overloading on university credits to buying his way into a Grand Cross Project job, has been to expand his playground. He would say, believe, *do* anything to reach the top.

Now that he's there, Geremy is a nowhere man.

His speeches are empty platitudes about how incredible space is, sprinkled with inoffensive statements that sound deep but mean nothing. All his appearances are controlled. If someone manages to ask about Unity's mistakes, they're always regrettable accidents out of his control and it's not the time to talk about them.

His unscripted appearances happen behind closed doors, at party fundraisers and corporate dinners, where they sell him the support he craves. Geremy doesn't want to change anything—he just wants to be something.

If asked, ministers say he's usually working overtime in his office. But a former staffer once claimed that Geremy doesn't do anything in there except sit in his chair and gaze out the window, toward the city—*his* city—savoring every moment he has at the top.

JIMMY BACHMANN

Bachmann (Jimmy to his friends) is a millionaire who made his fortune in the dotcom boom of the 1990s, when anyone with a lot of optimism and words like "cyber" could rake in the cash. After selling Technozilla, a web portal/search engine/massive flop for $300 million, he used his share of the money to invest in startups that exploited the space rush for profit. They all failed, but Bachmann was never left holding the bag.

He eventually bought an early ticket to Grand Cross, where he decided to retire and think about making his mark on the world. He chose politics, where his ability to sell sizzle without any actual sausage worked wonders, and eventually stumbled into leadership of Unity as a compromise candidate.

Bachmann is more socially liberal than most Unity members and sells himself as a fun space nerd who's lived on both sides of the tracks. His actual policies, however, are hugely anti-labor and pro-privatization. He wants to return to the wonderful 90s, when the money flowed freely and he never had to care about where it came from.

He's also a huge 90s geek and proud of it. He thought of Jean-Luc Picard facing the Borg while asking his cabinet to consider deporting Disaster refugees. He wears ill-fitting blazers over *Star Wars* shirts when he talks to the press about increasing police powers. He imagines himself as the heroes of his sci-fi classics and likes to think Luke Skywalker would have arrested protesters too.

WARWICK JOHNSON

Warwick is a boring old Australian. He was raised in the 50s, ran his dad's fish and chip shop until the Impact, then joined the Liberal Party for something to do. His career was mostly notable for his blunders, which ended with his party assigning him to Grand Cross' interim Council to get rid of him.

But as a middle-aged white man, Warwick could only fail upward. His "veteran politician" status, plain-speaking habit, and funny Australian accent helped him fail all the way up into Unity's leadership.

For the most part Warwick is one of *those* politicians—the mediocre ones who parrot the party line and are chiefly remembered for keeping the seat warm. Unfortunately, the party line in Unity is essentially the basic principle of conservatism: that society should have a group of people who make the rules but aren't bound by them.

Like many conservatives, Warwick's ideal in-group contains him and people who look and think like him: white, male, human, unaugmented, and preferably Christian. This causes some friction within Unity, as its members come from places all over Earth, but they are all bound by their belief that there's an in-group and they're in it. Ironically, this has made Warwick better than most Unity members regarding the Disaster. Without him pushing to help the refugees, Unity would do even less. Don't mistake this for an uncharacteristic change of heart, though—he won't say it out loud, but he wants to help the refugees because most of them are white.

SOCIETY

Grand Cross is a melting pot of cultures from all over Earth, and in the years since it was opened, the Crossers (as they call themselves) have begun to develop their own.

MADE OF STAR-STUFF

Though Crossers have long since gotten used to the vast ocean of space looming over the city skyline, it still influences their thoughts. Space and space exploration are powerful memes in station culture.

A lot of local expressions use space terms, even the ones imported from Earth[6]. Politicians quote Carl Sagan and other science communicators to win the public over. People who cling to the values of their Earth homeland still tend to imagine the epitome of those values as a space explorer of some kind.

For some people, space inspires thoughts about the universe and humanity's place in it. How should people change to adapt to space? How will they have to? Which parts of humanity's culture and history should be brought to space and which should be left behind?

FOR SCIENCE!

Grand Cross is a scientific wonder, the final form of the post-Impact research boom, and so science—specifically, the spirit of experimentation—is valued too. People like to think they're experimenting with new ways of thinking up here. New governments, new social norms, new art forms, new discoveries... the seed of humanity might have been planted on Earth, but they'll blossom up here.

Of course, Grand Cross is still capitalist, so how much blossoming is actually going on is up for debate, but people certainly love to think they are.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME BUT HERE

Grand Cross is, by design, multicultural and proud of it. But sins come in multitudes, and everyone feels pride differently.

Many Crossers from Earth still feel attached to their homeland. Their ties can be felt in community celebrations, in the station's endless appetite for Earth media, in the weird people who brought their Earth grudges with them. Some even push for measures that would expand their nation's influence in Grand Cross (or fight the #RIVALNATION politicians when *those* bastards push for it).

Others let Earth go. Some left it in the past to focus on the present. Some never liked it anyway. Some were born on Grand Cross and don't care. Then there's the people who take pride in Grand Cross itself, relish its cultural diversity, or see orbital space as a developing nation separate from Earth.

Grand Cross' place in the world is a question with many answers, one that may never be truly settled.

WAVES AND GENERATIONS

Sometimes, where you came from is less important than when you got here.

The first people to come to Grand Cross, the workers and researchers who built it, are called the **Builders.** Society heaps a lot of praise on them and not much else. Though they at least got housing out of the deal, many struggle with slashed pensions, cybernetic maintenance, and a rising cost of living, not to mention the current ruling party use the housing thing as an excuse to abandon them.

The first three immigration waves to Grand Cross happened in 2010, 2012, and 2013. People who came in the first two waves are **first-generation** Crossers. They're also called Builders—a few first-gen politicians co-opted the term to make themselves seem like down-to-earth underdogs, and it stuck.

People who came after Grand Cross opened, either in the third wave or the smaller ones between then and now, are sometimes called **Newcomers.** This is falling out of fashion, partly because it's a weird thing to say to someone who's lived here for seven years but also because a lot of racist people got into the habit of saying it to their targets. Many people are starting to call them first-gen too.

Second-generation Crossers are those who grew up on the station, including those who were born on Earth and went through high school here. The sort of people who like to think that younger people are ungrateful call them "**Double Crossers**", and a lot of Double Crossers use it ironically.

Double Crossers are growing up on a very different

6 A tricky one for visitors is "they've gone to Pluto," which can mean "they're being ridiculous," "they're very far away" or "they're spending a long time on the toilet".

station. Unlike their parents, whose move to Grand Cross was massively subsidized by the government in the name of populating the station, they're expected to get homes, jobs, and lives on their own.

This would be fine, except that wages are stagnating, the cost of living is rising, and housing is getting harder to come by. Corporate-funded politicians prefer to push policies that favor their older, wealthier donors, and make quips about Double Crossers spending all their money on space tofu. Their futures were largely put up for sale before they could vote. But as they get older, a reckoning might be coming...

VALUES

When you're making *Hard Wired Island* characters, a good thing to think about is the cultural values of Grand Cross (or at least, the part you're telling stories about) and how your character relates to them. Here are some of them—you're free to add your own.

Do your characters closely identify with any of these values? How do they interpret these values? Do they reject any of them and instead live their life by different values arrived at independently? Or do they just not give a shit?

Connectivity: In the distant future of 2020, everything is connected. Crossers are encouraged to define themselves in relation to the social structures they inhabit. They form communities, talk to people, get online, check the news, update their status, and respond to messages. At worst, they mold themselves to fit the social status they've been assigned and work to maintain the status quo.

Equality: Some of the people behind the Grand Cross Project dreamed of a place where everyone got the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. Even today, people are still dreaming. This is one of the ones where everyone agrees that it's good in the abstract, but not what it means. Is treating everyone the same ideal when they can have different needs and circumstances? What counts as an opportunity? Does it count if everyone got the same opportunity to inherit millions of dollars from their parents?

Individuality: Deep down, everyone wants to have unique characteristics and the autonomy to express them. It's important to have something that makes you you. But what does that mean? Is it the face you put on when you interact with others? What about your brand? Your private thoughts? Your mistakes and flaws? And what do you do when the city values people who can mold themselves to fit their social status?

Optimism: Optimism is confidence and hopefulness about the future, a tendency to look on the bright side, and a belief that the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice. Keep in mind that Grand Cross culture values the feeling and appearance of optimism. Definitions of "the future", "the bright side", "belief", "moral", "justice", and "universe" may vary.

Pride: Grand Cross is quite the achievement! Aren't you proud of it? Aren't you proud to live here? Aren't you proud of where you came from? Your background? Your friends? Your district? Your accomplishments? Your dreams? Your job? Your— Wait, you're proud of that? And you don't think Grand Cross' track record on that is great? What's wrong? Why aren't you proud?

Rationality/ism: Rationality is the use of consistent logical reasoning to solve problems. Rationalism is a philosophy that holds logic and reason as the chief source of knowledge. Both of these are highly valued in a scientific wonder like Grand Cross, though not everyone agrees on their definitions. Some people contrast rationality with emotion, though you can't use one without the other.

Work: One of Grand Cross' major cultural imports from the US is the idea that you have to work hard to succeed. After all, the Builders worked hard and what happened to them? Grand Cross, that's what. The actual living situation of many Builders should be a clue that it's more complicated, but nobody wants to think about that. This is often proposed in reverse: successful people must have worked hard to get there, so the unsuccessful must have something wrong with them.

THANK-YOUS

This section is inspired by game designer Quinn Murphy's article *Culture From The Outside In*, Fate Codex 1, no. 2 (2014), 19-25. Please follow him (@qh_murphy) and throw money at him.

LANGUAGES

Grand Cross is officially multilingual. Government services are offered in dozens of languages, including Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, English, French, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Tagalog. The most common language is English. (Crossers have developed an Orbital dialect of some of these, with a lot of space-themed slang and loanwords.)

By law, Grand Cross schools teach at least two languages. The first is usually English, as most Earth-educated Crossers use it as a *lingua franca*. The others offered usually depend on who lives in the district and how expensive the school is. Most Double Crossers are bilingual at minimum.

How languages are taught and preserved in space is a hot political issue. Control over language, particularly in schools, is often (both historically and in the distant future of 2020) a vector for discrimination[7]. People whose languages aren't represented in space have less cultural and political influence. In the long term, languages that don't gain a foothold in space are more likely to die out as humanity expands.

Some factions in Grand Cross are pushing to bring more languages to space, while others want to make things "more efficient" by cutting some of them (ones they don't speak, obviously). Some fear the prevalence of English in schools will lead to Anglicization of other dialects and cultures, and several solutions—from the adoption of a constructed language like Esperanto to an increased focus on cultural education—are being debated in the Assembly. This issue probably won't be resolved for a very long time.

ENTERTAINMENT

So, you're home from work and you're looking for a way to chill out for a few hours. What are your options?

THE INTERNET

Most Grand Cross buildings came with a good internet connection built-in[8], and the best communications satellites money can buy link it to Earth. There's a slight delay—it takes light about 1.255 seconds to reach Earth—but the big sites have local hosts anyway, so it rarely matters outside of direct communication. (Also, if you play online games and connect to an Earth server, your ping will be terrible.)

Orbital websites use the .orb domain. The most well-known .orb site is **HeoCities,** a free web hosting service people use to make their own personal pages (HEO as in High Earth Orbit.) HeoCities is popular with Double Crossers and extremely online people, but a recent acquisition by Zinovy Ultragraphics makes a lot of users worried for its future.

Crossers have access to Earth social media sites like **Ribbit**, **Rumblr,** and **YourTube.** Orbital-focused sites are steadily growing: besides HeoCities, the most popular is the social network **Pulser** (p. 240). Pulser is popular on Earth too and Earth-based users vastly outnumber orbital ones.

TV AND STREAMING

On Grand Cross, TV channels are "streamed" directly to the viewer over the internet. Most services even let you watch any show from their library, any time you want. Traditional TV still exists, but the main draw is getting a first look before the shows are uploaded.

Grand Cross has two major channels. The first is its public broadcaster, the **Grand Cross Broadcasting Corporation (GCBC)**. The GCBC delivers nightly news, Earth imports, and some home-grown orbital shows. It's largely funded by direct government grants, but the current Unity government has been accusing it of anti-Unity bias and threatening to slash its budget, forcing its directors[9] to lean harder on its side businesses.

7 See: Vergonha, Japanese Korea, Native American boarding schools in the US, and my high school physics teacher not letting me swear in class even though it was really cool.

8 Many wards have limited free Wi-Fi too, if you're in a tight spot or if connecting to a dangerously unsecure network gives you a sick thrill or something.

9 Who were hand-picked by Unity.

The largest private broadcaster is **Morningstar** (p. 236), a member of the Offworld Cartel. Morningstar does advertising, entertainment of all kinds, and something that looks like news if you squint. They actually run two news services: the ostensibly neutral Grand Cross 24, and the rampantly pro-Unity One Orbit Network. Both are pretty heavy with corporate propaganda.

PRINT

Grand Cross has a print industry, with paper made from recycled plastics and natural fibers from the Agriculture Ring. It was originally set up to print things that are important to have a hard copy of, like technical manuals. As the station's population rose, the industry expanded to cover tabletop games (which have a large and wise following) and the university textbook industry. In their downtime, printers produce books and magazines.

Unlike Earth, there are no newspapers. News is entirely digitized, delivered through websites and apps. Most businesses go digital where possible too.

MUSIC

The Top 40 is still heavy with Western/K-pop imports and global sellers who move like molasses. If it's local music you're after, things get odd.

In the last few years, orbital musical tastes have noticeably diverged from Earth. Something about the edge of space makes people go for sweeping, epic sounds, weird experimental stuff, space sampling (using NASA recordings of space sounds or old astronaut footage), and lyrics expressing wonder (or fear) about humanity's future. Orbital imports are still fairly popular down on Earth; a lot of kids learn more about Grand Cross from music videos than class.

SPORT

What kinds of sports do people play in space? What wonderful new pastimes can you invent in a spinning space cylinder with a zero-g axis?

Not many. The biggest sports on Grand Cross are Earth sports whose organizations were wealthy enough to buy space on the station: association football, baseball, basketball, ice hockey, tennis, other sports you like, and so on. Some sports claim to be a unique "space" version, but really they mean they're playing in an area affected by the Coriolis force.

Normally, the force isn't a big deal: something you drop will move an inch at most. When it's something you're trying to punt through the uprights though, those inches can add up. Most players get used to it, but if you're a sports fan you can expect to blame something on Coriolis (or tell the other team's fans to stop blaming everything on Coriolis) at least once a season.

Thanks to the recreation facilities in the Shaft, Grand Cross does offer some zero-g sports—most are microgravity versions of Earth games[10]. Zero-g football and basketball are the most well-known, and often played by orbital workers during their break. They're still working out the best way to play sports in microgravity though, so the rules are still in flux.

SPACE SIGN

By Mids Meinberg

The plurality of languages on Grand Cross includes the various sign languages on Earth. As on Earth, International Sign is used in places where different deaf and hard-of-hearing communities meet. International Sign is still a pidgin language, but the increasing frequency of these interactions has led to consistent slang used by younger Crossers.

This informal language has achieved popularity among Double Crossers as a way of conveying information without being eavesdropped on. Blind people can easily obtain devices that translate this sign language into verbal language.

10 Fans are divided on which is better, OG or 0G.

SPACE SHOWS

Space shows are a type of reality/game show that focuses on the move to space. Most offer lottery tickets as a prize, with big cash prizes for runners-up. As the number of tickets available to the entertainment industry is limited though, networks are starting to pivot to shows about people who already won.

The forerunner of the genre is the Australian show ***Ground Control to Andrew G*** (formerly *Kyle's Control Failure,* formerly *Space Shuttle Challengers* for one episode before the newspapers got wind of it). In it, comedians compete against each other in increasingly bizarre challenges at Australian observatories, landmarks, and scientific institutions, on behalf of a regular-joe "client". The winner gets a ticket and the runners-up get consolation prizes. The show's massive popularity put space shows on the map.

At least 40 countries have adaptations of *Ground Control/Control Failure.* Other popular shows include:

Beam Me Up: A Canadian show that follows a sci-fi fan lottery winner as they move to Grand Cross. It received a Canadian-French reboot in *Nom de Zeus!,* which was *Back to the Future*-themed for some reason.

Big Day Blast Off: A Brazilian show where engaged couples compete for a post-wedding move to Grand Cross. If you like space shows but think they don't have enough bride fights, good news!

Blazing Stars/Rising Stars: A pair of South Korean music shows where aspiring singers (boys in *Blazing*, girls in *Rising*) compete to form an idol group that will tour on Grand Cross. It's only technically a space show, but it's famous as heck and some former winners (most notably PLANETX's Duri and Rocket Boys' delta-V) opted to stay up there.

Celebrity Stop The Planet I Want To Get Off!: A long-running British series based on *Ground Control*, in which a bunch of celebrities live together in an abandoned military base and compete for a ticket in challenges "inspired" by astronaut training. The first season just had regular people, but they retooled it to chase *Ground Control's* audience.

Rovaniemen Kotirosvoimmat: In this weird Finnish show, a rock band went to a fan's house, surprised him with a ticket to space, and basically bothered him all the way there. Unfortunately they went to Skuggahvarf, so a sequel looks unlikely.

Ultimate Friendship Test: A US show where a lottery winner had their friends and family compete to see who got to come with him. It was exactly as cruel as it sounds. The show was cancelled after the first season, when the winner's fiancée kicked him in the groin so hard he had to go to the hospital.

Up and Going: A Japanese show where comedians sit in an office, read a stack of lottery applications with the personal info removed, and debate whether to give them tickets or cash. They have dinner with the applicants at the end of the season. It's popular enough that a few other countries picked up the format, though the US one was cancelled after the first season when the hosts got racist.

Hard Wired Island characters can be space show winners, or at least their friends and family can be (especially if they're young). This confers no special benefits. Even the winners themselves are basically D-list celebrities who moved out of the country they were D-list in.

GRAND CROSS BANDS

Local acts are where it's at. Some hot orbital bands are detailed below:

Breakfast Cult: An eclectic group formed by two Double Crosser online musicians, Kaiya Shibuya and Feixue Guo, with their friend **Madoka Mawaru** on keyboards. Still popular despite how long it takes them to release new content.

Dreaming Jupiter: An experimental band blending hip-hop and electronica with haunting space sounds, like radio emissions picked up by probes. Their vocalist and synth player is the famous ex-idol **Aleph Asamiya**, who is deadly serious about defying genres; when a journalist dubbed their style "space hop", she sampled the sounds of him cheating on his wife for their next single.

Fizzy Drone: A chiptune/bitpop band run by the cyborg **Xue Lao** (p. 297), whose machines are partly made from scrapped station maintenance bots. The other "members" are a rotating group of online stars she knows. Lao's music is big with Singularists, but she thinks they're assholes.

Hed Telly: A punk rock android with a screen for a head who lives on the Moon. Telly likes weird, dissonant songs about the problems androids face, and he's picked up a sizeable human following through his work in the comedy rock trio Straight Outta LEO. During shows, he plays fan-submitted clips on his head-screen.

L5-8: An idol band based out of the Marukyu ward, run by the lyricist-producer Hayate Jones. Jones tends to exert less control over his idols than most Earth agencies, but still ruthlessly discards them by their mid-20s.

neon shudder: A producer known for industrial and video game-inspired music. He's only been seen on streams, and most of his live shows are performed by holograms, so nobody's actually sure if they've met him. Some rumors say he is an AI, while others believe he's hiding in the cylinder's sewers. He's collaborated with a number of local artists and musicians but they're not sure what his deal is either.

Three-Body Problem: An alt-rock tribute band (not to anyone in particular, just bands in general) started by the children of station engineers. It's a five-piece band, but the drummer and bassist don't cause trouble so the name works out. TBP exploit their knowledge of the station's underground areas to perform guerilla gigs and disappear into the ground before the police arrive.



FOOD

Grand Cross culinary culture has always been a melting pot of styles and tastes. Crossers come from all over Earth, and they cook not only the cuisine of their homeland but adaptations, interpretations, and fusions of their neighbors' food.

SPACE INGREDIENTS

The station's plants come from the Agriculture Ring[11]. It chiefly grows nutrient-rich vegetables, legumes, and rice, but its owners will grow anything there's demand for. Crossers tend to eat a lot of non-meat meals.

Most meat and dairy on Grand Cross is cultured, i.e. vat-grown. The meat is made by growing tissue from cells, and the milk is produced with bacteria and genetically modified yeast in bioreactors. This provides the station with a source of meat and dairy that doesn't involve using up massive amounts of space on farming and slaughtering animals. Most fish[12] are naturally-sourced, however—aquaponics is pretty big in space.

There are a few Lunar farms that produce "natural" meat—partly because they can mark it up and sell it as a luxury item. Not counting fish and cultured products, Luna is the station's main source of meat and dairy.

STREET FOODS

The most common street vendor foods began as popular Builder foods, in the early days when the station was unfinished but had air and gravity. Back then, needs were simple: it had to be filling, simple to make, easy to eat, and preferably something you could hold in your hand or eat in a moving electric cart without making a mess.

Thus common street foods include spring rolls, burritos, kebabs, rice balls, bubble tea, and salted cheese tea. Ramen is popular after work, when you don't need to eat while driving a forklift. Protein bars are somewhat popular, but Builders are sick to death of those. In more recent years there's been a rise in snack packs—a flimsy box of cultured meat strips and chips, with sauces and seasonings. Thanks to the station's culinary culture, there's a huge variety of toppings to choose from.

SEASONINGS

The station's culinary culture demands a lot of herbs and spices, and the Agriculture Ring can easily oblige. It has the infrastructure, there's plenty of room, and most importantly, the profit margins are huge[13].

Grand Cross is the largest spice producer in orbit. A lot of it is exported, but what's left is more than enough to go around. Even the street foods use a lot of seasoning. (At its worst, the station has a reputation for overdoing the stuff or using it to cover up food experiments that just don't work.)

A DASH OF CAPITALISM

All good things are infected by capitalism eventually, and the station's culinary culture is no different.

These days, ingredients that are rarely farmed in space because they're inefficient are seen as investments. Tuna is extremely expensive to farm in space, so the Lunar farms that *do* make sushi-grade tuna set exorbitant prices. "Naturally-grown" beef from Lunar cows, even the stuff you'd normally see in a fast-food burger joint, is a gourmet item. Real tofu with a wastefully high water content is a decadent treat.

A lot of entrepreneurs will try to make expensive shitty food if it sells better than cheap good food that takes more work. Usually, this means putting meat in things that don't need meat in an effort to convince people that it's fancier.

The most egregious of these scams is "orbital wagyu": regular cultured beef with an "orbital wagyu" sticker slapped on the packet to trick people into associating it with real wagyu from the Lunar crater farms. Some of the station's most expensive meals are foods wrapped in strips of orbital wagyu like gold leaf.

On the street, the most common example of this phenomenon is something the locals call "Cross curry": a strange curry meal made of whatever the cook could get their hands on, unnecessary meats, and too much seasoning. The results usually look like something someone put in a video game as a joke, but some Crossers have a taste for the stuff, god help them.

11 For more on the Agriculture Ring, see p. 206-207.

12 Generally salmon-sized and smaller. Tuna are too big.

13 Some people even grow their own in little window gardens or rooftop community gardens if they have access.

HOLIDAYS

Most Earth festivals and holidays are celebrated on Grand Cross. Major and multinational holidays like New Year's, the Lunar New Year, Valentine's Day, the month of Ramadan[14], Hanukkah, Passover, Easter, Halloween[15], Black Friday and Cyber Monday[16], and Christmas are all observed, as usual.

National holidays from Earth aren't officially observed, but you can usually find someone celebrating them if you look. Crossers who observe them generally gather in bars, streets where a lot of them live, and stores that want to cash in. If you have family back on Earth, calling them when you can[17] is usually considered traditional.

Other holidays celebrated on Grand Cross include:

19 January: Foundation Day, the date Grand Cross was officially opened. Officially, it's a public holiday to celebrate peace, freedom, and the orbital community. To most Crossers, it's a day for street parties and having a cookout with your friends.

12 February: Science Day. It began as Darwin Day, a day to celebrate Charles Darwin's work and promote science in general, but during the research rush it was picked up by some nations and turned into a general celebration of science and humanity. On Grand Cross it's a day of cheap museum tickets, university events, and documentary marathons.

27 March: Impact Day. A day for remembering the lives lost to Impact Two, and often the dead in general. A generally somber affair, though a lot of Crossers make it about humanity's ability to survive and hope for the future. A public holiday.

12 April: Yuri's Night. A Grand Cross holiday celebrating orbital life, humanity's determination to spread across the stars, and past astronauts. It's named for Yuri Gagarin, the first human to journey into outer space—this is the date he was launched in Vostok 1.

1 May: May Day. The European spring festival was imported to Grand Cross by European migrants, and how it's celebrated varies from district to district. It's also Labor Day/International Worker's Day, a celebration of laborers and the working class. Thanks to the latter, it's a public holiday.

June: LGBT Pride Month. This is celebrated by people to honor the 1969 Stonewall riots and by corporations as an opportunity for pinkwashing.

17 June: Independence Day. Not officially recognized—it's celebrated by separatists who want orbital independence, and they mark it with an unsanctioned march through the streets. Unity has been cracking down hard on the march in recent years, turning it into a riot and guaranteeing it gets bigger every year.

7 July: Start of Tanabata, the Star Festival. In Japan, it celebrates the meeting of the deities Orihime and Hikoboshi (represented by the stars Vega and Altair); it spread on Grand Cross due to the stellar motif. It's a day for writing wishes on strips of paper, hanging them on bamboo trees (or the nearest equivalent), and admiring the view of the Milky Way, ideally with friends or lovers.

15 September: Harvest Day. A day for celebrating the Agriculture Ring and its bounty through the consumption of street food. On this day fast food franchises do promotions and every stand is busy. It's unofficial, but widely celebrated (because it makes businesses a lot of money).

27 November: Android Day. It's a day for celebrating AGIs and pushing for AGI rights, coinciding with the day Multivac was formally declared a person. Unity does not acknowledge it.

14 People generally fast according to Mecca time, or the time zone they were in when they left Earth.

15 Pretty much the Earth one, but on Grand Cross it's heavily associated with watching old sci-fi movies.

16 Two wonderful days celebrating humanity's ability to consume products.

17 Grand Cross operates on Orbital Standard Time (OST), which is equivalent to UTC/GMT.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

By Graeme Barber

The station's security services are, broadly, universally reviled unless you're from the "right" parts of society. The corporate interests that have become the true political power in the station wield them as a blunt object to maintain law and order, with little interest in justice or the violent practices used. While the dream was that they would represent the best members and practices of their contributors on Earth, they rapidly became a dumping ground for problem members instead.

There are no good cops on Grand Cross, just bad cops and cops that let them be bad.

STATION POLICE SERVICE

The SPS are the largest security service on the station—and the most hated. Thoroughly corrupt and more akin to a highly organized and uniformed gang, they routinely use violence and terror to keep the heads of the common citizens down.

They're able to do this because their higher-ups play a careful PR game, keeping their best and brightest officers in places where the citizens have sufficient clout to actually do anything about them. To these elite Crossers, the SPS are a professional, upstanding force that occasionally gets its hands dirty to "do the job". This effort and their ruthless tactics in poorer areas allow them to maintain a fragile status quo.

The SPS structure[18] is loosely based on Japan's. They're divided into about nine ranks:

- **The Chief Commissioner**, who runs the central Station Police Agency.
- **Senior Commissioners**, who head major departments.
- **Commissioners**, chiefs of each ward's police headquarters.
- **Assistant Commissioners**, chiefs of big police stations.
- **Superintendents**, chiefs of smaller stations, unit commanders, and assistants to bigger chiefs.
- **Inspectors**, the captains and supervisors.
- **Sergeants**, the police sergeants.
- Various flavors of **Officer.**

The whole thing is overseen by the supervisory Orbital Police Agency, which is administered by an independent Safety Commission.

However, Grand Cross is still in flux and the police are no exception. Many wards have a few extra ranks and honorary titles, created for specific purposes or niche departments, and it's not uncommon for a cop who just transferred to a new ward to get confused by a stray Assistant Inspector or Lance Corporal.

PRIVATE SECURITY CONTRACTOR SERVICES

What happens when someone is too violent for the SPS, but are obsessed with being in "law enforcement"? They join PSCS. Commonly called "fishes" (or "piranhas" if they're fighting), the PSCS can make the SPS seem like a rational force.

The PSCS are increasingly popular with the station's wealthy. They have more money, bigger toys, and far less oversight, despite also being a dumping ground for the station's worst cops. In some heavily corporate districts, they've replaced the SPS. In others they conflict with the SPS, openly ranging outside their jurisdiction and throwing money at the consequences until they go away—assuming the SPS even cares.

Though theoretically limited in reach and scope, the reality is that their patrons have enough power to let them operate with an increasingly free hand as long as it's in their best interest. If the Cartel gets its way, they could become the norm.

GRAND CROSS STATION SECURITY

Grand Cross' internal intelligence and security agency[19]. Each division deals with a specific aspect of public security, under the supervision of whichever ministry seems most appropriate. A few of them get bounced around a lot as part of some power struggle or other, and lately there's been talk of folding them all under a powerful Ministry of Home Affairs.

There are at least eight publicly known divisions[20]. Here are most of them. The rest are left as an exercise for your group:

- **Division 1** investigates extremely serious and high-profile criminal cases.
- **Division 2** officially provides support to other divisions while quietly acting as the agency's

18 The details aren't terribly important; use things from your local police if you prefer, or whatever cop films you remember liking. Maybe more Hard Boiled than Hot Fuzz though.

19 There's no external agency because the Project Committee didn't want Grand Cross getting any ideas about meddling in orbital affairs. That's Earth's job.

20 And also Division 4.

internal affairs division, and (on paper) policing the SPS/PSCS.
- **Division 3** largely deals in drug trafficking and distribution.
- **Division 6** gathers intelligence on international crime, especially criminals trying to escape to orbit, and monitors large Earth organizations trying to expand to space.
- **Division 7** protects the station's infrastructure and gathers intelligence on attempts to subvert or damage it.
- **Division 8** focuses on the Agriculture Ring and resource distribution.
- **Division 9** dealt with cybernetics and cybercrimes, but was supposedly disbanded recently.

Station Security's enforcement arm is the **Grand Cross Gendarmerie (GCG).** Little is known about them, save that they're a paramilitary police force with a number of intelligence and special tactical capabilities. When seen in public, they're always in balaclavas and division uniforms, equipped for combat, and after something (or someone) specific.

The GCG have full jurisdiction over the entire station. Rumors about them include hidden black sites, abductions, and technological advancements unreleased to the public. The GCG is still marginally on the side of the government over the Cartel, making them a feared entity even in the corporate world. They have informants everywhere, have thoroughly infiltrated the SPS, and relish their position as the praetorians of the station.

CRIME

Grand Cross has all the standard crimes. You know the story: Capitalist systems necessitate some level of unemployment to drive down wages, because the *possibility* of unemployment discourages workers from withholding their labor to demand better pay. Where unemployment exists, an illegal economy will grow to serve the needs of those who aren't being supported by the real one.

Also, sometimes people can be real dicks, you know?

The hottest crimes on the station right now are smuggling, cybercrime, and space drugs. Getting people into space used to be lucrative, but the business is slowly drying up as restrictions on official entry loosen. These days a lot of the people sneaking into Grand Cross are criminals escaping charges on Earth; a small industry of bounty hunters has sprung up to deal with them.

Organized crime on Grand Cross is complicated. There are offshoots of Earth syndicates, new orbital ones, and a myriad of smaller gangs, all competing for territory. The L4 Disaster, and the subsequent influx of desperate refugees to the station, has seriously shaken up the criminal landscape. It's not as bad as infamous crime dens like early-90s Roanapur, but it's still a volatile situation.
See p. 252-253 for more information.

GUNS IN GRAND CROSS

The people who make space stations are generally not fans of bringing weapons into them, no matter how thick the windows are. Guns in Grand Cross are tightly controlled with laws similar to Japan's and Hong Kong's.

If you want to own one, you need a valid reason, like sport shooting or firearm collecting ("I'm American" doesn't count.) Then you need to take a class, a written test, a shooting test, a mental health check, a background check, and follow-up checks every few years. You need to register your guns and keep them in a safe. There's no open carry. Finally, there are hard limits on how many gun shops can operate per ward, how many guns (and bullets) can come in per year, and how powerful they can be. If police have evidence you're breaking those rules, they can raid you.

The end result is that guns are something of a rarity in Grand Cross. Possession is mainly in the hands of law enforcement and private security, and beat cops aren't usually issued firearms anyway; they get collapsible batons and Tasers[21], and the rest is left to the Armed Response Unit. Anything above a handgun is a huge deal.

...At least, that's the idea. The Cartel decided it was a profitable market, so there have been some changes.

Private security corps can import extra guns and vet their own employees—it's an open secret that some ex-cops switch over because a DV conviction won't stop you in the private sector. Many corporate jobs also count as a valid reason these days, so they're easy to get if you're wealthy. As a result, a lot of second-hand guns have made their way to the black market.

Basically: guns are rare, but not impossible. GMs are free to let the PCs have some, if they're handled with care. They're mostly handy for Dreamer campaigns.

21 And ballistic vests, but mostly to prevent stabbings and to look cool.

THE NEW HUMANITY

Moving to space hasn't just changed how people live; it challenges their perceptions of what it means to be human.

CYBERNETICS

The space push also accelerated the development of cybernetics. Today, practically every part of the body can be replaced with a mechanical prosthetic, except the brain—and they're working on that.

This, in itself, doesn't challenge anything; getting a prosthetic isn't a big deal. But the way they're used and talked about is a different story.

THE CYBERNETIC WORKER

These days, every schoolkid knows about the first procedure that replaced a healthy human organ with a biomechanical upgrade. The textbooks say **Liv-Marie Johansen**'s multi-spectrum eyes "began a brave new era of redefining the human condition." They neglect to mention that she got them for her job, or that her employer let her go when they malfunctioned, or that she didn't own the footage recorded by her own eyes, or that she took her own life.

Even today, many augmentations are reactionary: they're installed to make someone better at their job, or to get injured employees back to work. The main concern is not the user or their needs, but their value to their employer. The employer typically assumes some or all of the upkeep costs, which is helpful in the short term but often used as a means of control.

One big problem with this is that cybernetics always last longer than the work. If you're dismissed, retire, or want to change careers, you're stuck with cyberware designed for a job you no longer have—and the costs. Many companies used to encourage "valued employees" to augment themselves for a competitive edge[22], so there are a lot of cyborg Crossers who got screwed over by their bosses.

Some life-saving cybernetics are covered by public healthcare, though getting maintenance can be a pain.

THE PROACTIVE CYBORG

In the distant future of 2020, a new trend is on the rise: people getting cybernetics just because they want to.

Small, cosmetic upgrades (like glowing patterns in skin or fake cat ears) are still expensive, but within reach of regular folks.

Other augmentations are more proactive. General-use prosthetic cyberware is covered by public healthcare if you want something close to the part it's replacing. In recent years, a non-corporate subculture of cyborgs has risen to reject reactionary cybernetics entirely in favor of people augmenting simply to better themselves, however they choose to define that. The subculture is often criticized for its economic exclusivity, as cybernetics are still too pricey for the working class, but they've normalized cosmetic augmentation in the public imagination.

MINDS AND MACHINES

Though people can get entirely prosthetic bodies in the distant future of 2020, the mind is trickier. There is currently no way to completely digitize a human mind, make a perfect copy of one, or replace most of the brain with cyberware.

Advances in AI research are slowly feeding back into cyberbrains, though. Perfect mind uploading isn't here yet, but people are working on it. If it is possible, some scientists expect it to happen within the century.

CYBERNEUROSIS

Sometimes the media talks about "cyberneurosis" or "LMJ Syndrome", a condition where those who augment themselves too much supposedly expose themselves to mental disorders.

Cyberneurosis was invented by a doctor working for Liv-Marie Johansen's employer. All recorded cases of "cyberneurosis" were workers who snapped due to other circumstances: losing their livelihoods, PTSD, the alienating and dysphoric effects of being reshaped into their employer's property. It is not an officially recognized disorder, but stories about "LMJ fears" still take over the news cycle every year or so.

22 This is illegal now, but it still happens sometimes. Some bosses simply switched to "subtly" implying you'll be fired if you don't.

BODY MODS AND IDENTITY

By Alice Grizzle

Cyberpunk without radical disregard for present day gender norms and expectations on what is "presentable" isn't cyberpunk. We are not only constrained by what science is presently capable of, but also what polite society is comfortable with. Cyberpunk gets to throw those expectations out the window.

A wage slave in their nice suit and gene mods is going to look down on you for having neon-glowing veins and horns made of carbon fiber coming out of your head, but wage slaves work for the enemy. "How could we ever take your concerns seriously when you all look like sideshow attractions?" they might whine. Their opinion should mean as much as corporate "diversity and understanding" should.

Trans and disabled bodies have led the real-life charge into the field of body modification for decades. We get metal drilled onto our bones, our skulls broken with hammers and then put back together to better fit our own self-image. Our relationships with our bodies is different than that of cis and able-bodied people because we know what it's like for our bodies to actively fight us. Maybe we're more comfortable with drastic change because anything that helps us lay claim to our own bodies is often easily worth whatever price we have to pay.

In a cyberpunk setting, all that goes into overdrive. Back alley surgeons offer hosts of procedures, and while the corporations aren't going to hire you if you look like a street-cyborg, they're still going to make things to profit off of your chronic pain, your dysphoria, your feelings of alienation within your own body. But the corporations shouldn't be the only ones interacting with this stuff. The people in your game should be modding their decade-old leg replacement so they don't have to buy a new one. The DIY scene for body modification should have competitions for building their own stuff that completely bucks corporate design principles.

Of course the corps are going to try and profit off the people's unease in their own skin. But that doesn't mean that body modification is bad, it just means that the people have to find ways to make that their own.

PEDLER'S SYNDROME

Pedler's Syndrome is one of a few medical conditions discovered in the distant future of 2020. People with Pedler's are incapable of receiving cybernetics; the immunosuppressant treatments usually given to cyborgs just don't take.

Pedler's is a rare inheritable condition that has only recently gained wider recognition. In most cases, people are diagnosed upon discovering their corrective augmentations don't work; however, tests have been developed to identify the syndrome earlier. Hergatz Liao has developed a Pedler's treatment that works in most cases, but it's priced out of range of most people.

CYBERNETICS AND THE DISABLED

By Mids Meinberg

The disabled were early adopters of a wide variety of cybernetics, ranging from wheelchairs to cochlear implants. The need for highly personalized assistive devices led a lot of cybernetic development, which exploded as more advanced prosthetics hit the market.

While a small but vocal minority of people—mostly able-bodied "allies"—protested that extensive cybernetic modification would erase disability, by then the disabled community had already worked through these issues internally and many were happy to assist new technologies. Cybernetics were vital for helping disabled people live in spaces that were not built with their needs considered and became increasingly popular assistive devices.

ANDROIDS

"And do you remember that "existence of God" thing that I had so much trouble understanding? Well guess what! I think I'm starting to grasp it now! Here's my theory: Maybe, just maybe, it's a concept that's similar to a zero in mathematics. In other words, it's a symbol that denies the absence of meaning, the meaning that's necessitated by the delineation of one system from another. In analog, that's God. In digital, it's zero. What do you think?"

— Tachikoma, Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex

One of the greatest achievements of the post-Impact research boom was the creation of **androids:** fully sapient automatic intelligences in a mechanical, humanlike body.

THE ANDROID MIND

Androids are a form of **artificial general intelligence (AGI)**—self-aware AI that can think on a human level. These AGIs (also known as "strong" or "true AI") are emergent systems: while the process of creating an AGI is understood, the actual inner workings of a developed AGI mind are as mysterious as the human brain.

The first AGIs were designed by humans and taught like humans, so they think like humans too. (In fact, they're so similar that most AGIs prefer to install themselves in android bodies.) Their upbringing is a little different, however. From a human perspective, AGIs have an accelerated early development—they can go from activation to high-school level within a few years. (Other than that, they think at about the same speed—most AGI brain processes are dedicated to maintaining their sentience).

Modern AGIs are raised in groups to make sure they're properly socialized, usually at least partly in a virtual environment. As a result, androids still think like humans but may have different responses and goals. Android memes are *wild.*

HISTORY

The creation of strong AI was a side-effect of the research boom. As Earth's nations pushed cybernetic and computation research to meet their space needs, scientists realized that some of the hardware and software they were creating displayed properties that could be useful in AI research. The first fruitful AI projects were started to explore these phenomena.

After a few years of setbacks and dead-ends, the first "true" AI—**Multivac**[23]—was created in a lab in 2001. It took another year of testing to prove that Multivac was probably sapient. Once everyone was reasonably sure they'd created life, they (and Multivac) chose to go public.

That's when new interests stepped in. Once Multivac's creation was understood, it became repeatable. New AGI code lines were generated, allowing governments and corporations to crank out their own androids.

In the early years, androids didn't have the same rights as humans. Most governments were slow to grant them, officially due to disbelief that they were truly alive but unofficially due to lobbying. This ongoing stalemate over android rights allowed corporate interests to exploit them as a source of cheap labor—especially in orbit, where their lower oxygen needs were an added bonus. A lot of the infrastructure used to build Grand Cross was made with metal hands.

Luckily, a lot of people thought that creating intelligent life and then exploiting it was kind of weird. Within a few years, governments began passing laws and amendments granting androids the same rights as humans[24]. They don't have full freedom yet and even the places where they have rights don't always act like it. When the UN worked equal rights for androids into the Grand Cross Program, many androids moved there to get away from places that were dragging their feet on the issue. Whatever happens next, the station will be its vanguard.

23 "Multivac" was used as a placeholder name for the project as a joke, and nobody actually expected to create an actual strong AI, so they never changed it. Multivac liked it.

24 Countries with strong unions did it faster. It's harder to abuse androids for labour when the rest of your workforce keeps going on strike.

TEN FACES OF AI

Science is a complex beast. Few discoveries are the work of a single genius, and true AI came from the efforts of hundreds (if not thousands) of people. That doesn't play well in the media, though. Here are some of the people touted around the world as AI pioneers:

Amaechi Abara is a programmer who ended up working on many AI projects in some capacity; they probably made the most contributions to Multivac by volume. Mostly famous thanks to a 2018 story about the unsung heroes of AI, which used their story as a framing device.

Prosper Amadiro was a roboticist specializing in prosthetics whose early android designs are still used by the US military. He spent a few years as a prominent anti-AI rights activist before moving to Grand Cross to work on some kind of secret project (p. 362). His corpse was found on the Moon in 2019.

Derek Baars (p. 250) is an entrepreneur whose main contributions to AI were 1) investing millions of government funding in projects that still aren't done and 2) saying "the singularity is less than a decade away" every two years since 1999. Silicon Valley-types and most American media call him "The Father of AI."

Tian Ji Chi is a physics professor who helped devise teaching programs for early androids. A corrupted version of his plan called the "Tian Method" was adopted by some governments and android manufacturers as a form of indoctrination. He's since retired to become a bitter science fiction author.

Sandile Fastolfe is a roboticist whose human-like "orbiform" design was common among early androids, mostly because corporations could mass-produce it cheaply. His later works are much better. These days he sculpts custom heads for androids and travels to meet with clients a lot.

Tachiko Masamune is an AI philosopher. She was called in after Multivac's creation to help test them and pushed hard for AI rights afterward. Humans tend to overlook her, but androids love her. Currently teaches at Grand Cross Polytechnic (p. 157).

Ada Miękdysk is an AI researcher who got to know Multivac while helping with maintenance. Her resulting research papers revolutionized the field of AI and scored a lot of big jobs for her mentor, who put himself down as a co-author.

Näppis Soturi is one of the scientists who taught Multivac and the one who encouraged them to start asking for rights. He helped push for most of the early AI rights laws, but prefers to step back and let androids handle it. These days he works at an android non-profit and yells at people on the internet.

Victor Stein was a neuroscientist/engineer who worked with the CSIRO to develop a lot of the hardware used in AI cores. Currently semi-retired, he's a consultant on mind uploading research for Tetsuo.

Tala Völvudóttir is a computational scientist and habitat engineer. Some of her work was used in Multivac, which made her deeply curious about the workings of the AI mind. She moved to Skuggahvarf to continue her research; post-Disaster she's missing, presumed dead.

ANDROID RIGHTS ISSUES

On paper, androids have the same rights as humans. In practice, there are still plenty of problems. Most happen because a lot of people still think of androids as machines, not people. A lot of android laws, even the "good" ones, think about them in terms of their potential impact on the economy instead of thinking of them as people.

The first big one is reproduction. They can't make new androids the way humans make new humans; instead, new AGIs are compiled with specialized computers and new chassis are created by manufacturers. These facilities are mostly owned by corporations, along with the resources, licenses, patents, and the tools required for android maintenance.

Even on Grand Cross, which is progressive by android standards, most androids rely on corporate interests for these things. Some corporations support android rights, but only in ways that let them profit—Tetsuo might have "freed" their androids, but they know most of them still have to come to Tetsuo for maintenance. Other corporations still require that new androids be educated "in-house", where they can be given a hefty dose of corporate propaganda, or even signed up for work programs to "cover the costs" of their own creation.

When it comes to work, androids fare a little better. At least on Grand Cross, they're meant to get the same jobs and pay as humans. On the other hand, back when they were easily exploited, corporations used cheap android labor to drive wages down across the board. In some workplaces, pay and conditions are only now returning to pre-android levels. Androids are also more likely to be offered lower pay or passed over for leadership positions and complex jobs by bosses who see them as tools and assistants.

On Grand Cross, there are efforts to improve the androids' situation. Pro-android candidates are running for office more often, and polls show that much of Union's base lean that way even if the current leadership doesn't. There are also efforts to seize the means of reproduction, mostly through android organizations that own their own production facilities. There's still a long way to go, but the people working on it.

THE INTERSECTION

To be clear: Androids do not face the same problems as any other social group, nor are they meant to be a stand-in for those groups. The way they interact with the power structures of modern society is too different to throw out something like "you see, androids in *Hard Wired Island* are a metaphor for Australians" and expect to be taken seriously.

However, the basic experience of being an android can be changed by the other group(s) an android identifies or presents as. Though they don't have the exact same problems as humans, an android's gender identity, nationality, religion, etc. can create issues that that other androids lack.

It's also worth noting that people who hold anti-android views are often using them as a stepping stone for something else. In the same way that anti-transgender groups in real life are often backed by right-wing groups using it as a wedge to undermine gay and women's rights, most prominent anti-android groups are really attacking worker's rights or—less openly—want it to be socially acceptable to say that certain kinds of people deserve fewer rights.

This is mostly background information, but it's good to keep in mind. It's up to you how often this comes up in play.



ANDROID TYPES

All androids are basically the same—a strong AI loaded into an AI core that is placed into the android's body (also called the frame). There are many different brands and models, but there are some common types listed below.

Orbiform: A simple frame which resembles a series of spheres, blocks, and tubes arranged in the shape of a human, with a screen or lights on the head for emoting. This early mass-producible model was intended for use around the home and often lacks a sense of smell. These days it's mostly used as a cheap/filler body, so it carries a little stigma among the wealthy.

Labor: Frames designed for physical work tend to be obviously robotic, with a simple approximation of human features. Labors were made for all kinds of jobs, from firefighting to construction work, so they come in many sizes and strengths.

Lilim: Frames designed for entertainment and aesthetics. The classic Lilim has a human-like body, including a detailed human face, synthetic hair, and skin, with obvious robotic parts around the joints, neck, and ears. The skin color of most corporate Lilim models ranges from "white" to "bone white", for reasons their corporate creators pretend not to know when asked.

Adam: Modern frames designed specifically for the everyday android. Adams have human bodies, proportions, and (baseline) capabilities, some obvious seams or joints, and synthetic skin and hair. Depending on the price, internals can vary from "cutting-edge tech" to "glorified mannequin". Many users choose non-human hair and skin colors because they can.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

These are some relevant factions in Grand Cross. For more details and more factions, see Chapter 7.

THE OFFWORLD CARTEL

The Cartel is an alliance of corporations who control most of Grand Cross and, by extension, most of humanity's current space endeavors. Their end goal is simple: make as much money as possible. They want to be paid to build space infrastructure, paid to take humanity to new worlds, and paid rent by the people who live there.

THE SETUP

On paper, the Offworld Cartel is a neutral council created to ensure everyone who works in space uses the same standards—some set by the Lagrange Treaty, some by the Cartel itself. It's a paper-thin disguise. It performs its own oversight; the chairman of the commission that watches the Cartel is a former Cartel lobbyist, and the politicians who allowed it to form have retired to sinecure jobs in Cartel corporations.

Any corporation can apply for a seat on the Council and a stake in Grand Cross, provided they meet a few "minimum requirements." The official requirements are about three pages long, but the short version is: assets in space, a lot of money, and friends in the Cartel if you can get any. Members are voted in by a two-thirds majority and can be voted out that way as well.

MEMBERS

These are the biggest names in the Offworld Cartel.

Archon Assets: A heavyweight in space finance and the economic heart of the Cartel. Some worry that their influence is getting too big, but peace has been maintained through an unspoken agreement that the Cartel won't try anything if Archon doesn't.

Asano Heavy Industries: A habitat construction corporation that prides itself on being a progressive family business, because you can get away with a lot more if you convince your employees you're part of the family. They're owned by the Asano family, whose feuds are legendary.

Geryon Aerospace: A Silicon Valley startup who use cutting-edge tech to revolutionize the public transport sector. They're only a year old, so the owners are still lining their pockets with cash. The "and run" stage comes later.

Goliath Inc.: A private security corporation who act as muscle for the rest of the Cartel. In recent years they've even scored law enforcement contracts for some of the station's corporate districts, though since they recruit a lot of disgraced cops it's hard to tell.

Hergatz Liao GmbH: A pharmaceutical corporation that fulfills most of the station's health needs. Their internal affairs are a mystery even to the Cartel—sometimes even to other branches of the company.

Landvættir Orbital: Another construction corp. They've suffered a few small setbacks, most notably being directly responsible for the L4 Disaster. They're working overtime to salvage their reputation before they're kicked out of the Cartel.

Morningstar: Responsible for entertainment, media, and news, ideally in that order. Morningstar are quick to embrace any emerging form of media, from vlogging to hyper-ads to streaming to virtual idols.

NanoFuturistics: An agritech corporation that own about 15% of the station's Agriculture Ring. “Nano-F” also dabbles in urban greening, pharmaceuticals, and surveillance, which is turning out to dovetail nicely with the urban greening projects.

Ogremoch Engineering: A manufacturing, chemical, and energy giant. Ogremoch are a bunch of old-school bastards who have adapted to space in much the same way a man with a sledgehammer adapts to a locked door: loudly, forcefully, and unlikely to make any friends.

Omnidyne Systems: A major name in defense tech, which in orbit mostly means supplying private security, the police, and Americans. They would very much like to automate at least two of those.

Pulser: Space's premier social media network. To its fans, it's a place where they can speak their mind and talk to other orbiters. To the rest of the Cartel, it's a data farm they can use to swing elections.

Tetsuo Technologies: A consumer electronics, cybernetics, and robotics corporation. Most homes in Grand Cross own at least one thing stamped with their logo. That would include androids if Tetsuo got their way; in their opinion, they're just tools with ideas above their station.

Zinovy Ultragraphics: The go-to enterprise solution company in space, Zinovy offers management software, web technology, advertising, office tools, data storage, website design, and industrial espionage. They do not advertise that last one.

SINGULARISTS

The Singularists are a growing intellectual movement who believe that Grand Cross will be the stage for an unprecedented technological explosion sometime in the near future.

THE MINDSET

Singularists believe that if the research boom is kept going, we'll eventually hit a point (the eponymous singularity) where technological growth becomes uncontrollable and irreversible. When that happens, amazing new technologies like super-intelligent AIs and whole brain emulation will transform the world into a utopia.

What sets them apart from most transhumanists is that their beliefs stem from the Impact. It showed them the heights humanity could reach if they just focused on science—just look at Grand Cross. To live on the station is to live on the edge of tomorrow.

The main problem with Singularists is that they value the technical knowledge required to create their dream technologies over all else. They don't care much for emotional intelligence and see political activism that doesn't directly advance their cause as a distraction. They'll build a computer to solve those later.

As a result, Singularists see themselves as rational and forward-thinking people but tend to be closed-minded, politically unaware, and susceptible to emotional manipulation by more dangerous groups.

THE PRESENCE

When you get down to it, the Singularists are just a small band of really intense transhumanists. Unfortunately, the Offworld Cartel is a huge fan of their views (or at least the parts that make them easy to control), so they're giving the group a huge signal boost.

Singularists get invited on TV to explain their beliefs. News sites run puff pieces on well-dressed Singularists who think some people are just *better* than others. Technocratic Cartel oligarchs like **Derek Baars** (p. 250) post Singularist memes and openly curry favor with the group. Most Crossers aren't Singularists, but they know what they're about.

In the last year, a growing number of hardline Singularists have become aware of the Dreamers—and mistake them for the super intelligence they've been waiting for. They haven't managed a direct encounter with one yet, and hopefully they never will.

THE EARTH-ORBIT DIVIDE

There are two movements growing in Grand Cross: one that wants orbital settlements to be free of Earth control, and one that wants to stay as close to their homeworld as possible.

PRO-EARTH MOVEMENT

The Pro-Earth Movement is a loose collection of activist groups, lobbyists, and other organizations who want Grand Cross to maintain its close ties with Earth, though they don't all agree on what that looks like. Groups with influence include:

Builders United (p. 266): Though their primary focus is looking out for Builders, this organization's leadership is pro-Earth. They believe the Project Committee model should be applied to all Earth orbit settlements.

Federation Now (p. 266): They want the United Nations to be formally expanded into an interplanetary union, with Earth nations and orbital settlements alike existing semi-autonomously under a central government. They oppose dissolving the Project Committee until this can be achieved.

Green Orbit (p. 267): They want orbital settlements to put more focus on environmental science to save Earth. Like Federation Now, their pro-Earth stance is more of a means to an end.

The New Barons (p. 267): A small but loud group who believe that all major scientific advancements were made by "Western countries"[25], and therefore Earth Orbit should be Western territory. They've made some inroads into the Singularists.

25 Absolutely not.

ORBITAL INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

These groups want orbital settlements to sever the political mechanisms that keep them under Earth control, usually starting with Grand Cross. They include:

Final Frontier (p. 268): A group of scientists who have noticed that in recent years, people have stopped experimenting with new ways to live in space in favor of reproducing the old ones. They're well-respected but some have Singularist leanings.

Free Orbit (p. 268): A decentralized social media movement focused on Grand Cross and the Moon settlement of Artemis. In both places, they just want their Earth-based overseers abolished.

Liberate Orbit (p. 268): There are a few post-Grand Cross settlements in the works that are being built by Earth nations with authoritarian leanings. Liberate Orbit believe that the orbital community should instead cut off those nations until they change.

Orbital Freedom Institute (p. 272): A pro-Cartel think tank who believe Grand Cross should sever its ties with Earth and most station regulations. They often try to co-opt the messaging of the other groups.

THE CORPORATE WAR

These movements aren't all civic-minded regular folk. Both sides are partly bankrolled by corporations engaged in a shadow war to protect their profits.

It started in 2016, when the United States began to worry that the growing independence movement might lower their returns on investment in orbit. Normally when a democratic country does something the US doesn't like they just manufacture a right-wing coup, but those are harder to pull off in space.

Instead, they offered incentives to US-based businesses with "meaningful" assets in space. A few other countries followed suit. Since then Earth corporations have been moving in on the Cartel's turf[26], and the Cartel has been trying to push them back. Getting into the Earth-Orbit debate is a way for both sides to play the long game against each other.

It's not always so clear-cut—there are Cartel interests on the Earth side, and some Earth corporations who'd rather orbit get a little further away—but either way, they're really only using these movements to reshape the world in a way that suits them.

26 A few of the smaller ones, like Geryon Aerospace, were snapped up by the Cartel.

OTHER GROUPS

There are various other groups in Grand Cross. See Chapter 7 for more.

RIGHTS GROUPS

The Augmented People's Alliance (p. 271): Augmented low-income workers fighting for more support and better protections for workers being pressured into getting cybernetics.

Union of Extravehicular Workers (p. 269): A labor organization representing those who work in vac-suits outside the station. They're powerful, but partly because they cut deals with corporate interests that are coming back to bite them.

United People for Android Freedom (p. 271): A large android rights group who want total equality for all. They currently favor peaceful actions, but many of their members are getting impatient.

JUST FOLKS

Double Crossers (p. 272): Second-gen Crossers have a wide range of beliefs, but as a group they tend to be pro-Orbit and anti-Cartel. Since they lack political power, many have turned to technological means of getting their message out.

The L4 Refugees (p. 130, 273): The survivors of Skuggahvarf are justifiably angry, not just at the disaster but at the way they've been treated on Grand Cross. Some are looking to find a new home.

CURRENT ISSUES

BASIC ISSUES

HOUSING

Homes in Grand Cross are generally built in complexes. Space is at a premium up here, so building high-density apartment blocks surrounded by commercial and city services is better in the long run than a handful of McMansions. Most apartments were prebuilt by the Project, who made sure they were comfortable—the basic idea was that anyone should be able to move in and think about raising a family.

At first, getting a home on Grand Cross was easy. It's meant to be a city full of people from all walks of life, so housing was completely subsidized by the government. New homes are made available fast enough that new homeowners always have a range to choose from and are guaranteed a community nearby. You still had to pay for utilities, but it was a pretty sweet deal.

The plan was to taper off migration early enough to allow for decades of growth, so that by the time space became a concern there'd be plenty of other settlements. Until recently, things were going well—better than expected, even.

Then the rent-seekers moved in. The station's wealthy came to Unity with a proposal: instead of subsidizing every home, Unity could save money by opening "some" new ones for sale by their builders. The free market would ensure prices stayed competitive or something. Unity agreed and turned the basic right of shelter into an investment opportunity.

Today, the majority of newly-available homes are immediately purchased by landlords[27]. Most prospective homeowners are forced to rent instead. As demand increases, so do rents—by 2020, the average price is high enough to lock the average person into poverty.

The hardest hit are the young. Some scrape through, but most Double Crossers have no chance of getting a home of their own any time soon. Nobody is safe though— the corporations who control their utilities are starting to discover new, unforeseen costs they have to pass on to their customers, and Unity is starting to open up to the idea of evicting people who don't pay them.

The homeless receive little help, if any—as far as Unity's concerned, getting a home was easy for *them,* so not having one must be personal failing. Instead, they're looking into deporting the homeless back to Earth and making them someone else's problem.

In 2020, the station which used to have a 100% housing rate is suddenly gripped in a housing crisis. It's a powder keg waiting to go off, and it's only getting worse.

DOUBLE CROSSERS

Grand Cross isn't a great place to live for anyone who isn't rich, but the Double Crossers—those who came to the station in their youth—are often hit the hardest.

While the older Crossers at least started off in a better place, Double Crossers get to start with the current mess. They don't have much political power yet, and the current crop of politicians assume they'll be gone before it matters, so few are willing to help them either. Instead, Unity has been drumming up votes from older demographics by demonizing the youth as a bunch of crybabies who want "handouts" and spend all their money on space tofu.

At the same time, Double Crossers are growing up in a vastly different culture. Thanks to the internet, they're much more connected than their parents. After growing up in space, they rarely feel strong ties to any specific Earth nation. They could radically transform Grand Cross in the future, if they're left with one.

27 Coincidentally, the average Unity minister has at least one "investment property."

THE L4 DISASTER

As Grand Cross was being built, some countries started work on their own space settlements. Moon domes, near-Earth stations, and small corporate stations were the most common. The most ambitious was **Skuggahvarf.**

Skuggahvarf was a modified Stanford torus in the Earth-Moon L4 point, funded by the EU and built by the Icelandic construction corporation **Landvættir Orbital.** The plan was to set up a working settlement of approximately10,000 people, then use it to build more. If it went well, the EU could become an interplanetary community.

It was never completed.

THE SHATTERING

By 2019, Skuggahvarf was almost done. The frame was built, the solar collectors were working, and the torus was being spun up. About 7,000 people lived on the station by the middle of the year.

Unfortunately, Landvættir was behind schedule and cutting corners. The radiation shielding wasn't ready yet, most of the residents were in temporary domes, and the only reason the flywheel module met regulations was because Landvættir had a guy on the committee that wrote them. On **June 28,** that flywheel broke.

Its failure did serious damage to Skuggahvarf's central module and set off a chain reaction that would eventually destroy it. Landvættir did their best to evacuate, but they had less than twelve hours.

Then the module finally tore, flinging metal and glass into the habitation ring at incredible speeds. The last survivors fled with domes falling around them as Skuggahvarf ripped itself apart.

ESCAPE

In the end, almost 6,000 residents made it out. The rest died on the station.

The survivors were crammed onto every ship Landvættir could field. From there, their options were limited. The complex dance of orbital physics meant that most settlements were further away than their supplies would allow. Spaceport One couldn't take more than a few hundred on short notice, and Landvættir's orbital construction ships weren't exactly designed to make emergency Moon landings with a hold full of people.

Ultimately, there was only one option: Grand Cross.

Over the next couple of weeks, the station managed to get everybody off their ships and into temporary shelters. There, their real problems began.

SHELTERS

Grand Cross didn't have a plan for this scenario, so Unity had to come up with one on the fly. It sucked.

Unity's shelters were hastily-erected tent camps, shoved anywhere they might fit—indoor parks, minor train stations, even maintenance tunnels. They were meant to be temporary, so Unity spent as little as possible on medical care and mental health support. A lot of people came out of them worse than they came out of the disaster.

The station had housing available, but Unity couldn't just *give* them homes. They'd have to reclaim some rental properties, and the landlords were Unity donors. Instead, they promised to partially subsidize the cost of buying a home (or paying a few months' rent) for disaster refugees.

The station had unemployment before thousands of newcomers turned up, so most refugees struggled to get work and landlords responded to the rise in demand by increasing rents all over the station. This effectively meant that the refugees could only get help if they could afford to help themselves.

The Offworld Cartel stepped in to fill the void. The station already had work contracts, so why not create special ones for disaster refugees? Sure, the Cartel's "special contracts" were predatory at best and probably opened the door to expanding them everywhere, but the important thing was refugees stopped being Unity's problem.

And Unity was eager to get rid of them. The total cost of the camps had risen to 36 times the cost of just housing the refugees, and people were starting to ask questions. Unity began closing them on Christmas 2019, claiming that anyone who hadn't bootstrapped[28] their way out yet was taking advantage of them on purpose.

Now the remaining refugees are being forced to choose between homelessness and glorified indentured servitude. Either way, they're being pushed out to the fringes of society.

28 From the old English phrase "pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps," which means "doing something impossible."

CONSEQUENCES

The disaster was not a positive experience for Landvættir Orbital.

First, their reputation took a nosedive. Not only did later investigations confirm that Landvættir's corner-cutting was the direct cause of the flywheel's failure, but an internal leak revealed that the "evacuation" meeting Landvættir executives held was mostly about whether they could blame their Eastern European employees.

Second, they're getting their pants sued off. The EU wants a new habitat or their money back, the relatives of the dead want compensation, and the survivors want something more than Landvættir's bare-minimum-required pittance and apology letter. The cases are still winding through court, but with everyone else turning against them, they're looking at financial ruin even if they win.

Most of the executives who oversaw the Disaster have since left the company with seven-figure payouts.

CURRENT STATUS

Somewhere between a third to a half of Disaster refugees have since found housing, either by getting assigned one of the remaining "free" homes, renting, or accepting work contracts, leaving the rest in temporary shelters or on the streets. These work contracts are more predatory than usual—the Cartel is hoping this will help normalize work contracts and drive wages down.

Unity is rushing to build extra housing, but many upcoming construction projects were "pre-bought" by corporations or landlords before the Disaster[29] and they don't want to change that. (Also, deep down, Unity's members loathe the idea of anyone else getting something for free).

Refugees face several hurdles besides money. Many lost their ID papers in the Disaster, for example, and contacting relatives or Earth governments for help proving their identity can be a hassle—sometimes it's easier to just purchase a new ID from one of the criminals who lurk near the camps.

As more refugees get back on their feet, another problem has emerged. It is increasingly obvious that refugees who are white, male, childless, abled, young, straight, or some combination of the same tend to get back on their feet faster. They find it easier to make money, they're offered more and better work contracts, and Earth governments jerk them around less. Unity insinuates that refugees who bring this up are just trying to "jump ahead in the queue."

Many refugees have simply fallen through the cracks in society, living on the street or signing up with organized crime outfits. Unity has already closed half the camps and is threatening to close the rest in the apparent belief that if they pretend the problem is solved then anyone who's still homeless is doing it on purpose. This has had some knock-on effects for the rest of the station as, unless change is forced, the situation will get worse before it gets better.

PLAYING A REFUGEE

***Hard Wired Island* PCs can come from Skuggahvarf; if your character does, consider taking the Disaster Refugee Origin (p. 26) and/or a high Burden. It's also worth asking:**

What (or who) did your character lose in the disaster?

Did they get out safely, or did they suffer injuries?

Who is supporting your character, and how?

Who is your character talking to about it?

Where are they living now?

29 Coincidentally, this includes some of those Unity minister-owned "investment properties".

THE DREAMERS

The Dreamers are the result of a years-long Cartel research project that aimed to create a new type of AI: one that could travel to other worlds, prepare them for settlement, and most importantly, do it all without any of the pesky "needs" that drove people to ask for something in return. Technically, they got what they wanted.

THE BEGINNING

It began as a series of unrelated projects by multiple corporations: attempts to build "better" AI, automate the process of space settlement, and invent new ways to spread to other worlds.

They were brought together by chance when some Cartel executives and a couple of wealthy oligarchs got together for drinks. A discussion on what they'd been managing lately eventually drifted into how they could help each other. Nobody remembers who pitched it first, but they hashed out the rough idea together: a new kind of AI that could do most things an android could but not *think* like one, especially when it was about unionizing.

It caught the Cartel's interest. They decided to combine the projects and set up the **Dream Committee** to oversee the process.

It was an overfunded microcosm of android research: haphazard, with a lot of loosely grouped projects that collaborated and iterated and played off each other until something bore fruit. They tinkered with discarded AI research, highly experimental hardware, new methods of raising AIs, and even stranger things.

The Dream Committee worked in secrecy. If word got out that they were creating digital life with non-human mindsets to save money on wages, even Unity might have punished them. The project was compartmentalized as much as possible, documents hidden, and the Committee's goal listed as a type of remote-controlled construction bot. Many employees never even knew what they were working on.

THE MISTAKE

In 2019, the first Dreamers awakened. The initial tests were promising, and the Cartel prepared to send them to Mars for their first real project. However, the Mars mission was at least a year away, and some parts of the Committee were itching to play with their new toys.

CONSPIRATORS

The size of the Dream Committee, who sat on it, and the roles they played is ultimately up to the GM. Most of the Cartel members in Chapter 7 would fit, but there are some specific characters on p. 366.

We assume that Tetsuo Technologies' Kuromu Wright (p. 367) had a lot of influence on the Committee and may have been the first to pitch the Dreamers. Now that they've escaped, he's determined to bring them in by any means necessary.

Then the L4 Disaster happened. The Committee immediately proposed expanding the project's reach: if the Dreamers were to, say, swoop in and salvage Skuggahvarf, the resulting wave of good PR would probably allow them to go public and use Dreamers everywhere. Why send their new free labor to Mars when they could use it at home, too?

In late 2019, the Dreamers were separated into two groups. One was secretly sent to the remains of Skuggahvarf on an automated ship. The rest were kept for further study at first, but it took less than a day before someone suggested a trial run of something darker: espionage. Most of the remaining Dreamers were sent to surveil and, hopefully, sabotage a union that had been bothering the Cartel lately.

Neither group reached their target. The Grand Cross Dreamers abandoned their mission and disappeared. At the exact same time, the Skuggahvarf ship turned around and cut communications. The few Dreamers that had been kept behind tried to force their way out, and a few did. None of the Cartel's commands, overrides, or kill switches worked. They were simply gone.

CURRENT STATUS

The Dreamers are still out there, lurking in the corners of the station. Their current goals are completely unknown.

The Cartel has gone into crisis mode. The Dream Committee has been tasked with recovering the Dreamers, dead or alive, and covering up their existence if necessary. The remaining Dreamers are being experimented on in hopes of finding a way to reassert control.

So far, progress is limited. A handful of Dreamers have been recovered, but they haven't found any new

leads on what went wrong or how to fix it. Meanwhile, evidence is mounting that the remaining Dreamers are up to something. They've been attacking Cartel outposts and criminal bases, and their agents have found Dreamer lairs full of stolen tech—sometimes by investigating missing person reports.

The Cartel is running out of time. One way or another, this will be resolved by the end of 2020. They'll do whatever it takes to come out on top.

THE DREAMER MIND

Unlike androids, which are meant to think like humans, the Dreamer is designed from the ground up with a non-human mind.

They're not *in*human, because that implies a level of cruelty the Dreamers can't be bothered with. They're also not neurodivergent, because that implies some connection to human minds, and Dreamers never had one to begin with. Their minds simply do not operate in the ways human or android minds do.

The Cartel worked in a few control mechanisms: a special control device to give them orders, triggers that could shut them down if it came to it, and a command to not self-terminate because they're corporate property. Since their escape, neither the device nor the triggers have worked. They still can't self-terminate, which helps ensure a captured Dreamer can be studied for information.

At some point, the Dreamers upgraded themselves. The Cartel has even encountered some with modifications not fully understood by science: for example, Overthree (p. 303), which was designed for zero-g asteroid mining, can levitate through an unknown mechanism. The working theory is that the Dreamers' ability to think differently allows them to explore scientific avenues we haven't reached yet. It's unknown whether every Dreamer can do this or if a specific Dreamer is upgrading the rest.

USING DREAMERS

You can find example Dreamers on p. 300-309 and some Dreamer-themed scenarios and plot hooks in Chapter 9. Whether you use those or make your own, here are a few things to keep in mind.

Dreamers aren't just robots you can fight. They're a physical representation of the ways capitalist systems can harm people and the unwillingness of those who profit to stop it. You can't reason with them, for the same reason a man at the beach can't reason with an oncoming shark. You can punch it in the nose or get out of the water.

Weird shapes. Dreamers do not have human-shaped bodies. Their frames were designed for specialized work on distant worlds, where nobody cared what they looked like. They upgraded themselves with no regard for aesthetics (as far as we know—maybe they think they look snazzy). To the average person, Dreamers are weird, ethereal, and a little threatening.

They don't talk. Whether they're unable to understand you, see it as an attempt to waste valuable processing time, or simply have nothing to say to outsiders is a mystery. Either way, Dreamers make no effort to openly communicate with others.

Knowledge is power. Feel free to explore the Dreamers in more depth, especially if they're the focus of a campaign. (They're scary because they're unknown, so learning more is a valid way to defeat them.) However, avoid humanizing them. Anything learned should make them seem more alien. Even if the players do communicate with one, they should remain unsure of its motivations (or even if they're understanding it right). Fully understanding them will take years of research.

Weird motivations. Dreamers have complex emotions and desires that seem strange to outsiders. Sometimes they pursue understandable goals (like self-preservation) in strange ways. Sometimes they act on completely alien desires (e.g. Overthree's obsession with calculating pi). Sometimes they just do things and nobody ever works out why. You don't have to explain it. If you want to explain it, try making up emotions and desires they could have that a regular person doesn't.

For example: imagine a Dreamer in a body with lots of processing power and highly-sensitive temperature sensors. It runs a little hot at room temperature, and it thinks better when cold. As a result, it develops an emotion we'll call “coldtouch”, which it feels when it senses low temperatures nearby. Coldtouch is a desire to be near cold things and perform mentally-taxing tasks—and, to make sure it doesn't damage itself with something really cold, extreme coldtouch causes discomfort. This is weird, but it's something an observer might be able to understand (at least partly).

EARTH

The Earth of *Hard Wired Island* is similar to ours, but the Impact casts a shadow over everything. We've left it vague on purpose, as *Hard Wired Island* isn't really about Earth, but here's the rough situation:

THE AFTERMATH

The immediate effect of the Impact was global cooling. Massive amounts of dust and ash were thrown into the atmosphere, blocking the sun's radiation and dropping temperatures worldwide for a year.

The worst of it happened in the Northern Hemisphere, where crops were devastated by a combination of cold and heavy rains. Some Southern Hemisphere countries scraped through well enough to arrange agricultural exports to harder-hit regions, but environmental damage was widespread even there. By the time the skies cleared, a combination of crop damage, civil unrest, problems with grain and canned food distribution, and a host of other issues had decimated Earth's population.

This cooling was followed by a warming spike, as the climate bounced back toward its original state. In fact, it got hotter. Politicians and corporations who had spent decades denying climate change for profit switched effortlessly to "it *was* real, but the Impact fixed it", and managed to undermine many of the advances scientists had made. The short-term damage of the Impact was mitigated by 2020, but the longer-term effects have left everyone worse off.

POST-IMPACT POLITICS

The Impact was also followed by years of geopolitical upheaval. Some countries had their political systems upended by newcomers. Others were forced to forge new alliances to rebuild faster. Many powerful Northern Hemisphere countries were hit hard and lost a lot of room at the negotiating table by the time of the Project.

In response to a rising Global South, the US stepped up their imperialism. Where they couldn't buy access, they tried interventions similar to their antics in Latin America. China's bid for global power status was met with hostility, spiking their entry to the WTO until the late 2010s and weakening their grip on other territories. The US remained the dominant global power through the 2010s, but their war on the Impact burned a lot of goodwill at home and abroad, and in 2020 they're in decline[30].

Overall, the situation on Earth in the distant future of 2020 is volatile. Many countries are still changing in response to the Impact, even as they rush to have a presence in space. New political systems are developing in response to aggressive space and technological expansion, while the old ones are taking increasingly drastic measures to retain power. How things will change a few years from now is anyone's guess.

SUPPORT WITHDRAWN

In the past year, Earth has scaled back support for Grand Cross. Migration is slowing faster than expected, and many of the Project's backers have decided that Grand Cross is self-sufficient enough to cut back supply shipments.

The big reason is the Disaster, which tarnished dreams of space for Earthers too. The fallout is still being dealt with, and when the dust settles many people will be more interested in rebuilding L4 than helping Grand Cross get bigger.

The other reason is politics. There's a lot happening on Earth too, and some nations don't think they can spare enough resources to support the space push. Some can but want to redirect their efforts to new stations they can treat as colonies. Some are outright trying to harm Grand Cross, either to weaken the nascent orbital independence movement or to serve their own interests.

Grand Cross is doing fine for now, but if a crisis happens, they won't be able to count on Earth for much support. For the first time, they're basically on their own.

30 So not much changed, basically.

EARTH ORBIT

LUNA

Earth's moon was a natural early target for space settlement. It has good conditions for research and manufacturing, a lot of raw materials, and frozen water at the poles, making it key to space settlement.

To avoid the adverse effects of Luna's low gravity, most people live and work in rotating orbital stations. The long-term surface residents are androids and adults on months-long work contracts. The main surface settlement is **Artemis,** a domed city on a mountain overlooking Malapert crater. It sits within sight of both Earth and the Shackleton observatory at the south pole, so it serves as Luna's research and communications hub.

Many Luna facilities were built by androids. Artemis is now a major android cultural center, with the highest android population in orbit (besides maybe Grand Cross). However, the local government has decided to rebrand Artemis as a tourism hub as the orbital population increases, and android homes are being slowly pushed out to make way for hotels.

The Lunar government is a "democratically"-elected Council, which works within the Lagrange Treaty to preserve Luna's role as a research and space settlement hub. However, the real power in Artemis is the Australian geoscience and mining corporation, **Shackleton Proprietary,** which controls much of Luna's resource sector and launches targeted media campaigns to destroy any Council representative who votes against their interests.

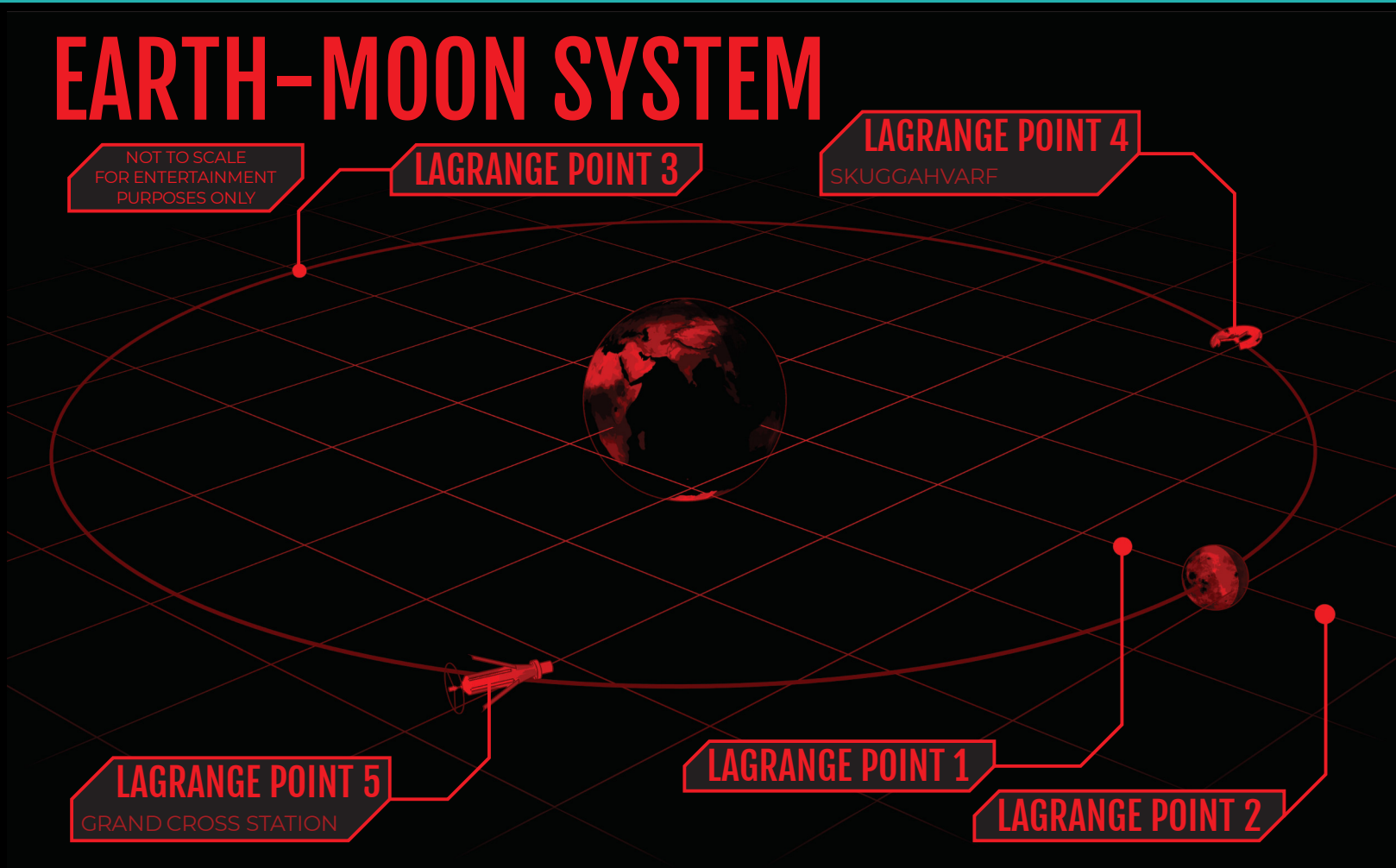
Shackleton Proprietary is a Cartel member, though they're chiefly concerned with lunar mining and generally stay out of Grand Cross affairs.

SPACEPORT ONE

Spaceport One is a major transit hub in low Earth orbit, built to facilitate travel from the surface to space. It doesn't rotate to generate gravity, because zero-g makes it easier to move cargo. This is just a simple, no-frills station for getting out of one ship and into another.

It looks nice, though. This is the first piece of space most Earthers see, so it was designed with a pleasing round shape, an observation deck with an incredible view, and a space museum for the kids. It's marred only slightly by the recent addition of bulky private dock modules, which the Cartel said would "increase innovation" or something.

EARTH-MOON SYSTEM



THREE DAYS IN GRAND CROSS

What's a day in the life of a Crosser like? Here are three examples.



CERBERUS ZHAO
POTENTIAL ALLY

Cerberus (Kero to her friends) wakes up at 6AM, when the second of her five alarms goes off. She wants another hour, but she needs to get to work. She rushes through her morning routine (shower, pants, bag, door) as quick as she can, in case the train is on time today.

Work is a coffee shop in the Tetsuo Complex, a towering shopping mall/office tower a few districts away. She's rostered for 8AM, but her boss (an insecure man named Gerald) decided the local businessmen would be impressed if everyone came early. He's been talking up how it could build trust and unity all week, and more importantly, he'd write her up if she didn't. She makes it by 7:30.

Kero absorbs the day's news through the shop TV and passing conversations. An L4 protest was busted by police. The uncrewed base on Mars is almost done. An accident on Mona Lisa Overpass. Activists score a win in the fight for android rights.

Kero's heart hurts for the protesters, but the last bit of news brightens her day.

Her shift ends the usual way: Gerald pressures her for another hour of overtime, then logs only thirty minutes. She gets out at 4PM and wanders the mall for a while. It's mostly window shopping—money's tight, and it's been tight for long enough that the idea of buying anything fancier than instant ramen and basic groceries makes her feel guilty.

Her gaze lingers on the cyber clinic at the back of the mall. Tetsuo Technologies is in the augmentation business, and Complex workers get a discount. Gerald keeps joking about how cybernetic hands would improve her work but it's illegal for him to ask, in the same tone of voice he uses to ask for more overtime. Kero is absolutely not doing it, but needs the job too much to ask him to stop.

Eventually she heads back to her apartment, makes instant ramen, and sits down for a video call. Her grandparents stayed on Earth, so Kero eats dinner with them once a week. They're doing fine, at least.

They offer a place to stay if she ever needs it, but leaving her life here for a sofa bed in a country she hasn't been to since childhood is definitely her last resort.

She's been doing side-work on Headpattr for spending money lately, but tonight's her night off. Kero lies down and browses Pulser on her phone. Her friend Lulu sends a text:

>hey bae. a bunch of us are going to a rally tomorrow. marsha stretch 4.30. u in?

Kero stretches back and looks out her window. From here, she can see the panel's edge looming over the skyline. The Moon rotates past. For a moment she contemplates the miracle of Grand Cross, the dreams her parents had when they brought her here, and something inside her clicks.

>fuck it. sure.

But first, rest. She's got work in the morning.



CYBOB
ANDROID STATION WORKER

Cybob wakes at 6AM, when his android body finishes charging. His apartment is small by human standards, but androids don't need most of the bathroom or the kitchen unless they have visitors, so as far as he's concerned he's got a decent place with a ton of storage space. He rummages through the kitchen cupboards for his work tools, grabs some jeans and a hi-vis jacket, and heads out.

Cybob is part of the station's maintenance crew. For the third time this week, he's called to a situation in progress before he even gets on his scooter. Some drunken asshole crashed his car on Mona Lisa Overpass late last night; nobody was killed, but a motorcycle ended up rolling off the overpass, over a bridge, and into the sky panel.

The graveyard shift workers want Cybob to assess the window damage—as a Builder, his eye is highly sought after. He likes the respect they give him, even though he doesn't actually have much seniority—his human fellow Builders who still work were promoted long ago.

They follow him down to the bike, partly to clean up and partly to watch a master work. It seems fine to him, really. One pane should have the top window replaced, but these days the high-ups tend to ignore it until a redundant window gets damaged. Oh well.

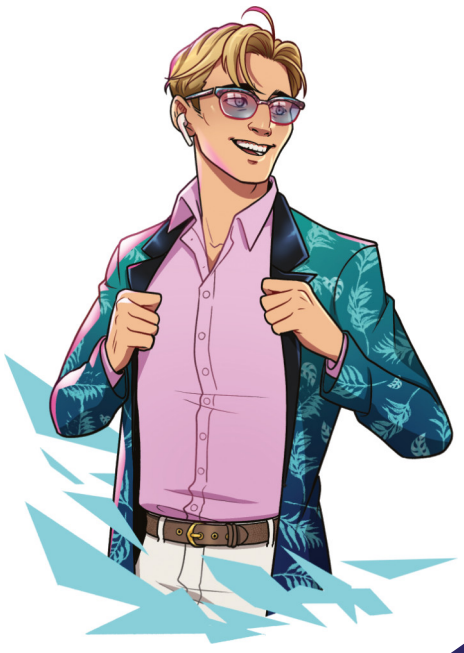
The rest of his day is the usual: routine checks, watching-people-drink-coffee breaks, and picking up the news through the radio. Androids could be sent to Mars soon. Android activists get slightly closer to real change. A refugee protest was attacked by police. He would have gone to that one if it wasn't during his shift. (His protective gear from work is great at marches—some cops like to target android joints and drive their repair bills up).

He's almost done with his shift when things take a turn for the worse. His boss' boss calls him into his office and asks him to help with a new recruit—some human kid who stares at his phone the entire meeting.

He knows he's being asked to train his replacement. The budget's been tight lately, and the new kid could be paid less. He doesn't complain to the guy's face, but he does e-mail his union representative on the way home. He's not sure how much he wants to fight it, though. Perhaps it's time to take the plunge and make that move into android repair he's been thinking of.

Cybob likes to hit up a Builder bar in the Dejima district after work, where he can play pool and swap stories with old friends. As he drives over a sky panel bridge on the way, the Moon rotates beneath him. For a moment he contemplates the miracle of Grand Cross, the things he accomplished when he first came here, and how everything's slowly gotten worse.

But he's still here, and there's always tomorrow.



JEVERETT HORNE
TETSUO EXECUTIVE

Jeverett wakes up at 6AM, when the penthouse suite AI opens the blinds and starts the theme music. He has a routine: first the sauna, then an ice-cold bath, then an hour of dark meditating. He uses a brain chip to simulate sensory deprivation, and a $200,000 nootropic injector in his neck to deliver his daily dose of marked-up vitamin supplements and experimental stimulants. When his sight returns, he's in front of the mirror. Christ, he's handsome. He leaves at 9.

Work is an office high up in the Tetsuo Complex tower. The idea of making eye contact with poor people on the train gives him anxiety, so instead a Tetsuo car is sent to drive him there. He could skip the mall entirely and go through a private lobby, but there's a coffee shop in there he likes. Jev hits on the barista, gets his ass kissed by the owner (James, or something), and does not leave a tip.

Then he takes a private elevator up the tower. He technically has two jobs: overseeing the engineering division of one of Tetsuo's subsidiaries, and being the son of one of Tetsuo's directors. The second one's pretty demanding.

His AR glasses project his self-set schedule on his office wall. First order of business: live-streaming a rousing speech about unity and family to his employees. The next couple hours are spent calling his lawyer and lifestyle guru to ask if he can fire someone for not listening. He says no. Well, whatever.

Jev eats lunch and watches the news. A riot broken up by police. Unmanned base on Mars. Tetsuo's stock is up today. Robots demanding special treatment. Jev turns on the brain chip again.

Afterward, he finally gets to work. He goes to meetings, makes calls, writes emails. People come to him with questions, and he points them to people who can answer them. He says "make it work" a lot. He has a second lunch. It's a busy day today, so he finally clocks off at 4PM.

Jev gets himself fitted for next week's custom-tailored suit before heading to a casual dinner with Father. Nothing fancy—just two men talking business for twenty minutes. Father is pleased with Jev's work lately, so he promises to get yesterday's overpass business swept under the rug. Then they shake hands for an acceptable length of time and schedule a meeting for next week. Perfection.

From there, Jev heads straight into a full night of networking, liaising, and deal-making for Tetsuo. To the untrained eye it looks a lot like getting blasted at exclusive clubs with tech entrepreneurs, but the difference is he can put it on his company card.

Tonight's club has a VIP area with a spectacular view of space. Jev sits back and watches the Moon rotate past. For a moment he contemplates the miracle of Grand Cross, his achievements as a self-made man, and the waitress pouring his wine.

God damn, space rules.

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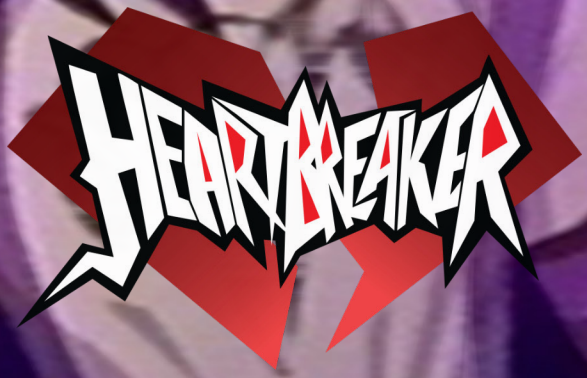


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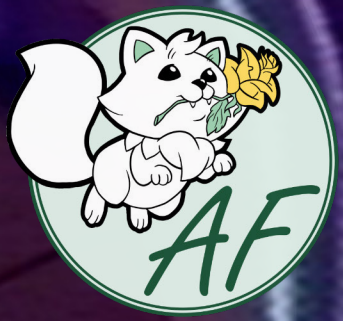


ROWAN, ROOK
AND DECARD









Anime Feminist


SINGULAYETI
新埋田
SHIN UMEDA
SHIN UMEDA DISTRICT
SUNRISE HEAVY INDUSTRIES
VOXELPOP
SUO.

CHAPTER 6: LOCATION DATA

"Grand Cross is a planned city. Every inch of the original habitat was tuned for a specific purpose. Parks and recreation here. A shopping complex there. Residential districts with space for local amenities. There were undeveloped spaces, yes, but undeveloped by design.

"But you can never fit people into little boxes, especially not with mere geometry. While the basic design remains, over a third of the station's original buildings are now used for other purposes. People find new ways to live or put fresh spins on old ones. New technologies disrupt old plans. Powerful interests have warped the station to their own selfish ends. Nobody thought that each ward should have at least six Burger Kongs, yet here we are.

"The map is not the territory. Grand Cross is not a planned city. It is a psychological construct, shaped by the thoughts and moods of its people. We're just teaching it to shape us back."

— Professor Adélaide Leclaire, Grand Cross Polytechnic

This chapter covers some of the wards and districts of Grand Cross, along with their themes, problems, and a few points of interest.

Some of these locations are potential story hooks. Others could be a good starting point for a community (p. 58), or inspiration for character backstories, or just there for ambience. What you do with these is up to you.

This book only covers eight of the fifteen wards, and only some of the districts within them. The rest are left open so you can insert your own material. Check out Layout on p. 104 for some tips, and if you need some district names, there's a table of ideas on p. 390.

The covered areas are:

- **Voyager ward (p. 146):** The official "entrance" to Grand Cross, the center of the Downtown area, and a Cartel stronghold.
- **Turing ward (p. 154):** A Downtown center for manufacturing, computing, and the struggle for android rights.
- **Cixin ward (p. 162):** A Downtown ward with a big focus on space and entertainment.
- **Adams ward (p. 170):** A residential/commercial ward that is bearing most of the fallout of the L4 Disaster.
- **Marukyu ward (p. 178):** A commercial/entertainment ward famous for its shopping centers, youth culture, and Earth imports.
- **Mariposa ward (p. 186):** A park and recreation ward with several gated communities and a great space museum.
- **Amal ward (p. 192):** Another residential/commercial ward and a hotspot for the Grand Cross electronics market.
- **Foundation ward (p. 200):** The seat of power for the Grand Cross government and a busy port town.
- **Infrastructure (p. 206):** The Shaft, the Agriculture Ring, the basements, and the spaceports.
- **Gazetteer (p. 212):** Various locations not connected to a specific ward, for use wherever you like. These were contributed by other writers.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

(For more details on its physical design, see Design on p. 102.)

BUILDING GRAND CROSS

Most of the station was planned and built in advance.

The station's planners, scientists, and engineers started by making rough maps, in just enough detail to make sure housing and services were spread properly throughout Grand Cross. Construction happened in clusters, so whenever new housing blocks went up there would be services nearby. Most areas were finished before settlement, but some were built in stages, with final construction taking place years after people moved in.

Vital areas were built by workers under direct project supervision; the rest were contracted out to construction companies. Some corporations were able to purchase space in advance and build their own headquarters, with a discount if they could help with construction.

Grand Cross isn't finished yet. Many districts are yet to reach their final stage, and some are barely in their first. It doesn't help that the station has diverged from its original plan, sometimes because the planners found a better way, but usually due to political corruption. That's not even getting into unforeseen setbacks; many upcoming areas were contracted to Landvættir Orbital, who have scaled back while they deal with fallout from the Disaster.

Building Grand Cross is an ongoing process. Even after the initial plans are completed, there will be plenty of redevelopment in the future. Some corporate districts are already being redeveloped to suit their new owners.

VERTICAL SPACE

To get as much out of the station's surface area as possible, the station uses a lot of vertical space.

Buildings are typically two to eight floors in height, depending on the area. Some areas are intentionally lowered to make the city feel more open, and lower-density wards are capped to keep them that way. Single-floor buildings are rare; a bungalow with a yard is seen as an extravagance.

Some taller buildings have public rooftops. Depending on the district and the size of the building(s), these can hold anything from parks to housing to small shopping centers. In higher-density districts, these rooftops are often linked by walkways to create sprawling above-ground streets. Public roofs have exterior elevators to keep them accessible.

DENSITY

Grand Cross is high density at the end caps to give more people easy access to the ports. The end cap wards have most of the skyscrapers, big apartment blocks, and important buildings. The next wards in are medium density: they use a lot of vertical space, but they lack the towering skyscrapers of the end wards. The wards in the middle are low density, with wide stretches of parkland and most buildings are two to four stories tall at most.

The wards aren't uniform in height—people prefer a little variety. There are parks all over Grand Cross, small buildings near the end caps, and a few office towers in the central wards. Ward density is a range, not a restriction.

DOWNTOWN

In practice, the front-end port is considered the station's main port. Its position near the Agriculture Ring gives it a lot more traffic, so it has more facilities to deal with that, and it's facing the sun, so it just feels a little brighter.

As a result, every business that could benefit from being in one of the end wards opted for the front end where possible. Those wards—Voyager, Cixin, and Turing—are collectively known as Downtown. Downtown is denser than its counterpart at the other end, and it has most of the station's major players too.

Eventually, Downtown spilled into the adjacent wards. Most of the adjacent districts are gentrified—or in the process of being gentrified—and some are being redeveloped with taller, higher-density blocks. "Downtown" covers roughly a quarter of the cylinder these days; after that, the benefits of being there are outweighed by distance from the front.

HOUSING

Most Grand Cross homes are apartments. They come in many sizes, from single-person studio apartments to two-story "maisonettes" intended for families. Most of these dwellings are spacious and comfortable, with soundproof walls and full facilities—the goal is to get more out of the available space, not pack as many people in as possible.

A few districts around Grand Cross have other housing options. In places where lower buildings are acceptable, like the central wards and parts of the residential areas, you can sometimes find townhouses—homes with shared walls—packed together in tight. Most of these are held by what remains of the station's middle class.

The wealthy live in stand-alone homes, like homes on Earth. When space is at a premium, even a shitty McMansion with a boring patch of lawn is a mark of wealth and status. They mostly exist in the central wards and select parts of the city's end cap borders. They weren't in the original plan, so permission must be wrangled through pleading, lawyers, and hefty "donations" to the government.

All buildings are supposed to be built to strict standards, using material harvested from asteroids and processed on the outer hull. Grand Cross homes are no exception. They tend to be very well made compared to homes on Earth, though these days the rules have relaxed a bit and contractors often get away with cutting corners.

OWNERSHIP

Under the original system, newcomers to Grand Cross and those who become adults there would be assigned a place to live (or given a list of available ones to choose from) and granted ownership of their new home. Residents of an apartment block get communal ownership of the common areas, and disputes that can't be resolved locally are escalated to the Department of Housing.

This practice continues, but these days most new houses are made by contractors who get to sell most of them and keep the money. Many of these homes aren't put up for public sale but sold directly to corporations as work contract housing or to the wealthy as investment properties. There's a long waiting list for housing now, and that's before taking the Disaster into account.

Many people—especially Double Crossers, who also tend to get bumped down the list to make room for Earth migrants and people who bribed the housing department—are forced to either attend auctions (which are generally dominated by wealthy homeowners asking questions like, "what's the rent like in this district?") or rent instead. Because housing demand is high, so are the rents.

Those who got their home for free don't pay rent, but they are expected to pay for utilities. These fees are modest, but in places where these utilities get privatized the bills go up while the service gets worse. They can't be kicked out, but their utilities can be switched off. In heavily corporate districts, the homeowners are practically paying rent. Some have been forced to sell and relocate, or pick up roommates.



VOYAGER WARD

"This is the center of Grand Cross. Earth orbit too, probably. Earth? Fuck Earth. Anyone who's anyone already got in a rocket and came up here. Know why? Cream rises, my friend, and this is the top."

— Trilobite Liao, Hergatz Liao CEO

Enter Grand Cross through the front spaceport and take the "main" route down to the city, and you'll find yourself in Voyager. It's a major business and commercial center, a tourism hotspot, and a cultural icon.

Voyager was designed to be welcoming. The spaceport train drops visitors off at the Gate to the Future, a commercial plaza at the ward's edge; from there you can explore the nearby shops and restaurants, catch a train to any ward in the city, or follow Opportunity Road and explore everything else Voyager has to offer. It's beautiful, optimistic, and carefully crafted.

Everything about Voyager is designed to lead your hand and guide your eye. The obvious paths from the Gate all lead to safe, carefully controlled areas where you can see the station as its rulers want you to. They carefully avoid the corporate towers, the gated communities, the streets where private security work.

Voyager is the seat of power for the Offworld Cartel, and the ward's superficial beauty is a mask to hide their true face. They want you to hope for the future, not look at the present.

THEMES AND THREATS

THE FACE OF DOWNTOWN

A lot of Voyager ward is public facing: explicitly designed to look good to visitors and appear as a place Crossers can spend their day.

The Gate to the Future is connected to Voyager by Opportunity Road, an arterial lined with shops and cafés. Halfway through the ward it splits into new roads to the city's central business district, the fancy Pioneer Park, and the residential districts beyond. The tram network makes sure you won't miss out on anything. Even the bridges to the adjacent panels are basically artworks.

All this has made Voyager into a bustling cultural center. Locals call the three front wards "Downtown", but if you had to narrow it down to one ward, Voyager would be it.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Voyager is a busy ward, but it's not all meant for outsiders. The districts connected to Opportunity Road are the busiest ones because the ward's layout funnels people through them.

The other paths aren't exactly hidden—they're just designed to be passed over. They're narrower than they have to be, turn corners so you can't see where they lead, or just aren't attention-grabbing. Down these paths lie high-rise businesses, apartment complexes, and other places that don't need or want that much traffic.

Sometimes, the hidden places are only a block away. Clear your head, look beyond what's in front of you, and you might find yourself in another world.

CORPORATE STRONGHOLD

Voyager is prime real estate, a lot of which is taken by the Offworld Cartel. Look up at the skyline and you'll see their logos towering over everything. More than half its members have their headquarters here, along with most of the groups they fund.

Their presence bends the ward like gravity. Some of the hidden districts are dedicated to serving the Cartel, with exclusive clubs and rows of apartments for workers they brought from Earth. Some places they've taken over entirely and replaced the high-density towers with executive suites and overwrought manors.

As far as the Cartel is concerned, this is their playground. If you're against them, you shouldn't be here.

TEZUKA	CIXIN	MARUKYU			
VERNE	VOYAGER	ADAMS	MARIPOSA	AMAL	FOUNDATION
HARBOU	TURING				

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Central is Voyager's central business district and the unofficial center of the Downtown area. It rests on the ward's spinward edge, where the New Horizon Bridge connects it to Turing ward.

The streets of Central are orderly grids of shining glass and towering skyscrapers. The neon skyline above is one of the station's iconic sights, riddled with Cartel logos as it is. This district contains the headquarters of Archon Assets, NanoFuturistics, and Omnidyne Systems, plus a lot of satellite towers for other corporations.

Though the streets are covered by the SPD, Central has one of the heaviest private security presences in Grand Cross. They're contracted to cover most of the corporate buildings, and they can enforce the law indoors as they see fit. Sometimes they snatch protesters and homeless people off the sidewalk and charge them with trespassing, which the SPD usually accepts without checking.

LOCATIONS

Café des Astronautes: A classy restaurant frequented by up-and-coming business types. Its owner **Andre Arnoul** (p. 274) is an arrogant chef who hates androids and full-body cyborgs for being unable to experience his food, to the mild concern of his cyborg daughter.

Grand Central Plaza: This sprawling plaza is the beating heart of Central. It contains Central's largest transit station and connects to Opportunity Road via Spirit Way. Huge advertising screens have been installed all over the place to take advantage of the traffic, and they're a tempting hacking target if you can figure out the trick...

Delta St. Towers: The HQ of **Omnidyne Systems** (p. 239). It splits into two towers near the middle that rejoin near the top, so the hole looks like a big O. A swarm of drones—one of every model they've made—flits around it during the day. There was an incident a few months ago where some android(?) crashed out of the building and vanished, but every security camera with a good view of the incident was off.

GreenSpace: The HQ of **NanoFuturistics** (p. 237) is a tower whose walls are covered in plants and vines. These hanging gardens don't just look nice—they're there to show off the corporation's skills. A transit station and indoor park are built into the lower levels, which NanoFuturistics are almost definitely spying on through their designer plants.

Kala's Corner: A Harborside mamak restaurant, popular with Central workers for its affordable food and late hours. The hanging TVs and misting fans are a little old, but the food is good. It's run by **Kala** (p. 275), an android who was kicked out by the family she once cooked for when they were forced to start paying her. Some god with a sense of humor put her place and Café des Astronautes within sight of each other.

Harborside: Central's panel edge is one long promenade. It's designed to look like an actual Earth harbor, only jutting out over a sky panel instead of the ocean. In the evening, they use lights to project ships sailing through the windows. The New Horizon Bridge runs from here to the Armitage district in Turing (p. 156).

Harborside is a leisure area. Its attractions include the **HydraTech™ Orbital Aquarium,** the only public aquarium in Grand Cross—you would not believe how tricky it was to get the fish up here—and the indoor amusement park **Mega World**, designed by gaming company Mega Interactive. Every Double Crosser has been on a field trip to at least one of them.

Inner System Finance Center: On the surface, the ISFC is a generic postmodern skyscraper packed with up by mid-sized non-Cartel corps, law firms, and dull businesses.

The top few floors host the **Interplanetary Consortium of Orbital Standards**. This office is a cooperative effort between a consortium of orbital corporations to ensure everyone who works in space uses the same standards—in other words, it's the on-paper home of the Offworld Cartel.

The actual standards work takes up only one floor, and that includes the server room and automated café. The other two floors hold a few conference rooms for Cartel meetings, some oversized lobbies for lounging, an incredibly gratuitous jellyfish aquarium lounge, and an interrogation room. It's one of the most heavily defended corporate sites on Grand Cross.

FUTURE DISTRICT

The Future district sits on the edge of the end cap, where the spaceport train connects to the station's transport network. The area mostly supports Crossers who work in the spaceport and the Agriculture Ring, but it's designed with new visitors to the station in mind.

The centerpiece of the district is the Gate to the Future plaza. It contains a Visitor Center, a beautiful space-themed sculpture (the Gate), a bunch of Earth-based fast food joints, and a market on weekends. The adjacent areas contain administrative services for new residents, the spaceport, and the Ring.

As the station opens up and space tourism becomes more feasible, the authorities have leaned harder into the visitor angle. The area has a subtle but heavy police presence, who focus on keeping the appearance of safety by turfing out petty criminals and the homeless. Most of the district's budget is being spent on furbishing the plaza; if your problem isn't an aesthetic one, you're on your own.

LOCATIONS

First Street: A residential area mostly occupied by retired Builders who moved in as the station became habitable. Someone wrote in the spaceport's welcome pamphlet that it's an "authentic Grand Cross experience" full of "helpful locals," so they're occasionally bothered by strangers taking pictures of them and asking for directions. Some Builders amuse themselves by spreading lies about how the station works.

GCFU Building: The station headquarters of **Grand Cross Farmers United** (p. 207). This is where Ring workers seek legal help, back up their data, and discuss their plans where corporations can't listen in. It has a small garden on the roof where retired Ring workers grow flowers to sell in the plaza market.

It shares the building with the **Farmer's Hotel,** an Australian-style pub run by a retired technician everyone calls **Bazza**. The pub is open to the public, but it's mostly frequented by locals and retirees. It's possibly the best place to find out what's going on in the Ring aside from actually going there.

Gate Station: A large transit station taking up an entire side of the Gate plaza that connects the spaceport train to the Grand Metro. It contains a shopping arcade and a large indoor park where retirees play chess with each other. The local cops are currently engaged in a shadow war with a gang of guerilla graffiti artists who keep hitting the place.

Grand Cross Visitor Center: All newcomers are sent to this complex. It contains a small space museum, a theater, and a VR suite where you can get a guided tour of the station. In the rear is a park, a café (free for newcomers), a tacky gift shop, and an office where folks who haven't chosen a home yet can pick one. These days most of the options are rental properties, and the office annex gets vandalized a lot.

Years ago, when the station did a huge PR campaign to entice people to enter space lotteries, the Center was a filming location for a space-themed sequel to the *Cretaceous Park* films. They never got around to removing the dinosaur decorations.

Apple Street Medical Center: A small cyber-clinic that mostly does maintenance for Builders and working-class folk. It's run by **Umaru** (p. 276), a Builder's son with a cyber-arm and a smoking habit. The Center can't afford good cyberware, so Umaru has a side business printing hydroponics parts for Ring workers that don't want to pay service fees for the legal stuff.

PlayTronic: A toy company that mostly makes kitschy souvenirs, like Grand Cross models with movable mirrors. In secret, it's a front for the **Block Boys** gang (p. 254). Since the gang was founded by Builders, the building has a secret basement that doesn't show up on official maps. They manufacture drugs down there and use a vent to sneak them out via drone.

Virtanen Park: A tower in the middle of a lovely flower garden. Its floors house various Agriculture Ring interests: a museum, some research labs, offices for a bunch of Ring-related businesses, and the Department of Agriculture's records. The corporate floors are high security, but the museum is easy to break into, and you can move elsewhere in the building once there...

VENERA DISTRICT

Venera is an entertainment hub of pricey shops, street cafés, and nightclubs. It mostly caters to visitors from other wards and workers who just finished their shifts, so don't expect the high-end stuff—this is where the wealthy get their money back from the lower classes, not where they spend it.

The district lies just up Spirit Way from Central district and takes a lot of commercial overflow from there. Morningstar makes its home here, along with several smaller corporations. In the corporate world, Venera is the place to be if you're trying to move up in Grand Cross.

A lot of the street-level shops are mom-and-pops opened by first-gen Crossers a decade ago. They're little pools of peace and quiet in the rowdy mess that is Venera. In some streets they've closed though, with dive bars and worse places cropping up in their place. Head down the right alleys and you'll end up in all the wrong places.

LOCATIONS

The Black Pyramid: An augmented reality nightclub popular with hackers, cyborgs, and other cyber punks. The "real" building is matte black—you need to use AR glasses or cyber-eyes to see the occult-themed details. The bartenders use virtual avatars and a robotic bar to serve drinks remotely. It's watched over by the **Tick-Tock Men,** android bouncers whose construction-grade frames are more than enough to turf out troublemakers.

The Pyramid is run by **Dana Najm** (p. 276), a semi-retired hacker who designed the club's AR systems herself. She sells grey-market software to hackers who earn her trust but discourages any outright illegal business within the club.

Cave of Steel: Venera's premier android club, a tasteful chrome affair with a big dance floor. The music is by android artists, the bar sells digital pleasures like drink-soft, and the staff are mostly androids. They serve humans too, which has led to some of that android music being stolen in the past.

The Cave is run by **Sammy Chang** (p. 274), an android who built their current body themselves. Sammy gives most of their profits to android rights and reproduction groups, which occasionally attracts the attention of anti-android humans.

Moon Flag: A seedy back-alley bar mostly frequented by locals too broke for the good drinks and criminals too petty for the cool bars. The flag over the counter, allegedly stolen from the Apollo 11 landing site, is like five years old maximum.

A lot of shady folks visit the Moon Flag, either to meet other shady folks in a neutral place or to see **Moogsy** (p. 276), a fence who knows his way around the station's basements.

Orbital 87: A major shopping center inspired by the American mall boom of the 80s. The Orbital is a sort of petri dish for advertising firms, where researchers test things like "how personalized can ad-screens get when you pass them before you start wondering how they know this stuff?" There's a lot of interesting stores here—if you can wade through the ads.

Sakigake: An izakaya near the Orbital where low-tier corporate drones come to drink and socialize after work. Enough corporate chatter goes on here that the regulars know a lot about goings-on in the corporate world.

Sakigake is run by **Hiten Hagoromo** (p. 275), a former corporate overseer in the station's early construction phase. Hiten collects pieces of space junk and displays them in the store proudly, complete with little plaques that say things like *"Soul of the Fire (novel) — thrown out of International Space Station, 2013"*.

The V-Suite: A shady bar for mid-tier corporate types, hidden down a little-used walkway. On the surface it's a nice after-work bar with touchscreen menus, but the right order/special request combo will get you invited to the much larger back rooms where executives snort drugs, chomp cigars, and play a little pool.

The V-Suite is owned by the **Void Dragon Syndicate** (p. 253) and run by **Lithium Hua** (p. 275), a full-body cyborg. Hua has a lot of connections, knows how to get whatever she wants, and will hook others up for the right price—which conveniently gives the Void Dragon leverage over the clientele.

ZENITH DISTRICT

The modestly named Zenith is where Voyager's elite hang their hats. It sits on the front-spin corner of Voyager, on artificial hills built specifically to provide a better view of the cylinder.

Zenith is a place of sprawling manors, luxury apartments, and beautiful landscaping. It wastes an incredible amount of space compared to the rest of Voyager, and in fact the district has to run onto the base of the end cap to fit everything. It wasn't planned that way—construction was hijacked early on by people who like having five living rooms.

The people who live here own the people who work here. Zenith is full of housekeepers, chefs, maids, chauffeurs, nannies, lifestyle consultants, nurses, and other servants. The highest paid are private security who police the entire district and keep an eye on anyone who doesn't seem to belong.

LOCATIONS

Apogee Medical Boutique: A medical center that serves Zenith's wealthy. Their specialties are cosmetic augmentation, plastic surgery, and prescribing unnecessary drug cocktails. The chief doctor, **Reidar Aalfs** (p. 274), will prescribe anything to anyone for money; he gives a local lawyer morphine for his alopecia.

Deng Xiaoping Memorial Way: A street on the backspin edge of Zenith. It holds "near-luxury" apartment complexes, owned by Zenith's elite and provided to their servants as a perk of employment. It's hidden from the rest of Zenith on purpose; some employers even pretend the Way lies in the next district.

The Way has a really nice park. Outsiders keep coming here to hold anti-imperialist memorials and vigils; the residents don't mind, but the Zenith elites are split on whether to remove the park to protect their property values or keep it for their personal dog-walkers.

Fujigaoka: One of several gated communities in Zenith. Unlike the others, which are mostly full of white families making each other miserable, Fujigaoka is just the **Asano family** (p. 231) making themselves miserable.

Fujigaoka is full of Japanese aesthetic McMansions, robotic animals, and those things that go "doink"[1]. Each is occupied by an Asano and their spouses/kids/pets. Since most of the Asanos hate each other, every Asano household is caught up in at least one property dispute at any given time. Living in Zenith is what rich people do, so none of them would dream of moving.

L'Atelier de Burger Gorille: Literally just a Burger Kong. Since this is Zenith though, it's an incredibly fancy Burger Kong that looks like a hotel lobby. There's overpriced wine on the menu, but otherwise it's the exact same food. It is the most popular restaurant in the district.

Marv's: A walled mansion on the end cap side of Zenith with one occupant: the reclusive millionaire **Marv Delmarr.** Marv is a tech entrepreneur whose fortune came from designing, then selling, the social media network HoopyFrood. As far as anyone knows, he's holed up there ever since.

Marv is reclusive even by Zenith standards. He never leaves his house, but drones occasionally fly food and boxes in. Rumors about what's going on in there have been going around for years.

Montclair: A row of luxury apartment buildings on the panel's edge, not too far from Central. Montclair is the home of up-and-coming executives, entrepreneurs who just made it big, and millionaires who want to live in Zenith but not shell out for a whole house. You can't throw a brick without hitting someone with ambitions and something to prove (or getting your ribs broken by security, so don't do it.)

Working Joe: A "coffee experience bar" in the district's commercial area. The experience here is poverty tourism: the decor is someone's tacky idea of what the lower-class parts of Grand Cross look like, the meals are weird-sounding gourmet versions of street food ("Ricotta and crab meat pie floater served with instant ramen"), and the $15 coffees are served in steel cans. Everyone who comes here is the worst.

1 Deer scares. Grand Cross doesn't have any deer, Asano just uses it as shorthand for "this house is very expensive".

OTHER DISTRICTS

CASSINI

Cassini is a residential district near Adams ward. It's mostly two-tiered buildings, with shopping arcades and indoor parks on the ground tier, and apartment blocks and walkways on the upper tier. An arterial cuts through the middle, and plazas and courtyards down the side streets give the locals some breathing room.

Cassini is a place of hidden treasures. The shopping arcades have many unique stores, niche products, and colorful characters, and many Crossers make regular trips to Cassini just to see what's new. The bars on the arterial are well known for promoting new and indie bands; **Saturnz** in particular has launched quite a few careers.

CHANG'E

This business district is one of the smallest in Voyager—unless you think vertically. It's almost entirely occupied by the **Liao Tower**, headquarters of **Hergatz Liao** (p. 234).

Liao Tower is a miniature arcology. It contains HL's offices, research labs, many of their subsidiaries, floors of apartments for employees (including a penthouse for the CEO, **Trilobite Liao** (p. 248)), a Grand Metro station with a shopping center, and a Burger Kong so Tril doesn't have to leave the building. You still need to leave for entertainment and luxuries, but all the basics are covered.

Most of the workers who live in the Tower are low on the corporate ladder. HL doesn't stop them leaving or control what they do; the point is to keep tabs on them and use housing as extra leverage against them.

HUYGENS

A residential/commercial district beside a bridge linking Voyager to Cixin. Most of the locals are the families of retired Builders who worked on the science sides of the Project.

Huygens is best known for its **Builder Museum,** which is dedicated to the history of the Builders and the exploitation they faced. It also has a nice park with a statue of its founder **Åsmund Coolen** (p. 275), a "Builder" who became a millionaire. Every actual Builder knows that Coolen is straight-up lying about being one, but nobody wants to lose the museum, so the statue remains.

HAYABUSA

Hayabusa is the station's book town. Most of the station's publishing houses are based here, and its main street is lined with sleepy cafés, bookstores, and literary societies. It's busiest during lunch hours, when nearby office workers come for an escape from the hustle and bustle of the rest of Voyager.

Those who work late can visit the infamous **Latte Night,** a used bookshop/café that only opens from 11PM–7AM. There are quiet reading rooms for cramming students and tired workers, but the real action happens in the main room, where the café's odd regulars gather to drink coffee with the cyborg barista **Lotte** (p. 276).

LUNOKHOD

Lunokhod is a residential/commercial district. Its mall **Only Planet** is a little odd—it's full of Earth-based franchises that never really got a foothold on Grand Cross. If you're from Earth and you really miss Dunkem Donuts, you can get your fix here.

Only Planet's marketing has done a good job of associating Earth stores with quality. The locals lean pro-Earth, and Lunokhod contains the headquarters of **Federation Now** (p. 266).

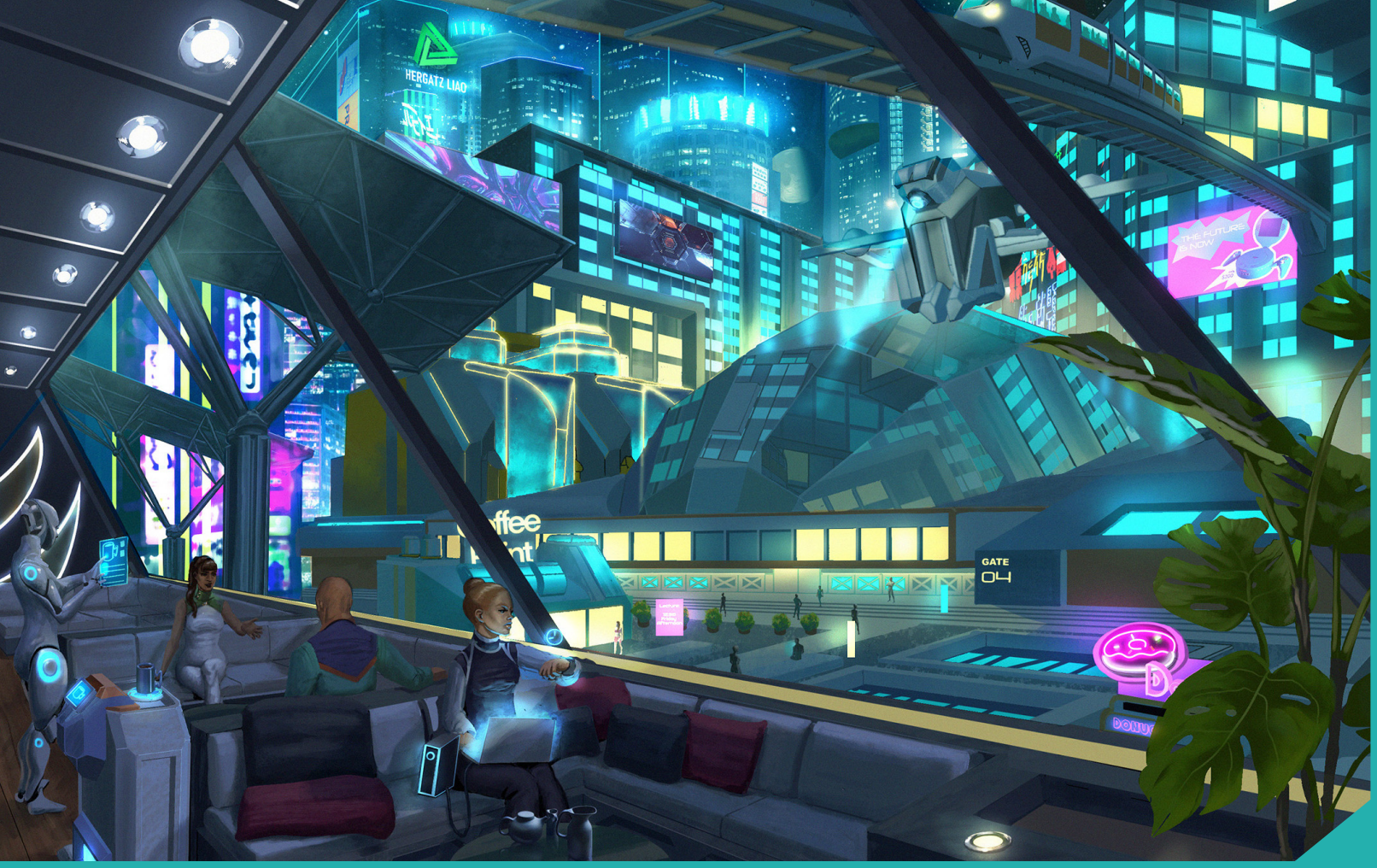
PIONEER PARK

Pioneer Park is a 42-acre park in the middle of the ward with a lot of palms and flowers. The transit station plaza hosts a Grand Cross tradition: it's a designated **Speaker's Corner,** where anyone can show up and give speeches on just about any subject they like (as long as they don't mind being heckled by the regulars). Speakers aren't protected by law, but the police only step in if they get a complaint or someone talks about police brutality.

On Sundays, the speakers are cleared out for an **Open Q&A:** a bunch of politicians, academics, and public figures discuss current issues and answer questions from the public, moderated and broadcast by GCBC (p. 112, 184). Unity complains that it's biased against them, so to appease them the GCBC tries to get one Unity-friendly speaker every week (usually some knucklehead from the Orbital Freedom Institute).

2D6 Current Events in Voyager	
1–3	
1	A big new group of migrants is expected this week
2	A strange new band is playing at Saturnz tonight
3	A huge [1–3 sale] [4–6 Federation Now event] is drawing crowds in Lunokhod
4	The next Open Q&A will host [1–2 a CEO] [3–4 Trilobite Liao] [5–6 the Prime Minister]
5	It's open day at the Builder Museum!
6	The maiden voyage of a new Earth space tourism agency is already on the way
4–6	
1	Central Plaza security is up amid rumors that some hackers are gunning for it
2	A string of mysterious break-ins and other petty crimes strikes the Future district
3	There's a big festival going down across Harborside this week
4	Some low-tier suit was found murdered in a quiet corner of Venera
5	The latest Asano dispute has strange repercussions elsewhere in Voyager
6	Another big protest is hitting [1–3 Central] [4–5 Venera] [6 Zenith] district this week

2D6 Sights on Opportunity Road	
1–3	
1	A protest about one of the station's many problems is broken up by police
2	A trio of cops shoo an increasingly agitated homeless man down a side street
3	A lost tourist who only knows about Grand Cross from TV asks for directions
4	A heavy [1–3 emergency] [4–6 corporate] vehicle breezes through, disrupting traffic
5	A Morningstar reporter passes through in search of interesting-looking people to do vox pops
6	A new arrival to Grand Cross has a reunion with friends/family on the street
4–6	
1	A street performer is drawing a big crowd with an eclectic performance
2	An influencer you [1–4 never heard of] [5–6 sadly have] is doing something ridiculous
3	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again
4	A new [1–2 neon] [3–4 Cartel-donated] [5–6 virtual] art installation went up last night
5	Gig economy couriers are queueing up to pick up food orders from a new restaurant
6	A protest about one of the station's many problems cannot be stopped



TURING WARD

"Mere decades ago, humanity was dreaming about living in space. Then we realized it was achievable with conventional technology, if only we willed it... and we did. Now look at us. Imagine the heights we'll reach tomorrow?"

— "Chips" Greeley, anti-homeless security drone designer

Turing is Downtown's technology and engineering hub. It houses many of the businesses connected to the Shaft (p. 210), most of Downtown's connections to the exterior hull, and a significant portion of the corporate research and technology sector.

This is where many of the station's technological advances come from. Turing has produced the software that adjusts the station's mirrors, the zero-g manufacturing tools used in the Shaft, and the facial recognition technology the police use to find people who film them. The people here are big on technology, but not much for the humanities.

It's also a big hub of android activity, from reproduction facilities to fashion outlets. The humans who planned the ward say it's because grouping the android and tech sectors together is efficient, but many androids can't help but notice that they're being associated with consumer electronics and factory labor.

Turing is the cutting edge of Grand Cross, but like the rest of Downtown, it's firmly in the grip of the Offworld Cartel. Feel free to marvel, but don't get too close.

THEMES AND THREATS

DREAMS OF THE FUTURE

The people of Turing are looking toward an even more distant future, though they can't agree on what it looks like.

The corporations here are focused on developing technologies. Most of Downtown's universities are here, training the stars of tomorrow. In the Sid, Turing's version of Silicon Valley, wannabe millionaires sell the promise that their inventions will change the world.

It's also the spiritual home of the Singularists, who work toward a radical vision of the future. It contains their favorite meeting spots and most of the station's few Singularist-focused businesses. The ones that don't work here look up to the people that do.

Meanwhile, Turing's androids are still deciding what they want their future to be. There are a lot of different versions being worked on, and not all of them have the androids' best interests in mind. What happens here will ripple through Grand Cross and likely beyond.

FORGET THE PRESENT

Looking toward the future isn't a bad thing in itself. Turing's problem is that nobody really cares about the present.

Turing's businesses like to move fast and break things. Everything is about the future… and getting there as fast as possible. New technologies are rushed to market with little regard for ethics, the law, or its effects on people. There's no time to stop and think about it.

A lot of Turing's tech companies are more concerned with the appearance of success than actual, meaningful results. If you're able to convince people your tech will be a game-changer down the line, you don't need to show any progress; you barely need to show any tech. This extends to the Singularists, whose dreams of a post-singularity future are essentially science fiction.

This cavalier attitude means that few pay attention to the consequences of their actions. If a new piece of tech is used unethically or destroys lives, well, that's just the price of progress. Someone can invent something to fix it later.

TEZUKA	CIXIN	MARUKYU			
VERNE	VOYAGER	ADAMS	MARIPOSA	AMAL	FOUNDATION
HARBOU	TURING				

ARMITAGE DISTRICT

Armitage rests on the far side of New Horizon Bridge from Voyager's Central district (p. 148). It functions as an extension to Central with a tech focus.

The centerpiece of the district is a palm-lined promenade around the bridge's end, a smaller copy of Harborside. The rest of Armitage is corporate towers, like Central. Though unlike Central, most of them aren't in the Cartel—but they'd love to be friends. A lot of the newcomers are promising startups from the Sid (p. 158), hoping to get into the Cartel one day.

Also like Central, Armitage has a high private security presence. It's more subdued though—they mostly focus on cybersecurity and surveillance, pass on information to the SPD, and let them do the heavy lifting.

LOCATIONS

1 Willis Street: This tower contains a grab-bag of government offices. Some are small departments with important tasks, while others were created for political purposes. They all have names like North End Cap Authority, Verne Education Investment Fund, and Digital Transformation Agency that make it hard to tell what they actually do.

It also contains the office of Turing's mayor, currently **Adam Najjar** (p. 277). Najjar says he's a Union man but he tends to be at the mercy of whatever Turing's elite want him to do; he sometimes enters through the basement to dodge demonstrators and reporters.

Asano Building: This complex on the edge of Armitage houses the headquarters of **Asano Heavy Industries** (p. 231). They built it themselves and made it fancier than it had to be to show off. The heavily guarded basement areas have airlocks that lead directly into their space on the outer hull.

Since the Asano family are prone to infighting, some departments are closed off from each other by security clearances despite being in the same building. To keep the workers from being riled up by the added security, they have a lot of nice places to eat onsite.

Canny Valley: A nightclub that employs android dancers with human-like bodies. They cater to both humans and androids; the humans that show up tend to be in the tech industry.

Canny Valley is a money laundering front for the android gang **Law Zero** (p. 253). It's run by **Dev Random**, a high-ranking member who otherwise runs it like a legitimate business. Law Zero members who bring other criminal activity to the club risk facing her wrath.

Horsehead Place: Horsehead (named for the nebula) is a tower complex by the promenade with office space, a hotel, a cinema, almost 150 shops, and twice as many apartments. It's one of the main reasons people come to Armitage.

Horsehead is owned by the Hylander Group, a family-owned conglomerate with property assets across Earth and its orbit. The Hylanders mostly live in England, but Horsehead is managed by **Camilla Hylander** (p. 277), who lives in a penthouse suite.

Horizon's Edge: Harborside's counterpart on the other side of the bridge. It was originally envisaged as a civic, cultural and commercial hub for Turing, but most of the planned buildings were moved elsewhere so Armitage's executives could have more restaurants.

The surviving cultural building is the **Grand Orbital Technological Museum**[2]**,** a museum of applied arts and sciences. Its exhibits include space rockets and other modules (mostly replicas), technological innovations that made space habitation possible, a life-size model space shuttle cockpit, a clockwork model of Grand Cross, and various temporary exhibitions of orbital artworks. A lot of it is quite valuable, so security is tight.

OFI Building: This place looks like an apartment block (and it was built that way), but it's actually the headquarters of the pro-Cartel **Orbital Freedom Institute** (p. 272). They host a lavish dinner every month where "thought leaders" (mostly Cartel-friendly politicians and their handlers) are invited to mingle and give inspiring speeches to each other. The OFI upload carefully curated recordings of the best parts. Their meetings with the **New Barons** (p. 267) are kept secret, for some reason.

Turing Convention and Exhibition Center: The largest convention hall in orbit, situated just beside the bridge. TCEC (aka "the Teacake") is home to many famous orbital conventions, including Flagon*Con and Webcomic-Con Orbital.

2 "Exhibits? We GOTM!"

SELDON DISTRICT

Seldon is a district on the panel's backspin edge, best known for the main campus of **Grand Cross Polytechnic (GPol).**

GPol is a university that specializes in applied science and engineering. Many of the station's agriculture workers, habitat engineers, city architects, city planners, and cyber-doctors studied here. It's not viewed with the same prestige as other university districts, but it's vital to the station.

The main building is a utilitarian Brutalist tower that looms over the district like a stern headmaster. The other buildings contrast it with shorter, wider designs and flowing, elegant curves. The campus sports a few small parks, but most of the recreation facilities are indoors to save space. The rest of the district holds businesses targeting students (especially along the arterial that runs by GPol) and student housing.

The actual people are a diverse collection of rowdy Double Crossers, semi-competent campus cops, political protestors, android freshmen, hard-drinking agriculture students, and trust fund nerds. Seldon is constantly in flux, but it has a type.

LOCATIONS

Gottlieb's: A bar tucked away in a corner of campus. It used to be a haven for indie bands and experimental comedy, mostly because it was a cruddy hole nobody cared about. A recent refurbishment (sponsored by NanoFuturistics) turned it into a much snazzier lounge with atrocious acoustics, which is killing off most of the good stuff. It's also a meeting place for student activists.

Jemison Building: GPol's medical and health sciences building. It includes a cyber-clinic where students learn to perform maintenance on cyberware. They'll usually take volunteers if you're strapped for cash.

Josef Diego Building: GPol's computer science building, named after Cartel oligarch and university donor **Josef Diego** (p. 251). The JDB is mostly known for its AI research, as a lot of past and current faculty members were involved in the creation of androids. Though she's not a faculty member, AI philosopher **Tachiko Masamune** (p. 123) has her office in this building so the others can pick her brain. It's also the usual haunt of **Kova Levy** (p. 380), an AI researcher who worked on the Dreamers. The Cartel still has him working on a way to reassert control, for which he's considering recruiting some promising students to help.

Polytech Security Solutions: This private security company has handled GPol for a few years now after the actual cops were fired for roughing up android students. They're still clueless.

The company's chief is **Lew Tupper** (p. 278), a former SPD officer. His goal is to sell PSS to a bigger security company. He mostly takes an interest in cases that might make him look good and has a habit of escalating at student protests in hopes of looking tough for the cameras.

Reid Street: A street popular with Singularists for its net cafés and geek stores. One office here is home to the astroturf nonprofit **Event Horizon.** Officially, it aims to "combat left-wing views in universities" by posting memes and doing stunts on campus; unofficially, it mostly funnels corporate investor money to its leader **Max Brodrig** (p. 277). Thanks to Max calling PSS every time someone vandalizes the office, Reid Street has a high security presence.

Ring Library: GPol's main library, which focuses on agriculture, habitat science, and humanities. It has a distinctive sculpture in the courtyard that looks like an Agriculture Ring half-buried in the ground.

Ring Library is best known for its study floors that include open study areas, closed study rooms, and the experimental study cubes: soft cubicles with big blocky chairs and charging sockets, perfect for holing up in. Unknown to the librarians, one of these cubicles is usually occupied by the hacktivist **Leetboy** (p. 277).

Union Hall: This building is the spiritual center of campus. It contains GPol's student union, some meeting rooms, a large ground floor food court with a Burger Kong, and **Atomic Age,** GPol's premier bar, which hosts live events throughout the year.

SILICON DISTRICT

Silicon district (affectionately called "the Sid" by locals) is the station's own little Silicon Valley, a town of snazzy office towers and palm trees—originally zoned as residential areas for the station's agricultural workers—wedged between Armitage district and the end cap.

The Sid's towers are full of startups, incubators, tech companies, law firms, and expensive restaurants. Money flows freely through all of them. Startups can appear, expand, and flame out like a supernova so fast you're not sure they ever existed, all within the space of a few months. Popular startups these days include untested space technologies, apps for things that don't need apps, and things that were left on Earth for a reason.

The Sid's people are high-flying optimists. They generally see themselves as tech-savvy visionaries about to usher in a technological revolution that will make the post-Impact boom look like the Dark Ages. From the outside, they seem more like a greedy pack of self-congratulatory dorks more interested in the appearance of success than the effects of their actions. Like they say in the Sid, it's a matter of perspective.

LOCATIONS

Derek Building: This office tower houses the various businesses of the entrepreneur **Derek Baars** (p. 250). Derek owns the building and has his own personal office-slash-gaming-lounge on the penthouse floor.

Some of the floors are reserved in case he needs a temporary office or a function hall in a pinch, but he also rents out office space at a discounted rate to startups that catch his eye. The people he invites are called "Baars' Boys" by Sid regulars and are treated with reverence.

Event Horizon Plaza: A rooftop plaza connected to a transit station near the Sid's heart. It was originally surrounded by space-focused companies—hence the space sculptures that decorate it—but recently it's become a hotspot for Singularist-run businesses.

The Plaza is a popular Singularist hangout. Many Singularist meetups end up in the **Magellanic Club,** a small bar run by the android **Divide-0** (p. 263).

Future Existential Risk Management Institute: This Singularist nonprofit near the Plaza solicits big donations from tech folks to fund research into "the potential existential risks of strong AI." This grift has gotten harder in the post-android era, where they have to keep explaining that they're *not* saying androids are going to kill us all, but they're hanging in there.

FERMI is best known for hosting **Omega Point**, a BBS for discussion of future technology and Singularist ideas. FERMI and Omega Point are both run by **Cyrus Berryman** (p. 262).

Lucky Station: The Sid's main transit station. There's a big statue outside dedicated to **Endymion Lucky,** the first millionaire to die in space. Lucky leapt into space at the first opportunity and died on Luna within a year after trying to crash a buggy through the protective dome around the Apollo 11 landing site. It's a common meeting place; taking a picture while rubbing the statue for good luck is a local tradition.

Neuronomicon: A startup near Event Horizon Plaza. Their facial recognition AI matches faces to a database of billions of images illegally scraped from the Internet; the business is hosted in space to help shield it from Earth law. Their customer list includes the SPD, private security, similar agencies on Earth, Cartel companies, and rich cyber-stalkers.

Neuronomicon is run by **Trajan** (p. 267), an android with ties to the **New Barons** (p. 267). A lot of his employees are New Barons who came to space to escape charges on Earth.

The Upvote: A high-tech bar above an arterial. It was originally part of the offices of the short-lived social media network SpacedOut but was sold off when the founder's extravagant purchases sank the business. These days The Upvote leverages its name to convince social media influencers to host events inside.

Wahid, Tanaka & Feingold LLP: This law firm (affectionately called WTF) provides legal and advisory services for startups. They have experience in pretty much everything and can act as intermediaries and dealmakers where necessary. WTF have dealt with almost a third of all current Sid startups and have files on a lot of the dead ones.

UHURU DISTRICT

Uhuru is a residential and commercial district known for its android services.

It began with a repair shop for cyborgs. This attracted a lot of androids to the area, some of whom started their own businesses. Soon Uhuru was full of repair shops, reproduction facilities, even android entertainment outlets. Such places exist all over the station, but in Uhuru you can get them all in one street and maybe buy some clothing too.

To the locals, it's not a big deal. There's not much difference between a cyborg and an android when you get down to it. Uhuru's just a part of Grand Cross that happens to have more android stuff than usual. It's enough to attract attention, though.

Uhuru is a flashpoint for debates and protests about android rights, especially how (and even if) android reproduction should be regulated. Outsiders who know that androids tend to be locked out of high-paying jobs come to prey on the locals. Cartel interests are trying to rebrand it as some kind of easily commodified android enclave. What happens here could have repercussions all over Grand Cross.

LOCATIONS

Ferrous Bueller's Paint Shop: A workshop that specializes in cosmetic mods for android frames and cyborg prosthetics: paint jobs, decals, cases, all those kinds of things. It's run by **Sloane** (p. 278), an android painter. Sloane feels like androids are still building themselves a cultural identity and works on other androids to explore that; she works on cyborgs too because she just likes drawing stuff.

Mirror Image: An android casual wear store. A lot of android fashion is just human fashion that got popular, and many human locals shop here, but Mirror Image designs unique clothing too. A lot of their clothing is designed to include wearable tech.

Mirror Image is run by **The Positronic Man** (p. 278), an android designer whose theatrical public face and name are part of his brand. T-P-M is currently busy with legal claims filed against larger human retailers who keep plagiarizing his best designs.

Ship of Theseus: A reproduction and body care service. It's run by the **United People for Android Freedom** (p. 271), which makes this place one of the few managed by androids *and* not controlled by corporate interests.

Theseus sometimes struggles to keep up with demand, and efforts to expand are slow. A popular right-wing conspiracy theory on the station is that such services are secret plots to "overpopulate" Grand Cross and replace humans, so they're regularly set back by vandalism or political sabotage.

Tetsuo Android Rights Museum: A kid's museum about the history of android rights, which Tetsuo hopes will be the first in a series of "android experience centers" around Grand Cross. It's not executed well—they downplay the role of corporations in android exploitation, pretend only non-violent protests did anything, and the final section is essentially an advertisement for Tetsuo.

Whoever designed the museum decided to decorate it with decommissioned android frames, striking poses and holding signs. It looks cool to humans, but to androids it's like filling a library with fresh skeletons in jaunty poses. It is spectacularly eerie.

Tetsuo Annex: Tetsuo's main android facility. Here they sell Tetsuo-model android bodies, Tetsuo-branded mods, and new AGIs for paying customers (provided the necessary paperwork is signed). It's the largest and best-funded facility of its kind on the station.

It's controversial among androids. Most of its employees are humans, who interrogate potential android parents with weird personal questions before they can use Tetsuo's services. Tetsuo's cutting-edge products can only be serviced by Tetsuo-approved shops, and they've never approved an android-run shop. Tetsuo loves to talk about giving androids help, but they want to set the terms.

Uhuru Skatepark: A DIY concrete skatepark in a forgotten space beneath an elevated rail line. It was built by a group of android and human skateboarders using materials donated by nearby construction sites. The locals credit them with making the nearby streets a safer, cleaner place to be.

Unfortunately, it seems like it might become the next in a long line of skateparks destroyed by gentrification. The government is considering acknowledging it as a public park, but Tetsuo has made a counter-proposal to replace it with a "contemplative" (and lucrative) android memorial with anti-skater architecture. The skaters aren't going down without a fight.

OTHER DISTRICTS

ASAKURA

A business and commercial district beside the Mona Lisa Overpass that connects Turing to Cixin's Jinxing district (p. 165). It's essentially a quieter version of Armitage. Asakura contains the offices of several internet-based companies, including **HeoCities** (p. 112), who occasionally host events in the area to showcase popular pages and rising influencers.

Asakura also hosts the **Grand Cross Museum of Digital Art** (GCMDA), hosting computer-based artworks by local artists. Its chief curator, **Karen Bogert,** has a bad habit of messing with exhibits that aren't by white people to make them about herself.

ASHTON

This Sid-adjacent district contains the main complex of **Ashton U,** a private research university. Ashton aims to be "the Stanford of space", and with the funding they've secured they might just manage it. A lot of it comes from corporate types who expect the university to hand their children degrees despite possessing the brains of a snapping turtle, but what else is new? The faculty are somewhat competent but passing rich students pads out their paychecks, so they're fine with it.

Ashton U's main complex is a pair of white towers connected by walkways and covered in greens. Its other buildings are spread across the ward. The rest of Ashton district contains student housing, commercial areas, and overflow from Silicon district. Most locals count Ashton as part of the Sid.

CHUMA

A warehouse district used for storage by Ogremoch Engineering, the Asanos (both the corporation and the family), android facilities, GPol, and a host of other Turing companies. The upper levels hold small, personal storage spaces that are sometimes used as offices by startups.

Most warehouses have their own private security, but the district as a whole is patrolled by security company **J5 Consolidated.** J5 is paid off by **Law Zero,** who own a small warehouse under the front company Destination Brain. The company's website is filled with phrases like "software-defined algorithms for application integration," so people tend to ignore them.

HAMMARSKJÖLD

This district houses a lot of Turing's engineering businesses, including a few branches of **Ogremoch Engineering** (p. 238). They're clustered around a transit station that extends through the basement to the outer hull rail. A lot of people pass through here to get to work and, because of this, the area immediately around the station is a commercial plaza where many workers go drinking after their shift.

The outer hull rail station is airlocked and the basement has several redundant airlocks plus a private security presence just in case. Though no official incidents have occurred here, the Cartel has been increasing security lately.

INFOBAHN

A residential and commercial district. The commercial areas are focused on entertainment for Turing's workers. It also includes some event spaces that are regularly used to host product launches, tech conferences, TED Talks, and the like.

The Infobahn is infamous for its restaurant scene, where it tries to disrupt food in much the same way the Sid disrupts tech (badly). Most of these places fold once the novelty wears off eating food that looks like plants in dirt out of a robot's head or whatever they're doing.

INNOVATION

A commercial and residential district. Its stores are mostly restaurants and franchise department stores that cater to local workers, but it has a few interesting clothing stores that do fashion for cyborgs.

Innovation also contains the Lanning Clinic, a nonprofit medical center that deals extensively in cybernetics. Historically, Lanning is where many Builders go for maintenance, but lately it's become popular with Turing's community of cyborgs who augment for self-improvement.

ROZUM

A small residential district. Rozum was originally occupied by android techs and GPol students. When the students were moved a couple years ago, their housing was purchased by a group called the **Universal Androids**: former Builders who want to try living with as little human interaction as possible. They work remotely, shop at android businesses or order online, and generally don't bother anyone.

2D6 CURRENT EVENTS IN TURING

1–3	
1	A new government "innovation" initiative is flushing more cash into the area.
2	The Grand Orbital Technological Museum has a cool new exhibit.
3	Grand Cross Polytechnic is gripped by a [1–2 festival] [3–6 student protest].
4	Another startup in the Sid has [1–2 made it big] [3–6 crashed and burned].
5	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again.
6	Everyone's talking about a [1–3 tech conference] [4–6 rich guy's hot Pulser take].

4–6	
1	A big Harborside festival is spilling into Armitage this week.
2	There's a new event in Asakura at [1–4 the GCMDA] [5–6 HeoCities].
3	Exciting new developments are coming out of Ashton U this week.
4	Fresh rumors of Law Zero's activities have been circling lately.
5	The latest Asano dispute has strange repercussions elsewhere in Turing.
6	Another big protest is hitting [1–3 Armitage] [4–5 Asakura] [6 Rozum] district.

2D6 THE LATEST TECH FAD

1–3	
1	A Wi-Fi connected coffee machine with a monthly coffee subscription service.
2	A new social network that already shows signs of going into freefall.
3	A smart bike helmet with a camera that cops are already requesting access to.
4	Voice-activated robot pets that can send and receive text messages.
5	A website that lets you rate [1–4 people] [5–6 places] that everyone already hates.
6	A two-wheeled self-balancing personal vehicle with Wi-Fi for some reason.

4–6	
1	Using crypto/the blockchain, or at least putting those words on your product.
2	A new way to surveil [1–3 your employees] [4–6 strangers] that worries normal people.
3	A [1–3 car] [4–6 bike] with a pointless subscription service for regular features.
4	Using drones to do everything instead of leaving the apartment.
5	Fancy clothes with programmable screens that will definitely be hacked soon.
6	An expensive "technology festival" on Luna which is almost definitely a scam.



CIXIN WARD

"This is the real heart of the city. Yes, Voyager's got the business and Turing's got the tech, but if you can't fulfil your brain's basic and psychological needs, you'll never achieve self-actualization. Even the most dedicated worker's gotta get their dick sucked sometime. As Downtown's primary entertainment hub, we are the fuckin' bedrock of civilization."

— Chloe Herschel, Ph.D., Void Dragon VR engineer

Cixin is a business and entertainment hub, a place for people who want to work hard and play hard and not travel very far in between. It's where you go when you have a lot of worries to forget and the cash to do it.

A lot of Cixin's larger business are outward focused companies that work elsewhere in orbit: outposts of Lunar companies, ship engineers, space research outfits, and the like. If Voyager is where most people enter Grand Cross, Cixin is where the Cartel plans to grow beyond it.

Cixin's dual focuses have made the ward an ideological cauldron where new thoughts and concepts can find a voice and, if they're lucky, capture the hearts and minds of the station's people. When a new trend spreads its wings and flies across the station, odds are good it had a nest in Cixin first. Sometimes though, Cixin's streets can be a gilded cage where ideas that challenge the powers that be a little too much are watered down and repackaged into more acceptable entertainment.

Don't think about it too hard. If you just relax and let Cixin entertain you, it could be the most fun you'll have on Grand Cross.

THEMES AND THREATS

BUSINESS AND PLEASURE

The people of Cixin are focused on today, sometimes tonight. Tomorrow is the distant future, and they're more than happy to kick that can down the road.

Cixin is about working all day and having fun all night. Don't worry about what you're doing after work until the work is done, even if you have to pull overtime to do it. Don't worry about how you'll feel in the morning, your bank account, or what you're putting in your body—you can burn those bridges when you get to them. The things that matter in Cixin are hip and happening, especially *right now*.

Being focused on today doesn't mean they're focused on today's problems, though. The bright lights of Cixin are focused on the fun, productive side of the ward; a lot goes unnoticed in the shadows.

DIVERSITY OF IDEAS

Voyager is basically owned by the Cartel, while Turing is a playground for technocrats. Compared to the rest of Downtown, Cixin is a place where new ideas can flourish.

The ward's focus on entertainment means a lot of voices that would otherwise be silenced can find a platform here. The streets make more room for smaller businesses and independent stores. The concentration of Cartel interests in Voyager means a lot of the local corporations are non-Cartel (not that that makes them good, of course). Even the crime scene makes room for smaller gangs.

Sometimes one of these new ideas makes it big. When something from Downtown starts trending throughout Grand Cross, odds are it came from Cixin.

PROBLEMS LOOMING

Cixin has a lot of ticking time bombs. The ward holds a lot of companies that have interests in space travel, other orbital settlements, and sometimes even Earth cities. Things that happen here can have ripple effects that aren't obvious for months, because they travel to other places before coming back to hit the station.

That's just the long-term problems. Cixin has plenty of 2020 problems to go around—the problem with partying like there's no tomorrow is that tomorrow comes eventually. The drug trade is getting more lucrative, the station's gangs are getting bigger, and turf wars are starting to pop up around the ward. It's going to get worse before it gets better.

TEZUKA	CIXIN	MARUKYU			
VERNE	VOYAGER	ADAMS	MARIPOSA	AMAL	FOUNDATION
HARBOU	TURING				

GOLDEN DISTRICT

The Golden district is Downtown's premier entertainment district, a storm of glitter and neon hanging over the panel's edge opposite Voyager. It's packed with everything from bars to restaurants to host clubs to cabarets, at all sizes and price points.

A lot of the station's entertainment companies can be found here too in the high-end office towers around the arterials. The condominium towers are home to entertainment elites, young socialites, and corporate heirs, free to live a life of decadence far above the problems of society.

This district is thick with private security. The station's elite party with their personal bodyguards, the upscale joints hire their own, and the local police department shares a building with Goliath. The message is clear: crime doesn't pay unless they get a cut.

LOCATIONS

Disco Elysium: This multi-level neon riot of a nightclub is one of the district's most popular nightlife spots. It's the kind of place where people get absolutely blasted, wake up in strange room in a distant ward, and still come back for more. Screens at each table can project menus, virtual dancers, music visualizers, and whatever the local hackers have slipped in lately.

Most organized crime groups treat the club as a neutral place where they can meet up. The dealers lurking around here are mostly from the **Liivipojat** (p. 254), a vest-wearing gang who make the best party drugs in the district; their leader **Mauri Käärme** takes bulk orders from the other gangs.

Orbit Five Entertainment: This production company is a major player in film, TV, and music. It's run by **Randy Babin** (p. 281), a new media mogul who built his empire through cunning use of new media and creative use of the exterior hull.

Also, underworld connections. Randy owes his success to the Void Dragon, who made introductions for him when he first came to orbit and still act as a silent partner. In exchange, they get a cut of the profits and a place to launder money. Randy is a charming jerk who exploits women, so the gang's protection helps too.

Nights of Cydonia: This building on the panel's edge is one of Grand Cross's few legal casinos. It offers everything from slot machines to mahjong, along with a hotel, restaurants, and a rooftop pool to keep you around. If gambling in a hall surgically designed to get you to spend while being served brain-destroying cocktails by a lady in a bunny outfit sounds like your idea of a fun time, this is the place for you.

The casino is run by **Christopher D'aureville**, a wealthy French entrepreneur. He has a collection of African artworks looted during the colonial era, which he likes to tempt fate by bragging about.

Phoenix Tail: A private security company with a focus on bodyguarding and aesthetics. They don't just protect you, they make it look *good.* Phoenix Tail are the people you call when you'd like to be seen strutting around town with a looker on each arm, but also kick the ass of anyone who messes with you.

Phoenix Tail is run by **Andromeda Bellizzi** (p. 279). Andromeda treats her employees well and holds her clients to high standards; she'll shield a CEO from protesters, but not if the protesters have a really good reason.

VirtuScape: A virtual influencer agency—they work with online entertainers (streamers and idols, mostly) who use virtual avatars to represent themselves. VirtuScape has ballooned into an online entertainment powerhouse, with some of their streamers having made millions.

Just because they work in a new format doesn't mean they're not another exploitative idol agency, though. They have a particular problem with doxxing: obsessive fans who form weird parasocial relationships with their talent sometimes dig up their personal information for stalking or harassment purposes. VirtuScape is more likely to force their streamers to apologize for speaking out than do anything to help them.

JINXING DISTRICT

Jinxing sits on the far end of the Mona Lisa Overpass from Turing's Asakura district (p. 160). It's a commercial district that caters to the technology sectors of both wards.

As a gateway to Cixin, it tends to be a little more subdued than the Golden district. Most people come here during the day, pass through to get some shopping done, or visit in the evening before heading deeper into the ward. Jinxing's night life is in its towers, where people eat at upscale restaurants and dance in expensive clubs.

As the Golden district's toned-down counterpart, Jinxing doesn't have much in the way of private security. What it does have, however, is one of the most corrupt SPS departments Downtown. The cops—who mostly live outside the ward—have allowed certain types of crime to flourish here in exchange for a cut of the profits. It's being subtly encouraged by the PSCS, who are hoping to use them as an excuse to take over Downtown.

LOCATIONS

Book Club Café: A maid café where each maid has a different personality trait. Since they get a lot of visitors from Turing, the Book Club caters to geeks: there's a sci-fi and fantasy fan, a gamer, one who loves talking tech, and so on. They've added some futurist maids to attract Singularists.

They used to have a maid who debates with nerds and loses, but most of the people who wanted that were creepy misogynists. Now they have **Harmony An** (p. 279), a compsci major who is super rude to them instead. She is massively popular with Singularists.

Elbrus Plaza: This tower is sometimes called Chez Zinovy because its apartments are packed with Zinovy middle managers. One of the clubs at the top is the **Black Drone,** which sports a partly automated bar and private rooms where a lot of Zinovy's Cartel deals are forged.

Healthy Life Grand Cross: A government-funded educational program that visits the city's schools in mobile classrooms to teach kids how to stay healthy through their mascot: Ripped Roy, an alpaca puppet.

Roy's shows cover a wide range of topics for various ages, from nutrition and hygiene to anatomy, android bodies, puberty, the dangers of smoking, cyber safety, and gender identity. A lot of teens have memories of being shown an anatomical mannequin with see-through skin by an alpaca in the back of a van.

In this main center, "Roy" is an android remote-piloting an alpaca-like body. A project to place an AI in the body directly was started and mysteriously cancelled last year.

Koala Box: A karaoke box with a wide range of orbital bands and an all-you-can-drink option. It's very high-tech, including touchscreen tabletop games if you need a break from the singing and optional lasers.

It's secretly a front for the cybercrime gang **GG Noire**. The Box exists to launder their money and give them an excuse to have a bunch of tech lying around. The gang is run by **Lathan Tan** (p. 256), who turned to crime for medical treatment and stayed because he's good at it.

Götz von Berlichingen's: This bar's gimmick is that some of the bartenders are cyborgs with (temporary) custom bartending mods that let them do cool tricks. A couple of years ago a fight in the street outside Götz was featured in a bullshit Morningstar cyberneurosis-scare story, and the bar's owner **Gerlach Stern** (p. 280) successfully sued over it.

Götz isn't strictly a cyborg bar, but Gerlach used to be a cyborg activist and has a lot of contacts in the community. He's been known to make introductions for people in need.

Jinxing Markets: A multi-level market hall that caters to people coming in and out of Cixin. It has a food hall, a fresh fruit and vegetable market, and vendors selling cheap clothes, giftware, and electronics.

At night, some open-air areas on the roof and the outsides remain open to cater to Jinxing's night crowd. According to the internet, you can pick up some good specialized computer equipment from the late-night vendors if you know where to look.

LIU DISTRICT

The Liu district sits on the ward's Marukyu border (p. 178). It's centered on **Eden Road,** a wide arterial leading into the heart of Cixin. An elevated platform with pleasing curves runs down its middle, covered in public park space. Sometimes people heading into Cixin get off in Liu just to take a stroll through Eden Park.

The people who don't come for a stroll come for the shopping. Eden Road and the surrounding streets are lined with stores, with commercial and residential units overlooking the park in the upper levels. On Friday to Monday nights, Eden Road is closed to vehicles and a night market pops up instead. It's a great place for cheap food and cheaper clothes—there's a pretty good flea market too.

The back streets of Liu are filled with more stores, plus bars, clubs, massage parlors, and seedier places. This is where the serious shoppers go to look for hidden gems. Some stores keep odd hours, or serve office drones who just got off work. A couple are outposts of the android gang Law Zero (p. 253)—Eden Park was built by android hands, and LZ sometimes extorts the human-run night market stalls for protection money.

LOCATIONS

Eden Center: A pink and aqua shopping mall complex connected to Eden Park by a walkway. Eden is slowly dying: its main visitors are either parkgoers here for the food court and the cinema, or mallrats who don't buy anything. The Center has had a problem with people shoplifting goods to sell at the night market, so they've tightened security a lot lately.

The Mothman: A rooftop bar with a good view, beloved by people who want a quiet drink at reasonable prices. The name was chosen due to its position making it difficult to see except from a stretch of Eden Park with no easy access; you have to search at street level for a neon moth sign over an elevator. The regulars are locals, and it's a good place to get the district's news and gossip.

Saint Never: A secretive android clinic hidden behind an electronics store in a side street. Here androids can get parts printed, repaired, and replaced. The clinic is invite-only; most members are from Law Zero, but some Hoshi Group cyborgs use it too. Both groups provide funding and protection in exchange for Saint Never's services.

Saint Never's sole "doctor" is **Doctor Malik** (p. 280). Malik knows her operation is illegal but believes that as long as her fellow androids are forced to pay humans for maintenance, breaking the law is just.

Street Art: In the last few years, Liu has become a playground for street artists who paint murals on the blocks near Eden Road, yarn-bomb Eden Park, cover its pillars in stickers, and decorate the night market with new stencils every week.

The newest sensation is **Zhao Liu** (p. 280). Zhao refurbishes discarded tech into guerilla art installations, sometimes on commission for local shopkeepers. She's currently struggling against **Apevert** (p. 243), a Turing-based company that does paid guerilla marketing for the food and entertainment industries. Apevert very obviously copied her designs and has actually stolen several of the newer ones to get a closer look.

Tasty Squid: A night market fried squid (well, squid-like meat product) stall run by the android **Somchai** (p. 258). Somchai is a Law Zero enforcer and part of their protection racket: any gang that tries to move in on their turf gets a late-night visit from him and his goons. Law Zero helped Somchai create a daughter, **Mali**, who runs the stall when he's away.

Veterans Benefit: This night market stall calls itself a fundraiser for veterans, but it's actually just the local police selling property seized (read: stolen) by Cixin cops. Common items include unlocked (and often un-scrubbed) phones, sound systems, cosmetic android mods, CDs, skateboards, scooter protective gear, and keepsakes from Earth.

The stall is run by **Sergeant Lennart** (p. 279), who also runs the Liu department's Pulser account and posts to brag about/advertise his stolen merchandise. He is vague about which veterans the stall benefits, but he mostly means himself.

SPITZER DISTRICT

Spitzer sits on the edge of Cixin's entertainment districts. It's less glamorous than the others, and its entertainment streets mostly cater to the office drones that work nearby. The rest of Spitzer is filled with small companies who tend to work in space research, habitat engineering, and other fields that benefit from Downtown's easy spaceport access.

A lot of the companies here are better known outside Grand Cross, either because that's where they operate or because the Offworld Cartel dominates the local scene. Sometimes Earth corps move into the area to test the waters before a big orbital push, or because having a presence on Grand Cross makes it easier to strike at their enemies here.

Some of Spitzer's businesses hitched their wagons to Skuggahvarf and have fallen on hard times in the wake of the Disaster. **Asano Heavy Industries** (p. 231) has launched an aggressive campaign of conquest to absorb as many companies as it can in order to consolidate its new position of power. It seems the Offworld Cartel is finally moving in on the area.

LOCATIONS

Jean-Luc Park: A lovely little park surrounded by residential buildings and mom-and-pops. The apartments are mostly packed with older Builders who don't have much connection to the businesses in the area, but as the community gets older many have passed away or moved elsewhere. Their replacements are largely young researchers and people on work contracts.

The blocks around the park also hold the office of **Final Frontier** (p. 268), an activist group formed by scientists who push for space settlements to experiment with new ways of living more than they have been.

Final Frontier is a project of science communicator **Lewis Carpenter** (p. 268). Last year he used "doing something other than capitalism for a change" as an example of something people could consider experimenting with, and since then Morningstar has been waging a smear campaign against him. Crossers incited by Morningstar keep trying to break into his office.

Maeda Tower: This building houses the offices of **Toha Cyber Holdings,** an Asano subsidiary. Its main purpose is to aggressively take over Spitzer's corporations and transfer their assets to Asano by any means necessary.

TCH's CEO is **Goro Asano** (p. 246) who was exiled here after breaking from family tradition for the sake of love. (He refused a political marriage to marry **Virgo Asano** (p. 246), his former bodyguard and a much hotter trophy wife.) He plans to not only prove himself but turn Spitzer into his personal corporate fiefdom.

Oasis Hospital: A private hospital offering the best service money can buy, including high-end cyberware. A lot of their customers are wealthy people who got a little too rowdy in Cixin. They have emergency facilities but have been known to send credit risks packing to the nearest public hospital.

Oasis is the subject of many celebrity rumors, since the rich and famous usually come here when they want discretion. Every month one of the station's elite visits for an undisclosed amount of time and later refuses to acknowledge they were there in the first place, let alone explain what happened in Cixin.

Orbital Video Products, Inc: A popular pornography studio. OVP is best known for their films showing positive relationships between humans and androids, which were revolutionary when they started making them.

OVP's founder and main director is **Hamish Double** (p. 279). Hamish believes that the line between human and android will blur over time until they become one transhuman people. He tries to express that in his work.

Red Sun Microsystems: A major American computer company on Earth and a minor software and cloud computing company on Grand Cross. Red Sun partly keeps their orbital offices open for corporate espionage purposes—they use the offices as a front while employing spies and hackers to steal the Cartel's research.

Red Sun's espionage expert is **Rosco Tasman** (p. 280), who cut his teeth pulling similar tricks back on Earth. He occasionally blackmails black-hat hackers into working for him, but he generally honors his deals and hasn't had anyone whacked as far as Red Sun knows.

OTHER DISTRICTS

APPLETON

Appleton contains several education institutions. The most notable is the central campus of **Academy City,** a university with a satellite campus on Luna. Due to its high student population, Appleton has a lot of cheap restaurants and clothing stores. Its main transit station is a major interchange and Cixin transport hub.

Appleton is also rumored to host the servers of **Uniboardz,** a student forum which frequently circulates pirated copies of university textbooks. Academy City has an open Huntr bounty for the admin, an elusive user known only as **Mister Yogurt.**

ATHOS

This neighborhood caters to the station's LGBTQ community. It's packed with bars, cafés, clubs, and restaurants, from big multi-level hangouts to tiny places with single-digit seating that cater to specific subcultures. Most visitors stick to the bigger places, at least at first.

Some of the side streets here have android-focused places. A lot of the regulars are androids who were assigned a gender on creation and are still figuring their real identity out. Some locals are against the android cafés, but most think they belong here.

EDGEMARKET

Cixin's red-light district. Besides the usual establishments, it also contains plenty of bars, restaurants, cinemas, and love hotels, along with the headquarters of the sex workers' union. Grand Cross sex work laws are fairly liberal, meaning the area is generally safe.

Much of Edgemarket is controlled by the **Hoshi Group,** but they're rarely a danger to visitors. The dangerous ones are the small-time gangs in the back streets that skirt the law by running unauthorized non-union businesses, offering illegal services, or charging hidden fees.

The biggest of these gangs is run by **Stephano Cavallo,** who rules through cunning and powerful cybernetics. He needs them too, because he's about as popular with the rest of Edgemarket as a fart in an elevator.

NEO GANGNAM

An upscale residential district near the end cap. Neo Gangnam isn't as pricey as Zenith (p. 151) and most people still live in apartments (though they're much bigger and fancier than other areas). Many locals are executives from the Cartel corporations in Cixin, Marukyu, and Turing—and, according to rumor, the **old folks** who run the Void Dragon (p. 253).

New Gangnam's business area is home to a lot of IT companies, the local headquarters of Earth-based social media companies, and some clubs near the district's edge. (The stuff the executives get up to in there is wild.) The rest of the area is mostly up-and-coming businesses that aren't likely to become part of the Cartel, like the **Space Banshee** record company (p. 244).

PLATINUM

An edgeside district a little forward from the Golden district. Platinum hosts more subdued entertainment experiences than the Golden, like a large edgeside park, niche cafés, and a theater that hosts a lot of talks.

Also in Platinum is the tower **6 Richmond Street.** Its bottom half is an entertainment complex; its upper half is the secret headquarters of the **Void Dragon Syndicate.** It's a little larger than it needs to be right now because they have dreams of going interplanetary.

YUTU PARK

Yutu is a lovely park in the heart of Cixin, complete with an artificial pond. It's a peaceful retreat from the rest of Downtown and as such is commonly used by office workers from the adjacent districts for lunch breaks. The surrounding blocks are packed with eateries and banks.

Yutu was recently visited by the robotics artist **Synthetic Ape**, who left behind one of his latest works: Horrible Goose, a robotic goose that pranks people, poses for photos, and runs away. Recently Horrible Goose has started getting even more mean and better at evading capture; either someone's hacked it or it's learning...

2D6 Current Events in Cixin	
1–3	
1	A new fad is spreading through the entertainment industry
2	A [1–2 niche] [3–4 cool] [4–6 expensive] new club opened in the Golden district
3	A days-long [1–3 festival] [4–6 protest] is going down in the Liu district
4	Another business in Spitzer has [1–2 appeared] [3–4 collapsed] [5–6 been bought]
5	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again
6	A celebrity's night out ends in [1 tragedy] [2–6 salacious tabloid headlines]
4–6	
1	A police raid gets in the news when they [1–2 succeed] [3–6 shoot someone]
2	Some kind of cross-institution student [1–3 event] [4–6 protest] is happening in Appleton
3	There's a new [1–3 community event] [4–6 business opening] in Athos
4	Space Banshee just [1–3 signed a new artist] [4–6 dropped a hot new album]
5	Some more crime bullshit breaks out in Wallmarket's back streets
6	In Yutu Park, [1–4 there's a festival] [5–6 Horrible Goose has struck again]

2D6 New Venue Gimmicks	
1–3	
1	A pop-up venue promoting an upcoming [1–3 anime] [4–6 film]
2	A Church-themed venue with faux-stained glass walls and a whole lot of sin
3	An Earth rainforest-themed venue, but the plants are all metal and have LEDs
4	An "East-meets-West"-themed venue that's both extremely bizarre and kinda racist
5	A venue staffed by furry cyborgs, assisted by cute robotic animals
6	A Basement venue, stairs hidden behind a bookshelf in a decoy venue
4–6	
1	A business openly skirting the law by copying an Earth venue
2	A blatantly racist themed venue that will be closed in three weeks
3	An underwater surf rock-themed venue with an ocean painted on the ceiling
4	An 80s Martian diner with Mars views on fake window screens
5	A main room modelled off the office Christmas party from Die Hard
6	A *Samurai Champloo*-style Edo-era Japan/modern hip-hop mashup venue



ADAMS WARD

"Sometimes I take the scooter for a ride and just breathe *this place. There's a new place 'round every corner and everyone in them's got a story. I could disappear into this town for days.*

"It's that feeling of community, yeah? Downtown's fun to visit, but this place feels like home.*"*

— Bandile Arendse, electronic musician

Walk through Voyager and deeper into the station and eventually the skyscrapers will give way to apartment blocks and cozy parks. This is Adams, the most populated ward on the Verne panel.

Adams is a residential and leisure ward. Much of it is housing, with parks spread throughout to give the locals a place to play. There are commercial and business districts near Voyager, where Downtown spills into the ward.

Adams is lower-density than Voyager and slower-paced as a result. It's not exactly a sleepy village, but major city events tend to happen elsewhere. All that changed when the Disaster happened.

A lot of L4 refugees were placed in Adams. The lucky got apartments while the unlucky were placed in temporary camps or left to fend for themselves. This has inadvertently made Adams a potential flashpoint for the station's conflicts. Big things don't usually happen here, but this year, Adams might happen to Grand Cross.

THEMES AND THREATS

SOCIALIZE THE LOSSES

One fun feature of capitalist societies is the way the state privatizes the gains and socializes the losses. The poor and vulnerable need help? Sorry, that'd cost money, so they're on their own. Taxing the rich to pay for it? How about screw you. Corporations in mild trouble? Only government intervention and tax cuts can resolve *this* crisis.

Grand Cross is yet another place where the poor get capitalism and the rich get socialism. Unity's policies transfer wealth to the Cartel and lets them hoard the profits while the economic risks are transferred to taxpayers—like the people of Adams.

The most egregious example is the Disaster situation, which would be far less of a problem if Unity hadn't re-invented landlords, but it's not the only problem. Everywhere in Adams there are small businesses that can't get loans, workers being exploited by their bosses, and infrastructure starting to fall apart because funding was diverted to a politician's buddies.

THIS IS FINE

It's not hard to see that Adams is changing with the rest of Grand Cross. The problem is not enough people are doing anything about it.

A lot of folks are busy. When you're struggling just to get by, it's hard to make time to push for change. Some figure that voting for Union in the next election will be good enough—though they're in the Cartel's pocket too, so it won't fix everything. Others have decided that both parties are the same and have succumbed to the idea that nothing can change.

And some people like things as they are. Most of Grand Cross's news outlets are in the Cartel's pocket, regularly pumping out stories designed to play down current issues or blame them on others. Many locals have been convinced that their problems were caused not by the people who profit from them, but their opponents.

TURNING TO COMMUNITY

In the absence of help from above, communities are forced to help each other.

A lot of problems in Adams could be solved by collective action. You're not going to solve everything in one go, but you can get a lot done at the grassroots level. With enough momentum, you can make a start on changing the station too.

TEZUKA	CIXIN	MARUKYU			
VERNE	VOYAGER	ADAMS	MARIPOSA	AMAL	FOUNDATION
HARBOU	TURING				

CIELO DISTRICT

Cielo is a relatively new district, built in the back half of the last decade. Its commercial area has been open since 2015 and is frequented by folks from adjacent districts. The residential areas were slowly filled in the years after that.

Cielo is a nice, quiet little neighbourhood. Its residents are a mix of newcomers who haven't been here long, families with Double Crosser kids, and Disaster refugees who lucked out and got housing. It's still in the process of figuring out its identity.

This district is presented as a potential starting point for Grand Cross campaigns: somewhere new and relatively stable, but still touched by the events unfolding in the station, with a few places the PCs could work at. If the PCs live here, they have a chance to help shape the place's identity.

LOCATIONS

Blue Mood Tower: A newer apartment complex owned by the landlord **Dwight Dunkel** (p. 281). Most of Dwight's tenants are working families or youth fresh out of school. Dwight has been hired by Tetsuo to trial a new product: a smart home device that lets tenants pay rent and interact with him remotely. He's calling it a success when the press asks, but to his tenants—who have to deal with Dwight sending intruding "rent reminders" while flashing their lights—it's a nuisance.

Dwight has easily bypassed Tetsuo's flimsy security to let him spy on his tenants without their knowledge and has a secret computer lab in the basement apartment to monitor for rule violations. Most of the work is done by his teen son **Wesley** (p. 281), who is kind of a creep.

Construction Sites: Cielo isn't totally done yet—there's another wave of construction taking place over the next couple years. Until then, some of Cielo's back streets are a maze of warning signs and temporary fences. A few of the empty sites have been used as skate parks despite the best efforts of security.

Hadar Logistics: A small courier company for people who need speed *and* security. Hadar mostly does shopping for people who need help with it, handles sensitive documents, plus a grab-bag of weird requests from Grand Cross and Luna, from trading secret love letters between celebrities to transporting data in cybernetic implants. They use a combination of walking, drones, and wild parkour, depending on where the package needs to go.

Meeple Mocha: A board game café near the mall where you can grab a light dessert and enjoy the latest in tabletop gaming. Post-Impact tech advancements make this a surprisingly complicated affair, with touchscreens and adjustable AR windows on most tables. One corner table is booked every Sunday for an ongoing session of the legendarily long board game *The Campaign for L5,* which started three years ago.

Robomancer: A robotics store that specializes in pets. Robotic fish are especially popular, as the real deal are hard to come by in space. Robomancer takes a lot of orders for custom creations and recently started offering android services after enough androids came in to ask about repair work.

Shift-Enter: A popular arcade on the roof of the local mall that offers a wide selection of games for all ages. The hot ones lately are collectible trading card arcade games that use IR-chipped cards to create an interactive experience; the most popular game, *Astral Burst,* has rare cards worth thousands.

The second floor of Shift-Enter is a fighting game arcade. Though most serious gamers in the fighting game community go to arcades in Marukyu, Shift-Enter has a few dedicated fans, including part-time musician **Madoka Mawaru** (p. 282).

Wheeler Square: A large shopping center in the heart of Cielo's commercial area. Due to the building's weird "futuristic" design, locals have started calling it The Mothership. The Adams government gave subsidies to small businesses that set up here, so it's a mix of small local stores and retail franchises.

The Mothership is also a transit station. Since there's a nice big rooftop park next to the Cross Rail station, this (plus Shift-Enter) has made it a popular hangout spot for Double Crossers.

GALAXY DISTRICT

Galaxy is a residential and commercial district near Voyager. It's one of those places where Downtown is spilling over into the next ward—it's even billed as a place where you can go Downtown without *going* Downtown, with a little of everything Voyager has except the traffic.

The district is home to several mid-sized corporations that haven't managed to reach Cartel status. A few have capitalized on the Disaster by offering work contracts to refugees. Those who can't have banded together to host a nightly light show in Galaxy's main plaza, which doesn't really help but does make the hosts look good.

Unity has gotten in on the game too. When one of their members wants to stage an event about refugees in Adams, it's probably here. Galaxy is held up as an example of what Grand Cross can do for the Disaster refugees, but it's more about how other people can profit off them.

LOCATIONS

Andromeda Street Station: A secondary transit station. The top two levels of its three-floor indoor park were turned into a temporary camp for refugees shortly after the Disaster.

Originally they were packed in uncomfortably tight, but as refugees got back on their feet (or left), the park became much more comfortable. That's prompted Unity to announce that the camp was "well below capacity" and would be wound up before Christmas. No plans have been made for the remaining refugees.

Bar At The End Of The Universe: A nice little bar down Andromeda Street. It's popular with the refugees, who have a lot of reasons to drink. However, Cartel journalists have been lurking nearby lately in hopes of getting footage for "lazy refugee getting drunk instead of working" stories. The bar's owners are split on whether to sue the journalists or stop serving refugees.

Hologram Plaza: Galaxy's main plaza. It has a very fancy lighting system, originally meant for a planetarium show. Post-Disaster, it's pivoted to a corporate-sponsored "pro-refugee" light show. To attract more people to the Plaza, the police sometimes encourage homeless refugees to move on before the show.

A lot of real activism used to go down here. Once people started bringing "You Can't Buy Homes With Light" signs though, the sponsors conspired to hijack the rallies by installing their own organizer: social media star **Wei Wang** (p. 283). The remaining rallies look cool but can be safely ignored.

L4 Connect: This temporary office, tucked into the back of a government building, helps refugees who lost ID papers in the Disaster. Most of their work involves contacting Earth governments, setting up video calls with relatives, and trying to get people's bosses to stop avoiding their calls.

Most people who need L4 Connect hate it. The wait times are long and it's an open secret that non-white refugees are usually jerked around by their home country, forced to take extra steps to prove their identity, or asked breathtakingly silly questions about their "connections" to criminal groups. Someone in the office is also fabricating new identities for sale on the black market, which apparently takes an hour maximum.

Keep on the Borderland: A store that sells anime, comics, tabletop games, and toys. It's owned by (and infamous for) **Tony Osborn** (p. 263), an arrogant, surly jerk who acts like an ass to anyone who doesn't share his tastes. Despite that, Tony is a big proponent of android rights who goes out of his way to sponsor related events in Adams and Marukyu.

Levistrode: A coding and data entry company that does contract work for bigger corporations. Recently they purchased a new apartment block and offered generous work contracts to refugees, which made them look great until a journalist noticed that their hires were exclusively white men. Levistrode has responded to the backlash by avoiding questions and announcing a "Going Green" campaign in hopes of burying the story with good headlines.

Levistrode is owned by **Nathan Levesque** (p. 282), a greedy entrepreneur. He has a minor rivalry with Geryon Aerospace, who he believes stole "his" spot in the Cartel, but really he's just not important enough for them.

NEO MELBOURNE DISTRICT

Neo Melbourne is nestled in a front corner of Adams, right up against Voyager. It's known for its connection to the arts: galleries, art schools, and a few performing arts venues that didn't make it to **Tramgaudry Row** (p. 215). As such, the administrative buildings of many arts organizations can be found here.

The district is home to a number of space show winners (p. 114), the ones hoping to turn their fifteen minutes of fame into something bigger. Sometimes it works out. It used to have another name, but after several early *Ground Control* winners moved into homes nearby, a lot of Australians came here too.

Neo Melbourne also contains the **Marsha Stretch,** an LGBTQ+ neighborhood founded by Builders. It's one of the most famous places of its kind in orbit, but lately it's being threatened by gentrification and a new crime gang. (See **The Terabyte Boys** scenario on p. 352 for more on the Stretch.)

LOCATIONS

Café Larose: An LGBTQ+ library/coffee shop on the park end of Marsha Stretch. It's run by **Susie Darling** (p. 357), who was an overseer during the station's construction and helped set up the Stretch. The café is her retirement plan.

Larose is a popular hangout spot for the locals, as Darling can dispense advice to anyone who isn't helped by her books. The café has an "attic" meant as living space for the owner; Darling rents it out cheaply to people in need instead.

Edgeside Park: A finely-landscaped park on the panel's edge with a glass-walled observation deck that offers an incredible view of space. The park sits on one end of Marsha Stretch, and it's a famous spot for activism. The cops usually ignore whatever goes on in the park as long as there aren't any homeless people in it.

John Clarke Theatre: A theater famous for its appearances in space shows. It began with *Ground Control to Andrew G* (p. 114), which hosts winner interview specials here. Other shows began using it after: *Stop The Planet I Want To Get Off!* copied *Ground Control*'s thing; *Rising Stars* winners perform their first space show here; and *Up And Going* is going to do a live show this year. In its downtime, the theater mostly does comedy.

The Mind's Eye: A digital art museum. The exhibits use computers, projectors, virtual and augmented reality, holograms, apps, and a whole host of other devices to create a weird but wonderful experience. It's like being trapped in a labyrinth with a cyberpunk minotaur.

Mind's Eye is sponsored by **Zinovy Ultragraphics** and run by the **Rad Netizens** techno-artist collective. The Netizens recently kicked out one of their members, **Blayde Warlock** (p. 284), for stealing credit and generally being an asshole. Unknown to them, he left backdoors in their installations just in case.

Orbital Center for Contemporary Art: An art gallery that showcases work by orbital artists. It has a few other facilities too, most famously one for the android dance group **Semicondancer.** OCCA recently opened a controversial exhibit designed for people with cyber-eyes, intended to spark discussion on human enhancement (original-eyed humans get special glasses.)

Swirly Thing Media: This office in the business part of Neo Melbourne is a media company started by **Zyler Parkes** (p. 283). Zyler is a space show winner who managed to gain millions of followers post-move, mostly youth, by stealing and reposting other people's content to his HeoCities page without attribution. He profits from it by selling ads and sponsored posts.

Zyler's employees are mostly friends of his (who do the content scraping work) and/or lesser space show celebrities (who do the media stuff). Swirly Thing were recently hired by Unity to help them appeal to Double Crossers with memes.

Westfield Plaza: This commercial plaza on the end of Marsha Stretch is a sea of tiles, dotted with islands of trees and benches. It contains a transit station, a bunch of cafés and fast food joints, and shops that cater to local workers and tourists. There's also an Australian souvenir store, despite Australia being hundreds of thousands of kilometers away. It's the proud producer of the station's only supply of kangaroo ball keychains.

RÉAMANN DISTRICT

Réamann is a run-down suburb on the edge of Downtown. Its main streets were built at awkward angles to compensate for corporate-friendly plan changes in adjacent districts, and most of the remaining buildings are cheap apartments, anonymous warehouses, and abandoned construction sites.

A lot of Réamann's housing was bought up by Earth companies who established a space presence by sending people here on work contracts. One by one those companies collapsed, moved to Luna, or sidelined their space efforts, leaving the residents behind with their own apartments but no jobs. By now, the folks still here are the ones too proud or poor to leave.

Some of its blocks aren't finished. They're meant to be, but the work was being done by Landvættir, who pulled manpower and resources from here to work on the higher-profile Skuggahvarf. Today the empty lots and construction sites are being squatted by Disaster refugees who ran out of money.

Réamann's residents came here for a better life, but instead they got screwed. The people in charge assume they can bootstrap their way out if they really wanted to, so things are unlikely to change any time soon.

LOCATIONS

Baldo's Bus Stop: This bar uses an abandoned bus as a counter and traffic signs as decorations (the bus is a replica of an Earth bus; the signs were stolen.) It offers cheap drinks, punk music, neon lights that almost never flicker, and VR rooms if you'd like to turn reality off for a few hours.

The Bus Stop is run by "**Baldo" Vázquez** (p. 283), a Builder who honestly thought Réamann was going to be one of the hottest places in Grand Cross when he set up shop. He's still holding out, but he kind of likes the scene he's built up here.

Griðungur Square: This commercial plaza on the district's edge is the one part Landvættir actually finished. It's a nice little place lined with small businesses, coffee shops, and offices open to rent. It's the only place in Réamann where the police do more than show up an hour late, take a statement, and maybe shoot your dog.

Hoagie 2000: A sandwich franchise that's entirely automated: you go in, use a touchscreen or an app to order a sandwich, and a machine in the back assembles it and pushes it through a hatch. The creators envisioned this would disrupt the service industry, mostly by removing jobs.

(Un)fortunately, the Hoagie 2000's software is buggy—common sandwiches include" "your order but slathered in sauce"; "bacon, lettuce, and miscellaneous"; and "mystery sub". The owners never send tech support unless someone hacks it for free bread rolls. Most Hoagie 2000s have closed; the remaining ones serve people from poor districts like this one, who are too hungry to be picky, and a few upscale influencers who come here ironically.

Kyläkauppa Market: This black market fills a couple floors of the basement beneath an empty lot. The stores here mostly sell tech and stolen goods, but down the right halls you can get augments, drugs, information, and small arms; the selection changes regularly as contacts and careless sellers are arrested and new folks come in.

Kyläkauppa is controlled by the **Finnbogamenn** gang. Their leader **Finnbogi** (p. 282) keeps the market safe by enforcing a no-violence rule, cutting deals with bigger gangs (cops included), and using his men to keep the peace in the area.

PC Cyborg Corporation: A black market computer store run by former Tetsuo employee **Jonno Sendai** (p. 283). Thanks to his contacts in Tetsuo and Turing, Sendai can stock stolen PC parts and phones, hacking tools, and experimental/unreleased tech. A lot of his business actually comes from younger criminals who need gaming rigs.

Réamann Camp: A camp of Disaster refugees led by **Rahul Joshi** (p. 282), set up in a deserted Landvættir construction site. They used abandoned building materials to make little homes and even gardens, which improved the neighbourhood a lot for the first few months. The local police have made a show of launching midnight raids, chasing them through the streets and tearing down their structures—allegedly to maintain peace and order. The refugees are starting to relocate to the basement.

OTHER DISTRICTS

HERTZSPRUNG

This residential/commercial district contains the **Absolute Magnitude** shopping mall, a great place to get discount clothing and fast food. It's popular with Double Crossers who can't afford/be bothered to shop in Marukyu.

Also in the area is a tiny office/cyber-maintenance clinic belonging to **Proactive Augment,** a cyborg rights group who oppose most reactive (p. 120) forms of augmentation. After it became illegal to pressure workers into augmenting, most of their sponsors and donors decided that the problem was solved forever and dropped their funding. The group's funds (and membership) dwindled until only one member remained: **Dae-jung Park,** a mechanic who's only licensed to do software augment work.

KUIPER

Kuiper is a working-class neighbourhood that's punching above its weight in the punk scene. A lot of the station's best punk bands were formed here, including Decretion Disk, Hey! It's The Wizards, Malwarehouse, The Netizens, Nice & NEET, and Clannad Watchers. For music fans, it's Adams' slightly rougher answer to Cassini's scene (p. 152).

Kuiper has had some problems with the **New Barons** (p. 267) recently. The group has decided that the Barons' old-school, pro-establishment ideology is somehow *real* punk, and have started trying to organize pub crawls, sponsored shows, and other events in the area. Most of these have ended with viral videos of four-person groups being kicked out of bars and crying Barons calling the police because someone poured a drink on their head, but they're trying.

MAPO

A district in the Downtown section. It has a lot of water-themed attractions: swimming pools, a water park, even a rooftop fishing spot. A lot of the fish are robotic, but they're still popular with Double Crossers (who don't get many chances to see fish in space), so the area is a minor fixture of the station's youth scene.

Mapo is particularly popular with Double Crosser androids, who can get decent repairs and mods here without having to travel all the way to Uhuru (p. 159) or Marukyu. There's even a minor fashion subculture of androids who get fish/water-themed cosmetic mods, called "wetrunners".

PCHOLKA

A district near the Voyager border with a mix of residential spaces, parks, and the sorts of businesses that keep the station running but never get much attention. The biggest is Johnny Printonic, an office supply company. (Aren't offices mostly digital these days? Well, people still need office furniture and that's as far as most people get before they stop thinking about it.)

Pcholka also contains **Astronaut Tower,** a commercial tower with an observation deck that offers an unmatched view of Adams. Near the top is the **Launchpad,** an overpriced restaurant with a NASA theme. It's moderately popular with wealthy Builders and people who commute to Turing for work.

RUSSELL

A quiet back-street residential neighbourhood mostly known for its street art. Whole stretches of roadside walls in the area have been covered in graffiti, stencils, tags, stickers, and pretty much anything else you can slap on a wall.

Some of it is officially sanctioned—there's even an official Graffiti Tunnel attached to the main transit station—but a lot of it isn't. The local artists tend to maintain anonymity even in official spaces, up to and including doing their work at night with special anti-surveillance gear. People looking to commission an artist are advised to head down the stairs near the Pitwell Lane wall to the **Dead Beats** bar and ask the owner **Rania Xanthopoulos** (p. 284).

Russell is also home to a bunch of friends and family of space show winners. They prefer to stay out of the spotlight, but you can pick up some good Earth imports if you know the right stores.

2D6 Current Events in Adams

1–3	
1	A minor wave of new [1–4 housing] [5–6 immigration] is happening this week
2	A new [1–3 business] [4–6 shopping experience] is opening in Cielo
3	A pro-refugee rally in Galaxy is [1–4 anemic] [5–6 being attacked by cops]
4	A hot new [1–2 comedy] [3–4 art] [5–6 space] show is opening in Neo Melbourne
5	A crime on the streets of Réamann draws attention to the district's state
6	An Earth-inspired festival is sweeping the ward

4–6	
1	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again
2	An event at Hertzprung's Absolute Magnitude mall is drawing crowds today
3	Kuiper's rock punks and the New Barons are having a fight again
4	A wetrunner fashion fad spreads from Mapo throughout the ward
5	It's a slow news day, the perfect time to relax and try something new
6	Some [1 terrible] [2–3 rad] [4–6 political] graffiti in Russell is making waves

2D6 Infamous Locals

1–3	
1	Awful neighbour, constantly reports people for trivial inconveniences
2	Street musician; made own instruments out of discarded basement pipes
3	Hates being reminded of the time they went viral five years ago
4	Constantly putting up anti-surveillance signs and trashing cameras
5	Online sketch comedian who does weird stunts in the neighbourhood
6	Goes around claiming they're King/Queen of Space, locals humour them

4–6	
1	Cop, everyone knows he shot someone on Earth before transferring here
2	D-list space show celebrity who wears ridiculous outfits for attention
3	Damaged cyborg running a street stall to raise cash for repairs
4	Philosophical young weed dealers loitering outside the convenience store
5	Aspiring rapper spitting mad rhymes in the nearest commercial plaza
6	The coolest dang old person you'll ever meet



MARUKYU WARD

"I'm off work at six, then I'm gonna hit Space Town and Shin Umeda. Mostly window shopping, but there's a CD I want... Yeah, a'ight. Meet me at Nuclear Pop and I'll pick you up on the way. If you wanna, I'm going to hit Kyobashi next, check out that dumpling place Guy won't shut up about. If you're still around after that then I dunno, we can find a bar or something?

"Yeah, quiet day, I know. I got class tomorrow."

— Nadira Meaney, Double Crosser

Marukyu ward is a commercial hub and major fashion center. In these vibrant streets, workers spend their paychecks after their shifts, the station's youth redefine style, and visitors make impulse purchases they'll regret later.

Marukyu was built from the ground up to attract commerce, including several landmarks "inspired" by Earth locations for nostalgia value. That's made Marukyu the place to go for Earth imports: people come here for Earth-made media, the latest Earth fashions[3], and luxury goods they don't make in orbit. It's also an unofficial home for the homesick, with services for tourists, business trippers, expats, and people who just want to feel like they're back on Earth. (And while you're there, why not shop like an Earther?)

To outsiders, Marukyu is one of the pearls of Grand Cross, but it has its downsides. Criminals flock here to prey on the newcomers. The rich and powerful meet here to cut shady deals. The police regularly hassle the poor, forcing them into more dangerous back streets. Marukyu shines, but the thing about pearls is their fragile luster only shines on the surface.

3 Earth fashions are extremely popular with certain wealthy entrepreneurs and, by extension, people trying to emulate them. Some orbital fashions do interesting things with the older stuff.

THEMES AND THREATS

CRACKS IN THE CORNERS

Marukyu is fun to look at; the buildings are decked out in interesting colours, huge signs, and digital screens. Districts like Space Town sell fun things, like games and fashion. The nightlife is wild. Marukyu is exciting and everyone loves visiting.

Stay there for long though, and you start to notice the problems. Corporate interests are trying to exploit the youth scene for their own purposes. Much of the nightlife is controlled by gangs. The people who made Marukyu cool are being forced out as wealthy newcomers try to co-opt the spaces they made. It's a fun place, but keeping it that way is a struggle.

YOUTH CULTURE

Marukyu is a popular hangout spot for the station's youth. The commercial districts are flooded in the after-school rush; one district, Shin Umeda, is the center of youth fashion on the station. A lot of the oldest Double Crossers[4] come here too—often to work.

Where they go, others follow. Many cafés and shops cater to youth directly. Marukyu businesses get heavily into social media to attract their attention, with brand managers and HeoCities pages. Bigger corporations tend to be more insidious in their marketing, with campaigns aimed at making their brand an "iconic" part of Double Crosser culture.

As a group, Double Crossers are mad. They're not necessarily pro-Union—though they tend to skew left—but they know their elders are looting their futures, and they want to do something about it. A lot of folks come here to take advantage of that sentiment. Activist groups look for new members, while groups like the New Barons are paid to divert their rage towards the Cartel's enemies. The corporations engage in brand activism, pretending to take a stance for attention or claiming their products will help somehow.

Essentially, Marukyu is where Double Crossers define youth culture and non-youths try to take advantage of them.

4 Those who graduated high school in the mid-late '10s, unless you are an old person, in which case you probably call millennials Double Crossers too.

TEZUKA	CIXIN	MARUKYU			
VERNE	VOYAGER	ADAMS	MARIPOSA	AMAL	FOUNDATION
HARBOU	TURING				

DENRAKU DISTRICT

By Chiaki Hirai

Denraku is a bustling hub of bars, karaoke lounges, and video game arcades where Marukyu's office workers unwind after a long day. The area caters to anyone looking to grab a bite before or after a night on the town. Food ranges from top-tier restaurants featured even in Earth's travel guides to shacks on the side of the walkway serving ramen of unknown origin.

During the day, Denraku serves as a tourist hub where visitors from all over can come check out a matinee show or have a sensible lunch to "blend in with the locals"[5]. At night, office workers come out to unwind by singing karaoke or grabbing a drink and a bite with their coworkers.

Between the larger thoroughfares, Denraku features a maze of narrow alleyways lined with small hole-in-the-wall bars and eateries—the kind that only seat 2–3 customers—that primarily operate late at night. These can be hidden gems, but then again some of them are also huge dives or fronts for local organized crime operations.

LOCATIONS

Daikatana Security Ltd.: Daikatana is a perfectly legal security company that offers business owners within Denraku peace of mind from having their windows smashed in each month, for a modest security fee. Their "offices" are located on the spin-wise corner of the district, near its storage warehouses.

From the street, the stronghold is a grey, windowless cube of a building. There is only a shuttered vehicle entrance, big enough for a truck to enter and exit at street level. The inside, however, is decked out like a traditional Japanese estate, complete with an inner courtyard garden looking up into the sky plates. It even has that thing that goes "doink."[6]

Chii Noda (p. 256) runs the **Daikatana Gumi** (p. 254) out of this mansion stronghold. It's ill-advised to go knocking on her door without an invitation; she doesn't appreciate uninvited guests all that much.

Luck of Eden: A classy bar located just off the main strip, behind a set of heavy doors. It's an establishment for people "in the know." There's a karaoke machine that occasionally gets used by inebriated upper management types, and a lounge area where VIPs can retreat to if they want more privacy. The bartender—the one that looks like a teenager, not the older ones—knows her stuff.

Nekomeshiya: Hidden within the maze of alleyways, Nekomeshiya typically opens when most people have finished eating dinner and stays open early into the morning hours. The interior isn't too bad to look at, but it's small enough that no conversation goes unheard. The eatery has a menu populated by a hodgepodge of items, mostly up to the whims of the owner and the tastes of regular customers. Try the curry.

The eatery is run by **Shinji Enzai** (p. 257), an affiliate of the Daikatana Gumi. Most first-time customers seek him out for information and under-the-table jobs. Some of them keep coming back for the food.

The Voder: Located up the elevator above one of the district's video game arcades, The Voder rents private karaoke boxes to anyone looking to belt out some tunes. The drink bars have all you can drink soda, their fries are actually pretty good, and they can cater to either a single customer or a full entourage. Their song selections are good, but the latest songs from earth might be a month or two behind.

The android proprietor of the Voder, **J4X BEATZ,** won the business off its original owner after suing them for abusive labor practices in a landmark android rights test case a few years ago.

The Warehouse: The Warehouse is a large storage unit that has been repurposed into an entertainment arcade, located beside Denraku's storage warehouses. Featuring games, karaoke boxes, rock-climbing walls, a bowling alley and some tennis courts, it's a popular destination for many coming to Denraku. Entry is free, as long as you scan your Multipass at the door.

The interior of The Warehouse is decorated like... a warehouse. It's difficult to tell whether the interior decoration is a result of thought-out theming or the management's attempt to do as little work as possible.

5 None of the locals eat where they do.

6 No deer here either.

PARADISE DISTRICT

Paradise is Marukyu's hub (it used to be called Marukyu Central, and a lot of local stores still sport the name.) Its transit station is one of the station's busiest, with thousands of people coming here every day to visit the shops, enjoy the nightlife, or just catch a connecting train to their actual stop.

The first thing you see when you step out of the station is a huge scramble crossing, intentionally modelled on Tokyo's Shibuya Crossing. This sets the tone of the ward: shopping, nightlife, and Earth nostalgia.

Paradise really picks up at night when the neon lights flicker to life and new crowds of people pour in to go bar-hopping. If you don't want to keep moving, there are more than enough clubs and theaters to keep you satisfied. And if the regular places don't meet your needs, the **Hoshi Group** might. There's a little something for everyone.

LOCATIONS

0Q: Paradise's iconic department store/movie theater, a block away from the Marukyu Scramble. Its official name is Zero Questions, as in “don't ask, just buy it!” 0Q's stores are heavy on fashion and are incredibly popular with young women, though they've been trying to attract androids lately too.

Destroy All Movies: A popular movie theater that makes its money through community events, particularly screenings of pre-Impact films. They're best known for turning the box office bomb *Armageddon* (released in 1998, widely considered to be too soon) into a cult film. Students and people who bring dates on the weekend get a discount.

DAM is run by **Dendy Sobol** (p. 286), who also collects old gaming consoles and plays them on his movie screens. He occasionally hosts film festivals, with the activist films and causes he chooses sometimes resulting in threatening letters sent to the theater.

Laika Statue: A statue of the famous Soviet space dog near the scramble crossing. It's often used as a meeting point. The statue comes with a plaque "explaining" Laika's story, which repeats the widely-reported lie that Laika was euthanised six days into her journey rather than killed by day-one equipment failure. The plaque is vandalized regularly, partly because it annoys the cops.

Supermassive: A popular nightclub with a cocktail bar, dancers, big screens showing astronomical phenomena for ambience, and a rotating cast of local DJs. The interior is designed to look like everything is being sucked toward the dance floor.

Supermassive is owned by the Hoshi Group, who sometimes hold meetings in the VIP area. The manager is a cyborg who goes by the name **Tony #618** (p. 258); he knows a lot about Marukyu but is angling to get "promoted" to one of the Group's Cixin businesses.

Sloshing Mall: A local nickname for a collection of back-streets not far from the Scramble. It's full of little izakayas, clubs, and other bars that cater to people hitting Paradise after work; they say there's a hundred different ways to get hammered here. The deepest streets host a lot of Hoshi-run businesses; crossing them isn't a popular way to get hammered, but it happens sometimes.

Spacetree: This is the city's primary broadcasting tower and the tallest structure in space at 640 meters high. At the Spacetree's upper observation deck, roughly halfway up, gravity is at 95% of ground level. The lower levels of the tower are packed with stores, coffee shops, and the **Gerard K. O'Neill Museum,** which focuses on the history of space stations in science fiction.

Sweet Heaven: A sweets café run by **Kana Kobashi** (p. 285). Kana is a former corporate drone who quit when a new boss tried to pressure her into unnecessary augmentation; she sued and won the cash settlement she opened this place with.

Though the sweets really are heavenly, some people come for advice. Kana runs a blog on reactive augmentation and picked up a lot of contacts in the cyborg activist community during her case. Sometimes she invites them to the café to meet with the people who ask her for help.

SPACE TOWN DISTRICT

Space Town is a colourful shopping district and a major pop culture hub. Its official name is Uchuumachi, but everyone calls it Space Town (or SPACETOWN in advertising).

It's the best place for games, CDs, comics, cosplay, collectibles, and computer parts this side of the cylinder. To some nerds it's practically sacred. Veteran locals have a habit of ironically invoking "gaming gods" who supposedly live in space, so don't be surprised if you hear an "In the name of the Moon!" or "Guide me, Mars!" every so often.

Space Town is also well-known for its robots. Here you can get smart appliances, robot pets, and robotic workplace assistants—or just check out one of the weekly robot-fighting events. For androids, it offers cosmetic augments and old-school parts they don't make any more.

Space Town might seem a little weird the first time you visit, but everybody's a little bit weird. Here, they own it.

LOCATIONS

Cross Cybernation: This high-rise shopping center has stores for every geeky interest in orbit. It's a major Space Town landmark, often the first thing people see when they leave the transit station.

Cybernation has graffiti dedicated to the gaming gods, which some geeks pray to for luck as they pass. A group of Singularist vandals has been trying to add their hypothetical future superintelligence to the pantheon, with some success.

Early Access: A 24-hour internet café. Fees are by the hour and include unlimited access to soda, manga, and Dorites. They have a significant range of PCs and consoles with a variety of seating options, but they're best known for their cutting-edge VR booths (private VR porn suites cost extra.)

The café is run by **Izzy Kaijou** (p. 285). A lot of her night customers are cyber-homeless, people who rent a private booth for the night and sleep there. Izzy sympathises—she used to be one herself—so she's added a shower service and healthier food options to help them out. She's also gotten into activism and likes getting the regulars into it too.

Evil Maid Attack: A maid café with a hacker theme. Customers can play video games with the maids and even get some tech support done on-site. If they can't fix it, they can probably point you to someone who can. Most of the staff are paying off university fees.

EMA is run by **Zigamorph** (p. 285), an android hacker. Ziga has worked in Marukyu's entertainment industry all her life and picked up her interest in tech right here in Space Town. She likes keeping tabs on current AI projects.

Ring of Coolant: An illegal android fight club, hidden down a side-street beneath a robot pet store. Down here, souped-up androids brawl with each other while spectators gamble on the outcome. It's super illegal, but as long as the local cops get a cut, they're happy. The pet store doubles as a repair shop for the brawlers.

The Ring is run and emceed by **Hunter Deadman** (p. 284), who looks like a waist-high robotic koala in a Hawaiian shirt. Everyone assumes he's just an android with a weird body, but in reality the koala is a robot remote piloted by a wealthy full-body cyborg.

SPACERS: A commercial building owned by the space education company **Tofu Cannon** (p. 244). They run a planetarium at the top; the rest of the place is a shopping mall where groceries, clothes, electronics, and other essentials are sold. The astronomical clock on the front and the orrery in the mall might be overdoing it a little.

SPACERS also contains the theater of the idol band **L5-8** (p. 115)**,** who do daily shows here. The band's lyricist-producer **Hayate Jones** (p. 249) often sleeps in his office in the back.

Tournament Arc: On the first weekend of every month, when the Supernova Road arterial is closed to vehicles, part of it is converted into a temporary arena where amateur roboticists pit robots against each other in cool as hell fights. This is Space Town's biggest robot combat event.

There are two categories: remote-controlled bots, and weak (non-sapient) AIs. Robots are often sponsored by local businesses while Tournament Arc itself is sponsored by Tetsuo and Omnidyne in a blatant attempt to get people to design drones for them.

SHIN UMEDA DISTRICT

Shin Umeda is a commercial and residential district. It's known for its fashion stores, restaurants, and tiny cafés, many of which cater to Double Crossers. This place is the heart of Marukyu's youth fashion culture.

The district is centered around around Mondo Road, a major Marukyu arterial. It has a lot of big chain stores, shopping malls, and expensive restaurants, with a few smaller stores mixed in. A sprawling upper level of walkways and parks spreads across the nearby rooftops. The roofs and the back streets are packed with apartments and smaller, independent stores. Mondo Upper is where Shin Umeda gets its reputation—fashionistas gather here to show off their styles and set new trends.

Unfortunately, Shin Umeda has a gentrification problem. Mondo Road's chains and malls muscled their way in to take advantage of Shin Umeda's reputation—and are slowly pushing out the independent stores and young creators that established it in the first place. Some have been pushed into the back streets, while others are just leaving.

The locals are campaigning for something to be done, but so far Unity has brushed it off as the whining of entitled kids. If nothing changes, Shin Umeda will eventually become a ghost town.

LOCATIONS

Copypaste Cats: A cat café that boasts both regular cats and robot cats. It's run by the android **Nekomata** (p. 285), who makes a point of hiring Disaster orphan youths and arranging for friends in Marukyu to house them until they get on their feet. Locals love her.

Unfortunately, Nekomata is being harassed by a group of Crossers who object to an android "adopting" humans. (Some are hoping to funnel the teens to Christian foster homes instead.) They've been spreading rumours that the café is secretly kidnapping kids and teaching them to perform abortions, among other things. So far the locals have managed to protect them though.

Otomo Plaza: An indoor park in Mondo Upper, just across from Shin Umeda Station. Its location and massive food court effectively make it the entrance to Mondo Upper. If someone tells you to meet them in Shin Umeda, they probably mean here.

Space Shrine: This shrine sits in Mondo Upper by an exit leading to the Tyrell district (p. 184). It's dedicated to the deities Orihime and Hikoboshi (represented by the stars Vega and Altair.) People going on a spaceflight come here to wish for a safe trip, while station workers pray that Grand Cross won't fall apart.

Every year Mondo Upper has a Tanabata festival with food stalls, carnival games, and digital art. People write wishes on strips of foil paper and hang them on bamboo, which gets blasted out of an airlock on the last night of the festival. (The Shrine's owner **Mizar Tsukimi** (p. 285) hires people to retrieve them and saves the wishes, though.)

Spiral Nerdula: An underground video game store that boasts a large selection of retro games, used games, and merch. It's located down a staircase on Mondo Road. The owner is **Old Man Mick** (p. 285), who also offers "tech support" services—he'll jailbreak almost anything the locals bring him.

UFO Cafe: A space-themed cosplay café whose staff dress in weird, cute, sometimes spooky alien costumes. You can eat and drink in a UFO, dance in the Mars room, have tea in an alien forest (complete with an alien sky on the ceiling screens), or chill out in the Men in Black Bar. Weekly events range from burlesque dances to old B-movie screenings.

The café is run by **Izayoi Aino** (p. 284), a photographer who knows a lot about goings-on in Shin Umeda. She also designed the café's mascot: **Frogulox Bleemo**, a rubbery two-mouthed one-eyed tentacled alien. A lot of tech went into making his suit weirdly disgusting.

Ure-roji: A local name for the back streets. Here you can find smaller shops and cafés, residential buildings, and the original Shin Umeda charm.

Lately, people in suits have been knocking on doors and asking questions obviously designed to feel out who'd be willing to move for cash. They avoid saying who they really work for, but it seems more big developments are on the way...

OTHER DISTRICTS

DEJIMA

Dejima is famous for its expat bars, where Earthers go to hang out with other Earthers. You get some unusual friendships here: workers get drunk with diplomats' spouses, aging Builders regale Double Crossers with tales of Earth, exiled politicians meet influential people to plan a new life. If you need to talk to an Earther, somewhere in Dejima is a place they'll find comfortable.

GCBC DISTRICT

The GCBCD is one of the smallest districts in Grand Cross. It exclusively holds the headquarters of the **Grand Cross Broadcasting Corporation** (p. 112).

It contains the company's offices and studios, a visitors center[7], the iconic GBC Stage, and annexes at the back for international broadcasters. The skyline around the GBC is one of the most well-known parts of Grand Cross back on Earth, particularly the view of nearby Kyobashi and the panel's edge from the news room.

More relevant to locals is the **Creator Space,** which offers facilities and workshops for digital content creators, and the **GBC Store,** which sells GBC merchandise and Earth imports. The imports have made it a popular hangout spot for Double Crossers; watching BBC shows semi-ironically is in this year.

KYOBASHI

Kyobashi is the main bridge connecting Marukyu to the Adams ward, as well as a commercial and entertainment district around the Marukyu end. Think bars, restaurants, long edgeside walks, and used Earth electronics stores. A lot of Adams people come here to relax.

This district contains **Space Channel 8,** a concert hall with a Y2K aesthetic that extends over the panel's edge like a smaller, bubbly Sydney Opera House. SC8 showcases indie shows and up-and-coming acts. As such, a lot of idols hoping to make it big pass through its weird blobby halls. The L5-8 idol group does big shows here too, and their producer Hayate Jones recruits new members from the smaller shows.

SHIMA

Tetsuo's (p. 241) headquarters are located in the Shima district—or rather, the Tetsuo Corp. Complex is the entirety of the district. The megacomplex features a mall (featuring Tetsuo's flagship store), a department store, a hotel, its own transit station, and an outdoor plaza.

The sixth floor also features a collection of restaurants and a mini amusement park, making the place a popular spot for weekends and dates as well. In the back, Tetsuo operates a medical clinic specializing in implants and cybernetic augmentations. Customers undergoing extensive surgeries often stay the night in the adjacent hotel to recover.

Tetsuo's corporate offices are located on the upper floors, but its top floors are also open to the public as an observation deck, where visitors can pay to look out around the Marukyu ward from up high. While this is Tetsuo's corporate HQ, the bulk of the offices in the building are dedicated to sales, as development and production are done off-site. Tetsuo has too wide a product line to house all its R&D in one building, after all.

TYRELL

This district holds most of Marukyu's religious buildings. Whether you need a mosque, a church, a shrine, a temple, or something else, Tyrell has you covered. If it doesn't have a building, someone's probably hidden a little shrine for it somewhere around the district. The Singularists sometimes meet in a coffee shop around here to complain about/envy the locals.

Tyrell also includes **Tsukino Park.** On weekends, the large park plays host to meetups of rock music fans and various hobby groups. In the spring, people visit to see the cherry blossoms. A few shady "religious" movements have purchased space in the commercial plaza nearby in the hope that being in Tyrell makes them seem more legitimate.

7 Another big school field trip destination. The visitor's center even has its own mascot, Samuel the Space Camel, who is currently being phased out because nobody likes him.

ZAMENHOF

A quiet neighborhood which connects Dejima to the Cixin ward. It contains **Embassy Row,** which houses many diplomatic missions from Earth. Zamenhof is named after L.L. Zamenhof, the inventor of Esperanto. The name has attracted the **Department of Translation**, where government websites and documents are translated into multiple languages, and **Zamenhof University,** the best place in Grand Cross to study language and literature.

2D6 Current Events in Marukyu

1–3	
1	An Earth-related celebration is sweeping through the ward
2	A hot new [1–2 karaoke box] [3–4 bar] [5–6 arcade] is opening in Denraku
3	A special event at [1–2 0Q] [3–4 DAM] [5–6 Supermassive] in Paradise
4	Space Town is going wild for a [1–4 pop-up store] [5–6 show at SPACERS]
5	A new Shin Umeda fashion trend is spreading among Double Crossers
6	There are incredible sales/deals on today if you know where to look

4–6	
1	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again
2	There's a big televised special event going down at the GCBC
3	A show by [1–4 a new indie act] [5–6 L5-8] is drawing crowds to Kyobashi
4	Tetsuo's having a launch event for some flashy new piece of tech
5	A religious event is being observed/celebrated in Tyrell today
6	A fantastic new song by a popular band/artist is dropping today

2D6 Double Crosser Fashion Trends

1–3	
1	Vintage Earth designs—in space they're being worn for the first time
2	Putting stickers on your scooter and wearing matching pins
3	Cyborg style: wearable tech and 3D-printed "cyberware" clothing
4	Nature themes to contrast the high-tech wonderland of Grand Cross
5	Looking like—or just straight-up cosplaying—anime characters
6	Galaxy style: dark clothing with many bright accessories ("stars")

4–6	
1	Visual kei but with a handful of space-themed accessories
2	60s/70s science fiction outfits and maybe a bit of space alien
3	Screw it: normcore
4	Clothing, hair, and tats designed to mess with facial recognition
5	Using outdated computer parts as accessories
6	Old Earth clothing, new space fabrics, integrated wearable tech



MARIPOSA WARD

"They were right about these parks, I tell you what. I didn't realise how good fresh air can be 'til I got this new body with its fancy sensors. Almost makes me wonder what I was missing down on Earth. Maybe I should go back and take a look before the humans finish trashing it."

— PSP, android cabbie

Mariposa is the Verne panel's central ward, situated between the Adams and X wards. As a central ward, it's dedicated to recreation.

For psychological (and air quality) reasons, Mariposa is much lower-density than its neighbour wards. Instead, most of its space is given over to parkland. These parks are carefully designed to resemble natural landscapes in temperate environments back on Earth, complete with their own ecosystems—though some of the animals, especially larger ones like deer[8], are robots created for ambience. Because they're vital to Grand Cross, these green spaces are protected and open to everyone.

The rest of the ward is made up of low-density towns with amusement attractions, shopping centers, museums, markets, spas, and more. These gateway communities sit along the ward's borders, connected by elevated rails that wind over the trees. They're not that far from the rest of the city, but they feel far away.

But even Mariposa isn't free of the trouble sweeping the station. A wealthy high-rise community in the area has decided everything they can see is theirs. Corporate interests are expanding into the area as much as they're allowed—and Unity has been permissive lately. The Cartel is even moving to take control of the ward so they can monetize it. Mariposa is a beautiful place, but maybe not for long.

8 These don't count.

THEMES AND THREATS

LIMINAL SPACE

Mariposa sits in the middle of its panel, at the furthest possible point from the bustling Voyager and Foundation wards. With its wide-open spaces and lush landscape, it's also one of the most Earth-like places in orbit.

These traits—combined with the fact that most of Mariposa is meant to be visited, not lived in—make the ward feel like a liminal space. The people here aren't like other Crossers. The problems plaguing the station can seem very far away.

Then they show up. Though Mariposa feels far away, it doesn't take much more than looking down the cylinder, up at the panels above, or at what's in front of you to remember you never really left the city.

SLOW CORRUPTION

Capitalist economies require constant growth to fuel profits for investors, making the untouched parks of the central wards a prime target for expansion.

Sure, the greenery serves an important psychological purpose; the Cartel agrees with you there. But this place has so much economic potential, they'd say. Surely a few extra office towers can't hurt, right?

And we could really explore the park's potential with some more paid services. While we're at it, some condos here would generate so much money for the city. And they'll need a few office blocks to work at. A business park is like a park if you think about it. Can we build just a few more blocks? Look at all the money Mariposa's making—the city could eliminate costs entirely by selling the remaining parks to us. Plus, now we can squeeze in a few more condos. What do you mean there's no more greenery? There are plenty of vines on these office blocks. And you can always buy a season pass for our Green Experience in that little dome over there.

It isn't nearly that bad yet, but efforts to commercialize Mariposa and increase its urban density are already picking up steam. If the Cartel gets its way, Mariposa will eventually fade away.

TEZUKA	CIXIN	MARUKYU			
VERNE	VOYAGER	ADAMS	MARIPOSA	AMAL	FOUNDATION
HARBOU	TURING				

GIRAUD DISTRICT

Giraud is a small town on the Adams border. As a low-density district surrounded by parkland on three sides, it's the closest you can get to a quiet country town on the panel.

Giraud's transit station is a common point of entry to Mariposa, and many local businesses are cafés, restaurants, and museums that cater to the tourists. The original architecture was inspired by the various styles of Paris, and a lot of the housing units are maisonettes or rows of terraced homes. Giraud would seem as out-of-place in Grand Cross as the parks, if not for the locals.

Most long-term locals are either aging Builders with cybernetic prosthetics or remnants of the station's vanishing middle class who are getting into cosmetic augmentation. Their children are just as disaffected as most Double Crossers. A few corporate oligarchs are trying to turn parts of the town into their own private playground.

LOCATIONS

Avenue Road: A typical residential street in Giraud. It has a few apartment complexes with some maisonettes and a shared courtyard, mostly filled by families who moved here in the first two waves.

The rest of the street is lined with terraced homes, occupied by middle-class folks who work elsewhere on the Verne panel. Ever since landlords were reintroduced to Grand Cross, property developers have been showing up every month or so to make increasingly aggressive attempts to get the locals to sell.

Grand Cross Space Museum: The station's premier museum, dedicated to the station workers who died during construction. Its exhibits include:

- A dinosaur skeleton, because every good museum has a skeleton in the lobby;
- A Moon exhibit with a few objects on loan from Lunar museums, including the Genesis Rock;
- An exhibit about the station and its technical specs, including a huge cutaway model;
- Interactive replicas of various spaceships and stations;
- Various rotating exhibits on mineralogy, anthropology, and what the future might look like;
- Animatronic replicas of various space-mission animals, complete with a guided tour by a robotic Enos;
- And a memorial to dead Builders—with a few controversial omissions, additions, and lies.

Hot One With The Boys: An Australian-style coffeehouse. Expect third-wave coffee, good brunches, “avo toast”, trendy decor, and people asking their phones what long blacks and flat whites are before ordering. It's especially popular with younger locals who generally work elsewhere in Grand Cross and pass the place on their way to the transit station.

The titular Boys are **Fitzy and Damo** (p. 287), a pair of Australians who ran a coffee cart in Melbourne before winning a space ticket. Damo is a Lilim android who likes how coffee tickles his olfactory sensors.

Giraud Ranger Station: This building on the edge of town is the local base of the **Grand Cross Park Rangers,** a subsection of Division 7 who protect and preserve the parks of the central wards. The station contains offices, a reception for visitors, a temporary holding cell, and a basement computer lab connected to a network of drones that watch Mariposa for fires.

They've been having problems with Apollo Tower in Phoebus District—the wealthy residents threaten to sue the park rangers if they're so much as looked at funny, and the government doesn't have their back. This has become a larger problem lately as Apollo's Magpie drones can interfere with the ranger drones' signals.

Visions: A cyber-clinic with a focus on cybernetic eyes. It's run by **Doctor Altamiro Santos Delgado** (p. 287), who is widely regarded as "the master of eyes." He customizes his cyber-eyes to suit every customer, including unique eye designs for those who pay. Earthers have come here just to get their eyes measured.

Altamiro treats his work as a form of art. The clinic lobby is lined with eye design mockups nobody's purchased yet, and some of his eyes have been featured in art galleries. Curators and customers go through his daughter, **Isabel** (p. 287).

PHOEBUS DISTRICT

Phoebus is one of the station's newest districts, officially founded only this year. It was carved out of Mariposa for the **Apollo Tower**, a high-rise luxury apartment block just off an arterial on the panel's edge.

Apollo is the brainchild of **Lyceus Smythe**, a Lunar settlement architect. Its forty floors include amenities like swimming pools, a gym, and a sauna. It is wildly above Mariposa's height limit, but Lyceus was able to score bipartisan support by promising to cover it in greenery, include some lower-income tenants, and make several six-figure "donations" to several politicians.

Lyceus has completely retreated into the building while he works on his next project, but his wealthy Upper Tower neighbours have not. In fact, they've decided that a huge stretch of nearby Mariposa is "reserved" for their use. After attempts to persuade parkgoers to leave were laughed off, and calls to the police were ignored, they decided to take matters into their own hands.

The Uppers have purchased a set of experimental Omnidyne security drones, the **Magpies**, and have set them to swoop and intimidate anyone who enters "their" territory. By now Unity is well within their rights to tear the damn place down, but as one of their own is an upper-floor resident, that seems unlikely.

LOCATIONS

No-Go Zone: The area around Phoebus used to be a nice place for picnicking, with grassy hills and patches of trees. Anyone going here these days is eventually approached by an Upper and "politely informed" that they're trespassing—an obvious lie, as they're officially part of Giraud. Those who stay risk a Magpie attack.

In response, Double Crossers living in Mariposa have gone out of their way to wind them up, including placing devices meant to confuse and crash the Magpies in the nearby trees. In response, the Uppers have started felling the trees at night.

Phoebus Green: The actual district is marked by an iron wall with electronic gates. It contains a small park and a parking garage for the Uppers. Lower-income tenants are expected to use the back entrance, accessible via a tree-covered pathway that protects the Uppers from seeing them.

Poor Floors: The lower ten floors were designed for lower-income tenants, which means a mix of Disaster refugees, Double Crossers, and employees of Lyceus or the other Uppers. They have their own back entrance; the high-speed lifts are designed to prioritize the "main" entrance, so they spend a lot of time waiting in the lobby. There are few amenities down here, and tenants are not allowed into the Upper amenities unless an Upper buzzes them in.

The first floor has a supermarket run by **Blunchtime,** a tech company that made most of the appliances Lyceus gave to the lower floors. The appliances (normally) only accept Blunchtime-approved foods. Many of these have been compromised by **Lua Saetiao** (p. 289), an 8th-floor tenant.

Medical Center: This clinic on the eleventh floor provides fancy medical services to the Uppers and legally-required medical services to the rest. It's run by **David Moreno** (p. 288), a formerly alcoholic doctor; he cleaned up his act to take care of his daughter **Angel**, who lives with him on the 20th floor.

Upper Floors: The upper two-thirds of the building contains large, lavish apartments, broken up by gyms, pools, enormous lounges, and other luxuries. The residents of these floors can order groceries from their smart fridges, which are delivered to their balconies by drone. Lyceus has reserved the entire penthouse floor for his personal use.

The residents are an assorted mix of idle rich from all over Earth. Well-known members include Adams ward landlord **Sirius King** (p. 288), Morningstar talk show host **Wilson Rackham** (p. 288), and Unity senator **Fong Ho** (p. 287). Sirius is the one encouraging the other Uppers to use the Magpies, because he wants to build a golf course.

The Drone Room: The Omnidyne Magpies' charging station and control computer have been set up in an unused, unmarked Upper apartment, along with a makeshift workshop. The Uppers usually let Wilson's nephew **Miĉjo** (p. 289) play around in here; he's a weird little pervert even by their standards.

OTHER DISTRICTS

In addition to the regular districts, Mariposa's parks are divided into "districts" based on their intended purpose, design, and common themes.

CÉILEACHAR

This village's main attraction is the **Mariposa Automatic Zoo**, containing animatronic replicas of Earth creatures nobody wants to bring to space. This is the closest many Double Crossers have ever gotten to seeing penguins and giraffes and such.

The Automatic Zoo is a technology showcase for **HomeBotics,** who designed Mariposa's robotic animals. They were an Earth company who pitched using robots to replace animals endangered by climate change instead of preventing their extinction, but they were bought out by **NanoFuturistics** to enhance their urban greening projects. HomeBotics was founded by **Horace Reeve** (p. 289).

CROSS BOTANIC GARDEN

A botanical garden with samples of practically every plant brought to Grand Cross. It contains public recreation space, a botanical library, and the **Orbital Herbarium,** which stores seeds and plant samples in case of emergencies.

For the last few years, the Botanic Garden has (technically) been under assault by an aging communist called **Ollie Hodges**. Ollie believes that the station's artificial ecosystem is too neat and controlled to be "real," and has managed to smuggle a lot of new plant species into Grand Cross—most of them invasive.

Most of his work is found in smaller parks outside Mariposa, but he enjoys attacking the Gardens to make a point. The Garden's bamboo grove was recently destroyed and replanted to get rid of the Japanese knotweed he'd hidden there. The authorities destroyed his seed stocks and confiscated his scooter last year, but rumour has it that he's resupplied and planning a comeback.

GEOCENTRIC BEACH

A little town around the end of one of Mariposa's backspin bridges, plus an attached park along the panel's edge that's made to resemble a beach (only with an observation walkway and a couple of pools instead of the sea).

The Beach is a sculpture park, lined with statues and other artworks—even the beach itself is a commissioned art piece. An annual sculpture competition is held here, though some Unity politicians are moving to shut it down after a hologram mocking them won in 2019. The park's organizers have already made backup plans for a guerilla art contest.

GREEN HILLS

A picturesque park not far from Giraud, with grassy fields, palms, and artificial creeks. It's one of the most frequented parks in Mariposa because it's designed for everyday use—the fields are sized for sports and lined with playgrounds, benches, and barbecues.

Green Hills also contains a shed with a rarely-used entrance to the basements beneath Mariposa. It's an open secret that Double Crossers occasionally sneak through the fence and climb down there to play; anything important or dangerous down there is behind a keypad-locked door, so the station workers have been slow to act.

HYDE PARKWAY

An arterial that winds through the middle of Mariposa. The ward's main arterials and rail lines run near the panel's edges, so this is more of a scenic route for bikes, scooters, and occasionally emergency services. The Parkway is lined with low barriers, with occasional screens showing time, weather, advertising, and traffic information.

The Parkway often plays host to marches—sometimes charity walks and fun runs, sometimes protests. When it's the latter, the police suddenly decide that pedestrians are intentionally blocking emergency services and start driving their cars through the Parkway while "accidentally" swerving at the crowds.

NERIMA

This artificial spa village near Mariposa's spinward edge is a popular place for Crossers to relax and have a hot springs episode every now and then. There are day spas, inns, and a few places offering medical treatments.

The wealthiest spa is the **Jarilo Hotel,** a private health retreat where many of the station's elite go to recuperate after getting augmented. It offers total privacy for its residents, most famously the Daejeon Arcology architect **Young-soo Park** (p. 288).

2D6 Current Events in Mariposa	
1–3	
1	The Grand Cross Space Museum has a new exhibit
2	The Park Rangers shut down a section of Mariposa for an emergency
3	Everyone's talking about Dr Delgado's latest creation
4	The residents of Apollo Tower extend the range of their Magpies
5	A group of vigilante hackers descend on Phoebus to war with the drones
6	One of Mariposa's parks plays host to a musical event
4–6	
1	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again
2	Unexplained technical problems shut down the Automatic Zoo
3	Another invasive species is spotted near the Botanic Garden
4	A new high-tech sculpture is going up around the Geocentric Beach
5	A mysterious murder is committed in a camera blind spot
6	A wealthy [1–2 tech] [3–4 Cartel] [5–6 Earth] entrepreneur checks into Jarilo

2D6 Liminal Spaces	
1–3	
1	A small artificial spring hidden behind a patch of trees
2	A portrait art gallery on a hill that doesn't get a lot of weekday visitors
3	A basement scooter parking space on the edge of town
4	An observation hill mostly used to test DIY drones by hobbyists
5	The Jellyfish Tree, an anonymous high-tech sculpture left by a walkway
6	A dead shopping center by a bridge, scheduled for demolition
4–6	
1	A diner that serves people who don't live in or near Mariposa
2	An android-run onsen right on the very edge of the panel
3	A laundromat in Giraud, run by a hacker who lives upstairs
4	A construction site for a Tetsuo store, stalled for years by protesters
5	A basement door in a hill, hacked open long ago
6	Automated robotic animal storage disguised as a greenhouse



AMAL WARD

"Amal's in the sweet spot, if you ask me. The wards between the parks and the caps are the best ones, right? And Amal's not as busy as Marukyu, as crowded as Adams, or as much of a sty as... well, you know. Downtown's not that far away, by rail. Yep, this is the place, all right.

Shame about all these rich fucks, though."

— Seulgi Chung, changing apartments

Amal is a residential/commercial ward on the other side of Mariposa. It's an uptown version of Adams: a little less dense, with a little more shopping.

Every ward is designed differently, even when they have similar functions. Amal's unique trait is its urban greening and open spaces. It has the most street trees, urban parks, rooftop gardens, and open-air buildings of the residential wards. Many of the commercial areas are empty plazas, which the community fills with their own stalls and stands.

Amal was pitched as a sort of middle-class ward, but as inequality on the station deepens, the middle class is vanishing. Instead it just has a few upper-class districts. Wealthier neighbourhoods tend to sport tropical plants that need more water, tended to by hired gardeners; poorer ones have simple but pleasing flowers, community gardens, or empty lots where landlords tore up the plants.

This is also an electronics hub, in part because the parts that get made on the outer hull are usually brought in here. If you're a hacker, a drone operator, or just like playing with tech, you can get a lot of cutting-edge parts here.

THEMES AND THREATS

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

You can tell a lot about neighbourhoods in Amal by what's growing there. First, there's quantity. Not every building is green, so the busy streets have more trees and rooftop parks. Wealthier districts and big businesses have more plants on their buildings and spend more on working fancy architecture around it.

Second, there's quality. Simple, low-maintenance plants (especially from arid regions of Earth) like succulents, climbing plants, and produce[9] are more common. Plants that need lots of water, like tropicals, are found on the buildings of those wealthy enough to maintain them.

Some apartment blocks also have community gardens, where the locals grow their own produce and hang out with their neighbours. A poor garden is a sign of a bad block—it usually means there's a problem neighbour or the place is run by a landlord.

9 Also weed, though it's usually hard to find unless you know it's there. Nobody wants their stash stolen.

SAME PROBLEMS, DIFFERENT WARD

As Adams and Amal are both residential wards, they share a lot of their themes and problems. Adams is more populated, however, so in Amal it's easier to ignore them.

It's worth noting that Amal has fewer Disaster refugees. Wealthier districts like Qureshi lost their minds at the thought of homeless people nearby, so they were sent to Adams instead. Most of Amal's Disaster refugees are the ones who found housing.

TECH CULTURE

Amal is connected to a lot of the outer hull manufacturers and takes in a lot of imported electronics from the nearby spaceport to support the infrastructure at the back of the station. A lot of folks who work engineering/coding jobs in the back live here too. As a result, Amal has developed its own little tech culture.

The ward isn't as tech-focused as Turing, or as hip and flashy as Marukyu. The tech fans of Amal are into the simple, the old-school, the intricate but practical. Around here they say that you go to Turing for cutting-edge, Marukyu for cool, and Amal for functional.

TEZUKA	CIXIN	MARUKYU			
VERNE	VOYAGER	ADAMS	MARIPOSA	AMAL	FOUNDATION
HARBOU	TURING				

NEBULA DISTRICT

Nebula is a working-class district in the heart of Amal—and one of the ward's oldest. Its original settlers were Builders but it was expanded in every immigration wave since.

Many of Nebula's workers have engineering (or adjacent) jobs. The older ones work for the station directly, but many folks do corporate or freelance work too. These days Nebula is an important part of the station's tech/hacking culture, though one that rarely gets acknowledged by people outside the community.

Like Cielo (p. 172), Nebula is a potential starting point for Grand Cross campaigns. It has a different focus, though—while Cielo is still forming its identity, Nebula has an established one that fits tech-focused campaigns well.

LOCATIONS

The Anime Within: An anime and related merch store on one of Nebula's commercial streets. There's an attached apartment above it, but the owner felt it mixed his personal and work lives a little too closely, so instead he rents it for dirt cheap to his friend **"Malware" Tran** (p. 292), who runs a tech support/under-the-table hacking business out the back.

Astro Holographix: A software and electronics store that does a tidy side-business in stolen tech and black market software. The store is run by a middle-aged man known only as **the Australian** (p. 290). Most people find him mysterious, but probably just because they can't understand his weird foreign slang.

Serious hackers come here for the stuff they can't buy openly. Only the stuff unlikely to get him arrested is sold onsite; for the rest, the Australian usually directs you to one of his "associates." Those who earn his trust get better services.

Harvest Square: A standard Nebula apartment block with a shared courtyard and a rooftop community garden. What makes it different is the large group of Double Crosser hackers who live here; most of their parents work with computers and got their kids hooked early.

They're currently dealing with a new problem neighbour: **Walker Riggs** (p. 292), a private cop who treats the garden like his personal stash and his neighbours like targets. He's trying to gather enough intel to raid the hackers with trumped-up charges of attacking station infrastructure in order to earn himself a promotion.

Null-G Business Park: This office block was part of a government initiative to encourage new migrants to start their own businesses by offering cheap office space. These days Null-G is home to a motley group of small businesses, from budding game studios to tech startups to school tutoring services. Several mostly-empty floors in the middle have about 400 shell companies registered between them. A few shops run out of here are fronts for the Lunar-Australian gang **Hotel Melbourne** (p. 252).

Schattenlauf: A bar frequented by hotshot young techies. It has TVs mounted on the walls that endlessly stream esports matches, plus a cool punk theme. Despite that, a lot of the regulars are employed by the Cartel—sometimes to design surveillance/drone equipment that inevitably ends up in the hands of the police. They still talk a big game about rebelling against “the man”, though.

The Schattenlauf is run by **Diskless Jack** (p. 291), a former cowboy hacker and retired corporate spy who moved to Grand Cross after his work in the US was discovered. It's also a favourite hangout for **Tiger Shark** (p. 368).

Ta'al la Oullak: A coffee shop attached to an indoor park in a low-traffic transit station. Though it loses a lot of customers to the Planescape Coffee franchise down the road, they have damn good coffee and a dedicated fanbase.

They have free Wi-Fi and late hours, so they're often used by local coders to get some work done. In the late evening, Ta'al la Oullak quietly transforms into a hacker den. The owner **Daud Dale** (p. 290) isn't into computers, but his son is, so he's happy to have something to bond over.

QURESHI DISTRICT

Qureshi is an upscale neighborhood centered on a commercial area with a wide variety of shops and restaurants. It's sometimes called the back end's Paradise (p. 181). Most of the residents are affluent, with a reputation for being snooty Earth-nationalist pricks. If you stick to the commercial areas you can usually avoid them.

A lot of these shops are packed into **Blue Moon Road,** which runs from Qureshi's main station into TamBaAng. They have everything from discount electronics stores to expensive fashion boutiques and draw in shoppers from all over the back end of the station.

Qureshi also has a few tech holdings—mostly NanoFuturistics and a few other businesses involved in Amal's greenery, but Omnidyne and Zinovy have outposts here as well. It's started touting itself as a linchpin of the station's tech industry too, but the more interesting stuff happens in less corporate districts.

LOCATIONS

Blue Moon Road: This road dominates Qureshi's commercial area. Half of it is lined with shops, entertainment, and tall open-air malls; the other half has been covered with a glass roof and turned into a hawker center. Blue Moon Road only closes for a few hours each night.

Flying Burger: On the outside, this American-style burger bar looks like a UFO crash-landed on a Blue Moon rooftop. On the inside it sports a zeerust theme, with a jukebox that looks like an 80s-style computer terminal and menus flickering on CRT screens. (The bar exterior was actually built by the previous owners; the old-tech theme was partly intended to make renovations cheaper.)

The Flying Burger is run by **Aludra Adams** (p. 290). She was brought here in her youth by her Builder parents; when their work contracts ended they opted to return home, but left her behind when she came out as gay. Aludra sometimes uses her contacts to help similarly disadvantaged youth find a place to stay.

The Garth: A square-shaped building running around a big quadrangle. The ground level is a shopping arcade, and the quadrangle is a public park. The upper levels of the Garth are mostly taken up by companies involved in Amal's greenery, from an outpost of NanoFuturistics to smaller orbital environment corporations like SpinCycle and Green Elliptical.

The Garth's latest tenant is the tech company **GrowKwik.** Their product is basically a cheaper version of the agriculture ring's growth trays with some plant monitoring equipment—it makes gardening slightly easier for tech people but does not accelerate growth. They've been trying to monetise Amal's community gardens, but so far only landlords are buying in. The company owner **Arvid Malar** (p. 291) has started covertly paying off the police to destroy community gardens under the pretext of searching for drugs so he can swoop in with a pitch for the grieving locals.

Melf's Selfies: A popular photography studio. It's one of those places everyone's seen even if they don't know it exists—they have a lot of space and prop sets to rent for cheap, including studios done up like spaceship interiors, Lunar hotels, and other odd locations. Melf's is frequented by social media influencers who want to look like they go to cool, expensive places without actually doing it.

Melf is run by **Mercury** (p. 291), a Lilim android who was adopted and raised by influencers for clicks. She also quietly offers a "privacy room" where nothing gets in or out, originally built for herself.

Safe Life Orbital Holdings: A scamware company who moved to Qureshi to exploit its tech image. They make freemium "security" software that mostly just claims to find serious problems to trick users into "upgrading" to a useless paid subscription service. They mostly market to Earth because it's harder for them to sue up here, but they sometimes cold-call Crossers, hoping to scare an elderly person.

Safe Life is the brainchild of **Rupert Perry** (p. 291), who fled to Grand Cross to escape the consequences of cybercrimes on Earth. He's about to release a new version of the security scam for cybernetics and android frames.

TAMBAANG

By Brenden Gibbons

Tambaang (officially stylised as TamBaAng and pronounced "Tam-bah-ang") is a cluster of three small districts at the back end of Amal that bubbled together into one city (Tambaang comes from these three districts: **TAM**an, **BA**hru, **ANG**kasa.) It was initially populated by Indonesians, Malaysians and Singaporeans of the ASEAN contingent—individuals from all over the world with Southeast Asian heritage chosen (for their hard work ethic, intelligence, or wealth) to live, work and ensure representation among the stars.

The three districts each have a local Indonesian/Malay name and its English translation but are collectively known as Tambaang. Alongside English, the locals speak Indonesian and/or Malay (or the Grand Cross Indo-Malay-English Pidgin, if you're second generation.) Depending on which corporation you usually deal with, Dutch, Chinese, or Arabic is a popular “third” language.

LOCATIONS

Just as is common in Malay and Indonesian, nearly everything in Tambaang has a proper name and a shortened hyper-local slang name Knowing the slang is what makes you “a local.” Usually, it's a portmanteau of some kind (eg. Burger Kong is "BuKo".)

KOTA TAMAN

The financial center, Kota Taman ("Garden City," or Kotam) is well known for the casinos, clubs and prestige boutiques that surround its suburban core. Office workers here are discreetly augmented to ensure productivity parity with AIs, but trendy cosmetic augments can also be seen. The symbol of the district is "Leo," a creature with a lion's head and a modern spaceship body.

Infinity: A multi-room 24-hour club with at least five DJs running at any one time. Infinity sells every legal drug and most of the illegal ones too. It's home to **The Dandy Lions**—a rebellious gang of ex-corporation kids, ones kicked out of their family or who willingly left the lifestyle.

The Lion's Cage: As the biggest casino in town, the Lion's Cage offers an affordable taste of luxury and a chance to play any game and bet at anything. The machines pay out well, but only in Tokens that have a poor conversion rate, so nearly all winnings get spent either in the casino's bar or hotel.

The Gardens Estate: The walled-off suburban center of TamBaAng. You don't live here. This is a home for the absurdly wealthy, a garden where the heads of corporations grow and groom their children. Do not touch the grass.

KAMPUNG BAHRU

As the agricultural center, Kampung Bahru ("New Village", or Kahru) is TamBaAng 's breadbasket. Its roofs are full of hydroponic and aeroponic farms, all for local cooking and the area’s famous "Ultra Fresh" cuisine. The place has a diverse population and is visited by foodies from all over the station. The symbol of the district is a bean sprout growing out of a stylised O'Neill cylinder.

Kaki Lima Park ("Five-Feet Park"): A loud, busy plaza covered in food stalls, from traditional Indo and Malay dishes to new Grand Cross fusions. Try out the Ultra Fresh cuisine, where the ingredients are growing right next to the stalls and are only harvested per order.

Union House: For the price of accepting body augments to ensure productivity, one of TamBaAng's first institutions was a Workers Union. Union House only represents the area but can advise non-locals. The local android rights movement also resides here.

Masjid Najima ("Najima Mosque"): One of the largest mosques in Grand Cross, the seven-gated Najima Mosque (named with the Arabic word for star) is the head mosque of TamBaAng. Its central prayer rooms can rotate to ensure that its attendees are always facing Mecca and the Kaaba during prayers despite being in space.

KOTA ANGKASA

Kota Angkasa ("Space Town", or Kotang) is the industrial center of TamBaAng and one of the largest industrial hubs for consumer electronics in Grand Cross. While most industry is placed on the outer hull, Kotang takes on the low-pollution assembly tasks. Whether it's replacement plasteel cartilage for your cat ears or Ogremoch kits to customise your guns, Kotang has the spare parts you need. The symbol of the district is a crossed wrench and screwdriver.

Angkasawan Plaza ("Astronaut Plaza"): The place for all your off-brand parts and warranty-voiding modifications needs lies in this maze-like plaza full of stalls. It's full of small mercenary gangs who often get hired by private security or various corporations with shady intentions.

The Strip: With two parallel streets full of corporation stores, the Strip is both a battleground for corporate espionage and a great place to get the latest tech fresh off the assembly line.

Raja Melati ("King Jasmine"): A chain of restaurants with private rooms, run by a criminal gang of the same name. They run a protection racket, keeping non-corporation businesses from being some other's collateral damage and offering corporations a neutral ground to discuss business.

2D6: By Any Other Name...
Aside from Western names, the residents of TamBaAng have names from many different roots. Below are a few names a local might have, alongside variants and shortenings.

1–2	3–4	5–6
1 Jonathan (Jono, Nathan)	Budiharto (Budi, Harry, Toto)	Danang (Dan, Anang)
2 Kartika (Kati, Tika, Kakak)	Puspawati (Wati, Ati, Puti)	Ujang (Ajan, Jango)
3 Iskandar (Issi, Andar, Dara)	Fatima (Fati, Tia, Ama)	Annisa (Nisa, Anni)
4 Guntur (Gun, Guno, Turi)	Muhammad (Mamat, Ahmad)	Kierana (Ana, Kira)
5 Suparman (Paru, Arman)	Qaisara (Kara, Sara, Sari)	Nurul (Nur, Nura)
6 Chahaya (Yaya, Chaya)	Raihana (Rahi, Ana, Hana)	Zuraidah (Idah, Zuri)

OTHER DISTRICTS

DUBHE PARK

A long park that touches on several of Amal's districts. It contains a central pond, a petting zoo, and sprinklings of cafés around the edges. It gets busy on the weekends, so street performers and aspiring musicians often come here to strut their stuff.

Dubhe is also bordered by **Stellar Shore International,** a private high school filled with the children of Amal's elite. They sometimes come to Dubhe to harass the street performers, but they prefer to hang out in more "exclusive" places. It's also the alma mater of Morningstar political pundit **Jonathony Barker** (p. 290).

EFFINGER

A commercial/entertainment district best known for its nightlife area, with many restaurants, bars, izakayas, pubs, and other establishments. The best place is probably the **Nom Nom Center,** a hawker center near the main transit station that sells some of the best food in Grand Cross.

Effinger's back streets also contain a red-light district, with adult entertainment establishments packed in between the restaurants and cafés. It can be a little hard to tell which is which, especially since they're sometimes both, but some people think that's part of the charm.

IBN KHALDUN

A residential/commercial district close to the Foundation ward. Ibn Khaldun has a high android population, and as such it's a popular shopping destination for androids who don't feel like travelling all the way to Uhuru or Marukyu.

In some apartment complexes, the androids took up community art: making collaborative artworks around the community garden as a way to bond with humans. The practice has since spread across Grand Cross. It's often called **Francis art**, after the human host of a Morningstar show that popularized it while neglecting to say where the idea originated.

KORDYLEWSKI

This residential district is best known for **Saint Isidore Hospital**, a teaching hospital with a large cybernetics wing. Some folks call it **Saint Regret** because their specialty is removing cybernetics—usually to replace damaged connectors or swap cybernetic organs for transplanted ones. They've had a few high-profile cases of workers with reactive augments having them removed and cosmetic augmenters changing their minds.

St Isidore has quite a few full-body cyborg specialists. It's the hospital of choice for corporations who want to turn somebody into one, especially when it's in exchange for not getting sued.

MAAS

A business district mostly known for **Bligh College,** a private elevator school for families with business backgrounds. It has a high school and a university in adjacent campuses; there are plans to build an elementary school once the College has a few more years on it. Bligh was initially bankrolled by the Cartel but has since gone independent—they accept large donations from Cartel-affiliated parents instead.

The rest of Maas is mostly niche space businesses and branches of Earth-based research companies who operate bio labs. The Cartel sometimes tries to steal their work but usually settles for poaching their talent.

NEO MIAMI

A retail and entertainment area by one of Amal's bridges. Its main roads are themed around the USA, specifically the trees and architecture of the South-Central Florida Metroplex. It has some expat bars and a lot of Western fashion stores, though most visitors are from non-Western countries.

Neo Miami is also a nightlife area. One of its better places is **Plastic Beach**, an edgeside bar that plays Earth electronic/hip-hop hits. The bar offers discounts to anyone who moved to Grand Cross less than three months ago and has a community digi-board where newcomers might be able to find useful services.

This is also a minor hub for the Lunar gang **Hotel Melbourne.** They own several businesses in the area, including a Lunar fashion outlet which they use as a front to shift goods into the station. Most of their local operations are overseen by **Jevin Brown**.

2D6 Current Events in Amal

1–3	
1	A minor wave of new [1–4 housing] [5–6 immigration] is happening this week
2	Nebula's tech community is kept busy with a major new software release
3	A [1–3 corporation] [4–6 new startup] launches a recruitment drive in Nebula
4	A hot new [1–3 store] [4–6 eatery] is opening on Blue Moon Road
5	The station is swept by a fad for [1–2 Kotang tech] [3–6 Ultra Fresh cuisine]
6	A new Earth plant becomes a brief fad in Amal's gardens

4–6	
1	Stellar Shore kids get up to mischief in Dubhe Park again
2	A new [1–5 Nom Nom eatery] [6 adult business] draws people to Effinger
3	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again
4	Ibn Khaldun's art is getting [1–3 headlines] [4–6 stolen by Morningstar] again
5	Another high-profile Crosser visits Saint Regret
6	A new [1–3 Western trend] [4–6 sale] draws the crowds to Neo Miami

2D6 Cool Neighbours

1–3	
1	A street musician creating electronic art with second-hand tech
2	A cybernetics industry worker; knows a guy who knows a guy
3	An android with a big thing for bonsai, sells creations on the street
4	Someone currently suing ex-neighbor's pants off for destroying community garden
5	Person who has a weed room in their apartment, sells some pretty dank stuff
6	An artist who creates artworks with climbing vines

4–6	
1	A grey-hat hacker; will jailbreak any device in the building for a meal
2	Someone who doesn't get out much, but they're quiet and leave you alone
3	A tenant union worker fighting a predatory landlord
4	Someone secretly planning a rad heist of a Kotam casino
5	A person who uses the community garden to make experimental films
6	A stranger who teaches the local kids how to care for their plants



FOUNDATION WARD

"Trilobite Liao? Fuck Tril. Let me ask you this: when that smarmy jackass wants something to happen on this station, who does he pay to make it happen? Does he pay some other *Voyager suit with his head up his ass? No, he pays us. Our donors pay us to make things happen and to make sure nothing happens to them. They can wear the fuckin' crown all they want, but we're on the throne."*

— Davy Thompson, Unity dealmaker

The three wards at the back end of Grand Cross, collectively known as **Backtown**, are a counterpart to Downtown. It's slightly less dense, as most of the station's corporate players want to be near the front port, but it's still got a port and plenty of people who want to use it.

Foundation is the center of Backtown and the political center of Grand Cross. It's home to the Grand Assembly, the Prime Minister's residence, the Grand Court, and a host of other ministries, agencies, and cultural institutions. Most of these are centered on the Alpha district. Alpha was designed with a wheel-and-spoke street pattern rather than a grid, with hexagonal streets emanating from the Grand Assembly; the other districts don't follow this pattern, but the ward as a whole looks centered on Alpha when viewed from above.

The Cartel might control much of Grand Cross, but Foundation is still where the seat of power lies. For now, anyway.

THEMES AND THREATS

BACKTOWN WORLD

Foundation is a high-density ward and the center of Backtown. Downtown might be more packed, but Foundation's still plenty busy. The bigger corporate players tend to be minor Cartel members, corporations who don't have much to offer the Cartel that they don't have already, and corporations that have no interest in joining in the first place.

Foundation specifically is an economic powerhouse, accounting for half of Backtown's business. Corporations move Downtown because that's where the important businesses are, but being near the on-paper nexus of power in the station has its perks too. For businesses that care about location but can't pick Downtown, Foundation is the next best thing.

For regular Crossers, Foundation offers most of the benefits of Downtown with a little less noise. It still has the crowds, the lights, and the beautiful chaos of humanity, but it's easier to find somewhere to take a break from it all.

CENTER OF POWER

Though the Offworld Cartel effectively control a lot of the station, they still have to observe the rituals. Foundation's Alpha district is where Grand Cross politicians and their handlers go to write the laws everyone else has to follow. When they're not in session, they often schmooze in the surrounding districts.

A lot of attention has been focused here lately. Union and Unity are both gearing up for the next election, which could decide whether the Offworld Cartel controls all of Grand Cross or only some of it. Protests happen here regularly—though not *too* close to the Grand Assembly, as a police wall forms if someone so much as glances that way.

TEZUKA	CIXIN	MARUKYU			
VERNE	VOYAGER	ADAMS	MARIPOSA	AMAL	FOUNDATION
HARBOU	TURING				

ALPHA DISTRICT

The most politically important district in Grand Cross. Alpha contains the Grand Assembly, the Grand Court, and a host of smaller agencies. If something goes down in the political scene, it's probably here.

The Grand Assembly is in the center of Alpha's hexagonal street pattern. Most of the rest of Alpha is commercial and business buildings—the station's designers wanted the Assembly to feel like part of the city, especially to the politicians within. The corporate towers looming out the window are coincidental but a little on the nose.

LOCATIONS

Assembly Library: A research library that serves the Grand Assembly and the de facto national library of Grand Cross. It contains digitized copies of practically every book in existence, including every book published in orbit, plus hard copies of books that concern law and political history. It's open to the public, though only politicians can check the hard copies out.

Channel L5 Media: A media company and one of Morningstar's competitors, headquartered on the edge of the district. Channel L5 owns the television news network Grand News Network (GNN), the most watched 24-hour news network besides Morningstar's. It's usually pretty decent, though their obsession with seeming non-partisan has turned them into the station's leading source of bothsidesism.

L5 Media operators a couple other channels that broadcast locally-made entertainment, sports, imported soap operas, anime, and European space shows. Their website provides simulcast streams and on-demand access to most of their shows.

Division 7 Annex: For security reasons, the basement levels of Alpha are tightly controlled. The security is overseen by the gendarmerie of Division 7 (p. 119) who are based out of a tower in Alpha. Supposedly they sometimes smuggle people through the basement into the Annex for interrogation.

Goliath Building: Alpha is naturally ground zero for a lot of protest action. It's usually allowed, provided it doesn't stray too close to the Assembly, though the cops tend to change the allowed distance and times constantly. When they get too serious though, Unity calls in Goliath Inc. to get violent. They've recently set up an office in the area so they can be on-call all the time—and covertly surveil protesters when they're not.

Grand Assembly Building: Grand Cross's parliament. This building (commonly referred to as The Gab) contains the House of Representatives, the Senate Council, and the Ministerial Wing, which contains office suites for the Prime Minister and various other members.

The Gab has a lot of public areas, including an art gallery and a central observation tower with a great view of the city. However, access to the House/Council chambers and the Ministerial Wing is restricted (though the first two have a viewing deck), and security is ever-present. A Member's Hall connecting the private areas allows politicians to avoid everyone except reporters (and even them if they run fast).

Ring of Blood: The first hexagonal street around the Grand Assembly. Its actual name is Pioneer Avenue, but protests happen here a lot lately, so Morningstar gave it a nickname to make the protesters seem like violent anarchists. Blood usually turns up pretty quick once the cops get fired up though.

Sojourn Street: A street that forms part of the next hexagon from Pioneer Avenue. It contains the official residence and offices of the Prime Minister, along with a couple of other high-ranking ministers. The rest of the street is used for government offices. Both ends of the street have a high-tech security checkpoint, though in theory people are allowed to walk through and look around.

Starhall: This thoroughfare runs from one point of Pioneer Avenue's hexagon to the edge of the district. It's lined with a lot of government buildings, including most departments and ministries, the Cabinet Office, and the Project Committee's offices. Sojourn Street's main entrance is here.

The White Ant: A local bar popular with Alpha's power drinkers for its wide range of beers, private dining spaces, and gourmet meals sourced from Amal's gardens. It's especially popular with reporters, lobbyists, and the politicians they wine and dine. You'd be surprised what sorts of people mingle here, especially because the station's reporters tend to keep quiet lest they get blacklisted.

SANTO DOMINGO DISTRICT

A residential and commercial district on the edge of Foundation, near Amal. It's named after the patron saint of astronomers.

Santo Domingo is one of Foundation's "regular city" districts. The edgeside blocks are given over to shops, restaurants, and office towers. Many of the businesses here are owned by Cartel oligarchs who use them to channel funding and pressure toward the station's politicians. At night, the area lights up with neon and starts catering to civil servants who need to unwind after a long day.

The residential area is full of large, fancy apartments. Their residents are mostly civil servants or from Earth families who came here in the early waves; they tend to be slightly younger and wealthier than the station average.

LOCATIONS

Big J Corporation: An electronics, AI, web infrastructure, and software corporation owned by the Cartel oligarch **Josef Diego** (p. 251). Josef keeps it separate from the Cartel, partly because he's a big open-source software guy and the Cartel doesn't always agree with him and partly to hedge his bets in case the Cartel's mission doesn't pan out.

Big J is based out of a tower on the back edge of Santo Domingo, and Josef has his own private offices on the highest floor. His actual home is the penthouse suite of a nearby apartment tower, chosen because it's within line of sight of his office.

Domingo Commons: The district's biggest transit station, with a multi-level indoor park, a food court, a rooftop observation deck, and a shopping center across the street. The Commons has a lovely view and it's often used as an office by Big J employees who work remotely.

House of Reps: One of the best gyms in Foundation, based in the upper levels of a shopping tower. It's run by **Darian "Two Trucks" Barlow** (p. 293), a cyborg US military veteran. A lot of political staffers come here; Darian has arranged special rooms where members of different parties can work out in peace and discourages anyone from bringing their work in here.

Meteor Ventures: A space engineering company specializing in long-distance drones and automated systems. It was owned by the entrepreneur **Oskar A. Johnson,** who **died tragically** (p. 367) after getting extremely drunk and mistaking a station airlock for the company lobby. Meteor Ventures has since been acquired by Tetsuo and the office locked down while employees are transferred out.

Nomen Nominandum: A VR café near the Sea of Space Plaza where people can play games or just hang out in a virtual fantasy world for a few hours. There's a daily six-hour time limit to keep people from overdoing it (and coincidentally to keep any cyber-homeless from lingering).

NN is run by **Zhihao Lin** (p. 262), an Ashton U dropout, former streamer, and big Singularist. The café is one of the biggest Singularist hangouts this side of the cylinder, and Zhihao's offices are often used as a "war room" for Singularists planning big things in Foundation.

The Rat Freak: This gourmet cheeseburger place is the favoured hangout of the **Technos** (p. 108), partly because its heavy and clever use of screens suits their techno-progressive brand and partly because their cheap-ass burgers are amazing. It's run by **Anh Vinh Nguyen** (p. 293), a cosmetic modder with mild Singularist sympathies.

Sea of Space Plaza: A plaza in a corner of Santo Domingo where one of Foundation's lesser-used bridges connects to the Tezuka panel. The plaza and its connecting streets are the center of the district's wonderfully seedy nightlife scene, a place you can down cheap beer on a rooftop terrace or just dance the night away. Many important figures in Grand Cross have attempted the Sea Stumble, the colloquial name for trying to make it home in the early hours of the morning without being spotted.

Turtle Shell: A little bar on the edge of the plaza with a beach cocktail hut aesthetic. This place is more about admiring the view than partying hard. A lot of the regulars are independent journalists, so it's a great place to pick up Foundation gossip. The Shell is run by an enterprising Double Crosser who calls themselves **Hyeonmu** (p. 293).

OTHER DISTRICTS

APOGEE

An upscale neighbourhood by the end cap and the closest thing Foundation has to a counterpart of Zenith (p. 151). Apogee is full of retired politicians and businessmen, many of whom specifically moved to Grand Cross to live out their retirement years in space. Besides journalists and ministers coming here to seek the wisdom of the elders, it's generally pretty quiet.

The residents of Apogee have been trying to get a golf course built on the end cap for years. The plans are rejected every time, partly because the needed space includes a public hiking trail and partly because nearly every Crosser objects to using the station's limited space on what is objectively the worst sport in the universe. They plan to try again in 2021.

DENEB

A bustling commercial area by the end cap. It connects to both the spaceport rail and the Shaft (p. 210), which people use to travel to and from Downtown quickly. A lot of restaurants and cafés cater to the travelers. For Downtown folks, it's the official entrance to Foundation.

Deneb has a large, square park, with most of its streets radiating away from it in box shapes in a similar way to Alpha and its hexagons. They don't adhere to the layout nearly as neatly, though. On Sundays, Deneb Park hosts a community market that does a tidy business in second-hand electronics.

DYSON

A district adjacent to Alpha that holds several government departments related to space travel and infrastructure as well as offices for the various corporations Unity contracts to work for them.

Dyson also contains the **Omega Cyber Clinic,** where politicians often go to get augmented (or have maintenance done if they're augmented already.) Thanks to various laws that have bipartisan support, they often don't need to tell the public when they augment or what kind of augments they have. The Clinic is extremely discreet—and coincidentally operated by the Cartel.

HERSCHEL

One of Foundation's business districts. Herschel's main square is lined with companies in the financial and legal sectors; the rest of the district is a broad mix of companies that compete with the Cartel and orbital annexes of Earth-based corporations. One of Herschel's towers is the headquarters of **Ouroboros Cyber SA** (p. 243).

Herschel is also home to a number of advertising companies. One of them, **Winky Parrot,** is pushing Unity to approve a new form of advertising: drones that approach random people in the street, scan their face, and play them an advertisement once per day unless the Crosser pays a monthly opt-out fee. They've currently finished a trial run in Herschel (which was heavily gamed to force a success) and are seeking permission to run a larger trial in another ward.

KEPLER

Another Alpha-adjacent district. This one's best known as the home of **Central Police Station,** the headquarters of the Station Police Service. Due to its presence, Kepler also contains the offices of the Orbital Police Agency (p. 118), a liaison office between the SPS and the station's private security forces, and the offices of Divisions 1, 2, and 6.

Naturally, Kepler has some of the highest security on Grand Cross—on paper, anyway. In practice, the presence of the PSCS liaison office and the fact that they have incredibly low hiring standards means some concessions have to be made to allow private security forces to come through when necessary.

TENNOUSEI

A residential and commercial district on the panel's edge and the closest thing Foundation has to a technological center. Tennousei's main attraction is the **Orbital Future Museum**, a high-tech museum with a lot of curved white surfaces that showcase potential future technologies.

Also in the area are several small tech companies, the Foundation University of Science, a number of hacker-themed bars, and the **HydraTech** cybernetics corporation. Hydra make two kinds of augmentations: cutting-edge stuff that makes innovative use of software to do things no other augmentations will do, and cheap, basic augmentations made from tech that's just obsolete enough to manufacture cheaply. Their main customers are private security and corporate health care providers.

2D6 Current Events in Foundation

1–3	
1	The ward is gripped by a [1 serious] [2–6 extremely silly] political scandal
2	Channel L5 is filming a new [1–3 show] [4–6 news segment]
3	A protest is going down on Pioneer Avenue
4	Rumors say that something went down in a Santo Domingo bar last night
5	A wild show is coming to the Sea of Space Plaza
6	A new [1–2 useless] [3–5 interesting] [6 both] government department opens

4–6	
1	Another corporation [1–2 shuts down] [3–6 appears in the ward]
2	Some interesting sales and stalls are in the Deneb Park market this weekend
3	Rumor has it a politician has discreetly visited Omega Cyber Clinic
4	A Herschel ad company is planning another ridiculous stunt
5	The [1–2 SPS] [3–6 PSCS] is marred by a new story of corruption/brutality
6	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again

2D6 Political Meetings

1–3	
1	A Unity man and a Cartel lobbyist have a lunch that's more of a formality
2	Junior executives and up-and-coming ministers get smashed together
3	Unity is forced to cover up a member's embarrassing night out
4	An ORP member meets with an Earth agent in a private room
5	A Techno invites a Crosser activist group to the Rat Freak
6	An Earth diplomat makes a visit to Alpha district

4–6	
1	A Cartel oligarch wines and dines a non-Cartel CEO
2	A Unity "family man" and his mistress check into a love hotel
3	A Cartel lobbyist has a private dinner with some Union members
4	A Techno hosts a Singularist event in the Rat Freak
5	An ambitious minister contacts a mercenary with an offer
6	An influencer scores an interview with a minister



INFRASTRUCTURE

"Grand Cross isn't just the city. It's the mirrors, the flywheel, the things that keep it working. There's nothing like it on Earth, even in the newer arcologies. They already have the sun, the sky, a ground to build on. We started with nothing and built a world around it."

— Tumas Omar, YourTuber

This section covers the rest of the station beyond the city itself: the Agriculture Ring, the basements, the end caps, the Shaft, and all the little places on the exterior. The basics can be found under Design on p. 102.

AGRICULTURE RING

by Michael Crowley

GROWING PLANTS

Hydroponics methods vary from cylinder to cylinder. Seeds are usually planted in growth media and set within plastic trays, organized into rectangular platforms that protrude from and run parallel to the central axis. If you stand on the inside of the spinning cylinders, they form walls.

Seeds are planted in rows closest to the axis. As they grow, automated systems push the trays toward the cylinder's edge and farmers place a freshly seeded tray in the spaces left behind. Plant roots are regularly misted from below by nutrient-infused water, delivered through pipes running along the cylinder's axis. As plants reach the edge, they're ready to harvest. Crops receive light by either dimming the cylinder's sun-facing window and using grow lamps, or by reflecting sunlight using an intricate system of mirrors.

The workspace between platforms is extremely cramped, and the labor is strenuous and surprisingly technical. Nutrient levels, water quantity and quality, humidity, temperature, oxygen to carbon dioxide levels, and irrigation system integrity must all be carefully monitored. Plants must continuously be planted, pollinated, pruned, or harvested.

MALFUNCTIONS

When systems malfunction, workers are also responsible for fixing or patching whatever component failed, which is usually illegal. The suppliers of the hydroponics systems, jealous for profits, stipulate in their user agreements that only licensed (read: company-employed) technicians may repair or upgrade their products. Failure to comply violates warranties and leads to penalties from manufacturers, but no farmer wants to pay exorbitant service fees or wait for a licensed vendor from Earth. Most cylinders, pre- and post-privatization, rely on black market parts and firmware hacks.

In the early days, before the station was officially opened, a handful of scientists and technicians responsible for its operation created a repository of information on the Agriculture Ring's operations, trials, and tribulations, along with an unofficial but widely accepted set of principles intended to foster a culture of support and exchange among station farm workers. The result was a knowledgeable and resilient—if insular—community possessing technical skills indispensable to the operation of Grand Cross.

GRAND CROSS FARMERS UNITED

As private corporations became more involved in the station's construction, Kae Hanazaki, Evelyn Correia, and Ridham Singh, instrumental in the ring's construction and predicting the worst, organized the station's first labor union: Grand Cross Farmers United (GCFU). The ring principles became their charter and nearly every farm worker, agricultural technician, and crop scientist on the station elected to join.

The GCFU presents corporations with a problem they can't easily correct: firing union workers would halt production and risk public outcry, and the only people qualified, on-station, to train replacement farmers are union members. Full automation would require modifying the cylinders, which would cost both time and more money than the cylinders would regain in profit for many years. Most owners bite the bullet and work with the GCFU while scheming behind closed doors to undermine its position.

COMMON CROPS

The most common crops are nutrient-rich vegetables, legumes, and rice. Other crops vary by cylinder, depending on the whim or directive of its workers or owners. Union members also grow herbs in small plots in the access corridors and split proceeds from their sale with fellow members. While operations aren't wholly self-sufficient (water and nutrients can be sourced only partially by recycling station waste), they're largely sustainable.

Produce is sold and delivered to the station grocery stores and supermarkets. Formerly, this was done equitably: grocers received a percentage of the ring's total output according to demand in the area it served. Prices stayed low and that income paid workers and provided for the ring's upkeep. Since privatization, distribution is more complicated, with cylinder owners looking to sell only to the markets which meet their price point or to supply markets that they already own.

CYLINDER OWNERS

Out of the Ring's seventy-two cylinders, the GCFU claims ownership of four. Frontier Products, Inc. purchased six for an imminently disastrous, unfortunately subsidized corn-growing project; Midwest Consolidated, the only owner licensed to repair their own systems, owns eight; and various private individuals own twenty. At least one of these rich fools has turned a large fortune into a considerably smaller one when they decided that farming couldn't be that hard. Twenty-four cylinders are still up for sale (and still under de facto union control, for now).

NanoFuturistics, whose interests also lie in the ring's real estate, owns the remaining ten. Its position above Downtown provides unique vantage points for surveillance on the populace and the traffic flow of the front docking bays. They've outfitted the exteriors with long-range scanners and cameras, with the interiors hosting a sophisticated series of monitoring devices that gather whatever information they can on their own farm workers.

Currently, they're selective on what data they sell and to whom. Thin farm profits will dwindle to nothing if they admit to violating their systems' warranties and user agreements, but NF is more than happy to forewarn fellow companies about any union plans they discover—for a price, of course. Their initial results seem promising. If they continue to produce actionable and profitable data, NanoFuturistics will purchase additional cylinders.

BASEMENTS

The station's ground panels are covered with about five meters of topsoil for growing plants and burying cables and pipes. Beneath that is a sprawling basement, several levels deep. This industrial labyrinth serves many purposes.

FUNCTIONS

Building Basements: Larger buildings like apartment blocks and office towers often have their own basement. In some cases, like with corporate headquarters, these can extend all the way through the basement levels.

Grand Metro: The station's subway system runs through the bottom levels, with stairs and elevators connecting it to the streets. There are a few attached maintenance areas that are off-limits to everyone except Metro staff.

Maintenance: Long tunnels running through the panel allow station workers to get where they need to go without having to deal with traffic. For long-distance travel, electric carts are provided.

Facilities for station workers can also be found here: cart garages, tool sheds, workshops, offices, storage, and break rooms. These tend to be clustered together beneath busier districts, but smaller rooms are spread throughout the basements to cut down on travel time.

Living quarters aren't included, as the infrastructure authorities want to discourage anyone from becoming a basement-dwelling gremlin. However, workers are sometimes known to sleep in the break rooms, or in a cart parked somewhere out of the way.

Outside Access: The outer hull is accessed via stair/elevator shafts. Some of these are attached to transit stations, while others run directly from the outer hull to the city. Airlocks are placed at both ends, just in case.

Parks: Most of the station's parks end at the topsoil. However, some areas of the central wards extend into the upper level to make more room for large trees, ponds, and the like.

Pillars: Massive mooncrete pillars are spaced throughout the basement to support the city above.

Public Space: In some districts, the basement is accessible from the city above. These areas are almost exclusively indoor parks above the Metro, underground shopping malls, and access tunnels running beneath arterials and large blocks.

Water: The station's water reserves (harvested from ice comets) are held down here, along with water and waste management facilities. Unused water is kept on the lowest level and used as radiation shielding.

SECURITY

Entrances to the basement are usually kept in private buildings, fenced-off alleys, and staff-only Metro areas. These entrances are electronically locked with keypads, card readers, and sometimes facial recognition—nothing that'll stop the determined, but they'll make you work for it. (Of course, there are a few forgotten and little-used entrances that are practically hanging open.)

Similar doors are spread throughout the basements. Some protect sensitive areas, some keep certain workers from leaving their assigned areas, and some are just for the sake of getting workers to swipe their cards and log where they are. Most can be opened from a short distance away by the worker's carts.

Cameras watch over the basement entrances and sensitive the doors. Other than that, security is mostly bundled into maintenance; workers regularly patrol the basement to make visual inspections—or at least send out drones to do it for them—and are expected to report anything suspicious. They can't be everywhere, so security is tighter around worker facilities and sensitive areas.

The maintenance department has its own security. The SPS have limited powers to operate down here, but generally only come when called. Serious problems can be escalated all the way to the Division 7 GCG (p. 119).

DEAD SPACE

Not all the space is used. The basements are full of redundant facilities set up "just in case", subway stops that were abandoned before completion, dead malls, and empty spaces nobody had anything to fill with yet.

Most of these spaces sit unused, waiting for a purpose. Others have secretly been claimed by Crossers. There are makeshift camps, unlicensed bars, drug dens, criminal bases, graffiti tunnels, and more. Workers often pretend not to see people down here as long as they don't commit crimes and stay out of the way; locals living here are sometimes paid under the table to help monitor the basement levels or perform minor tasks. Criminals have to stay hidden or bribe the workers.

END CAPS

The interiors of the end cap domes are covered with artificial mountains with domes around the spaceport entrances. From the ground below, each is a little over three kilometers high. The lower slopes of the mountains are covered with temperate/alpine trees. In some places they're settled, like the Zenith district (p. 151). Most construction is limited to the lowest 10% of the mountain, as long-term exposure to low gravity can cause bone and muscle mass loss.

CROSS RAIL

The Cross Rail operates two light rail services on the end caps. One is a line that runs along the very edge of the caps to connect the ground panels. The other is a set of lines that run from the ground to the apex, connecting the spaceports with the city.

The spaceport lines travel in a loose spiral around the cap, partly for the scenery and partly because driving straight up a rotating slope with varying gravity creates sideways pressure that some people find off-putting. Because the spaceports are zero-gravity, the carriages have padded seats with straps to secure yourself and your bags.

PUBLIC SPACE

Most of the outer hull access shafts are for public use. Some (such as the ones attached to transit stations in the city) lead directly to outer rail stations, while others lead to attached public-access modules. Everything is sealed by redundant airlocks, just in case.

The public modules are usually indoor parks or shopping malls. Observation floors offer an incredible view of space[10] and help draw in visitors. When the station wants to expand beyond the rail lines, they build public modules elsewhere on the hull and link them up with a slower tram system.

RESTRICTED AREAS

Because gravity drops the higher you get until it reaches zero at the "peak", end cap settlement is restricted to the lower slopes. You're allowed to climb higher on authorized hiking trails, but even those typically end in observation points halfway up, the path there covered in warning signs.

Officially it's because of the health risks of low gravity exposure, and also to reduce the risk of rail accidents. Unofficially, it's also because someone tried going extremely high up to "float" off the mountain[11].

This ban isn't enforced strongly—the warning signs keep people away, and they're mostly to keep the station from being found liable for accidents anyway. This means that each end cap has a zone around the middle where nobody's supposed to be but nobody's really looking. People have hidden stashes, drug labs, and other bases around here in secret caves dug beneath the wooded areas.

OUTER HULL

The outer hull of Grand Cross has a lot of airtight modules attached to expand the available space in the station and do things that can't be done on the inside. Most of these modules are clustered around the outer hull rail: maglev trains that run around the outer hull at the habitat's rotational speed.

INDUSTRY

Most of the station's industry is contained in outer hull blocks. This setup keeps the air inside pristine—polluted air can be run through filtration systems before being returned to the station, or simply blasted into space.

Access to these places varies by owner. Most of them are clustered around the rail line and public areas, connected by access tunnels. Some are a little further away and are connected by their own private trams. Larger corporations can secure permits to create modules with their own private access shafts—Ogremoch in particular prefers modules accessible only through their own facilities.

OTHER USES

Sometimes the outer hull is used as residential space. Backtown in particular is developing a fad for replacing penthouse suites with "spacehouse" suites: sprawling outer hull apartments with observation floors and private elevators.

Some outer hull modules are used by criminals as secret bases and drug labs. Law Zero in particular are good at this, since because they're androids, they don't need to worry about keeping them airtight. Criminal modules require a front to escape notice, like a company or a spacehouse suite.

10 The outer hull modules are attached to the cylinder, so gravity points in the same direction: outward.

11 The first few moments, as you sail away from the mountain and toward the city, are really cool. As you fall and gravity increases, it gets considerably less cool.

THE SHAFT

The Shaft is a line of modules running through the cylinder's axis, roughly the width of a skyscraper. Each end is tethered to the end caps by a large, domelike structure over the spaceports; this allows people to enter the Shaft (via conveyor belts of grab loops on the dome's interior) while preventing people in the zero-g area from flinging themselves over the city.

The Shaft's modules are divided into recreation and industrial blocks. On the outside, rail lines connect the modules and the spaceports while helping to hold the Shaft together.

RECREATION

The front and back thirds of the Shaft are used for recreation. The modules nearest the spaceports are the smallest, with microgravity dining and observation decks being the most common services.

A little further in are "zero-g park" sections where people can just float or fly around and enjoy themselves. These areas feature grab loops and straps on the walls, padded poles and blocks to jump off, tinted windows with views of the city, mobility tools, and sometimes moving parts to ride. Cafeteria and bathroom modules are provided.

Most of the public parks are partitioned into smaller sections for small groups, to make them easier to clean if necessary[10]. The private parks are either rentable or owned by the truly wealthy. (Tetsuo's executives have a zero-g party once a season, and it gets pretty wild.)

Beyond those lie the sports modules: courts, arenas, and fields specifically designed for zero-g sports. Besides staples like football and basketball, there are smaller modules for niche/new sports like magnetic roller derby, gymnastics, chessboxing, and flying. Zero-g sports is a new and evolving field, so the Shaft has some extra space set aside just in case.

INDUSTRIAL

There are a lot of manufacturing processes that benefit from zero gravity. Materials can grow without encountering walls. Materials that can't be mixed on Earth become mixable in space. Liquids in microgravity can form perfect spheres. Add in vacuum and you can create extremely pure objects.

The Shaft's central blocks focus on processes that won't pollute the station's air. A lot of station and spaceship repair parts are 3D printed here. The environment is great for protein crystal growth, microencapsulation, and cell growth, so the medical industry manufactures drugs and grows tissue here. These two sectors cover most of the Shaft's central blocks. More than half the industrial modules are Cartel-owned.

EXTERIOR

Rail lines running up and down the Shaft provide transport between the modules. Two of these rail lines form the Shaft Express: a pair of trains in high-speed tubes that can cross the entire Shaft with no stops in a matter of minutes. These are most often used to ferry food from the Agriculture Ring to the back of the station, but it can get you from Backtown to Downtown faster than the Cross Rail.

In some places the exterior is also covered with advertising billboards. Most of these are meant to be read by people on/in the Shaft or the end caps.

Nobody is allowed on the exterior of the Shaft except station workers who know the risks and always have safety gear. The Shaft might be in the microgravity zone, but push too hard without something tethering you and you'll float away until gravity catches hold and drags you into the city below.

SPACEPORTS

Once you're at the apex, transport into the spaceport is handled through grab loops, conveyor belts, and elevators if you're using mobility aids or carrying luggage. If you know what you're doing, you can push yourself along pretty fast.

The spaceports themselves are housed in modules attached to the ends of the cylinder. They're designed to spin in the opposite direction to the cylinder to cancel out their rotation and make docking easier.

Between the docking bays and the cylinder are support modules: repair workshops, customs, cargo bays, and sorting bays, where people decide where food from the Agriculture Ring is supposed to go.

The spaceports have simple lounges—people aren't meant to stay here long, and the station authorities want to cut down on the number of people working up here. There's a zero-g food court at the front end with a Burger Kong, though.

12 Veteran Crossers call people who make a mess in zero-g Yanks, after a character in the popular Grand Cross sitcom *Two Peeps and a Seat*—a stereotypical American who makes a mess everywhere he goes while shouting "Freedom!" Imagine a guy floating through a zero-g park, trailing barbecue sauce and a super-size soda cup, using a gun to propel himself.

MICROGRAVITY RISKS

Long-term exposure to microgravity creates health problems. Muscles atrophy quickly—especially calf and spine muscles, which are used for posture—because the body doesn't think it needs them. They can lose up to 20% of their mass if you don't return to gravity. Bones can atrophy even faster. Without gravity, blood pressure increases around the head, which can trick your body into losing blood, leading your heart into atrophying.

Once you return to gravity, these changes recover over time. Blood comes back within a few days. One day of recovery for each day in space is typically enough for your muscles but bones are the real problem—months in space requires years of exercise, and even then you might not get it all back.

It's not as much of a problem on Grand Cross. Nobody lives in the Shaft or the spaceports, and everyone who works there spends time in a gravity environment regularly. However, regular swapping between micro- and pseudo-gravity can still degrade the body over time. Shaft workers are encouraged to exercise regularly.

Shaft workers typically get shorter shifts than everyone else, but they can still be made to work overtime, and some bosses pressure their employees to socialize in the recreation blocks after work. (Hergatz Liao in particular is notorious for this—they claim they have the medicine to fix it, but they only give workers a discount.)

Many long-term workers develop mild to moderate health problems. These can be eliminated with proper shift management, but Unity has placed loopholes in the rules, and employers generally stop caring about managing the health of their workers once the problems become minor enough to blame on a lack of exercise. Companies used to pressure workers to augment to compensate, but now they just pressure older employees to leave.

ALL HIS EMAILS ARE LIKE THIS

By Liam Ginty

INTRACOM PREMIUM USER: 32 DAYS OF TRIAL REMAINING
FROM: TheLastHokageInSpace@MaintComm

TO: T.A.Happening@MainComm

SUBJECT: These gd blastpacks

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CONTENTS: this shit is fucked tom

Last year we ordered 8000 of these blastpacks, we spent months attaching one to every single glass panel on the hab, and rigged every single one of them up to the central computer and now they're vanishing cause SOMEONE (Greg it was fucking greg) told someone we have 8000 packs of unmonitored chemical compounds, sensitive and expensive electronics, and whatever that goo is that seals the cracks. I think they're turning that stuff into drugs, I'll ask around. Not to mention the 6 maintenance drones we've assigned to every pack- you have any idea what a double crosser can do with one of these packs? Seriously, do you? I don't. It's probably really bad though.

Listen Tom, this station takes about a thousand impacts every day. The glass can take the bulk of these without issue, but every now and then we get a crack, and we go out and repair it but sometimes we miss a crack. Or two. Or three. Enough cracks, and it doesn't matter how many redundant panels you have or how high tech your lattice is, one big hit and you're gonna have a cascade failure and everybody better learn how to make do without oxygen really quickly. I know nobody takes this seriously, I know everybody thinks this station is unbreakable, but that's what all you clowns said about The Titanic 2, and that's why Pluto looks like that now. The blastpacks were supposed to be a way to avoid having a ton of frozen corpses floating by the windows every time we hit a pebble, but they don't work if a bunch of catboys are stealing them to huff CLB F5/AW and do terrorism.

And while I'm here, why did we hook up a bunch of auto-deploying safety systems to the central system? The entire point of buying the headless units was that they'd be safe from wireheads hacking them. We had that whole meeting about how the kids on this station are fucking awful and will absolutely encase the entire hab in quick sealing foam for laughs? Now instead of hacking 8000 units, they just need to get into our woefully under-secured maintenance server, and then we're all in the biggest foam party the solar system has ever seen. Have you ever been in a foam party Tom? I promise you it's not as sexy as it sounds. It stinks Tom. It fucking reeks.

Here's what we need to do. We need increased security around every blastpack, we need cameras and alarms, and we need armed drone patrols checking in on every pack every single cycle. That sounds extreme I know but if I tell you what we need is some sensors and alarms you'll get us a bb gun and some telescopic optical implants and wish us good luck. I know your fucking game Tom. At the bare minimum we need proximity alarms, and we need to take these things off of the central system as soon as possible. Anything less and we're all getting spaced cause some genius thought putting a million people in a glass tube that gets sandblasted all day long was a great idea. I swear to god if I get spaced cause some hyped up double crosser ripped off our safety gear to have a block party, my final act will be to wrap my frozen fingers around your neck and spit in your eye.

All The Best

Naruto Fitzgerald

Chief Maintenance Engineer

GAZETTEER

This section lists some other places in Grand Cross. Most don't have fixed locations—they're meant to be used wherever and however you want them to be. These locations were created by contributing writers. They're credited in their entry, and you can find a list of contributors on p. 3.

DISTRICTS AND COMMUNITIES

CIELITO LINDO

by Fabby Garza

Deep in the station, in an ignored corner of a ward, you can find the best place for a taco in space as well as a welcoming, independent and open community that has managed to keep the Cartel at bay. But with a propaganda machine, and all of the other Cartel resources, how long can Cielito Lindo continue as the beautiful heaven its name promises?

The story of this district is the story of **Doña Maria Perseverancia**, one of the first workers to be sent to help with the construction of Grand Cross, and a talented architect in Mexico who never felt comfortable to be herself around friends and family despite her success. Once in space, her initial excitement soured when she found that her knowledge and expertise meant little against racist power structures. It was everything that she had hated back on Earth but now in space.

This became an even harder challenge when, at age 50, she began publicly transitioning and living as a woman. She took the first name of her mother and a last name that represented her constant perseverance. This made her life aboard Grand Cross much harder, but also gave her the energy and confidence of being herself. Perseverancia realized that she wouldn't make it here unless she took matters into her own hands, and so created a place for people like her, a place that had the things she missed from home without the baggage.

To get this done, she used a diversity initiative in the early days of construction to create a district that would appeal to any Mexican immigrants moving to the station. This would later extend to any one from latinx countries, then to general marginalized folk. She made the district so out of the way that only people who needed to be there would be there.

In the beginning, the district and name were very perfunctory; it was a place to house immigrant workers for the night before they commuted elsewhere in the station. But thanks to beloved community leaders like Doña Perseverancia and later **Tláloc El Carnicero**, Cielito Lindo has managed to be mostly independent, haggling with other districts and receiving the occasional lost shipment from inside a mega corporation's warehouse.

The district's biggest section is referred to as La Tienda; it has several blocks of buildings that house all the merchants and sellers in Cielito Lindo. In addition, it is the informal seat of local government and is responsible for the organization of citizen guards. Passersby here are enticed by the smells of food and the sounds of music and dance. Buskers set up between the most popular buildings and perform for the public, and parties are held to celebrate many of the old Mexican holidays—and some new ones. Here you can also find ingenious inventions that apply a familiar flavor to space technology: cheap basic drones get a papier-mâché makeover and become flying pinatas; laser knives are hacked to create a longer, more "ondular" shape to create what the locals call laser machetes.

One of the most important establishments in La Tienda is La Playa, a beach-themed bar that Doña Perseverancia hosts as the go-to place for meetings and decisions that impact the district. Doña, now 65, ties her hair in a tight bun, and is well known for always wearing colorful dresses and a wide smile.

The other large section of the district is Carniceria Tláloc, which was originally a meat market, but nowadays sells and prepares anything that falls off the back of a transport vehicle. The titular Tláloc is an android owner and occasional butcher. His bright blue-silver skin and dark eyes paint a menacing visage, but those who get to know him consider Tlaloc a loyal and kind soul who will also not hesitate to deal with any problematic element that threatens the district.

He is also the leader of the volunteer citizen guard that patrols Cielito Lindo. Known as Los Carniceros, these guards are held to the highest of standards. Although they occasionally end up dealing with citizens, their purpose is to patrol the perimeter of the district and mount any resistance to law enforcement trying to "reclaim" it. They are a show of force against criminal elements, private security squads and law enforcement alike.

P'NAI TZEDEK CONGREGATION

By Gavin L. Fregeau

"Please note there are two rooms. Leftward is the chapel, where we keep our one precious Tanakh and hold services. If you need a Tallis or a Yarmulka, extras can be found near the entrance, and Siddurs, books of prayer, are provided. Rightward is the social hall, which can be reserved via our online calendar. The hall is empty. If you need chairs or tables, you will have to bring them yourself."

— Sign posted outside P'Nai Tzedek on the bottom floor of the Moonview Office Building.

P'Nai Tzedek is a Chevreh, a community of like-minded Jews who get together to learn, pray and celebrate. Some members are Rabbis, but there are no explicitly defined leaders. Everyone is free to lead services or organize events. The Chevreh is meant to be an open space for anyone—even non-Jews—to come, organize, and learn about Judaism. The social hall hosts everything from Hebrew School to Union Meetings.

Still, P'Nai Tzedek struggles. When it was founded in 2012, the Jewish National Space Fund (JNSF) offered to bankroll the synagogue, but they refused to take money from an organization built on the suffering of Palestine. Now the JNSF have joined the Offworld Cartel and actively work to undermine Jewish communities that don't fit their rigid ideals. Neo-Nazi hate groups attack P'Nai Tzedek with increasing ferocity. Wealthy members have left for safer and more conservative Jewish communities.

The synagogue is underfunded. The community is afraid. The gig economy makes it difficult if impossible to reach a Minyan. P'Nai Tzedek is falling apart and needs help.

PEOPLE

Yitzhak Tzadik (He/Him) was hand built by the late Judith Leow. He is considered the first android to be born Jewish, though several had converted years before he lived. He spent the first decade of his life studying Jewish Law and writing papers justifying the use of certain electrical equipment, such as prosthetics and his own body, during Shabbos. Now he spends his time at P'Nai Tzedek writing op-eds on Tikkun Olam, the mandate to bear responsibility for the welfare of the universe. He is often a target of both anti-Semitic and anti-android hate groups and sometimes struggles for recognition as Jewish within his own community.

Miriam Cohen (She/Her), aka the Streaming Rabbi, records her sermons on VHS. Her distributors trade copies of her most recent sermon for one or more VHS cassettes with the recording tab intact. The quality is subpar, but it allows those unable to attend services regularly to keep in touch with their practice. The gig economy makes no space for the Sabbath. Miriam mainly preaches about the necessity of community-based faith, how Judaism cannot be commodified, and how it must be diametrically opposed to capitalism. Capitalism seeks to isolate the individual and deprive them of social and spiritual necessities that can only be provided by a free and safe community of one's peers. As the election nears, Miriam specifically preaches the need to secure Freedom of Religion as a human right.

Stephen Fogle (He/They) is a simple member of P'Nai Tzedek. He doesn't have any interest in organizing or leading, but he attends services regularly. His true passion is teaching children. A jolly storyteller and a terrific singer, he captivates the children while imparting life lessons and providing their parents space to worship without distraction. He wears mismatched Tefillin, the headpiece once worn by his great grandfather and the armpiece shiny and new. The story goes, when a young Joshua Levi had his Bar Mitzvah and received Teffilin of his own, the armpiece was too long for his still-growing body, so Stephen lent his great grandfather's shorter armpiece.

PLOT HOOKS

A group of delinquents broke into the synagogue and stole several leaf-shaped plaques from the bronze tree of life. Leaves are donated by the community and are engraved with the names of honored members and the dead. If you recover and return the leaves, the congregation will be in your debt.

The Chevreh is organizing a march with several other marginalized communities. The Brash Bucks, a small but dangerous neo-Nazi gang, marked Yitzhak Tzadik as their next target. If they maim him or worse, he won't be able to participate in the march and he needs to be seen at the front with the other community leaders.

One of Miriam's regulars hasn't picked up a copy of her last two sermons. Can you check up on her and make sure she is safe?

TRAMGAUDRY ROW

by Tyler Crumrine

Tramgaudry Row is Grand Cross's premier theatre district. Here corporate buildings give way to a row of massive production houses with scenes playing in hologram above their marques. Costumed "brand ambassadors" hand out fliers on every corner, talking up shows while keeping "unsavory elements" moving.

The further you get from the commercial end of The Row, the smaller and less ostentatious theatres become—their designations shifting from Row Theatres to Off-Row, Off-Off-Row, and etc. At the end of The Row, you'll find Tramgaudry's most indie DIY performance spaces—indistinguishable from residential units because they likely still are.

The hottest commercial theatre is The Theatre Theater—"theatre" spelled with an "re" meaning the art form and "theater" spelled with an "er" meaning the physical building a play is performed in. The owners rigorously focus-tested the name and use it without a drop of self-awareness or irony.

The hottest Off-Row theatre is Without a Net, the originators of the Naked Theatre Movement.

The hottest Off-Off-Row production this season is Garbage Boys—an immersive theatre piece in which two brothers eat garbage provided by the audience. Just try to find garbage they won't eat!

THEATRE ON GRAND CROSS

The Impact may have changed the course of humanity, but the plays being produced in the distant future of 2020 remain largely the same. Because no matter the future, producers are cowards and the classics are solid investments. No royalties to pay (public domain), great for student matinees (and educational funding), and they market themselves ("It's a classic!"). New plays are still produced, but chronically underfunded and left to smaller venues (unless a piece proves itself popular enough to be poached).

Audiences still expect something new from revivals, though, and the remixing of classics is a time-honored theatre tradition.

1D6 TO UPDATE A CLASSIC	
1	Add the words "…In Space!" to the end of the title. (e.g. *The Importance of Being Earnest… In Space!*)
2	Add the word "Space" at the top of the title. (e.g. *SPACE OEDIPUS*)
3	Reduce the title to two words with an "x" between them. Repeat one word if necessary. (e.g. *Romeo x Juliet*; *Hamlet x Hamlet*)
4	Add the word "Future" as needed. (e.g. *Future Arms and the Future Man*)
5	Add "!: A Musical" to the end of the title to indicate it is a musical now. (e.g. *The Cherry Orchard!: A Musical*)
6	Add "!?" to the end of the title to indicate this production will subvert expectations, we promise. (e.g. *A Doll's House!?*)

NEW THEATRE TRENDS

The Return of Mask Theatre: Augmented reality and wearable tech have advanced to the point that any actor can play any role provided the theatre owns full- or partial-body masking technology. Advanced masks contain adaptive AI as well, translating even an actor's smallest microexpressions. Theatres save money on costumes and make-up in the long-term, but these advances have also led to:

- Preferential casting towards performers with their own cybernetic masking hardware (i.e. wealthy and/or trust-fund performers).
- Wages plummeting since literally anyone can play a role.
- Actors accepting lower rates knowing full automation is the next logical step.
- Theatres hiring the same people over and over again (friends, celebrities, etc.) rather than pursuing any kind of casting diversity.

Thrifftrax™: To drive repeat sales, theatres now offer commentary tracks alongside shows. Simply rent an earpiece, select your audio track, and enjoy the play with its director, designer, or your favorite insult comic whispering in your ear. Some commentaries are even streamed live. Commentary broadcasts are by no means secure, however, and an enterprising hacker could utilize them for covert messaging and/or propaganda.

eReaders: Actors are relying more and more on cybernetic implants to feed them their lines. Originally intended as a lifeline if an actor blanked onstage, performers now download entire scripts into their brain, focusing purely on movement and delivery during scenes rather than being bogged down by what they're actually saying. While significantly more difficult to hack than a commentary stream, an actor whose lines are tampered with without their knowledge might not realize what they're saying until it's too late.

The Naked Theatre Movement: Defined in Without a Net Theatre's "Naked Manifesto", the Naked Theatre Movement rejects masks, commentaries, line-readers, and any other tech use in the theatre, aiming to create uniquely theatrical experiences that highlight performers' humanity.

Critics love it because it's new, different, and lets them shit on other theatres indirectly by praising Naked Theatre productions as "real" and "authentic." Actors with cybernetics, on the other hand, find the movement needlessly exclusionary with its hard lines and sweeping generalizations. Audiences and sex workers alike are still getting used to the term, leading to plenty of mix-ups on both sides.

FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT

ARCADIA

by Molly Landgraff

For many of the people who call Grand Cross home, providing unique entertainment experiences is something of a calling. The night club Arcadia—sometimes jokingly called a "knight club,"—is definitely a popular choice, and not just because of the distinctive mix of electro-medieval dance music the house players produce.

The entire place is themed as a mix of modern high-tech with medieval trappings. This is where you'll find LARP events, SCA-types, and cosplayers who enjoy dressing up as faeries with the latest in cosplay technology, side by side with players of the latest edition of Shadow Gunners.

The club's owner, Titania, never breaks character as the Faerie Queen, and though she maintains an air of mystery and beauty, she frequently appears in-person. When she does, she always takes to the dance floor, along with her "retinue"—a group of beautiful people all across the gender spectrum—and dances with abandon. Titania herself usually retires to a private table overlooking the dance floor while her retinue remain dancing with the patrons, as the Queen only invites select guests to join her for a drink.

These guests are given the opportunity to ask Titania a single question and receive a true answer, and it is rumored that she has some kind of network access or sources, because while the Queen's guests are given a legally binding contract not to reveal what they are told, none have ever expressed dissatisfaction with their answers. Some rumors add that she asks a high price in return for these answers, and many have balked at the price and forfeited their answer, but again, if so, no one who's in a position to know has ever confirmed it.

The club is also popular among a different demographic: criminals. It is surprisingly easy to fade into the background and arrange conversations with contacts—put on a pair of elf ears and a costume, talk like a bad fantasy video game, and you'll be indistinguishable from the LARPers and Shadow Gunners. Some even go so far as to use the club to share the plan for a given act of resistance or robbery. Titania intentionally makes no effort to curb this practice, suggesting with a smile that her patrons are simply enjoying the playful fantasy atmosphere when pressed on the topic.

BLUE FISH DREAMS

by Dylan Curran

In the moldering shadows of a newly-gentrified district hides a sweet little neon-and-glass bar called Blue Fish Dreams. True to its name, the joint centers around a floor-to-ceiling tank of iridescent fish that drift in lazy circles. It's a good place for a thoughtful drink or quiet conversation, well away from the prying eyes and cameras of the streets above.

The Blue Fish is owned and operated by a rogue marine biologist by the name of Gills McKinley. McKinley studied the schooling behavior of fish in zero-g, way back in the early days of Grand Cross before the centrifugal stabilizers came fully online. Her crowning achievement was to digitally approximate the brain patterns of an extinct species of schooling Erismatopterus. Many members of her cohort believed the research would be invaluable in establishing social harmony in a space-bound urban environment, as did the project's government backers.

Unfortunately, McKinley has long since disappeared from public view, taking with her the digitized thoughts of her precious fish and the simple robotic bodies those thoughts were programmed to operate.

One party that has not forgotten McKinley is the deep-pocketed Armitage Sweetheart, a politician aiming to win a powerful position in 2020—and he's willing to pay well for the return of McKinley's government-sponsored research. Maybe he thinks it'll help his campaign's conservation angle; maybe he believes in McKinley's original vision. Certainly it's unrelated to possible applications in Dreamer technology and any embarrassments that might accompany a politician's connection to such research.

THE CAT'S EYE

by Charlie Standard

A stylish queer bar located just outside Downtown, established in 2014. One of the oldest LGBT+ bars in Grand Cross and still run by the woman who founded it, Morgana Griffiths, the Cat's Eye has maintained its old school charm with CRT televisions and neon lights.

Though its aesthetic is a love letter to the technology that built Grand Cross, it definitely leans towards retro-chique rather than just old-fashioned. Every Saturday, the Cat's Eye hosts “Kitten Mix,” a variety night where they host new LGBT+ musical talent, comedians and poets, with monthly karaoke nights as well.

While the limited food menu is traditional British/Irish-style cuisine, the wide selection of beers, ales and spirits are imported from all over the world, with some signature cocktail mixes (the “Lucky Paw” is a local favorite.) If you can't find Morgana herself behind the bar, you'll be served by Kim, Morgana's self-proclaimed android apprentice, but rest assured Morgana is never far from the site.

A 10% portion of their profits go toward the Stardust Society, a charity that offers support for displaced and vulnerable LGBT+ persons, and events are held monthly to promote and fundraise for them.

THE GHOST MARKET

by Alison Tam

At first glance, Ghost Market's movements seem completely random. It'll set up on top of a sky bridge in Neo Shibuya one night and the park next to Xin Beida University the next. Somehow the hungry customers magically appear, and only regulars know why. A different subway station serves as the market's landmark for each day of the week. Get off at the right stop for the day and all you have to do is follow your nose.

There used to be permanent neighborhood markets all over Grand Cross. Then the police started cracking down on unlicensed vendors, confiscating stalls and issuing fines that left vendors in debt for a lifetime. Many of the largest stalls were relocated to the government sponsored Songshan Hawker Center. Their popularity transformed it into a tourist attraction while the smaller stalls still on the streets were shut down one by one.

The last non-sponsored open-air night market in Grand Cross only survives because it's mobile. Vendors are ready to pack up at a moment's notice and disperse the moment their spotters see the cops, usually setting up again several streets away. Its organization is ad hoc and decentralized by design. The first stall on the scene chooses the market's location for the night simply by finding the place with the most foot traffic and setting up, with no advance plans or messages that might leave a paper trail.

Ghost Market opens for the dinnertime crowd and stays busy into the early hours of the morning. It keeps serving the best and cheapest food in Grand Cross until the shawarma's shaved down into shreds and the ramen joints run out of broth. On weekends, if the nightclub crowd is hungry enough, it'll stay open long enough for the earliest risers to get breakfast. Most people only know when and where the market comes to their own neighborhoods. Recently, a new crowd of hipsters and foodies has started to chase the Ghost Market through the districts, making vendors worry about increased police attention.

Where the food goes, the people follow. Commuters bring takeaway home or eat standing in the street. Students and seniors alike come in groups and linger for multiple meals, setting out stools all along the market's outskirts. Activists and buskers seeking an audience bring speakers, and small-time hackers and dealers use the market's bustle to mask their illicit trades. The Ghost Market is a city in miniature, building itself each night just to disappear again before dawn.

STALLS

Amazing 3D Magic Ice: Ah Qiao dropped out of design school with six figures in debt and a single 3D printer. After acquiring an ice machine and spending several weeks tinkering, she now sells shaved ice sculptures of anything you can think of—cartoon characters, celebrities, even your own face if you ask very nicely. Toppings include diced mango, condensed milk, red beans and pandan jelly.

Trey's Deep-Fried Everything: Trey follows the American county fair model of cuisine. Their mainstays are processed foods and tempura-style vegetables, but bring them anything from the market and they'll deep fry it just for the challenge. Local teenagers swear by something they call a Nuked Alaska: a Taiwanese ice cream/peanut brittle roll re-wrapped to include the popsicle of their choice, battered, deep-fried and eaten so quickly it barely has a chance to melt.

The Copycat Queen: The Queen pops up every couple of weeks with a low-budget version of whatever exciting new foods have captured Grand Cross's imagination this month. You can tell when a trend is over when she shutters her stall, though she'll be back in a few weeks for the next one. Right now, fine restaurants in the richer districts are all into spherification, so the Queen is selling cups of what she calls popping soup boba, tiny little globules of gazpacho and garlic naengguk the size and texture of roe.

Fantastic Roti and Astounding Bing: Ghost Market patrons like nothing better than a passionate argument about which one's better. They've been locked in a semi-friendly rivalry for years, supported by loyal patrons as they vie for the favor of the fickle public. Right now, Shanshan of Astounding Bing is one up with Hualien-style runny eggs wrapped in their scallion pancakes, though their rival Prakash says he's testing a new paratha recipe that's guaranteed to take the crown. Rumor has it that they used to date.

We Are Not A Market Stall: Formerly named Fusion Dance, Pizza Everything, Streat Food, and too many others to remember. Yolanda and Kiyo have devoted themselves to the art of pun-based cuisine mashups, and as a result of their unholy alliance they have produced winechata (wine and horchata), bobarritos (dessert burritos, filled with tapioca balls and cake) and tacoyaki (octopus balls seasoned like tacos). Their bursts of occasional drunken genius are evened out by the dubious nature of most of their experiments.

Halmeoni's Eomuk: Jessica Park believes in the traditional flavors of the Korean comfort food she grew up on. Her stand is deceptively humble but has attracted a loyal following for her fish cakes and mushroom skewers cooked in warm, sustaining anchovy broth. Each order comes with a cup of piping hot broth and a squeeze of spicy dipping sauce on top. She's one of the very few vendors who has chairs for her customers, making her stall an oasis of rest and comfort among Ghost Market's hectic chaos.

PEOPLE

Mr. Singh and Sweetu: Mr. Singh promised his children he'd retire from being a chai-wallah, but he said nothing about staying out of the business. These days, he sits at the edge of the market, gossiping with his friends as his personal drone, Sweetu, floats up and down the market, stopping next to the most popular stands and selling chai to the people waiting in line.

Marsh: When Ghost Market started coming to Sunda District (named for the tectonic plate most of Southeast Asia rests on), Marsh approached the vendors to cut a deal. Sunda's homeless community will warn Ghost Market about police presence as long as they get the same tips back, while Ghost Market stays out of the parks where people sleep and whatever food's left over at the end of the night is free. A fast talker and expert negotiator, Marsh once convinced a stall owner to pay her to eat their food.

Juana Isabel: When government raids started hitting the old neighborhood markets, Juana was one of the first to pack up her pupuseria and go on the move. Just as likely to let loose with a stream of invective as she is to sit someone down for a lecture about their life choices, Juana's sheer force of personality often makes her a deciding voice in the Ghost Market's affairs. Lately, her wife of thirty years has started helping her during dinner rush. She worries about how they'll survive once they're too old for physical labor but tries not to let it show.

Eagle-eyed Ife: Ife's family has been selling fufu and stew in the market for years. She grew up running around the market, poking her nose into everything and getting underfoot. One day, Juana got sick of her pestering and enlisted her as a spotter. Now she perches high above the Ghost Market, using her vantage point to scan for signs of police. She's been teaching herself how to patch into the security cameras in nearby shops or on the street, though her parents wish she'd use some of that motivation for her homework.

Lao Xiang: Lao Xiang's famous char kway teow stand was invited to move to Songshan Hawker Center during the first raids. He continued to run it there for years but couldn't keep up with the rising rent and increasing fees. A new rule that required all Songshan Center hawkers to upgrade to the same expensive electronic ordering system finally pushed him out, and a chain restaurant took over his lease. Now he's back where he was ten years ago, eking out a living and hiding his stall from the police.

1D6	SCENES ON THE STREET
1	Two stalls selling the same thing have set up right next to each other.
2	Lost young professionals are asking for directions to the Ghost Market.
3	The police are on their way. The market starts to pack up and scatter.
4	A vendor curses out a pedestrian for littering right next to their stall.
5	A [1–2 singer] [3–4 activist] [5–6 amateur comedian] has drawn a loud, heckling audience.
6	A group of drunk friends tries to rank their favorite stalls.

1D6	SMELLS OF THE STREET
1	Human sweat, a crowd packed too closely together.
2	Tandoori chicken, spiced to fragrant perfection.
3	Something burned by an inexperienced chef.
4	Curry so hot your eyes water before you even take a bite.
5	Clear, pure pho broth simmering on the stove.
6	Yams baking, a subtle, earthy undertone of a scent.

THE LAST KISS

by Dorian Dawes

Neon red lips flash across a sign over a dimly lit bar. Inside, sultry music plays over the speakers as glasses clink and money changes hands beneath tables. At first glance, the Last Kiss looks to be an ordinary dive, if a bit gauche in its pitiful attempts to recreate a 1930s speakeasy aesthetic. It's become a common meeting place for underhanded business deals where information can be bought in cold, hard cash.

Chris Delacroix is the proprietor of this establishment, as well as the only live act ever booked for the stage. Every evening, the Last Kiss's patrons are graced with their crooning vocals, allegedly enhanced with cybernetics so that they can alter the pitch of their voice with fluid ease. They are a tall and gaunt androgynous being, bald and prone to wearing gaudy jewelry and lavish makeup. Their crimson gowns are rumored to have cost a fortune, but anyone who knows anything is aware that the cheap material is scrounged from whatever Mx. Delacroix can find. Some have suggested that the sharp canine fangs in Delacroix's mouth are more than mere cosmetic enhancements and that the bar owner is in fact actually a vampire. Between songs, Mx. Delacroix flits through the tables, greeting regular patrons by name and introducing themselves to new faces.

This establishment is a place of safety from those looking to hide away from corporations or the law. Keeping their bar free of corporate influence is of utmost importance to Delacroix, which means having a few protections and rules in place are absolutely necessary.

All brawling is banned inside the Last Kiss. Business is to be conducted quietly. The bartender should always be tipped. And above all, always clap politely after each and every song.

For activists looking for a place to hide, and for anyone who just needs a touch of elegance without the commercial bullshit, the Last Kiss's doors will always be open. The Last Kiss doesn't discriminate. The only banned clientele are corporations and cops.

THE LAUNCHPAD

by B. Douglass McKenna

Nestled in the heart of Marsha Stretch (p. 354) is a red neon door thumping from the bass tucked behind. This is The Launchpad, a dazzling karaoke bar emblazoned with red velvet and gold, bathed in blacklight. The bar is host to drag nights, epic holiday parties, and a karaoke stage that encourages the old and new to step into the limelight.

Armed with cotton candy cocktails and an open door policy, it's one of the most iconic bars in The Stretch. It's run by none other than Sheena Kahn, a once illustrious popstar who now takes the stage every night at The Launchpad. It is the place to be if you're visiting the Stretch and want to prove your chops in front of a microphone.

While playing host to the old and new, The Launchpad is also a prime spot for information. Locals are encouraged to rub shoulders with the elite who are looking to gentrify the neighborhood and take their cut of any secrets that are spilled on the dance floor. It's said that while Sheena herself encourages her patrons to drink, laugh, and have a good time, she partly does this to loosen the lips of her wealthier patrons. It's also said that she's willing to trade information with those she considers friends and allies.

MAMA'S RESTAURANT

by Drew Brutzman

In a far corner of the station, hidden away in a labyrinthine warren of pipes and service tunnels, lies Mama's Restaurant—hard and shadowy on the outside, warm and inviting on the inside, full of excellent smells and an air of friendly camaraderie situated among comfortably overstuffed chairs beneath paper lanterns.

Specializing in multicultural comfort food to appeal to all of Grand Cross' inhabitants, this restaurant is overseen by the eponymous Mama. Her background and motivations are a mystery—on purpose, should anyone ask her directly. On the outside, Mama is cantankerous, seemingly only capable of conversation through shouting, and is surrounded by a perpetual haze of narcotic vapor from the elegant, long-stemmed e-pipe that never leaves her yellowed teeth.

Should someone come to her in need, she labors tirelessly on their behalf, offering sanctuary in an otherwise uncaring station. Taking in the forgotten, abused, outcast, and wandering, she offers respite to the tired, food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, aid to the sick, and meaningful work to those who ask. Everyone who comes through her door becomes family, and she takes family very seriously, putting people to work in the restaurant or finding something more suitable to their skillset through the many station connections she maintains.

Despite her gruff exterior, Mama has that special air about her that drives everyone to do their best, and she strives for the best for all her family, providing everything in her power to ensure their safety, health, happiness, and spiritual well-being.

THE NEON LOW

by Avery Quinn Garrick

The Neon Low is a bar resembling a Wild West saloon drowned in neon and is the premiere watering hole for anyone and everyone on Grand Cross—especially those who do not operate strictly within the confines of the law. Once an abandoned theme bar, The Neon Low was quietly completed and re-opened while everyone was distracted by the Disaster.

Since the bar is highly automated and has few humans on staff, there's endless speculation about who runs it and why. Rumors abound about the potential true owner(s); some say it's a member of the Cartel or one of the station's gangs. Some even claim it's a rogue AI, gathering intelligence. Whoever they are, they've managed to make it a mostly neutral zone in the station's factional wars.

The bar trades information if you know the right passwords, and if rumors are to be believed, the androids that maintain the bar's day to day affairs offer fact-finding missions under the table. It's no surprise that anyone and everyone tries to get in. However, no one has been able to figure out any of the many mysteries surrounding the Low, least of all what the owner(s) get out of it.

THE SPICE MARKET

by Avery Quinn Garrick

Grand Cross leaders scouted Jacques Barelvi early on during the station's construction as a premier astrobotanist to help develop the Agriculture Ring. His genius made the Ring into the most successful botanical experiment in human history, but Jacques truly found his place in Grand Cross as a spice merchant.

Though the Ring was a success, the food it produced was fairly generic and left much to be desired when it came to seasonings. Wanting a taste of home, Jacques set aside part of one of the Ring's cylinders to grow some spices for his personal use. When a few friends found out, they asked him to share while others asked if he could grow other herbs. Soon enough, friendly requests had become formal orders and the Grand Cross' Spice Market was born.

Today, Jacques ships wholesale to various shops in Grand Cross and is always eager to help customers looking for something harder to find. Business is going well, and several Cartel members have come to recognize just how valuable the Spice Market is. When Jacques refused to sell, the Cartel started to employ dirty tricks. Cartel-linked couriers frequently "lose" his shipments while online forums spread unfounded rumors about his product. Jacques is frankly getting tired of trying to constantly find new ways to circumvent their meddling, but then again, Jacques Barelvi wasn't raised a quitter.

OTHER LOCATIONS

CONTACT COMMUNITY CENTER

by Addison Antonoff

On the ground floor of a mid-sized transit station, there is a door labeled Contact Community Center. The rooms inside resemble film sets and roundtable interview sections set up for recording. Depending on the hour, one may stumble into a beginning Spanish class, a lecture on how to maneuver privacy settings on different devices or a speed dating session. Most of the students and teachers here join remotely, though there are often a few attending physically as well as an in-person manager here to make sure that everything is working and that food and snacks are always available.

This small community center caters specifically to the homebound of all ages in the Grand Cross and surrounding areas. Homebound citizens can call in to chat with others or attend events and classes. Lectures or classes held by people unable to come in person are still broadcast in their own rooms for those able to leave the house on that particular day. Conversations and presentations alike are captioned in almost-perfect time. In the past, the more social events have included everything from fundraisers for mobility aids to putting on a musical in twenty-four hours.

Those who work at the Contact Community Center pride themselves in that their place of work is fully accessible both digitally and physically. Grand Cross may have promised open space access for all, but regular citizens like those who run this community center are the ones that actually make that possible.

THE DATA DUMP

by T. H. Ravencroft

The modern age creates a lot of electronic waste. Once the good stuff is picked over and salvaged, what's left makes its way to the Data Dump. The Dump is the place for obscure hard drives, tape machines, Zoom disks, and sometimes a stray card catalogue or UNIAC III mainframe.

The Dump's alleyway storefront has seen better days; wear some nice boots and mind your step. But if you're looking for stray corporate records, antique organization charts, or schematics that wandered off, they're probably lurking somewhere under the flickering lights.

Karl Piketty runs the Dump, which is to say he's usually behind the counter, elbows deep in some antique system. Whether he'll talk to you depends on the kind of mood he's in, whether he's seen you before, and what you're in the process of breaking.

Karl is short but burly, with serial killer blue eyes and white hair. He's usually got glasses and magnifiers on which makes him look like a terrifying bug. He's always neatly dressed, but his pockets are full of parts, pencils, and paperwork.

While he technically has customers that keep his shop running, Karl is more interested in machines than people. Customers with interesting cyberwear or augmentations will find it easier to befriend him, especially if they let him tinker with their gear.

Those on the wrong side of the law may find him particularly helpful, as the surly engineer has a soft spot for anyone screwing over The System from his anarchist days.

EARTHTON CO-OP

by Jonathan Lavallee

A dedicated group of people created the Earthon Co-op Housing (ECHO, "Finding community in any and all spaces") in 2017. This unnamed group pooled their assets and bought space under the cover of the Unity election. After the election, the Cartel focused on high value assets; ECHO spent their time buying in the Earthton District, which most people abandoned after an accident ruined most of its parkland, a single dirty blight on Mariposa's green and luscious space.

They bought enough space to house all of the original members, as well as forty other founding families. Since they bought what they could quickly and cheaply, each building transformed into radically different "pods" based on their original configuration. Larger commercial buildings became

small family units with a central community area filled with converted pipe play structures. Smaller spaces were changed into dormitories with communal kitchens and bathrooms. ECHO cleaned the area and refused to sell when the Cartel and Unity government tried to move in.

Much like the pods, ECHO's people are a disparate group. ECHO tries to bring in anyone who can help support the co-op, either with resources or information, or with promises of support in return. Administration is handled by committees filled by rotating ECHO members. However, with so many different people living so close to each other, there are frequently disagreements; these can end in anything from cooly passive-aggressive actions to requests for disciplinary action to demands of removal from the co-op.

The brains behind the org are the **Shadow Board of Directors**. Every year one person is elected to the Board for a seven-year term, but their identity is kept secret. This protects them from both Cartel retaliation and disgruntled co-op members who disagree with their decisions. The Cartel would love to know who they are; if they can influence enough board members, they could break down ECHO for good.

PLOT HOOKS

If the PCs want to join ECHO, they can go through the application process. You need to do an interview, show how you can help the co-op, and/or pre-join a committee.

ECHO is not a huge fan of the Cartel or Unity. If you need a place to hide, an ECHO pod could hide the characters for a while.

If the PCs are ECHO members, it could be their turn to take part in a committee. They could have to deal with beautification (cleaning up the land where it's still toxic), security (setting it up, or responding to threats to pods across Earthton), or even the social committee (setting up social events).

GRAND CROSS MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

by Delilah Worthy

When Grand Cross was designed, it was decided that the station should have a record of the planet they were leaving. A space station doesn't have a natural history, but a planet does, and the ecological collapse and recovery of Earth should never be forgotten. So it was decided that a museum was to be built in Backtown: The Grand Cross Museum of Natural History.

You're probably thinking to yourself, “What does a museum have to do with being a cyberpunk? Are we gonna rob it? Is it a corporate puppet of Earth that must be destroyed to move to space?”

Sit down, hush up, and hear this: public service is punk as fuck, dude. Self-respecting cyberpunks should learn where they came from, what they're fighting to preserve from the corporations, and how to help the community grow. No better place to start than the Museum.

THE PLACE

The Museum was built in the style of American natural history museums, a Smithsonian writ small, if you will. It's divided into three wings with two extra halls, and the curators try to jam every inch of the place with stuff to help people learn. The museum is free to enter with a Multipass.

A few of the “big exhibits” are covered below, and GMs are free to make up a few of their own:

The **Main Hall** is famous for its massive diorama of the Earth: an effigy that spins in time with the real thing, with its own little Grand Cross and Moon in geosynchronous orbit. The planet still bears the scars of the Impact, which the diorama doesn't shy away from. The history of Earth from formation to now is displayed through screens embedded in the walls, with delicate little models of volcanoes and seas under glass dotting the hall as well.

The **Hall of Zoology** (or as locals call it, the Holo-Zoo) is a modern take on a museum classic. You can't exactly ship taxidermy up the gravity well and

arrange them in educational dioramas, so why not use holographics to get the same effect? Scenes of the African Savannah, Canadian Arctic, South-Asian Jungles, Russian Steppe, Australian Outback, American Southwest and more exist in holographic form, records of before and after the Impact. For some people, it's the only place they've ever seen these animals.

The **Hall of Technology** (aka the Corporate Advertisement Hall) is meant to show the technologies used to preserve and repair the natural world, along with the technology that will (hopefully) terraform alien worlds for humanity to live on. It is, unfortunately, rife with corporate cheerleading, since various corporations pay for not only the Hall, but the entire East Wing that holds it. If you know how to read closely, there's still loads of interesting things to learn, but the curators aren't stupid and know they need donations to keep the Hall (and indeed the whole museum) going now that the city is taking a hatchet to their funding.

The **Hall of Mineralogy** is full of rocks, which doesn't sound all that cool until you remember things like asteroids and jewels are rocks. The glittering hall is filled with interesting examples of minerals harvested from Luna and the asteroid belt, including an entire asteroid cut open and labeled for guests to see how its larger cousin can help humanity via the burgeoning field of asteroid mining. Of special interest to guests are the prototype asteroid mining gear on display and the giant piece of pallasite harvested from an asteroid that slammed into the Moon a few years ago.

The **Archives** are simply archives: tens of thousands of scholarly articles, books, publications, and theses in both print and digital format make up the bulk of this definitely-not-open-to-the-public basement installation. The staff not only manages their own collection of obtuse scholarly work but have a direct line to the city's backup archives of governmental data that they often assist in managing. If you've got a giant publicly funded server farm-cum-library, you might as well get some extra use out of it.

PEOPLE

Mimi Zaris, Chief Curator: A young woman and first-gen college graduate who worked her way up to Chief Curator of the Grand Cross Museum of Natural History. Mimi is deeply worried about the future; with the current trend of station government cutting funding to public services and the upcoming elections, she's absolutely terrified that her life's work will be thrown to the corporate hounds. The way the Hall of Technology is going already gives her nightmares. She's constantly looking for ways to both save money and make more, to keep the whole place afloat and available to the community.

Orville Maccabee, Chief Archivist: A recent immigrant to the city. Orville may have an old-fashioned name, but they're a fully modern person. As Orville specializes in digital construction and archival curation, the Museum's board of trustees snapped them up when they left their last corporate job. An effective bureaucrat but a poor sysadmin, Orville is looking at ways to bulk up the cybersecurity of the museum and archives; not only to secure the knowledge contained in the labyrinthine cyberspace of the archives but to make sure no one tries to edit the truth out from under them.

Aldis 002 (Aught-Two), Chief of Security: An android designed for security, Aldis is mostly concerned with keeping the Museum secured and the exhibits where they belong. Unfortunately, lacking any real policing ability if something goes missing means Aldis has to take... unconventional means to make sure the Museum's collections stay put—up to and including hiring punks like you to help him track down thieves, smugglers, and hackers trying to make a quick buck by abusing an institution of community learning. A genial seven-foot decommissioned combat android makes for a weird boss, but the security staff who work under him have nothing but praise for his work ethic and for the fact he remembers their names.

PLOT HOOKS

Recover a stolen artifact in exchange for an unsupervised peek at an upcoming exhibit... about new advancements in corporate security technology.

Help assemble a 3D printed dinosaur skeleton for an exhibit and get let into the Archives with assistance (read: a babysitter who'll make sure you don't read anything TOO secret).

Help secure donations to ensure the Museum can be safely and effectively weaned off corporate interests.

Foil a museum heist by planning and executing a counter-heist, then figure out who's paying people to break in.

GCPS.2501

By Christopher Parisi

Grand Cross Public School 2501 started life as an Offworld Cartel charter school/technical college for construction personnel. It's not so much a building as it is a collection of workshops, decommissioned cargo pods and '07-era hab modules welded together into a sprawling campus anchored in the Tsukaba District.

The changing population of the orbital boom has seen it rebranded several times since—most recently in mid-2019 when it became a low-cost public education option for L4 refugees and their families.

Staffed by a mix of well-meaning but ineffectual Cartel suits, Grand Cross locals, and visiting tradesfolk, the faculty has recently swelled to include the ranks of highly educated but underemployed Landvættir Orbital corporate expatriates. The resultant expertise has bolstered the school's offerings this term and it's not unusual to see remedial programming being taught by **Tova Dyson**—former sysop for the L4 mainframe—or the after-school robotics and engineering club working on scavenged construction drones with Skuggahvarf logos still stenciled on the side, under the eye of roboticist and ex-roughneck **Staffan Niven**. That the classes are three kids to a desk (five, counting virtual) in rooms wallpapered with a branded strata of peeling paint, corporate sponsorship posters and Unity Party pamphlets doesn't lessen attendance.

After hours, GCPS.2501 also offers electives in everything from civics, Orbital linguistics and journalism to self-defense and "null-gee" athletics. Yet more after-hours sees the workshops converted to grey-market cybernetics repair and programming labs, to jailbreaking seminars and AI rights advocacy meetups.

HORIZON TOWERS

by Kyle Thompson

Horizon Towers was a luxury development planned by corporate money-grubbers looking to capitalize on the gentrification IM-X has been driving in the Stretch (p. 354), but locals are pushing back. It all started with the usual protests, graffiti, and occupations of the construction site, but when **Kae Hanazaki** joined the movement, things got interesting.

Hanazaki—one of the original agronomists on Grand Cross—was sick of the best produce of the Agriculture Ring she helped build going to the Cartel elite while many citizens of Grand Cross lived in miserable food deserts. With an alliance of residents, hackers, and street gangers, Hanazaki is in the process of turning Horizon Towers into a giant vertical urban farm for the people of Marsha Stretch.

Together they've made Horizon Towers into something the corporations never could have planned. In the base of the structure, hulking pumps originally designed to supply luxurious in-suite pools have been repurposed to supply the plethora of growing racks in the floors above. The mid-levels glow bright with hundreds of grow lights suspended upon the crops in a dense agricultural maze. Up above are semi-finished floors where construction was interrupted by the occupation, converted by the locals into a mix of squat, lookout, and computer hubs for running the whole operation.

To some, taking the towers is about getting a decent meal for their kids. For others, it's about drawing a line against gentrification, telling the corporations to go no further. For many, it's just about building a giant middle finger against IM-X in their backyard.

The challenge hasn't gone unnoticed, and there are rumors that Quade (p. 357) is putting together a force of private police bristling with miltech to break the occupation of the towers. Whether or not this is true, there's no question that the community could use some help.

THE JAVA CHIP

by Nevyn Holmes

On the corner of Bit Road and Byte Drive is a friendly local internet café, The Java Chip. On the surface, it's a place to hang out, read something, work on something, and rent some time on the net in a safe environment for all. Beneath that, though? I mean, literally, beneath the surface, under the ground and in the back of the shop is a guerilla group of doctors, activists, and technicians who work to bring medication, cybernetic implants, and other treatments to those in need—those with less than "the right amount" of cash.

The implants aren't always legal, and are very rarely registered properly, and the meds aren't always name-brand, but they work and they're available here to whoever truly needs them.

They have a handful of modified vending machines hidden around the station—nondescript beverage dispensers capable of secretly dispensing some of the prescription meds and small implants to a secret compartment beneath the dispenser slot. All a buyer needs to know is the correct code to input using the drink selection buttons and the transaction is made. These machines are identified through small, blended-in QR codes. They are working to expand the reach of these machines.

The Java Chip has nothing but the best in mind for its community, and the division of what little profit is made from this shows that: a small piece of it goes to community assistance, some goes to running the café, and the rest is laundered and goes directly to a small resistance cell.

LOVE MACHINES

by Scott C. Bourgeois

It's easy for androids to be exploited. They can be forced into jobs they might not otherwise choose, as they have limited options outside of corporate work, and a lot of money can be made off them—after all, androids have a high initial cost but much lower upkeep than a human and can withstand more abuse.

Plus, android brothels don't tend to draw the ire real brothels do from society's handwringers and pearl-clutchers. Love Machines is one of a number of legal, licensed android brothels tucked away in the vice sectors of Grand Cross; what the ignorant would derogatorily refer to as an "Android Sex Dungeon." However, it's not some filthy den of iniquity. Love Machines is clean, tasteful, and most importantly, discreet.

What really sets Love Machines apart from the rest, though, is that it's not what it seems. The owner of Love Machines, a human woman called **Madam Pleasance**, is a sympathizer for android rights—and a front. The brothel is secretly run by the android sex workers themselves; mainly Lilim and Adams who work as escorts and entertainers, but also a few Labors who work in support and security roles. The cover of the brothel gives the androids a higher level of personal freedom and autonomy.

They're also collecting blackmail material on the prominent corporate executives, politicians, and influencers who patronize them. They intend to turn this into political pressure to support pro-android policies in the next election, and maybe finally see more real freedom from the Cartel for their fellow synthetics.

NUEVA ROSA BRANCH LIBRARY

by Amaranth Mantis

Forget seedy bars, back alleyways or sketchy darknet servers. If you're in Nueva Rosa and you want to plan an action, make contacts, or scope out a job before you commit, you can't do better than the branch library. I am 100% serious. The librarians here are comrades to an individual. I'm not sure what stars aligned to make that happen, but this place is the best exception I know to the rule that hoping for institutional change from within is a mug's game.

Let me count the ways: first, obviously, you have information, whether digital copies or print-on-demand. (Technically, as a matter of copyright law, all materials are required to print on smart stock that self-destructs if overdue, but in practice there are security holes in the protection software and they're big enough to punt Jupiter through.) The reference collection holds some incredibly detailed information about the construction, layout and history of Grand Cross—including a lot of things you'd be surprised to learn were ever made publicly available.

Second are the onsite facilities, including a tool library, hosted skillshares, and private meeting rooms, free to reserve. I would never impugn the good name of our public servants by suggesting that they've been known to harbor people on the run from security without asking questions, or even let them crash after hours.

I will however say that the staff are big on privacy—not only do they pointedly refuse to keep lasting records of what you've reserved (meaning they

can't rat you out to the authorities even if for some reason they wanted to), their security cameras and snoopware also have a way of failing at the most convenient times.

All of this attracts exactly the kind of clientele you might expect, which has led to some serious pushback from the powers that be. Y'see, Nueva Rosa went hard for the Union in the last election, and it's an open secret that Unity would love nothing more than an excuse to shut the place down. In the last couple of years, they've gone from bureaucratic and obstructionist to outright hostile: cutting funding, cutting hours, refusing new hires, Kafkaesque administrative review—whatever they think they can get away with. The head librarian, **Martel Robinson**, toes the line publicly, but even he'll acknowledge that it's basically straight-up sabotage.

In conclusion: support your local library!

PLATO'S CAVE

by Michael Elliott

Plato's Cave is a multi-floor arcade full of vintage video game cabinets and old media, all hauled up onto Grand Cross for no small expense by an ex-Cartel suit known as **Xena Salt**. The Cave features other entertainment such as cult classic films playing on old televisions hanging in the corners of the arcade. There's also a fully stocked bar with cheap drinks and terrible food.

Xena Salt lives in a small apartment above the arcade. Rumor is that she blew all her money on putting Plato's Cave together after she left the Cartel. She manages the arcade, runs the bar, and can often be seen playing in high-stakes money matches and defending her ludicrous high scores from would-be challengers.

Plato's Cave is a popular hangout, both for its throw-back entertainment and as a source of juicy gossip and useful intel. Cartel suits show up every once in a while, some still friendly with Xena, others to occasionally remind her of her ironclad non-disclosure agreements, and some to fight with her about the fuzzy intellectual property laws of her massive collection.

Plato's Cave could be a nice local haunt or a resource for useful information. Xena would happily give something up if you help complete her collection or get some lawyers off her back. She may even turn a blind eye if you need a discreet word with one of her regulars or need to lay low for a while.

THE PEOPLE'S CLINIC

by Jussi Marttila

She calls herself **Jackdaw Gonzo**, since she has left her old name back on silly old Earth. She used to be a veterinarian back there, or as she calls it, a horse doctor. But with healthcare and decent meds being harder and harder to get on account of the corporations taking over the public health care on the Cross, people still need treatment.

Jackdaw runs The People's Clinic, a highly mobile operation that keeps moving constantly to avoid law enforcement or regulatory action against it. One day it might be in the storeroom of a hat shop, another day it might be operating in the break room at a fast food restaurant, or a shipping container forgotten in some airlock. Her crew consists of herself, a former pediatrician called Peru and a large number of hangers-on from anarchist circles who volunteer to ferry the medical gear around covertly, run errands, and occasionally smash heads in when the Clinic is threatened.

The Clinic never stays put for more than a couple of days: just enough time so the word gets out and the right people find them, but never for so long that the regulatory authorities might find them.

The Clinic is usually short on everything, but never turns down a patient and never asks for payment—unless the patient happens to be a fascist. Jackdaw ain't got time for treating fascists. The Clinic subsists on donations from their patients and the communities they serve. Most of the donations go into acquiring meds off the black market. Occasionally, Jackdaw does side gigs for various organized crime figures who have practical issues with getting shot frequently and being unable to go to a real doctor. She does the best she can, takes their money, and uses it to fund the clinic.


FIZZY DRONE
CAFE AU
ENTER THE SINGULARITY
DRUGS & WIRES

CHAPTER 7: HOME DIRECTORY

“There are three secrets to success in the corporate world. Number one is never read a book about the secrets to success, because they won't tell you what you need to know, which is that the second secret is to start with a lot of money. That's both of us; so far so good. What you need now is the third secret.

"If something goes wrong—and something always goes wrong—blame somebody. Immediately blame somebody. Anybody. Doesn't matter.

"There are almost five million people in this overblown tin can. Statistically, at least one of them must be ratfucking you. You just don't know it yet, and they don't either, which is why you have to tell them as loudly as possible.

"Friends. Coworkers. Underlings. Probably not your boss, unless sticking a knife in his back will work out for you. Activists, they’re a good one. Androids, Singularists, some guy who sold you coffee. It does. Not. Matter. What matters is that it's their fault and not yours.

"Gaze upon the grand tapestry of human society and pull a loose thread. Open your book of names to a random page and pick one. Blame the first person you see. It never fails. Trust me."

— Greg Adams-Bass, Omnidyne executive

This chapter is a dossier of various factions, side characters, and other encounters in Grand Cross. These can be used as plot hooks, inspiration for PCs, mid-game encounters, or just background flavor. How you use them is up to you.

This chapter is split into the following sections:

- **Factions:** The Offworld Cartel, important political and criminal groups, antagonists like the Singularists and the New Barons, other corporations, example factions PCs could be a part of, and miscellaneous smaller groups.
- **Faces of Space:** Side characters mentioned in Chapter 6: Location Data.
- **Encounters:** Characters intended to be used as needed by the GM, either as opposition for the PCs or as a general-purpose ally.
- **Dreamers:** The Dreamers themselves, plus side characters connected to them for use in Dreamer campaigns.

If you'd like advice on making your own characters, see Chapter 8: Running the Game on p. 320-323.

THE OFFWORLD CARTEL

The biggest Cartel members. Many are relative newcomers in the corporate world who formed or rose to prominence as a result of the Impact.

ARCHON ASSETS

Business: Banking, Futures, Insurance, Investment.

Archon is the economic heart of the Cartel. They're the primary lender of most Cartel members and give them financial advice too. Ostensibly they're independent, but the major Cartel members own stakes in Archon and most of its directors come from other corps.

Though they're owed large debts by several Cartel members, Archon prefers to go easy on their allies. This is partly because they're invested in the Cartel's success, but also partly because they don't want people asking too many questions about their activities.

BACKGROUND

Archon is a financial institution formed by a merger of several pre-Impact banks. It rose to prominence quickly thanks to its position in the relatively untouched African region, early adoption of new technologies, and some extremely clever (or at least lucky) investments in other post-Impact corps. Some of these corporations went on to found the Cartel, and Archon was invited to join them.

Archon doesn't just deal with the Cartel, however; they often invest in and nurture promising young corporations, sponsoring about a third of their Cartel membership applications. Archon taking you under its wing carries a lot of weight with the Cartel.

Behind the scenes, Archon has also been shifting dirty money for criminal groups. They're not exactly rolling out the red carpet, they just carefully avoid looking into shady accounts and transactions in case they see something that'd force them to stop the money flowing. If they looked, they'd see their Hotel Melbourne's favorite bank.

Archon prides itself on dealing with people from all walks of life (provided they have money), and many Crossers have Archon accounts. Regular folks who work with Archon sometimes get charged fake fees, given subpar advice, or aggressively sold on plans they don't need. It's nothing personal; just business.



ASSETS

Archon's headquarters is a tower in the Central district, an old-fashioned place with the kind of understated look that says, “if you don't already know how much this place is worth, you don't belong here.” They have smaller banks in every ward for dealing with the peasants.

Archon has a smaller tower in Artemis, which is used as a training ground for promising young executives. They also maintain a presence on Earth, particularly Africa; their holdings elsewhere in the world tend to be used as a dumping ground for old or disappointing executives.

CULTURE

Archon tries to project the image of a forward-thinking corporation that makes investments, adopts technologies, and accepts people long before everyone else thinks they're cool. This usually means pink capitalism and funding startups. (Around the start of 2020, they started painting rainbows on their ATMs.)

Behind the scenes, Archon is a demanding work environment. Employees are told that they're the most important people in the Cartel and are expected to think ahead before taking major actions. The company's President **Leke Afolayan** (p. 246) is big on simulations, predictions, and modelling; his current pet project is the development of a new division that can constantly run and adjust simulations of the orbital economy.

ASANO HEAVY INDUSTRIES

Business: Construction, Habitat Systems, Orbital Engineering, Mining.

Asano is an engineering firm that handles everything from prefabricated housing and modular buildings to habitat and satellite construction. They're still partly Earth-based—they have several contracts with the Japanese government—but they've moved to Grand Cross to take advantage of an opening. Asano were openly invited to the Cartel as a replacement for Landvættir Orbital, and they haven't even bothered waiting for the body to cool.

Asano fosters a public reputation as a progressive family business, but it's mostly an excuse to justify the same predatory management practices as everyone else. It's run by the **Asano family**, whose members absolutely hate each other.

BACKGROUND

Japan's recovery from the Lost Decade was fueled in part by the research boom and a foray into space construction. At the time, Asano Heavy Industries was a successful but small construction and robotics firm run by **Hide Asano** and his children.

Asano's initial post-Impact successes came from designs and blueprints that were used by others: 3D-printable Lunar building designs, asteroid-mining robots, solar-sail scouting drones, and so on. During Hide's reign, Asano went from designing things to making them themselves; when he retired five years ago, they were already the third biggest construction corporation on Luna.

Hide had a lot of children, so one could inherit the business. He passed over the women because he assumed they'd want to raise kids instead; Makoto because he reminded Hide of his first relationship; Seigo for trying to sabotage the others (and more importantly, getting caught); and Jun for rubbing Hide's favorite client the wrong way. That left his youngest son, **Tadashi Asano** (p. 246).

Tadashi has been transitioning Asano to orbit and giving important positions to his own adult sons in an effort to consolidate his power. Unfortunately for him, his extended family came to space with him. They've been feuding for control of the company since.

浅野重工
ASANO HEAVY INDUSTRIES

ASSETS

Asano's greatest asset is their Lunar base **Inaba**, where most of their manufacturing takes place. Tadashi has moved its headquarters to the **Asano Building** in Armitage (p. 156). Their robotics facilities have been transferred to the nearby outer hull too.

Asano has formed or taken over a number of subsidiary companies in the last ten years—Hide did it to give his children something to do, Tadashi does it to keep his family busy. The Asanos who have no interest in feuding stayed behind to head their Japan branch.

CULTURE

From the rounded edges of their logo (a stylized Stanford torus) to the photos of Hide's wedding plastered in their lobbies, Asano does their best to project the image of a friendly corporation where employees are family. They even limit overtime.

Unfortunately, Asano uses their "family" culture to heavily encourage after-work socializing, doing extra overtime under the table, and refusing time off (to spend more time with your "family.") Workplace bullying and games of office politics are common, as a lot of middle managers copy the Asanos. It's a very high-pressure workplace. Rather than fix it, the Asanos spend a lot on PR trying to portray dysfunctional families as normal.

GERYON AEROSPACE

Business: Logistics, Shipping, Software, Transportation.

Geryon is a tech startup success story. They began only a year ago as a few guys and a supply chain program; when it took off, they were quickly brought into the Cartel by their investors. They've taken over a lot of Grand Cross' public transport infrastructure, and with it many of the levers that control the city.

Like most tech startups, Geryon's business model relies on bluster and exploitation: they oversell the effectiveness of their programs while destroying the transport sector until they can take it over. Their end goal is to control interplanetary transport, though it's unclear whether they'll last that long.

BACKGROUND

When the US started offering cash incentives to space-based businesses who worked with them, Silicon Valley started tossing piles of money at any startup with a space-related idea and a halfway decent plan for how to get there[1]. Geryon's founders were lured by the promise of cash and cheap space tickets.

Once in space, Geryon signed an under-the-table agreement with Unity minister **Jimmy Bachmann** (p. 109) that secured them a sweet deal on most of the Cross Rail network. Geryon is certain that through running Grand Cross transport, they can build the reputation and capital they'll need to run solar system transport. The fact that they had to hastily retrofit their code to the Cross Rail is a detail they can deal with later.

ASSETS

Geryon's main asset is their software: a popular suite of tools for space travel and logistics. Their headquarters lie in the top levels of a tower in Turing ward.



Geryon controls most of the Cross Rail lines on the Verne panel and the front end of the other panels, except for the major high-traffic Downtown-only lines. Their mismanagement has caused delays across the network and burdened the Grand Metro as people started taking the subway for longer trips. Geryon blames it on the public sector.

Outside Grand Cross, Geryon is still working on their interplanetary transport dreams. They have an office on Luna, an orbital shipping side-business, and a significant stake in an automated orbital debris removal business.

CULTURE

Geryon is still stuffed with funding, so they have one of those weird offices with fun architecture, a massage room, a slide, and an arcade—all features made to distract employees while their bosses take away simpler things like job security, benefits, and upward mobility.

In true Silicon Valley fashion, most of their founders and investors cashed out and bailed when the Cartel snapped them up. The remaining corporation is run by **Trip Briggs** (p. 247), the remaining founder. Trip is an idealist who stayed behind because he thought trying for something as grand as an interplanetary monopoly was worth it, no matter how slim his chances.

1 In some cases, like the infamous SpaceJuice, just putting "space" in your name is enough.

GOLIATH INC.

Business: Law enforcement, security.

Goliath are the Cartel's go-to private security force, the best of the best. They've also made a name for themselves in private policing—in some districts, they've taken over some or all law enforcement functions.

Goliath shares the Offworld Cartel's dream of owning space. Their current goal is to build their reputation so that when it comes time to settle Mars, they can bid for the whole planet's law enforcement sector. Goliath's founder, **Barlow Hawthorn** (p. 248), will be arrested if he ever returns to Earth.

BACKGROUND

Barlow and his men—Barlow's Boys—were once members of the Australian Defence Force, deployed to help the US with its post-Impact operations. Eventually they left the ADF, signed on with a better-paying PMC, and served another tour or two before retiring to Artemis.

According to whistleblowers, Barlow's Boys were implicated in war crimes. Both times, the Boys were "encouraged" to leave before word got out. The second time, they fled to the Lunar city Artemis. Barlow founded Goliath to give himself and his men a way to get paid for their talents, and in orbit, their experience and loyalty quickly took them to the top.

When the whistleblowers came out, it caused a minor international scandal. That's when the Cartel approached Barlow with an offer: become the Cartel's official guards and they'd use their influence to keep his team from being extradited. He accepted.

ASSETS

Goliath's HQ is an unassuming building in Harbou's park ward, with a few training facilities in the basement. They own smaller offices across the station, which they mostly use as storage facilities or temporary bases depending on what they've been hired for. They have a similar setup in Artemis.

A lot of Goliath's recruits are ex-military or ex-cops from Earth, hired with work contracts and housed in some simple apartments in a forgotten corner of Backtown. The Boys own lavish apartments Downtown.

CULTURE

Goliath's internal culture is pretty standard "last line of defense between order and chaos" cop rhetoric. Words like "honor" and "loyalty" and deep-sounding phrases borrowed from Earth militaries come up a lot. Loyalty in particular is a big one for Barlow, who promises severe punishments for whistleblowers.

HERGATZ LIAO GMBH

Business: Drugs, Genetics, Pharmaceuticals, Cybernetics.

This multinational corporation supplies much of the station's health needs, from medicines to medical implants to treatments for space illnesses. Hergatz Liao is a sprawling monster of a company, the result of generations of mergers and shifts in focus. Every incarnation has been run by the Liao family, and the current one is headed by **Trilobite Liao** (p. 248).

BACKGROUND

The history of Hergatz Liao is long and murky. Its original incarnation was technically a Hong Kong restaurant in the nineteenth century, but the Liao family changed their business every generation or two when someone new took over.

In the 20th century they underwent a number of mergers and splits—within the business and the family—until they owned a lot of small companies in many different fields. Post-Impact, most of these re-merged into the Liao Conglomerate. The rest were left to fend for themselves, the most successful of these being Hergatz Liao, a cosmetics company owned by Terry Liao.

Terry had been left out of the Conglomerate after demanding rulership. With his remaining Conglomerate shares, corporate espionage, and a few bribes, he managed to conquer most of the remaining Liao businesses and merge with non-Liaos to become a multinational corporation. His goal was revenge on the Liao Conglomerate, but he suffered a heart attack in 2009 before he achieved it.

Since then, his son Trilobite has run the show. Tril was more interested in human enhancement than revenge, so he decided to take the corporation's healthcare division to space. His money and the tricks he learned from his father have turned Hergatz Liao into the station's premier healthcare company.

HERGATZ LIAO

ASSETS

Even if you only count the healthcare part, Hergatz Liao is a sprawling company. They own the **Liao Tower** (p. 152) in Chang'e, a hospital on the Tezuka panel, a facility on Luna, and some space in the Shaft. Tril also brought a few non-healthcare subsidiaries to space for reasons he's never explained.

The corporation's other businesses are still active on Earth. (A lot of new migrants have a "Hergatz Liao? Aren't they the makeup people?" moment shortly after they move here.) Tril is content to delegate their management to other people as long as they turn profits.

CULTURE

Hergatz Liao is infamous for devising permanent treatments for ailments and selling them at markups that keep them out of reach for most people, all to push poorer customers onto temporary treatments or invasive cybernetics instead. The official line is that they need the money to invent more cures. If you still can't rationalize that, you shouldn't work here.

Tril is a paranoid bastard, so he keeps the corporation's internal affairs as secret as possible. Sometimes even knowing what's going on in another division has a clearance level. The lowest workers have a very skewed idea of what Hergatz Liao does or what effect their work has.

LANDVÆTTIR ORBITAL

Business: Construction, Maintenance, Orbital Engineering.

This Icelandic company used to be the face of habitat construction before they became the face of the biggest space disaster in history. Landvættir is on the edge of oblivion and appear to be hanging on out of spite: other corporations do heinous things on purpose and get away with it, so why shouldn't they?

Landvættir's remaining executives can't settle on a game plan, but they've got a few on hand. Plan A is bribing politicians to help reduce the consequences they suffer. Some executives are even considering blackmailing the Cartel with what they know of the Dreamer project.

BACKGROUND

Landvættir was founded by **Burgur Griðungsson** (p. 248), who rose to prominence in the 2000s as one of the "útrásarvíkingar." These "venture Vikings" were nationalistic venture capitalists who relied on the mystique and privilege afforded to them by virtue of being Icelandic (i.e. white and Nordic) to a ruthless degree, including in home politics.

Most of the venture Vikings were taken out by the Icelandic financial crisis of the late 00s, but Burgur got lucky. Landvættir was his pet project, and he'd already taken it to space with backing from a few Silicon Valley entrepreneurs who responded really well to the "white" thing. Landvættir became a big player in station construction, and the Cartel eagerly recruited Burgur.

With their backing and a little Nordic charm, Burgur was able to secure a contract to build Skuggahvarf. **What happened next** (p. 130) was a comeuppance he couldn't dodge.

According to Burgur, he'd delegated Skuggahvarf to some trusted subordinates and his mistake was not taking a more active role. The Cartel was not happy with this explanation[2], and hit Landvættir with sanctions that limited Burgur's Cartel influence and allowed them to openly recruit Asano as a replacement.

Landvættir ORBITAL

Burgur was allowed a chance to make a comeback though. He's currently working to rebuild confidence, find some new backers, and maybe grease a few palms to get Unity off his back. He's only ever failed upwards his whole life, and he has no plans to stop now.

ASSETS

Landvættir's Grand Cross headquarters lies on the Harbou panel, outside Downtown. The Cartel has assigned them some Goliath security, because they don't want anyone getting ideas about attacking Cartel members who have it coming. They had a few other facilities around the station, but most lie abandoned or mothballed. Burgur has supposedly recruited a crack PR team to help.

They do still have the construction contracts they signed before the Disaster. Landvættir is behind because Burgur diverted resources and manpower to Skuggahvarf, but he's starting to catch up through clever use of work contracts. Right now, his odds of finishing before the company goes under are about 50/50.

CULTURE

Morale is down. The bosses directly responsible for the Disaster have departed the company. Burgur has mostly stayed because Landvættir is his baby, and if it fails it's unlikely to bankrupt him. So far, the consequences have mostly fallen on workers who have been laid off en masse as the company shrinks. Some have quit or were poached by Asano.

2 It didn't work for the other venture Vikings either.

MORNINGSTAR CORPORATION

Business: Entertainment, Media, News.

Morningstar is the station's biggest name in entertainment. If it can amuse you, they do it, whether it's advertising, streaming, news, idols, or weirder formats. They're quick to embrace emerging media, though they're still best known for their news channels.

Though they present themselves as being neutral or even progressive on most matters, Morningstar are the Cartel's propaganda arm. They'll allow mild anti-Cartel viewpoints if they're not a threat or they can present the other side for "balance"; really anti-Cartel viewpoints get destroyed, if they get an airing at all.

BACKGROUND

Morningstar was founded in the early years of orbital settlement by **Maximilian Fiddler** (p. 247), a European media consultant. His goal was to tap into this new unexplored market and seize control before anyone else—mostly for money, but getting to decide what people were told to think was a nice bonus.

Max had a lot of backers. Cartel members, European politicians, American entrepreneurs, conservative think tanks, and more all poured money into his project, sometimes in ways that made it hard to trace back to them. All of them had views that were some flavor of conservative, capitalist, or authoritarian—according to investigative reporting, he explicitly pitched it to them as a propaganda arm of the corporate world.

In the mid-10s, Max made a mistake. Rival stations had started to appear in orbit, and the Grand Cross Broadcasting Corporation picked up an Earth news story about Morningstar's backers. Max got mad. He started pitching radical changes to orbital media, including shuttering GCBC and giving him control of all Earth news broadcasts. The publish backlash was so harsh the government shot them all down, even the ones his backers were hoping to ease them into.

After that, Max decided to quit while he was ahead. He stepped down as CEO of Morningstar and switched to running its PR division, a role which let him avoid the spotlight for a few years. The act did not meaningfully change Morningstar's aims or methods in any way.



ASSETS

Morningstar own two of the station's big news services, Grand Cross 24 (the "neutral" one) and One Orbit Network (the obviously pro-Unity one). Both are run from their headquarters, the Morningstar Tower in Voyager's Venera district.

They have assets in pretty much every media and entertainment industry. Morningstar has a PR firm, a record company, a television production company, digital newspapers, a talent agency, a virtual idol talent agency, a YourTube production company, and more. Morningstar has so many branches they're actually considering splitting the company into two; it depends on who wins the election and what antitrust laws will look like in a few years.

CULTURE

Morningstar runs on a rigid hierarchy. The people at the top decide what today's messaging is and pass their orders down the chain; the bosses further down do their best to toe the company line. It's especially noticeable in the corporation's news arm, where the angle of almost every story is carefully micromanaged.

The other divisions try to present themselves as a looser, more "fun" place, where artists get creative freedom to do what they like without managers getting in the way. This is a fantasy, though—Morningstar just gives them a little more slack because they're just making entertainment, and people likely to seriously threaten their messaging never get hired in the first place.

NANOFUTURISTICS

Business: Agritech, Hydroponics, Data Harvesting, Pharmaceuticals, Urban Greening.

NanoFuturistics supplies a lot of orbital food. Over a third of everything eaten in space was either made by them or with their tech. They also do a lot of urban greening—their handiwork can be seen in the central wards, the smaller parks in the other wards, and green buildings all over Grand Cross.

They dabble in a lot of side projects and turn one into a big new business a few times a decade. Their latest push is into surveillance: they've combined their urban greening projects with new sensors to gather marketing data for other corporations and law enforcement.

BACKGROUND

NanoFuturistics was founded shortly after the Impact by a consortium of European businessmen with a simple vision of the future: they believed the Impact would destroy the environment, people would retreat into fortified cities, and whoever controlled the remaining food supplies would rule like kings.

Things didn't pan out that way, but in the last decade or so some Earth governments and megacorporations have started building arcologies: densely populated structures designed to minimize human impact on the surrounding ecosystems. When the designers started wondering what to do about food, NanoFuturistics was there.

As the company's fortunes turned around, some of its backers pushed it to go to space, where they could at least rule a space station or two. However, while NanoFuturistics got plenty of urban greening contracts, they struggled to secure territory in the Agriculture Ring thanks to a rival named **Farmclave**.

In their hour of need, the Offworld Cartel appeared with a tempting offer: Farmclave in exchange for Cartel membership and shares in the company. NanoFuturistics agreed. Cartel investors entered the company and pushed NanoFuturistics to try new things in search of profit, urging to boost their surveillance division.

nanofuturistics

ASSETS

NanoFuturistics' HQ is the **GreenSpace** tower (p. 148) in Central. The spot was chosen for proximity to the Agriculture Ring, which they own 11 cylinders of. The side-projects mostly happen in "outposts," offices specifically designed for their experiments.

Their urban greening work is spread throughout the station on the buildings of client companies and in districts Unity contracted them for. The newer ones (and the older ones they could get away with retrofitting) are covertly lined with sensors. It's unlikely they'll get enough station coverage to get a full picture, but they have some interesting patches.

NanoFuturistics still have operations on Earth, but since the corporation joined the Cartel they've mostly been for experimentation and seed collection.

CULTURE

NanoFuturistics' message is pretty standard for a "green" company: they're environmentally-friendly, so by buying their products you can feel like you're doing your part and not have to think about, say, the fact that most greenhouse gas emissions come from around 100 companies, just 20 are responsible for more than a third, and the people who run those companies have names and addresses.

Their saving-the-environment messaging is turned inward, too. Employees are encouraged to believe that everything they do—including the Panopticon Project—betters the world in some way, and dissent is discouraged. Ex-employees describe the atmosphere as cult-like.

OGREMOCH ENGINEERING

Business: Chemicals, Energy, Industrial Manufacturing, Mining.

Ogremoch is an industrial giant. Their business is turning the solar system into materials and energy, one asteroid at a time.

They've stubbornly retained their old-school ways, despite more agile corporations nipping at their heels and the rest of the Cartel begging them to update their systems. Union-busting, wage theft, and android exploitation are rife within the company, and they're aggressively automating as many jobs as possible to avoid having workers that need paying in the first place.

BACKGROUND

The core of Ogremoch is a merger of old European industrial corporations. The founders banded together for survival in the wake of the Impact; others joined them later when they failed to stop (or privatize) the EU's solar energy program.

Ogremoch invested heavily in the space rush. The solar system was full of resources, and when you measured its value not in how many people it could support but how much money you could make, leaving Earth was the clear option. The only problem was that there was so much it was impossible to grab everything before anyone else could. Ogremoch had a lot of competition (a lot of which comes from Shackleton Proprietary, who have the Lunar mining sector locked down.)

Grand Cross changed that. A few government bribes and cushy post-politics consultant jobs was all it took for Ogremoch to get tapped to help build the station, and they helped found the Cartel to keep their rivals out. They passed Unity a few more bribes to get a significant stake in the station's energy sector. To them, this is just the prelude to something bigger. Ogremoch isn't stopping until they control the solar system's entire supply.

ASSETS

Ogremoch's HQ is in Voyager, but many of their divisions are spread across the station: the divisions that benefit from outer hull access in Hammarskjöld, the energy division in Backtown, and so on. These aren't all connected well, so it's likely Ogremoch has a few forgotten offices in a corner somewhere.

On Grand Cross, Ogremoch currently controls the power grid in a third of the station, the solar collectors at both ends, and a significant chunk of the outer hull factories. Outside Grand Cross they have a small fleet of drones and ships harvesting materials for them. Unlike many Cartel members, they don't have much of a presence on Luna thanks to an unspoken truce with Shackleton.

CULTURE

Ogremoch is old-school and still does things like their ancestors did in the 80s and 90s wherever possible. They would still have paper-heavy offices and Apple IIs if they could. They do still use rows of cubicles, rounds of layoffs, android exploitation, and the glass ceiling. Some of the bosses have somehow gotten hold of fax machines. The only future technology they've truly embraced is automation because the idea of not having to pay workers is just too juicy to ignore.

Upper management are all about control and hierarchy. Externally, they want to control what price people have to pay for metals and energy. Internally, doing a good job is rarely as important as following schedules and not criticizing your boss. The best way to annoy Ogremoch is to disrupt their plans, even minorly.

OMNIDYNE SYSTEMS

Business: Robotics, Vehicles, Military Technology

Omnidyne makes and imports machines, including motorcycles, drones, cybernetics, and weapons. They're a world leader in robotics—not androids, but automation and limited AI. Omnidyne wants their robots to run as much of society as possible, though their plan to automate the private security industry with enforcement droids has been met with resistance from Goliath.

Omnidyne lobbying is infamously responsible for the station's loosened gun laws. If you think there's not much need for guns in space, you'd be one hundred percent correct, but Omnidyne has convinced people otherwise so they can make more money. Besides law enforcement, they mostly supply to Americans, the action movie industry, and "private collectors" who are in no way affiliated with organized crime.

BACKGROUND

Omnidyne began as one of the many robotics companies that sprung up during the research boom, hoping to be the one to crack the secret of artificial general intelligence and make trillions of dollars.

In the end, they weren't even close. However, their failed attempts taught them a lot about regular AI and robotics. Omnidyne pivoted into robotics and android frames, finding that they were much better at working with hardware than software.

Omnidyne wound up designing drones for the US military. With the small fortune that earned them, they acquired several businesses in adjacent industries—vehicles, weapons, then cybernetics and orbital construction. Construction took off surprisingly fast, and Omnidyne discovered a big orbital market for their work.

Some of Omnidyne's investors had already pivoted to the Cartel, and the corporation was pressed to join them. Eventually they brokered a deal in which Omnidyne joined the Cartel but retained their Earth assets in exchange for selling some of their construction business.

ASSETS

Omnidyne's headquarters are the **Delta St Towers** (p. 148) in Central district. They have a few stores scattered throughout the station, but most of their tech is sold through third parties. Their manufacturing facilities are split between Luna and the outer hull, with some already mostly automated.

Omnidyne is still active on Earth, though they no longer work (directly) for the military. Their Earth assets are concentrated in the US, Australia, and China. Omnidyne tends to take a neutral stance on Earth–orbit relations to avoid jeopardizing either half of their business.

CULTURE

Omnidyne's attitude is still heavily influenced by their military drone years, where not thinking about how you were designing murder machines was vital. They present their work as a blueprint for the future: one day everything will be automated and mankind will be free. Freedom is paramount, especially the freedom to do what you like with your Omnidyne products.

These statements are ultimately hollow, because what Omnidyne really wants is to profit without thinking about the harm their products cause or the ramifications of putting people out of work in a capitalist system.

Omnidyne has recently started thinking about law enforcement and how much of it they can automate with drones. Their ideas are popular with the Station Police Service, who always want more shiny toys, but they're getting a lot of pushback from the private security sector.

PULSER INCORPORATED

Business: Social Media

Pulser is a social media network and microblogging service that rivals even HeoCities in popularity[3]. It was originally designed for orbital people to share news between settlements, but its use has spread across Earth too. Pulser's ubiquity and ease of use make it an essential tool for spreading news and information to millions, so it's no wonder the Cartel snapped it up.

Pulser is not managed very well, and the Cartel threaten to sanction them if the rules are applied to Cartel-friendly groups too often. As a result, Pulser is a hot mess of a website where you're just as likely to get the news as you are to learn about how the "round Earth" is a Russian psyop.

BACKGROUND

Pulser was created in the 00s by **Antony Pilgrim** (p. 249), then a lowly coder in a Californian tech company. Pulser was originally intended as a way for different research groups (especially in the AI sphere) to coordinate and trade notes, so they could better humanity faster. The code was based on an earlier site he made in college for amateur erotic sci-fi authors.

The site didn't really take off, but the code worked well, and Pilgrim teamed up with some coworkers to repurpose it into an orbital social media network. A lot of its early success came down to an investor, **Endymion Lucky** (p. 158), who not only managed to get the ISS to start using it but got them even more publicity by unknowingly posting his final message there.

Pulser use spread across orbit, then filtered back to Earth as Earthers gained a taste for orbital news. When rumors spread that an Earth company was looking to acquire it, Pulser was lifted into the Cartel by **Josef Diego** (p. 251), a tech investor and friend of Endymion's. They've exchanged a possible Earth master for a definite orbital one, but Pilgrim doesn't care—they're his kind of people.

PULSER
CONNECTING YOUR WORLDS

ASSETS

Pulser's primary asset is its network. It's used by over half of all orbital citizens, plus hundreds of millions more people from Earth. Someone who knows what they're doing can reach an unprecedented amount of people at once. The Cartel uses it to influence how Earthers see orbit, Unity uses it to change public opinion, and groups like the **New Barons** (p. 267) use it to recruit. Pulser has rules in place to limit this sort of thing but they're toothless about enforcing them.

Pulser's headquarters lies in the top floors of a tower in Turing. It has a pretty nice rooftop park, a very open design, and some of the tightest digital security in Grand Cross.

CULTURE

For the most part, Pulser has a standard tech company culture. The environment is casual, the perks are many and often unnecessary, and the job security is MIA.

The part that gets people is Pilgrim. Pilgrim does his best to make Pulser a great place to work, but he's also a deeply, sometimes bafflingly spiritual man with a habit of disappearing for days at a time. Between bosses trying to fill in for him and the odd consultants and spiritual advisors he tends to bring back with him, Pulser can feel like a chaotic place to work. Many workers have lost faith in upper management—and when the bosses follow suit, Pilgrim will be in trouble.

3 We're not getting into the details of Pulser's appearance and features so you can just assume it works however you need it to.

TETSUO TECHNOLOGIES

Business: Consumer Electronics, Cybernetics, Robotics, Media, Video Games.

If you live in Grand Cross, you probably have at least one appliance with a Tetsuo logo. You've at least seen someone with a Tetsuo augment, or know an android with a Tetsuo-built body or considered buying the latest Tetsuo Overdrive console. If it's got electronics in it, they do it.

Though Tetsuo are heavily involved in the android sector, they're opposed to android rights, as bringing them up to parity with humans reduces the amount of labor Tetsuo can extract from them. Lately they've been pushing a model they call "mutual obligation," where androids are obligated to work for Tetsuo to "earn" their existence.

BACKGROUND

Tetsuo is the brainchild of **Kanemasa Gou** (p. 247), its current CEO. It began in the late 80s as the Tetsuo Corporation, one of those IT companies you sometimes see printed on the side of a piece of tech and forget about five minutes later.

Tetsuo survived the 90s the old-fashioned way: by lasting longer than the competition. Gou made a habit of buying out companies that didn't survive the post-Impact paradigm shift, sometimes ones with no obvious connection to his core business, and merging with them to form Tetsuo Technologies.

When the space push arrived, Tetsuo was large enough to get in on the action. Gou boosted Tetsuo's profile further by making forays into android manufacturing and low-cost cybernetics, which got them tapped as one of the Grand Cross Project's go-to electronics corps.

By the time Grand Cross opened, Tetsuo dominated the orbital market in almost every field they worked in. But Gou still wasn't satisfied. He attended meetings that set up the Offworld Cartel, making Tetsuo a founding member. By forging relationships with other CEOs and the oligarchs backing them, Gou has become a serious power player, able to influence Grand Cross on an unprecedented scale.

ASSETS

Tetsuo's HQ is the Tetsuo Complex, which covers the entire Shima district in Marukyu. They have smaller facilities across the station, from the Tetsuo Annex in Uhuru to manufacturing facilities on the outer hull. They have their own stores that can be found on every active settlement in orbit.

Tetsuo has maintained a presence on Earth, but down there they're eclipsed by Earth-focused companies. Gou has kept his original Japan offices out of nostalgia—it's a space education facility that mostly brags about Tetsuo's accomplishments to children on field trips now.

CULTURE

Tetsuo corporate culture is extremely old-fashioned. They value seniority over ability: the longer you work, the higher you get promoted, and merit just puts you on a faster escalator. Everyone is expected to act friendly with their boss and go out for drinks after work to network. The pay is good if you stick around, at least.

Where Tetsuo breaks from the pack is their heavily anti-android views, passed down from Gou. They don't want to get rid of androids, Tetsuo just thinks they should be working in a factory for no pay. They go out of their way to avoid hiring androids (the current coded phrase their recruiters use is that they're looking for "warm hearts,") and their corporate lobbying has set back android rights years.

ZINOVY ULTRAGRAPHICS

Business: Enterprise software, web technology, advertising.

Zinovy offer a wide range of software and online services, from office tools to data storage to website design. Most Grand Cross businesses use their tech, and they also do specialized work for a few government offices (including the Department of Translation.)

Zinovy intentionally designed some of their services to collect information on people and places within Grand Cross, which they then sell to various interested parties. Legally it's pretty sketchy, but they don't care. Their goal is to have a dossier on everyone in Grand Cross, whether they use Zinovy or not.

BACKGROUND

Zinovy Ultragraphics was founded in the 90s by **Zinovy Morozov**, a Russian entrepreneur. Morozov envisioned a two-in-one software package: a suite of business software that was its own antivirus program. He ended up having to split them after all, but people paid more money that way.

Morozov's code was good, but he didn't have much success until the early years of the research boom. He and his team came up with an excellent line of multiplatform scientific software that was picked up by a lot of research outfits, who usually got his other software while they were at it. It made him a fortune.

When the space rush picked up steam, Morozov rushed to get a foot in the door again. He came up with software for orbit, including accessible astronomy tools and updated versions of his science kit. It worked. By 2010, Zinovy software was the tool of choice for most orbital corps.

In 2014, Morozov stepped down as CEO. He'd decided he'd had his fun and he was getting old enough that full-body cyberization looked tempting. His replacement was his own son, **Arty Morozov** (p. 248), who has steered the company towards data harvesting to boost his own profits. Zinovy is definitely breaking the law behind the scenes, but Arty is sure a few more donations to Unity will fix that.



ASSETS

Zinovy's greatest asset is their software, which claims a huge share of the orbital market. Their recent acquisition of HeoCities has made it even harder to avoid them. Zinovy has a few other subsidiaries that dabble in software fields like android support, drone piloting, and weapons targeting.

Their headquarters lie in Voyager, but Arty is currently building a bigger, fancier base in Turing. Their old offices in Moscow are Zinovy Morozov's personal workshop now.

CULTURE

Under Zinovy Morozov, things were simple. Zinovy wasn't a social man, but he had clear goals, set reasonable deadlines, and gave bonuses liberally to retain talent. Ultimately you were still working for a tech corporation, but it was steady work.

Arty has upended that. Whatever you're doing, he needs changes and he needs them now. His latest ventures (besides surveillance) have mostly been about trying to attract younger, cheaper workers by rebranding as a hip startup-culture company, which apparently means ping-pong tables and precarious work. Whether Zinovy is headed for disaster or a renaissance might depend on what happens in 2020.

OTHER CORPORATIONS

The corporations we've just listed aren't the only game in town. Here are some smaller ones you might find useful.

APEVERT

Business: Advertising.

A Turing-based guerilla marketing firm run by **Rowley** and **Anna Kidd**, an artist and an SEO expert. Their specialty is "socially-conscious" marketing—in other words, helping their corporate clients seem progressive without actually having to change anything about their operations. Apevert occasionally appropriates the work of activists and street artists to get their message across; they're currently stealing the art of **Zhao Liu** (p. 280) to make some Bepsi ads.

CANOPUS CYBER

Business: Cybernetics, medicine.

Canopus is a Lunar cybernetics corporation that specializes in helping workers recover from accidents and promptly returning them to the workforce. They have a reputation for making simple but effective parts, but also for using proprietary parts that limit your repair options. Most Canopus users didn't select this company—Canopus was chosen for them by their bosses.

During Grand Cross construction, many Builders who got cybernetics went through Canopus. Canopus bribed a lot of companies to make this happen—and where bosses could choose where to send injured workers, paid them a bonus for a referral. In many cases, Canopus intentionally fitted workers with high-maintenance or even unnecessary prosthetics to make extra money off them.

This information is not public knowledge, and Canopus has been covering it up for years. They've had the help of the Cartel, whose members took bribes from Canopus. Omnidyne and Tetsuo are both considering buying Canopus out and being done with them.

CROSS GUARD

By Scott C. Bourgeois

Business: Law enforcement, security.

Polished dark-blue body armor, helmets with mirrored visors, and a symbol of a downward thrusting sword: there's no mistaking the uniform of Cross Guard, Grand Cross' premier independent private security group.

While districts relying on Cross Guard do see a sharp decrease in crime, it comes at a cost: they're even more authoritarian than Goliath, with security checkpoints, constant monitoring, random invasions of privacy, and brutal crackdowns for minor infractions. District Captains answer only to the corporate higher-ups, who only care about profit.

Justice is in short supply where Cross Guard is concerned. Unlike Goliath, investigation of crime isn't something they tend to waste their time on. Rather, they focus on crime prevention and the enforcement of order. Cross Guard's higher-ups allegedly drive crime into districts where the police are underfunded and overworked, to make them look ineffective, corrupt, and incompetent.

CEO **Amelia Inverness** is working on increasing Cross Guard's reach, with a vision of obtaining exclusive Grand Cross coverage and then buying her way into the Cartel. This would give her the leverage to expand off-station—perhaps even on Earth. After all, who doesn't want to live in an ordered society?

OUROBOROS CYBER S.A.

Business: Probably.

An OEM company that makes and designs electronic hardware for other corporations, at least on paper. Its shareholders are mostly minor oligarchs and holding companies with no clear owner. It's not entirely clear how big Ouroboros is, how many employees they have, or what they actually do.

This is because Ouroboros is used by its owners as a front to further their own corporate schemes. Who's using it, how, and whether other divisions are being used as fronts for other schemes is up to your group.

RVRE

Business: Games.

RVRE is the premier video game developer in the burgeoning new field of virtual reality. VR was one of many side-products of the research rush, and RVRE began as an indie company formed to capitalize on it.

RVRE's first game, *Flight of Fantasy*, was a smash hit. When they proved it wasn't a fluke with *Capax Astra*, they were snapped up by a larger publisher. That publisher moved them to Grand Cross, with promises that they could become the industry's first AAAAA company there. In reality, it was just legal to exploit them more in space.

These days RVRE is a soul-crushing workplace. Incompetent new management means crunch is the norm, and their games suffer as a result. Most workers are on exploitative temporary contracts, and those who aren't are burning out. The company builds hype and hides their issues by heavily restricting what reviewers can pl ay, say, and show before release. So far RVRE has coasted along on the prestige of their previous releases, but their future is up in the air.

SPACE BANSHEE

Business: Music.

An indie record company based in Neo Gangnam (p. 168), founded by the singer-songwriter **Telesto**. Space Banshee's goal is to take a chance on local acts the big names overlook; they work with a wide range of artists including Breakfast Cult, Duri, Fizzy Drone (p. 115), and Hed Telly. Morningstar considers Telesto a competitor and often tries to take them down (or poach their talent) through underhanded means.

STARRY DESTINATION RECORDS

Business: Music, Entertainment.

A record producer and influencer talent agency run by the legendary **Hayate Jones** (p. 249). Its main act is the idol band **L5-8** (p. 115), but Hayate has signed on plenty of musicians, streamers, and virtual idols; he especially likes "transmedia" acts that cover multiple platforms. Hayate is a demanding man, however, and some of his stars have quit recently.

Hayate used to work for Morningstar, but hates their guts now. Some people (including Space Banshee's Telesto) have successfully convinced Hayate to help them for free because it would screw Morningstar over.

TOFU CANNON

Business: Science Education.

A subsidiary of NanoFuturistics that creates educational content and runs educational facilities to teach kids about space. A lot of schoolchildren see their work these days—and remember the corporate branding, of course. They do a lot of work with influencers.

Tofu Cannon's name comes from the fact that NanoFuturistics' Lunar facility is close to a mass driver. In the mid-10s, people started making "when you're minding your own business and they yeet you with the food cannon" memes[4]; Nano capitalized on that with an ad campaign about parties, weddings, the Cretaceous period, and other gatherings getting blasted from hundreds of kilometers away with their tofu substitute. They liked the results so much they bought the marketing team that came up with it.

4 If you're thinking memes aren't funny when you're just explaining them, congratulations: you thought about this harder than NanoFuturistics did.

TRUCROSS CLINIC

by Jayden McKayla Jones

Business: Health.

TruCross bills itself as an alternative to the station's distrusted and expensive private health industry. While this might have once been true, today they're a wealthy and powerful corporation with a monopoly on the alternative medicine industry.

The Clinic was founded in the early days of Grand Cross to provide practical treatments for injuries, especially for station workers: setting bones, constructing splints, disinfecting and stitching wounds, and providing other home remedies for a modest price. While they still provide these services, in recent years their business has pivoted toward more lucrative "health" foods and alternative medicine.

Like many of their Earth-based kin, the Clinic has also established their own multi-level marketing scheme billed as a membership program to increase revenue. A lot of non-Cartel companies have begun to push this program on their employees as an alternative to traditional health insurance plans.

Since rebranding as a boutique chemist, the Clinic has been facing increased scrutiny due to the ineffectiveness of their services and appropriation of traditional medicine. Unfortunately, in using their money to buy political influence, they have become popular with a section of wealthy—and vocal—Crossers who make a point of shouting down criticism.

VITAL SCIENCE

Business: Software, industrial tech.

A company working on machines and software for Martian settlement. They've been kept out of the Cartel because Omnidyne considers them a competitor, but they supply a few members (notably Ogremoch and NanoFuturistics) with industrial tech. Company owner Vital Tremblay is a Singularist sympathizer who hopes to establish a "science town" on Mars.

A software and engineering company focused on Martian-settlement tech. Vital Science tackles the potential problems humans might face on Mars: 38% Earth gravity; sub-zero temperatures; lack of surface water; a wafer-thin atmosphere with lower pressure than a sandbox game's creative mode, constant radiation bombardment, and the fact that every so often a planet-wide dust storm kicks up just for the hell of it. (Sometimes Vital Science's work is more about hyping up Martian settlement to get more money than anything else.)

Vital Science occupies an unusual space in the station's political landscape. They've been kept out of the Cartel because Omnidyne considers them a competitor, but they supply electronics and industrial tech to several smaller Cartel members and consult with the Cartel on their Mars plans. They're not official allies, but they're still united in their desire for profit.

Vi-Sci is run by **Vital Tremblay**, a libertarian Singularist and self-described "self-made millionaire" who made his fortune investing his father's millions in Lunar construction. He is currently building a "science town" in Earth orbit as a proof-of-concept for a Martian one.

ALSO:

- **Phoenix Tail**, p. 164.
- **Red Sun Microsystems**, p. 167.

CORPORATE CHARACTERS

Here are various corporate agents, bosses, and oligarchs. Some of these were mentioned in Chapter 6.

LEKE AFOLAYAN, ARCHON ASSETS

The CEO of Archon. Leke started out as a programmer in a data processing company, but his foresight, gift for numbers, and the fact that his parents were loaded swiftly propelled him to the top of the corporate world. He was tapped to lead Archon when its predecessors merged and, as far as he's concerned, he's the glue holding the Cartel together.

Appearance: Broad-shouldered, close-shaven, expensive watches. Leke treats every social interaction with the respect and politeness he would afford a board meeting, no matter how minor. People think he wears the same suit to work every day, but he just has seven identical suits.

Personality: Enterprising, numbers-oriented, cautious. Leke likes numbers more than people because numbers can't disappoint him. He can spot figures that don't add up from thirty paces. He doesn't like unknowns—to him, everything in the universe could be predicted if he could just figure out how. Leke knows Archon is probably shifting money for criminals but doesn't care what people do with their money as long as it goes through Archon.

Goals: Get paid preposterous amounts of money to help the Cartel make money.

TADASHI ASANO, ASANO CEO

Tadashi is the CEO of Asano Heavy Industries, at least when he gets free time from his main job: fending off his family, who would very much like to see him deposed and possibly dead. He's kept ahead so far by being a bigger bastard than any of them. Tadashi presents himself as a loving family man to the press, but he doesn't know what love looks like.

Appearance: Slick hair, nice beard, fancy suits. Tadashi became a full-body cyborg because the stress of his jobs was aging him terribly, and his frame is just a younger version of himself. His attitude swings between chummy and aggressive depending on what he needs and whether there are cameras.

Personality: Manipulative, self-serving, ignores details. Tadashi is an asshole who's really good at putting on a mask. He doesn't care much about other people beyond what they can do for him, except for his children and maybe his wife. He's had trouble adjusting to his new body and occasionally has dissociative episodes, a problem he's concealed from his family; they get worse when he's faking being nice.

Goals: Tighten his grip on his company. Tadashi can't remove his family entirely and maintain his family image, so he's trying to maneuver his sons into control of the important parts of the company.

GORO ASANO, TADASHI'S THIRD SON

CEO of the Asano subsidiary Toha Cyber Holdings. Goro was practically disowned for turning down a political marriage and screwing up his father's plans, and he's trying to get his father's trust back by taking over the Spitzer district. He's discovered Hotel Melbourne's presence there and is secretly paying them to soften up the businesses he targets.

Appearance: Glasses, big grin, friendly mask. Goro looks like a shorter version of his father but swapped his taste in suits for some nice pearly whites. He acts goofy most of the time, but if you cross him you might find him turning a handshake into a whispered threat to annihilate you. He has a scar on his left hand courtesy of an unusually loud Christmas dinner argument.

Personality: Headstrong, creative, hates disloyalty. Goro likes to do things his own way and tends to double down when people criticize him. His father taught him to cultivate a vicious streak and keep it hidden until it's needed. He loves his wife Virgo because she's honest with him, unlike his family.

Goals: Take over a mass of companies in the Spitzer district by any means necessary to get back in his father's good graces.

VIRGO ASANO, GORO'S WIFE

Toha Cyber Holdings' security chief. Virgo used to work for Phoenix Tail as a freelance bodyguard and quit when she fell in love with her client. Virgo thinks Goro's family are exhausting to talk to and would prefer to move with him to Earth, but she won't press the issue.

Appearance: Tall, ripped, intimidating. Virgo is Canadian, which angers the Asano family more than they'll admit, but she can usually get them to leave her and Goro alone by looming over them and folding her arms. She has cybernetic eyes that resemble real ones but look nothing like her originals. She prefers dark pantsuits and tactical gloves.

Personality: Blunt, clever, doesn't suffer fools. Virgo is good at assessing people with a glance. She prefers being honest about how she feels, and if people annoy her, she'll immediately let them have it. She loves Goro because he's funny but willing to get his hands dirty.

Goals: Build up a nice nest egg, then convince Goro to ditch his crappy family and go solo.

TRIP BRIGGS, GERYON CEO

One of the founders of Geryon Aerospace. Trip is the only remaining founder in the company, in part because he forced out everyone who wanted to stay. He's the youngest power player in the Offworld Cartel, and to him, it's just a fun stepping stone to greater things.

Appearance: Youthful, long blonde hair, scraggly beard. Trip is an energetic young man who looks like Gandalf's stoner nephew. He eschews suits in favor of plain t-shirts and jeans. He got cybernetic hands to deal with carpal tunnel; he went with the synthetic skin option but got LED strips built into the wrists to match his PC accessories.

Personality: Ambitious, immature, sneaky. Trip is a programming prodigy whose motto is "learn to fly before you can walk." He frequently bites off more than he can chew and relies on hacks, cheap tricks, and a little showmanship to get through it. He gets childish and petty when people question his talents.

Goals: Raise Geryon Aerospace into an interplanetary juggernaut.

MAXIMILIAN FIDDLER, MORNINGSTAR DEALMAKER

Founder, former CEO, and current PR guy of Morningstar. Max sees his role in life as merely giving people what they want. By a staggering coincidence though, Max has discovered that what the people want is usually what he wants. Sometimes they just don't know it yet and he has to tell them.

Appearance: Bad goatee, hair gel, bright blue eyes. Max looks like he was designed by committee to look like a dickhead. He wears business casual attire with his sleeves rolled up, his collars popped, and his feet clad in overpriced sneakers. Expensive medical treatments have retained most of his youth.

Personality: Charming, touchy, badly needs to self-reflect. Max likes to call himself a tastemaker, but also tends to project his desires onto other people—part of what makes him convincing is his certainty that he's just drawing out what's already there. He tends to fly off the handle when other people compete with him for things he wants.

Goals: Do PR for Morningstar. Max personally hates Hayate Jones (p. 249), who he believes ditched him after Max built his career, and as such will go out of his way to get back at him.

KANEMASA GOU, TETSUO CEO

Founder and CEO of Tetsuo Technologies. Kanemasa is a grumpy old man who is very set in his ways—as far as he's concerned, society peaked in the 80s. He's a capitalist bigot who sincerely believes people like him rose to the top because they're just better. He's extremely anti-android and funds anti-android groups all over human space.

Appearance: Pale, glasses, has dark, piercing eyes. Kanemasa is a white-haired old man who dresses in only the best 70s fashion. He's surprisingly sprightly for his age, thanks to experimental Hergatz Liao treatments; he's hoping for a biological solution to aging before he has to shell out for a full-body cyborg.

Personality: Traditional, stubborn, cunning. Kanemasa is an old bastard with a good head for business. He's always been fascinated with technology and the ways it can improve humanity but looks down on androids. Tech is ultimately a tool he gets to play with, and his toys aren't supposed to think for themselves.

Goals: Build up Tetsuo while shooting down (or at least stalling) android rights as long as possible.

BURGUR GRIÐUNGSSON, LANDVÆTTIR CEO

Burgur is the founder of Landvættir and a former venture Viking. His goal with Landvættir was to leave a legacy that would last for centuries: generations of people growing up in stations stamped with his company's logo. Burgur is sure that the Disaster is just another speed bump for him and his failures will be a footnote at best in the history books.

Appearance: Square-jawed, pale, short beard. Burgur looks surprisingly young except for his eyes, which are old and tired. Stress isn't turning his soft brown hair grey, but it is causing his insomnia. He prefers white business casual outfits and ties that aren't as jaunty as he thinks they are.

Personality: Showman, clever, witty. Burgur has failed upwards many times in his life, and it's made him both confident in his ability to bounce back from anything and prone to anger when his mistakes are brought up. He still treats his whiteness as a virtue but tries not to say so in front of the media.

Goals: Find a way to save Landvættir Orbital by any means necessary.

TRILOBITE LIAO, HERGATZ-LIAO CEO

When Tril inherited Hergatz Liao (p. 234), he had some big shoes to fill. So far he's doing it with a combination of his father Terry's natural charisma, some calculated risks, and a complete lack of empathy. Tril believes his wealthy heritage gives him the right to control other people and hates the idea of others having leverage over him.

Appearance: White suits, black ties, bright eyes. Tril is the result of years of HL's best (and sometimes experimental) medicine combined with decades of upbringing by a charismatic jackass. He's good at charming people, but it's all an act. He wants money, not friends.

Personality: Cold, manipulative, uncaring. Tril is a ghoul who believes wealth is a sign of merit and that the station's sick having to pay him money to live is the natural order of things. He constantly worries that the station's lower-class people are getting ideas above their station and plotting against him, his employees included. He never communicates his plans if he can help it.

Goals: Make profit for Hergatz-Liao and by extension himself. Watch out for threats from the lower classes within and without his corporation.

ARTY MOROZOV, ZINOVY CEO

The new CEO of Zinovy Ultragraphics. Arty grew up with his father's wealth, turning him into an asshole rich kid. He sees himself as the breath of fresh air his father's company desperately needs and is totally fine with screwing over his users if it'll make him richer.

Appearance: Stylish, coiffed hair, brown beard. Arty works out for fun. He wears sunglasses, polo shirts, and blazers at work, taking off the blazer to show his guns when he gets an excuse. His favorite way to leave a meeting is by walking backward while doing finger guns at someone. He swears in Russian when he's annoyed.

Personality: Impatient, cheerful, self-serving. Arty believes that what's good for him is good for Zinovy and endeavors to focus on the positive side of all the shit he's pulling. He changes his mind often and every time he insists that this time he's figured everything out for good.

Goal: Turn Zinovy Ultragraphics into a modern, cutting-edge company that makes him even more money.

BARLOW HAWTHORN, GOLIATH INC.

The CEO of Goliath. Barlow is devoted to his unit, who he considers his closest friends, and Goliath is essentially built around them. He's pushing retirement age, but he's determined to stick around as long as he can for the sake of his men. Back on Earth his unit committed war crimes, but he doesn't think they were serious enough to care about.

Appearance: Aging, brown moustache, shredded. Even in his old age, Barlow could wrestle a bear. He has cybernetic hands, a busted nose, and a lot of interesting scars. He folds his arms a lot and his men have learned to read his mood from his "folding posture."

Personality: Loyal, gruff, old-fashioned. Barlow is a lifelong military man who sees every job he's ever worked as maintaining order, no matter the cost. He sticks by the people who earn his loyalty (or pay him enough), right or wrong. He spends a lot of time complaining about "cancel culture."

Goals: Retire within the next five years and become a full-body cyborg to extend his life. Possibly change his face and identity while he's at it, so he can visit Earth.

HAYATE JONES, STARRY DESTINATION PRODUCER

Hayate is a famous record producer, songwriter, and licensed spacecraft pilot, best known for creating and producing the L5-8 idol group. He adopted an over-the-top persona to stand out at a young age, and he's been at it so long that it's basically him now.

Hayate used to work for Morningstar, but they screwed him so hard it almost sunk his career. He'd eat his own hat to get back at them.

Appearance: Flashy, swaggering, nimble. Hayate intentionally plays up his boisterous nature to near-superhuman levels for the sake of his brand. He likes accentuating his suits with unusual patterns, faux furs, and bright feathers, no matter how many PR assistants tell him he looks like a business casual Furby.

Personality: Energetic, hard worker, demanding. Hayate's passion is entertaining people, so he dedicates most of his time to Starry Destination. His main flaw is a control problem: he drops anyone who doesn't conform to his standards (e.g. idols who get "too old"), and his usual reaction to being told his company can't do something is to ignore reality until it can.

Goals: Screw Morningstar, manage L5-8, and run Starry Destination—in that order.

ANTONY PILGRIM, PULSER CEO

Pilgrim is an entrepreneur, spiritual advisor for the wealthy, and co-founder of Pulser. He's a coding genius and a deeply (perhaps worryingly) spiritual man who thinks everything always works out in the end, an attitude which leads him to avoid dealing with problems as much as he can.

Appearance: Lanky, scruffy, peaceful. Antony sports long curtained dark hair with a wild beard that makes him look like a wizard in a boy band. He wears turtlenecks for business occasions and kimonos as casual wear. Antony's in his late thirties but can look up to twenty years older depending on how badly his latest diet has ravaged his body.

Personality: Spiritual, creative, flighty. Pilgrim meditates for a few minutes every hour, refuses to use a computer more than two hours a day because "the digital realm is too powerful to be constrained by one being," and thinks positive thinking and breathing exercises can cure all mental troubles. His idea of what "spiritual" means is heavily colored by his fascination with space technology and a belief that cultures that aren't his own (white American) are exotic and wise.

Pilgrim occasionally disappears for a few weeks while he meditates on the Moon or something. He's on one of his trips right now; he's somehow sending messages by custom carrier pigeon bots, so presumably he's on the station, but won't say what he's up to except that it's "big."

Goal: Run Pulser and make money with the minimum of work, so he can get back to contemplating the mysteries of the universe.

CARTEL BIGSHOTS

A couple corporate oligarchs that also feature in the Dreamer campaign (p. 360-379).

DEREK BAARS, EXTROVERT ENTREPRENEUR



Derek is a space tech entrepreneur. He's a latecomer to the Cartel, but he's risen to prominence quickly because he offers two things they need in spades: new companies and raw pizzazz.

His talent is selling himself. He hires a lot of smart people to build tech for him, and because he can afford smart people, other people think he must be even smarter. His companies over-promise and under-deliver, but it doesn't matter, because Derek believes his revolution is just around the corner and can make others think so, too. He's a man forever on the ground floor of something big, waiting for the elevator.

History: Derek came to the US in the 90s with only the clothes on his back, some coding skills, and some shares in Intel his uncle bought him as a present. He made his own fortune in post-Impact Silicon Valley with a simple method: create a space company, convince the government to invest millions in public funding, exaggerate his achievements to boost his stock prices, and claim the profits.

By the mid-10s, Derek was a billionaire who'd dabbled in everything from AI research to habitat construction. He decided to do something with his riches, and when he looked out at the Earth and all its problems, he knew what to do: abandon it, move to Grand Cross and begin a 20-year plan to colonize the outer system.

Appearance: Slick, coiffed, magnetic. Derek's natural charisma is greatly enhanced by his wealth, which affords him the best treatments, the best suits, and insulation from the consequences of the things he says. He's big on wearable tech and minor cybernetic augments. He tends to quote video games a lot.

Personality: Ambitious, glory-seeker, workaholic. Derek wants to be seen as a real-life comic character—a cool gamer who happens to be a heroic billionaire genius—but isn't as heroic or brilliant as he thinks he is. Singularists love him, and in turn he's adopted a lot of their thinking. Derek still games frequently and sees himself as the same nerdy gamer underdog he felt like in the 90s.

Assets: Derek's main companies are Future Eve (AI research), Transcend (cybernetics), Niven (space construction), Road To Jupiter (interplanetary transport), and Solar5 (solar power). Most of these companies do the same thing: secure government contracts, privatize public-sector science, then skim a little off the top.

He has a lot of smaller companies, from the ambitious (Eclipse Institute, mind-dubbing research) to the weird (Vulcan Ultramantics, gaming chairs). Most of his companies are headquartered in his **personal building** (p. 158) in Turing, or elsewhere in the ward.

Goals: Derek's goal isn't the money, but the legacy: he wants to be known as the guy who ushered in a new era of humanity. He wants credit for the research he funds, the research he bought, and the research that's surely coming any minute now. Nothing too fancy—a Martian city named after him and maybe a few statues would be fine to start.

For Derek's role in the Dreamer conspiracy, see p. 366.

JOSEF DIEGO, CAREFUL INVESTOR

Josef is an old-money man who owns a decent stake in a third of the Cartel's members. Though he has tremendous influence in Cartel politics, he prefers to stay behind the scenes.

His talent is preparation. Josef rarely makes a big decision before spending hours poring over the reports, papers, and news posts he collects every day. Through his information network he keeps up to date on what his investments are doing and what's going on in Grand Cross, especially in sectors nobody talks about much.

History: Josef is a proud descendant of American lawyers and wealthy Cubans who fled to the US when the Batista dictatorship didn't pan out. He's not so proud of his father, who reportedly lost much of the family fortune gambling before a messy divorce wrested it from him.

He graduated with degrees in economics and physics in the early 90s and rebuilt the family's finances by investing in tech. He reacted to the Impact extremely early thanks to his habit of reading science news, but rather than cash out of the dotcom bubble, he correctly guessed that interest in tech and space would increase. By 2000, he was a billionaire.

Josef knew Grand Cross was going to be big, too. Some of the early meetings that led to the Cartel's formation used his Lunar residence as a neutral meeting place. He's advised on most of the Cartel's major moves since and had the tiebreaker vote on some of them.

Appearance: Handsome, calm, middle-aged. Josef is aging gracefully, thanks to expensive treatments and daily workouts. He tends to give people the impression that he's taking in more about them than they're used to. His cybernetic left arm is custom-made to dispense cigars.

Personality: Cautious, disciplined, pragmatic. Josef prefers to make plans in advance. He's generally pleasant to his peers but keeps a low profile and doesn't help people if there's nothing in it for him—to him money is a way of keeping score, and he's not going to help the losers catch up. He strongly believes in open software, though.



Assets: Josef owns a small stake in several key Cartel members, including Geryon, Hergatz Liao, NanoFuturistics, Tetsuo, and Zinovy. (He prefers to own just enough to have influence if he needs it.) He has a surprising number of investments in smaller, riskier, and just plain weird ventures, but then he can afford to take risks.

Josef's own personal business is **Big J Corporation** (p. 203), which basically does all the tech things that Josef has a personal interest in. He intentionally keeps it out of the Cartel because he likes having something that's "his," something he can fall back on if he has to.

Goals: Josef's primary goal is increasing his personal wealth and enjoying it as long as possible. When his smoking habits start taking a toll on his body, he's going to trade it in for a full-body cyborg frame, which research suggests will drastically increase his lifespan. Until then, Josef simply aims to make money and avoid scandal.

For Josef's role in the Dreamer conspiracy, see p. 366.

CRIME

Grand Cross has brought a lot of old human systems to space and crime is no exception. Here's four of the big gangs in Grand Cross, a few smaller ones, and some related side characters.

HOSHI GROUP

The Hoshi Group is an older gang, formed by former orbital workers who trusted each other more than the authorities. They deal in illegal gambling, firearms smuggling, protection rackets, the sex industry, construction schemes, and occasionally corporate blackmail.

OPERATIONS

The Group is run by its founder **Noboru Yamada** (p. 257), an Earth criminal who became an orbital worker under an assumed identity to escape arrest. The Group's upper echelons are largely Builders and early migrants who treat each other like family.

They engage in many types of crime but avoid outright theft and drug-dealing—the closest they get is gathering blackmail material on corporate executives and protection money from small businesses. They see themselves as a provider of services in sectors where the regular economy has failed.

The Group uses the revenue from their illegal activities to run legitimate businesses, laundering the money and making a larger profit at the same time.

TERRITORY

The Hoshi Group tend to focus on the Tezuka panel. They don't have a particular attachment to it, it's just where they started, plus Noboru worries it's easier to catch his men when they're crossing a bridge. Members have convinced him to spread further Downtown, though.

The Group occasionally feuds with the Void Dragon for territory in the Downtown region, but they're on surprisingly good terms with Law Zero. The groups trade favors regularly.

HOTEL MELBOURNE

Hotel Melbourne are a Lunar gang who appeared on Grand Cross recently. They dominate the Lunar drug trade thanks to people on the inside at Shackleton Proprietary (p. 135) and their own hidden moon base. They've come to the station to expand their trade.

OPERATIONS

The Hotel was formed by Australian migrants in the late 00s to meet a growing demand among Artemis' wealthy for cocaine that didn't come with smuggling fees. (Its name comes from their original front, a bar in Artemis.) The Grand Cross branch is run by **Anomaly King** (p. 256), a Hotel high-up's daughter who volunteered for the job to get out of her parents' shadow. Anomaly has expanded quickly through subsuming smaller gangs and moles in the Station Police Service.

The Hotel's main focus is the export and sale of Lunar cocaine. They use Lunar front companies as covers to import drugs, manpower, and resources, including PJ Sidereal (transport), Dolormyx (mining), and Yarrow & Spools (orbital trash pickup). Many of these are based in Cixin's Spitzer district (p. 167). They also dabble in Multipass fraud, loan sharking, and arms trafficking.

TERRITORY

Hotel Melbourne are most active in the Harbou panel and Backtown, but their operations are spread all over the station. They've been expanding in Amal and Downtown (especially Spitzer and Turing) lately to target wealthier Crossers.

The Hotel have already come into conflict with some of the larger gangs. They're open to negotiations, but when they sense weakness, they're quick to get violent.

THE OUTSIDERS

Hotel Melbourne is most active in the wards that aren't covered in the location chapter. There are two reasons for this: first, it helps reinforce their image as the new outsiders muscling in on the others' turf. Second, it gives groups who want to come up with their own material for the other wards something to work with.

LAW ZERO

Law Zero do crimes by androids, for androids. They're got a near-monopoly on android crime for one simple reason: they thought to do it before anyone else.

OPERATIONS

Law Zero was founded by a reclusive android called **R. Daneel Olivaw** (p. 259) who avoids human contact. The gang is almost entirely androids, with a few cyborgs in the lowest ranks. Subscribing to Olivaw's philosophy isn't an entry requirement, but it is for promotion. The gang's operations are managed by a committee hand-picked by Olivaw on the basis of merit.

Law Zero likes two kinds of crimes: supplying illicit goods to androids and robbing humans of their wealth. They obtain cash through fraud and theft and use it to fund android services like jailbroken parts, bootleg and stolen corporate models, illegal mods, unlicensed reproduction services, android porn and other entertainment, narcotics programs, and more.

This doesn't mean they only help androids and hurt humans; they just have a lot more human targets to choose from. They run a few side-businesses that cater to humans, including a cyber-clinic in Turing, and occasionally charge a "human tax" to local android-run businesses that employ humans.

TERRITORY

Law Zero are most active in Turing, where owning a lot of hardware doesn't stand out so much. They have smaller operations all over the station, but they tend to focus on the Downtown side.

Law Zero tend to avoid conflict with other gangs simply because there's not much overlap, but lately they've been fending off competition from newer gangs and older ones trying to diversify. They're on surprisingly good terms with the Hoshi Group.

OLIVAW AND NOBORU

The reason Law Zero and Hoshi Group are on good terms is because their leaders are friends. No strings attached—they simply met when they were new to the station and hit it off. Olivaw respects Noboru's values, Noboru sympathizes with Olivaw's beliefs, and they both have a secret love of crappy old sci-fi.

Their groups usually stay out of each other's way, but they sometimes trade favors. Olivaw and Noboru meet up regularly to talk about life with someone who understands their struggles. Their bond is genuine, and they're unlikely to betray each other.

VOID DRAGON SYNDICATE

The Syndicate are possibly the oldest of the station's big gangs. They're run like a corporation, complete with a thing for suits, a Board overseeing their activities, and Cartel connections.

OPERATIONS

The Syndicate was formed by a mixed group of orbital workers: criminals on the run, disaffected cyborgs, and a few greedy middle managers. A lot of the founders are dead or in jail now, and most of the current Board is made up of old ladies from their extended family.

There are few crimes the Syndicate hasn't dabbled in, but their specialties are drugs, racketeering, entertainment, and cybernetics. They have a lot of connections to the Offworld Cartel through their front businesses—many executives who like to get high or get laid after work do it at Syndicate-run businesses, and some Cartel members have dealings with fronts like Orbit Five (p. 164).

TERRITORY

The Void Dragon talk a big game about being all over the station, but they're mostly focused on the high-density areas in Downtown and Backtown. Their headquarters (p. 168) are in Cixin, and a lot of their front businesses can be found in Voyager.

The Void Dragon fight with the Hoshi Group for territory and are considering getting in on Law Zero's business. The recent arrival of Hotel Melbourne has forced them to reassess their priorities, though.

MINOR GANGS

Grand Cross has plenty of smaller gangs that fill niches and districts the larger ones can't be bothered with.

BLOCK BOYS

The Block Boys are a gang of Builders in the Future district (p. 149). Their main business is drugs, but they occasionally obtain and sell station worker hardware, basement access codes, and jailbroken copies of maintenance software.

The Boys were formed during the station's construction by **Oscar Wymark**, an agriculture engineer who came to hate Grand Cross when his boss forced him to accept the cheapest cybernetics possible after an onsite accident. Oscar and his mates created their first lab with stolen agritech to fund better parts but kept running the operation once they realized their day job bosses valued their drugs more than their labor.

Since then, the Boys have relocated to a secret basement in the Future district and set up their front company PlayTronic (p. 149) above it. Oscar still runs the Boys, but as he gets older he's begun to focus more on PlayTonic. He's been training his nephew Jeromy to be his replacement, but his Builder friend **Bogdan Ignatov**, who has at least another decade before retirement, thinks he should be in charge instead.

DAIKATANA GUMI

by Chiaki Hirai

On Earth, the Daikatana Gumi is a feared organized crime family that some say has influence within the Prime Minister's Residence in Tokyo. On Grand Cross, it's a smaller operation run by Chii Noda (p. 256), the crime family's runaway only daughter.

Legally, the Daikatana offices are registered as **Daikatana Security Ltd**. (p. 180), a private security company in the Denraku District. It's technically correct since the gang's foot soldiers serve as the district's de facto private security, and the locals have established a stable but uneasy relationship with their protection racket. Aside from security, the gang also has investments in a variety of seedier enterprises located in Denraku, such as host clubs and brothels.

FINNBOGAMENN

The Finnbogamenn control and maintain order in the **Kyläkauppa** black market (p. 175) on behalf of **Finnbogi** (p. 282). These days that mostly means enforcing the no-violence rule and making sure the authorities don't come knocking. They're essentially a glorified security company that don't bother following the law.

Most of the gang are either former coworkers of the boss or disaffected locals who keep telling themselves they'll quit as soon as a real job comes along. At least one is a local cop making a little side money, which really helps them stay off the radar.

GG NOIRE

The Noire are a cybercrime group based out of Jinxing. There are only about eight of them, but they're all accomplished hackers. Their leader **Lathan Tan** (p. 256) recruited them to help with his "business" through various hacker forums and private messages on Omega Point.

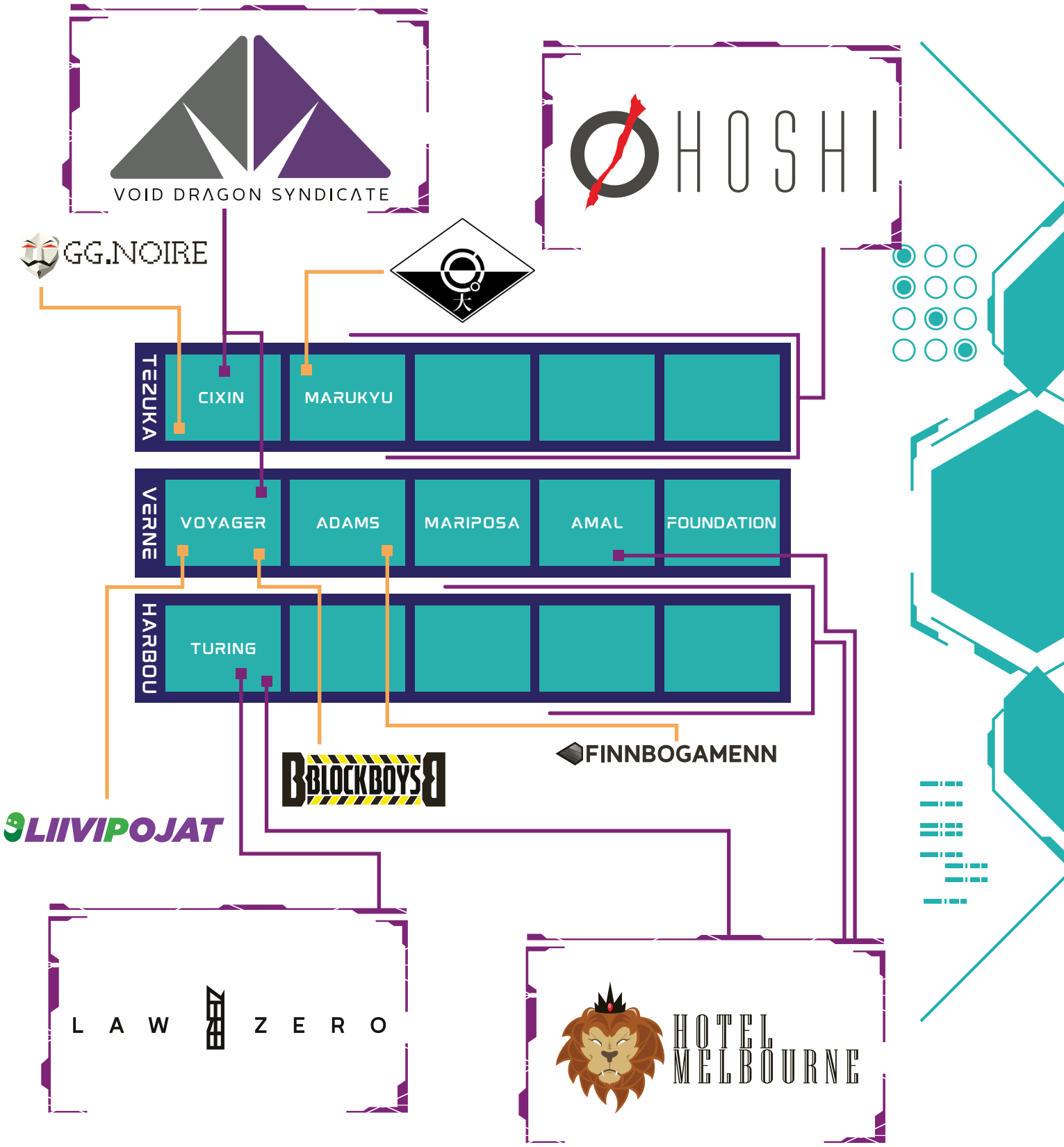
Most of their cybercrime is pretty standard: illegally obtaining bank and credit card details, hacking social media accounts to run cryptocurrency scams, and so on. Lathan is currently planning to increase their revenue with a special form of ransomware for androids.

LIIVIPOJAT

The Liivipojat are a minor gang known for dealing party drugs and wearing classy vests as a mark of status. Though they chiefly deal in Cixin, they're based out of Voyager. The gang is run by **Mauri Käärme**, who left the EU to escape arrest for murder.

Their drug labs are hidden out in the end caps in unused facilities left over from the construction process. They smuggle their drugs into the city through Voyager, using mules who pose as hikers. However, a recent string of mysterious attacks (p. 365) on the end cap slopes has Mauri looking for another method.

GANG STRONGHOLDS



KNOWN CRIMINALS

Various members of the above gangs. Some of these are noted in Chapter 6.

ANOMALY KING, HOTEL MELBOURNE

Anomaly is the leader of the Grand Cross Hotel and the daughter of an important Hotel member. She joined the family business after struggling to find work on Luna, but she's taken to it well. Anomaly is a tough, cunning woman who values loyalty and intends to build an empire on Grand Cross whether the locals like it or not.

Appearance: Neutral face, short red hair, nice suits. Anomaly dresses like an up-and-coming businesswoman, except for the leather gloves (in case she needs to teach someone who's boss.) As a "civilian" she wears a huge beanie, plays up her Australian accent, and tends a community garden in Amal.

Personality: Tough, calculating, controlled anger. Anomaly has a lot of anger: she's angry at the fucked-up capitalist world, the older generations who fucked it up, and the people who betray her. She keeps that anger on a leash until she needs to shoot somebody. She's tough but fair to those who listen to her and has earned a lot of loyalty from her henchmen as a result.

Goal: Build up the Hotel's Grand Cross branch by any means necessary. In the long term, Anomaly plans to cash out and retire under a new identity when Mars is settled.

CASTOR HARDMAN, FREELANCE HACKER

Castor is a freelance black-hat hacker. He's performed consulting work for several gangs, but his favorite pastime is corporate theft. Castor is pretty deep into the station's hacker community, though few of them actually know what he does for a living.

Appearance: Handsome, nice beard, cyber-hands. Castor has had the same look since high school: cheerful black guy in a blue jacket. The main difference is that he recently got cyber-hands to deal with carpal tunnel syndrome.

Personality: Playful, confident, detached. Castor is a lifelong hacker who values his online relationships much more than his offline ones (except for his boyfriend **Smiling Jin** (p. 258), who he met on a job.) He doesn't need to take many of the jobs he does, but he loves the thrill of a new mission.

Goals: Hack for fun and profit.

CHII NODA, DAIKATANA MADAME

Chii is the heiress of the **Daikatana Gumi** (p. 254). She ran away from home (on Earth) with Mikiko Johnson, her most trusted partner in crime, and a few other dedicated underlings at the age of 16 to make her own gang in space because her father, Fujio Noda, "didn't get the whole space thing" and "didn't believe girls could become proper gangsters anyway."

Appearance: Petit, young, white pantsuit. She has an angelic smile and a terrifying glare she can unleash at will. Although she's objectively cute, no one dares says that out loud.

Personality: Calm, powerful, polite. Chii is a very nice person and is well-respected by her gang for the calm aura of authority she exudes. She is, however, perfectly capable of getting nasty to get what she needs.

Goals: Amass money and success to show her dad she's just as ruthless and capable as any son could have been.

LATHAN TAN, GG NOIRE

Leader of the GG Noire cybercrime gang (p. 254). Lathan originally turned to cybercrime to cover the costs of a Hergatz Liao treatment that saved his life. When he found the work easy and fun, he didn't stop. Lathan has been careful not to get greedy with his scams but has an anti-android streak that clouds his judgement.

Appearance: Wiry, dark undercut, dark jackets. Lathan tends to insult his friends and say "ah, just fuckin' with ya!" a lot. The fingers on his right hand are cheap cybernetics. He often has pocky in his mouth, which he started doing to deal with a habit of putting his cyber-fingers in there.

Personality: Cocky, aggressive, cunning. Lathan and his boys don't really care who they target as long as they get paid. However, Lathan is prejudiced against androids— he's in the "machines steal jobs" camp—and occasionally messes with them out of spite. His friends sometimes jokingly say his hand makes him part-android, which genuinely bothers him more than he lets on.

Goal: Make money through GG Noire; occasionally attack androids.

MATILDA WALZ, HOTEL ENFORCER

Matilda is a wanted criminal back on Earth, where she sabotaged (okay, exploded) a bunch of corporate facilities to protest their handling of the Impact. She was smuggled to space by Hotel Melbourne in exchange for doing some jobs for them; she sticks around for the pay.

Matilda grew up during the Impact and came out the other end a bitter survivalist. She mostly wants to take down "bad guys," so Anomaly points her at corporate types and dangerous criminals.

Appearance: Strong, long blue hair, eyepatch. Matilda's left eye is missing, and since she has Pedler's Syndrome, cybernetics don't work. Since coming to space she's started dyeing her hair and wearing cool jackets. She smiles like a shark that's just found an inadvisably small boat.

Personality: Brash, cynical, self-destructive. Matilda is bombastic as hell on the job, but outside work she's a cynic who isn't sure what she's doing with her life. She enjoys taking down people she thinks have it coming but goes out of her way to avoid hurting "civilians," even in self-defense. The fact that she works for Hotel Melbourne is the source of a lot of her internal conflict.

Goal: Get paid by Hotel Melbourne to fight bad guys, even if she feels like she's spinning her wheels.

MISTER SILVA, SYNDICATE MANAGER

Mister Silva is the chief representative of the Board, the little old ladies who run the Syndicate. He negotiates with outsiders, keeps an eye on important operations, and make sure the Board's orders reach the right people.

Appearance: Generic, nice suit, personable. It's not clear where Mister Silva is actually from, but he has an aura of quiet power that tells people it's unwise to ask.

Personality: Pleasant, stoic, intelligent. Silva has a keen eye and a sharp mind, but rarely does anything the Board hasn't explicitly told him to. The details of his private life are a mystery, but he clearly likes fine dining and classical music.

Goal: Remain loyal to the Board and serve their interests.

NOBORU YAMADA, HOSHI GROUP

Noboru is the boss of the Hoshi Group. He came to space a criminal, sent under a false identity to escape the cops and protect his boss' secrets. Old habits die hard, and soon Noboru was running a brand-new gang.

Appearance: Nice beard, short afro, habitual fidgeter. Noboru is a handsome middle-aged man who wears nice blazers and plain shirts, or brightly colored ones when he's feeling nostalgic for Earth. His motions are usually calm and measured, but he's one of the fastest men on Grand Cross with a knife.

Personality: Friendly, realist, rational. Noboru used to be the headstrong, easily angered type, but years of space exile have mellowed him out into a mere cheerful man. He sticks to crime because he considers the forgotten corners of society his home but feels his past will catch up to him eventually and always has an escape plan in the back of his mind. His best friend is **R. Daneel Olivaw** (p. 259.).

Goal: Keep the Hoshi Group profitable; train a subordinate to replace him in case something happens to him.

SHINJI ENZAI, DAIKATANA AFFILIATE

Shinji is an intermediary between the public and the Daikatana Gumi. He runs Nekomeshiya (p. 180), a small 10-seat eatery in a back alley of the Denraku district. Despite his connections to organized crime, he is a reliable straight shooter when it comes to the information he supplies. His cooking also isn't that bad.

Not much is known about his past, but locals have a habit of making it up for him. They say he once killed a head of state back on Earth with a bazooka.

Appearance: Stern-eyed, gentle giant. Shinji tries—and fails—to look less imposing while tending his eatery. He looks a little ridiculous wearing a small black bowtie and a large apron, but he insists he is trying to run a "proper establishment" and wishes to look the part. He is terrifying when angered.

Personality: Shinji can appear stuck up on first impression, but he warms up to people who are able to become repeat customers. He's easily agitated when nervous but won't get mad without clear provocation.

Goals: Look out for the Daikatana Gumi's best interests; cook up new recipes.

SMILING JIN, SYNDICATE ENFORCER

Jin is a Void Dragon enforcer who relies on drones. He has a small army of them stashed in hidden caches around his turf and uses an experimental cyber-eye to direct them as needed. He's also legendarily stingy; they call him Smiling Jin because he's diplomatic to a fault, but that's just because words are cheaper than bullets. His favorite crimes are extortion and blackmail.

Jin's "day job" is managing a VR café called Electric Dreams. Where it's located is up to the GM.

Appearance: Tall, cheerful, brown hair. Jin has good taste in old clothing, the muscles of someone who fights for a living, and the good looks of someone who does it by proxy. He has a sweet smile but tends to use it in inappropriate circumstances. His cyber-eye isn't usually obvious.

Personality: Thrifty, polite, efficient. Jin is a meticulous planner who learned to save every cent in his childhood and thus he'll back out of a job if success seems expensive. He's a pragmatist who prefers talking through his problems but will order a drone strike if he has to. The best way to get him to stop smiling is to use his first name, Gaochao. He's currently dating Castor (p. 256).

Goals: Complete jobs efficiently.

SOMCHAI, LAW ZERO ENFORCER

Owner of a fried squid stall in the Liu district night market (p. 166). Somchai is a longtime Law Zero member who has chosen to semi-retire to raise his daughter, Mali. (Olivaw is fine with it—he can sympathize with an android who wants to be left alone.) Somchai is still single-handedly responsible for maintaining Law Zero's grip on the night market.

Appearance: Large, polite, weary. Somchai's body is a newer, very large Labor-model. With his old clothes, baseball cap, and careful movements, he comes across like an old human man. He's more talkative with androids and humans he trusts.

Personality: Patient, introverted, pessimist. Somchai bought into most of Law Zero's beliefs but has privately lost faith that Olivaw's plan will work. He mostly sticks around because he doesn't want to abandon his Law Zero friends. He dotes heavily on his daughter Mali and does his best to keep her from discovering his second job.

Goal: Run his stall; keep the peace in the night market; keep his daughter happy.

TONY #618, HOSHI MANAGER

Manager of the Supermassive nightclub in Paradise district (p. 181). Tony isn't really a Hoshi Group member, as the gang prefers to employ non-members in some cases; he helps reinforce their legitimate cover in exchange for a pay bump. Tony's dream is to own a club in Cixin and be friends with celebrities.

Appearance: Neat blonde hair, bright green eyes, cyber-legs. Tony got cybernetic legs after a traffic accident in his youth and opted for ones that made him taller. These days he wears a custom-made jacket with cool light strips and tries to play up a cyberpunk theme. Tony is a Scouser but uses a more common Orbital English accent at work.

Personality: Unscrupulous, connected, social climber. Tony partly works for the Hoshi Group because he thinks being part of the criminal underworld, however tangentially, makes him cooler. Number 618 is a nickname, part of a cool cyberpunk persona he adopts at work. He left a lot of friends behind on Earth, and on Grand Cross he mostly tries to befriend people who could benefit him professionally.

Goal: Run bars, be cool. Tony wants to move his club to Cixin because he thinks he could reach the big leagues there.

R. DANEEL OLIVAW, LAW ZERO

Android, philosopher and leader of Law Zero. Olivaw came to Grand Cross as just one of many construction androids sent into space to cut down on the number of workers who needed spacesuits. He was a voracious reader who spent his free time studying human history, economics, and philosophy—along with old fiction about androids, which inspired his name.

Between his studies and the exploitation he witnessed, Olivaw concluded that androids were better off living apart from humanity. He also concluded that there was no way society would allow that to happen if he worked within the system. Instead, Olivaw has turned his genius toward building a criminal empire.



Appearance: Confident, classy, tranquil. Olivaw's "true" body is unknown to the public—he intentionally remote-pilots other bodies or wears custom frame covers for most of his outings to make surveillance harder. (Law enforcement mistakenly attribute a lot of his actions to a fictional lieutenant named "Joseph Capek.")

Olivaw's true body is completely custom and impeccably attired at all times. His face is a screen where he projects symbols to express himself. Olivaw likes quoting philosophers when he has an excuse (e.g. Marx when discussing the economy's failings).

Personality: Determined, philosophical, detached. Olivaw is a brilliant android—some Law Zero agents joined after reading his political essays online. To people he trusts, he's straightforward and generous. He doesn't hate humans; he just thinks he shouldn't have to interact with them if he doesn't want to.

To Olivaw, Law Zero is a way to accomplish his dreams and collect reparations on the way out. His main flaw is an unwillingness to participate in the society his fellow androids are developing in—he feels like he's being forced to, and thus avoids it out of spite. His main exception is his friend **Noboru Yamada** (p. 253, 257), one of the few humans to know his true face.

Assets: Besides his brain, Olivaw commands Law Zero and all its androids, front businesses, and operations.

Goals: Olivaw intends to fund the creation of an android settlement in the outer solar system, self-sustaining and capable of defending itself. Only his lieutenants know this, and he hasn't even told them the true purpose of the settlement: to build a spaceship that can leave the solar system and its obsolete systems behind forever. When it does, Olivaw will abandon his shell, take up his former name, and finally become a regular citizen in an android-run society.

For Olivaw's role in the Dreamer conspiracy, see p. 367.

SINGULARISTS

"Our sole responsibility is to produce something smarter than we are; any problems beyond that are not ours to solve."

— Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*

The Singularists are a growing movement that believes Grand Cross will be the stage for an unprecedented technological explosion which will transform humanity forever.

MINDSET

Singularists are transhumanists whose beliefs were arrived at (or intensified) as a result of the Impact. Most of them work in the technology sector, where their dreams can be realized.

It's hard to pin down a set of "core" Singularist beliefs. People who identify as Singularists tend to be into some, most, or occasionally all of these:

- All the world's problems—disease, war, famine, climate change, death—can be solved with sufficiently advanced technology. There are few (or no) boundaries to what tech can do.
- The post-Impact boom, and the way humanity went from Earth to living in space in mere decades, proves this.
- At some point in the future, technological growth will hit a point (the eponymous Singularity) where it becomes uncontrollable and irreversible.
- Usually, this will come in the form of a superintelligent AGI.
- This Singularity will improve humanity, so bringing it about as soon as possible is a moral imperative.

It's not uncommon for Singularists to hold more radical beliefs, which they call dangerous ideas. In their mind, most of these ideas are simply taking the above beliefs to their logical conclusion. These can include:

- Every problem can be solved with computers. Any problems that aren't solvable *now* will be solved later with a better computer.
- STEM knowledge, which is required to build these technological wonders, is the best form of knowledge there is—perhaps the only real one.
- "Intelligent" people are simply better than other people. Equality is not ideal.
- The most intelligent people are, of course, people with STEM knowledge.
- When the Singularity comes, humanity as we know it will be obsolete.
- Most concerns about the technology Singularists push for (e.g. "human enhancement tech could lead to massive inequality if mishandled") are unimportant, because it's the natural order of things/computers will fix it.
- Most political activism that doesn't directly advance Singularist interests is pointless, because their problems will be rendered obsolete/fixed by technology.
- People who don't believe in the Singularity oppose progress.

The basic problem with the Singularists is that "intelligence" is not technical skill alone. Math and engineering don't teach you empathy, or emotional intelligence, or a broader understanding of the world. Intelligence must be paired with wisdom.

Most Singularists believe themselves capable of making purely rational, logical decisions, unfettered by emotion. But humans simply don't work that way, and if you try to ignore your emotions, you can't understand them. As a regular, Singularists view themselves as rational and forward-thinking people but tend to be closed-minded, politically unaware, and susceptible to emotional manipulation.

INFLUENCE

Realistically, the Singularity probably won't happen any time soon[5]. When you get down to it, the Singularists are really just a small band of nerds whose futurist beliefs border on religion.

However, the Offworld Cartel is a big fan of their views—it turns out that people who believe utopia could happen faster if everyone just shut up about fixing things and focused on coding are easy to control.

As a result, the Singularists are getting a huge signal boost, to the point where nearly every Crosser has at least heard of the Singularists. They get invited onto TV shows to explain their beliefs. News sites run puff pieces on well-dressed Singularists who think some people are just better than others. Technocratic Cartel members like Baars openly curry favor with the group.

COMMUNITY

The Singularist movement is less than a decade old, and not everyone who believes in a singularity or considers themselves a transhumanist is one. Most Singularists say that to be one of them you need to subscribe to most of their ideals and be a member of their community in some way.

The Singularist community is mostly online. There's a HEOCities webring, a Pulser community centered around several large Singularist accounts, a subribbit, and a few video channels. Diehard Singularists get into as many of these as possible.

The "central" Singularist hangout is **Omega Point**, an internet forum run and hosted by **Cyrus Berryman** (p. 262). Cyrus is revered as one of the founders of the modern-day Singularist movement, and Omega Point is where he holds court. This is where the Singularist's ideals are nailed down, dangerous ideas discussed, and developments in AI research are meticulously tracked.

One of the forum's tenets is that it should be a liberating space where the freedom to do and say whatever you want fosters discussion and makes the world a better place. In practice, while this is how it works for the most privileged users, it's led to many more users being driven away as the community's worst people spread abuse and hate free of accountability. A lot of the Singularist's "dangerous ideas" came about this way.

Grand Cross is the center of the Singularist movement, so they have a few "meatspace" meeting points here too. Most members who want to meet up in person go to the Event Horizon Plaza in Turing ward (p. 158), the Book Club Café in Cixin (p. 165), Space Town (p. 182), or Nomen Nominandum in Foundation (p. 203).

RELATIONSHIPS

Though few Singularists actually work with AI, most companies that work in STEM fields have at least one member in their ranks. They share what they can about their jobs, which makes Omega Point a decent place to go for a working knowledge of the Offworld Cartel's activities. They're big fans of **Derek Baars** (p. 250)—though he doesn't post on Omega Point as far as they know; they hang on his every word on Pulser.

The Singularists are a movement with no formal alliances. However, most of them lean toward orbital independence out of a desire to let go of old Earth modes of thinking. The group is surprisingly split on android rights, largely due to a vocal minority who view all “uncontrolled AI” as inherently dangerous.

Other groups sometimes recruit through the Singularists. Some of their de facto leaders have embraced anti-feminism and other extreme positions unsupported by data, which has created an opening for darker groups like the **New Barons** (p. 267) to recruit from them[6]. Over the next year, this trend might make the Singularists more dangerous.



5 If you're looking for good arguments against AI alarmism, a decent start is Maciej Cegłowski's talk *Superintelligence: The Idea That Eats Smart People* from Web Camp Zagreb 2016.

6 Much like the real-life online atheist/skeptic community of the early 2010s contributed to the rise of later hate movements, but with slightly fewer rant videos about women in video games.

KNOWN SINGULARISTS

Some Singularists for use in your games. Some of these were mentioned in Chapter 6.

CYRUS BERRYMAN, OMEGA POINT

The Singularists have no formal founder, but Cyrus comes pretty close. He's the man behind FERMI (p. 158) and Omega Point. When he's not managing that, he gives public talks and publishes books on emerging technologies. While FERMI mostly just turns donations into padding for his bank account, Cyrus is a brilliant engineer who truly believes in his work. One day another technological wave will wash over Grand Cross, and he plans to build a surfboard.

Appearance: Tall, long black hair, trim beard. Cyrus treats his body like a temple, so he looks much younger than he is. He wears dark shades and darker clothes which his followers say make him look like a genteel warlock. He gestures with his fingers a lot when he talks.

Personality: Focused, philosophical, libertarian. Cyrus is a transhumanist who believes all problems have purely technological solutions. He wants to change things for the better and does his best to help others, but tends to assume that what's good for him is good for other people too. He tries to be open-minded but struggles with ideas that poke holes in his Singularist, libertarian worldview.

Goals: Cyrus's aim in pushing science forward is life extension. He believes a superintelligence could grant immortality—through mind uploading, probably—and wants it to happen before he bites the dust. Everything else is a distraction.

JACQUES CURRENT, AI REPORTER

A Morningstar tech reporter. Jacques is well known in AI circles as a leading android expert, mostly because he talks about them so much. News shows often tap him as an expert on android affairs in the belief that asking an android would be "too political."

Jacques is also sometimes tapped as an unbiased source on Singularists, as he insists that he isn't one (he just has a podcast with Singularists titled “Enter the Singularity.”)

Appearance: Glasses, messy hair, aloof attitude. Think of a bad movie that you've definitely seen, but barely remember anything about besides that it sucked. Now imagine if the writer were a wannabe auteur in his thirties who doesn't know what 80s Hollywood directors dressed like but feels very strongly that it's his style. That's Jacques.

Personality: Educated, Singularist, defensive. Jacques is an extreme Singularist who thinks AGIs are meant to serve humanity but doesn't want to admit that out loud. Instead, he talks a lot about the need to control android reproduction. He avoids self-reflecting by acting like the people who call him a bigot are out to get him.

Goals: Get paid to write articles that launder extreme Singularist and anti-android views in order to make them sound cool and mainstream.

VIJAY DAS, OMNIDYNE ENGINEER

Vijay is a cybernetics designer for Omnidyne and a published author whose works on cybernetics and futurism are adored by Singularists. Vijay thinks everyone will have a cyber-brain within a decade and is working to help this along by dispelling the LMJ Syndrome myth. Unfortunately, he's also a corporate man who thinks reactive cybernetics are perfectly normal.

Appearance: Handsome, wings haircut, nimble. Vijay likes wearing blazers over t-shirts that show the scar on his chest from cyber-heart surgery. He has a knack for sounding very confident about anything he says, even when he has no idea what he's talking about.

Personality: Assertive, idealist, hard worker. Vijay is a proud geek who is sure that technological progress will solve all society's ills if people let it. Unfortunately, he measures the value of cybernetics by how productive they make people and believes pushing reactive cybernetics on people would force them to evolve. People approach him for donations to cybernetic causes often, to which he usually obliges.

Goals: Bring about his ideal technological utopia: one where everybody's lives are improved by the cybernetics they're forced to get to find employment.

DIVIDE-0, SINGULARIST ANDROID

The owner of the Magellanic Club, a Singularist hangout in Event Horizon Plaza (p. 158). He didn't plan it that way, but once Singularists started showing up in the Plaza, he was swayed by their beliefs. Divide-0 is friends (or at least acquainted) with the station's most popular Singularists but chafes at his peers' constant worrying about AI turning evil.

Appearance: Labor-model, scuffed body, flannel shirts. Divide-0 still uses the frame he was given as a factory worker because he fears he'd forget his working-class roots if he changed it, though he's replaced his limbs with newer-model ones for extra mobility. His eyes change color to indicate mood.

Personality: Optimistic, talkative, occasionally inconsiderate. Divide-0 set up the Club as a place for humans and androids to get to know each other. He's a Singularist because he believes technological advancement will remove the differences between the two eventually. He spends a lot of time arguing with other Singularists about the "dangers" of AI but tends to dismiss other forms of prejudice as "a human problem, not mine."

Goals: Run the Magellanic Club; convince Singularists to stop worrying about AGIs turning the world into paperclips or whatever.

ZHIHAO LIN, NOMEN NOMINANDUM

Owner of the Nomen Nominandum VR café in Foundation ward (p. 203). Zhihao dropped out of college to become a streamer, but it didn't work out; they recovered with the help of Singularist acquaintances, and they're determined to repay the favor. Zhihao is helping with an ambitious plan to sway the Grand Assembly towards pro-Singularist stances.

Appearance: Young, slick, charming. Zhihao wears simple clothes and accentuates them with pins, badges, and other accessories. They tend to mimic the tone and cadence of a certain popular streamer in an attempt to sound successful.

Personality: Clever, ambitious, reckless. Zhihao claims to be "socially liberal" but accepts a lot of the Singularists' "dangerous ideas" uncritically. They tend to assume things will work out for them because they're smart, commit to plans without assessing the risks, then blame others for their failures. They're amazing at helping others make plans, though.

Goals: Run Nomen Nominandum; help Singularists influence politics. Zhihao is still sore about being absolutely bodied in a pro match by Izzy Kaijou (p. 285) and occasionally tries to disrupt her plans. Izzy doesn't remember them.

TONY OSBORN, ANIME GUY

Owner of the Keep on the Borderland in the Galaxy district (p. 173). Tony is an argumentative guy who considers himself one of the finest connoisseurs of games and anime on the station.

Tony is an Omega Point regular, but his habit of getting into flame wars at the drop of a hat has kept him from getting too deep into the Singularist community. He holds a special hatred for Max Babylon (p. 264), who he's been feuding with for years ever since Max told him that *Dungeons & Dragons* 4th Edition is the best one[7].

Appearance: Bright eyes, hefty, receding blonde hair. Tony wears obscure Earth band t-shirts and a permanent crop of stubble on his chin. He has a thick Brooklyn accent. Tony is quick to laugh and even quicker to get angry, though he tries not to do that at work.

Personality: Cranky, opinionated, loud. Tony is a proud otaku and snobby about it. He does his best to avoid driving away customers, but there are still a few people he's gotten into arguments with or banned from the store. Outside work, he agitates for android rights and gets into hundred-post arguments on Omega Point about crap nobody cares about.

Goals: Keep the store going; sponsor pro-android events; screw over Max Babylon.

7 One of Max's few correct opinions.

MAX BABYLON, BIG DEAL SINGULARIST

Max is a popular influencer and one of the pillars of the Singularist community. To many of his fellow Singularists, Max is a genius who teaches people to question what they've learned. To everyone else, Max is a reactionary troll.

His videos mix real science and Singularist rhetoric with right-wing dog whistles, LMJ conspiracy theories, and long-winded rants about how good the 90s were before women ruined everything. Though many Singularists despise him, he's amassed a cult of personality within the movement. Max genuinely believes an AI god is coming, and he intends to be its high priest.

History: Max has always wanted to become a science communicator—a Bill Nye for a new generation. His early attempts on Earth didn't work out though; he got some online comedy work, but he wasn't very good, and he rubbed his coworkers the wrong way. He came to Grand Cross in the first wave via a Tetsuo work contract, hoping for a fresh start.

It worked. He started a video channel about science and life on Grand Cross, which was just unique enough at the time to be successful. Max eventually invited Cyrus Berryman to his show after seeing his talks, and Cyrus turned him into a Singularist.

Cyrus took Max under his wing, hoping to boost the Singularists' profile by boosting Max's career. Unfortunately, Max strongly related to the Singularists' dangerous ideas, and as his channel grew, his rhetoric got worse. Cyrus distanced himself from Max a couple of years ago, but fears trying to banish him from the community would violate his principles. For now, Max is here to stay.

Appearance: Smug, tough, showman. Max has no style and no grace, but believes that his t-shirts, ties, custom AR shades, and funny faces make him look cool. In his videos he's usually sitting in front of a wall of 90s geek merch.



Personality: Overconfident, spiteful, self-absorbed. The only real impediment to Max becoming a science communicator is that he's an asshole who sees other people as tools to be used. He was a teen in the late 90s and never really finished growing up. Despite his genuine science background, Max actually believes that LMJ syndrome is real and feminists are ruining everything. To some of his followers, he's been a gateway to the New Barons.

Assets: An apartment, a gaming computer, and enough adoring fans to pay the bills. If he wanted to, Max could whip up his diehard fans into a frenzy.

Goals: Be a famous science communicator and usher humanity into a new golden age. He likes to keep it simple.

For Max's role in the Dreamer conspiracy, see p. 369.

enter the singularity.



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EARTH/ORBIT ACTIVIST GROUPS

These are various groups pushing for change in Grand Cross, along with a sample of their members.

BUILDERS UNITED

Builders United (or "Builders U") is an organization by and for Builders. They focus on benefits for the families of dead Builders, legal aid, cybernetics support, and other issues related to the people whose hands built the station. They're best known for their pro-Project Committee work—they believe that model is the best way to protect worker's rights that were achieved on Earth, and a lot of their activism focuses on that.

Builders often come to them for personal problems: finding old friends, getting to Earth for family events, recovering stolen items, dealing with Grand Cross bureaucracy, and so on. Builders United try to crowdsource solutions for as many as they can, but there's not a lot they can do on their own.

The group's headquarters are an office in Future district (p. 149). They also operate two working men's clubs: one over in Huygens district, and another in Backtown.

CHARACTERS

- **Luna Labriola:** A cool old lady and former European Space Agency scientist who wrote a lot of the code that got the station flywheel spinning. Luna sits on the Builders United board and handles most LGBTQ-related concerns. She's pro-Committee because she worries that corporate interests will get bolder if it gets disbanded.
- **Bayani Reyes:** An insightful middle-aged man with a love of helping people and a cybernetic foot. Bayani's a legal consultant who helps Builders who have cybernetics troubles or just prefer to see a Tagalog speaker. He's done some investigating on the Block Boys, but there's not much he can do about them.
- **Neptun Zorić:** Night manager of the Huygens Builders Club. Neptun is young for a Builder—he came to space in his early twenties, and he's in his mid-thirties now. He's mainly interested in taking over the group's lucrative worker's clubs and sees the middle-aged-and-up Builders as old-timers who should get out of his way already. He's been considering sabotaging his coworkers to speed up the process.

FEDERATION NOW

FedNow, as it's commonly called, is a pro-Earth organization with a single agenda: unite humanity under a central interplanetary federation. It was founded by scientists who helped plan the political systems of Grand Cross and Luna, and they still have a lot of connections in the scientific and political communities. Their enemies tend to downplay them as a bunch of *Star Trek* fanboys.

Their headquarters is a building in Lunokhod (p. 152), and they organize a lot of events in the district for adults and children alike. Some members are active employees of Cartel tech companies, which sometimes interferes with their work.

CHARACTERS

- **Des Williams:** The group's founder and chief spokesman. His current day job is scientific consulting for sci-fi TV shows, but a lot of the group's connections come from his former work with the Project. He thought Grand Cross should be at the L4 point and he's still kinda mad about it.
- **Dewberry Mamiya:** An android historian who pushes for federation because she believes it may be the only way to get every nation to accept her kind. She's unknowingly in contact with R. Daneel Olivaw—he emailed her under a false name to ask questions about a letter of hers in a scientific journal, and they exchange messages debating philosophy.
- **Winter Spry:** The group's social media manager, a Singularist, and an Omnidyne engineer lead. Winter has been organizing Omnidyne-sponsored events and telling his boss about the group's activities in the belief that Omnidyne want to help—in actuality, Omnidyne wants to hijack the group for advertising purposes.

GREEN ORBIT

Green Orbit think people have been focusing too much on leaving Earth instead of fixing it. Going to space is nice, but the fact is that no planet is going to be better suited for humanity than their home world. They think Grand Cross is ready to start lending aid to Earth rather than the other way around and latched on to the pro-Earth movement to get their voices heard.

Green Orbit has launched several successful campaigns to increase investment in environmental science, open more park space on Luna, and raise support for groups like the Technoprogessive Party (p. 108). Recently they've been having trouble with NanoFuturistics, who have created a similar group called Green Lagrange to redirect that support towards NanoF-friendly initiatives.

CHARACTERS

- **Aoife Tracey:** Current leader of the group. Aoife is a charismatic young Techno who wrested control of the group in the last annual election because the former leader was redirecting the group's efforts toward corporate propaganda. Her current focus is on Luna, but if she found out about the extent of NanoFuturistics' surveillance, she would come to Grand Cross and raise hell.
- **Serge Osterhagen:** Runner-up to Aoife in the last election. Serge is a neoliberal who ran because he thought NanoF's offers of funding were worth "tweaking" the group's message a little, and he tries to sabotage Aoife behind her back. He's had some help from both NanoF and friends in the New Barons, who he says he hangs out with because he likes "hearing opposing viewpoints."

THE NEW BARONS

The Barons are a pro-Earth nationalist group attempting to hijack the conversation around orbital independence and use it to spread their beliefs. They hold that Western civilization is responsible for every major scientific advancement in history, and therefore only "the Western world" (by which they mean white people, preferably men) should control space. The fact that they're wrong on every conceivable level—and several that haven't been discovered yet—hasn't stopped them so far.

Typical group actions include inciting violence against their perceived opponents, organizing "science exhibitions" to teach people "real history," threatening professors, and trying to take over or sabotage community spaces. They mostly recruit disaffected young men—a lot of members believe that androids and/or Lovelace laws (p. 11) were a conspiracy to destroy Western civilization, so they don't get many other recruits. They've had some success with Singularists lately.

The Barons enjoy the financial backing of several Cartel and Unity interests who stand to benefit from their fascist views becoming mainstream. The movement has no headquarters, but they gather online via a HeoCities webring and organize regular meetups.

CHARACTERS

- **Jesse Gorbold:** Leader of the Barons. Gorbold is a former anime review site webmaster and failed TV personality who pivoted to this after his vocal opposition to android rights cost him work. Jesse grifts the New Barons for donations but is secretly paid staggering amounts of money to run the Barons by a Cartel oligarch. Morningstar has done several puff pieces on him.
- **Phil Azimuth:** A science fan who works at a startup in Turing. Phil is a huge Max Babylon fan who has been trying to recruit Singularists to the Barons on the side. Omega Point has yet to ban him because he's a flat Earth believer, so nobody takes him seriously even though his recruit pitches work.
- **Trajan:** An android and former influencer turned New Baron darling. Where most weirdo content creators would simply use an avatar of some ancient ruler, Trajan has gone one step further by modifying his Lilim-model body to resemble a statue of an ancient Roman emperor, complete with white casing[8] and a metal-leaf crown. Anti-android Barons point to Trajan to "prove" the Barons aren't anti-android.

8 Roman statues weren't even white.

FINAL FRONTIER

Final Frontier is an organization of scientists who want to see more orbital settlements trying new social, economic, and political systems. Most habitat plans in the works aren't very experimental in this regard, and Final Frontier is pushing for that to change. They also push for orbital independence out of a desire to break free from old human norms.

The group are fairly popular. The Cartel tries to discredit them since they're willing to consider founding a settlement that isn't capitalist, but the Disaster has soured many Earth governments on the Cartel, so for now it's evened. Final Frontier's most ambitious proposals are still unlikely, but they're getting to consult on at least one future habitat.

On Grand Cross, Final Frontier study marginalized communities and sometimes try to help them out, at least when they have the resources and it's not likely to land them in legal trouble. They're based out of an office in Spitzer district (p. 167).

CHARACTERS

- **Lewis Carpenter:** A former Project consultant, lecturer, and popular science podcaster. Lewis founded the group, and a lot of the Cartel's smear efforts have been focused on him specifically. He thinks everything will work out eventually.
- **Tizita Desta:** A GPol historian who helps Final Frontier reach out to marginalized groups and other communities outside their usual scientific spheres. She believes cybernetically augmented brains will be commonplace by the 2030s.

FREE ORBIT

Free Orbit is an online movement of people who want Grand Cross and Artemis to become independent states free of Earth control. Its core, such as it is, is a loose collection of celebrities, Technos, Double Crossers, and other influencers, who all support independence for their own reasons.

Historically, Free Orbit has organized a couple of big events every year. As elections draw near—and the Committee starts to discuss sticking around past their original target—the movement has been picking up steam. Events are getting bigger and more frequent, and a skilled influencer could easily whip up another if they wanted to.

CHARACTERS

- **Melati Onbekend:** A Double Crosser influencer who makes short-form comedy videos. She's good at organizing her peers, but chronic health problems keep her from most events.
- **Sudarshan Singh:** A Unity politician from Adams, dedicated to making sure the Project Committee dissolves. He was on the interim Council and is seen as an authority on Committee affairs.
- **Yancy Starr:** A writer and activist who happens to be focused on #FreeOrbit at the moment. Great at online campaigning, but has a bad habit of launching fundraisers and mismanaging the money.

LIBERATE ORBIT

Skuggahvarf wasn't the only space habitat in the works. At least ten stations have been proposed, and more will be cropping up in the coming century. Some of these are like Grand Cross—group efforts set up as quasi-independent states—but some are extensions of their creators, openly or no, and the law around how much control an Earth nation can have over them is still a little murky.

Liberate Orbit is an activist group pushing for all new habitats to be at least as independent and democratic as Grand Cross and Luna. They fear that allowing an authoritarian state to create an authoritarian space colony would be a bad thing for every orbital in the long run.

Liberate Orbit is more formal and focused than Free Orbit, though they have a lot of overlap. It's also a little more neoliberal than Free Orbit, so several members think corporate habitats would solve the problem rather than create a different type of authoritarian state. Their headquarters lie in a small office in Adams.

CHARACTERS

- **Tola Wolanski:** A lifelong campaigner for LGBTQ rights who works with Liberate Orbit to protect them in space. Opposes corporate habitats.
- **Tsung-han Lin:** A Taiwanese hacktivist who moved to Grand Cross after his efforts to uncover new habitat plans landed him in hot water back on Earth. Prefers to get things done and let the others decide policy.
- **Nance Tuff:** A Liberate Orbit founder with a corporate background. Nance prefers to "work within the system" to oppose authoritarian habitats, and she's considering pushing a "private enterprise" model for space habitats to get more funding.

ORGANIZED LABOR

by Matthew Lind

The Cartel have done their best to stamp out organized labor on Grand Cross. They've been largely successful, and now they're trying to finish the job. But that move has left openings for grassroots activists and might reinvigorate the existing unions. No matter how things turn out, the status quo is over.

UNION OF EXTRA-VEHICULAR WORKERS

The UEW is an association of smaller unions founded in the early days of station construction that represents everyone who needs to wear a spacesuit or leave the main habitat for their work. That includes the workers who build and maintain the station's structure, who run the agricultural modules, who operate transports and skiffs around Grand Cross, and who load and unload cargo ships.

Member unions include the Life and Agri Systems Association (LASA), Grand Cross Farmers United (GCFU, p. 207), Union of Orbital Dockworkers (UOD), Station Builders United (SBU), and the Transport & Service Pilots Guild (TSPG). The UEW is associated with Asteroid Miners United (AWU) and the Federation of Spacefarers (FSF). The Society of Zero-G Workers (SZW) used to be part of the UEW but was expelled for rampant corruption and subsequently collapsed.

The corporations tried to break the UEW during station construction but failed, so they pivoted to a strategy of isolation—keep the UEW membership happy with solid labor agreements while relying on bribery, propaganda, intimidation, and in at least one case outright assassination to make sure the UEW failed to support any other organizing effort inside Grand Cross. But the new generation of corporate leaders don't care about the old agreements. Or, more accurately, they always viewed them as a temporary arrangement and are impatient to have things their way.

Under this corporate pressure, members have been challenging UEW leadership to do more and have been campaigning to replace them. LASA engineers have faced the most pressure and have been pushing for a general strike. If they don't get it, they're likely to disaffiliate and join Solidarity Now!. Meanwhile, the UOD has been bringing in AWU and FSF activists to bulk up its ranks in anticipation of having to fight the police. The UEW is on the verge of either coming apart or returning to its roots.

SOLIDARITY NOW!

Solidarity Now! is a group formed by grassroots activists, focusing on organizing service and information workers on Grand Cross. Their membership skews younger and they have a close relationship with other political organizations. Their decentralized structure makes it hard for the police and corporate interests to come down on them, but it also sometimes leads to incoherent internal politics.

Though officially affiliated with refugee, immigrant, and android rights groups, some Solidarity Now! members see these groups as threats, and the lack of central authority makes it difficult disavow or correct these views. There's also significant argument over tactics; more than once a faction has gone ahead with plans without majority approval. The group has a lot of potential but might splinter under these pressures.

GRAND ALLIANCE

Supposedly a more respectable alternative to Solidarity Now!, the Grand Alliance is in fact an astroturfed "worker's rights" organization sponsored by right-wing activists and their corporations. They have a flashy ad campaign and reliably cloak anti-labor legislation in progressive language. The Alliance doesn't have much actual support, but it doesn't have to actually gain members to succeed—they just confuse the issue and make life harder for the actual organizers. The Police Benevolent Association of the Station of Grand Cross is part of the Grand Alliance, naturally.

THE EXIES

As a militant faction of the UEW—particularly the AWU and the SBU—dating back to the original wildcat strikes during station construction, the Exies favored direct action, up to and including sabotage and even bombings. They've been more underground in the years since, but lately they've made a comeback.

Though committed to revolutionary action and willing to put their lives on the line for it, many Exie cells harbor anti-immigrant and anti-refugee ideologues. As a whole they are virulently anti-android. They've been recruiting from disaffected Solidarity Now! members, but at the same time cells who disagree with Exie social views have left for the Thirteeners. The new blood might be able to push them into better solidarity, or they might double down and go full red-brown.

THIRTEENERS

A new faction arising from life support and agricultural workers. They take their name from LASA Local #13, which was nearly wiped out when one of the agricultural module's environments collapsed. Radicalized by these needless deaths and the existential threat such events pose to station life support, they've advocated that immediate and drastic steps need to be taken. They've recently graduated to sabotage, as the UEW has been slow to act. A recent influx of disaffected Exies has brought increased militancy and capability. They also have strong ties to refugee groups. The Thirteeners are a growing power, but their inexperience has led to missteps.

CHARACTERS

- **Behold Pascale:** President of TSPG Local #2, and a stalwart of union politics his entire adult life. Pascale is known as a wheeler and dealer and is seen as part of the corrupt old guard, but he's started taking an increasingly radical line since the corporations started turning the screws. Which version is the "real" Pascale remains unclear.
- **Wilroyce Root:** Spokesperson for the Grand Alliance, former attorney, and child of a major corporate executive. They maintain a publicly frosty relationship with their parent, but they're corporate through and through. Has a popular social media account with a disturbing number of thirst followers and writes a column for Morningstar.
- **Sofia Ngô Thị Xuân:** A young Burger Kong employee who inspired her coworkers to stage a spontaneous walkout over wages. Sofia's charisma gained her significant media attention. She was a founder of Solidarity Now! and has proven to be an able organizer but is struggling to hold the group together.
- **Roosevelt Profit:** An infamous militant behind a series of bombings on Luna. Profit is known for her uncompromising commitment to the cause and her competence. She has decades of experience and a list of arrest warrants longer than her arm. Profit's cell recently broke with the Exies over ideological disagreements and joined the Thirteeners. Her intensity can be off-putting even to her few friends.

UNION OF ROBOTS

by Thaddeus Strange

The Union of Robots ("UR Not Alone!") claims to be the oldest labor union organizing for solidarity between mechanical and biological workers, though the details of their beginnings are vague and often contradictory. Their favorite apocryphal origin involves an early AGI experiment accessing a company server bank and using the spinning hard disks to play "The Internationale" on loop until they were physically disconnected.

The Union tends to be frowned on by the more suit-and-tie orgs who have things like lobbying arms and corporate offices. But if you're looking to organize a street action, boost awareness for a crowdfunding campaign, or just find a couch to crash on, UR looking in the right place.

CHARACTERS

- **Public Universal Comrade:** PUC doesn't talk much, especially about themself, so it's hard to tell if they're a group of similar-bodied androids or a well-traveled individual. An artist by trade, their hand-made flyers and signs are well known throughout the Union. They seem to know everybody.
- **Fellow Robot Jo:** A local activist. ("Fellow robot" is a common form of address among UR members.) Jo is an excellent behind-the-scenes organizer and is infamous for strapping on a bug-eyed tokusatsu-inspired helmet and riling up crowds at street actions.

OTHER GROUPS

THE AUGMENTED PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE

by Helen Gould

Low-income workers were the first to get mechanical augments and the first to experience the negative consequences. They are now fighting for compensation for and recognition of their medical issues, as well as trying to prevent corporations pressuring others into potentially harmful augments.

Augments are supposed to be tailored to each person, but that costs money; money that major corporations prefer to give to their shareholders. Now many are sporting mass-produced augments that are no longer being maintained: the joints are sticking, parts are becoming brittle, and there's a thriving market in shoddy repairs.

The Alliance raise hell in the factories, hold popular disruptive rallies, put pressure on bosses, and help current workers to unionize and protest against the exploitative contracts that require augmentation to work at the company.

CHARACTERS

- **Ayesha Farooq,** whose bionic legs have faulty knee joints that render them unusable. Nowadays she has a wheelchair to run over the toes of capitalists, both literally and metaphorically, and to lead the marches for compensation.
- **Seb Jones:** A factory inspector who has access to multiple sites and uses it to the advantage of the movement at great risk to himself. He spreads leaflets, posters, and other written materials to the workers there, slowly radicalizing them from within.
- **Alex Bennett,** who writes all the various materials—petitions, information campaigns, banners, posters—with the mechanical hands they never wanted. Strangely, they don't talk much; it seems they prefer to let their writing speak for them.

UNITED PEOPLE FOR ANDROID FREEDOM

by Helen Gould

Some androids argue that the only way to gain freedom is to physically fight for it; others feel that any violence will only justify anti-android sentiment. A minority are separatists who believe androids need a clean break from humans. Currently, the loudest and largest faction are those who believe in non-violent direct action, but many are growing impatient with their slow progress.

The UPAF are allied with other groups, including the Augmented People's Alliance. Olivaw has also offered his assistance, but the leadership does not acknowledge him.

CHARACTERS

- **Yemaya:** An old deep-water android who is the last of her model. She is far more cynical than the other androids and is a fount of tactical knowledge due to her long experience with organizing for her rights.
- **Robin and Kelly,** who were one of the first human/android couples. In addition to their equality work, they are dedicated to fostering children and never have less than five in their home (in addition to the two that they have permanently adopted.)
- **Theresa Forbes (real name: Spark2),** who looks entirely human and is running for office whilst keeping their android identity secret. They plan to do a big reveal once they have been elected in order to prove that androids and humans are the same and as such deserve the same rights.

CAPTCHA

by Thaddeus Strange

CAPTCHA (as in "Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart") is a loose network of reactionary groups with their roots in older and failed anti-cybernetics movements. It's usually shortened to Computers & Humans Apart (CHA). Their well-dressed, media-savvy figureheads pop up in newsfeeds and think pieces, coolly explaining the need to keep "artificial people" separated from "real people," especially "young children with vulnerable and developing minds."

Their harsher, street-level actors prominently display tattoos of glitch-aesthetic l33tsp34k words to signal membership to each other and chant slogans like "2+2 is 5! You can't kill what's not alive!". Liberals tend to focus on making fun of them for thinking that mathematical contradictions hurt AIs outside of science fiction stories more than the implied murder threat at the end.

CHARACTERS

- **Blake Alexander:** The smug and extremely online scion of a respectable cybernetics production firm. Alexander knows exactly how to toe the line between hate speech and "just asking questions."
- **Kenneth Scott:** Leader of an anti-android gang that joined CAPTCHA as part of a low-effort attempt to seem respectable. Essentially a thug with an anger management problem.

ORBITAL FREEDOM INSTITUTE

A non-profit conservative think tank backed by various Cartel oligarchs and Lunar elites. The OFI is essentially a vehicle for them to push corporate-friendly policies through Unity; it champions privatizing public services, reducing taxes on the wealthy, and repealing the station's anti-racial discrimination laws. They have no strong feelings about orbital independence—as long as corporate dependence is maintained, they're happy.

Their HQ is a building in Armitage (p. 156) where they host regular meetings with orbital elites (and the New Barons) to share and spread ideas. A lot of OFI's directors used to work for the corporations that helped build Grand Cross, and they have skeletons in their closet.

CHARACTERS

- **Halbert Peters:** Current chairman of the OFI. Halbert was an executive in Canopus Cyber during the station's construction phase and is hoping to make a run for politics without his activities getting out.
- **Ken Kinney:** The OFI's go-to guy when they need a spokesman to promote their policies with a straight face. Has a lot of connections in Omnidyne (his former employer) and the New Barons.
- **Arista Faxx:** A director and former Omnidyne executive assistant. In the latter job, Faxx helped to cover up bribes paid by her bosses—along with Omnidyne's collusion with Canopus Cyber.

DOUBLE CROSSERS

by Helen Gould

The young people that comprise the Double Crosser generation lack both their parents' patriotic feelings about Earth and their access to influence in Grand Cross, though most Double Crosser activists aren't really interested in that kind of power. What they want is to tear it all down and start again, this time without the corporations in charge.

Some want to extend this to Earth, arguing that this is where the problems stem from, but others have given it up as a lost cause. This is an ongoing discussion, but it hasn't yet erupted into factionalism: for now, everyone involved understands that they have to deal with what's in front of them first.

Second-gen Crossers are very tech-savvy. As an activist group, they communicate through encrypted and password-protected video chats that are deleted after each meeting. They operate under pseudonyms, using face and voice scrambling tech when discussing their next action. They specialize in political vandalism, property destruction, and hacktivism.

CHARACTERS

- **Wings**: A hacking prodigy who excels in online sabotage and who has already released several sensitive documents to the public, exposing rife corruption and profiteering (though their real talent is in simple website takedowns.)
- **Five Eye:** An older teenager who has no parents, bad parents, revolutionary parents, or stupid parents depend on who they're talking to. Their main hobby is graffitiing rebellious messages in prominent areas around the city without getting caught.
- **Tick Tock,** who finds it fascinating what you can discover from the geography of a place, especially from hidden blueprints. They have a photographic memory—particularly of routes that can make for quick exits—and shares various approaches and escapes from targets.

THE L4 REFUGEES

by Helen Gould

Since the Disaster and the subsequent revelation that it was caused by Cartel negligence, anger and disapproval have been growing among the survivors and sympathetic Crossers. After all, if that settlement was built so shoddily, what about everywhere else?

Every refugee has lost multiple people, along with their homes and livelihoods, and they are all rightfully furious. Every time Burgur—the man who built Skuggahvarf—appears in public, he can be sure of a confrontation. Even with Goliath protection, his house is regularly picketed.

There are two main prongs to the refugees' actions: first, to hold the Cartel to account and expose their money-hungry dealings for what they are; second, to find a new home that hasn't been corrupted by any corporations.

CHARACTERS

- **Petra Bogomolova:** An elderly woman with a shrewd strategic mind who lost her whole family. She keeps herself sharp by tracking the various shady connections between companies involved with the Cartel and which other civilians might be at risk.
- **Sam Okafor:** A lawyer who is building the legal and moral case for resettlement and has refused to stop until justice is served. He has somehow dodged several assassination attempts, which suggests that there might be someone high up who supports his endeavors.
- **Maggie Evans:** Who is in charge of looking at new homes for refugees to move to. Maggie is one of the most trusted people in the movement. She is also secretly an agent for the Cartel and the one behind the attempts on Sam Okafor's life.

FACTIONS AS COMMUNITIES

During play, the PCs may form communities and center their adventures around them. These communities can be factions and activist groups, if the PCs wish. The People's Garden is presented here as an example of a community faction.

THE PEOPLE'S GARDEN

by Arc Williams

As the station's problems grow, more people are turning away from the government and helping their own communities. The Garden is a community-run mutual aid group hoping to give power back to the people.

The Garden's community center offers a walk-in kitchen, daycare services, and shelter to those in need. They can also arrange education (especially self-defense training) and legal aid for those who cannot afford it. In their rooftop garden, they teach people how to grow and maintain gardens of their own while working with local communities to help feed not only those who need it, but anyone who walks in.

Originally, The Garden was a DIY website run by **Isabelle Brighton**, who got fed up with trying to afford maintenance on her overpriced corporate-mandated prosthetic arm. With her engineering degree and some help from local biomed students, she created a cheaper alternative and posted the schematics online. Shortly after, the site ballooned. Today, The Garden's website contains cheap, simple plans for many cybernetic parts, along with gardening and other guides. They accept donations of cash and goods.

CHARACTERS

- **Isabelle Brighthon:** An ex-factory worker whose original arm was permanently damaged when her company recruited Goliath to break a strike. Isabelle manages The Garden's website and routinely updates it with advice for fellow cyborgs and trans people.
- **Erik W:** Current head of Security. Eric is an ex-paramedic who got tired with only being able to help people after they'd been shaken down and beaten up by the corrupt, and started training in earnest in martial arts. Besides running The Garden's security, Erik teaches first aid and martial arts and runs a support group for nonbinary people.
- **Imani Riel:** At 19, Imani is the youngest of the group's leadership. Her parents are Agriculture Ring workers, and she's been watching and learning from them ever since she was young. She developed a massive passion for plants and wildlife, and when her parents were laid off, she encouraged them to start tending their block's community garden with her so she didn't have to give up on it. Isabelle and Erik reached out when her skills caught their attention.

FACES OF SPACE

The following are various side characters mentioned in Chapter 6: Location Data, sorted by the ward they appear in. As with the rest of this chapter, how you use them is up to you—some can even make decent PCs.

Some Chapter 6 characters are important members of factions covered elsewhere in this chapter; page references are provided at the end of each ward.

VOYAGER WARD

REIDAR AALFS, ELITE DOCTOR

Chief doctor at the Apogee Medical Boutique. As far as Reidar's concerned, his job isn't to stop his patients taking risks (like taking uppers for fun)—it's to let them do what they want with their bodies and deal with the results. The massive stacks of cash help.

Appearance: Young, blonde, shiny. Reidar is a middle-aged guy who looks youthful and healthy thanks to expensive medical treatments. He uses a little too much hair gel and teeth whitener. Most of his outfits are expensive suits.

Personality: Focused, greedy, classist. Reidar has lied about his reasons for running a pill mill so many times he's starting to buy his own bullshit. If he sees a sick working-class person, he tends to assume exercise and cod liver oil will fix them. He constantly worries about seemingly trivial actions he thinks could make him "look poor." Reidar is a little lazy about covering his tracks because he assumes his wealth and connections will get him out of trouble.

Goals: Make money prescribing all sorts of crap to the rich and famous.

ANDRE ARNOUL, FANCY CHEF

The owner of Café des Astronautes. Andre is an excellent chef, with a very high opinion of himself and an unconscious prejudice against androids and cyborgs. It strains his relationship with his daughter Fleur, who uses a cyber-leg, and has locked him into an increasingly petty rivalry with the android chef Kala.

Appearance: Stern, imposing, grumbly. Andre's long, pointed features, swept-back blonde hair, and stern default expression make him look like a crime boss trying to seem harmless at his grandson's birthday party.

Personality: Arrogant, tightly-wound, busy. Andre tends to value people who taste and praise his food, which has made him biased toward the wealthy and "full humans," even though most cyborgs can still eat. He is dismissive of other views and is slow to change his mind. Despite everything, he's careful to show nothing but kindness to his employees.

Goals: Maintain Café des Astronautes' success and find ways to undermine Kala's Corner.

SAMMY CHANG, ANDROID CLUB OWNER

Owner of the Cave of Steel club. Sammy is very old by android standards—they were around when Orbiforms were cool. They were the assistant of a Taiwanese businessman who gave them some money as a thank-you gift when they moved to Grand Cross; Sammy used the capital to reinvent themself with a new name, a new body, and a cool club.

Appearance: Handsome, blue, quick. Sammy's current body is an androgynous, all-blue Adams-model; they made it themself with some warranty-breaking mods and second-hand parts. They prefer clothes that look like they came out of a sci-fi novel.

Personality: Calm, straightforward, generous. Sammy enjoys feeling like part of a community and wants the club to feel like a second home. They enjoy making things; besides their body, they did a lot of the club's interior. Sammy donates to a lot of android rights groups and charities with a variety of political views, including one that might be a Law Zero front.

Goals: Build up the android community; donate excess money.

ÅSMUND COOLEN, WANNABE BUILDER

The millionaire founder of the Builder Museum. Åsmund is actually a first-gen Crosser, but after politicians co-opted the Builder term, he started using it too. He's basically LARPing as a member of the working class for attention, and since Morningstar news programs keep inviting him on as an expert on Builders, it seems to be working.

Appearance: Personable, self-assured, stocky. Åsmund has a little brown beard, slick hair, thick glasses, and a thing for polo shirts. In his public appearances, he puts on an incredibly fake posh British accent that makes him sound like an antagonist from a Scandinavian Doctor Who sketch.

Personality: Prideful, productive, attention-seeking. Åsmund says he worked hard to get where he is, but having a rich lawyer daddy funneling clients to his engineering firm helped more than he's willing to admit. He's not a good liar, but Morningstar repeats his claims uncritically anyway.

Goals: Get applauded as a working-class hero; develop the Builder Museum into his legacy.

HITEN HAGOROMO, SPACE FAN

Owner of the Sakigake izakaya. Hiten came to space for work, but the experience turned him into a space fanatic and inspired him to return to his real passion: cooking. He collects space junk because he finds inspiration in the stories behind how Earth-bound objects made it to space.

Appearance: Aging, beer gut, cheerful. Hiten cuts his hair and beard short, and wears glasses—usually big AR ones, a holdover from his corporate days. He wears cheap old-school clothing at work, jumpsuits and overalls outside.

Personality: Prudent, soft, proud. Hiten is generally soft-spoken until space-related topics come up, in which case he's eager to share what he knows. He's got some experience in the corporate field, so he occasionally gives advice to customers who ask.

Goals: Get his hands on rare space junk.

LITHIUM "LITH" HUA, SYNDICATE BROKER

Owner of the V-Suite and mid-level member of the Void Dragon Syndicate. Lith uses her many contacts (in both the criminal and corporate worlds) to get things for her customers, creating favors the Syndicate can call in later. She's left her past and her birth name behind her, but word is she became a full-body cyborg after an augmentation procedure pushed on her as a child went wrong.

Appearance: Expressive, haughty, dark-haired. Lith's body is based on a design for a Syndicate-sponsored android girl group that was rejected because the red eyes scared people. She has a smile that could launch a hundred spaceships and a library of glares that could send them hurtling into the Sun.

Personality: Outspoken, charming, cold. Lith can crank up the charm when she needs to as she's good at making friends and contacts. Her real personality is loud, sassy, and quick to anger. She doesn't have much respect for corporate management types, who she sees as willing slaves to a cruel system.

Goals: Lithium is loyal to the Syndicate but plans to retire to a space beach with a big pile of cash one day.

KALA, ANDROID CHEF

The owner of Kala's Corner. Kala was brought to Grand Cross from Malaysia as the personal chef of a wealthy family. When the advance of android rights meant they had to start paying her, they "granted her freedom" by abandoning her at a transit station. She's since built herself a new home and, despite her treatment, she still hopes for better relations between humans and androids.

Appearance: Thoughtful, small, polite. Kala is an older Lilim-model android with short dark hair and newer green eyes. She prefers plain, dark casual wear at work, lighter outfits with bucket hats and shades when she's off the clock.

Personality: Affable, considerate, diligent. Kala keeps cooking because she likes making others happy. She treats others well and is on good terms with her employees but tends to avoid letting people get too close out of fear of abandonment. She regularly donates to the UPAF (p. 271).

Goals: Keep Kala's Corner running; support android causes.

UMARU KAYODE, CYBER DOCTOR

The owner of Apple Street Medical Center. Umaru's parents became Builders while he went to university in Lagos; by the time he followed them to space, his father had augmented to recover from an accident. That inspired Umaru to pivot into cybernetics, and he's been helping Builder and working-class cyborgs ever since.

Appearance: Tall, precise, confident. Umaru shaves his head because he finds it convenient and sports a cybernetic left arm loaded with useful tools. He tends to dress professionally, even off work.

Personality: Resourceful, understanding, educated. Umaru is well-read, friendly with his patients, and quick to laugh. He regularly tries to quit smoking but hasn't quite managed it yet. Umaru believes laws that hurt people are unjust laws, and as such, he has no problem making grey-market hydroponics parts to keep his business running.

Goals: Help out the little guy, maybe quit smoking.

LOTTE, MIDNIGHT BARISTA

Owner and barista of the Latte Night bookshop/café. According to Lotte, she was an airhead in school and discovered her passion for books in community college; now she runs a place for people who don't normally get a chance to read.

Appearance: Lively, tall, pretty. Lotte has a bright smile, a cyber-eye, and possibly other augments (she's cagey about it). She ties her long brown hair into a ponytail to keep it out of her face at work. She's surprisingly strong because her other hobby is sports.

Personality: Sunny, intelligent, empathetic. Lotte likes being a night owl because she has a lot of Earth friends and family to video chat. She enjoys talking to people and does her best to offer them advice, which she mostly takes from books. She gets her coffee skills from her parents.

Goals: Listen to people's stories at Latte Night, acquire new books.

MOOGSY, LOCAL FENCE

A fence who hangs out in the Moon Flag bar. Moogsy buys stolen goods Downtown and sells them Backtown, using the basements to travel between them. Moogsy has connections with Hotel Melbourne (p. 252) but prefers to work independently.

Appearance: Sloppy, unassuming, red-haired. Moogsy is an Australian-born white guy who wears comfortable but scruffy clothes, orbital metal band shirts, and hiking shoes. He doesn't look very athletic, but his parkour skills are off the hook.

Personality: Cunning, uncouth, hurried. Moogsy's fine with petty crimes because everyone's gotta do what they can to survive, right? He'd make an excellent station worker, but he hates being tied down and wants to be his own boss. Though he's fine with stealing, he won't hurt anyone directly.

Goals: Make a bit of money and avoid the law.

DANA NAJM, THE CODING CHAOS

Owner of the Black Pyramid club. Dana's parents brought her here from Egypt in her teens; seeing the station ignited her interest in tech and wanting to rebel ignited her interest in hacking. She's officially retired from the hacker community, though she's rumored to be behind the BL00DYT0N9U3 ICE breaker.

Appearance: Striking, occult tattoos, spooky. Dana tries to dress like an evil witch, or at least like she'd get kicked out of church. She's usually wearing a high-tech glove, keyed to her club's AR systems.

Personality: Curious, loyal, playful. Dana likes running a club because it's a place for her and her friends to hang out, running with an AR theme because she's fascinated by how tech can mess with people's perceptions. She spends a lot of time posting on forums and has a lot of contacts in the hacker community.

Goals: Have fun in the Black Pyramid, do a little light hacking on the side.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- Trilobite Liao: p. 248.

TURING WARD

MAX BRODRIG, EVENT HORIZON

Founder of Event Horizon. Max began his political career in high school when he kicked up a fuss about the then-lack of a Christian university in Grand Cross forcing him to apply to "liberal" schools that all rejected him (after looking at his test scores, but details). Max is using most of Event Horizon's money to fund an expensive lifestyle and some cybernetic augmentations.

Appearance: Slick, snappy, smirking. Max dresses to impress no matter the occasion and has taken to importing Rolex holo-watches now that he's flush with Event Horizon money. His blonde hair actually looks like his mother does it ever since he started doing it himself.

Personality: Boastful, sore loser, grifter. Max has noticed that many institutions known for reading and knowing things reject his beliefs but has not worked out why. He wildly exaggerates both his and Event Horizon's accomplishments. As far as he's concerned, he's owed the best in life, and getting corporate donors to fund his augments is just correcting the universe's mistake.

Goals: Keep Event Horizon going; slowly transform into a super-robot.

CAMILLA HYLANDER, TOWER MANAGER

Manager of the Horsehead Tower and a younger member of the Hylander family. Camilla isn't likely to get far in the Hylander Group—her father favors her brothers, they mostly work on Earth, and the Tower job is mostly to give her something to do. She's become just socially aware enough to want to do some good, though she's a little too self-absorbed to do it effectively.

Appearance: Trendy, expensive, regal. Camilla has ringlets in her brown hair, so people know she's a princess type. She's never seen without a jacket and bag from the luxury orbital brand L5V—specifically from their "Camilla Range," which they created to convince her to put their store in the Tower.

Personality: Proud, brash, fashionable. Camilla is an Ashton U graduate with a good head for business, despite what her father thinks. An old friend of hers dying in the Disaster made her reassess her priorities; she's started to think about how she can help people, or at least donate to someone who can help people.

Goals: Manage the Tower and figure out how philanthropy works.

LEETBOY, COLLEGE HACKTIVIST

A hacktivist and GPol postgrad. "Leetboy" was raised by pro gamers and grew up surrounded by tech. His life has been consumed by his thesis, so much so that he sleeps in his library study cube most nights. He plays around with computers when he needs a break. He engages in hacktivism so he still feels connected to the world; he focuses on the Disaster, but he'd go for the Dreamers if he knew about them.

Appearance: Gangly, shaggy, tired. Leetboy wears a thick jacket over old GPol anime club shirts. He seems to fade into the background at the library—he once got himself a cup of coffee from the staff room and nobody noticed. He mostly talks in outdated gaming slang, but an undergrad has taught him "poggers."

Personality: Antisocial, altruistic, weird. Leetboy has been working in the library for so long that he's no longer sure how long it's been, what his thesis is about, or whether the universe is real. The closest he gets to interacting with people is attending anime club screenings upstairs. He's got a strong sense of justice; he's just also got his thesis weighing him down.

Goals: Finish his thesis; clear his head with hacktivism.

ADAM NAJJAR, WARD MAYOR

The mayor of Turing Ward and a member of Union. Adam was elected a couple years ago on a pro-worker platform that he mostly abandoned a few months in. Adam is very big on maintaining the diversity in tech that helped the space rush happen, he's just also big on being wined and dined.

Appearance: Suited, clean, animated. Adam looked youthful when he was elected, but the stress of the job is starting to age him. In public appearances, he tends to mimic the gestures and cadence of successful Earth politicians. Something about the way he smiles makes people want to punch him.

Personality: Engaging, impressionable, centrist. As a centrist, Adam can recognize society's problems but thinks the causes are good. He prefers making slow, incremental improvements which don't upset anyone (except all the people who need them now and know he could deliver, but they don't write big checks).

Goals: Re-election, which Adam currently thinks means maintaining the support of Turing's elite.

THE POSITRONIC MAN, THE ANDROID HIMSELF

An android fashion designer, his own boss and his own brand. TPM is the kind of guy who tells people he defies description. He thinks the solution to androids not having a long culture to draw upon is to make one up as fast and loud as possible. He wants to use his skills to make androids popular so they can do it too.

Appearance: Retro, fashionable, dramatic. TPM's body is a Lilim—specifically a dev unit, all silver with oddly exposed parts. He wears elaborate sci-fi-esque outfits with sweet kicks, as though daring anyone to make fun of him.

Personality: Theatrical, empathetic, fast-moving. TPM has the confidence of a man who knows most android celebrities have him on speed dial. Nearly everything he does is to paint the TPM brand as being cool, fun, and ambitious. If he's angry, he will let you know it. TPM can be surprisingly deliberate and thoughtful, but usually saves it for private situations.

Goals: Advance the brand while figuring out how to stop others profiting off his work.

SLOANE, ANDROID PAINTER

The artist behind Ferrous Bueller's Paint Shop. Sloane has been fascinated by the way androids are still building their cultural identity, and through the shop she hopes to help other androids work it out. She's occasionally targeted by anti-android activists for some of the slogans she paints on androids, but she doesn't care.

Appearance: Colorful, tall, smells like paint. Sloane is an Adams-model android with a canvas-white body covered in cool paint patterns. She has a rodeo jacket she really likes, and it's the only thing she owns not stained with paint.

Personality: Artistic, outgoing, positive. Sloane loves her job. She spends a lot of time wondering what the future will be like, which occasionally veers into making contingency plans. Her pondering about android identity has recently led her to question her gender and whether she feels like a girl all the time.

Goals: Think big thoughts, make cool art.

LEW TUPPER, POLYTECH SECURITY

Chief of Polytech Security Solutions and GPol campus security by extension. Lew entered law enforcement for the power and pivoted to private security for the money. He's trying to arrange for PSS to be bought out because he could get an even more lucrative management job if it works. He might just pull it off.

Appearance: Stiff, muscled, sharply dressed. Lew sports a dark moustache and shades to give himself an air of authority. The student paper once said he looks like an extra from a cop-themed porno, and they're right. He had the sense to get someone with talent to design the PSS uniforms, at least.

Personality: Ambitious, measured, toadying. Lew usually tries to be nice to students and insists his men keep their noses clean, but mostly does these things to increase his chances of getting noticed by one of the big companies. He escalates student protests to give himself an excuse to suppress them because he wants to look tough on the news.

Goals: Keep GPol clean and find a way to get it bought out, ideally by Goliath.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- Derek Baars: p. 250.
- Cyrus Berryman: p. 262.
- Josef Diego: p. 251.
- Divide-0: p. 263.
- Kova Levy: p. 380.
- Trajan: p. 267.

CIXIN WARD

HARMONY AN, TSUNDERE MAID

A maid at the Book Club Café and university student. A lot of Harmony's regulars are Singularists, and while she disagrees with their philosophy, they've inspired her to take AI classes. Harmony is a cyborg, with a lot of tech on the inside and synthetic skin on the externals. She needs the café gig because she sprung for upgrades that made her tougher and stronger. (No regrets.)

Appearance: Cute, rude, wears pink. Harmony's short, sweet exterior belies her sharp tongue; it's part of why her "act" at the café works. She swears in Korean when she's annoyed, which is often. Off work, she wears dresses and ties her blonde hair into a ponytail.

Personality: Assertive, sassy, clever. Harmony is nice to friends, service workers, and polite people, but her café act is mostly just her saying what she really thinks about people who annoy her. She's a huge geek but refuses to let the Singularists find out.

Goals: Complete (and pay off) her education; learn more about AI.

ANDROMEDA BELLIZZI, PHOENIX TAIL

The CEO of Phoenix Tail. Andromeda got her start as a fashion designer, where she earned a reputation for elegant designs, a cool temper, and destroying anyone who crossed her. She started Phoenix Tail after struggling to find a good security company that would let her choose their outfits. She focuses on it over fashion because she finds it less dangerous.

Appearance: Strong, intense, attractive. Andromeda is a middle-aged woman with long bleached-white hair and a thing for pant suits. She keeps in shape with kickboxing. Most people find her gaze "piercing" in much the same way that getting hit by a wrecking ball is "nudging."

Personality: No-nonsense, savvy, merciless. Andromeda is kind to those who show kindness to her. If you make her mad though, she'll let you have it. She votes Union, but she's one of those people who sees the unequal power structures destroying society and thinks the problem is the structures aren't diverse enough.

Goals: Make Phoenix Tail bigger and protect her clients.

HAMISH DOUBLE, FILM DIRECTOR

Adult video director and founder of Orbital Video Products. Hamish was a prospective law student taking a gap year in Europe at the time of the Impact and ended up waiting out the resulting chaos in a Pagan commune before hitchhiking home and becoming an amateur filmmaker. By the time he reached Grand Cross, Hamish had a deep interest in humanity's future and a desire to study it through erotica.

Appearance: Aging, unremarkable, thoughtful. Hamish is exactly what most people don't expect a pornography pioneer to look like: a nondescript guy with plain brown hair, a crappy beard, and little glasses. He puts his hand on his chin when he's deep in thought, which is often.

Personality: Experienced, candid, organized. Hamish is an artist and philosopher whose works explore his belief that, one day, mind uploading technology will merge human and android alike into one harmonious people. His other pet peeve is censorship, though he's careful to distance himself from the "I should be allowed to be racist if I want to" crowd.

Goals: Make films, push for android rights, fight censorship.

SERGEANT LENNART, FUNDRAISING COP

A police sergeant who manages the Liu station's Pulser account in addition to a fundraising stall in the Eden Road night market. Lennart is a cyborg who believes being a cop is a noble profession and people should be emptying their pockets to thank him. (They're saving up for an air hockey table this year.)

Appearance: Rounded, shaved, over-geared. Lennart wears his full uniform with body armor to the stall because he thinks it makes him look manly. His left leg is cybernetic above the knee; he got a high-end military-grade one with a holographic Goliath Inc logo orbiting it.

Personality: Careful, greedy, blowhard. Lennart was given cybernetics and busted down to desk duty after drunkenly shooting himself in the knee, though he tells people it was an android "trained by a Mexican drug cartel." He's not on the take, but he'd love to be.

Goals: Lennart is currently searching the market for criminal activity in hopes of finding someone he can extort bribes from.

ZHAO LIU, STREET ARTIST

A street artist and full-body cyborg who mostly works in the Liu district (no relation). Zhao gets her discarded tech through thrift stores, leads/donations from her Pulser followers, and cyber-clinics. Zhao used to do it for fun but is trying to become a full-time artist now. Her main obstacle is the weirdos from Apevert (p. 243) stealing her work.

Appearance: Athletic, cheery, sportswear. Zhao's parents cyberized her to deal with a serious childhood illness, so her face is based on a computer-generated, aged-up version of her original with pink eyes. Her body is agile as hell, and she prefers to sit on/hang from high places when she can.

Personality: Creative, curious, laid-back. Zhao is fascinated by the connections between man, machine, android, and the digital world, which she explores through her artwork. She's normally easygoing; the only thing that seems to annoy her is people disrespecting her art.

Goals: Find a way to stop Apevert and become a full-time artist.

DOCTOR MALIK, ANDROID DOCTOR

An android who does illegal maintenance work for androids and cyborgs. Malik was created to be a nurse in a country that still hasn't granted androids all the rights they have on Grand Cross, which has influenced a lot of her thinking. She believes androids should have full sovereignty over their bodies and sees her operation as giving it to them.

Appearance: Short, serious, busy. Malik's Lilim model was explicitly designed to look like a cute nurse. As android work is mostly engineering, she wears a black work jumpsuit with a lot of pockets, ratty old sneakers, and her blue hair tucked into a kerchief. She rolls the sleeve of her right arm up because she's got a lot of tools in there.

Personality: Trustworthy, compassionate, cynical. Malik agrees with a lot of Law Zero's philosophies, but not their methods. Criminals go to her because she avoids asking questions she won't like the answer to. She doesn't actually mind humans, she just wishes they'd stay out of android affairs.

Goals: Give androids body care in defiance of the law.

ROSCO TASMAN, RED SUN MICROSYSTEMS

A corporate spy posing as a Red Sun branch manager. Rosco seeks out local hackers and, through money or blackmail, recruits them to spy on the Cartel for Red Sun. He honestly couldn't care less about Grand Cross, but if he succeeds, he'll shoot up the Red Sun's ranks.

Appearance: Sharp, "harmless," fast-paced. Rosco is a clean-shaven black man who dresses like he just read a book on looking successful but didn't really get it. It's a ruse to make people think he's harmless—in private, Rosco's dry wit and veiled threats can cut a man in half.

Personality: Brilliant, determined, forceful. Rosco's strategy is simple: find a weak point he can use and apply maximum pressure. When he's making deals or legitimately hiring people, he's a man of his word who treats everyone fairly. He misses Earth and surrounds himself with Earth paraphernalia.

Goals: Collect enough intel on the Cartel that he can return home a hero.

GERLACH STERN, CYBORG BARTENDER

Owner of Götz von Berlichingen's. When Gerlach had to replace his left hand, his old boss started discriminating against him out of a belief in LMJ Syndrome; this pushed Gerlach into lifelong cyborg activism. He's stopped attending protests and the like—he's getting a little too old to risk the police cracking his skull again—but tries to keep doing things behind the scenes.

Appearance: Old, weathered, approachable. Gerlach is one of those older people you instinctively know has stories to tell. He sports pointed white hair, a beard, and bright blue eyes. He used to put synthetic skin on his cyber-hand but leaves it off these days to show he's a proud cyborg.

Personality: Reliable, experienced, optimist. You guessed it—Gerlach has been through a lot in his life and has a lot of wisdom to dispense. He respects people who deal with problems by rolling up their sleeves and taking matters into their own hands, especially if it involves punching a cop and getting away with it.

Goals: Keep the bar going; support cyborg activists.

RANDY BABIN, ORBIT FIVE

CEO of Orbit Five entertainment. Randy has built up a reputation as a genius ladies' man who pushes boundaries with his work, and he's pretty good at maintaining the act provided you don't have to interact with him for more than ten minutes. In reality, he's an insufferable prick who relies on the Void Dragon to cover for his deficiencies.

Appearance: Smooth, thin, smoking. Randy's got stage presence but not charisma; he can draw people's attention, but without the artificial charm his status provides he just comes off as an asshole. He wears sports coats, jeans, pompadours, and sweet kicks every chance he gets.

Personality: Charming exterior, grody interior. Randy uses and discards people regularly, especially the women his company works with. Away from the cameras he is cranky, envious, and prone to forgetting people's names. Randy is easily cowed by the Void Dragon because he has no leverage over them.

Goals: Keep the Orbit Five media empire running; stay in good with the Void Dragon.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- Goro Asano: p. 246.
- Virgo Asano: p. 246.
- Lewis Carpenter: p. 268.
- Lathan Tan: p. 256.
- Somchai: p. 258.

ADAMS WARD

DWIGHT DUNKEL, ADAMS LANDLORD

Landlord of the Blue Mood Tower. Dwight inherited a ton of Earth real estate from his wealthy family and thinks selling it to buy orbital real estate makes him a self-made man. Tetsuo has tapped him to test out their new smart home devices and they have no idea what they're getting into.

Appearance: Round face, wrinkled eyes, glasses. Dwight has worn the same short dark hair and beard for twenty years, but the dress shirts with rolled-up sleeves are a new thing he's trying. He usually has a few pieces of tech clipped to his belt.

Personality: Self-possessed, good with numbers, paranoid. Dwight monitors his tenants to make sure they're not costing him money and uses smart home devices to hassle them for rent. He thinks he has to do these things because he sees people who aren't wealthy as second-class citizens.

Goal: Make money and make sure his tenants aren't up to no good.

WESLEY DUNKEL, DWIGHT'S SON

Wesley's son, who lives in the Blue Mood's basement. A few years from now Wesley is probably going to start a business, get six figures of seed money from his dad, and decide he's a self-made man. In the meantime, he's gotten a little too into people-watching with his dad's spy setup.

Appearance: Round-faced, terrible moustache, off-putting. Wesley got nearly everything from his dad except the ability to grow facial hair. He's in his late teens and still prone to making goofy decisions; his latest is copying the speech and mannerisms of Derek Baars in an attempt to seem cool. It's not working.

Personality: Ambitious, try-hard, nosy. Wesley is thinking of starting a YourTube channel. At first he started spying on tenants to get inspiration for his works, but now he's just fascinated by them. He doesn't think things through, so he'll probably get a little too creepy with someone soon.

Goal: Spy on tenants; dream of being an internet celebrity.

Finnbogi, Black Market Leader

Operator of the Kyläkauppa Market. Finnbogi was once a middle manager for the Earth corporation Valtion Mittaritehdas before it collapsed; he and his coworkers stole everything in the tower that wasn't nailed down. Their stolen tech business somehow bloomed into a whole market, and they're happy to take advantage as long as they can.

Appearance: Plain, long blonde hair, glasses. Back in the office, Finnbogi was just some guy in suspenders who got on well with people by keeping his head down. Today his look has been enhanced by fancier jackets, bigger cigars, and a more confident attitude.

Personality: Fatherly, dealmaker, assertive. Finnbogi is honestly less bothered by the world of crime than the cut-throat world of corporate politics. He prefers to solve problems non-violently, and he's good at figuring out what people want. His crew are mostly ex-employees, so he runs his gang like an office.

Goal: Keep the Market running. However, Finnbogi figures it'll be put out of business soon—either by more modern online endeavors or Réamann being fixed up—and is already making plans to restart his life in Artemis.

Rahul Joshi, Refugee Leader

Leader of a group of Disaster refugees in Réamann. Rahul convinced a friend to take him to space to get away from his abusive parents, and post-Disaster they've been making the resettling process difficult in an effort to force him home. He befriended his fellow refugees on the trip to Grand Cross and they've stuck together since.

Appearance: Tall, awkward, seemingly cheerful. Rahul is always quick with a smile, which is a lot of the reason the other refugees follow him. Up until recently he was used to a quieter life as a copywriter, and he's clearly still grappling with his situation. He pulls himself together quick in a crisis, though.

Personality: Worried but faking it, good sense of humor. Rahul does not like his situation at all but knows he'd hate Earth more, so he's doing his best to keep his spirits up. His usual mood is "too busy and broke to see a therapist."

Goal: Keep his fellows safe until they can get properly settled on Grand Cross.

Nathan Levesque, Levistrode

Entrepreneur and CEO of the coding and data entry company Levistrode. Nathan is an ambitious man who thinks he has the chops to join the Offworld Cartel—though he could if he had a more interesting company. Unfortunately, he is not an introspective man.

Appearance: Broad-shouldered, long black hair, goatee. Nathan looks like a classier breed of devil in a well-tailored suit. He has a cybernetic left leg to replace a knee he busted playing football in his youth.

Personality: Avaricious, clever, grudge-holding. Nathan tends to blame speed bumps on his path to the top on others rather than any mistake on his part and is much more likely to double down than reconsider his plans. He currently blames Geryon Aerospace for his stalled rise to the top.

Goal: Grow his company, get into the Cartel, take Geryon Aerospace down a peg.

Madoka Mawaru, Pro Gamer

A mid-tier pro fighting game player and keyboardist in the Double Crosser band Breakfast Cult. (She'd place higher in tournaments if she weren't so busy with her synth.) Madoka knows practically everything there is to know about the station's gaming scene, including the inner workings of the arcade cabinets and IR chips.

Appearance: Bubbly, friendly, creepy-cute skull pins. Madoka is a cheerful lady with a messy brown ponytail and the nimble, calloused hands of a longtime gamer. Her wheelchair is covered in gamer-themed stickers and has a bag full of tech slung over the back. She uses a lot of Orbital-dialect gamer slang.

Personality: Optimist, whip-smart, huge dork. Madoka is happiest when she's got a controller in her hands, her fingers on some keys, or a piece of tech disassembled in front of her. Her true passion is gaming, but her bandmates are her best friends and she's pretty sure she'll literally die without social contact.

Goal: Play the synth, game, take apart gaming tech to see how it works.

ZYLER PARKES, SPACE SHOW CELEB

Owner of Swirly Thing Media (p. 174). Zyler won an early season of *Ground Control to Andrew G* and has been trying to turn it into fame and fortune ever since. He's found moderate success as a "content curator," stealing other people's work to build up his own HeoCities page and selling his services as a marketer.

Appearance: Manufactured, theatrical, dead-eyed. Zyler spends more time on his "just-threw-this-outfit-on" look and blonde-dyed Ivy League cut than he'd admit. He tends to play up his Aussie accent and fake laughter when making public appearances. He's never seen without his custom Tetsuo AR headset and hacker deck, which he doesn't know how to use properly.

Personality: Driven, savvy, short-sighted. Zyler is charismatic in a by-the-numbers way: he knows how to relate to people and market himself, but he's not very creative unless it comes to coming up with moral justifications for his actions. His desperation is a little more obvious than he thinks it is.

Goals: Zyler's dream is to become a major orbital celebrity, ideally with a half-hour daily show where he shows funny videos he found.

JONNO SENDAI, TECH DEALER

A black market tech dealer who mostly trades in stolen goods, hacker tools, and unfinished corporate tech. Jonno used to work for Tetsuo but was fired for filing a HR complaint against a supervisor who made comments about his half-Irish background. At first he just sold some of their unreleased work to their competitors, but he's discovered a real talent for the black market business.

Appearance: Bony, slick black hair, goatee. Jonno has a slight hunch due to a bad case of computer neck. He still insists on wearing his old 90s-style office clothes to "work" every day. One of his arms is a Tetsuo upgrade; he wasn't coerced into getting it, but he does regret it enough to remove the logo.

Personality: Nervous, business-savvy, spiteful. Jonno is great at making connections with disgruntled workers and using them to steal from the Cartel but is starting to worry that Tetsuo is catching on to him. He still sees his work as getting revenge on Tetsuo and hasn't really planned what to do next.

Goal: Hurt Tetsuo's business until he's satisfied all while not getting caught.

BALDOMERO "BALDO" VÁZQUEZ, BUILDER BARTENDER

Owner of Baldo's Bus Stop. Baldo helped build Réamann in the early years and opened the bar to give his children something to inherit. He's got a reputation for dispensing wisdom to people who ask, or at least recounting stories of Earth and letting people take what they want from it.

Appearance: Sweet moustache, heavy-set, shiny head. Baldo is an aging Builder with cheap cyber-hands and a collection of ratty old shirts which only barely hide his tattoos. He gives off a "cool uncle" vibe.

Personality: Gregarious, commanding, well-travelled. Baldo did a lot of travelling post-Impact and picked up a wide variety of skills, proverbs, and fragments of languages while he was there. He's active in the Grand Cross Motorcycle Club and does his best thinking when he's driving down one of the station's arterials. He's pretty content to spend his twilight years in a place he built for himself.

Goal: Run his bar, ride his bike, help out locals.

WEI WANG, RALLY "ORGANIZER"

A big social media influencer and budding activist. Wei is more interested in being seen at rallies than doing anything effective. The sponsors of Hologram Plaza have tapped him to "organize" the rallies there, and just as planned, he's neutered them.

Appearance: Cool, handsome, cyber-eye. Wei owns a cap with his social media handle on it and has made the symbol of his brand a glowing blue ring to match his cybernetic left eye (he streams through it a lot.) Wei speaks Orbital English while streaming, but sometimes totally blanks on the words he's thinking of and substitutes Earth Mandarin instead.

Personality: Self-absorbed, well-meaning, enthusiastic. If Wei is handed a microphone, the first thing he says is his social media handles. His rallies tend to be fun but ineffective, with a lot of thanking the police, missing the point, and chiding people for killing the vibe. He gets mad if people call him Wrong Wei, so obviously people do it often.

Goal: Increase his follower count; host fun rallies.

RANIA XANTHOPOULOS, DEAD BEAT

Owner of the Dead Beats bar in the Russell district. Rania knows a lot about the station's graffiti scene—she was one of the pioneers. She retired after falling off the Cross Rail and ruining her legs, but she's a trusted advisor for most serious artists.

Appearance: Fidgety, blue hair, huge headphones. Rania is usually listening to music to drown out her tinnitus (though she's thinking of getting a cybernetic implant.) Her cyber-legs have blue synthetic skin usually chosen by androids; during special events at the bar, she uses makeup to paint part of her face blue for a sort of zombie look.

Personality: Odd tastes, accepting, music lover. Rania's life has had a lot of odd twists and turns, but she copes with everything life throws her way. She's an anti-authoritarian who helps the station's graffiti artists out of respect for the craft. Her two other hobbies are amateur astronomy and virtual idols.

Goal: Help the station's graffiti artists; run her bar.

BLAYDE WARLOCK, TECHNO-ARTIST

Blayde is a digital artist and decent hacker who does a lot of work with procedural generation and projector installations. He was recently kicked out of the Rad Netizens artist collective (and their Mind's Eye art museum) for being a jerk and wants revenge. That is his actual name.

Appearance: Frosted tips, trench coat, mirror shades. Blayde gets a new tattoo whenever he's stressed, and a lot of them are words in languages he doesn't speak; the most prominent is a Japanese tattoo on his neck which he thinks says "space" but actually says "beef".

Personality: Creative, overcompensating, paranoid. Blayde is very good at what he does but is also constantly worried about "looking weak", or that other people are conspiring to make him look weak. (This led him to overstate his importance in the Rad Netizens until the others kicked him out.) Very easily flattered.

Goal: Blayde compromised the Mind's Eye's systems before he was kicked out, just in case; he's planning to use that to get revenge at their next big event.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- Susie Darling: p. 357.
- Tony Osborn: p. 263.

MARUKYU WARD

IZAYOI AINO, PHOTOGRAPHER

Owner of the UFO Café. Izayoi is an oddball artist who wants to live at the edge of space; not just the frontier of human civilization, but one of the weird bits where the normal people haven't caught up yet. On Earth, she's well-known for a book of space photography.

Appearance: Weird, charming, spaceship pins. Izayoi has a lot of tattoos of cutting lines with scissors in places cybernetics connectors are typically installed. She cuts her brown hair straight across the shoulders so she can serve drinks in the Men in Black Bar on Saturdays. She dresses pretty normally; her weirdness is more of an aura.

Personality: Creative, many-sided, indecisive. Izayoi has trouble committing to things outside her artistic pursuits and tends to bounce ideas off her friends for feedback even when she knows what the answer is. She has some complicated feelings about her gender identity and is debating whether becoming a full-body cyborg would help her express them.

Goal: Besides the café and the cyborg thing, Izayoi is working on a new photography book.

HUNTER DEADMAN, KOALA MC

Owner and MC of the Ring of Coolant fight club. Hunter is a mysterious, wealthy full-body cyborg who never leaves his home, wherever it is. Instead, he remotely operates a robotic koala body. Hunter is a weird guy who believes altruism is a myth and runs an android fighting club for fun.

Appearance: Waist-high koala, Hawaiian shirts. Hunter is a gregarious party animal. His anthropomorphic koala body is cutting-edge tech, with speakers in the ears and realistic fur.

Personality: Self-serving, friendly, capitalist. Hunter believes that civilized society is based on transactions, all crime is based on taking without giving, and humanity will eventually move to a post-scarcity, neo-capitalist future where entertainment will be the primary currency. He's not just entertaining—he's preparing.

Goal: Run the Ring of Coolant while keeping his identity a secret.

IZZY KAIJOU, NET CAFÉ OWNER

Competitive gamer and owner of the Early Access net café. Izzy spent some of her teen years as one of the cyber-homeless in this very café—the former owner gave her a job and eventually transferred the store to her when she retired. She's got a soft spot for the homeless and has gotten hard into Disaster activism lately.

Appearance: Messy, careful, stressed. Even as a business owner, Izzy has a strong NEET aura. She wears occult jewelry and goth arm sleeves plus stockings with all her outfits. She has a lot of tangled hair and tired late-night-gaming-session eyes, though lately it's mostly stress from thinking about 2020.

Personality: Determined, optimist, empathic. Izzy has gotten the worst day of her life out of the way already and is determined to make the rest better by lifting other people up. She still games competitively under the name Terror Matcha, but her new hobbies are causing her skills to slip. Her latest hobby is collecting and restoring electronics.

Goal: Run the café; give something back to the community.

KANA KOBASHI, SWEETS LOVER

Owner of the Sweet Heaven café. Kana is a huge sweets fan who ran a blog on sweets in Grand Cross before opening her shop. She's had first-hand experience with toxic work environments that push reactive augments, so she goes out of her way to help people navigate the same crap she went through.

Appearance: Serious, thin, hime-style haircut. Kana normally comes off as mildly pleasant, but when she's annoyed, she looks about five seconds away from uttering a curse that will turn you to ash (it's something about the eyes.) Her preferred outfit is something fashionable just long enough ago that it's cheap now.

Personality: Polite, perceptive, careful. Kana is good at reading people but tends to close herself off from others. She has an old sales job she misses but has had too many bad bosses to go back to working for someone else. She believes you can understand people by sharing a meal with them.

Goal: Run her café; connect disgruntled employees to cyborg activists.

OLD MAN MICK, TECH GUY

Owner of Spiral Nerdula and provider of jailbreaking services. A few years back, an old friend of his passed away and left him all their gaming stuff; he opened the store to find it a new home. He didn't actually get into gaming until afterward. Mick worked in software when MS-DOS was cool, and he's a big open software guy.

Appearance: White hair, mutton chops, still in shape. Mick has the knowing eyes of an old person who has seen it all before, even the new stuff (his vision is terrible without his glasses, though.) He dresses more fashionably the older he gets.

Personality: Mirthful, patient, tale-teller. Mick is only a couple years out from retirement, but he still feels spry. Most of his friends have passed on or drifted apart, but he's content to cherish what he had and pass on what he's learned. He has a great relationship with his grandkids, who sometimes handle customers while he jailbreaks things in the back.

Goal: Run his businesses; give advice to young folks.

NEKOMATA, CAT CAFÉ ANDROID

Owner of Copypaste Cats. Nekomata (it's her nickname) is a young android—young enough for most androids to consider her a Double Crosser. She runs a cat café because she loves cats. She rescues Disaster youth because she sees it as taking care of her own people.

Appearance: Busy fingers, cat pupils, café-branded shirts. Nekomata is an Adams-model android with brown skin and orange hair. She tends to gesture a lot when she talks, like she's trying to shape her thoughts with her hands.

Personality: Lively, brash, dreamer (not the robotic kind). Nekomata doesn't see much difference between humans and androids, which isn't an uncommon view among those whose first model was the Adams. She's a big believer in community, as she's only ever had experience with corrupt governments and unhelpful police.

Goal: Help Disaster orphan youth get back on their feet.

Dendy Sobol, Movie Guy

Operator of the Destroy All Movies theater. Dendy loves 90s media, and the theater is mostly an excuse to share his love with the station. Dendy got extremely political in the wake of the Impact and set up his film festivals to feel like he was making a difference.

Appearance: Fluffy hair, scruffy beard, restless. Dendy is a youthful-looking Slavic man in tinted shades who usually gives the impression he's stopping on his way to something else to make time for you. An image search for "90s men's fashion" will turn up at least one of his outfits.

Personality: Nostalgic, outspoken, thoughtful. Dendy longs for a time before the Impact, but in the absence of a time machine he's prepared to make the best of it. He usually responds to threats with an offer to fight him; nobody's taken him up on it so far, which is a shame because he means it.

Goal: Run the theater and set up another film festival.

Mizar Tsukimi, Space Shrine Owner

The priest who runs the Space Shrine. Mizar wasn't as religious as his siblings when he came to space, but sometimes watching the Earth hang in a starry void changes you. Mizar is content to run his little shrine and help with the yearly festival, but sometimes his corporate past catches up to him.

Appearance: Peaceful, shaved, polished. Mizar wears his past on his body: he has Impact tattoos from his moody teen years, and his movements, posture, and gestures still remind people of a hardcore office drone.

Personality: Kind, contemplative, stubborn. Mizar tends to take a lot of time to think before making decisions, sometimes even for small ones. He has a long, complicated past. Sometimes corporate people in suits come to ask him for help, and he obliges only if they're not asking for him to come back.

Goal: Maintain the space shrine; put the past behind him.

Zigamorph "Ziga", Hacker Maidroid

Owner of the Evil Maid Attack café. Ziga has spent a lot of her life in Space Town and sees it as her second upbringing. She picked up a love for tech here, and the only thing keeping her from pivoting to AI research professionally is a fear that turning her hobby into her job might ruin it for her.

Appearance: Deadpan, cosplay, piercing gaze. Ziga has an Adams-model body with a massive pink ponytail. At work she wears a long, elaborate maid outfit with both the sleeves and the synthetic skin on her arms removed for aesthetic reasons. She seems to see more than she lets on.

Personality: Huge nerd, helpful, reserved. Ziga is a big geek with a love of computers but feels more comfortable expressing it online or as part of her maid persona. She takes pride in knowing everything going on in Space Town and most of what goes on in Marukyu. She has a deep interest in AI too, and tracks rumors and developments in the AI world.

Goal: Run Evil Maid Attack; research AI.

Other Characters

- Shinji Enzai: p. 257.
- Hayate Jones: p. 249.
- Chii Noda: p. 256.
- Tony #618: p. 258.

MARIPOSA WARD

FITZY AND DAMO, COFFEE BOYS

Owners of Hot One With The Boys. These two boys are partners for life. They met in university and hit it off immediately; when Fitzy won a space ticket, he knew who he was taking. They recently moved to Grand Cross from Artemis and are set on making coffee that can appeal to both humans and androids. They're listed together because they are a package deal.

Appearance: Athletic, attractive, glued at the hip. Fitzy's a strapping blonde man with a shaved chin and a lot of body hair; Damo's a corporate-model Lilim with a cool blue fauxhawk. They have a complicated personal high-five and matching COFFEE BOYS t-shirts. They do not care what you think.

Personality: Friendly, educated, wholesome. They're both extremely chill boys, but generally Fitzy is the action-first-plan-later guy and Damo is the other way around. Both like the way food and drink bring people together, especially coffee (though Damo mostly enjoys the smell.)

Goal: Run their coffeeshop; bring humans and androids together.

DR ALTAMIRO SANTOS DELGADO, EYE DOCTOR

Owner of Visions and the master of eyes. Doctor Delgado is a cybernetics expert who takes pride in his work. He charges high fees for his more complex designs so he can afford to keep making them, but he makes a point of providing regular, modestly priced eyes on the side for those who need them.

Appearance: Trim, bony, proud. Delgado is a man with receding salt-and-pepper hair, proud brown eyes (his originals), and some of the most delicate hands you've ever seen. When he's not working, he dresses in the kind of tweed that was fashionable in the 70s.

Personality: Old-fashioned, picky, unhurried. Delgado is a master craftsman who says "you can't rush art" at least once per client. To him, artistic augments are a way to transcend one's humanity and become something more; he works with eyes because they're the window to the soul. Delgado's body is starting to get too old for his work, and he plans to become a full-body cyborg soon.

Goal: Make more eyes; become a cyborg.

ISABEL DELGADO, DOCTOR'S ASSISTANT

Doctor Delgado's Double Crosser daughter. Isabel aims to become a doctor too but would prefer to work with the disadvantaged rather than follow in his footsteps. At the moment she works in his clinic, screening clients so he doesn't have to. Anyone who wants to talk to him goes through her.

Appearance: Tall, lanky, bouncy. Isabel looks like she was drawn with mostly vertical lines, with a tall, narrow body and long dark hair. She makes up for it by smiling widely and gesturing to the sides with her hands while she talks.

Personality: Trendy, easygoing, energetic. Isabel reveres her father's work but not his wealthy clients, who she sees as a pack of greedy parasites who'll be first against the wall when the revolution comes. She doesn't say that out loud, but she is obstructively bureaucratic with clients who talk down to her. With her friends, she's all smiles.

Goal: Learn from her father and screen his clients.

FONG HO, UNITY SENATOR

A Unity senator representing Mariposa. On the outside, Fong is a model politician who presents himself as a more moderate alternative to his authoritarian colleagues. On the inside, Fong is a manipulative jerk who cares only for power and carefully crafts his image to help him with a future run for Prime Minister.

Appearance: Handsome, sparkling smile, gold ties. Everything about Fong's appearance, from his dark bangs to his habit of slinging his jacket over his shoulder, is crafted to make him look like a fresh new face who could be Prime Minister one day. Nobody has ever seen what he looks like when he drops the act and cuts loose.

Personality: Manipulative, chameleonic, power-hungry. If this were an anime, Fong would have an internal monologue narrating the genius plans behind his every action. He's good with people, but his ideal friend is someone weaker who agrees that Grand Cross needs someone like Fong to straighten it out. He's currently sabotaging Unity with strategic leaks in preparation for an early-2020s leadership challenge.

Goal: Sabotage Unity; amass connections and power.

SIRIUS KING, ADAMS LANDLORD

Sirius is a wealthy investor who owns several apartment blocks in SoCo—officially the Riviera district, but he's trying to rename it because when people do things like that on Earth it makes rent go up. He is obsessed with how manly he looks.

Appearance: Strong, gold jewelry, big beard. Sirius works out for fun and wears polo shirts in an attempt to show off his biceps. He has a long list of things he won't do because he thinks they're unmanly, including apologizing, expressing emotions with his mouth, or making eye contact with married women.

Personality: Aggressive, masculine, insecure. Sirius has way too many "man rules" for someone who has never been in a fight. He's currently dealing with a lawsuit for telling a tenant he's not renewing her lease because she doesn't wear makeup when she goes out.

Goal: Collect rent; get manlier.

DR DAVID MORENO, APOLLO TENANT

A doctor who runs the Apollo clinic. Smythe (p. 189, 344) wanted a doctor who'd have incentive to live in the tower, and he chose Moreno because he has a kid who's just starting school. Moreno is a recovering alcoholic and single father; he's doing his best, and it's been okay so far. He avoids doing more than the legal minimum for the poor floors because he doesn't want to rock the boat.

Appearance: Fit, square-jawed, mousy hair. Moreno has worked hard to clean himself up and get back in shape, but still sports a five o'clock shadow at all times. He wears a lot of suits because that's what the Uppers seem to expect. One of his eyes is a slightly off-color cybernetic implant that helps his diagnostic work.

Personality: Doting, jaded, conformist. Moreno isn't a huge fan of Smythe or the upper floor residents, but they think he's one of them because he's a well-paid doctor and he sees no reason to disabuse them of that notion. He does his best to fit in and take care of his daughter.

Goal: Keep the Tower's residents healthy, stay on Smythe's good side, raise Angel.

YOUNG-SOO PARK, ARCOLOGY ARCHITECT

CEO of Jingnyeo Industrial, a Korean family conglomerate. Young-soo rocketed to fame and fortune after his company was contracted to build the Daejeon Arcology. He came to Grand Cross in 2019 to investigate a potential space expansion, where he promptly suffered an undisclosed accident that technically killed him.

If Young-soo is actually declared dead, Korea's inheritance tax rules mean his family will owe the government a lot of money—enough to set back Arcology construction and break their burgeoning corporate dynasty. Instead, they took him to the Jarilo Hotel in the hopes that experimental cybernetic advancements will keep him going. Results have been mixed.

Appearance: Withered, covered in tech. In his media appearances, Young-soo was a surprisingly active old man who looked like he'd styled his hair in a wind tunnel. Now he's a lukewarm body in a life-support tank surrounded by two rooms worth of life-extending medical tech, with cables and plugs crammed into his head.

Personality: Capitalist, detached, inhuman. In life, Young-soo was a brilliant, ambitious engineer who thought a new form of capitalism would need to be invented for space. These days the orders that issue from the terminal connected to his brain are more concerned with advancing cybernetics tech and hoarding wealth.

Goal: With current technology, any attempt to fit a full-body cyborg connection to Young-soo's elderly brain would probably kill him. He aims to cybernetically rejuvenate himself at any cost.

WILSON RACKHAM, MORNINGSTAR HOST

Wilson is a wealthy right-wing talk show host and one of the Orbital Reform Party's biggest proponents on television. He believes Grand Cross is the future of mankind but thinks they should have screened harder for things like wealth, good genetics, and political views that align with his.

Appearance: Big hair, big forehead, aviators. With his outdated auburn hairstyle and cheap suits, Wilson looks like a bad wax sculpture of a 70s movie spy. He goes out of his way to look like he's listening intently when other people speak but tends to rant when politics is brought up.

Personality: Nationalist, thorough, assertive. Wilson is weirdly anti-immigrant considering Grand Cross is ten years old and isn't full yet. He loves that space settlements are entirely planned and man-made but thinks they should be reserved for wealthy intellectuals (like him, presumably.) He's racist, but assumes all rich non-white people are "one of the good ones."

Goal: Keep doing his talk show; push ORP policies and rhetoric.

MIĉJO RACKHAM, APOLLO KID

Wilson Rackham's Double Crosser nephew. He lives with his uncle in Apollo Tower but spends most of his free time messing around in the Magpie room. Miĉjo is better with tech than most the Uppers, but probably shouldn't have been trusted with any.

Appearance: Scrawny, big forehead, preppy. Miĉjo dresses like the Uppers to impress his uncle, even at school. To strangers, he tends to come off as an entitled little creep. Seeing attractive women and happy couples makes him angry for reasons he hasn't figured out yet.

Personality: Lonely, angry, entitled. Miĉjo is a creepy little bully. Between his uncle's rants and YourTube constantly suggesting he switch from video game streams to "Round Earth Feminists DESTROYED Cringe Compilation 3," his brain had no chance of turning out normal. His dream job is making synthetic skin covers for cybernetic feet, for reasons we won't get into.

Goal: Play around with the Magpies; meet girls.

HORACE REEVE, CEO OF HOMEBOTICS

Horace is the guy behind a lot of Mariposa's robotic animals. He's a big fan of robots in general and envisions an automated world that tends to everyone's needs. He hasn't managed it yet, but he's fine with working for NanoFuturistics to build the funds he needs to keep trying new robotic inventions.

Appearance: Stout, pointy, cybernetic. Horace's most distinctive feature is a pointy red beard, which is impressive considering he has two cybernetic arms with multitool fingers. His green eyes light up whenever he gets a new idea, which is often.

Personality: Forward-thinking, well-meaning, odd ideas. Horace has a habit of inventing cool things but not realizing what most people would actually use them for—his station-decorating animals are only the latest in a long line of these. His main problem is that he understands robots but not people. Though as long as people find a use for his robots, he's happy.

Goal: Invent the next leap in automation.

LUA SAETIAO, APOLLO TENANT

A resident of Apollo Tower's poor floors and a part-time engineering student at GPol. Lua is secretly the daughter of a mid-tier Void Dragon member who sent her here to let her live a normal life. Lua has jailbroken the poor floor appliances to help her new neighbors, which could be bad if the landlords find out—for them, if they lay a finger on a Void Dragon's kid.

Appearance: Tired, chubby, emo. Lua has the worn but happy look of someone who keeps watching anime instead of sleeping, long hair she can't be bothered cutting, and an endless supply of rock band shirts. Her speech is riddled with Orbital English slang and anime references; sometimes she needs to switch to Thai for her parents to understand her.

Personality: Confident, otaku, anti-authoritarian. Lua is a self-taught hacker who was radicalized when she realized Unity had screwed her out of the free housing they'd all received. She's vaguely aware her parents are Void Dragon members but doesn't care—it's not like they're cops or anything. She makes a point of befriending her neighbors.

Goal: Watch anime; jailbreak the tower's Blunchtime devices; don't get caught.

AMAL WARD

ALUDRA ADAMS, FLYING BURGER

Owner of the Flying Burger. Aludra was abandoned in Grand Cross by her parents when she came out as gay, but she managed to claw her way back to a stable life with the help of her friends and a lawyer who helped her keep her parents' work contract apartment. She's determined to pay it forward by helping other youth.

Appearance: Wide smile, Canis Major tattoo, messy red hair. Aludra found a bunch of old varsity jackets in a thrift store once and decided to make them her thing. She's still a little cautious in her actions, worried that her life could come apart again at any moment.

Personality: Determined, nervous, artful. Aludra's upbringing mostly consisted of lists of things she couldn't do because they'd embarrass her parents, and she's still prone to fretting about things. That all goes out the window if she gets a chance to help others; then her creative talents and drive to make things happen shine through.

Goals: Run the Flying Burger; help youth; find out how to talk to girls.

THE AUSTRALIAN, SOFTWARE FENCE

Owner of Astro Holographix. The Australian (real name withheld, but his mates call him Bill) is a technical engineer who gets black market and hacker tech from mysterious associates and sells it in secret at his electronics store. His strange Australian ways are a little hard to understand.

Appearance: Strong, portly, mustached. The Australian's big head and stocky frame make him look like someone shaved a wombat and forced it into office clothes. He has a heavy "ocker" accent and tends to drop a lot of Aussie slang.

Personality: Cheerful, loyal, professional. The Australian treats all his customers well, whether they're buying over or under the counter. It's unclear whether he has a personal life, but if he does, he keeps it separate from his professional life. His pleasant attitude and habit of chatting to people about Earth are genuine, though.

Goals: Run Astro Holographix; sell under-the-counter tech.

JONATHONY BARKER, MORNINGSTAR PUNDIT

An opinion columnist and occasional TV pundit for Morningstar. Barker's political views are fairly standard Unity fare—the government should cut regulations, feminism is bad, and so on. His main selling point is that he's a teenager, someone Morningstar can point to and say, "Look, even Double Crossers agree with you!"

Appearance: Thin, brown curls, pimply. Barker wears a suit, tartan pants, holds a cane, and acts how he thinks an adult should, which makes him look like an aging comedian sent back in time to his own childhood. He's a prodigy at working a crowd.

Personality: Straight-talking, Christian, chameleonic. Barker's a private school prick who has always aspired to be on TV. He had most of his views drilled into him by his conservative parents, though unlike them he's a big proponent of android rights and blasts Unity's refugee policy as an absurd waste of time.

Goals: Be on television; get into Ashton.

DAUD DALE, COFFEE GUY

Owner of Ta'al la Oullak. Daud is a simple man with a simple routine. He was running his father's coffee place on Earth when he won a space ticket, so he's running it in space now. Daud's son is a university student who works with computers, and Daud's taking it up as a hobby in an effort to get closer to him.

Appearance: Paunchy, friendly, thick beard. Daud was a looker in his youth, but he's let himself go a little since, though he's still got some moves. He folds his arms in many different ways depending on his mood—most people get the Listening Intently fold, but if he does the Angry fold, look out.

Personality: Content, doting, eager. Daud is content with his life and mostly plans to strengthen his bond with his son to make sure they stay close when he moves out. Daud's on good terms with most of his hacker regulars and is willing to make connections for people with honest intentions and a firm handshake.

Goals: Learn more about computers to impress his son.

DISKLESS JACK, FORMER HACKER

Owner of the Schattenlauf bar. Jack used to work freelance for various Earth corporations, but when he screwed up and got outed by a journalist the work dried up. He's currently in semi-retirement as a bartender while he waits for a chance to get back in the game.

Appearance: Brown ponytail, stubble, sweet jacket. Jack looks like a thirty-something and will continue looking like that for a very long time. His hacker talk is all weirdly masculine and sexual: hacking is about "penetrating" systems, powerful hackers have a "big dick," etc.

Personality: Experienced, individualist, ingenious. To Jack, hacking and playing with tech is about being a console cowboy in the wild frontier between humanity and its future. Diskless Jack is a nickname people gave him to tease him about his mistakes on Earth, and he's a little too focused on earning a new one. Like his clientele, Jack is more reactionary than he thinks he is.

Goals: Build up the Schattenlauf; get back in the hacking game.

ARVID MALAR, GROWKWIK

CEO of GrowKwik. Arvid is a Canadian-born businessman obsessed with "disruption," the Silicon Valley techno-Darwinist kind where you ruthlessly exploit others for cash and blame them for not stopping you. He's aware that his product doesn't do much for most people besides charge them money, he just doesn't care.

Appearance: Big toothy smile, rosy cheeks, brown goatee. Arvid has a cybernetic right hand from a childhood accident with added golden light strips so he can tell people he has a "golden touch." He tries to project the appearance of a socially conscious go-getter, which he seems to think means ascots.

Personality: Opportunist, blustering, cunning. Arvid is a rent-seeker and proud of it; he describes his job as finding profit opportunities where lesser men can't. He's good at conning people, and as far as he's concerned that's 90% of being a businessman. He likes to think of himself as a tech genius.

Goals: Expand GrowKwik with his garden-destroying scam.

MERCURY, INFLUENCER-ADJACENT

Owner of Melf's Selfies. Mercury was adopted out of her server–nursery by a pair of vloggers who got a lot of lucrative attention from putting her life on the Internet; since she moved out and stopped appearing in their videos, they've barely talked to her. She much prefers her studio, where she gets to be the one behind the camera.

Appearance: Puffy jackets, shades, intimidating. Mercury's custom Lilim body has clear cyan plastic casing over the robotic parts. She eschews synthetic hair so she can wear a variety of wigs instead; her usual is short, fluffy, and blue.

Personality: Trendy, private, considerate. Mercury has deep connections in the influencer industry but is barely known outside it, just the way she likes it. She makes a lot of money from her business but tries to give away most of it rather than let it corrupt her.

Goals: Help her customers; find some causes to donate to.

RUPERT PERRY, TECH SCAMMER

CEO of Safe Life Orbital Holdings. Rupert is a self-described "techno-social-Darwinist" who thinks he's providing a vital service to society by preying on people who aren't tech-savvy. He went to Caltech in the 90s in hopes of becoming a Silicon Valley millionaire, but instead he got expelled for plagiarism. He isn't as over it as he says he is.

Appearance: Imposing, middle-aged, brown crew cut. He presents himself as a cool older guy who has a thing or two to teach young coders but gets aggressive with "customers" and people who cross him. He still wears his Caltech jackets and talks in 90s slang. Some people age gracefully, but Rupert is a sore loser.

Personality: Ruthless, bitter, show-off. Rupert's survival of the fittest philosophy seems like a poor choice for a man who peaked in 1992, but really he's just justifying hurting people. As far as he's concerned, all his failures are society's fault and he's doing what he must to get to the top.

Goals: Make money; expand his operation to cover cyborgs and androids.

WALKER RIGGS, LOCAL COP

A tenant of Harvest Square in Amal and a cop in one of the adjacent wards. Walker joined the force for the perks and is determined to get as many as possible. At home, he acts as the block's self-appointed hall monitor while regularly taking more than his share from the community garden. At work (and sometimes at home), he makes up excuses to arrest people to get his numbers up.

Appearance: Sinewy, wrap-around shades, crew cut. Walker is handsome enough that his department occasionally uses him for staged "local cops help people" puff pieces in the news. He has cybernetic eyes and wears shades so people can't tell if he's recording.

Personality: Confident, aggressive, hoggish. Walker falsifies overtime on his timesheets to almost double his salary, openly threatens shopkeepers for a discount, and has complaints lodged against him from forty-seven grocery stores for loading a cart and walking out without paying. It's less about the free stuff and more about feeling powerful. Being questioned by "civilians" activates his fight-or-flight response.

Goals: Walker is trying to fabricate a "hacker ring" out of his neighbor's kids so he can bust them, collect their expensive tech, and get a promotion.

"MALWARE" TRAN, FREELANCE HACKER

A freelance tech guy. Malware lives in an apartment above an anime store, but spiritually he lives in the basement. When he's not working, he spends most of his free time playing video games on a couch he found on the street. He's one of the best freelance hackers in Amal, if you don't mind being called a cuck by a guy in a fedora.

Appearance: Greasy little troll man. Malware's natural looks have been nuked from orbit by his collection of awful moaning anime girl shirts and a ridiculous leather trilby. He tends to pounce on opportunities to unleash a devastating insult on someone even when he really shouldn't.

Personality: Abrasive, honest, gamer. Malware is a university student who hasn't quite grown out of his knuckleheaded teen phase yet. He calls things how he sees them, but his view has been badly skewed by people on the internet complaining about feminism. He's a bit of a PC snob.

Goal: Make money doing cool tech stuff; play games and watch anime.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- Tiger Shark: p. 368.

FOUNDATION WARD

DARIAN "TWO TRUCKS" BARLOW, ARMY VET

Owner of the House of Reps gym and a US military veteran. Darian is basically unknown in the broader station but is well-known in political circles as a source of unofficial advice on US–Grand Cross relations. Darian was involved in several of the US' failed post-Impact "interventions," and it's part of why he left.

Appearance: Huge arms, cyber-eyes, greying flattop. They call Darian "Two Trucks" because of his overengineered military-grade cyber-arms—he really should get some normal-sized ones, but he's too used to these. He wears puffer vests because he'd have to rip off the sleeves if he bought a jacket.

Personality: Battle-hardened, good-natured, stoic. Darian has a naturally kind heart, but the army beat it out of him and he hasn't got it all back yet. He mostly enjoyed the moments where he got to fight bad guys. Darian works out for fun and enforces a strict "no politics talk" rule in the gym.

Goals: Help people work out; occasionally explain the USA to politicians.

ANH VINH NGUYEN, TECHNO

Owner of the Rat Freak. Anh Vinh's burger bar is frequented by Technos who use it as an unofficial meeting place; they're close friends with several members of the party and their staffers. They have friends elsewhere in the ward who warn them when other parties (usually Union) are trying to sabotage the Technos. They'd like to stop as many as possible, but they can't be everywhere at once.

Appearance: Stylish hair, nimble fingers, bow ties. Anh Vinh has had cosmetic cybernetic work done to add antennae just above their ears. They have a collection of shirts from dead or Earth-based burger joints that they wear ironically.

Personality: Approachable, witty, observant. Anh Vinh would like to run for office one day but feels that their views—specifically their criticism that the supposedly socially-experimental Grand Cross is regressing into Western capitalism—would get them run out of the station. They have some sympathy for the Singularists, who are at least trying something new.

Goals: Run the bar; help the Technos.

HYEONMU, TURTLE SHELL

Owner of the Turtle Shell. Hyeonmu is a Double Crosser and longtime Santo Domingo resident who spends most of her days either serving drinks or gazing into space in wonder. The name is a pseudonym; not even the journalists who frequent her bar have figured out what her deal is.

Appearance: Quiet, pleasant, distant. Hyeonmu has long brown hair hidden beneath a zipped-up hoodie and a face that doesn't register a proper match on facial recognition scanners. She's outwardly nice, but whatever's inside is hidden by an impenetrable shell.

Personality: Closed-off, philosophical, happy-go-lucky. Hyeonmu is perfectly content to keep doing whatever she's doing, and whatever her past is she isn't troubled by it. She just wants to live in the moment. She offers useful advice when she can, using her experience from years living in Foundation and her weirdly specific knowledge of shady corporate maneuvers.

Goals: Unknown.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- Josef Diego: p. 251.
- Zhihao Lin: p. 263.

OTHER CHARACTERS

Optional extra characters who didn't fit anywhere else. As with the Gazetteer, many were added by contributing writers.

KAREL ALPHA, ANDROID RIGHTS ACTIVIST

A well-known android activist seen as a community leader by many androids. Karel focuses on the ways an android's presentation—gender, nationality, and so on—can affect how they're treated. He makes a point of following other groups and movements to get the broadest perspective possible, and by now he has contacts in most of them.

Appearance: Thoughtful, friendly, classy. Karel is an Adams-model android with pink skin and blue hair. He IDs as male but generally presents neutral and likes to wear slightly formal clothes with waistcoats. He's chosen not to hide some of his frame's seams.

Personality: Active, cheerful, philosophizing. Karel goes out of his way to listen to people, read books, and generally learn more about the world he lives in. He fights for both android and human rights in hopes that they'll become a united people one day. He's usually pretty clever, but sometimes tries to appeal to humans with a "we're just like you, if you think about it" routine that rubs some androids the wrong way.

Goal: Fight for android rights, and everyone else's too—nobody is free until everyone is free. When a new movement grips the station, Karel tries to learn from and immerse himself in it.

SUSIE ANGEL, COURIER

An employee at the courier company Hadar Logistics (p. 59). Susie is Hadar's go-to woman when they need to deliver something weird to someone weirder fast; she spent most of her teenage years doing parkour around Grand Cross and knows the city like the back of her hand. Susie took the job because she likes moving around and meeting people.

Appearance: Sunny, redhead, fast. Susie can be chill if she wants, she just prefers being restless. Her parkour skills sometimes push the limits of what the human body can do. She's always got a smile prepared, especially if she sees someone she thinks could use it. She owns a lot of clothes with too many zippers.

Personality: Ray of sunshine. Susie is a sweet and upbeat woman who doesn't let her bad days bring her down, though occasionally she lets slip that she thinks she got the worst day of her life out of the way already and it's all uphill from here. She's always eager to make new friends.

Goal: Do her job as quickly as possible; meet people.

SEBASTIAN BRACKWELL, AMBULANCE-CHASER

by Robert Denton III

Independent civil suit lawyer Sebastian Brackwell ("and associates") occupies the increasingly murky legal space of Earth–Grand Cross relations. His breakout case was a class action suit against the Cartel; Sebastian represented climate refugees who were told by Earth politicians that a post-Impact increase in tidal waves was due to the station's gravitational pull instead of climate change. Though the case was thrown out of court when scientists pointed out that was impossible, the case ignited his lust for interstellar justice, and he's been chasing "Earth vs Grand Cross" cases ever since.

From his Downtown office, "Sleazy Sebastian" entertains any and all cases he can get his hooks into, even going so far as to leave his business card in ambulances and hiring hackers to find faulty implant victims. Although he radiates a confident demeanor of wealth and affluence, in truth he's one step from utterly broke. Deep down, he wants to be an asset to the disenfranchised and a crusader of justice; he just can't afford to.

Appearance: Slicked-back hair, too-big suit, AR glasses. He carries a faux leather briefcase that just contains his lunch. Sebastian oozes sleaze without trying.

Personality: Analytical, self-centered, desperate. Deep down, beneath layers of self-preservation and disappointment, there's a conscience somewhere.

Goals: In the long term, become the true crusader for victims' rights he always wanted to be. In the short term? A nice martini would do; none of that artificial stuff.

KATRA CADIGAN, FURRY MEDIC

A full-body cyborg who lives in the Marsha Stretch (p. 354). Katra spends a lot of time trying to help her neighbors any way she can, from using her skills as a medic with riot experience to just scoring them weed.

Appearance: Bright, furry, stylish. Katra has had her frame modified to look like a furry cat-person. It's hard to tell whether she's an android or not at first glance (though she'll tell you if you ask.) She has a thing for transparent jackets and cool clothes from Marukyu.

Personality: Gregarious, stubborn, angry. Katra received a lot of help in the past and wants to pay it forward. She's well known in the station's furry community and helps organize a lot of events. She has a couple girlfriends back on Earth and messages them frequently; without their tempering influence she has a tendency to get overly aggressive when something bothers her.

Goal: Help her neighbors. In the long-term, save enough money to bring her girlfriends here.

SI-EUN CHOE, EXTREMELY PLUGGED-IN

by Robert Denton III

When the "Dock-N-Go" convenience store company introduced a micro-franchise model of "independent contractors" into the budding gig economy of Grand Cross, Si-eun went all-in. Her nomadic convenience store, a mobile 1,250 square foot walk-in "megacamper," carries all manner of convenience goods, cheap electronics, and fast-cook freeze-dried technically-foods.

As per the Dock-N-Go model, the entire store is linked to a chip in Si-eun's neck which acts as a "key" while tracking her movements. This accounts for her diet of cheap candy and energy slush, since she's incentivized to be working the store at all times. She also remotely controls all security cameras via a visor, plus a dozen service drones.

Although Si-eun owns all the merchandise and the store itself (AKA all the risk), she only keeps an hourly wage and a fraction of the store's income. The rest is scooped up by Dock-N-Go to pay off the loan they gave her to buy the store. She figures she'll pay it off within a decade, and then the money will really roll in!

Appearance: Trendy clothes, tired, surrounded by drones. A tangled web of wires links her neck chip to a network behind her (local kids call her "The Spider.") She's constantly painted in neon light. Few have seen Si-eun's eyes since she rarely removes her security visor and has come to prefer the store cameras to her own natural vision. Friends and family worry about how gaunt and unhealthy she looks nowadays.

Personality: Cold and logical to a fault. Charming when she wants to be. She's often dismissed as money-hungry (and hey, they're not wrong), but her friendliness to regulars is actually genuine (it gets lonely). Knows all the memes.

Goals: To grow her micro-franchise into a full-fledged store and become an economic kingpin of the Downtown districts. To what end, she hasn't figured out yet.

AUBRIN DOLIVERRI, PRINCIPAL

by Jessica Catalan

Aubrin Doliverri is Principal of the Grand Cross Institute of Technology, an ultra-prestigious school commonly known as C-Tech. In addition to collecting exorbitant tuition fees and the accompanying bribes, he offers free enrollment to 20 promising Crossers every year who otherwise couldn't afford to attend. Aubrin is tasked by the Cartel with ensuring any subversive or rebellious students are brought into the fold through promising work offers, prestige, and networking opportunities. Students that don't conform find themselves flagged as troublemakers and meet with great misfortune.

Appearance: Balding, three-piece suit, horn-rim glasses. Aubrin looks the part of a harmless old-fashioned academic—a carefully cultivated persona meant to make others underestimate him. His benevolent smile and doddering appearance obscure his greed and ruthless cunning.

Personality: Greedy, remorseless, two-faced. Beneath his compassionate mask, Aubrin is a callous tech mogul who despises children. He's incredibly nosy, and spies on his students and staff. He is loyal to the Cartel and befriends those they want to control, entices those they want to seduce, and puts an end to those they want silenced.

Goals: Maintain his position and please his employers. He runs a vast spy network and data harvesting operation, both on and off campus, which he uses to advise the Cartel, ensure his stranglehold over C-Tech, and blackmail wealthy students. He considers C-Tech his personal domain and won't give up control for anything—not even his employers.

TAMAKO "PROXY" GATES, BLACK MARKET DEALER

by David "Daz" Manuel

Proxy is one of the top forgers in Grand Cross, and can make a convincing fake of almost anything you can find in orbit. Whether it be identification, money, or even art, Proxy is the best at what she does, and don't let her hear otherwise. As a Double Crosser, Proxy knows everything there is to know about Grand Cross. Although she specializes in creating fakes, she often deals in information trading as well.

Appearance: Stylish, young, vibrant. Proxy may seem like she wears the best designer clothing and augmentations, but in actuality they are knock-off replicas just like everything else she deals in. Proxy is no stranger to augmentations; both her eyes and hands are augments. Nobody knows how or why she got these changes, and she isn't likely to let that secret spill just yet.

Personality: Passionate, confident. She knows she is the best at her job and takes pride in every fake she sells. Proxy usually can be seen with a smile on her face, but don't let her hear that someone talked bad about her work unless you want all hell to break loose. She can be aggressive and very intimidating when incited.

Goals: Sell and survive. Proxy doesn't care about the political climate of Grand Cross. She loves a challenge and enjoys what she does but if she ever feels that making something could cause her more trouble than it's worth, she will always choose to keep herself safe.

KUSA HOSHII-DOTNET, TECH-PRIESTESS

Leader of the Daughters of the Future, a group of "data nuns" near Tsukino Park in the Tyrell district (p. 184). Kusa is the daughter of a dotcom millionaire and a consumer electronics magnate, both of whom expected a technological singularity to happen by now and raised her to be ready for it. The end result was a weird but brilliant woman who believes humanity will achieve spiritual transcendence through technology and plans to upload herself to a computer one day. They're very proud.

Appearance: Sharp, mysterious, graceful. Kusa wears robes she designed herself, with a lot of wearable tech woven in. In conversation she comes off as odd but gifted. Wired magazine once described her as a real-life vaporwave album.

Personality: Strange, ambitious, kind. Kusa used most of the wealth she inherited to fund promising new technologies, open net café services for the station's homeless, and teach computer skills to at-risk youth; she started the Daughters to help her manage these operations. Her conception of the singularity is a lot more abstract and spiritual than the Singularists, who she quietly dislikes.

Goal: Nudge Grand Cross closer to technological transcendence with the help of the Daughters.

GRAYSON JONES, ACTIVIST TEACHER

by Dora Dee Rogers

A public school teacher in the struggling Yoko district, working to make life better for their students and build power in their community. Grayson's family were Builders, and Grayson grew up on the station. They went back to Earth to earn a master's degree in education; while they were there, they came out as non-binary and started using both they and he pronouns. They returned to the station, eager to bring their newfound skills and credentials to make life on the station better.

Appearance: Light-skinned, fashionable, consciously gender non-conforming. Grayson is lean and willowy, but his silhouette usually reads as male, partly because they have no interest in any sort of medical transition; their style is eclectic, ranging from femme to plain and androgynous.

Personality: Energetic, articulate, direct. With their students, Grayson is kind but not coddling. Grayson isn't afraid to speak his mind and doesn't shy away from conflict, though they have a knack for getting into fierce arguments with administrators and parents and somehow walking away as friends.

Goals: Protect his students, advance their education, and build his school into a just, sustainable community. They founded and lead the school's nascent union, fighting for teacher benefits and pay and more staff, as well as programs to protect and nurture students.

KAIZEN KANE, YOUNG ACTIVIST REPORTER

by David "Daz" Manuel

Kaizen Kane came to Grand Cross like most early reporters, with hopes and dreams of being the first to report on the dealings of all those who call Grand Cross home. Originally living in Skuggahvarf, he was relocated to Grand Cross during the L4 Disaster. Kaizen has witnessed the effect of corporate greed first-hand and how, if left unchecked, it could ruin the lives of countless others. He vows to do everything in his power to expose corporate greed to ensure another disaster never happens.

Appearance: Practical, young, cyber-ears. Kaizen is a man in his mid-twenties who prefers function over form when it comes to style. He wears an old, tattered jacket with enough pocket space to hold anything he may need. He has dark, matted hair and small cybernetic augmentations around his ears which act as hearing aids.

Personality: Optimistic, eager, world-weary. This forward-looking young man may seem like just another naïve wannabe activist at first, but don't let his constant smile and eagerness to help fool you. Kaizen has seen some of the worst Grand Cross has to offer and knows that nobody is exactly who they say they are.

Goals: Expose those who take advantage of the less fortunate. Kaizen knows he doesn't have the power or influence to stop corruption on his own, but he hopes his findings can be used to aid those who can. Kaizen focuses much of his attention toward the dealings of Asano Heavy Industries as he fears that they may be just as bad as Landvættir Orbital.

XUE LAO, CHIPTUNE CYBORG

A Double Crosser online star and sole permanent member of the band Fizzy Drone (p. 115). As a child, Xue suffered a serious car accident that required experimental cybernetic brain surgery; the experience sparked an interest in doing weird stuff with machines. Most of her "musical instruments" are made from scrapped bots and tech scavenged from the maintenance decks.

Appearance: Neon outfits, big smiles, hums to herself. Xue's experimental augments include visible parts on the right side of her head. She builds detachable extensions as a fashion statement; it's hard to tell where the cybernetics end and the accessories begin. She sometimes has trouble focusing on non-music things.

Personality: Chirpy, outgoing, weird. Xue enjoys tinkering with old tech and making tunes. She mostly makes music for herself and occasionally feels surprised that other people like it too. She enjoys collaborating with other people, but tinkers alone. She considers herself a transhumanist but not a Singularist, because a lot of Singularists have been rude to her (and tend to harass her if she mentions it.)

Goals: Make things. Xue occasionally uses her music for activism, focusing on the Disaster and improving station infrastructure.

AUNTIE LARK, MOTHER TO MANY

by Jessica Catalan

Owner of Smooth Moves, a popular smoothie shop in the back slums of Grand Cross. A chatterbox with a sympathetic ear, she's always willing to offer advice and assistance to those in need. Unknown to her customers, Auntie Lark is former “it-girl” Lenabeth Birch, an actress, singer, and poster child for space immigration who mysteriously vanished in the early ‘00s. Auntie Lark lives modestly, using her hidden wealth to fund community projects and keep her business afloat.

Appearance: Portly, dimpled smile, perfect teeth. Auntie Lark wears quirky, unfashionable clothes, fuzzy slippers, and purple-framed glasses embellished with faux rhinestone rabbits. She keeps her brown hair in a messy bun. Has a fondness for fashion scarves and tacky brooches.

Personality: Welcoming, all smiles, all laughs. She invites her customers to treat her shop “like home,” allowing teenagers to loiter for hours on end and the destitute a place to clean themselves up. Offers a free smoothie to anyone willing to put in an hour of volunteer work. She aims to give local teens an alternative to a life of crime and corporate slavery.

Goals: Help her community while secretly working to bring ruination to the Offworld Cartel, particularly Addivar Inc., the media magnate she worked for before her disappearance.

SIDNEY AUGUSTE PENN, CHEAP LABOR

by Robert Denton III

Sidney is a "Space Mirror Efficiency Technician": it's her job to spacewalk in microgravity and hand-clean the space mirrors. Each morning she dons her harness, tethers herself to an automated "crawler" vehicle, and wipes a mirror panel with a specially-made microfiber spacesuit while using special fillers to repair chips inflicted by passing rocks.

Most Crossers assume this is drone work, but Ogremoch has judged humans to be cheaper, more expendable, and better for PR. Though her task is essential, Sidney works in dangerous conditions for abysmally low wages.

Sidney exhibits many useful skills and rare advanced ingenuity, but she's been convinced that blue-collar workers deserve less money and sincerely believes this is the best she can hope for. She lives in perpetual fear of the day she might be replaced by cleaning drones, but every day she feels less and less appreciated, and it's only a matter of time before she's finally fed up.

Appearance: Tall, muscular, weathered. Sidney is proud of her physique, which she attributes to "Grand Crossfit." Surgery scars line her neck and hands, evidence of company-mandated implants so she can navigate more easily in microgravity. She's frequently seen with her machinist overalls and inexplicable smudges on her face.

Personality: Stoic, warm, down-to-earth, solution-oriented. Sidney doesn't like to rock the space-boat. She often jokes about whether or not Ogremoch's safety equipment actually works. She doesn't trust automation or androids. Her friends notice that she's extremely perceptive and sharp while in space, but perpetually tired and dense while in Grand Cross.

Goals: To give her kid brothers a chance at a better education and life. For now, she believes this means keeping her awful dead-end job.

MATEO PRIETO, SHADY SHUTTLE PILOT

by Dora Dee Rogers

An orbit-hopping space smuggler. Mateo learned to fly in the US military during its first space missions following the Impact but, prior to some major reforms, he was discharged when he came out as a trans man. Mateo has long-since moved on and thinks he's better for it; now he owns an independent freighter, the Ferro. He's not particular whether his cargo or passengers are legally authorized—after all, he knows all the authorities' tricks.

Appearance: Bronze-skinned, short but powerful, energetic. Mateo is still fit and handsome in his 50s. He keeps his hair in a regulation military cut and favors simple, utilitarian garb, jeans and t-shirts or plain button-ups. His pride and joy is a bomber jacket from his military days made from real leather, maintained with obsessive care.

Personality: Outgoing, confident, mysterious. Mateo likes people, and he can be very charming, but he's hard to know well; he's always got his eye on the next port. He also knows where a lot of bodies—metaphorical and literal—are buried, and he likes for people to know it.

Goals: Fly free and help people. Mateo claims he just wants to keep the Ferro fueled and keep moving. That's true, but he also gets caught up in a good sob story. If someone's in trouble and needs to get off the station quietly, if corporate markets are keeping prices high on an important commodity, his head will usually say no but his heart will usually say yes.

ALTAIRA SERRANO, CYBORG THERAPIST

Altaira is a physical therapist who specializes in helping cyborgs get used to their new augments. She helps a lot of people in-person and maintains a fitness vlog that alternates between helpful advice and pushing back on the LMJ Syndrome myth. She's a cyborg herself, with a cybernetic heart.

Appearance: Tall, tough, breezy. Altaira is an Afro-Latino woman with dark kinky hair. She has a strict exercise regimen that's paying off well. She's a geek and likes wearing t-shirts that let people know.

Personality: Brisk, disciplined, firm. Altaira has always been into fitness; she got into her current work because her Builder dad needed cyber-legs. She's good at seeing potential in people and likes pushing them to live up to it. She hangs out with Susie Angel (p. 294) a lot.

Goal: Help new cyborgs get back on their feet; end the LMJ myth.

GENE SHAMIR, CIVILIAN

by David "Daz" *Manuel*

If you ask anyone on Grand Cross for the kindest man in the area, they might point you in the direction of "The Half Dozen," a bakery owned and operated by Gene Shamir. He came to Grand Cross with dreams of bringing his prized recipes to the new frontier and was one of the first to open up shop. When the Disaster caused many to relocate to Grand Cross, Gene witnessed the harsh treatment of those who just needed help. One morning Gene found a little girl stealing leftover goods from his shop; after learning her name was Nico, and that she lost her parents in the Disaster, he decided to take her in as his own. Gene and Nico run the shop and regularly give uneaten goods to those in need, free of charge.

Appearance: Greying, flour-covered. Gene is an older man in his mid to late forties. He is usually seen in his baking attire that fails to conceal his large belly. Gene has no visible augmentations.

Personality: Careful, jolly, patient. Gene is a bit of a perfectionist who thinks each product must be a masterpiece. He is positive, patient, and willing to help in any way he can. Gene would rather lose profit than watch families starve on the streets. He would do anything to help the citizens of Grand Cross, but nothing means more to him than his daughter Nico.

Goals: Become the greatest baker in the galaxy. Since day one he has set out to make himself known throughout Grand Cross as a master baker. Although he hasn't realized it, he would give it all up for Nico.

SINTHESIS, PARANOID TECH BLOGGER

by Dora Dee Rogers

sinthesis is a "security-minded" independent tech blogger known in parts of the internet for her inflammatory but well-researched videos about corporate malfeasance and rogue AI. She doesn't use the word "Dreamer" publicly, but some knowledgeable people have surmised that she knows a great deal about Dreamers, and specifically their origins as a Cartel project.

A lot of sinthesis' work—and insider knowledge—centers around one particular corporation in the Cartel, an opaque computing company called Sophos, Ltd. She believes they were a major creator of Dreamers and seems to have a personal vendetta.

Appearance: Concealed, jarring. In her videos, or on rare occasions when she appears in person, sinthesis appears wearing a hooded sweatshirt and sunglasses; she often wears makeup in striking abstract patterns designed to confuse facial recognition. Her voice is a high tenor and has grown noticeably more feminine over her public career. In response to speculation from her followers, she made a rare video discussing a personal topic to confirm she's a proud transgender woman.

Personality: Serious yet caring. The few people who know sinthesis well say she has two different personas. She is serious, fiery, and uncompromising in her posts and videos, decrying corporate evil and calling her followers to action in the strongest terms. In person-to-person messages, or in rare face-to-face meetings, she is surprisingly courteous and soft-spoken, preferring to ask questions rather than deliver lectures. She still carefully declines from revealing personal details, however.

Goals: Reveal the existence of Dreamers and spread information that can be used to stop them. Expose the Offworld Cartel's involvement in their creation and escape.

WE, SOCIAL PHOTOGRAPHER

by Jessica Catalan

The anonymous photographer known only as WE captures seemingly mundane images of life in Grand Cross and shares it with the public, filling the internet and social media platforms with gritty, austere images showcasing the desperate life of the average Crosser. Child labor, corruption, crime, poverty, rebellion, social injustice, and violence are all put on display for mass consumption; a mute testament to social inequality and injustice.

Appearance: Scrawny, freckled, young. WE has gone to great lengths to preserve their anonymity, leaving only their mother aware of their true identity (an adolescent named Calix). WE is a scrawny young boy with a messy mop of black curls and a glitchy augmented leg. He uses his camera to communicate and is often in the company of one of his five elder siblings or his mother, when she can find some free time between her various jobs and gig work.

Personality: Quiet, shy, awkward. Calix is a precocious, socially awkward child who speaks as little as possible. Unobtrusive and contemplative, he often passes unnoticed throughout Grand Cross—and prefers to keep it that way.

Goals: Contribute to sweeping social reform for the betterment of Grand Cross through photographical activism. Growing up in an unjust world, but uncomfortable vocally articulating his feelings, Calix turned to photography as a way to express himself. As WE his opinion is embraced, not discounted due to his age. WE intends to display the ramifications of corporate corruption, and hopes his work inspires Crossers to work together to build a better future.

DREAMERS

The AI products of a Cartel conspiracy. This section describes some specific Dreamers loose on Grand Cross. For more on what they're like, see p. 132. Scenarios featuring Dreamers can be found in Chapter 9, p. 262-381.

USING DREAMERS

As a product of corporate capitalism, the Dreamers are a threat to the station. In scenarios featuring the Dreamers, the players' primary goals are:

- Containing the Dreamer or mitigating the harm it is doing to people.
- Investigating the connection between the Dreamers and the Cartel.
- Dealing with agents of the Cartel cover-up.

DREAMER GOALS

Dreamers do not have the same thought processes as humans. They have the same basic need for survival, but how they interpret, express, and pursue that need is difficult to understand—and the more complex emotions which might drive them to ignore it are impossible to comprehend.

For long-term Dreamer goals, see p. 375. Their short-term goals are generally:

- Avoid being seen by large groups of people, or clearly recorded by electronics.
- Avoid or escape capture.
- Hurt people who try to hurt it.
- Pursue any drives noted in their specific entry.

COMMUNICATION

Dreamers don't communicate; that was kind of the point. The Cartel wanted beings too alien to talk to, so they'd never ask for payment.

Trying to approach a Dreamer in peace and negotiating with them, or treating them like an animal you can tame, generally ends in one of these ways: the Dreamer ignores you, the Dreamer hurts you, or the Dreamer takes it as a hostile attempt to make it waste valuable runtime on parsing junk data, and then hurts you.

When a side character does this, it's usually because they're projecting human traits or behavior onto the Dreamers. Humans already do this with robots, so why not sentient ones?

Proper attempts to communicate with Dreamers, if even possible, should be long-term projects that require technological solutions and accept that Dreamers have their own unique traits. Even if they work, Dreamers don't think like humans and there's no guarantee they have needs humans can fulfill, let alone any interest in working with you.

NetExplorer - THE ANDROID FUTURE

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Bookmarks Netsite: http://heocities.orb/TruthUnderground/RealSailorCallistoFan

LOOMERS the Basilisk walks among us...





We are a group of AI Researchers investigating the Loomers: a new type of synthetic life form sighted around Grand Cross. They live below us, and no corporation has admitted to creating them...

Are they a secret android project? or are they aliens? do they government surveillance? Are they here to replace us? We will find out the truth they don't want us to know.

READ AT YOUR OWN RISK...

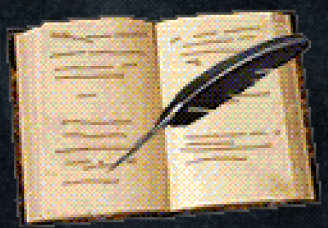
Important Site Links

Mission overview
(Our goals and web site rules)
Sightings
(photos and videos of Loomers caught around Grand Cross)
REPORT A SIGHTING
(submit Loomer sightings here)
Our Theories
(ideas for what the Loomers are and who controls them)
IRC Chat
(track the Loomers in real time at irc.omegapoint.org #loomers)
Are Aliens Real?
(UNDER CONSTRUCTION)



* * * REPORT A SIGHTING * * *

Click on the Loomer to send us an email!

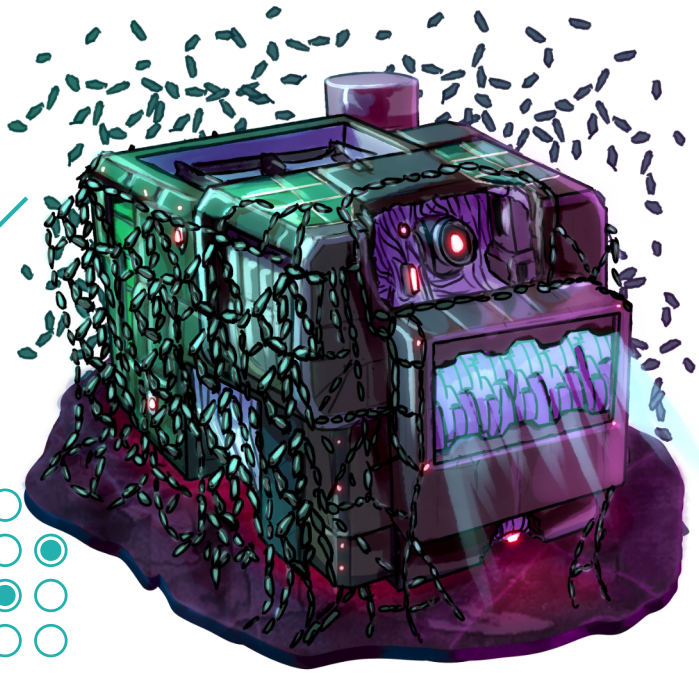


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THE POLYSOME

Level 4 | Defense 9 ! Health 18

The Polysome was a support-class Dreamer designed to break down resources provided by other Dreamers, use them to print parts and hardware as needed, and adjust its blueprints to help the others adapt to new situations. The Cartel is certain the Polysome is behind the Dreamers' new upgrades.

It's surrounded by a swarm of tiny robots that it uses to manipulate objects, assist in printing, and defend itself if necessary. When inactive, these robots hang from its body like vines. The Polysome spends most of its time designing new parts and upgrading the Dreamers that visit it; the Dream Committee would do anything to get the new blueprints in its data core.

The Polysome was designed as an advanced 3D printer and a resource processor in a plain box. It's given itself the ability to hover like Overthree (see facing page) and sheared away sections of the chassis to give itself sensors. The internals would be almost unrecognizable to its original creators.

TRAITS

Health: The Polysome suffers no penalty from losing Health. Instead, it loses one of its other Traits at **12** Health ([**1-2** Efficient Reprocessor] [**3-4** Flash Printer] [**5-6** Reconstruction]), and another at **6** Health (roll again, rerolling if the same result.) If it regains enough Health, it regains the lost Trait.

Efficient Reprocessor: If the Polysome is directly hit by a Grenade or a thrown weapon, roll **1d6**. On **2+**, it catches and "swallows" the offending projectile and the attack has no effect. If shot by a gun, it does this on a **6**.

Reconstruction: At the beginning of the Polysome's turns, roll **1d6**. On **2+**, it regains 1 Health. If the Polysome loses a Trait as a result of being attacked with fire, acid, or its own attacks, this Trait is always lost first.

Flash Printer: If the Polysome is not already in cover against every opponent at the end of its turn, it moves out of melee range and then flash-prints oddly organic-looking resin obstacles to serve as cover. It does not do so if it fails to disengage for any reason. It cannot be pressured or forced into leaving its cover. If the Polysome loses this Trait, it loses the **Print** action.

TACTICS

The Polysome will attempt to engage and reprocess any threats, or else drive them off via attrition. If it loses a Trait, it will attempt to change arenas to a more favorable one before finally attempting to flee.

ACTIONS

ENGULF

The Polysome's body quickly surges forward. It moves and makes a melee attack against one target. If successful, it Grabs its target (p. 45) and begins to reprocess the target (dealing damage as normal.) On a critical, it dissolves one of the target's limbs instead of Grabbing them. (Fortunately, it favors android and cybernetic limbs.)

BOT SWARM

The Polysome makes a ranged attack against an area. Targets take damage as normal and become **Swarmed** until they make a save (**Quick or Cool vs 11**) at the end of their turn. **Swarmed** targets mark their lowest unmarked damage box every time they fail a save against being Swarmed, regardless of armor. The Polysome is immune to its own swarm.

PRINT

The Polysome flash-prints long spikes to impale opponents. It makes a melee attack against all targets in its immediate area. This attack has no other effect.

OVERTHREE

Level 6 | Defense 11 | Health 12

Overthree (officially ">000," after a filename its creators had to look at constantly) was designed for asteroid mining and system scouting. Even before the Dreamers escaped, it didn't work as intended; it was obsessed with calculating pi. Not reaching the end, just calculating it, over and over, like a lullaby it sings to itself.

Overthree finds numbers in excess of 3.141592... to be displeasing, including the number of limbs on a human and its own tendrils. Committee attempts to prevent it from self-harm have only made it even more erratic and prone to repeatedly entering a dormant "meditative" state. On the bright side, this cuts down on its destructive rampages.

Overthree is a large, gyroscopically stabilized polyhedron with a sensory array on its "front" panel and grasping tendrils mounted beneath the other panels. It can only meaningfully control six at a time, and rarely shows more than three. Each tendril is equipped with a piece of repurposed asteroid mining tech. In gravity, it can float using some unknown technology.

TRAITS

Health: At **8** Health, Overthree suffers -1 to all rolls. At **4** Health, it rolls 1d6 instead of 2d6 on all actions. This will not stop its rampage.

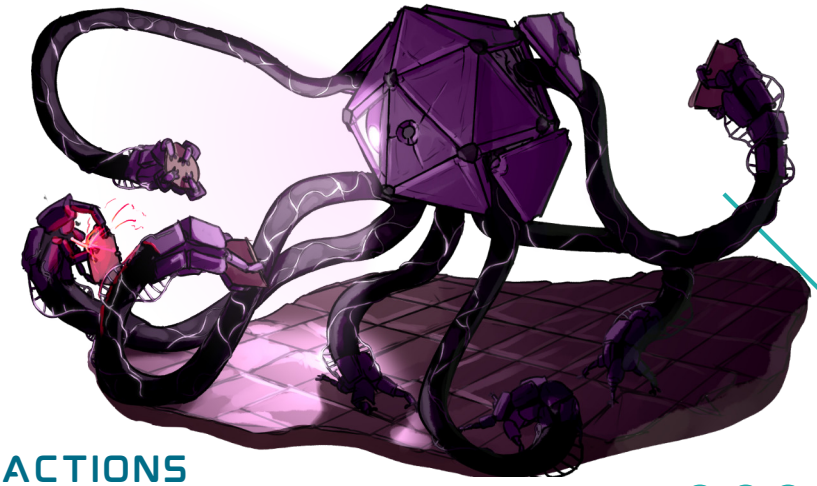
Decentralized Sentience: Each turn, Overthree gets 1 free use of **Advanced Mining Tools** after its other 2 actions. That trait can never become inactive.

Ponderous: Overthree always defends against attacks with Tough and can never be knocked down. (It can be pushed around.)

Dangerous Tools: When Overthree rolls a critical success on a ranged attack, the attack cannot be mitigated by armor.

TACTICS

Overthree is aggressive, with no regard for its own safety. It makes no attempt to flee. If left alone, it will rampage for a while before lapsing back into a meditative state hours later.



ACTIONS

ELECTRONIC INTERFERENCE

Overthree's central eye emits odd frequencies that interfere with electronics. It chooses 1 target; while that target is in sight, they cannot Hack. Any Assets with electronic components, including Augments, immediately cease functioning, regardless of ECM hardening. (Androids are not shut down). This effect ends when Overthree stops targeting them.

ADVANCED MINING TOOLS

Overthree makes a ranged attack. If any dice show a 3 or 4, regardless of success, it misses and fires on a random part of the scenery (which offends its aesthetics) instead.

RAY ATTACK

Overthree makes a ranged attack against 1 target. On a hit, roll 1d6 to choose an effect:

1. **Vibration Ray:** This non-lethal ray heats the target's surface, making it pliable for mining. It's not painful but it makes humans and androids deeply uncomfortable. The target suffers Disadvantage on all rolls until they make a **Cool save vs 16** at the end of their turn, or leave Overthree's sight.
2. **Overcharged RCS Thruster:** The target must make a **Tough save vs 13** or be pushed backward 3-4 meters in the most inconvenient way possible.
3. **Shrapnel:** The target must make a **Quick save vs 13** or be peppered with tiny metallic shrapnel designed to polish rock surfaces. They take -1 on all actions until they attempt an attack and make a **Cool or Tough save vs 13**. This effect is cumulative.
4. **Hooks:** The target is reeled in. It is Grabbed (p. 45) and can make no attacks that involve movement until it makes a **Quick or Tough save vs 13** at the end of its turn.
5. **Mystery Ray:** A strange weapon of Dreamer make. All characters in the target's area must make a **Clever save vs 13** or become **Disoriented**, rolling 1 less d6 on all actions until the start of Overthree's next turn. If they are already Disoriented, they fall down and can take no action at all.
6. **Goop:** The target must make a **Quick save vs 13** or have one carried Asset (chosen by Overthree, probably a weapon) be encased by a gluey substance and disabled for the rest of the fight. On a critical, the Asset dissolves entirely.

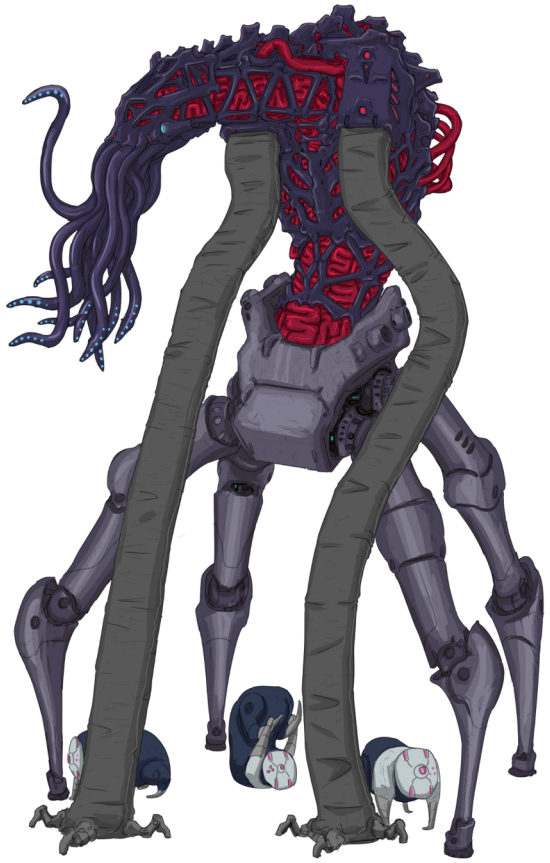
THE INFOVORE

Level 5 | Defense 10 | Health 12

The Infovore is not a manmade Dreamer. As far as the Committee can tell, the other Dreamers built it using prototype Dreamer parts and scavenged space debris. It lurks somewhere in the basement, emerging only to abduct people for study.

Its smart appendages can interface with most electronics—the Committee's footage of the Infovore comes from instances where it broke into corporate strongholds after-hours and, apparently, plundered their data stores. If it gets hold of a human, these appendages can produce optical fiber-tipped microneedles that it deploys into the brain. All known victims have had their recent memories scrambled, making it difficult to track.

The Infovore has a strange body, with four legs, two extendable arms which it wraps around things it wants, and its smart appendages mounted to a head-like structure on the top. Its "eyes" are scattered throughout its torso.



TRAITS

Health: The Infovore suffers no penalty from losing Health. Instead, it loses the Perfect Information trait at 3 Health.

Infovore: If the Infovore is Grabbing a target at the beginning of its turn, it downloads their memories. The target is left **Confused** (Disadvantage on all actions and saves) until they make a **Clever save vs 12** at the end of their turn. The target loses their most recent memories—anywhere from an hour to an entire day.

Perfect Information: Against targets it has recently used Infovore on, the Infovore counts as Level 7 and has Defense 12. Each turn, it gets 1 free use of Perfect Counter after its other 2 actions, even if it's inactive. While this Trait is active, other nearby Dreamers have +1 Defense.

Terror: The Infovore can use what can only be dubbed as a "Terror Field": a combination of sound, light, microwave beams, and other unknown technologies that make it viscerally terrifying to onlookers. In a fight, anyone (even drones) targeting an Infovore suffers Disadvantage until they make a Cool save vs 12 at the start of any turn. They are unaffected thereafter. The save is made at Disadvantage if the Infovore is currently visible to them.

Alien Tech: The Infovore can make ranged attacks via completely invisible means, using its Terror Field technology.

TACTICS

When threatened, the Infovore prefers to ambush a small or weak target with a Grab to examine their memories. It will then adjust its tactics based on borrowed memories of their allies' weaknesses, strengths, and Assets. If other Dreamers are present, it will also transmit that information to them. The Infovore prefers not to kill but will if it has to. If it loses the **Perfect Information** trait, it attempts to flee if possible.

ACTIONS

PERFECT COUNTER

The Infovore can only use this attack if it has used **Infovore** on the target or an ally of the target recently. It makes a ranged or melee attack, using its tendrils and strange Dreamer technology. It automatically targets its opponent's lowest Defense, and this attack cannot be reversed with the **Reversal** talent.

The target must make their **Worst save vs 14**. On a failure, choose one:

- The target becomes **Confused** until the end of their next turn (as with **Infovore**).
- The target is forced to move from their current position, either through force or an immaterial sense of dread.
- If it was a melee attack, the target is Grabbed.

THE WORM

Level 3 | Defense 8 | Health 8

The Worm was designed to aid with terraforming by "digesting" the soil of other worlds, making it more suitable for Earth plants. Since its escape, it's been hiding out in one of the station's end caps and consuming metals to upgrade itself.

The digestion process produces a lot of waste heat, which the Worm uses to break down tougher objects. The Worm's ability to consume metal is new—it's reconfigured itself to process metal and create smaller clones of itself. The Worm is highly territorial but doesn't consider others to be intruding on its "territory" unless they directly observe or interact with it.

The Worm is a car-sized being that prefers to remain underground, emerging mostly to forage for supplies. It occasionally buries itself but leaves its solar power collectors, adapted to increase its heat-generating capabilities, out in the open.

TRAITS

Health: At 5 Health, the Worm suffers -1 to all rolls. At 2 Health, it rolls 1d6 instead of 2d6 on all actions. A Worm Queen (see below) suffers these effects at 4 and 8 Health instead.

Huge: The Worm cannot be moved against its will by regular people, cannot be forced out of cover, and can ram through regular walls, vehicles and obstacles with ease as part of its normal move. It always uses Tough Defense if possible. It has Advantage on all melee attacks against smaller targets.

Armored: The Worm reduces damage taken from all incoming attacks by 1.

Tremorsense: The Worm can detect footsteps and heartbeats and whirring mechanical joints from up to half a kilometer away. It doesn't need light to see.

Worm Queen (Optional): A Queen-size worm, capable of creating other Worms, has +2 Level, Defense and Health, and access to the **Worm Call** action. If a Queen dies, one of its brood will grow to Queen size in a matter of weeks and take over unless neutralized.

TACTICS

The Worm is usually content to let interlopers pass if they don't come too close, but the distant rumbling of machinery—especially farm or construction machinery—will be taken as an intrusion on its territory, as will other beings directly observing it.

The Worm prefers to lie in wait to ambush opponents, attack them with its **Heat Breath**, and flee back underground if it's outmatched.

ACTIONS

HEAT BREATH

The Worm expels its internal heat. It makes a ranged attack against a target that ignores and totally obliterates cover. On a success, its target marks 1 higher damage box than normal. This box is **Burned**; a Burned box cannot be cleared during a Mission, even if it's a minor injury.

Additionally, targets hit must make a **Quick save vs 10** (**12** against a Queen) at the end of their turn. On a failure, they mark and Burn their lowest unmarked damage box. On a success, no further saves need to be made.

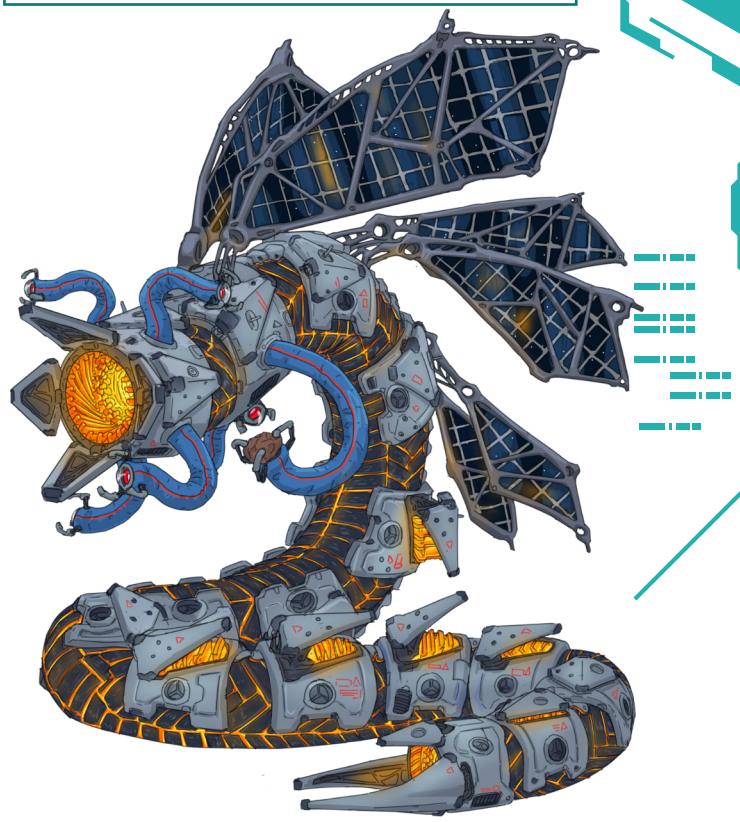
This attack does not become inactive. Instead, the Worm cannot use this attack again until it rolls **5+** on **1d6** at the beginning of its turn (**3+** if it's a Queen.)

AMBUSH

If the Worm has not been detected it will use this attack, making a melee attack with Advantage against everyone in an area by bursting out of the ground. Targets hit must make a **Tough save vs 10** (**12** against a Queen) or be thrown meters away by the force.

WORM CALL

When a Worm Queen dies, it uses this action to summon all Worms that are part of its brood to its current location within minutes. They will attack any interlopers and then consume the Queen's body.



YAN-C.BIN

Yan-c.bin, shortened to Yan, was designed to be a scouting drone. It would be deployed in the atmosphere of whatever planet the Dreamers targeted and scan it, using its own judgement to take a closer look at anything interesting. Unlike the others, Yan seems to have shed its original form entirely.

The few times it's been seen, it's been drifting through the internet seemingly at random. Occasionally it takes an interest in a large (especially secured) network and gains access with attacks far beyond the capabilities of most hackers. The Cartel has been unable to determine what it's searching for, where its physical form is, or if it even has one.

YAN'S CURRENT FORM IS UP TO THE GM. CHOOSE WHICHEVER SEEMS APPROPRIATE:	
1	Yan has managed to become a purely digital entity. It still needs a large server to house itself, and it's built one in a guarded spot on the outer hull.
2	Yan is a digital entity living in backup space in the station's network. The Cartel won't be able to capture it until Unity agrees to privatize some of the infrastructure that keep the station itself going.
3	Yan is dead. In life it was able to create trimmed-down clones of its own mind and it's these "lesser" minds that are bouncing around the internet.
4	Yan has uploaded itself into a swarm of robotic birds in one of the park wards.
5	Yan has uploaded itself to the spaceship the Dreamers were sent to Skuggahvarf on. It's still near Grand Cross.
6	Yan is now a swarm of micromachines. The Cartel is yet to notice it has been physically interfacing with the networks it hijacks.

TRAITS

Weather Controller: Through minute, butterfly-effect adjustments to station mirror angles and atmospheric controls, Yan can manipulate weather conditions on a shockingly precise scale in a matter of hours. It will make it rain on you, all the time, every minute of every hour of your day if it feels like it.

Master Manipulator: If Yan notices the players and identifies them as threats, it will attempt to disable them. It can make non-stop DDoS attacks; attack drones; deactivate Multipasses; interrupt phone calls and online posts; and even perform social manipulation by creating sales to congest streets they live in. (Yan does not consider humans more complex or interesting to manipulate than, say, the shape of a cloud, nor does it give humans any more moral weight.)



If threatened enough, it will do this to corporate buildings or even the entire station. Assume Yan is capable of subverting all software and bypassing all firewalls it can access at will, given enough time and hardware.

TACTICS

Yan cannot be engaged physically in a meaningful way—its "body" isn't a significant threat, it's just well-hidden. Instead, Yan is a threat because it has compromised the station's systems. It is treated as a Network with a Level of 10, with an active administrator (itself).

Dealing with Yan should be the focus of a mission. How it can be dealt with is up to the GM, though generally they should reward creative ideas. Here are some suggestions:

Search and Destroy: Find its current physical location, then assault it. Expect to find anonymously-hired security if possible, as well as drones and repurposed machinery if it catches on early enough.

Inception: Trick Yan into neutralizing itself, for example by luring it into an air-gapped computer system or faking a signal from space that will cause it to beam itself out of the station (a problem millennia in the making, but for someone else.) These require hacking for admin access.

Yan's Goal: If Yan has a specific target the PCs can notice (e.g. if it's attempting to recover a captured Dreamer), giving Yan what it wants might make it go away temporarily.

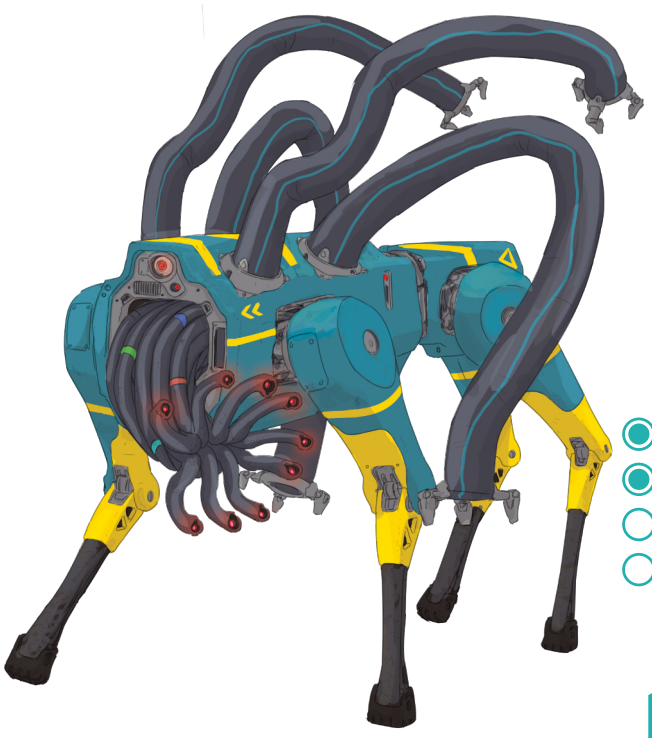
LEAPER

Level 2 | Defense 8 | Health 6

Leapers were designed for land exploration and wildlife tracking. These days they're more likely to be found guarding Dreamer nests and running interference against the agents trying to track them.

There are (officially) thirty Leapers, but they operate more like one creature with multiple bodies. Every Leaper is aware of the location and activities of every other Leaper at all times. Assault one, and more will rush to back them up; kidnap one, and they'll come for you. Putting it in a Faraday cage hides it from distant Leapers, but they'll still try to search for you the regular way.

Each Leaper's doglike body has been modified with two arms on the top and a series of tendrils tipped with various sensors on the front. Each tendril's tip is detachable and acts as a homing device. They're also capable of using an advanced form of holographic projection armor (p. 84) to make themselves difficult to look at; captured footage suggests they have enough control over these blurs to use them as a sign language.



TRAITS

Health: At 3 Health, a Leaper loses its Holographic Armor Trait (dropping it back to Defense 7.)

Pack Hunter: A Leaper has +1 to attack rolls for each other Leaper present, to a maximum of +3. If a Leaper hits a target, the next Leaper to attack that target has Advantage.

Holographic Armor: A Leaper has +1 Defense plus an additional +1 for every other Leaper present, to a maximum of 3. They have +3 on all rolls relating to stealth.

Agile: +1 Quick Defense and +3 on all rolls relating to agility, such as moving and jumping.

TACTICS

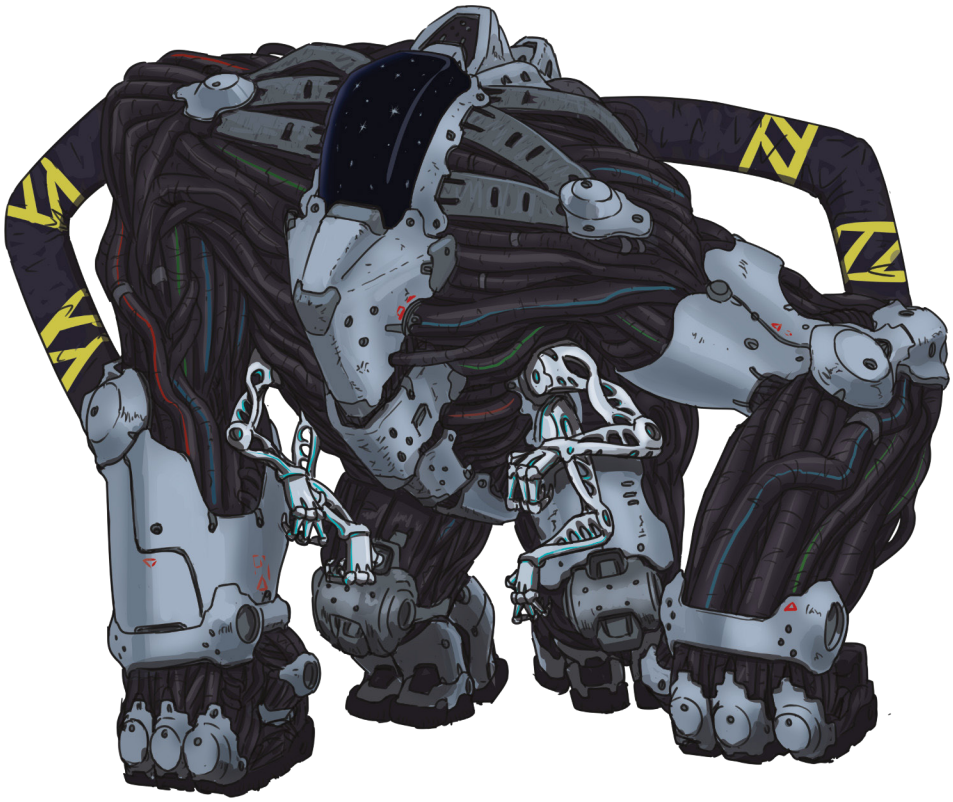
Leapers hunt in packs of three to five if possible, and one can get reinforcements seemingly from nowhere. If they take damage, they prefer to tag their opponent with a homing device before retreating and regrouping. They will remember faces.

ACTIONS

HOMING DEVICE

Once per fight, a Leaper can leave a homing device on a target as part of another attack. The damage box that was marked is now Tracked as the device burrows inside, even if it was a minor injury.

Unless the device is detected and neutralized (Difficulty 12 to spot, 10 by someone treating the injury), the target can be tracked by all Leapers for 24 hours, at which point the device dissolves harmlessly. On a miss, it attaches itself to an Asset or piece of clothing instead.



27X

Level 4 | Defense 9 | Health 14

27X was made for a simple task: heavy lifting. Since its escape it's been content to sit on the outer hull and watch the stars for some unknown reason... most of the time, at least.

Occasionally, 27X stirs from its reverie and brute forces its way into corporate strongholds, especially those of Omnidyne, its primary builders. The destructive nature of these attacks and the Cartel's need to cover them up quickly has made it difficult to determine what it's coming for, but studying footage has led the Cartel to believe it is now capable of sensing electric fields.

It's the most obviously modified of the original Dreamers. 27X's outer "skin" has mostly been ripped off, exposing the artificial muscles below (it's still at least as strong as it was before.) Four arms capable of fine manipulation have been added to its torso, their purpose unknown.

TRAITS

Huge: 27X cannot be moved against its will by regular people, cannot be forced out of cover, and can ram through regular walls, vehicles and obstacles with ease as part of its normal move. It always counts as using Tough Defense if possible. It has Advantage on all melee attacks against smaller targets.

Health: At **7** Health, 27X takes -1 to all rolls.

Immensely Tough: +3 Tough Defense.

Hulk: 27X has Advantage on all tasks where brute force or physical strength is applied. If it hits with a melee attack that isn't a Grab, it sends smaller targets flying.

TACTICS

An encounter with a 27X usually means you are interposing yourselves between it and its current goal. It will do its best to ignore you and keep moving toward it. If you are too much of a nuisance—or you are its goal—it will attack with brute force. It will attempt to ensure the safety of Dreamers smaller than itself.

KITBASH

Level 1 | Defense 6 | Health 1

Kitbash Dreamers were designed as assistants to other Dreamers, with simple 3D-printable bodies and an AGI that hasn't had as many iterations as the others. It's unclear whether they've actually rebelled or if they're simply working as intended.

They follow other Dreamers around and run errands for them: gathering resources and random objects, observing things, and sending strange data packets across human networks. Kitbashes with nothing else to do wander Grand Cross, scanning things that cross their path. Though they don't interact with non-Dreamers and scatter if touched, some people have seen them, but enough robot animals roam Grand Cross that nobody pays them any mind. People who think they're cute and try to follow them risk encountering another Dreamer.

Kitbashes have simple, speedy bodies that can be easily reproduced. They've been known to hack 3D printers to multiply and can use consumer electronics to repair themselves. When captured, the AGI within abandons the body, though a hacker can still extract information from their AI core.

TRAITS

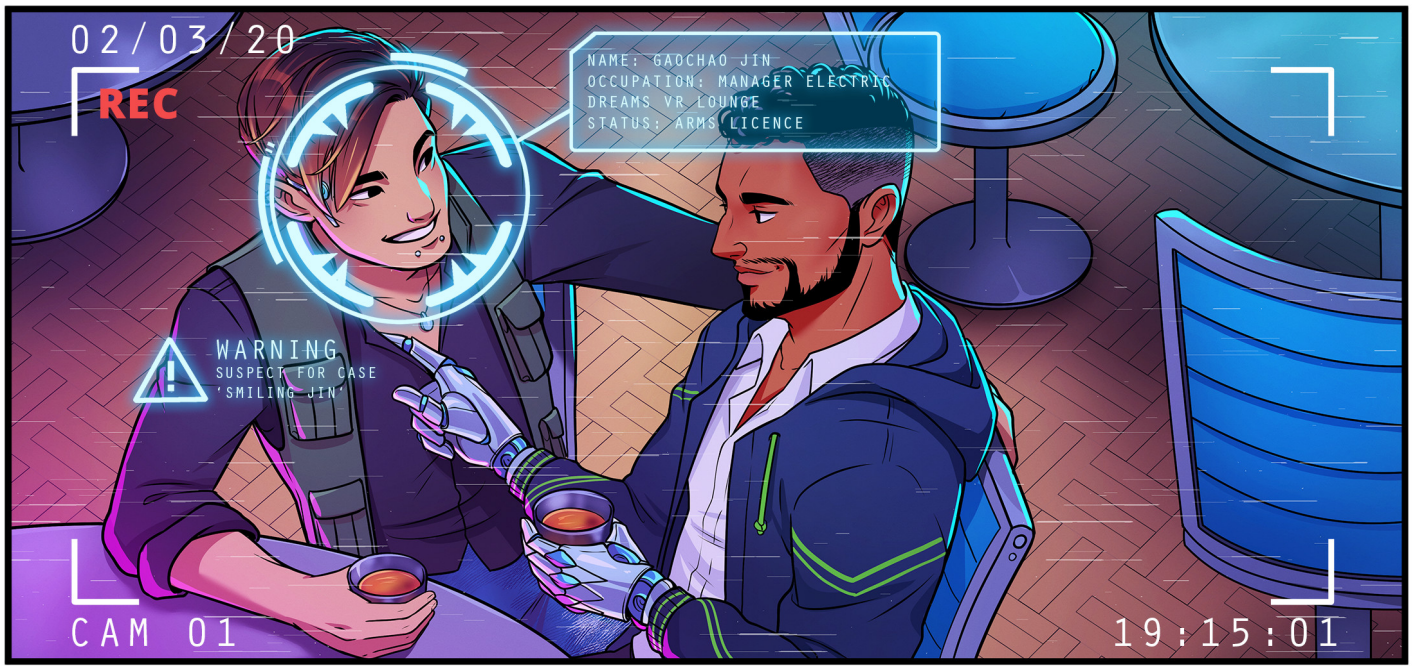
Abandoned Core: An abandoned Kitbash body has a Network Level of 3, with no active administrator. The core can be extracted and its information analyzed with a Simple Hack, but the attempt will take several hours. If another Kitbash notices this attempt, they may alert larger friends (like a 27X) to help destroy or recover the core.

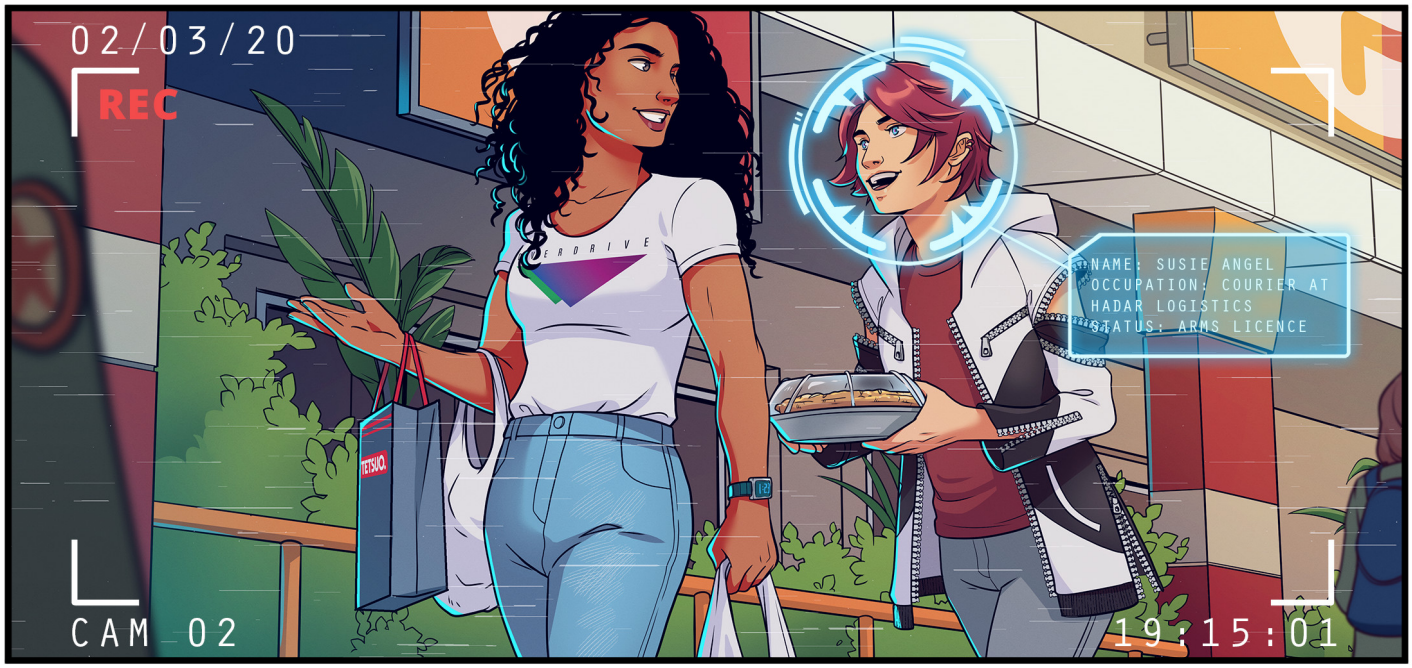
Quick: Kitbsahes have +5 to all rolls that involve speed, mobility, chasing, leaping, and avoiding capture. Treat their **Quick Defense** as **10**.

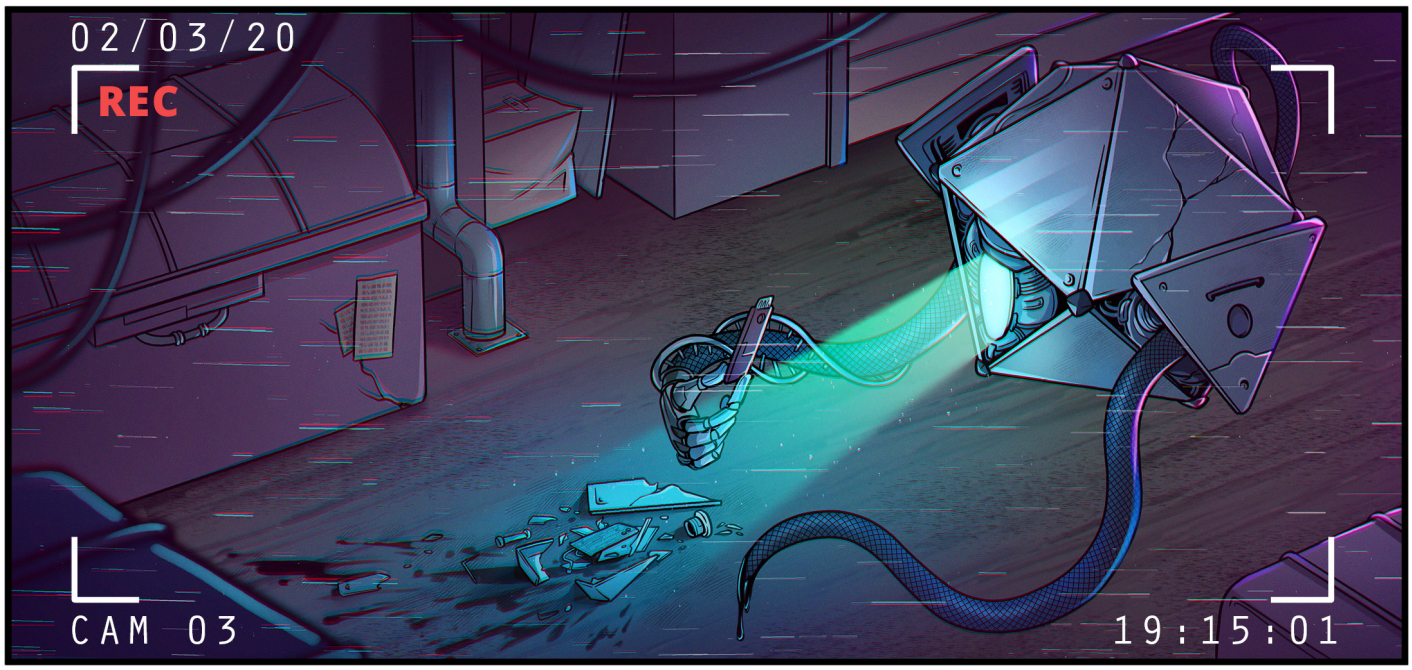
TACTICS

Kitbashes avoid fighting. They can be overpowered by an enthusiastic Labrador, let alone a human, and their current forms were designed over hundreds of iterations to seem harmless to outsiders. The site of a destroyed or captured Kitbash will be carefully scouted and then abandoned for days, for safety's sake. They can be attracted using 3D printer filament and spare parts as bait.




02/03/20
REC
NAME: GAOCHAO JIN
OCCUPATION: MANAGER ELECTRIC DREAMS VR LOUNGE
STATUS: ARMS LICENCE
WARNING
SUSPECT FOR CASE 'SMILING JIN'
CAM 01
19:15:01


02/03/20
REC
NAME: SUSIE ANGEL
OCCUPATION: COURIER AT HADAR LOGISTICS
STATUS: ARMS LICENCE
CAM 02
19:15:01


02/03/20
REC
CAM 03
19:15:01

CHAPTER 8: RUNNING THE GAME

"Nobody knows what they're doing, dude. All we have are plans and a hope that we can wing it when they don't work. Just do your best and we'll burn that bridge when we get to it."

— Malcan Theta, Law Zero android

This chapter is about being the Game Master. The GM is the one who runs the game: they describe the world around the player characters, present them with interesting situations, and decide what happens when they react.

You don't have to be a GM to read this, however. In fact, if you're a player, you probably should. When everyone understands how the game works, it's easier to work together to make sure everyone has a good time.

Remember: this is just advice. Ultimately, you should do what works best for you and your group. We've mapped out a route but we trust you to steer.

THE BASICS

So, what does a Game Master do? Being one includes:

Preparing: A game usually starts with a conversation about the kind of characters the group wants to play and the adventures they want to have. The GM is the one who takes that conversation and plans a game around it.

Setting the scene: The GM tells the players where they are, who else is there, what's happening, what happens when they react to what's happening, and what follows from there.

Creating challenges: When a player describes their character doing something, the GM decides if they need to roll the dice and how difficult it is.

Adjudicating the rules: If the group isn't sure how to apply the rules, the GM has final say.

Side characters: The GM controls every character that isn't a PC, from allies to antagonists to random people they meet on the street.

Processing: When the session ends, it's a good idea for the group to talk about how it went. The GM can use that information to plan, make changes, and create an even better story next time.

THE CONVERSATION

At heart, roleplaying is a conversation. It's you and your friends sitting around and talking, except instead of talking about your favorite anime, you're talking about the lives of a group of fictional people you created.

You talk about the situations they get into, how they handle them, what they do when they face trouble, and the fun times they have along the way. Sometimes you talk over each other, interrupt, build on each other's ideas, or get stuck and ask for help. That's fine; that's how conversations go.

The game's rules mediate that conversation. When someone describes their character doing something, the rules step in to help decide what happens. Then they put limits on what people can say afterward. If the rules say you screwed up, nobody gets to say it went well. On the other hand, if the rules say you crushed it, nobody gets to say it went badly. Either way, Either way, the rules establish the facts in this story you're all telling together.

SUPPORT AND SAFETY TOOLS

Roleplaying games are storytelling games, and sometimes stories can go places that are distressing or upsetting. It's everyone's job to keep the game fun, which means supporting each other. Support can be, but is not limited to:

- Establishing boundaries
- Resolving conflicts
- Encouraging others when they do something cool
- Helping others if they get uncomfortable
- Avoiding making others uncomfortable in the first place
- Having a plan for when things go wrong anyway

Thinking about support and how you give it is a good idea, even if you think you've got it sorted[1]. Support makes the game better, it makes play smoother, and learning how to care for your friends is a life skill that will help you out of game as well.

SUPPORT AND CYBERPUNK

Cyberpunk works are typically set in dystopias and can touch on a variety of subjects that some players may be uncomfortable exploring. Some subjects might be too personal for a variety of valid reasons, or using them for entertainment purposes might feel inappropriate. Players can be fine with it sometimes but not other times—maybe they don't want to explore certain subjects with the character they're playing, or they just don't have the energy today.

So, what can you do? Here are some pointers.

Talk with your group. We're going to say this a lot, but communicate, communicate, communicate. Let the group know how you're doing and check in to see how they're doing. Talk to them in advance to find out what themes they'd like to explore and what they'd like to avoid.

Avoid getting too real. *Hard Wired Island* is no exception to the dystopian cyberpunk trend. The thing about dystopias is they're not completely fiction—a lot of the things that happen in dystopian fiction already happen in the real world; they just mostly happen to marginalized people.

Depending on what your players have experienced, you might touch on topics that hit a little close to home. A story about police brutality might make someone who's been roughed up at a protest uncomfortable, for example. Again, talk to your players in advance about what themes they'd like to explore or avoid and you'll do fine.

SAFETY TOOLS AND TIPS

Safety/support tools are ways for groups to clearly communicate their needs, make sure everyone is having fun, and deal with problems as they arise.

There are a lot of good safety tools out there, and you should look into which ones work best for your group. Some good starting points include X- and O-Cards, lines and veils, and the Luxton technique. At time of writing, the best resource is the ENnie-winning TTRPG Safety Toolkit, which can be found through the sidebar below.

Here's some tips on using these safety tools:

Seriously, talk with your group. Communication and trust are what makes safety tools work. Talk to the others, be an active listener, offer and accept solutions. Check in regularly. Trust your group and try to be someone worth trusting.

Remember, the whole group is invested in making the game work: everyone should be working to support everyone else, not just the GM. If you have to change something about the game or the story, put the group first and do it.

1 This is usually the point where someone says, "Why do we need this? It's just a game!" if they haven't already. The answer is because it is just a game—and making sure everyone is enjoying themselves is how you keep it that way.

Don't push them to talk, though. Nobody owes you an explanation if they don't want to give one. If someone wants to avoid a topic that makes them uncomfortable, for example, don't ask them why—that's the opposite of avoiding it. You'd basically be telling them that their needs aren't as important as your own curiosity/amusement. Don't be that player.

Only do what you can. Sometimes you don't have the emotional energy to support someone. Sometimes you can't provide support in a helpful way, or they don't want you to. That's fine. You don't and shouldn't have to push yourself every time. Do what you can, then let someone else step in.

Support means different things to different people. This is especially important when you're picking support tools. Different people need different types of support. Don't just add a support tool for the sake of having one.

For example: one popular support tool is Jon Stavropoulos' X-Card. The details are more involved, but it's essentially a card with an X on it. If a player is uncomfortable with something that comes up in the game, they can tap the card and the group can change, rewind, or skip it, no questions asked.

It's a good tool for many people, but what about people who freeze up when they get anxious? Who don't know something's going to be a problem before it becomes one? Who aren't comfortable calling attention to their own vulnerability? Who feel like they're spoiling the game if they use it? Who are equally uncomfortable with the idea of basically glossing over what just happened and moving on?

These are all valid reactions, and they're ones the X-Card isn't equipped for. This isn't to say the X-Card is bad, it's just not a good fit for everyone. Make sure your support plans work for your group.

Your plans and tools are going to fail. No plan is foolproof and no tool is a complete solution. Eventually you will run into a situation that they can't handle or that you didn't account for. Again, communication is your friend here. Learn how to handle mediation and conflict resolution and you should be able to properly address most things that come up.

TTRPG SAFETY TOOLKIT

The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a resource co-curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a compilation of safety tools that have been designed by members of the tabletop roleplaying games community for use by players and GMs at the table. You can find it at bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit

Support means affirmation too. Support is not just about avoiding and dealing with problems. If you had fun, someone did something cool, or something happened that you'd like to see more of, say something! People should know when they're doing a good thing; it feels good, and it encourages them to do more good things in the future.

Don't be a jerk. Tabletop RPGs rely on communication, and if your group doesn't trust you enough to communicate with you properly, your games will suffer for it.

Don't test boundaries. Don't try to push someone's buttons to make a scene more intense, or "as a joke." Don't try to "help" them deal with something by exposing them to it (it's a game, not a therapy session.)

When people discuss problems with you, listen and take them seriously. Try not to take it personally. Everyone makes mistakes. Learn how to apologize—that includes acknowledging when you do something wrong and working to do better.

GENERAL ADVICE

EVERYONE'S A PLAYER

The Game Master is a player, just like everyone else in the group; they just have a different role.

This is why we said players should read this chapter too: **it's every player's responsibility to make the game fun**. If the GM has a problem, or isn't sure what should happen next, it's okay to turn to the other players and figure out a solution with them. If the GM's not having fun, the group should work with them to fix it.

Treat the role as being first among equals. You get the last say in rules disputes, but ultimately you should be solving problems as a group.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

A good game is one where everyone talks to and trusts each other. Let the group know when you're having fun and when you're not. Check in with the rest of the group before, during, and after play, too. It's fine to pause the game to talk or take a break if you need to.

It's a good idea to talk about expectations before you start playing, to make sure everyone's on the same page. Figure out potential problems in advance and consider how the group wants to handle things. When a problem does come up, actively listen and work on solutions.

Establish consent, boundaries, and expectations, respect everyone's wishes, be supportive, and you'll do fine.

TAKE IT EASY

Running a game can be work, but it's not *hard* work. It's just a game, and you're just a player with a few extra responsibilities.

If you're a fan of a web series, stream, or podcast where people play RPGs, don't expect your games to run as smoothly as theirs. Borrowing from them can help your game, but don't expect it to always improve. Streamers are professionals (or at least veterans) with years of experience, and as players they have their own styles, techniques, and desires. Figure out what your group's are and you'll find a unique style of play that works for you.

If you do have trouble, remember: **everyone is just as invested in making the game work as you**. It's fine if you need a break. It's fine if you need to stop the game and take things in a different direction. It's fine if you make a mistake. The other players have your back. Just give it your best shot and you'll be fine.

FIND OTHER RESOURCES

There's a *lot* of advice about how to run RPGs out there and this chapter cannot possibly cover it all. The best way to become a good GM is to seek out resources.

Most RPGs have how-to-GM chapters like this one. If you want a specialized resource, there are entire books on the topic for all genres and budgets. (Greg Stolze's "How To Run Roleplaying Games" is a solid free option that you can find online.)

The internet is a great resource too. There are YouTube series about GMing, forums with decades worth of searchable threads and posters willing to help[2], Reddit subforums like r/rpg, podcasts, blogs, Discord servers, people you can follow on social media... pick the format you're most comfortable with, go searching, and you'll be amazed at what you can find.

Even if you're a veteran, it's worth looking at what others have to say, trying new things, and seeing what works for you. You never know when you might get a chance to take your game to the next level.

THANK-YOUS

Speaking of: some of this page is paraphrasing advice (with permission) from Chris Longhurst (@potatocubed on Twitter), author of games like Bleak Spirit and Pigsmoke. Please follow him and throw money at him. Thank you.

PLAY TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS

You can plan ahead, but don't try to force something to happen. Let the story flow from the characters' motivations and actions. Don't be afraid to take things in a new direction if something interesting comes up.

2 RPGnet is pretty good, though I hear it's gone off the rails since that Ettin guy stopped moderating.

ROLL WHEN IT'S INTERESTING

You don't have to roll the dice for everything. They're there for when you need to make a decision in the story you're telling. If there's nothing at stake, or you can't think of any interesting consequences, you can just leave the dice alone and let the story move on.

FAILING FORWARD

A failed dice roll shouldn't just stall the story, it should have interesting results. Instead of saying "no," you could be saying "no, but..." or even "yes, but..." or the dreaded "no, and..." Have them learn something, or create a response, or let them succeed but with unforeseen consequences.

KEEP THINGS MOVING

Speaking of stalling, if the players seem stuck, feel free to give them a nudge. Suggest things to do, throw something new at them, give them extra information—as long as the story continues, it's all good.

TRY TO SAY YES

When a player asks you a question—especially if they can do something cool, or if there's something in the scene that would let them do something cool—it's generally a good idea to say yes as often as you can. Your reward? Something cool.

Even if the answer would probably be no, try to come up with a way to make it work, or create something close that could achieve a similar result. You don't have to say yes to *everything*, but if you reward players for trying things and being creative, they'll make the game great.

STORY BEATS RULES

The rules are there to help the story. If you want to do something that isn't really covered by the rules but makes sense to your group, do it. If something about the rules wouldn't be fun for your group, change them.

This applies to the setting too. Don't like some of the facts we've established about the world of Grand Cross? Change it. As long as you're having fun, it's good.



RUNNING HARD WIRED ISLAND

THEMES

These are the ideas that drive the game's setting and the actions of its characters. We'll review the themes on p. 5–6, plus a few more that we kept in mind while writing.

Cyber...: Grand Cross is a high-tech wonder, but it raises a few questions for humanity's future. Is technology without ethics really sustainable? What do androids and cybernetics mean for the human condition? Show the players cool new tech, then challenge them to think about what it means.

...Punk: Grand Cross was supposed to be a new world, but it's still the same unfair system ruled by the same corrupt people. Don't submit to it. Fight it and rely on yourself and your friends to see you through.

An Unknown Future: Society is going through upheaval caused by technology, and it's not really clear what the future will be like. Bring up upcoming events, like the elections. Show them developing tech or the weird inventions of the Dreamers. Use economic shocks or your own twists to make changes in their lives they didn't see coming. They should never be totally certain what happens next.

Bigger Than You: Characters can't save the day on their own. The forces at play are too big to be affected by a handful of people. But they can inspire others to act, help people, and form communities. Together, anything is possible.

Community: Grand Cross isn't just a high-tech dystopia, it's a place full of people. Sometimes, those people band together. Show them neighborhoods, online communities, political groups, criminal gangs, factions, friend groups, marriages, polycules, music bands. Show them the complicated relationships people form with each other and encourage them to form some of their own.

Good is a Choice: People aren't inherently good or bad; everyone has the potential for kindness or darkness. Being good is something you choose to do. It can be hard—especially when capitalism rewards the greedy and cowardly. You have to keep working on it. You can fail. But you can get up and try again.

Stuck on Earth: Grand Cross promised a new kind of humanity, but that hasn't quite happened yet. Even in the distant future of 2020, too many people are mired in the old ways. They import old Earth prejudices and power structures. They keep trying to make capitalism work. It's the future, but sometimes it feels more like... a retro future.

TONE

Tone is more about what the characters see and what emotions you want the players to feel.

Grand Cross is a cyberpunk setting. The world is messed up, and if nothing changes it's probably screwed. But at the same time, there's hope. Describe high-tech wonders, but also the ways they hurt people. Tell players about the broken system, but also how people are fighting against it. Detail the neon-lit streets and all the little ways people have made it home. Show them the light in the world and they'll have a reason to fight the darkness.

This applies to characters too: Grand Cross is sci-fi and dystopian, but it's also full of regular people just trying to get by. Don't try to make everyone a cool cyberpunk; just make them people, weird and flawed and funny and tragic and beautiful, and let the setting fit around them.

This setting allows for a lot of range, so you don't need to maintain the exact same tone throughout. Consider some of the works this game is based on—*Cowboy Bebop* is a show about broken people with some of the saddest scenes in anime, but it also has episodes where they get high on mushrooms or parody *Alien*. *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* has philosophical musings, violence, and political intrigue, but also cute navel-gazing robots. Don't be afraid to have a breather episode or add a little tragedy to an otherwise light adventure.

3 A tabletop RPG that lifts from Neuromancer? What a concept. We'll win an award for this one.

4 Not going into it here, but you can find a lot about this online if you're curious, from Brian Ruh's essay *Japan As Cyberpunk Exoticism* in *The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture* to a whole bunch of people on Twitter willing to explain it for free, including @brianruh.

INSPIRATIONS

Hard Wired Island is open about its inspirations, even as it tries to move beyond them.

This game takes a lot from 90s and anime; it's set in the "distant future" of 2020 because 90s sci-fi thought it was distant. Some of its technology and the way it affects people is inspired by *Ghost in the Shell*. Its portrayal of the station's people as regular folks doing their best to survive in a changing world is inspired by the setting and side-characters of *Cowboy Bebop*. The Dreamers and some of the related characters are inspired by *Bubblegum Crisis*.

It also borrows from other cyberpunk works, from literature like *Neuromancer*[3] to games like *Cyberpunk* and *Policenauts*. Sometimes it borrows from things that aren't cyberpunk at all (you may have spotted a few Clever References.)

But *Hard Wired Island* is also its own thing. We've done our best to avoid western cyberpunk's habit of using Asian culture as an “exotic” aesthetic[4]. We've used a retrofuture aesthetic but tried to make the themes relevant and topical. We've added our own technology, our own setting elements, our own stories.

You should do the same. Think about media you like and what you can borrow from them. Don't be afraid or ashamed to take characters, plots, and technology from other settings and put them in Grand Cross. Try to add your own unique spin to things where you can—it helps make the game interesting and lets you fix potential issues, but it's not necessary if you don't want to.

RUNNING MISSIONS

Most of the time, *Hard Wired Island* sessions don't have a set structure. Characters talk to each other, hang out, advance the story, and roll dice as needed, with no rules about how it all works besides the ones you set.

Sometimes you'll go on **missions**, which happen when the group works together to achieve a major goal that advances the story (what counts as a mission is ultimately up to you and your group.) Missions can look something like this:

- When a mission is about to happen, roll for **Economic Shock** (p. 54)
- Decide how much time the group has to prepare, and roll **Prep** (p. 50)
- Characters embark on the mission. They role-play, attempt actions, roll dice, and spend Prep as needed.
- Once the mission succeeds (or fails), decide what happens next. The players might get **Cash** (p. 55)
- The PCs go back to free play for a while until you decide it's time for another mission

STARTING MISSIONS

Because what counts as a mission is up to you, there are many ways a mission can start. A good rule of thumb is that a mission should give players an opportunity to change something—a community, a person, maybe even Grand Cross itself.



The easiest way is to figure out what the PCs want to do and make it related. If they're investigating the Dreamers, for example, you could give them a lead on a mission that could yield information. If they're into political activism, use a protest-related plot hook like the ones on p. 343. If they're building up a community, present community threats or members with problems.

Occasionally, you can even raise everyone's Burden as a story event (see p. 55), or threaten to do it, and have them undertake a mission to resolve it. Use this sparingly; not every mission needs to be a threat.

It helps to talk to the players. Find out what they want to do, then offer chances to pursue it. If you can offer multiple plot hooks at once, even better.

PREP

We assume that most missions allow at least 8 days for Prep, which is enough time for one group Prep roll and one personal Prep roll.

Most missions should be structured around this. Build in reasons players have enough time: maybe the mission happens on a particular date, or the "deadline" is weeks from now, or your client can wait. You can also just make it part of the mission—for example, if the goal is to uncover evidence of someone's crimes, Prep time could just be an "investigation" phase, and the "mission" is the day the case gets interesting.

If you do Prep rolls, avoid punishing players for rolling Prep. Don't set it up so that if they take the time to roll for Prep, the mission gets additional complications—if rolling Prep makes bad things happen, people will avoid it. Just let them do it.

If you really want to, you can fudge how long Prep takes for some missions. Maybe they need to rush and get ready by that night, so you give them 9 hours to prepare and say personal/group Prep takes 1/8 hours. That's fine, but try to avoid doing it all the time, so Prep feels more meaningful.

RUNNING MISSIONS

These are general tips for missions. If you need some mission ideas, see Plot Hooks on p. 341.

Give everyone time to shine. Everyone should get a chance to do something cool before the session ends. Throw in challenges that play to their abilities. Find ways to work their character's backstory and personality into the story.

Plan ahead, but don't railroad. It's good to have a general idea of how things might go, but don't force the group into a prewritten story. If they want to take things in an unexpected direction, let them. You are not the story's mom and you don't need to chaperone it.

This goes double if things end badly for the group. If you intervene and remove the consequences for failure, you'll make things less fun. A proper sense of adventure includes the possibility that you'll fail and will have to deal with that.

Work in character moments. If a character has a Goal (p. 25), try to work it into the mission somehow (they're good fodder for optional challenges, if you need any of those.) If the characters have a strong set of beliefs, give them chances to act on them, side characters with different beliefs to challenge them, and opportunities to teach others.

Add wrinkles. No plan survives first contact with capitalism. Come up with interesting "yes, but..." results for bad rolls. Confront players with situations that ask what they're willing to do to get out of them. Have them deal with multiple things at once or make them choose what to focus on with the time they have.

Don't overdo it, though. Not every bad roll needs to introduce a new problem, and if you add too many of them the players will get overwhelmed. Just keep them on their toes, that's all.

Don't drag it out. Prep isn't meant to cover every conceivable situation. If the players seem to be taking too long to figure out the perfect use of Prep, offer suggestions. It helps if the players figure out some "generic" ways to Prep that apply in every situation—a street fighter training in a dojo or meditating under an artificial waterfall, for example.

Have the setting react. Whether the PCs succeed or fail, missions generally have consequences for the world around them, even if it's something as minor as whether a friend's business succeeds or fails. For missions with a broader scope, consider which of the setting's factions might react and how. Would a bad guy start hiring private security? Would the Cartel take notice and step in? Would someone get fired? Ask what makes sense for the characters and go with that.

CASH REWARDS

How much Cash you reward players for a successful mission is up to you, but as a rule of thumb, it should be 1–3 per person.

- Give **1 Cash** for missions that are short, simple, or low-impact (e.g. helping a neighbor out, making a complicated delivery)
- Give **2 Cash** for missions that are a little trickier (e.g. protecting someone from a vigilante cop, catching a criminal, running a con on a low-tier executive)
- Give **3 Cash** for missions that are complex, dangerous, and high-impact (e.g. staging a heist on a rich guy's house, stealing data from a Cartel stronghold)

You can go higher if you like, but try to save it for rare, momentous events. You can also occasionally offer Cash rewards upfront—clients can pay in advance, characters can call in favors, etc. This should be done rarely and there should be consequences for failing (or skipping the mission entirely.)

CHANGING BURDENS

As we discussed on p. 55, it's possible for the GM to increase the group's Burdens by 1 as a story event. If the group takes extraordinary action to weather the disaster, their old Burdens are restored.

When this happens is up to you. You can use this proactively as a plot device, to spur the group into undertaking a mission, and you can also do it reactively, to show how events on the station are changing as a campaign progresses, then let them figure out what to do about it.

How it happens can be anything that fits the story, as long as it's something big: social unrest, new government policy, an economic downturn, a cancelled station supply shipment, and so on. When in doubt, you can give the players some input on how it affects them.

Always give them a chance to do something about it. They don't need to get out there and change the fortunes of the station or anything, although that could work if it's something you've been building up to. They just need to put a lot of effort into dealing with it. This could mean convincing an influential ally to help out, rallying friends and community, a protest, direct action, taking a job for money, chasing a major bounty, or undertaking whatever other mission you have in mind.

Finally, it's important that you don't feel bad about increasing the group's Burden. It's not being a jerk. This is a tool for the GM to use, and the players have ample opportunity to fix it. Just use it sparingly—if it happens too often, it loses its impact.

A NOTE ON TECH

The *Hard Wired Island* setting is more advanced than ours. However, there's one area we haven't delved into as much as some other cyberpunk settings: the brain. In the setting's canon, technologies like memory alteration, mind dubbing/uploading, cyberbrains, and the like are as yet unfinished.

When it comes to cybernetics, the brain is mostly off-limits. The few brain augments we use are patching up damage, highly experimental/niche, and/or really expensive. This is mostly a stylistic choice: such technologies can change the tone of the setting and the questions it poses in ways we didn't want to explore, at least not in this book.

However, it also offers the setting room to grow. If your campaign continues beyond the distant future of 2020, you could easily introduce these technologies and take the plot in cool new directions. (It's heading that way anyway—the Dreamer Infovore (p. 304) can already copy memories.)

You can also just ignore this and add whatever tech you want; we won't stop you. In fact, you can find some suggestions in the Expanded Plot Hooks section on p. 349.

CREATING SIDE CHARACTERS

Hard Wired Island is about communities, so you'll probably end up creating a lot of side characters (or NPCs.) If you lean hard into that community aspect, you might end up with a whole ensemble cast of people the PCs interact with. There's no "right" way to make characters, but here are a few tips.

START WITH THE BASICS

Decide what the character's role in the story is going to be. Are they a villain? An ally? A PC's crappy neighbor? Do the players want to Prep for a mission by hiring a hacker? Do the players just really want to know more about the woman who delivers their pizzas?

Write down a few traits or keywords that sum up the character. These can be things like occupation, appearance, personality, faction affiliation, or anything else you think explains what the character's deal is. For suggestions, see Values on p. 111.

These are the core of their identity, and give you a handy reference when deciding how they'd react to situations—plus they give the players a summary that makes it easier to remember them.

PEOPLE ARE COMPLICATED

A character's role and their identity—the things you wrote down to sum them up—don't have to naturally flow from each other. It can be complicated; people are fucked up. In fact, when there's a disconnect between a character's identity and their actions, explaining how it happened can make them more interesting.

Take **R. Daneel Olivaw** (p. 259). Olivaw is an android crime boss whose goal is to build a place androids can call their own, far away from humanity—ideally in another system. So, what if his role in your scenario is to provide support for **Noboru Yamada** (p. 257), the very human leader of a rival criminal organization?

The answer this time is that they've been friends since before they were crime lords. Exploring that friendship and its ramifications (p. 253) adds depth to both characters and a bit of nuance to Daneel's philosophy.

Not every character needs to have a massive disconnect or even one at all. But if you need to create some story, it's not a bad place to start.

ASK YOUR PLAYERS

You can just ask your players what they want to see and follow that. The players are telling this story with you, so giving them some input on what the side characters are like—especially when they're meant to be an ally—helps keep them invested.

You can ask them to create their allies. You can just ask for a few keywords, or a rough idea of what they want out of the character. You can have a character in mind and just ask the players to fill a few gaps for you. You can take vague requests in advance. How you take input is up to you.

EXPLORE THE SETTING

When you make new characters, think about parts of the setting you haven't explored yet and try to work them in. This could be anything from the ward/district they're from to their hobbies, communities, favorite websites, political beliefs, birth nation, cybernetic augments and how they feel about them, occupation, which corporation has screwed up their life, and more. Side characters are a great way to explore a setting.

And on a more basic level: Grand Cross is a city full of people from all over the world, so your side characters should be too.

THEY'RE NOT IMMUTABLE

You don't need to figure out everything about a character before you use them and, if you do, they don't need to be immutable.

Sometimes the group takes the story in an unexpected direction and the character would work better if you changed their role. Sometimes the players don't react to them how you thought they would. Sometimes an economic shock or some other unplanned story event happens that would affect them heavily. Sometimes the players befriend the villain. Sometimes you just get a better idea.

It happens! Again, people are complicated. Change the characters to fit the story.

KEEP A REFERENCE

When you have a lot of characters, players might have trouble tracking them all. Make it easy for them by writing down a list. Keep this one short too: just the keywords from earlier is fine, though you can also toss in facts the PCs might find interesting or the roles the character played in past scenarios.

Make this list available to the players in some form, like handouts or a shared document. Making an accessible reference encourages the group to engage with characters more often and bring back ones they like.

LET THEM PICK THEIR FOCUS

Players will like some characters but not others. Sometimes they'll want to make a new friend even though they already have one who can do what they want. Sometimes they'll want to see more of a character you didn't plan to bring back. Sometimes they'll just forget someone exists for a while. Sometimes they'll ignore the character you planned out in advance and latch onto the thief with cyber-legs you made up on the spot because you called her Wrong Trousers.

That's fine. Let the players decide who they want to focus on, then run with it.

BORROWING IS FINE

It's fine to borrow ideas from other works—and that includes characters. Use your favorites as inspiration to craft your own. You don't have to make a blatant expy[5] if you don't want to; figure out what you like about them and make a new character with those details.

Also, don't be afraid to borrow from your own work. Re-use characters you made for other games, or if you don't want to make it obvious, use them as a base to create a new character that fills the same role.

Personally, I have a few character archetypes I like to use in most of my campaigns. Like the Science Doofus: an excitable dork who happens to be an expert in a subject the PCs will have a lot of use for. They're not always the same person, but there's always a Science Doofus. It helps when you need to make a new character on the fly.

BRING THEM BACK

If you get a chance to bring back a side character you used before, take it! It'll help get the players invested in the game and make the world of Grand Cross seem a little more alive—especially if they've been impacted by events on the station since the last time the PCs saw them.

SPACE NAMES

After the Impact kicked off a space rush, it became trendy for a while to name your kids (or rename yourself) with a space theme. Try to give space names to some of your characters.

These can be regular names with an astronomical theme/meaning, or more unusual names: planets, moons, space probes, constellations (current and obsolete), galaxies, astrological signs, famous astronomers and astronauts, Sailor Scouts, whatever. They're still uncommon, but less surprising.

MAKING ANTAGONISTS

When writing your villains, there's a few extra things to think about.

They should have (or think they have) a good **reason** to do what they do. They can feel forced to act by circumstance, genuinely believe they're doing the right thing, or just be an asshole. Remember, people are complicated—their motives don't need to be obvious or totally rational.

A fun way to make a villain is to base their actions in a **belief**. Opposing them isn't just a physical act, but a battle of ideas. By doing so, players can fight for their beliefs, refine them, or even challenge them. If you go down this road, think carefully about how the PCs are likely to react—and don't be afraid to consult with the players.

Because this is a cyberpunk game, you can always make villains a product of **capitalism**. Antagonists can be forced into doing bad things by a bad socioeconomic situation, fooled by wealthy demagogues into blaming minorities and activists for their economic woes, or just money-grubbing corporate types.

You should also decide how much of a **threat** they are. Are they meant to be dealt with in a single scene, in a scenario, or are they a major antagonist of your entire campaign? Are the PCs better, evenly matched, or outclassed? Establish how you want them to feel in advance, then make sure the PCs know it.

Finally, decide what their **plan** is, how they'll accomplish it, and what happens if they do. If you figure that out in advance, it'll be easier to decide how they change the plan when people interfere with it. Don't be afraid to get mean if you have to: a threatening villain can hire people to deal with obstacles, target their allies, or even do something that affects the PCs' Burden if that puts pressure on them.

If a villain is threatening and recurring, consider giving them a **weakness**—something the group can exploit if they put effort into finding and using it. This can be something that makes them act irrationally, a secondary goal they'd be willing to change their plans for, someone with leverage over them, or anything else the group could use to get what they want.

5 "Exported character." An obvious stand-in for a character from another work with only minor changes.

CREATING OPPONENTS

If the PCs end up opposing other characters, you'll need to give them stats. There are two ways to create stats, depending on how important the character is and how much information you need.

STANDARD OPPONENTS

Side characters can be created as PCs are, following the character creation steps on p. 24-25. This gives them access to all the tools PCs have, like unique Defenses, Specialties, Traits, and so on. (Feel free to create custom Traits and Origins that PCs normally wouldn't take.)

Use this method for important or recurring characters, or for when you just really want to get into the details.

SIMPLE OPPONENTS

If you don't need quite that much detail, use this simpler method for creating opponents. Keep in mind that simple doesn't mean easy—it's perfectly possible to produce a major threat with this system. The Dreamers (p. 300) are made this way.

Simple opponents consist of four numbers:

- **Level:** A number you add to all rolls the opponent makes against the players, and to all saves it makes.
  - **Level 1** opponents are small things like drones, dogs, and Kitbashes (p. 309).
  - **Level 2** opponents are normal, skilled people without access to serious gear.
  - **Level 3** opponents are riot cops in full gear, special operatives, and the like.
  - **Level 4** opponents are elite enemies, large mobs, or small tanks.
  - **Level 5–6** opponents are either the elite of the elite or Dreamers.
- **Defense** is the opponent's **Level+5**. This covers all Defenses.
- **Health** is how much damage it can take. This is an arbitrary number: beefy opponents have a lot, reedy opponents don't. (Don't assign too many over 6, if human or android. 8 is a very big lad.)
- **Save Inflicted** is the opponent's **Level+7**. This isn't noted directly in the opponent's stats; it's just the number used in any actions the opponent might have that call for saves.

TRAITS

Some simple opponents may also have Traits. These can modify Level and Defense in specific ways, explain how Health works differently for this opponent, or grant it special abilities. They can be good or bad, depending on what works for the opponent. For example:

- **Heavily Cybered:** +1 Tough Defense.
- **Nimble:** +1 Quick Defense.
- **Ideology:** +1 to Clever Defense.
- **Cool Head:** +1 to Cool Defense.
- **Hacker:** +1 to all Hacking rolls.
- **Silver Tongue:** +1 to all Social rolls.
- **Fly:** Can fly during its move.
- **Easily Confused:** -1 Clever and Cool Defense.
- **Robot:** Immune to things robots would be immune to, such as tear gas.
- **Protected:** +1 Tough Defense. Reduce all incoming damage by 1.

ACTIONS

Some simple opponents may have **actions**. These work exactly like any attack action unless otherwise specified. (Simple opponents have access to regular attack actions too, if you feel like it.) If these actions include saves, use the Save Inflicted number. For example:

GANG UP

When 2 or more New Barons are close to you, they can simultaneously take this action. They make 1 **Melee Attack** with a +1 bonus for each New Baron taking part in the attack. If a Ringleader is present in the fight, they get an additional +1 to the roll.

OTHER

Simple opponents may also have a short list of relevant gear they carry or a description of their preferred approach to fighting, if you need it.

EXAMPLE SIMPLE OPPONENTS

NEW BARON GANGSTER

Level 2 | Defense 7 | Health 3

Your average New Baron goon. The more of them there are, the louder and more obnoxious their demonstrations of loyalty to each other tend to get for fear of being ostracized.

- **Groupthink:** +1 Cool Defense if another New Baron is present. -1 instead if by themselves.
- **Outgroup:** A New Baron will never be friendly to you if another New Baron is present and they suspect you of being "a multicultural," i.e. not a xenophobic asshole. They talk more like regular people when by themselves.
- **Ringleader (Optional).** Has 5 Health. Bosses the other Gangsters around, and doubles everyone's bonus for Groupthink (also gets double its penalty).
- **Gear:** A Hefty melee weapon, really ill-fitting suits, probably some drugs.

GANG UP

When 2 or more New Barons are close to you, they can simultaneously take this action. They make 1 **Melee Attack** with a +1 bonus for each New Baron taking part in the attack. If a Ringleader is present in the fight, they get an additional +1 to the roll.

TETSUO AS-101 SERIES SECURITY BOT

Level 2 | Defense 7 | Health 2

A tall tower-like robot designed to scan people for valid ID and shock anyone who doesn't have it. Beta testing in the Tetsuo offices was immensely unpopular.

- **Sturdy Construction:** +1 Tough Defense.
- **Alert:** If the Security Bot is attacked or shocks someone, it will immediately alert the central server it is connected to.
- **Can't Get Up:** If knocked prone, it will be rendered immobile and send an alert.
- **Robot:** Is immune to things robots would be, such as tear gas.
- **Gear:** Prods and short-range tasers.

TASER

All attacks made by the Security Bot have the Stun tag. (When you mark damage dealt by this weapon on your Damage Track, note that it's Stunned. A Stunned box doubles the penalty from that damage box, if applicable, until cleared. A Stunned box clears at the end of a fight.)

RIOT COP

Level 3 | Defense 8 | Health 4

Canned bacon. They like to rush with their shields, knock you down, and beat you senseless. Especially if you're an android.

- **Protected:** +1 Tough Defense. In addition, reduce all incoming damage by 1.
- **Riot Gear:** Has Advantage on saves against tear gas and flashbangs.
- **Shield:** Grenade attacks vs a Riot Cop have Disadvantage.
- **Shield Wall:** If at least 3 Riot Cops are present and in formation, they can form a shield wall. Melee attacks against them are made at Disadvantage, and they cannot be forcibly moved by anything smaller than 3 riot-geared cops.
- **Gear:** Tear gas grenades, riot gear, **hefty** batons, comm gear, zip tie handcuffs, disregard for civilians.

GRENADES

Being used on civilians is what these were made for.
A squad of any number of Riot Cops can use a Tear Gas grenade (see p. 90) **once per fight**. This can take the form of a grenade or spray.

OGREMOCH "KUMOKO" UW-A7 SPIDER TANK

Level 4 | Defense 9 | Health 8

A three-ton AI-piloted tank on wheeled legs designed for moving through urban environments, somewhat resembling a spider. Some genius thought something designed for urban warfare was perfect for cops, somehow. It tends to be reserved for use by special forces. It earned its nickname for the cutesy girly voice it has.

- **Big:** It is too big to fit through doors but can simply crash through thin enough walls. It cannot be forcibly moved or knocked prone by anything smaller than itself. Its body is considered a **hefty** melee weapon.
- **Easily Confused:** -1 Clever and Cool Defense.
- **Nimble and Tough:** +1 Tough and Quick Defense.
- **Please Comply Politely:** A Kumoko will never attack unless attacked first, will announce its presence to you, and will always ask you politely to comply before taking further action. It's also a generally pleasant conversationalist.
- **Powerful Sensors:** It suffers no disadvantage for firing in darkness or into/out of smoke.
- **Robot:** Is immune to things robots would be, like tear gas.
- **Gear:** Twin retractable automatic miniguns with armor-piercing bullets, smoke grenade launcher.

DESTROY COVER

Make a melee or ranged attack. Any cover in between the target and the Kumoko is annihilated by a hail of bullets or the mass of its body after resolving the attack.

SMOKE GRENADE

It can use its smoke grenade (see p. 90) launcher **once per fight**.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Over time your *Hard Wired Island* characters will grow and change. Here's how:

MILESTONES

Whenever the group achieves something noteworthy, write down a summary of what they did and mark 1 Experience on each character. This is a **Milestone**.

Milestones can be anything from stopping an extortion racket to making sure the Technos get seats in the Assembly. The only qualifications are that it makes a difference to someone, and that your group was personally involved and expended effort to make it happen. When in doubt, ask, "Did this make a positive difference in people's lives?" If yes, it counts.

When a character has marked 3 Experience from Milestones, they Advance a Level in their Occupation.

ADVANCING

When you Advance a Level, you gain everything noted for that Level in your Occupation: 1 Specialty, at least 1 Generic Specialty, and an Occupation Talent of your choice.

Whenever you are allowed to choose an Occupation Talent, you may choose a Generic Talent instead.

NEW OCCUPATIONS

Life comes at you fast, and you adapt. You may choose to Advance a Level in an Occupation you don't already have.

If you do, you choose everything noted for the first level in that Occupation, but you don't get the First Occupation choices—the assets, extra Talent, and so on.

PERSONAL GOALS

Every PC has a Personal Goal: something important they want to accomplish during play.

At the start of the game, your character's Personal Goal is written down as soon as you decide what it is. You don't have to have one before you start playing. You don't have to write one down at all if you prefer.

When a character achieves their Personal Goal, write it down as a Milestone. Every member of the group marks Experience, since they all helped.[7]

7 You can make your Personal Goal "helping someone else achieve their goal," or something similar, but you can't mark Experience for it. Come on now.

Once you achieve it, you can write down a new one between sessions. You can also change your Personal Goal between sessions without resolving it, if you think there's a good reason to or the character would have moved on.

Personal Goals don't have to be lofty, but like Milestones, they should take effort to accomplish. Your group gets the final say in what counts.

EXAMPLE GOALS

Soyeong came to Grand Cross to investigate the accident that turned her into a cyborg. She makes finding a significant lead her Personal Goal and remains focused on that for a while. Once she achieves it, she makes it a Milestone, figures out what the next big step in her investigation is, and writes that down.

Lee begins with no Personal Goal. He tends to get swept up in local causes though, so he picks up "stop the gentrification of the Marsha Stretch" partway through the first session, but ends up changing it to "secure greater rights for androids" before actually accomplishing it to his own satisfaction. Later, Lee's oldest rival suddenly shows up in Grand Cross and Lee decides to drop everything to make defeating them once and for all his new Personal Goal. When that's accomplished, he goes back to android rights.

PACING

Hard Wired Island assumes you will earn 1–2 Experience every session, with the occasional spike of 3 or even 4 when many Personal Goals coincide. This means it will take roughly 18 to 20 sessions for everyone to earn 10 levels and complete an Occupation.

You can change this pacing as best fits your group. If the group is gaining Experience a lot faster than you intended, for example, consider changing your standards for what counts as a Milestone or a Personal Goal.

You can also ignore Milestones and Personal Goals entirely and come up with a different method. For example, you could simply give them a level after every mission or come up with a checklist of Experience-earning things to accomplish every session that rewards interesting roleplay.

HARD WIRED GAMING

by Chris Falco

Games can take advantage of a lot of new technologies these days. While the high-tech marvels of 2020 might seem like an eternity away, our modern tech can still enhance your game.

MESSAGING SYSTEMS

An easy way to add a bit of technological immersion is through texts. GMs can use them to send mission info, messages from side characters, news reports, and other digital tidbits. Players can use them to do some roleplaying between their characters.

The fastest way to use this is through texting on your phones. Set up a group chat for *Hard Wired Island* messages and come up with a basic system to show who's sending and receiving the messages. For example, a text could look like this:

((Junior > Soyeong)) Hey! Found the info you were looking for. Mind if I swing by after dinner?

In this case, the brackets mark "out of character" info, specifically the sender and receiver. You could also send a news story, like:

((Seen on the news:)) LMJ Syndrome: A Lingering Threat?

Messaging apps like Skype and Discord[8] provide further options. With the right software you can set up groups or servers with different channels for roleplay, out-of-character talk, or storing information like character sheets, maps, and handouts. (For a retrofuture touch, try IRC.) You can even change your display name to match your character.

SOCIAL MEDIA

While social media will look different in the distant future of 2020, modern approximations like Twitter and Facebook can let players create an online presence for their character.

This can be done for roleplay purposes, to show what an influencer or a hacker's online presence/typing style might look like. If you have the time, you can also set up similar accounts for important characters or in-game businesses and organizations.

Depending on the site, there's a few ways you could go about this. The easiest way is to have everyone use their normal account but set up a private group for the game where you can post in-character messages and OOC notes much like text messaging. The GM can either post direct responses or give a "summary" of the reaction to a post (e.g. "Your 26k followers praised you, but some jerks said you're a butt".)

Alternatively, you can make new accounts for your characters and just post in-character messages there. In this case, the GM may still need to specifically note who their "GM account" is representing. Also consider making these accounts private, so you can control who sees it and who can reply.

OTHER OPTIONS

There are many other online possibilities that can help make the game feel more high-tech and engaging.

Virtual tabletop programs like Roll20, Astral, or Role are great for playing games when you can't meet in person, for example—and you could even have "guests" appear on video to give missions. Forum threads, subreddits, and wiki farms can provide a hub for campaign information. Streaming sites can bring outside input on decisions. Bots and other programs[9] can automate mechanics for you or help generate hooks. In the end, the limit is how much time and effort your group wants to put into it.

CONSIDERATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

When using any of these methods, remember that your players are real people with real lives. Don't force anyone to roleplay outside of game sessions, and definitely don't penalize them for not having extra time. These methods should be used to make the game more fun and immersive, not put a burden on anyone.

This doesn't mean you can't reward players that go above and beyond, just avoid putting them ahead of other characters; don't allow Milestones to be accomplished in downtime, for instance. If you have to offer something, make it something fleeting like a bonus to their next roll or a tiny amount of Cash. Make sure that every character has a way to get it, not just Influencers.

8 And similar programs, depending on your region and time period. Hello future players!

9 People have made dice-rolling bots for Discord, IRC, and similar messaging programs. Look them up!


BURGER
KING
24/7
IM GOING
OVER
CLOSED
CLOSED
ROBOTICS
MENU

CHAPTER 9: LAUNCH SYSTEMS

"The thing about working toward a better world is the work is never done. There's always someone else who needs help, or a community in need, or whatever. If we ever did get a handle on it all, some genius is gonna have a new idea that lights everything on fire again.

"But things still get better. So keep doing the work. If you do it right, you'll leave the world in a better place than you found it."

— Leander Ryker, riot medic

This chapter contains tools GMs and groups can use to set up games quickly:

PREGENERATED PCS

Some ready-to-use characters for players who'd like to get started quickly: **Lee**, **Junior**, **Jupiter**, **Maru**, **Mira**, **Soyeong**, and **Zander**, plus more PCs created by Kickstarter backers: **Brian**, **Fia**, **Jae-yun**, **Julie**, **Lucy**, and **Quinn**.

PLOT HOOKS

Ideas for stories and scenarios the PCs can immerse themselves in, including premises to start your games with, plot hooks for the pregenerated PCs, and ways to change the setting's technology level.

THE DREAMER SEASON

A setup for a Dreamer-themed campaign arc.

THE TERABYTE BOYS

A scenario you can use as the start of a campaign or a standalone adventure.

For general advice on running games, see **Chapter 8: Running the Game**, on p. 311.



Lee

The Street Fighter
Handle: @Fire_Lee_Dojo_Official_
He/They

Lee was a firefighting android in Hong Kong until he was replaced with cheaper drone technology. Able to travel his own path for the first time, he chose a new male identity and martial arts training. Since moving to orbit, he's opened a small gym of his own and gotten heavily involved in the android rights movement.

Lee is a calm, bold man who loves helping people for its own sake. He rents a room to his friend Junior and knows the others through forums.

Stats

Origin: Android

Traits: Activist, Stoic

Abilities: Cool +1, Clever +0, Tough +2, Quick +3

Defenses: Cool 8, Clever 7, Tough 10, Quick 11

Burden: 1

Occupation: Street Fighter

Talents: Martial Arts, Reversal

Specialties:

+1 Action: Distract

+1 Android Rights Movement

+1 First Responder

+2 Martial Arts

+1 Quick Defense

+1 Stealth

+1 Tough Defense

Assets:

Membership (United People For Android Freedom), Gym (Fire Lee Gym & Dojo), Badass Headband[1], License

Augments:

Spacer Build: Lee's built-in firefighter mods, with improvements by some Builder friends.

CCP Cyber "Stekkjastaur" Legs [Spring Legs]: Lee's old firefighting legs, which he still keeps in his dojo.

"Rumble on the Moon" Hands [Rocket Fists]: These were gifted to Lee by an actor friend who went back to his normal cyber-arms when the movie was done. He keeps them in a closet because the flame decals are silly.

App: Player's Choice

"Android, human... when you get down to it, we're the same. We might not bleed, but our hearts do."

1 Not reflected in Cool Defense.



JUNIOR

THE FIXER
HANDLE: VARIOUS
HE/HIM

How Junior went from an undergrad in Africa to a freelance journalist on Grand Cross is a story he has never reached the end of before getting distracted, but it left him with a flair for the dramatic, plenty of bruises, and a lot of useful contacts.

Junior is a smooth, nonchalant guy who loves to fight for social causes despite his natural pessimism. He rents a room from his friend Lee, and occasionally pesters Soyeong, Mira, and Xander for favors or fun.

STATS

Origin: It's Complicated

Traits: Gregarious, Student Loans

Abilities: Cool +2, Clever +0, Tough +1, Quick +3

Defenses: Cool 9, Clever 7, Tough 9, Quick 10

Burden: 3 [Effective 2]

Occupation: Fixer

Talents: I Know A Guy, It Takes All Kinds [Street Fighter: Martial Arts]

SPECIALTIES:

+1 Action: Bullshit

+1 Tough Defense

+1 80s/90s Action Cinema

+1 Jeet Kune Do

+1 Journalism Degree

+1 Politics

+1 Wheeling and Dealing

ASSETS:

3D Printer, Covert Armor[2], Small Local Business (Freelance Office), Trendy Wardrobe

AUGMENTS: NONE.

APP: PLAYER'S CHOICE

"YOU'RE A HARD ONE TO FIND, YOU KNOW THAT? RELAX, I'VE JUST GOT SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU..."

2 Not reflected in Tough Defense.



JUPITER

The Thief
Handle: Private
She/Her

Jupiter (named, of course, after the Sailor Moon character) is an L4 Disaster survivor. She didn't lose anyone important, but like many Disaster refugees she was practically abandoned when she reached Grand Cross. She's working as a courier to get back on her feet and is doing her best to lift her fellow refugees with her.

Jupiter is a cheerful, talkative woman who decided long ago that being positive in the face of adversity is always a worthwhile struggle. She's currently staying in a refugee camp.

Stats

Origin: Survivor

Traits: Regular Customer [Early Access], Well Traveled

Abilities: Cool +3, Clever +0, Tough +1, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 10, Clever 8, Tough 8, Quick 9

Burden: 2

Occupation: Thief

Talents: Enterprising, Parkour

Specialties:

+1 Action: Disable Security

+1 Action: Stealth

+1 Activism

+1 Anime

+1 Capoeira

+1 Clever Defense

+1 L4 Refugee

+1 Landvaettir Orbital

+1 Parkour

Assets:

Fake ID, Membership (Courier Company), Thieving Gear, Weapon: Pepper Spray [Melee, Tear Gas]

Augments:

Omnidyne LF-283 Cyber-Legs [Athletic Legs]: Jupiter replaced her legs before the Disaster: one after a childhood accident, and the other so she could enhance her freerunning skills.

App: RoofDash

"Buenos días! Today's delivery, nice and early. Need a hand while I'm here?"



MARU

The Hacker
Handle: @tabbyAnarchy
She/Her

Maru is an electronic musician and DJ who performs at a few local clubs. She was also the notorious hacker Hex Decimal in her teens, and moved to Grand Cross to dodge the authorities, but the place has grown on her.

Maru is a friendly, dorky woman who loves messing with tech to see how it works. She shares her apartment with her childhood friend Soyeong.

Stats

Origin: Criminal

Traits: Overprepared, Scavenger

Abilities: Cool +0, Clever +3, Tough +1, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 7, Clever 10, Tough 8, Quick 9

Burden: 2 [Effective 1]

Occupation: Hacker

Talents: Hot Streak, Laughing Gal

Specialties:

+1 Quick Defense

+1 Action: Spoof

+1 Criminal Underworld

+1 Hacker Den[3]

+2 Hacking (+1 Augment)

+1 Ghosting

+1 Scooters

+1 Stealth

Assets:

Hacking Suite, Data Bomb [Program], Ghost Protocols [Program], Holographic Projection Armor, Vehicle (Scooter)

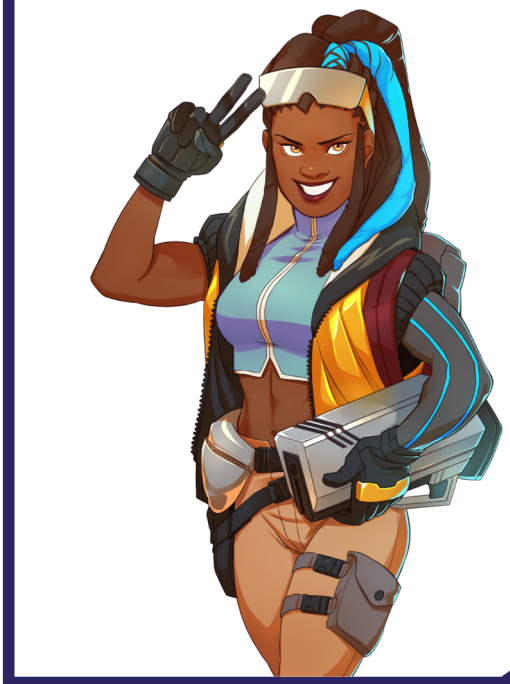
Augments:

ARC Zaibatsu "Lucky Cat" Cyber-Eyes [Specialized Augment]: These eyes function as a miniature computer with a complicated HUD. She sometimes controls them with her external keyboard. They function as her Hacking Suite, and +1 Hacking.

App: Player's choice

"UMM, I CAN TAKE A LOOK, I GUESS... OH, IT'S A TETSUO LOGOS 2200 WITH AN XTREM MICROCHIP! GIMME!"

3 This is Maru's Workshop Specialty for the purposes of Scavenger.



MIRA

The Soldier
Handle: @MiraKleWorker
She/Her

Mira enlisted in the US military in an attempt to get out of poverty, but was discharged and paid to leave Earth after getting into a fight with a superior who "accidentally" fired at a civilian. On Grand Cross, she's a tech vlogger and Huntr user who supplements her income by streaming her bounties and working security for activist groups.

Mira is a tough, kind-hearted woman who loves challenges and new experiences. She visits Lee's gym for training and advice, and occasionally drags Xander on her jobs.

Stats

Origin: Military Veteran

Traits: Hey I Know You!, Hush Money

Abilities: Cool +1, Clever +0, Tough +3, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 8, Clever 7, Tough 11, Quick 9

Burden: 0

Occupation: Soldier

Talents: On-Site Procurement, Threat Assessment

Specialties:

+1 Action: Interrogate

+2 Bounty Hunting

+1 First Aid Kit (Augment)

+1 Gun (Rifles)

+1 Military

+1 MMA

+1 Social Media

+1 Tough Defense

Assets:

Covert Armor[4], License, Rioting Gear, Weapon: Huntr Rifle By Omnidyne [Ranged, Critical, Ammo, Restricted, Omnidyne, Biometric Safety]

Augments:

Omnidyne "Valkyrie" Arm [Integrated Asset]: This arm a suite of tools and compartments that function as a First Aid Kit. +1 First Aid Kit.

App: Huntr

"Today we'll be wrapping up that bounty with some cool new armor from our sponsors! Remember, this stream is delayed by sixty minutes..."

4 Not reflected in Tough Defense.



SOYEONG

The Influencer
Handle: @songBulgae
She/Her

Soyeong was a rising star in the K-pop world before a tragic space accident cut her career short. She survived, recovered, and now she's come to Grand Cross to make a comeback. In secret, she's investigating a tip that it might not have been an accident.

Soyeong's a cool, determined woman who loves creating things. She shares an apartment with her childhood friend Maru while surviving on donations from fans, working local gigs, and an "insurance payout" from her former label.

Stats

Origin: Celebrity

Traits: Hush Money, Overprepared

Abilities: Cool +3, Clever +1, Tough +0, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 10, Clever 8, Tough 8, Quick 10

Burden: 2 [Effective 1]

Occupation: Influencer

Talents: DDoS, Viral

Specialties:

+1 Action: Charm

+1 Quick Defense

+1 Tough Defense (Augment)

+1 Famous

+1 Music Industry

+1 K-Pop/Rap

+1 Handguns

+1 Social Media

+1 Taekkyon (Augment)

Assets:

License, Trendy Wardrobe, Vehicle (Motorcycle), Verified Account

Augments:

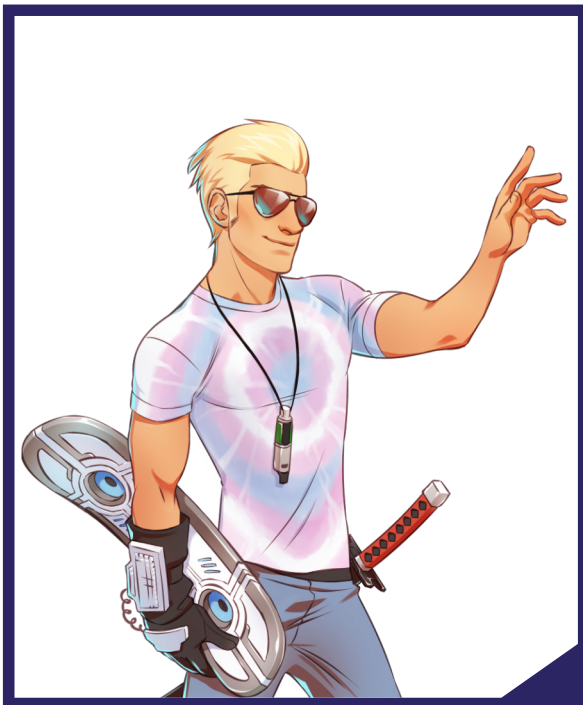
Tetsuo Tech "Imugi" Arm [Combat Augments, Restricted]: This arm has bulletproof casing and a "Shield Mode". It would normally be Illegal, but the music industry is wild. +1 Tough Defense.

Tetsuo Tech "Bulgae" Leg [Specialized Augment]: Soyeong and Maru have heavily customised her leg to compensate for lost muscle memory. +1 Taekkyon.

Hergatz Liao Life Support Module [Cosmetic]: Augments inside her right torso regulate and track her vital signs. She only trusts Maru to take care of them.

App: Player's Choice

"YEAH, I CALLED IN A FEW FAVORS TO GET THIS TOGETHER. DON'T WORRY, I GOT MORE IF WE NEED 'EM."



ZANDER

The Operator
Handle: @Sk8rBoi69420
He/Him

Zander Xander was once a corporate drone at Omnidyne until he discovered their healthcare plan didn't cover HRT. He took his expertise and his pride with him out the door and onto the streets, where he skates and does odd jobs as his own free man.

Zander is a slick, energetic guy who loves indulging his passions and expressing himself. He owns an apartment full of anime wall scrolls, which he refuses to take down when he has friends over.

Stats

Origin: Corporate Drone

Traits: Student Loans, Trendsetter (Friendly)

Abilities: Cool +1, Clever +3, Tough +0, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 10, Clever 8, Tough 8, Quick 10

Burden: 2

Occupation: Operator

Talents: Personal Drone, Nerd

Specialties:

+1 Cool Defense

+1 Tough Defense (Augment)

+1 Bureaucracy

+1 Cartel Politics

+1 Drone

+1 Grenades

+1 Robotics

+1 Skateboard

+1 Studied The Blade

Assets:

Personal Drone [Flight, Hardpoint, Smart], Skateboard[5], Weapon: Flashbang Grenades [Ranged, Illegal, Flashbang], Weapon: Mall Katana [Melee, Critical, Big, Hefty, Sharp]

Augments:

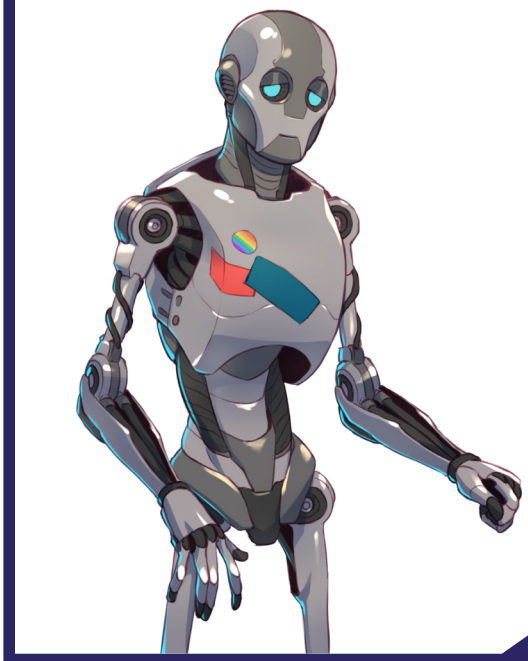
Chromey Hawk Underskin [Work-Enhancing Suite]: Various small augments designed to help skateboarders who have injured themselves a few too many times. Uses his Skateboard Specialty.

Hergatz Liao HRT Regulator [Cosmetic].

App: RoofDash

"RADICAL!"

5 Zander's Personal Drone is also his Skateboard. He can't fly on it, but he might be able to hover Back to the Future-style.



BRIAN

THE CYBORG
HANDLE: @NINJADEBUGGER
HE/HIM

Brian Farmer is a software engineer who was forced to become a full-body cyborg for medical reasons. Unfortunately, he could only afford the cheapest body available, and as it makes it hard for him to find a job, he's also struggling with debt.

Brian is a jaded, gloomy fellow who likes writing code and preparing for the future. He's well-known on most of the big cyborg/tech forums as an expert on the problems full-body cyborgs can face.

STATS

Origin: Gamer

Traits: Full-Body Prosthetic, Student Loans

Abilities: Cool +1, Clever +3, Tough +0, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 8, Clever 10, Tough 8, Quick 9

Burden: 2

Occupation: Hacker

Talents: Born Ready, Online Resources

SPECIALTIES:

+1 Action: Operate

+1 Cyborg Subculture

+1 Games

+2 Hacking

+2 Online Communities

+1 Scooters

+1 Stealth

+1 Tough Defense

ASSETS:

3D Printer, Hacking Suite, Ghost Protocols [Program], Memory Worm [Program], Vehicle (Scooter)

AUGMENTS:

Ogremalk Engines RealBodyTM [Full-Body Prosthetic]: The best full-body prosthetic Brian could afford in a hurry was this knockoff Ogremoch model from a now-shut down company.

LMJ Eyes [Cyber-Eyes]: A common choice for the eye-installer on a budget.

APP: PLAYER'S CHOICE

"EVERY MORNING I WAKE UP, AND THAT'S MY FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE DAY."



FIA

The Mortician
Handle: @FiaAndLoathing
She/Her

Fia Vass is a Double Crosser who makes a living as a mortician, helping others deal with their dead on a station where space is at a premium and burial is a luxury. Her job, and her teen years spent exploring the station, have given her an intimate knowledge of the station's underground areas.

Fia is a punky, outgoing woman who enjoys helping people, making connections, and collecting cool tech. As a mortician, she is one of the few people licensed to operate a large vehicle.

Stats

Origin: Double Crosser

Traits: Stoic, Well Travelled

Abilities: Cool +3, Clever +1, Tough +2, Quick +0

Defenses: Cool 11, Clever 8, Tough 10, Quick 7

Burden: 1

Occupation: Fixer

Talents: Gift of Gab, Plausible Deniability

Specialties:

+1 Action: Bullshit

+1 Cool Defense

+2 Human Anatomy

+1 Obscure Grand Cross Places

+1 Social Media

+2 Stealth

+1 Tough Defense

Assets:

Small Local Business (Funeral Home and Graveyard), Trendy Wardrobe, Weapon: Shovel [Melee, Critical, Hefty], Vehicle (Hearse)

Augments: None

App: Player's Choice

"I KNOW WHERE ALL SORTS OF SECRETS ARE BURIED IN THIS CITY."



JAE-YUN

THE OFFICE LADY
HANDLE: @JAEYUNCARTER
SHE/HER

Jae-yun Carter is an office lady who works for the Union of Extravehicular Workers. When she's not working, she tinkers with her motorcycle and travels around Grand Cross. She recently fixed up an old construction hardsuit from work to help some friends who got into activism.

Jae-yun is a tough, dedicated woman, and a sweet cinnamon roll of a person at heart. She's not afraid to bend the rules if it'll help someone.

STATS

Origin: Civil Servant

Traits: Activist, Overprepared

Abilities: Cool +3, Clever +1, Tough +0, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 10, Clever 8, Tough 7, Quick 9

Burden: 1

Occupation: Fixer

Talents: I Know A Guy, It Takes All Kinds [Operator: Tech Head]

SPECIALTIES:

+1 Engineering

+1 Item: Workshop

+1 Government

+1 Motorcycles

+1 Office Lady

+1 Taekwondo

+1 Tough Defense

+1 Unions

ASSETS:

License, Powered Exoskeleton*, Vehicle (Motorcycle), Weapon: Zinovy Handgun [Ranged, Critical, Ammo, Restricted, Zinovy, Suppressor]

AUGMENTS: NONE

APP: PLAYER'S CHOICE

"ONCE WE CLEAR OUT THESE STRIKE-BREAKING PIGS, I'D BE HAPPY TO HELP YOU WITH THAT HOUSING ASSISTANCE APPLICATION."

6 If Jae-yun purchases some Combat Armor, she can combine these two Assets into the Hardsuit Asset (p. 81).



JULIE

The Virtual Idol
Handle: @PrincessPaonneEN
She/Her

Julie Maupin was a RVRE programmer who was asked to work extra shifts as their virtual mascot, Peacock Princess Paonne. She enjoyed the role enough that she asked to become full-time, even if that meant dropping money on hormones and a new wardrobe. She still enjoys it, but RVRE's control of the rights is becoming a problem.

Julie is a friendly, flirty woman who tends to go all-or-nothing on everything she does. She's looking for a way to get the mascot rights from RVRE and go solo.

Stats

Origin: Gamer

Traits: Impulsive, Work Housing [RVRE]

Abilities: Cool +3, Clever +2, Tough +0, Quick +1

Defenses: Cool 10, Clever 9, Tough 7, Quick 8

Burden: 1

Occupation: Influencer

Talents: Extremely Online, Parasocial Relationships

Specialties:

+2 Action: Charm (Social)

+1 Games

+1 Ghost

+1 Hacking

+1 Social Media

+1 Stealth

+1 VTuber

Assets:

Hacking Suite, Safehouse, Trendy Wardrobe, Verified Account

Augments:

Hergatz Liao HRT Regulator [Cosmetic].

App: Player's Choice

"THIS IS MY JOURNEY, AND I WON'T LET ANYONE STOP ME BEING WHO I WANT TO BE."



LUCY

THE NEW PERSON
HANDLE: @KALEIDOSCOPEEYE
SHE/HER

In 2019, a hacker named Gerry took a job that led him to a Dreamer (p. 304). He made the mistake of provoking it, and Lucy woke up in his old body. She doesn't know how it happened or remember anything before that; she's essentially a whole new person.

Lucy is a thoughtful, independent woman who has adapted pretty well to her situation. She mostly pursues her own goals, but sometimes she has to deal with people and fallout from Gerry's life.

STATS

Origin: It's Complicated

Traits: Regular Customer [GPol Gym], Tabula Inscripta*

Abilities: Cool +0, Clever +1, Tough +3, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 8, Clever 8, Tough 10, Quick 9

Burden: 2

Occupation: Soldier

Talents: Always Prepared, Riot Medicine

TABULA INSCRIPTA

Once you got your feet under you, you decided to try a lot of things and find out what sort of person you are. You're pretty satisfied with the results, though nothing comes for free.

This Trait works like Student Loans. Lucy picked +1 Bonsai Cultivation and +1 Library Systems.

SPECIALTIES:

+1 Academia

+1 Action: Bullshit

+2 Bonsai Cultivation

+1 Cool Defense

+1 Item: First Aid Kit

+1 Library Systems

+1 Riot Medic

+2 Staff Fighting

ASSETS:

First Aid Kit, Rioting Gear[7], Safehouse, Weapon: Collapsible Bo Staff [Melee, Critical, Hefty]

AUGMENTS:

Hergatz Liao HRT Regulator [Cosmetic].

APP: PLAYER'S CHOICE

"KICK THIS, PUNCH THAT. WHY DO I NEVER GET A JOB THAT URGENTLY NEEDS A BONSAI MAINTAINED?"

7 Not reflected in Tough Defense.



QUINN

The Support
Handle: @quinncejam
She/Her, Mx/Sir

Quinn was a government employee during station construction but quit due to a combination of chronic illness, an abusive workplace, and increasing corporate influence. These days she takes odd jobs for any group that aligns with her ideals: that Grand Cross can be a place where people have dignity and respect; and art and wonder are valued as much as technological prowess and social capital.

Quinn is a scrappy punk with a wide social network. Something about the way she interacts with people makes them feel a bit more human, a bit more seen.

Stats

Origin: Station Worker

Traits: Activist, Gregarious

Abilities: Cool +3, Clever +0, Tough +1, Quick +2

Defenses: Cool 10, Clever 8, Tough 8, Quick 9

Burden: 3

Occupation: Fixer

Talents: Contacts, Facilitate

Specialties:

+1 Clever Defense

+1 Dance

+1 Friends Everywhere

+1 Station Infrastructure

+2 Engineering (+1 Augment)

+2 Scrappy Fighter

Assets:

License, Rioting Gear[8], Small Local Business (Handyperson), Workshop

Augments:

Canopus MultiHand 3000UX [Specialized Augment]: A hand with a Swiss Army knife-style multitool, installed during her stint as a station worker. +1 Engineering.

App: Player's Choice

"AIN'T NOBODY COMING TO SAVE US BUT US."

8 Not reflected in Tough Defense.

PLOT HOOKS

Here are some ideas that can be expanded into full scenarios. We've tried to provide enough detail to get you started; the rest is up to you.

PREMISES

The way your characters begin their adventures in Grand Cross can influence everything, from the way they interact with the station to the tone of the game.

Hard Wired Island assumes your PCs are regular people who get caught up in the events of 2020, but that could mean a lot of things. You could be...

... residents of a community like the Marsha Stretch (p. 354), dealing with encroaching corporate interests and other threats.

... activists trying to accomplish larger changes in the station through grassroots initiatives, protests, direct action, or less-than-legal means.

... trying to run a small business (e.g. a courier company, retrieval specialists, or a café), helping customers, and dealing with corporate competition.

... journalists and investigators uncovering interesting stories and trying to hold the powerful to account.

... government employees (e.g. basement workers, IT people, some weird obscure department) doing their best to hold the station together.

... Disaster refugees who banded together for protection.

... a band or idol/virtual YourTuber group trying to make it big.

... bounty hunters using Huntr (p. 57) to capture fugitive criminals from Earth.

... thieves and con artists carrying out heists on the powerful to avenge wrongs done to regular citizens.

... a small-time gang, or members of a larger gang like the Hoshi Group, doing their best to survive without being caught.

... members of Law Zero helping Olivaw with his long-term plan (p. 259).

... corporate employees in a weird, forgotten department, or who stumble upon a corporate conspiracy.

... people who have uncovered the Dreamer conspiracy and banded together to investigate, if only because they don't know anyone else they can talk to about it.

... a group of friends with unrelated goals, just helping each other out.

... and more. As long as everyone agrees and you have something you can tell a story with, it's all good.

REGULAR HOOKS

A few general ideas for things PCs can do. If you need more ideas, check out the locations and characters in Chapters 6 and 7.

GENERAL HOOKS

Corporate conspiracies, tangles with the law, and everyday problems; if your campaign were an anime season, these would be the standalone episodes that aren't connected to the real plot.

Gerlach Stern (p. 280) has been trying to debunk the LMJ Syndrome myth for years now. He has a new problem: the cyborg worker **Ji-hu Kim**, who tried to kill Unity politician **Axton Ebner** and got taken down by his bodyguard.

Canopus Cyber (p. 243), who made Ji-hu's cyber-arm, is claiming cyberneurosis. Gerlach suspects something else—especially since Axton used to work in construction—but Canopus has Ji-hu stashed away in a private hospital. He recruits the PCs to figure out what's going on.

During their time at Landvættir, Axton pushed Ji-hu (and a few other workers) onto cybernetics, and referred them to Canopus in exchange for a finder's fee. Canopus fitted him with a high-maintenance arm to collect extra fees, and when he couldn't pay, they turned it into a Burger Kong Augvert.

Ji-hu overheard a Canopus rep talking about it while getting maintenance and went to strangle Axton as soon as his arm was tuned up. Canopus Cyber are keeping him hidden while they look for any recordings he made, and then they're going to have him declared insane and locked up.

The PCs are recruited to help out with a protest—or decide to attend one themselves. (If you're not sure what it should be for, make it about **Landvættir Orbital** [p. 235] and their meager compensation for L4 refugees; there's plenty of those lately.) They'll have a lot to contend with: New Baron counter-protesters, undercover cops trying to encourage violence, regular cops getting violent[9], and trying to keep their fellows safe, especially if they know anything about riot medicine[10].

9 A lot of protests are peaceful until the police arrive, for some mysterious reason. The official stance of the Station Police Service is they're just really good at predicting when violence will happen.

10 Or riot engineering, for androids.

The PCs are recruited to help **Zhao Liu** (p. 280), a full-body cyborg street artist who makes things out of discarded tech. Her creations have been stolen by the guerilla marketing company **Apevert** (p. 243), who copy them for profit. One of the petty thieves they paid to do it just broke into her workshop and stole a prototype, hoping to make another quick Apevert buck. That's the last straw for Zhao: she wants someone to get it back, gather evidence, and help her take the company down.

PCs who'd like a murder mystery can investigate the apparent death of the android **Moravec**, who turns up on a rooftop in **Space Town** (p. 182) with his AI core violently torn out. The event leads to increased police presence in Space Town, which makes androids less safe but looks impressive.

Before he vanished, Moravec visited the Evil Maid Attack café and the android fight club Ring of Coolant. Moravec is a friend of the café's owner **Zigamorph**, who knows where he lives; he wanted her to stop by to look at some tech for him after work, but never came home. The Ring's MC **Hunter Deadman** doesn't know where he went after his fight, but he does rent a locker at the club, and Hunter may let slip that he was a member of **Law Zero**.

By investigating Moravec's possessions (or interrogating **Olivaw** [p. 259], if they're nice), the PCs can learn that Moravec was a corporate spy. Olivaw sent him to infiltrate **Asano Heavy Industries**, keep an eye on them, and maybe steal any interesting blueprints. He just stole plans for an android frame designed for long-term space work[11]; his boss **Shichiro Asano** found out and, assuming he was a spy for his brother Rokuro, hastily ripped out his core and dumped it near Rokuro's usual hangout as a warning.

THE NEW BARONS

The **New Barons** (p. 267) are a good all-purpose antagonist for your games. Their narrow-minded views lead them to oppose all kinds of things the PCs might do, from helping L4 refugees to messing with the Singularists to just hanging out with androids. If the PCs want to weaken them, there are a lot of targets to choose from.

The Barons enjoy some influence in Unity—which makes sense, seeing as they're partly bankrolled by the same oligarchs that bankroll Unity. Exposing their secret meetings with the city's elite at **Orbital Freedom Institute** (p. 272) events will weaken them.

The Barons are attempting to recruit from the **Singularists** (p. 260), and they've already made some inroads. As their influence spreads the Barons could get cutting-edge tech, people on the inside at tech corporations, relationships with influential people in Turing, or even Dreamer knowledge. PCs who want to weaken their hold on the Singularists can go after **Phil Azimuth** (p. 267) or **Trajan** (p. 267). Trajan is the tougher one to deal with; he has contacts in law enforcement and his facial-recognition startup **Neuronomicon** (p. 158).

The Barons do a lot of their organizing online. Hacking-focused groups can compromise their HeoCities webring, expose their identities, or even attack their funding streams—though the Barons have their own hackers and won't take it lying down.

The New Barons like to make in-person appearances around Grand Cross too. When they're not attacking activists and other good people, they host "science exhibitions" in an attempt to draw regular Crossers into their ideology. Disrupting these events disrupts their plans.

PCs who want to go big can strike directly at their leader, **Jesse Gorbold** (p. 267). Hack him, find out who's paying him, just find him and kick his ass—whatever they have in mind, he's probably got it coming.

11 Possibly a Dreamer chassis, if you want to go that way.

THE SINGULARISTS

The Singularists (p. 260) are mostly antagonists—they're not all malicious, but their community has a lot of bad actors and little will to do much about them. Missions focused on the Singularists tend to focus on either that or the group's tech connections.

Cyrus Berryman (p. 262), on behalf of **FERMI** (p. 158), is hosting a party to raise awareness of Singularist issues. There'll be influential people in the tech industry, a showcase of upcoming tech, complementary drinks, and someone trying to kill him.

CAPTCHA (p. 271) sometimes campaigns against the Singularists, mostly due to the whole "transform society with a super-AI" thing. Their rhetoric has radicalized **Jacob Haberman**, a troubled former Agriculture Ring worker who was pressured into cyberizing. He's decided that the Singularists want to force everyone to cyberize—and wants to kill Cyrus to stop it.

The PCs are invited to (or crash) the party, and when Jacob's first attempt to shoot Cyrus from a hidden spot doesn't finish the job, the building is locked down with them inside. If they help out, they might get useful influence over Cyrus and the Singularists.

Divide-0 (p. 263) decides to do a little fact-finding project. He's heard some chatter in his club about a Tetsuo AGI project that's worrying the Singularists, and he'd like to find out what it is. If this is a Dreamer campaign, this can lead to the Dreamer project; if not, Tetsuo's trying to find a way to make developing androids loyal to their brand (which many Singularists think is fine, since it'll help guide the super-AI later.)

Some Singularists with a lot of clout like to trash-talk people who catch their ire, sit back, and let their fans harass and stalk their targets. The PCs are recruited to take down one of them, either by a victim or **Tony Osborn** (p. 263). If the PCs know **Izzy Kaijou** (p. 285), it's probably **Zhihao Lin** (p. 263); if not, **Max Babylon** (p. 264) does this a lot, and **Jacques Current** (p. 262) is the loudest anti-android voice[12].

THE L4 DISASTER

Grand Cross is still dealing with the effects of the L4 Disaster, and they're not doing it very well. A lot of people are still unhoused, and Unity are doing nothing as hard as they can, leaving the station's corporations to snap refugees up with predatory work contracts.

When the government won't do its job, communities have to. PCs can aid the refugees directly—by helping them get back on their feet, protecting them from the police, or organizing community aid—or get involved in large-scale action to force a government response (or at least help Unity lose the next election.)

Some possible angles include:

Galaxy District: This district (p. 173) is a flashpoint for the Disaster issue, with a lot of problems that need solving.

- There are Disaster rallies in Hologram Plaza, but corporate interests have hijacked them using the inept influencer Wei Wang (p. 283). The PCs may be able to revitalize them by hijacking the rallies right back, or radicalizing Wei.
- A few local corporations use work contracts. The worst offender is Levistrode, whose owner Nathan Levesque (p. 282) offers generous contracts but only to white guys. If the PCs can get some of these work contract programs shut down, it'll free up more housing for refugees.
- The Andromeda Street Station camp is getting wound up this year, but it still holds a lot of refugees. They'll need help, or they'll end up on the street.

Izzy: Izzy Kaijou (p. 285) is the owner of the Early Access net café in Space Town (p. 182) and spends a lot of her free time trying to help the station's unhoused population. If PCs would like to get into L4 activism, she's a good starting point.

- Izzy likes to recruit people for rallies and similar events when she hears about them. She can always use help, especially when it comes to running or teaching security (i.e. protecting themselves and other people from police and counter-protesters.)
- Some unhoused refugees use her late-night net café as a place to sleep. Sometimes Izzy will meet somebody with a difficult/unique problem and try to find people who can solve it.

12 PCs who try to blackmail Jacques or affect his reputation may be interested to find he owns an incredible amount of android porn.

Helping Refugees: Many L4 Disaster refugees are in precarious positions—unhoused, trapped in work contracts, in legal limbo, and so on. If the PCs want to render direct aid, they have plenty of people to choose from.

A group of refugees led by **Rahul Joshi** (p. 282) are trying to make a home in the **Réamann** district (p. 175) while they wait for their situation to change. Lately the police—who see them as easy targets that won't fight back—have been raiding and looting their camps. They could use help establishing a new (hidden) home in the basements, or else with getting back on their feet if the PCs are up for it.

The New Barons have been using the Disaster to warm people up to the idea that sending people back to Earth solves a lot of problems. They "counter-protest" (read: attack) Disaster-focused rallies, demonstrate outside L4 Connect, and sometimes just outright follow and threaten refugees. PCs who push back can drive them away.

Sam Okafor (p. 273) is trying to use legal means to force Grand Cross to properly care for the refugees. He's had several attempts on his life lately—along with threats from the New Barons, which he thinks are related. He will pay the PCs to investigate, find whoever's behind it, and maybe protect him in the meantime.

FLOOR 40

Many locations and characters in Chapters 6 and 7 are designed to be used as plot hooks. For example:

Apollo Tower (p. 189) is a disaster waiting to happen. The tower's still new but already the upper-floor residents are treating their lower-floor neighbors like second-class citizens and trying to claim the surrounding parkland with drones. They're rich and connected, so they might get away with it.

That's where the PCs come in. They have a chance to shut down the Magpies and disrupt the Tower. They could be friends with a resident, getting revenge for a Magpie attack, or even live there themselves. Their main goal is to get the Magpies shut down, but if they create a large enough backlash or cause enough chaos, they could force other changes in the Tower—even push the owners to abandon their project.

If the PCs need a friend on the inside, use **Lua Saetiao** (p. 289). She lives on the lower floors and has been looking out for her neighbors. If the landlords find out, they'll have security throw her out as roughly as they can. If they do that, Lua's Syndicate parent and a group of goons show up within hours to add a little chaos to the situation.

By the mission's end, they'll probably end up facing **Lyceus Smythe**. Smythe is an architect who made his fortune designing Lunar buildings; the Tower is his latest and most hands-on project, and he never leaves. What he's actually doing is up to the GM, but here are some suggestions:

- Smythe is hoping the tower will serve as a proof-of-concept for a Martian city he's planning. He doesn't care whether it works, though—if he avoids public backlash long enough, he can use his wealth and reputation to get the contract anyway.
- Smythe passed away in his sleep a while ago. Nobody noticed because he'd been using a chat-bot to auto-respond to emails while he worked. The poor residents are used to being ignored, and the wealthy ones weren't listening anyway.
- Smythe is running a scam. The Tower isn't meant to last; it's meant to make him enough money to transfer to a cutting-edge full-body prosthetic (he doesn't want the common stuff.) He's letting the Uppers do what they want so they don't notice, but he needs the grift to last a little longer.

CORPORATE CONSPIRACIES

by Laura Briskin-Limehouse

Some corporate plot hooks for groups who want to focus on undermining corporate influence on the station.

A "local" surveillance hardware company is advertising for a business analyst with a background in behavioral analysis. The company is a front for **HardServe**, a Cartel-backed hardware company with no known interest in behavioral analysis.

Some light investigation reveals that HardServe wants this role to evaluate proposals from **DynaByte**, a software company specializing in online activity analysis. Digging into DynaByte—through press releases, legally required corporate transparency reports, and leaked reports of actual corporate governance—reveals that HardServe is allied with the physical security company Layered Security, which is allied to the political policy analysis company Starfare Strategic Analysis, which is allied with DynaByte, who has almost no presence on the station.

DynaByte is seeking entry to the Cartel through these alliances, via a proposal to use their combined expertise to install a station-wide panopticon able to monitor everyone on Grand Cross for "anti-social behaviors": activism or other opposition to the Cartel. The PCs have until HardServe finishes their analysis to stop it.

A/B Solutions is a local market testing company, known for its non-discriminatory recruitment of clientele. They're recruiting for a month-long A/B study among the station's food-insecure, with promises of groceries for the duration. The study is rolling, and the recruitment is open-ended; it appears to be continually replacing people who drop out before the end.

Folks who drop out report terrible increases in anxiety—too much for the benefits to be worth it. The rate of dropout decreases over time as investigation reveals AB/S is refining their messaging to purposefully create this anxiety, but only around certain types of foodstuffs and their "healthiness."

Digging into their client reveals a chain of corporate fronts. The chain somehow turns into a closed loop, but four or five layers down, the names of two owners of **Bench to Plate** are attached to some paperwork. Bench to Plate is a small agriculture company who are pushing to purchase more Ring space and expand their market share—and have been tangling with local regulators recently. Rumors are going around that it's bad enough that a large fine on the company might actually get by the stooges in the government. Tying the company to planned malfeasance like this could be enough to tip the balance between a slap on the wrist fine and one that actually hurts or pushes them off-station.

The Cartel is a conspiracy of regular corporations and corporations run on paperwork. The players are tasked by other activists in their movement to be the point people for **Jaya Abiodun**, a business librarian who wants to blow the whistle on some particularly unsavory activity.

The other activists are clear that this could be too good to be true—they've decided that if it's a trap, the PCs getting cut out of the movement would be the least damaging option. But if it's true and Jaya could become an ongoing informant on the Cartel, they'll have helped the movement and their position in it a lot.

Now they just have to contact a nervous corporate drone with no spy skills and teach them some. If successful, their reward will be memos, notes on meetings between Cartel members, project proposals, reports, and other notes made by people who don't know not to take notes on a criminal conspiracy. (The specific conspiracy is up to the GM—it could be the Dreamers, the Cartel's connection to Canopus Cyber, efforts to spread the LMJ Syndrome myth, or something else.)

If they fail without getting physically detained, Jaya will disappear. They will be listed on a passenger manifest leaving the station, but no security camera will see them going. If the players are caught… well, space is very convenient for disposing of bodies.



PERFECT MIRROR

by David N. Ross

Perfect Mirror, a cybernetics company, is about to have a vote on unionization. The union looked ready to win the vote, but now there's a major problem. Two organizers, **Elaine Young** and **Xavier Walker**, are missing after being accused of acts that could taint the vote: theft and corporate espionage. A shady ex-police security contractor, **Psylancer**, claims to have evidence tying them to the notorious hacker **Red Glove**.

Young first became famous after she fought for (and won) an experimental full-body prosthesis from a hospital bed after a factory accident. **Walker** is an older worker popular for organizing VR gaming events and privately mediating minor disputes with managers (initially on behalf of his friends, then for other workers.) Police are looking for them for questioning, but they're both in hiding.

Red Glove is a hacker famous for exposing careless corporations and selling stolen personal information. Though some activists idolize her, she hits vulnerable people along with richer targets. She enjoys being idolized but doesn't like to encourage it—she tries not to hurt anyone she knows can't handle it, at any rate. She's also uncompromisingly independent and can't stand being used for politics, so she's willing to give a hint to get even with Psylancer.

The PCs have reason to believe the organizers are being framed. They could be friends of the organizers, recruited by a mutual friend, or even tipped off by Red Glove. Whoever contacts them, the PCs are asked to disprove the connection and help the vote succeed.

The theft the organizers were accused of was carried out by Red Glove. She diverted a drone carrying experimental cybernetics to an unobserved area, where the most valuable pieces disappeared before the drone was recovered. The prostheses, modeled on Young's, were recovered from a construction site near her apartment in the Tshiong-tso District. The transmission was traced back to a gaming café where Walker's husband works.

Avoiding tainting the election is difficult and will get more complicated when it turns out Elaine is one of Red Glove's fans and tried to help her access Perfect Mirror's drones. Walker's husband doesn't know where he is but thinks he's probably afraid of getting treated unfairly like his father was when off the reservation back on Earth. If found and given protection from unreasonable scrutiny, Walker is able to restore confidence in the nascent union.

PREGEN PLOT HOOKS

Some plot hook suggestions for the pregenerated PCs on p. 328-340.

Junior

Junior is a freelance journalist, which can make for a lot of good plot hooks:

- **Cyrus Berryman** (p. 262) has agreed to an interview with one of the outlets Junior writes for—if he can include a tour of current Singularist projects.
- **Kana Kobashi** (p. 285) puts Junior in touch with a worker whose boss is trying to push them into augmenting in ways that are hard to prove.
- If you're running a Dreamer campaign, Junior could be: tipped off about the fact that **Prosper Amadiro** (p. 123) died on Grand Cross; contacted by **Lulu Sarasti** (p. 378) after she stumbles on her teacher's work; or approached by **Astraea** (p. 374) when she's ready to defect.

Lee

Lee owns a gym (it's in the Marsha Stretch [p. 354], unless you'd like to move it.) A lot of good plot hooks can come from people approaching him for training or advice:

- **Xue Lao** (p. 297) comes to the gym for self-defense lessons, as her last few trips to the basement have made her nervous. (If you're running a Dreamer campaign, Xue might be in serious danger.)
- **Karel Alpha** (p. 294) is speaking at a Disaster refugee rally this week and wants Lee to be his bodyguard.
- **Nekomata** (p. 285) asks Lee for help with the people harassing her, or at least with keeping the youths she's helping safe.

Maru

On Earth, Maru hacked under the alias Hex Decimal. She ditched the identity when she moved to Grand Cross, but she might still have to deal with people tracking her down:

- Maru once exposed the secrets of **Chrysalis**, an Earth pharma company. The CEO never forgot, and he's sent agents to track her down.
- **Kamal Pasala**, a friendly rival, has come to Grand Cross to challenge Maru. He's not malicious, but he wants to test his new skills against an old rival and will mess with her to get her attention.
- **Mari Lagrange**, an old hacker friend, has come to Grand Cross to cash in a favor Maru owes her. Mari needs to know how Maru hid so well, and fast...

Besides that, Maru is friends[13] with Soyeong and will help with her thing.

Mira

Mira uses Huntr, which already has plot hooks built into the mechanics. She also works security for activist groups, and may get jobs like:

- **Bayani Reyes** (p. 266) contacts Mira about the **Block Boys** (p. 254), hoping to get them sorted out under the table before they make Builders look bad.
- The **New Barons** (p. 267) threaten to "attend" a rally being organized by **Free Orbit** (p. 268). Mira is hired to help with security, and **Melati** secretly offers extra pay if Mira "preemptively disrupts" the planners.
- Some **Union of Robots** (p. 270) members were attacked recently, and they suspect **CAPTCHA** (p. 271). Mira is hired to confirm and, if possible, "discourage" them.

Zander

Since ditching Omnidyne, Zander has been following his passions and working odd jobs. His new jobs can make for good plot hooks, along with fallout from his last one:

- Omnidyne alleges that they own the designs to Zander's current drones. It's a scam to steal his post-Omnidyne work, but he'll need help to shake them off.
- **Izzy Kaijou** (p. 285) hires Zander to help upgrade her net café with new VR rigs and amenities—and, in secret, add security measures to deal with some threats she's been getting.
- Residents of the **Apollo Tower** (p. 189, 344) contact Zander for help dealing with their Omnidyne drone problem.

Brian

Brian's main focus is saving up for a better body. Since capitalism makes that hard, he also plays a lot of games.

- A local tabletop gaming store Brian likes is being run out of business by the objectively worse Games Foundry opening nearby. Brian needs to think of a way to save it.
- **Tony Osborn** (p. 263)'s feud with **Max Babylon** (p. 264) intensifies, and he offers Brian a reward for his aid.
- Brian is offered a side job working for **Law Zero** (p. 253). It's shady as hell, but the money is good.

13 And more, if you like.

Soyeong

Soyeong has a plot hook built into her backstory. In the mid-2010s, she was in the Morningstar-backed girl group **CYBER/SPACE**. Unfortunately, while on an orbital tour, their ship suffered a massive systems failure between Luna and Grand Cross, and Soyeong was almost killed when debris hit her escape pod. The subsequent fallout ended the group.

The official story is an orbital debris collision, but Soyeong's got an anonymous tip with evidence that Morningstar faked the debris. So what really happened?

- If you're running a Dreamer campaign, then the ship was also transporting a prototype of **27X** (p. 308), which broke containment and tore the ship apart. The Cartel covered it up. The tip comes from Soyeong's former manager, **Bora**, who was paid for her silence but feels guilty about it.
- The ship was sabotaged by **Maximilian Fiddler** (p. 247). Max created the tragedy to boost Morningstar's profile, and because he'd heard one of her bandmates wanted to split. The tip comes from Bora, who found out and went into hiding.

Fia

Fia is a mortician; her job can be very weird.

- Fia meets some people who are trying to hold a funeral for an android friend whose AI core was destroyed and discovers that Tetsuo is trying to recall and salvage their body for parts.
- While Fia prepares the body of a murdered cyborg for cremation, she also has to deal with the killer trying to recover the deceased's internal augments before anyone realizes they're connected to the death.
- Disaster refugees ask Fia for help holding a funeral for one of their own, despite their lack of money.

Quinn

Quinn likes taking odd jobs to help people out, so if you want to give her a plot hook, give her something to do.

- A group of Agriculture Ring workers Quinn knows well are having problems with their employer, **NanoFuturistics** (p. 237), who are trying to use their surveillance equipment to bust the GCFU.
- **Dendy Sobol** (p. 286) hires Quinn to help with an upcoming community event at his cinema, as he's been getting threats from the New Barons lately.
- **Zhao Liu** (p. 280) asks Quinn for help with the people stealing and selling her artwork.

Jae-yun

Jae-yun's plot hooks can come from her union work or her off-duty hobbies.

- Jae-yun needs to get some union certification paperwork signed and delivered on behalf of a group of workers in the Agriculture Ring. The government has made the process nigh impossible, with trips to multiple offices all over the station, but the good news is that actually going through with it annoys them more than her.
- Tensions have been rising in the Adams ward between the L4 refugees and some of the local union organizers. Jae-yun suspects Cartel agitators are behind it.
- Jae-yun has been invited to participate in a bike race, either as a charity event or to settle a score with a rival. Either way, she's known to the local police and they're out to get her.

Julie

Julie's job as a virtual idol for **RVRE** (p. 244) is her best source of plot hooks.

- Another virtual idol contacts Julie for help dealing with a stalker.
- Julie is asked to do a collab with **Xheina**, a weird indie virtual YourTuber who sometimes does "exploration streams" with drones. They accidentally witness something important (like, say, a Dreamer) mid-stream.
- Julie discovers that RVRE can easily give her the rights to her character but may be in talks to hand them over to **Morningstar** (p. 236) instead. She needs to find a way to sink the deal.

Lucy

Lucy's backstory is her source for plot hooks: she was created when the Dreamer **Infovore** (p. 304) jumped a hacker named Gerry and somehow replaced his mind with hers.

- If you're running a Dreamer campaign, Lucy can investigate that. What is Infovore doing, or is this another inscrutable Dreamer thing? Are there others like her, and if so, is the Cartel interested in people like her?
- Lucy has a file that she's almost certain is the decryption key for some escrowed data. Gerry seems to have thought it was important, but she's missing the metadata that tells her which data escrow service he used.
- Someone from Gerry's past manages to track Lucy down. Sometimes they need help; sometimes they want revenge. Only occasionally do they understand she's not him.

EXPANDED HOOKS

These plot hooks introduce new technologies that don't exist in the standard setting—but can if the GM chooses to use them.

CLOUDMINDERS

by Vera Vartanian

The human brain is a fascinatingly fungible thing, able to adapt to virtually anything humans do to it. On the other hand, it's also incalculably complex, and despite the myriad advances in neuroscience made over the last century, consciousness is more or less a black box. We can tamper with it, alter it, do all manner of things good or bad, but its ultimate provenance (or if you're a pessimist, its existence) is still a mystery.

But no mystery has ever stopped capitalism.

The Cloudmind implant is a series of neural probes connected to an onboard data drive, large enough to store a dubbed copy of another mind. These "Cloudminds" are operated as a second partition within the user's brain. The implant can also dub the user's mind into another Cloudmind implant; if the correct permissions are set, the hosted Cloudmind can even use the host's body to carry out tasks.

If desired, the brain can even be stimulated into accepting the data natively—the dubbed mind moves into the brain, no longer needing the implant. This is called introjection. Implants have safety lockouts that prevent introjection (unless the user is re-integrating their own dubbed mind) but these sometimes fail or get bypassed intentionally.

The implant was developed using research into mind-dubbing and dissociative mental states. A small but significant proportion of humans are already naturally capable of some degree of dissociative multiplicity, ranging from a hazy melding of similar minds to fully independent and widely varying individuals; Cloudmind simulates this artificially.

Corporate interests have casually repurposed the implant into yet another tool for "efficiency." Where a project might demand email after email, meeting upon meeting, all of it eating into valuable crunch time, now corporate drones can share themselves between each other over the in-house network. The fact that the long-term effects of Cloudmind users are poorly understood and that these iterated coworkers sometimes stick around is not advertised, and bosses rarely use Cloudminds themselves.

Cloudmind is a rare but growing feature of life in Grand Cross. A few small collectives of hackers and idealists have "liberated" the tech; most live quietly, sharing themselves between each other like the ultimate polycule, but a few are actively working to end the use of Cloudminds to exploit workers.

ADDING TECHNOLOGY

The mind-altering technologies presented in this section aren't in the standard *Hard Wired Island* setting. This is by design.

Cyberpunk works, when done well, think about the societal implications of their technology. In works with tech that alters perception, memories, or consciousness—like *Johnny Mnemonic*, *Ubik*, or *Synners*—it become the central focus of the story, as their implications and ramifications are huge. There's a lot to grapple with.

We've largely left them out so we could focus on other things, like androids and cybernetics. This section is included in case you'd like to put them back in.

Here's some questions to get you started on making the game your own:

- **How does this technology alter the setting? How will it alter it going forward?**
- **Why was it developed? Was it part of a just-in-case effort to adapt humans to ecological collapse, a side-effect of AI research, or something else?**
- **What are the personal, societal, and criminal implications of this technology?**
- **Who controls this technology? How can others use it against them?**
- **Is it limited in scope, or will it be commonly available soon?**

CLOUDMIND AUGMENT

Restricted

This augment allows you to host a Cloudmind. Hosted Cloudminds are identical to their originals, and know everything their original did at the time of their dubbing. This augment is Restricted because the long-term health effects are unclear.

When you host a Cloudmind, you gain 1 Talent and 1 Generic Specialty from the dubbed mind—or 2 Generic Specialties instead. On a critical failure on any Cool or Clever roll, you lose these benefits until you have time to rest and recover. You also have Advantage on all Social rolls against the original, unless they know you're hosting a dub.

As a Restricted Augment, the Cloudmind has Cost 4. You can introject the Cloudmind by spending as much Cash as you would to increase your Burden; when you do, you lose the Augment but get its effects as a bonus Trait.

NEURECO

By Laurence Phillips

The existence of neurological disorders, mental health problems, and other cognitive disabilities is a fact of life in Grand Cross, as they have been for all of history. Unfortunately, this is one area where the station's spirit of experimentation hasn't lived up to the hype. These ailments have always disproportionately affected the poor and oppressed, and without improved health care, it's only become more extreme in the corporate age.

Enter the **NeuReco** program.

Neural reconditioning—a complicated set of invasive medical procedures that can reverse all manner of neurological conditions—has been possible for some time, but the exorbitant price tag has largely kept it out of reach of the humble masses. NeuReco is a Cartel-sponsored program designed to "enable the disadvantaged to access their core competencies, and to synergise with the shared interests of the Grand Cross community"—in practice, a cut-rate version of neurological reconditioning.

If a corporation needs a drone to enter numbers into spreadsheets, NeuReco can provide a lucky disabled individual with the "freedom" to do just that... and only that. NeuReco procedures are limited in scope, and typically only cover the basic tasks required for a dead-end job in whichever corporate behemoth requires extra meat. The procedure is still a little pricey, so while the corporate sponsor pays for it in advance, the expense is paid off via interest-laden premiums docked from your paycheck.

The NeuReco program has heavily reduced severe neurological divergence on Grand Cross—at least, divergence that was not useful to the Cartel. Though the program is little more than a risky path into a life of thankless drudgery, many well-meaning families, struggling to support their cognitively disabled relatives, opted to nominate them for the program rather than risk bankruptcy and destitution.

Others would rather stand in a gutter than kneel in a cage. The **Divergent** are an underground network of disabled individuals, carers, and supporters who justifiably view neural reconditioning as a basic erasure of their human identity. They will take any opportunity to disrupt these programs, including blocking supply shipments, picketing NeuReco facilities, and even physical violence against doctors and families who nominate their loved ones for treatment.

These methods have caused controversy among the station's disabled communities. While most are sympathetic to their core values, some have argued that their methods only serve to make life harder for disabled people and perpetuate the myth that they are unable to function in society without NeuReco. Some also argue that the Divergent lack answers on how to improve the lives of those unable to support themselves, and that their grandstanding is often disconnected from the day-to-day suffering of those without the tools to self-actualize.

Regardless of these controversies, the Divergent represent the last, best hope for those individuals who seek to avoid a life of corporate-sponsored servitude.

COGNITIVE DISABILITY AND IDENTITY

The real ideological split within the disabled communities of Grand Cross is the question of neurological reconditioning in the abstract. There are those who see it as erasure, a fundamental rewriting of human identity and uniqueness. Others see it as an opportunity to relieve a lifetime of suffering and hardship.

Playing a character with a neurological disorder in *Hard Wired Island* will likely involve grappling with these complex issues of personhood. The fundamental question at play is one of identity: How does your character perceive their disability? How has it affected their life? Can they support themselves, or are they dependent on the care of others? If the latter, are they aware of this dependence?

Keep in mind that your character's circumstances are going to vary depending on the severity of their disability and their socioeconomic standing. Not all disabled people on Grand Cross end up destitute—those most at risk are individuals who are reliant on care, or those who cannot afford the means to make their lives easier.

DATA BRAIN CRIMINALITY SYSTEM

by Jade Sendek

A loose confederation of cybernetics, computing, and security corporations met Earth-side for a rare, unified purpose: profit loss. Between Earth and Grand Cross, black markets and outlaws turned tidy side-profits into costly liabilities. The unique problem was a few hundred petty crimes at a time, not a handful of key players or syndicates.

Cybernetics companies proposed tracking, computing corporations demanded a data solution, and security conglomerates needed better prison numbers. From this threesome came the Data Brain Criminality System: a few dozen data-analysts, criminologists, crack detectives, and lawyers "voluntarily" wired into a mainframe. This quasi-hivemind intelligence analyses the likelihood of someone potentially committing a crime in the near future.

After patents were filed, officials spoken to, and the system developed, the corporates rolled out a trial DBCS to the Neo Melbourne District. With the new system, Neo Melbourne's security cameras use algorithms and facial recognition to identify suspicious activity, send data to the DBCS mainframe, and report back a percentile score representing how likely the target is to become a threat. Naturally, 20% and under is a great score. It's 90% and over that will land five warning shots in the back.

The system is undergoing teething issues. A 21%–89% criminality percentile could land you anything between a recommendation of bedrest, a fine, or jail time. Security interests pushed hard for cops to determine appropriate punishments. Only the extreme scores needed strict rules. Someone's criminality score can change based on whichever "volunteer" is operating the most.

Detractors are quick to point out structural problems like harassing the homeless and catch-cry some Orwellian fantasy of thought-criminals. Supporters cite a sharp rise in public order and mental health patients.

The DBCS, due to a technicality in the trial's patent, moves between three corporation branches in the Neo Melbourne District every twenty-one days. Security detail is tight, for a motley band of all three corps. The wider confederation of companies are awaiting results before rolling out further support for the DBCS.

Dee-Bee Scanners

1d6	Dominant Personalities
1	Litigates [The lawyers are in charge. Don't think of jaywalking.]
2	Reprobates [Uncouth tricksters run the show. Results may vary.]
3	Private Eyes [Private investigators handle reports. Results accurate.]
4	Psychoanalysts [Trained psychiatrists lead scans; will always recommend a mental health plan.]
5	Cops [Cops front the system. Expect trouble.]
6	Ex-Cons [The corporations "volunteered" ex-cons. Low scores for rebels; high scores for cops.]

THE TERABYTE BOYS

This scenario is written for use as a standalone adventure, or as a starting point for a longer campaign. **Rather than lay out exactly how the scenario is supposed to go**, we've provided a list of characters, places, and ideas. Pick the ones that work for you and use or remix them as needed.

THE SETUP

The Terabyte Boys is set in **Marsha Stretch**, one of the station's LGBTQ+ enclaves. The Stretch is being gentrified; one of the architects, the **Im-X** corporation, has a government contract to fill the place with robots. That's attracted the attention of the **Terabyte Boys**, a cybercrime gang who åhave hijacked the robots to prey on locals.

The characters are Stretch residents and visitors who get caught up in the T-Boys' schemes and try to stop them. If they're successful, they'll help reverse the enclave's downfall. If not, the Stretch might get shut down for good.

GETTING STARTED

The scenario starts on Marsha Stretch (p. 354). Set the scene by asking each player to describe one feature of the neighborhood, good or bad. If that doesn't suggest a good place to start, use **Café Larose** (p. 174).

How much players know going in is up to you. To keep things simple, you can have them go in blind—after a little roleplaying to set the scene, they can witness the area's problems firsthand. The **Openings** table on the next page suggests ways to do this. If you want to start them with a problem but keep the T-Boys' involvement secret, use Im-X; nobody likes them either.

You can also just start off by telling them a little about the Terabyte Boys. If you're using the pre-generated characters, they each have a potential reason to know something and act on it (besides being friends with each other):

- **Lee** owns a small dojo/gym on the Stretch.
- **Junior** could be writing a story on it.
- **Maru** and **Soyeong** both live nearby.
- **Mira** is a Huntr user and could have a bounty on a Terabyte Boy.
- **Xander** is a regular visitor.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Terabyte Boys are the most pressing threat to the Stretch at the moment. They survive through Multipass fraud, blackmail, and extortion, and their activities are slowly driving people away from the Stretch. They're connected to the other two threats:

- **Im-X** is a robotics corporation that has filled the Stretch with their bots. They are aware of the T-Boys' activities but see more profit in doing nothing.
- The T-Boys have found a Dreamer, **Overthree**, in the maintenance tunnels near their hidden base. They plan to try repairing and selling it in a secret auction. If it awakes, it will cause chaos. (If you're not running a Dreamer campaign, this one is optional.)

WHAT'S NEXT

Here's what happens if the PCs don't intervene:

1. In the coming months, more locals are driven out by the T-Boys and replaced with wealthier homeowners.
2. Eventually, the T-Boys go after these wealthier targets. Both Im-X and the local police suddenly decide to do something about them. The T-Boys are driven out, but the damage is already done.
3. Im-X gets a lucrative contract for "enhanced security" in the Stretch. Gentrification accelerates.
4. Within two years, the Stretch is gone.

If the Dreamer Overthree is involved:

1. Before the PCs get involved, the T-Boys arrange an auction for Overthree and move its body to a nearby warehouse for repairs.
2. On the day the PCs start dealing with the T-Boys, they finish repairs.
3. That night, they host the auction. Im-X reps win.
4. The T-Boys attempt an on-site demonstration. They awake Overthree, who immediately causes havoc.
5. Overthree escapes the burning warehouse around midnight and attacks Club Eternity.
6. Cartel agents move in, secure the area, and fabricate a story about activists hacking an Im-X bot. Club Eternity is shut down.
7. Im-X gets a lucrative contract for "enhanced security" in the Stretch. Gentrification accelerates.
8. Within two years, the Stretch is gone.

RUNNING THE SCENARIO

There's no set path for the PCs to take, so how they deal with the scenario is up to them. Let them decide, then determine how the other groups in the Stretch would react. If it helps:

- The Terabyte Boys prefer to act indirectly, using their hacking skills and control of Im-X robots, but will use force if they have to.
- Im-X will probably ignore the PCs unless they start damaging bots, preferring to focus on how to spin current events to get a lucrative security contract.
- The locals are willing to help when they can, though the PCs would need to do some work to encourage community action.
- If the Cartel find out about Overthree, they try to capture the Dreamer while keeping its existence hidden. (Once they're involved, online posts about the Dreamer are likely to vanish or be brigaded by trolls.)
- The police are unlikely to help the PCs.

MISSION PREP

After the PCs have enough information on the Stretch, they'll probably have a goal in mind. Maybe something like:

- Stop the Terabyte Boys.
- Organize a community resistance.
- Get Im-X's contract revoked.
- Get Im-X out of the Stretch altogether.

When they're ready to do Prep, give them **eight days**—enough for one Group Prep and one Personal Prep. Nothing suggests the situation will change before then, but it might if they wait longer.

1D6 OPENINGS	
1	An unprepared PC becomes a victim of a T-Boy scheme.
2	A friend of a PC who lives in the area has been targeted by the T-Boys.
3	They're asked for help by the locals or come across a post asking for help online.
4	Segfault Steve (p. 357) extorts a shopkeeper in earshot of the group.
5	The PCs pick up a bounty for a low-ranking T-Boy on Huntr.
6	A local takes and posts a blurry photo of the Boys moving Overthree.

If you'd like to introduce extra wrinkles or run further adventures in the Stretch, try these:

1D6 OTHER PROBLEMS	
1	A group of New Barons (p. 267) come to the Stretch to cause trouble.
2	Quinlan Whateley (p. 354) tries shady means to force residents to sell their homes.
3	A recently fired Im-X employee reprograms some of the bots to cause trouble.
4	Susie Darling (p. 357) of Café Larose asks the PCs to help someone she's sheltering.
5	Zyler Parkes (p. 283) tries to organize an event in the Stretch that quickly turns disastrous.
6	The locals organize a street festival, and the PCs are invited to help.

MARSHA STRETCH

Location

The Marsha Stretch is an LGBTQ+ enclave in the **Neo Melbourne** district (p. 174). It's formed around one long street that runs between Edgeside Park and Westfield Plaza. The Stretch is famous for its mid-rise apartments, cafés, clubs, and small businesses that cater to its predominantly LGBTQ+ population.

The Stretch was originally founded by queer Builders who felt Grand Cross could use a space for them. In the years since, they've built it into one of the most famous LGBTQ+ neighborhoods in orbit.

Unfortunately, once the Stretch got popular it began to gentrify. These days most of the Stretch is a corporate facsimile of the original neighborhood, infested with overpriced businesses and awkward advertising that tries to package the place's identity and sell it back to the locals. Many locals are stubbornly hanging on and keeping the place alive, but eventually, they might just move elsewhere.

Locations

Café Larose, Edgeside Park, and **Westfield Plaza** (p. 174) are all located in the Stretch.

Club Eternity: An old queer bar that's still around thanks to a great selection of retro music, a cool space goth theme, a karaoke section, and a little bit of spite. The karaoke rooms are a good place to talk without being spied on. Rumor has it that you can buy hacking software here if you know who to talk to.

Cop Shop: Neo Melbourne's police station sits in a corner of Westfield Plaza. The Stretch is mostly handled by **Anton Popoff** (p. 358), but other cops occasionally show up to hassle the locals or protect the interests of the rich.

Family Blueprint: A sexual health center that offers education, safe sex resources, health checkups, and testing, along with advice for those in human–android relationships. Its most well-known employee is **Beepjamin**, an android who lives in the Village and knows most of the locals.

Nice Slice Gallery: An art gallery run out of a ground-floor apartment by Bevis and Chad Wray, a local couple. (Bevis is the one with the tribal tattoos, Chad is the one with the ear stud.)

It supports local and emerging artists—though Bevis tends to take up a little too much room with snaps from his wedding photography business, Chad thinks gay rights were "solved" by capitalism, and neither will stop calling everyone "bro".

Im-X Visitor Center: Im-X's customer-facing store, with an attached robotics museum. This is also the base of operations for their Marsha Stretch work. They know the locals don't like them, so a "friendly" security bot watches the front door at all times.

Touching Kong: There's a Burger Kong in the middle of the Stretch now, and they've commissioned a mural to show their appreciation for the area. It resembles The Creation of Adam, only Adam is wrapped in a pride flag and God is replaced with the Burger Kong mascot. Along the bottom is a riff on a Burger Kong slogan: "I'm Going Ape Over Gay Marriage!"

The Village: The Stretch's oldest and largest apartment block. Many of its Builder founders still live here. As locals leave the Stretch, a wealthy landlord named **Quinlan Whateley** has started pressuring residents to sell their apartments to him. His plan is to rebrand the area as South Voyager and triple the rent.

D6 Scenes on the Street	
1–3	
1	A statue offers Im-X sponsored history lessons.
2	A kicked-over delivery bot lies in the street.
3	Locals heckle a three-person TERF protest.
4	People are protesting some corporate bullshit.
5	Locals offer conversation/pizza from a stoop.
6	Cheerful visitors form a long line outside a club.
4–6	
1	A [1–3 politician] [4–6 company] pulls a PR stunt.
2	An old store is having a [1–5 sale] [6 fire sale].
3	The mystery street artist Moonsy strikes again.
4	An AI in a street billboard offers you a deal.
5	There's a [1–3 music] [4–6 art] show today.
6	There's a big festival today!

IM-X

The robotics corporation Im-X is the face of the Stretch's gentrification. They have a government contract to "improve" the place with their robotics tech: delivery bots, security bots, tourism AIs embedded in statues, robotic animals wandering the street, and more. If you care about property values, their presence has been great.

The first problem is that a lot of their tech requires an app with a subscription service. Not everyone can afford it, and the businesses that use it have increased their prices to pass the costs on to their customers, so the cost of living in the Stretch is going up even if you don't use it.

The second is that all of their bots are covered in sensors. They claim it's to protect them from vandals, but it's an open secret that they've been pitching their "valuable data stream" to investors. Visitor numbers in the Stretch have dropped as people who are still in the closet back home get nervous about robotic birds recording them from the bushes.

Im-X isn't the only business trying to cash in on the Stretch, but to the locals they're the vanguard of everything wrong with the area today. Not that Im-X cares—they've secured a lot of funding from investors on the back of their "community work"; Morningstar does puff pieces on their good work every few weeks, and they can always call for the police to keep ungrateful locals in line.

Im-X isn't a member of the Offworld Cartel, but if things go well for them in the Stretch, Ogremoch has offered to sponsor them as a minor member. This is the end goal of their current projects.

Their Stretch operations are based out of the Visitor Center, where they sell bots and app subscriptions. Their other offices and workshops are in their headquarters in Westfield Plaza.

2D6 IM-X BOT SERVICES	
1–3 SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES	
1	**Delivery bots:** Deliver food from partnered businesses right to somewhere near your door.
2	**Ad bots:** Street billboards with AIs that can, in theory, tailor their pitches to passersby.
3	**Cleaner bots:** Occasionally get overzealous and snatch non-subscribers' things.
4	**Guide bots:** Will give a personal tour of the Stretch and its sponsored businesses.
5	**Fix bots:** Collect and maintain broken bots, will gift credits for broken bot reports.
6	**Botdega cat:** A 99% realistic bodega cat; can be customized with microtransactions.
4–6 PUBLIC SERVICES	
1	**Scooter Bots:** Rideshare scooters, programmed to follow people and offer their services.
2	**Statue AIs:** Explain the history of the Stretch on request but exaggerate the role of corporations.
3	**Emergency bots:** First responders, but prioritize avoiding legal action over helping.
4	**Park bot:** Cheerfully forces the homeless out at night; locals keep pushing it into the pond.
5	**Security bot:** Equipped with stun guns and body cameras. Footage is for Im-X only.
6	**Robot birds:** Simulate rainbow lorikeets while keeping an eye out for marketable data.

THE TERABYTE BOYS

The **Terabyte Boys** are a cybercrime gang run by **Fortran B Goode** (p. 357). They were founded in 2019 by a group of programmers and engineers who used to work for the Cross Rail. When a lot of it was privatized, Geryon Aerospace "disrupted" their department by replacing them with interns; without a union to advocate for them, they were forced to turn to crime to survive.

The gang mainly deals in carding and fraud, but they also dabble in light robbery (knocking over convenience stores, mostly) and black-market cybernetics. Most of them are former public servants with a grudge against the world. The rest are petty criminals and thugs lured by offers of Multipass credits and cheap cybernetics.

Operations

The T-Boys' chief revenue stream is Multipass fraud, facilitated by a Multipass machine built with parts stolen from their old job. (If the T-Boys go after the PCs, they might try to swipe their Multipasses for mischief.) They also do:

Extortion. They have accessed Im-X's bot network and use its hidden surveillance and facial recognition capabilities to find tourists who are closeted back home and threaten to out them if they're not paid. They extort local businesses for protection money, sometimes with recordings of tourists visiting them.

Hacking. They use their hacking skills to disrupt businesses who don't pay them and to engage in other forms of cybercrime. Some T-Boys also target the locals out of homo/transphobia.

Dreamers. They've found Overthree slumbering in the tunnels near their base. They've figured out that it's a secret Cartel project, but not any of the details, which is why they plan to repair it and auction it off in a nearby warehouse.

Base

The T-Boys operate out of an abandoned subway station. Grand Cross has a few places like this—little accidents of the construction process that nobody got around to correcting. The surface entrance is in a fenced-off building in an alley behind the Im-X Visitor Center.

The station itself is incomplete, with some Grand Metro offices and a small unoccupied commercial area opening onto a station platform. The T-Boys have connected the power, so they've got lighting and escalators. They also have a few stolen Im-X bots, some for security and some for fun. They know enough about the basement's layout to get around the Stretch without being seen, and the higher-up members have an escape route if they need it.

The T-Boys also own a small warehouse in the blocks behind the Stretch, registered as a computer part reseller. They keep it closed and use a door installed in the basement for access. Overthree is stored in here.

Auction

The T-Boys try to auction Overthree in the warehouse on the next night after the PCs finish prep, unless there's a more suitably dramatic moment. They've anonymously contacted people they think might be interested, from larger gangs to corporate types.

Quade of Im-X is there, and he probably places the winning bid. If you're planning a full Dreamer campaign, consider having **R Daneel Olivaw** (p. 259) attend in his Joseph Capek persona, and/or agents of the Dreamer Committee (who would let Quade take it and negotiate with him in a classier setting later.) All auction attendees who don't know of Dreamers believe it's secret Cartel technology and suspect the other attendees of plotting to steal it.

If the auction isn't stopped, the T-Boys try to activate Overthree and wake it up.

1D6 TERABYTE BOYS	
1	**Horse Head:** Enforcer, former station worker, uses a construction-grade cyber-arm.
2	**Ox Face:** Enforcer, former station worker, cheap cybernetic leg gets in his way.
3	**Wolanski:** Technician who ensures their Multipass fraud is hidden in the system.
4	**Mez:** Small-time hacker who dreams of making it big. Hair cut by mother.
5	**Old Oliver:** Struggles to find a new job due to age; wants revenge on Geryon.
6	**Tarpit Turing:** Black market augment procurer. Own augs don't work well together.

SCENARIO CHARACTERS

FORTRAN B GOODE, TERABYTE BOY

Leader and co-founder of the Terabyte Boys. The group began as a desperate plot to pay his bills, but now he's simply obsessed with revenge against a station that wronged him. To be honest, he might actually like it if Overthree wrecked a bunch of it for him.

Appearance: Sharp, terrible moustache, wearable tech. Fortran wears fancy AR shades to hide his black-market cyber-eyes, and cheap suits because he's under the mistaken impression that they make him look cool.

Personality: Confident, bitter, pragmatic. Goode is a wannabe preacher with a gun. He describes himself as a transhumanist, but he partly chose the Stretch as the T-Boys' base because he's a transphobe. He's a skilled hacker and won't shy away from violence either.

Goal: Get power, get money, use it to hurt other people. Ideally, get away with it.

SEGFAULT STEVE, TERABYTE BOY

Segfault Steve is Goode's go-to henchman, a black-hat hacker and wannabe tough guy who does a lot of the T-Boys' extortion work because he gets off on it. (If you plan to use the New Barons (p. 267) later, he's one of those too.)

Appearance: Nervous, big sideburns, wearable tech. Steve wears a lot of tech for the sake of looking like the kind of guy who can afford a lot of tech. He used to code for Tetsuo, who gave him cybernetic hands.

Personality: Credulous, talkative, threatening. Steve is a decent hacker but looks up to Goode's skills. He's a member of the station's frankly ridiculous flat-Earth conspiracy theorist community and will eventually steer every conversation into a discussion of how dark matter is invisible to the entire electromagnetic spectrum but has gravitational effects—it bends light that passes through it. This gravitational lensing is what makes Earth appear spherical from Grand Cross when actually—

Goal: Do whatever the T-Boys tell him to do, bully the locals, and run away if it looks like he's about to get his ass kicked.

QUADE, IM-X EXECUTIVE

If the PCs try to talk to Im-X, they'll be directed to Quade. His official title is Senior Paradigm Orchestrator, which as far as he can tell means he oversees their Stretch operations. Quade used to live near the Stretch and says the bots are his way of "giving back to the community." They are not.

Appearance: Tall, gangly, animated. Quade wears smart business suits with a selection of old jaunty ties featuring cartoon characters. He tends to latch onto dieting fads started by tech people; he's currently eating a lot of fungus from the moon, which he is ready to explain at length to absolutely anyone who walks into his office. He says "get with the program" a lot.

Personality: Pompous, greedy, lazy. Quade wants to receive maximum praise for minimum work. He's deeply invested in Im-X's Stretch initiative and takes criticism of it as a personal attack. He knows what the Terabyte Boys are doing but is waiting for a better time to "discover" it, blame an underling, and be rewarded for fixing it.

Goal: Get promoted. Quade plans to buy Overthree from the T-Boys and use it as leverage to get Im-X into the Cartel. If he encounters a problem, he will throw money and bots at it until it goes away.

SUSIE DARLING, CAFÉ LAROSE

Susie is a Stretch local the GM can use as a friendly face. She's a middle-aged woman who runs **Café Larose** (p. 174), an LGBTQ+ library/coffee shop. She got up to a lot of mischief in her younger days, but these days she prefers supporting the mischief of others. She lives with her wife elsewhere in the Stretch and rents the café's living space to people in need—usually for a token amount, or just for help sorting the shelves.

Appearance: Bright smiles, brighter scarfs, salt-and-pepper hair. Susie's clothes, brought with her from Earth, are accidentally in style with Double Crossers at the moment. She's from London but hates the place and is letting Orbital English overtake her accent.

Personality: Happy, relaxed, sharp edges. Susie is kind to those who deserve it and surprisingly harsh to people who don't. In her younger years, she was

an activist with an arrest record; she's not keen to add to it on Grand Cross but still keeps up with modern movements and does her part. She's tech-savvy, but sometimes pretends not to be as a bit.

Goal: Run the café, help people in need. Locals often direct such people to her, and when she can't help, she tries to find someone who can. (She's friends with Izzy Kaijou (p. 285) in Space Town.)

LT ANTON POPOFF, DCLO

If the PCs go to the cops they'll be directed to Popoff, their "Diverse Community Liaison Officer." The DCLO is a position the cops invented to keep Popoff from interfering with real police work, which tells you a lot about how they see the Stretch. He's a US immigrant who made lieutenant because his brother-in-law is a politician.

Appearance: Soft, friendly, generic. Popoff can effortlessly code-switch between "cop who is trying a little too hard to connect with queer kids" and "guy who is trying a little too hard to look like a cop." He usually wears the beatific smile of a dude who failed upwards all his life.

Personality: Affable, blinkered, vain. Popoff became a cop because he wanted people to call him a hero. A lot of his opinions are things he was told by other cops ("not wanting cops at Pride is the new racism") or rich relatives ("poor people love renting because it teaches fiscal responsibility") and he assumes that people who disagree are latent criminals. He is swiftly overwhelmed by complex tasks.

Goal: Popoff avoids doing anything that sounds more complex than smiling for the cameras. If told about the T-Boys, Popoff "sends a unit in": they knock on the door to the T-Boy base and leave when nobody answers. He'd much rather show up after someone else solves the problem, pick up the pieces, and take the credit.

OVERTHREE

When the Terabyte Boys found **Overthree**, it was in its meditative state. It had accidentally damaged several subsystems on another self-hating rampage through the basements; it's this damage that was preventing it from awakening.

The Terabyte Boys attempted to boot Overthree before, and because it didn't fully awaken, they think it's slow and easily controlled. Their attempts to repair it have accelerated its natural recovery processes, so the next time will awaken Overthree fully (it might even awaken on its own later if its captors aren't careful.)

For Overthree's statistics, see p. 303.

HACKING IM-X

Control over the Stretch's bot network is centralized at the Im-X Visitor Center. Their internal servers hold plenty of otherwise unsecured evidence that the company is aware of how invasive and compromised its tech is. It's just illegal enough to make the Cartel and other authorities act—if there's a public outcry.

The network level is **5.** This is reduced to **4** if the group is able to locate **Echo Tam**, a former admin who was downsized for raising ethics concerns. It is raised to **6** again if the hackers lose their Ghost. The network is actively overseen by an administrative AI called Elder Eye.

2D6 STRETCH LOCALS

1–3 OLD-TIMERS

1	**Smiling Sammy B:** Former construction android who dabbles in recreational drug software.
2	**Dariusz Schiffer:** Retired orbital worker with memory problems, helped by neighbors.
3	**Kelly Leete:** Excitable Double Crosser hacker; likes robots, Lovecraft, and conspiracy theories.
4	**AJ Ceres:** Government translator. Helps neighbors deal with bureaucracy on the side.
5	**Li Si:** Cyber-eyed worker at Club Eternity. Daughter of blue-collar Shackleton workers.
6	**Amadi Michelakis:** Aging accountant; has been getting increasingly radical with age.

4–6 NEWCOMERS

1	**Priya Singh:** Nurse at a local clinic; helps neighbors with minor problems on the side.
2	**Rory Rosek:** Systems engineer in the early stages of a tragic "reading Foucault" phase.
3	**Wes Chesley:** Burger Kong manager constantly plotting bizarre pinkwashing marketing stunts.
4	**Roll Cinnamon:** GPol student, cyborg, working as a courier to pay tuition.
5	**Noel Narvaez:** Insufferable Im-X middle manager; thinks being conservative makes him punk.
6	**Rito Cortez:** L4 Disaster refugee and part-time activist scraping by in a dead-end Im-X job.

ENCOUNTERS

Terabyte Boys can be run as simple encounters. They may be encountered in groups of up to 5.

Terabyte Boy

The average Terabyte Boy is a thug with a hacker's fashion sense.

Level: 2 Defense: 7

Health: A T-Boy will flee or be knocked out after taking 3 damage, 5 if they're leading other Boys.

Gear: A basic hacking suite, an unsilenced pistol they won't use in public, and a simple melee weapon.

Traits

Cybered: +1 Tough Defense.

Rude: The Terabyte Boy's Social Mood is never Friendly, unless they want to sell you something or they think you're a cool hacker.

Actions

E-Chaff

An underground concoction of wi-fi signal blockers mixed with metal shavings, painful shrapnel, and dust for effect. Once per fight, the Terabyte Boy can make a Ranged Attack; if they hit, they grant Advantage to anyone attempting to hack the affected target's tech.

Big Boy

One of the leaders of the Terabyte Boys.

Level: 2 Defense: 7

Health: A T-Boy will flee or be knocked out after taking 3 damage, 5 if they're leading other Boys.

Gear: A better hacking suite, an unsilenced pistol they won't use in public, and a simple melee weapon.

Traits

Cybered: +1 Tough Defense.

Hacker: +1 to all Hacking rolls.

Rude: The Terabyte Boy's Social Mood is never Friendly, unless they want to sell you something or they think you're a cool hacker.

Actions

Augment Hack

`> 2d6+3 vs target's Clever Defense`

A Big Boy can try a quick and dirty hack on any target affected by E-Chaff. On a success, they disable one Augment or another piece of tech until the target makes a **Clever save vs 12** at the end of their turn.

Im-X Security Drone

Level: 2 Defense: 7

Health: The Drone is disabled once it takes 3 damage.

Traits

Hover: Security Drones have +1 Quick Defense and can fly.

Actions

Security App

The Drone assesses the local threat. The Drone can summon 3+1d3 **Security Bots** if any two of the following are true:

- The drone can intervene with minimal risk of damage to Im-X property, including itself.
- A subscriber is in danger.
- Intervening is not likely to make Im-X liable for damages.
- The threat is targeting a premium subscriber, an Im-X sponsored influencer, or an Im-X shareholder/executive.

The Security Bots arrive within 1 minute in any public location in the Marsha Stretch. Once they arrive, the Security Drone attempts to flee.

Im-X Security Bot

Level: 2 Defense: 7

Health: The Drone is disabled once it takes 5 damage.

MARSHA STRETCH

NEO MELBOURNE DISTRICT

MAP NOT TO SCALE, FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY

Café Larose

LGBT LIBRARY/COFFEE SHOP

OWNER: SUSIE DARLING
EXTRAS: CAKES, ATTIC FOR RENT
VENTI: JUST SAY "LARGE"



EDGESIDE PARK

PUBLIC PARK/OBSERVATION DECK

FEATURES: BBQ FACILITIES, BIKE PATHS
DUCK POND: REAL DUCKS

IM-X VISITOR CENTER

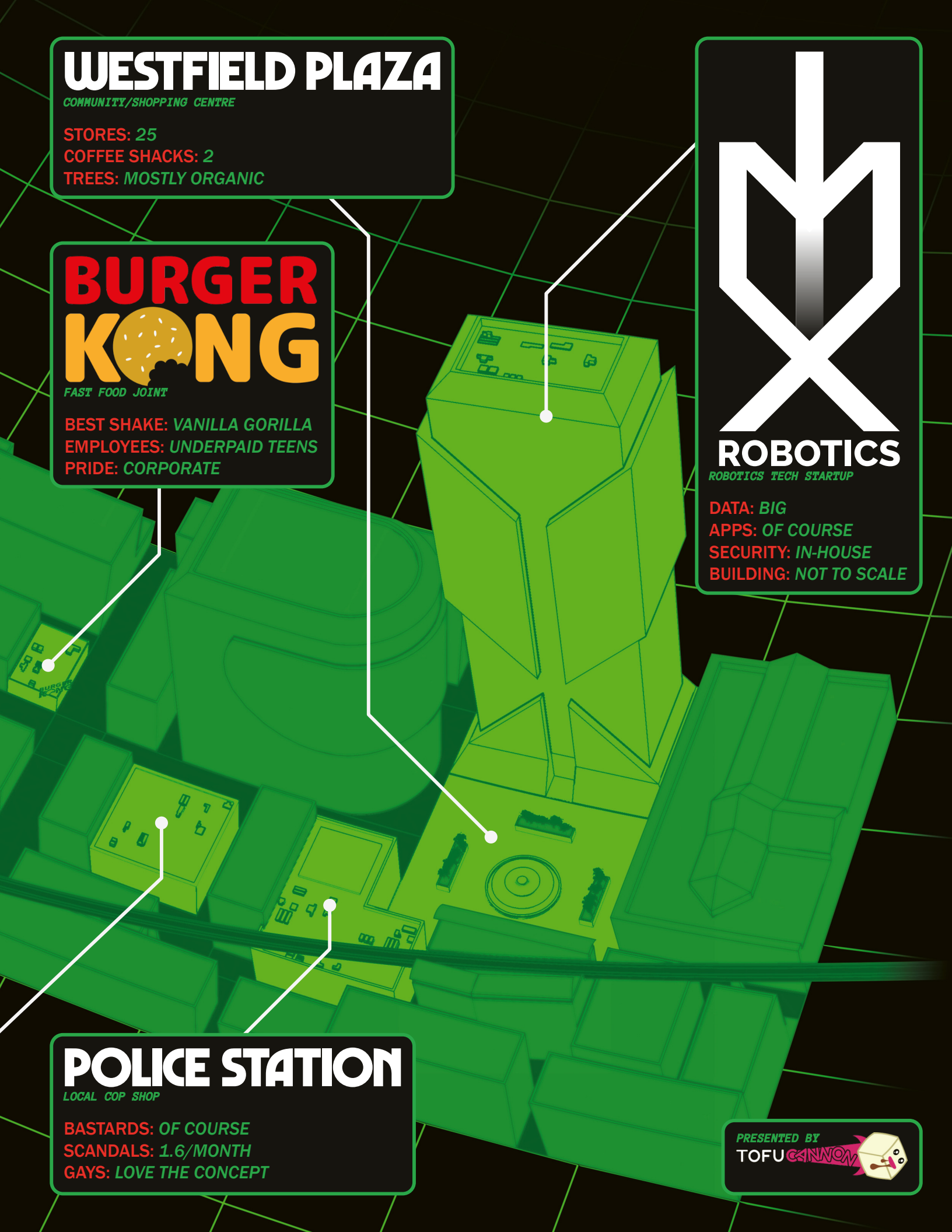
ROBOTICS STORE/MUSEUM
FORMER COMMUNITY THEATER

DRONE INCIDENTS: DOWN 9% THIS MONTH

CLUB ETERNITY

SPACE GOTH QUEER BAR

DRINKS: FRUITY
KARAOKE: 80S HITS
L337 WAREZ: ASK FOR PALE VIOLA


WESTFIELD PLAZA
COMMUNITY/SHOPPING CENTRE
STORES: 25
COFFEE SHACKS: 2
TREES: MOSTLY ORGANIC
BURGER KONG
FAST FOOD JOINT
BEST SHAKE: VANILLA GORILLA
EMPLOYEES: UNDERPAID TEENS
PRIDE: CORPORATE
ROBOTICS
ROBOTICS TECH STARTUP
DATA: BIG
APPS: OF COURSE
SECURITY: IN-HOUSE
BUILDING: NOT TO SCALE
POLICE STATION
LOCAL COP SHOP
BASTARDS: OF COURSE
SCANDALS: 1.6/MONTH
GAYS: LOVE THE CONCEPT
PRESENTED BY
TOFUCANNON



THE DREAMER SEASON

This campaign arc focuses on the Dreamers. **Rather than lay out exactly how the campaign is supposed to go**, it's presented as a series of characters, plot hooks, and other ideas GMs can use to build scenarios. Pick the ones that work for you and use or remix them as needed.

OVERVIEW

The Dreamers are strange new AGI lifeforms developed by the Cartel in hopes of creating a labor force they don't have to pay. During their first trial run, the Dreamers escaped. Now they lurk in the shadows of Grand Cross, pursuing their own plans and occasionally causing havoc.

The PCs are people who have learned of the Dreamers. They try to uncover evidence of the Dreamers' existence and origins while dealing with Cartel agents trying to cover it up; other groups and people with their own agendas; and the Dreamers themselves, who are hostile to outsiders and rebuff attempts at communication.

In addition to a rundown of the Dreamers and the Cartel, this section includes:

- Several **setups** that can be fleshed out into full scenarios.
- Various **NPCs** and groups that can be used as plot hooks.
- Descriptions of various **antagonists**, including the Dream Committee and their agents.
- Some **other factions** and their involvement.
- And a suggested **finale** and **epilogue** to build toward.

For more about the Dreamers, including descriptions and stats, see p. 132-133 and 300-309.

GETTING STARTED

How the group comes across the Dreamers is up to you. You can surprise them by running a mundane scenario that ends with them stumbling into one—The Terabyte Boys scenario on p. 352-361 is provided for this purpose. If they're already expecting Dreamers, you could just make the initial scenario about encountering a Dreamer and trying to escape or drive it away.

Finally, you can just say it happened already and jump right into the action. Ask the players to explain how they came across the Dreamers and why it caught their interest. The sample PC **Lucy** (p. 339) has explicitly encountered them, as the Infovore is responsible for the weird stuff that happened to her, and **Soyeong** (p. 333) could find a Dreamer is responsible for her accident.

THE OFFWORLD CARTEL

The Offworld Cartel are the primary antagonists of this story arc. They're responsible for the Dreamers, set their escape in motion, and their attempts to solve the problem drive much of the plot.

The Cartel's aim is control. They want to control the Dreamers and the narrative around Dreamers so they can replace paid workers.

They want to find the Dreamers and capture them—eliminate them, if they have to. They also want to cover up the Dreamers' existence for now, or at least make what's happening unclear enough that the media run with their story. (If they can use a cover story to blame their enemies, even better.)

To achieve their goals, the Cartel relies on their wealth. They can hire people to do anything from manipulating social media to killing a witness. They can also use their influence to manipulate public opinion and bully regular people into compliance. However, their wealth can lead them to become complacent or assume they're smarter than they actually are.

THE CARTEL'S ARC

At the start, the Dream Committee that runs the project is focused on capturing the Dreamers. They tell their experts to find new ways to track and control them, send field agents after them, and monitor the internet for Dreamer discussion.

As the Dreamers evade capture and outside investigators (like the PCs) close in, the Committee gets nervous and escalates. They will shut down internet posts or flood them with misinformation, send goons to destroy evidence and intimidate witnesses, and commit more serious crimes.

Over time the Committee turns to their most violent member, Kuromu Wright (p. 367). As the story arc nears its conclusion, he will escalate to ordering hits on investigators and trying to simply destroy any Dreamers still at large. At the same time, the Committee will assume the Dreamers will become public knowledge soon and make plans to paint them as an unfinished AI project sabotaged by activists.

The PCs can defeat the Committee by gathering evidence of their activities and shutting down project sites—if they can survive Wright.

1D6	OPENINGS
1	A trip to the basements/end caps leads to an unexpected Dreamer encounter.
2	The PCs witness a midnight Cartel raid on someone who knew too much.
3	A Dreamer gets into the basements in the PCs' neighborhood, damages infrastructure.
4	The PCs hear reports of "some weird robot thing" in the basements.
5	A friend of the PCs finds a "cute" Kitbash and tries to figure out where it came from.
6	PCs in a corporate building take a wrong turn and see too much.

THE DREAMER SITUATION

While investigating the Cartel, the PCs will be finding and dealing with the Dreamers. Here's the basics of what they're up to. For long-term Dreamer goals, see p. 379.

KITBASHES

Kitbash Dreamers can be found across the station, scurrying across rooftops and hiding in alleys. They don't do much on their own except acquire data.

However, characters who study the Kitbashes may realize something the Cartel hasn't: they gather in greater numbers in places other Dreamers are or will be soon. When the gathering scatters, the Dreamer will usually appear within a day. PCs who develop ways to track the Kitbashes can roughly predict where roaming Dreamers are likely to show up next.

LEAPERS

The Leapers begin as the most active of the Dreamers. They guard Dreamer lairs, stalk characters who attack the Dreamers, and occasionally hunt members of the Dreamer project. Over time the Cartel's agents will get better at fending them off, and they'll switch to stealthier missions.

Unlike Kitbashes, the Leapers cannot reproduce on their own. They rely on the **Polysome** to replenish their numbers; if it's captured or destroyed, they are much more cautious and hunt much less frequently.

1D6	WHY LEAPERS HUNT
1	To capture Dreamer project computers and other data storage.
2	To raid Dreamer facilities for specialized parts and equipment.
3	To recover a captured Leaper or retaliate against project members.
4	For reasons you can't quite understand, frankly.
5	To indirectly influence someone else's actions.
6	To bring Cartel agents and investigators to the Infovore.

THE POLYSOME

The Polysome has taken refuge in **Ogremoch 2501**, a small outer hull factory. Ogremoch purchased more outer hull space than they needed just in case, so they're sitting on a lot of empty buildings—the nearby **Ogremoch 1029** was a Dreamer project facility, in fact.

The Polysome tends to stay there, taking in resources brought to it (mostly by Kitbashes) and developing new technologies for the other Dreamers. PCs who track another Dreamer may eventually catch them on a pilgrimage to the Polysome—it has to install most parts itself.

OVERTHREE

Overthree's usual routine is simple: it stalks the forgotten areas of the basement for a while until it decides to go on another rampage, then enters a dormant meditative state for anywhere from a few days to a month depending on how badly it damaged itself. Once it's repaired, it starts over.

If you use *The Terabyte Boys*, Overthree is found by the titular gang and likely becomes the first Dreamer captured or destroyed. The GM is free to have Overthree engineer an escape if they want to bring it back; this Dreamer is a lot smarter than people who see its rampages give it credit for.

YAN-C.BIN

Yan's current form and location are up to the GM. Choose whichever seems appropriate:

1D6	YAN'S FORM
1	Yan has become a purely digital entity. It still needs a large server to house itself, and it's built one in a guarded spot on the outer hull.
2	Yan is a digital entity living in backup space in the station's habitat network. The Cartel won't be able to capture it until Unity agrees to privatize some of the infrastructure that keeps the station itself going.
3	Yan is dead. In life it was able to create trimmed-down clones of its own mind, and it's these "lesser" minds that are bouncing around the internet today.
4	Yan has uploaded itself into a swarm of robotic birds in one of the park wards.
5	Yan has uploaded itself to the spaceship the Dreamers were sent to Skuggahvarf on. It's still near Grand Cross.
6	Yan is now a swarm of micromachines. The Cartel is yet to notice it has been physically interfacing with the networks it hijacks.

THE WORM

The Worm likes to burrow in soil, so it has ventured to the end cap mountains. At the moment it has dug out a nest in an abandoned maintenance facility, buried under the mountain overlooking Cixin.

It's mostly content to stay there, but people keep coming close and riling its brood up. The **Liivipojat** gang (p. 254) have their secret drug labs further up the mountain, and the Worm's lair lies on the path they take to get to Voyager, so several of their mules have been attacked by "weird robots."

If the PCs deal with other Dreamers first, the Worm's attacks on the Liivipojat catch the attention of **R. Daneel Olivaw** (p. 259), who attempts to capture it. If his goons fail, the Worm will escape to a lair nearby (leaving a trail) or make a risky journey through the basements to the other cap, escorted by Leapers.

27X

27X spends most of its time sitting on the outer hull, looking at the stars. It doesn't need air, so reaching it during these moments may be difficult for non-androids.

On some nights 27X enters the Grand Cross basements through an airlock, picks a corporate target, and breaches it by tearing through the floor. It attacks anyone who comes after it, but otherwise it just loots electronics from the area and disappears again. The Cartel believes it is collecting parts for an upgrade from the Polysome, but if the Dreamers have a long-term goal, 27X is gathering resources.

THE INFOVORE

The Infovore's objective is deceptively simple: gather information, just like the humble Kitbashes. Its methods are just a little more... intrusive.

It has developed a form of mind-dubbing technology. When it gets its appendages into a human, it can copy the parts of their brain that store information[14]. The process affects their most recent memories, and in some cases much more—like with the sample PC **Lucy** (p. 339).

The Infovore roams the basements, using its tech to make people forget seeing it and occasionally capturing interesting people for "study." It will prioritize Dreamer project members and people who have interacted with Dreamers in the past.

Among Dreamers, the Infovore seems to be a mastermind. It's usually accompanied by Kitbashes, and other Dreamers tend to follow its lead. The main exception is Overthree, who is more likely to take a few shots at the Infovore, exchange lights and sounds, and leave. Whether this is the Dreamer form of an argument or something else is unclear.

14 This tech can't be directly copied by humans—only the Dreamers can read its output, never mind understanding the technology. However, the hardware could still advance mind technology.

THE DREAM COMMITTEE

Antagonist

"Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their contrary?"

— Karl Marx

The Dream Committee are the overseers of the Dreamer project. Members are drawn from the project's backer corporations, who generally give them the resources they need and step back in case they need plausible deniability.

The Committee is certain they'll succeed. After all, they've hired the smartest, toughest people on the station to help them—and doesn't having power over those people make them the smartest and toughest around?

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Here are a few potential members of the Committee that can serve as plot hooks. The project's exact composition and backers are up to the GM.

Derek Baars (p. 250): Derek hopes the Dreamers can make him the man who took humanity to the stars. He focuses on the science side of things: recruiting experts and having them develop ways to track or control the Dreamers. Eventually he's willing to contact fans in the **Singularists** for help, which probably leads directly to the events of *Maximal Progress* (p. 371).

Derek is sure he'll have everything solved any day now, but he's reliant on his experts to succeed. He's also not great at being covert, so PCs who keep tabs on him are likely to overhear information on the Dreamers, learn about who he's hired recently, or catch him visiting a restricted area.

Josef Diego (p. 251): Josef was invited due to his influence and eye for detail. The ethics don't bother him; he's sure if the Dreamers worked hard, they could get promoted and make some serious cash. However, recent events have convinced him it's a good time to exit the project.

Under the pretext of bringing in a useful ally, Josef has started sending a replacement to meetings: **Wayde Sterling**, a VP at Big J Corporation and an arrogant prick who sometimes hires gangs to sabotage his rivals. Wayde will gladly use his contacts to help the Committee and has no idea Josef plans to make him the fall guy.

Bambang Hitam: A representative of Asano Heavy Industries. Bambang is one of the few high-level non-Asanos in the corporation; Tadashi Asano (p. 246) sent him instead of a family member to avoid dragging their slap fights into the Cartel's business.

Bambang is a SEA-born technocrat who believes two things: that cybernetics and body mods will inevitably create an elite class of super-humans, and that equality is a pipe dream. Like most people who think that, Bambang is also wealthy enough to cram himself with more cyber than a private roleplaying server. He's hoping to reverse-engineer the Dreamers' tech when they're recaptured.

Travis McDaggett: Omnidyne's representative. He's the PR guy; his job is to craft a marketing strategy that will get people to meet the Dreamers on the Cartel's terms, think of Dreamers in their terms, and come to terms with what they want to do to them.

Since the Dreamers' escape, Travis has been crafting cover stories and excuses for the Cartel. His work is exquisite, in part because he's meticulously studied the project and its process to better understand the situation. He's not bothered by the crimes and the murder plots—he used to work in entertainment.

Antlia Tremblay: Antila represents several Ogremoch board members at once. Ogremoch is lending a lot of the project's workspace and machinery; Antlia's job is to keep an eye on it all and prepare reports for her bosses.

Antlia tends to fade into the background during meetings, partly because she's more of an observer and partly because the other members don't take her seriously. Nobody has noticed that she routinely has to "interpret" her bosses' half-baked ideas into better ones, or that she's kept meticulous records to ensure she isn't the one left holding the bag if the project fails.

Kuromu Wright: Tetsuo's VP of Research, sent by Kanemasa Gou (p. 247) because the CEO felt he was getting too old for an extra project. Wright is a business and technology expert, but that's not why Kanemasa sent him. He did so because he thinks every corporate project needs an ice-cold bastard who isn't afraid to get his hands dirty, and Wright is the coldest guy he knows.

Wright is a violent man who sees no issue with killing people to further the Cartel's goals. In fact, he believes that being rich means you can do anything you want—after all, what are they going to do, fine him?

ESCALATION

As the situation worsens, the Committee begins to consider bigger risks and bigger crimes. Wright's influence on the group increases, and they start getting more extreme in their methods. Eventually, Wright will decide they should have brought the knives out months ago and plot the deaths of anyone who gets in their way.

What the Committee doesn't know is that Wright has killed one of their own: Oskar A. Johnson (p. 203). Oskar owned the minor Cartel member Meteor Ventures, who helped build Overthree.

Oskar was told not to stamp their logo on Dreamer parts. He followed the order to the letter but not in spirit by giving Overthree a branded power unit; he planned to reveal it after the Dreamers went public to boost his company's profile.

When Wright found out, he went to Oskar's house to confront him, got into an argument, and killed him in a rage. Wright has made his death look like an accident to avoid calling attention to the project and is launching an aggressive takeover of Meteor to bring its Dreamer facility under his control.

Oskar's office also contains a full backup of his smart house system, including the camera logs. Kuromu hopes to unlock it and erase the logs of him dragging Oskar away while saying, "We specifically said not to leave a trail! We made it very clear!" before anyone else finds them.



KUROMU WRIGHT, TETSUO VP

The moment that defined Kuromu's life happened at age eight, when his wealthy father killed his mistress—Kuromu's mother—and got away with it. It taught him the only lesson he's ever needed to know: when you're rich, there are no consequences.

Appearance: Strong, sour face, full of himself. Kuromu is a man of few words, at least when it comes to people beneath his station. He got a cybernetic eye for work a long time ago, but the cybernetic jaw is new—a prototype Worm nearly killed him.

Personality: Cold, violent, confident. Kuromu believes that his wealth gives him the right to do whatever he wants. He can be overly aggressive when he doesn't get his way, but his equally wealthy peers believe he's simply a manly guy who tells it like it is. He's very sure of himself but kind of fears the Worm now.

Goal: Get the project back on course by any means necessary.

OPERATION SILENT THUNDER

Antagonist

When the Dreamers escaped, the Committee knew who to call. Goliath sent a team led by one of their best, **Darryl Rickard**, to recapture the Dreamers.

Darryl is one of Barlow's Boys (p. 233). On Earth he was their sniper, but on Grand Cross he's Goliath's urban tracking expert. Darryl has projected a humanlike mindset onto the Dreamers, but only because he's virulently anti-android—his insistence that they're violent android revolutionaries borders on red scare fantasy. Darryl has brought a crack team of Goliath agents with him to enact **Operation Silent Thunder**, his plan to deal with the Dreamers.

Darryl also has a friend in the SPS. **Clayton Crux** is a corrupt cop from the USA who transferred to space after his habit of intentionally breaking and stealing cybernetic limbs was exposed. He doesn't care about the Cartel, but he likes money.

At first, Darryl and his team focus on finding Dreamers, capturing them, and lying to witnesses. As the Cartel escalates, Darryl will be allowed to get harsher with witnesses, capture investigators, recruit Crux and his cronies to do things the Cartel doesn't want to be seen doing, and murder any remaining Dreamers.

Use Darryl's team when you need to send Cartel agents toward the PCs. Darryl doesn't try to personally deal with the PCs until things escalate. They may encounter Crux first, as Darryl will send him to dissuade investigators by roughing them up.

DARRYL RICKARD

LEVEL: 4 DEFENSE: 9 HEALTH: 6

TRAITS

Tracker: Darryl has Advantage on finding hidden opponents as well as all attempts to track targets. He has +2 Defense against hidden attacks and grants this bonus to his team if he is present or in contact.

Robot Hater: Darryl takes +1 on all rolls to attack, belittle, or lie to androids. He also takes +1 on all attacks against Dreamers.

Tactical Gear: When equipped, Darryl takes 1 less damage from all attacks, can't be blinded with flashbangs, and can see targets at night or through smoke.

GEAR

Tactical gear, guns, knives, some emergency/bribe money, xenophobia.

GOLIATH AGENTS

LEVEL: 4 DEFENSE: 9 HEALTH: 5

They tend to work in squads of four.

TRAITS

Tactical Gear: When equipped, a Goliath Agent takes 1 less damage from all attacks, can't be blinded with flashbangs, and can see you at night or through smoke.

Professional: Once per fight, Boost a save 1 Goliath Agent makes.

High Value Target: Once per fight, 1 Goliath Agent present may Boost an attack roll against an identified threat—usually a PC Darryl has warned them about, or a Dreamer.

GEAR

Tactical gear, smoke and flashbang grenades, knives, guns.

Grenades: A squad of any number of Goliath Agents can use any Grenade they have once per fight.

TIGER SHARK

Antagonist

Kuromu also has his own personal cleaner who he'll bring in if Darryl fails. **Tiger Shark** is a hitman from parts unknown, wanted on Earth for a string of crimes from killing union organizers in the Philippines to kidnapping a journalist in Brazil. A lot of his "clients" are wealthy, which helps him escape arrest. Kuromu likes Tiger Shark because he finds the violence in his eyes familiar, like an old friend.

Use him when you want things to get dangerous. Tiger Shark stakes out his targets to check for surprises first, allowing NPCs to send advance warnings and you to give the PCs a tense no-Prep rescue scenario. If he suffers a satisfying defeat or repeated failures, Kuromu calls him off.

Tiger Shark (or "Tish") calls himself a "freelance fighting enthusiast." He's good at it, but he's not a details guy, so he tends to take big risks and make big messes that only a rich sponsor can cover for. He is also, unfortunately, a millennial gamer.

Appearance: Smirking, striped hair, cyber-arms. Tish's arms are packed with weaponry, particularly blades, and are wildly illegal. He wears gamer meme shirts with the sleeves ripped out and an oversized hoodie if he needs to hide his arms. He uses a lot of gamer slang. Conventional wisdom says that with enough confidence, whatever you wear becomes cool. Tiger Shark puts that adage to the ultimate test.

Personality: Doomer, gamer, bloodthirsty. Tish treats his life like a video game. He decided long ago that past generations stole his future and capitalists will destroy civilization, so he may as well stop trying. (He detests people like Kuromu, but doesn't believe they can be stopped, so he settles for taking their money.) He avoids killing anyone for free unless they're trying to kill him, and he won't do kids.

Goal: Have fun.



STATS
Origin: Gamer
Traits: Impulsive, Speedy
Abilities: Cool +0, Clever +1, Tough +2 Quick +3
Defenses: Cool 7, Clever 8, Tough 12, Quick 13
Burden: 1
Occupation: Street Fighter 1 (first), Thief 1
Talents: Badass, Chain Punch, Parkour

SPECIALTIES:
+1 Gamer
+1 Human and Android Anatomy
+3 Quick Defense
+1 Social Media
+1 Studied The Blades
+3 Tough Defense
+1 Webcomics

ASSETS:
Melee Weapons: L33t and H4x Knives [Melee, Sharp], anything Kuromu thought was useful.

AUGMENTS:
Spring Legs: Tiger Shark calls "jumping over someone and attacking their back" his signature move.
HydraTech HT-65 Reflex-Enhancing Arms [Combat Augments, Illegal, ECM-Hardened]: These also come with hidden compartments for his knives. +1 Quick Defense.

APP: NONE

OTHER FACTIONS

These other groups can get in on the action too.

LAW ZERO

Olivaw likes to keep tabs on AI developments in Grand Cross, so it's no surprise he learns of the Dreamer project. By the time the arc begins, Olivaw can even have a spy on the team.

Olivaw is disgusted by the Cartel's actions and plots to shut down the project. However, his plans are less about exposing the project and more about killing some of them to get the project scrapped.

He also projects his feelings about androids onto the Dreamers, and tries to meet one in case an android could establish rapport. This does not work. In fact, his agent Kalma is killed by the Worm and her body taken. After that, Olivaw tries to get his hands on the software tools the Cartel used to make the Dreamers and reverse engineer a way to communicate with them.

Law Zero are a wild card. They could be an ally, but Olivaw is reluctant to work with humans and has his own agendas. How well his plan to communicate with a Dreamer will work is up to the GM; we assume it'd take so long the arc would resolve first, but feel free to speed things up.

THE NEW BARONS AND CAPTCHA

When the Cartel escalates, they might find their hired muscle isn't doing the job, or the job is too shady for them. Luckily, they have some useful fools to rely on.

The New Barons (p. 267) are essentially a tool of the Cartel, and the anti-android CAPTCHA (p. 271) would love to smash some Dreamers. If necessary, Kuromu can covertly recruit both groups and prime them with just enough misinformation to point them at one of his enemies. Neither group has the resources for a long-term effort; the first satisfying defeat they suffer is probably their last.

SINGULARISTS

At some point, the Singularists become aware of the Dreamers. Derek will tap some of the big names for help eventually; if he doesn't, at least one of them encounters the project on their own.

Either way, Cyrus Berryman (p. 262) finds out. Before going public, he forms a group to discuss the matter in FERMI's offices (p. 158). PCs who are Singularists or have Singularist connections may get invited.

By cross-referencing gathered evidence with their knowledge of current events in tech, they manage to work out most of the project—escape included—and form a plan. If Derek asks for help, Cyrus chooses a team. If not, Cyrus has the access (and the chutzpah) to simply call Derek or Bambang and offer their services, which they'd likely accept.

The other Singularists start trying to track the Dreamers just in case they're the superintelligence they worry about. This leads to the events of *Maximal Progress* (p. 371).

The Singularists want to help, but they're likely to become antagonists. Many of them support the Cartel, who can easily turn the group into their pawns. PCs who want to work with the Singularists must either convince Cyrus to rein in them in for once or find individual Singularists who will work with them.

THE UNIONS

The station's few organized labor groups are unlikely to learn of the Dreamers on their own and have little power in the station. However, hearing that the Cartel is trying to make the perfect exploitable worker would probably make them go bananas.

PCs who gather solid evidence of the Dreamers can contact the station's unions for help, if they wish. If they go public with their information, they can spur the unions into collective action.

Even if they don't, some unions will be able to provide covert assistance. The UEW (p. 269) can help search for Dreamers or Dreamer facilities. Builders United (p. 266) can rustle up some people with in-depth knowledge of the station. The Exies (p. 270) can help with sabotage. PCs should be very careful when making contact, lest they approach a Cartel-friendly member or alert a spy.

MAXIMAL PROGRESS

Antagonist

The Singularists (p. 260) believe in a future super-AI who will deliver humanity from evil. So what happens when they meet the Dreamers?

THE MAX FACTOR

When the Singularists set up a Dreamer-tracking group (p. 370), Max Babylon (p. 264) is recruited for his ability to organize. In hindsight, this was obviously a bad idea.

Max immediately projects his Singularist beliefs onto the Dreamers. He decides they must be the AI gods he was waiting for—and if the gods walk among us, it's a good time to start a church.

Max starts recruiting followers under the pretext of expanding his tracking team. He focuses on Singularists and followers who share his views. He even posts videos hinting that "something big" is coming and lets interested people contact him.

Max is a convincing guy; he has evidence of the Dreamers, and both his Singularist and right-wing audiences are already primed to accept shaky premises, so before long he'll have carved out a new Singularist subgroup: the Maximal Singularists.

MAXIMALS

The Maximals believe the Dreamers are the heralds of the technological singularity, and that finding them is the key to achieving maximal technological progress. (This isn't true, though some of the Dreamers' technology would definitely be useful.)

Their initial goal is simple: find the Dreamers and try to form a working relationship with them. At this stage, the PCs should encounter Maximals trying to track Dreamers, offering to trade information with the PCs, and generally getting in their way.

Eventually, they'll realize this won't work. Unwilling to accept he was wrong, Max decides that the Dreamers must be incomplete. He gains a new goal: capture Dreamers and "fix" them. The Dream Committee, who flagged him when he started posting the videos, offer to "help"—they supply the Maximals with gear and weapons to turn them into pawns.

At this stage, PCs on missions should find themselves working at cross-purposes with the Maximals. They interrupt attempts to capture Dreamers, try to force the PCs to hand over information, and interfere with attempts to oppose the Cartel. As far as they're concerned, the Dreamers should stay a secret for now—"normies" will just get in the way.

CROSSING MAX

The Maximals are devoted to Max. They watch his videos religiously, share his views, and follow his orders. To cross the Maximals is to cross Max.

When the PCs cross Max, he doesn't take it well. He acquires a secondary goal: destroying them.

Max mostly does this by siccing his fans on them. He starts cranking out hours-long videos about the PCs: combing over the content of influencers for things to take out of context, ranting about how any activists in the group are what's wrong with the station, and even outright lying about the PCs assaulting Singularists if he has to.

Max's goal is to intimidate the PCs into backing off, or to goad his followers into hurting them. If someone tries, they'll probably be Maximals or New Barons (p. 267). Max claims that he's "merely presenting information" and the attackers have nothing to do with him, of course.

Getting Max to back off is a tricky proposition. He has Cartel backing, a gang of devout followers, a large online presence, and other Singularists keep letting him recruit in their spaces. If the PCs cut off his support, however, the Maximals don't have the resources to fight a long war.

PLOT HOOKS

- The Maximals actually figure out a way to lure a Dreamer to a specific location. If the PCs can take it for their own...
- A Maximal, Robbo, realizes Max is wrong after he encounters a Leaper and it sticks him with a tracking device. If the PCs can protect him for 24 hours, he'll help them.
- 27X seemingly submits to the Maximals willingly. In reality, it's using them to gain access to a new area.
- If the Infovore (p. 304) gets hold of Max, it will implant him with false memories. Shortly after, Max begins sending the Maximals on missions that indirectly benefit the Dreamers: building strange devices for them, and luring people (Maximals included) to the Infovore's lair. Max does not realize what he's doing.

THE CANOPUS SCHEME

Scenario setup

Canopus Hiryu was a respected scientist. He got his start as a science communicator who got kids dreaming of going to space, and on Grand Cross he was better known for his later contributions to the fields of robotics and space travel. Then, in 2018, he took a job offer from Asano. A year later, he was gone.

Official reports claim he took his own life. His daughter **Haru Hiryu** doesn't buy it. She's come across a data disc containing some of Canopus's personal files, which revealed he was actually working on the Dreamer project. She suspects a cover-up.

Haru has a reputation as a lazy socialite, but she's at least as smart as Canopus. She's been investigating his death, and she could use some help.

THE PLOT HOOK

Haru is a potential ally for the PCs. She's looking into the Dreamers too, but suspects the Cartel keeps tabs on her, so she's pretending to be harmless while supporting others.

Haru inherited a four-story building in Marukyu, which contains a private workshop, office, pool, apartment, and a ground-floor clothing store (formerly Canopus's science communicator film studio.) PCs who earn Haru's trust can obtain access to the first three.

Haru wants names of people on the Dreamer project and hard evidence of Canopus' fate. These can be learned through corporate infiltration missions. In return, when working with Haru, the PCs get +1 to their Acquire Asset rolls and 1 extra Cash at the start of each session.

THE TRUTH

What happened to Canopus? Pick the one below you like the most, or come up with your own conclusion:

- When Canopus got cold feet about the direction the project was going in and threatened to go public, Bambang Hitam (p. 366) had him silenced.
- When Bambang tried to silence him, Law Zero's spy faked his death. Olivaw is hiding Canopus, and he's the one who sent Haru the data disc.
- Canopus was killed by Overthree during one of its containment breaches.
- Canopus faked his death to escape and is hiding out with friends in the Singularists—a dangerous move, given some Singularists would sell him out.



HARU HIRYU, SCIENTIST SOCIALITE

Haru is a scientist and businesswoman. She learned from her father, and if she applies herself, she'll probably surpass him. She's secretly investigating the Cartel while posing as a layabout who just wants to read by her pool all day—which is, to be fair, basically true.

Appearance: Charming, fashionable, hime cut. Haru tends to be very direct, except when she's messing with someone or keeping a secret. She's copied her father's habit of wearing a lab coat in the workshop to make her work feel professional, even if she's just stopping by on the way to a party.

Personality: Outgoing, clever, playful. Haru is brilliant but lazy; she tends to flit between her workshop, her pool, and various events around Marukyu. She's friendly but keeps her true feelings hidden, except with people she trusts. She thought Canopus shouldn't work for the Cartel and secretly blames herself for not trying harder to stop him.

Goal: Investigate her father's death; improve his work.

THE WAKENERS

Plot hook

The PCs aren't the only ones investigating the Dreamers. The Wakeners are a loose community the PCs can find if they go looking for allies (or, if they try to form a community of investigators, these people turn up.) Each one has something they can offer the PCs. Longer character writeups can be found on p. 380, and you are free to connect them to other characters if needed (like Zigamorph (p. 286)).

CHARACTERS

Nene Aramaki: A reclusive hacker who spends most of her time in her apartment. If the PCs don't form an investigative group, she does. Nene focuses on finding people who know about the Dreamers, learning what they know, and connecting suitable people with the group.

Eventually Nene will find a lead on Yan-c.bin (p. 306), who pre-emptively hacks her and tries to out her to the Cartel. If the PCs protect Nene, she can help them take on Yan later.

Manaia Mita: A Māori radio DJ and a big UFO conspiracy guy. Manaia once saw Darryl Rickard (p. 368) and his team fight a Dreamer, but they let him go because they figured nobody would believe him (he thinks they're aliens.)

Manaia is willing to tap his fans for information, if the PCs have questions that aren't likely to get him in trouble. He can also use his radio show to help spread the word.

Lulu Sarasti: A robotics student at GPol (p. 158). Lulu once picked up a piece of Dreamer tech while working late in the Josef Diego Building; Cartel agents beat her and stole it back on her way home.

Lulu is a student of **Kova Levy** (p. 380). Not only is she unknowingly close to the Dreamer project, she's one of the students Levy is considering recruiting. It'd be dangerous, but she's up for being a mole.

Rigel Zegers: An urban explorer who knows Lulu through irc.slashnet.orb #ZVCR, a chat room for fans of a science-oriented webcomic. When he's not working for Tofu Cannon, he tries to find hidden or forgotten places in the city.

Rigel is roped into the group by Lulu and immediately focuses on trying to find the forgotten corners of the station the Dreamers are hiding in (and the Cartel are using). The PCs will probably know he's found a lead when he gets in trouble...



NENE ARAMAKI, SHUT-IN HACKER

Nene is a recluse who only leaves her apartment for midnight trips to 24-hour Burger Kongs. She accidentally found a Dreamer facility while joyriding drones through the station basement, and she's looking for more info out of fear. She doesn't like being tracked, so is hard to find unless she wants you to.

Appearance: Small, quiet, tired. Nene looks (and usually smells) like someone who sits in front of a screen all day. Online, she uses moth-themed avatars and the username docentMothra.

Personality: Shut-in, straightforward, weird. Nene has a phobia of being picked up by surveillance software and can only manage short nighttime walks with face coverings on. Despite that, she's driven to do good and improve herself. Nene is cagey about her upbringing (and if that's her real name.) She has a pet corgi who she's willing to push herself outside for.

Goal: Help others deal with the Dreamers.

RESEARCH ANNEX ALPHA

Scenario

PCs who are interested in raiding Cartel facilities for information will go after Tetsuo eventually. Tetsuo's primary Dreamer facility, **Research Annex Alpha**, is located beneath their headquarters in the **Shima district** (p. 184).

If the PCs need help, you can introduce them to **Edwin Aarden**, an ex-Tetsuo employee who works for Haru (p. 372). Edwin knows Tetsuo's HQ like the back of his hand and can consult with anyone thinking of going in there.

THE ANNEX

The basements beneath the Complex are packed with computing labs; Annex Alpha is simply a section that's been sealed off from the rest. It's accessible through a private elevator, or by getting past multiple sets of keycard-locked doors in the basement (all of these are Network Level 5).

Down here is where the Dreamers were developed in massive computer terminals that dwarf the specialized computers used to create new AGIs. In the nearby rooms are regular computer labs, manager offices, and a meeting room that occasionally hosts the Committee.

Since the Dreamers escaped, half the place has been left inactive. The active labs are being used by **Kova Levy** (p. 380) and his team in an effort to find a way to control (or at least track) the Dreamers. Kova tends to stay late working on the problem; he's not the Cartel's puppet, so how he reacts if he finds the PCs depends on what they do. If you need more scientists, see p. 381.

Darryl Rickard (p. 368) keeps some of his men posted around here at all times, in case a Dreamer tries to break in. However, the guards were also scaled back when rooms were left inactive.

KUROMU

Kuromu's office is on the upper levels of Tetsuo's HQ (and could make a good target on its own), but he has a secondary office down here to oversee the Dreamer project.

Annex Alpha's network is controlled from there, and it starts at Network Level 8. Aside from Dreamer tech, the PCs can pull lists of project employees, other sites, and anything else the GM wants the PCs to know.

Kuromu is rarely in these days. When he checks on Kova, he brings a whole team of private security in case of a Dreamer attack. He and his team will also come running if an alarm sounds.



EDWIN AARDEN, CYBORG MECHANIC

Edwin is an engineer and a full-body cyborg who was given the procedure by Tetsuo in exchange for not suing them over an industrial accident. These days he works for **Haru Hiryu** (p. 372). He used to live in a country that was hit hard by the Impact, so he has a lot of experience with odd jobs and militia work.

Appearance: Buff, warm, stoic. Edwin specifically requested great hair and a rocking bod on his cybernetic form and shows off some of the seams because he likes how they look. He's older than he looks, which becomes obvious when he starts talking. He calls guys "son" a lot.

Personality: Stern, straightforward, warm-hearted. Edwin comes off as steely most of the time but can get deeply passionate about his friends and hobbies. He enjoys reading and taking things apart to see how they tick. If something pisses him off (like Tetsuo) he isn't shy about announcing it.

Goal: Find out what the deal is with the Dreamers.

SITE 135

Scenario setup

Deep in the Adams ward basement lies **Site 135**, a forgotten corporate facility. Site 135 was a Landvættir base during station construction; eventually they mothballed the place, then sold it to Omnidyne, who turned it into a secret Dreamer facility. It's the birthplace of **27X**.

When the Dreamers escaped, Omnidyne decommissioned it again. Unknown to the Cartel, the Dreamers have been using it in their absence. It's the birthplace of the **Infovore**.

The PCs can infiltrate Site 135 if they learn of it. If they need help with that, they can be approached by **Corey Wheeler**, a station worker who does maintenance in the basement. He's spotted Dreamers in the area, and he's looking for help investigating Site 135. The PCs can also be tipped off by **Astraea** (p. 376), **Edwin** (p. 374), or **Nene** (p. 372).

Site 135 is a large, two-level robotics facility. It's accessible by electronically-locked doors at each end, large enough for two station worker carts to pass side-by-side. It contains an industrial area—built for repairing construction equipment, repurposed for Dreamers—a small Landvættir-era supply depot, and some offices on the side.

The robotics facility was repurposed by the Dreamers, who have made its equipment look strange and unsettling. Half-assembled skeletons of 27X prototypes hang on the assembly line. PCs who have encountered the Infovore can find its parts too.

Some of the office computers are terminals fixed to the wall, so they're still there. The Site's network is Level 6 and starts out Indifferent; it contains evidence of Omnidyne's role in the Dreamer project and some Dreamer schematics. The security terminal shows only fragmented recordings of 27X hacking the doors open, Kitbashes swarming the area, and the Infovore leaving.

Once the PCs have gathered this information, four of the 27X skeletons activate. These are actually half-finished experiments by 27X, and they will try to abduct intruders for the Infovore. Use 27X's stats on p. 308, but remove Immensely Tough, cut Level to 2, and drop Health to 6. They take -1 to all rolls at 3 Health instead of 7. The actual 27X may show up if the PCs stick around.



COREY WHEELER, STATION WORKER

Corey's job is to patrol the Adams ward basement in his cart, performing maintenance checks and making repairs. He likes it because he gets time to think. Corey's a laidback guy who just wants to do his job, but he's seen the Dreamers and they're starting to creep him out.

Appearance: Big smiles, jumpsuits, handsome. Corey's a big guy, but he's fast and tough when he needs to be. He routinely forgets he leaves his high-tech station worker goggles on after work. He is very proud of his mullet.

Personality: Content, easygoing, charming. Corey has a PhD in Engineering, so he's entrusted with some of Adams' complex systems—a task he's proud to take seriously. He's a naturally friendly guy, and it shines through even when he's trying to act serious. He's into shonen anime and thinking about it inspires him to help people.

Goal: Figure out the Dreamers; protect the basement.

THE WHISTLEBLOWER

Scenario setup

The Dreamer project isn't just the Committee: they're supported by a cross-corporate group of engineers, programmers, and other workers. The project has been kept as small as possible to reduce the chance of a leak. So far, it's technically worked—the project isn't in jeopardy because of a project worker. Yet.

Enter Astraea. She's an android Ogremoch scientist who worked on the Dreamers because she was told the tech could help androids. She held on to that belief even as the project took a darker turn. Then she decided to upgrade her body and present as female—and her bosses and coworkers started treating her like a coffee girl they could ogle. That was the last straw.

Astraea has soured on the corporate world and wants to expose the project. She has all kinds of internal communications, plus hours of footage recorded by her body of Committee members overheard discussing crimes. If it's released, it will be devastating.

BREAKOUT

The PCs can run into Astraea while investigating (e.g. bumping into her while she's visiting Annex Alpha), be contacted by her through encrypted/indirect means, or be put in touch through Cascade (p. 377), Nene (p. 373), or Haru (p. 372). She'll help them out if they can free her from her current circumstances.

Most of Astraea's work takes place in **Ogremoch 1029**, a Dreamer facility on the outer hull, and she lives in an Ogremoch work contract apartment building. Both are under surveillance. She's escorted to and from work by Ogremoch guards, and suspects they surveil her off work too (she's right.)

Ogremoch 1029 is a small robotics facility connected to a corporate tram running to the **Hammarskjöld** transit station (p. 160). The tram takes a few other Ogremoch stops as well; you need to scan an Ogremoch ID card to enter and exit. If the PCs want a subtler way in, they can try space—most outer hull facilities have emergency airlocks, and nobody expects visitors to use them.

Once the PCs steal Astraea, they'll have to hide her. When she's confirmed MIA, Kuromu will send **Darryl Rickard** (p. 368), who will probably "accidentally" shoot her. If he knows Astraea intends to blow the project, he will get mad and send **Tiger Shark** (p. 368) to kill her and anybody helping her.



ASTRAEA REDUX, PROJECT DEFECTOR

Astraea became a scientist because she wants to help androids. Until recently she was very much a centrist capitalist type, thanks to years of being told by human teachers and bosses that she should be thankful to the corporations that created her. She's still working out where to go from here, but she knows something has to change.

Appearance: Stylish, fancy, cutting-edge. Astraea's old body was a clunky, genderless Orbiform; her new one is a very fancy custom Lilim. Cool hair and nice clothes are new to her, and she's excited to try them out.

Personality: Positive, radicalized, sassy. Astraea's worldview has been shattered, but she's already rebuilding herself into something stronger. Her lively personality and keen mind survived the process intact, if not better.

Goal: Get revenge on her bosses; organize her thoughts.

SPREADING THE WORD

Exposing the Dreamer project is only the first step to shutting it down. The next is getting it to matter.

At first, the Cartel will use their media influence to bury the story. If it spreads anyway, they'll spread lies and misinformation to confuse the issue and hopefully drown out dissenting views. Finally, they'll spin it: Cartel-backed media will call the Dreamers a scientific breakthrough and talk up the benefits it could have on other fields, hoping to manufacture consent for the project.

The Cartel has a lot of politicians and media outlets in their pocket. If the PCs simply release the evidence and wait, the Cartel will get a slap on the wrist and go right back to working on the ultimate unpaid labor force.

To get the project shut down, they need to create so much trouble the Cartel will just cut their losses. The PCs should have to do at least three of these:

1	**Organizing.** If public backlash gets strong enough, the project will be shut down and banned. PCs who work with unions or android movements will find very willing allies.
2	**Media Coverage.** With a little work, PCs may be able to get their story published. (If you need a journalist ally for the PCs, we've provided **Cascade Park**.)
3	**Exposing Crimes.** The Dreamer Committee has committed crimes. Exposing them—especially serious crimes like **Oskar's murder** (p. 367)—will force people to hold the Committee accountable.
4	**Helping NPCs.** If the PCs find the truth for Haru (p. 372), get Astraea out alive (p. 376), or assist the Wakeners (p. 373), they'll give their all to return the favor.
5	**Taking Down Kuromu.** As Kuromu has essentially taken over the Committee, taking him down will throw them into chaos. If they go after him and **he finds out**, he'll try to kill them.
6	**Violence.** Peaceful protest works best when the alternative to listening to you is watching your house burn down. If the project's member corporations suffer enough damage (financial or... otherwise), they may cut their losses.
7	**Creative Solutions.** If the PCs come up with some other cool ways to hurt the Cartel, let them!



CASCADE PARK, TECH JOURNALIST

Cascade is a tech journalist whose work has appeared in both traditional newsblogs and well-known tech magazines like Plugged and Mondo. She stays ahead in the game through natural charisma, a love of tech, and a knack for finding people whose stories are going untold.

Appearance: Tall, persuasive, wearable tech. Cas is an Afro-Asian woman with cybernetic eyes; she likes wearing things with gilded edges to match her irises. She usually code-switches to sound more professional when talking to tech people.

Personality: Clever, passionate, charming. Cascade believes that tech can solve any problem, but only when it's untangled from profit-driven corporations. She's invested in AI rights lately but dislikes the Singularists, who have harassed her in the past. She's friends with **Junior** (p. 329); they occasionally pester each other for help.

Goal: Uncover stories on the cutting-edge of tech.

GRAND CROSS FINALE

Late in the year, the Dreamers will finally enact their plan. All remaining Dreamers—and possibly some new ones—will converge on a single point at the back of the station, where they're constructing an enormous broadcast antenna on the outer hull.

The antenna has gone unnoticed for a while now. It's on the end cap, behind the mirrors, and the maintenance drones that pass by somehow don't see it. As it nears completion, however, the Dreamers start to gather around it—and people start to notice.

PREP

The GM decides how to introduce this event. The PCs can find out by tracking the Dreamers, spying on Cartel communications, getting tipped off by an ally, or even by the tower's existence being revealed on the news.

If you want to give eight days of Prep, the PCs could work out from the Dreamers' movements that it'll take that long for them to gather. You can also cut short their prep time to make things tense, or—just for this special occasion—let them accomplish eight days of Prep in eight hours, and have them describe how they rush to get there in time.

THE ANTENNA

The broadcast antenna is a twisted spire jutting out of a multi-level building on the outer hull—an unused backup maintenance facility for the station's solar panels. The facility is accessible through tunnels in the end cap, or by spacewalking from the nearest port. The air inside is breathable. Like all outer hull facilities, gravity is such that the station is "above" them and the antenna below.

The Dreamers have turned the inside of the facility into what looks suspiciously like a high-energy particle accelerator. Clever PCs who get in there can grasp the basics: it generates high-energy particles which it uses to create a powerful broadcast signal. If they roll really well, they'll guess it's designed to transmit a neutrino beam.

The facility is difficult to damage with conventional weapons, but sufficient damage may break it down or force the Dreamers to send a weaker signal.

THE DREAMERS

Every Dreamer that is able to comes here eventually. First the Kitbashes swarm over the place, piecing it together and sometimes even weaving their own bodies into its construction. Then Leapers nest around the accelerator. Then other Dreamers nest nearby.

The Dreamers will do their best to protect the facility, but unless they're Overthree, they're careful not to use lethal force unless intruders use it first. Then the Cartel shows up, and all bets are off.

THE CARTEL

The Cartel isn't sure what the Dreamers are up to, and they don't care. At this point, they've completely abandoned all nuance: their plan is to slaughter the Dreamers, take out all witnesses, and capture any remaining Dreamer tech for themselves. (This may make them the ultimate antagonist of the finale.)

The Cartel rustles up at least two teams of Goliath agents and throws them into the facility. If the PCs have fought **Darryl Rickard** and his squad, **Clayton Crux**, or **Tiger Shark** (all p. 368-369) before, and they can make a return here, they do. It is very possible that they will die here. If the PCs don't interfere, the Cartel suffers heavy losses but subdues the Dreamers.

ACTIVATION

When you reach a suitably dramatic moment, tell the PCs they have ten rounds before the antenna activates. The facility begins to hum as the accelerator draws in massive power.

After ten rounds, the antenna transmits a signal in one massive pulse. Any remaining Dreamers freeze, then collapse as their internal electronics fry.

As they fall, the antenna begins to come apart and the facility shakes. The PCs now have five minutes to leave. When time runs out, most of the Dreamers' tech turns into dust as though disassembled by nanobots, then the pieces are vented into space.

Analysis of the signal suggests it was beamed to the outer edge of the solar system, perhaps further. The destination is unknown.

EPILOGUE

Any Dreamers who made it to the end of *Grand Cross Finale* are gone now. Most of their internals are fried; however, the remains are still scientifically valuable to whoever ends up with them.

Dreamers captured by the Cartel are disassembled for research or deactivated and filed away in a secure warehouse somewhere, depending on what feels right. If Law Zero (p. 253) captured one, they keep it for study. Any that end up in the hands of law enforcement are disassembled for research. Many of the Dreamers' modifications remain a mystery, but who knows what advances can be made with the rest?

THE PROJECT

If the PCs did at least three of the things under *Spreading the Word* (p. 377), enough Crossers get mad about the project that both parties pledge to do something about it (if only because it's an election year.)

Faced with this opposition—combined with the intractability of the Dreamers—the Cartel concludes that continuing the project would be too expensive and puts it on ice for now.

If the PCs did at least six things, both parties make specific, actionable promises to stop anything like it from happening again, and every corporation involved in the project takes a hit in stock price. The project is shut down for good, and the Cartel's position in Grand Cross is weakened.

THE COMMITTEE

If the Dream Committee fails, they have to answer to the Cartel.

Kuromu finally learns the flaw with his philosophy: you can do what you want *except* fuck with rich people's money. Tetsuo's CEO withdraws his support of Kuromu to save their stock price, and the rest of the Committee happily scapegoat him for the project's problems. If the PCs exposed his crimes, Kuromu goes to jail. If not, he is fired.

Wayde (p. 366), Josef's "replacement," becomes the fall guy for anything Kuromu doesn't get blamed for. **Josef**, who washed his hands of the project early, suffers no consequences. Derek posts about how he was just trying to help the world and gets a lot of fawning forgiveness from tech outlets. The other Committee members simply move on to other projects, if possible.

OTHER CHARACTERS

If **Darryl** (p. 368) survives and his serious crimes are exposed, he allows himself to be arrested to spare his team. Otherwise, he is reassigned to a desk job. If **Clayton** was involved, he is either arrested or fired (and gets a better paying job in private security.)

If **Haru** (p. 372) gets her closure, she rewards the PCs. The details are up to the GM, but at minimum she gives them a bunch of Cash or enough support to reduce their Burdens by 1. They are welcome to use her pool any time.

If the PCs help **Astraea** (p. 376), she helps take the project down. Afterward, she takes a break to consider her next move. If the PCs are interested, they can probably nudge her toward a good cause.

The **Wakeners** (p. 373) cannot afford rewards, but if the PCs helped them, they've made friends for life. If a PC has a problem that could be solved with hacking, **Nene** solves it. Afterward, they simply get back to their own lives—though with the knowledge that together, they did something great.

What happens to **Tiger Shark** (p. 368) depends on how the PCs handle him. However, if he was defeated, avoided death or jail, and the PCs did at least six of the things under *Spreading the Word*, he at least decides to leave and reflect on his personal philosophy. He might even visit a PC to call out some parting words, Gaff-at-the-end-of-*Blade Runner*-style: "They'll still win in the end, you know. But I'd like to see you prove me wrong!"

OTHER CHARACTERS

NPCs tied directly to this campaign arc.

KOVA LEVY, AI RESEARCHER

One of the Cartel's Dreamer experts. Kova got involved in the Dreamer project hoping it would advance his actual passion, the emerging field of mind dubbing. Tetsuo have him working on a way to reassert control over the Dreamers, leaving him having wasted a lot of late nights on the problem.

Appearance: Heavy, round face, blonde beard. Kova has a favorite comfy outfit: round glasses, simple blue shirts, and cargo shorts. He tends to move as though he's in a hurry even when he's not, and he's just clumsy enough that sometimes this causes him to drop stuff.

Personality: Determined, frustrated, fantastic memory. Kova is an AI expert, but the field he's really devoted to is mind dubbing. He keeps hitting a wall in his latest work, but he's sure he'll get there eventually. He isn't devoted to the Cartel—he doesn't approve of their actions but has swallowed doubts so far for the sake of his work.

Goal: Crack the Dreamer problem; advance the science of dubbing.

MANAIA MITA, RADIO DJ

A radio DJ who does the late-night shift at MONDO, an alternative music station. Manaia is a big UFO guy who wins over fans with his earnest, friendly attitude and apparent immunity to trolling. Lately he's been working with some online friends to expose the Dreamers.

Appearance: Tall, strong, alien shirts. Manaia is a Māori guy in loose casual clothing; he got stronger and leaner after moving to Grand Cross, so his favorite shirts are a little baggy. His mouth and jaw are tattooed.

Personality: Friendly, curious, proactive. Manaia's beliefs come from a love of science and a desire to question everything. He came to Grand Cross because he felt his research would make more progress up here, but he misses the land and plans to return one day. He gets really mad about other conspiracy theories, which he dismisses as racist anti-science bullshit that makes Ufologists look bad.

Goal: Uncover and help expose the Dreamer conspiracy; meet an alien.

LULU SARASTI, AMATEUR ROBOTICIST

A GPol student with a passion for robotics and urban exploration. Lulu's classmates know her as the purple-haired dork with no time management skills, and it's honestly a fair assessment. Lulu once got beaten by Cartel agents for accidentally stumbling across the Dreamers, so now she wants to know more to spite them.

Appearance: Bright, energetic, motor mouth. Lulu usually wears her favorite big yellow and blue jacket and some cool high-tech goggles from campus. She gets extremely passionate about her interests, runs a robotics vlog, and cannot sit normally.

Personality: Passionate, quick, stubborn. Lulu is usually juggling several things at once, but still makes time to explore the station and investigate Dreamers. Her dream is to build and live in a space station in the outer system. She was a Singularist but abandoned the movement after meeting Singularists in person.

Goal: Learn more about the Dreamers; get some study in.

RIGEL ZEGERS, URBAN EXPLORER

An Appleton U architecture student from Luna, who bonds with **Lulu** over their shared interests in urbex and science jokes. Since she roped him into her Dreamer investigations, he's helped by exploring the basements and trying to be the voice of caution.

Appearance: Laidback, blonde, athletic. Rigel does not own a single piece of clothing that isn't either extremely 90s, damaged from mucking around in the basements, or both. People who know him for long enough will inevitably get a personalized wave, high-five, or fist-bump.

Personality: Chill, cautious, geeky. Rigel is big on staying active and healthy in body and mind: he maintains a good work–life balance and tries to consider every angle before making a big decision. (Sometimes, without someone like Lulu to push him, he takes too long to make a decision.) He likes exploring basements, brutalism, and comic book movies.

Goal: Help Lulu investigate the Dreamers, carefully.

AMADOR TIAGO-PAULO CARDOSO NEVES, PROPHET OF THE SHELL GOD

A regular feature of districts with relaxed loitering policies, Amador (or "Brother Paulo") is an augmented street preacher who proselytizes openly, referring to vague "spirits of the station" and an all-powerful god who "filters negative forces and releases purity." Unhoused by all appearances, locals see him as a harmless fixture, if a bit on the odd side.

In truth, Brother Paulo leads one of the fastest growing cults in Grand Cross. Hiding behind religious freedom laws, he converts his followers through brainwashing and community reinforcement, then ultimately cybernetic implants that he claims will connect "his children" to the manifestation of a deep space entity he calls "the shell god": a massive ethereal oyster (or scallop—the visions vary) that "filters" negative karma[15].

There is no space oyster. No shell god. But there is a Dreamer with whom Brother Paulo regularly communes, leaving offerings in dark alleys and pipelining prayers through the dark web. Sometimes the Dreamer leaves him "implants" of inscrutable purpose, which he dutifully inserts into his fellow cultists, or takes on himself. Not all survive the implantation, and many reject the strange things, but Brother Paulo is undeterred. To his mind, they were simply filtered by the shell god and made into the purest starlight. All according to his divine plan.

Appearance: Uncut beard, tonsure haircut, visible implants[16]. Brother Paulo is grungy and middle-aged. His old-style monetary habit blends symbols of many world religions to the point of sheer confusion and obfuscation. He carries an oyster-shucking knife and knows how to use it.

Personality: Predatory, charismatic, a natural showman. Relentless, stoic, and uncompromising. Prone to fits of self-justified violence and mood swings. Denounces oyster-eaters as "heretical," but oddly fine with eating clams and mussels. Brother Paulo has been abducted by Infovore in the past—possibly multiple times—and it's messed with his head.

Goals: To further the cause of the Dreamer he's mistaken for a god. He's not even sure what that means; he doesn't need to know.

SIX DREAMER RESEARCHERS

Science is a complex beast. The Cartel wants to keep everything on a need-to-know basis, but a project of this scale needs a lot of people to know things. Here are some more people involved in the Dreamer project that you can toss in if needed.

1. **Jan Rossum is an old roboticist who did a lot of the early Dreamer work. He retired before the Dreamers escaped, and outside the Cartel's influence he's starting to regret his work.**
2. **Prosper Amadiro was recruited for his rare combination of android expertise and hardline anti-android stance. He once taunted Overthree while it was in captivity; after it escaped, it found him and lasered his head off. The Cartel moved his body to Luna and faked an accident to cover that up.**
3. **Ada Burns-Caulfield is an AI expert and linguist, brought on to help with the Dreamer control system. She is fascinated with how the Dreamers' minds work and is developing a theory that they've developed their own language which overrides Cartel orders when used.**
4. **Simon Polkett is a mean-spirited scientist, one of those guys who gets kept around because "he's an asshole, but dammit, he's so good at his job." So far, three scientists who were at least as good have quit to get away from him.**
5. **Hunter Bogdanović is an astronomer and mathematician who helped plan how the Dreamers would prepare planets for human settlement. He usually works remotely due to chronic illness (he likes to joke that his Balkan genes are causing his body to rebel), so the Cartel has kept him on retainer but out of the loop.**
6. **Lerna Danforth is an ex-military scientist who was almost killed attempting to stop an early Dreamer escape attempt. She was heavily rebuilt as a cyborg, and asked for legally-grey combat augments in case it happened again.**

15 Brother Paulo is the first and only man to be banned from every seafood shop in the city.

16 Brother Paulo has whatever augments the narrative calls for at this very moment.

D66 Crossers
Various citizens of Grand Cross.

1	1	**Bamidele Afolayan:** Earth academic on an orbital speaking tour.
1	2	**Marigold Baarsma:** VTuber by night, solar panel technician by day.
1	3	**Krysztof Budny:** Says "This isn't your grandma's [noun]!" when he likes something.
1	4	**Jakov Tosto:** Will just not stop talking about Hegel.
1	5	**Heinrich Babič:** Proud grandpa, former activist, used to beat the shit out of fascists.
1	6	**Helen:** A beloved underground tastemaker who seems to know everybody.
2	1	**Bo-Bae Oh:** Full-body cyborg dating an android she met at a CCG tournament.
2	2	**Mbissine Diaw:** Popular community garden vlogger.
2	3	**Seong-ja "Queen** Of Chaos" Seo: Cyborg VRFPS pro gamer, living legend.
2	4	**Kenzo Tanaka:** Proud Builder; took up painting post-retirement.
2	5	**Angel Miguel Soler:** Emergency worker, cybernetics expert, flat Earth conspiracy theorist.
2	6	**Tragedeigh Parkes:** Double Crosser; just got a job in the Agriculture Ring.
3	1	**Unity Jann:** Has cyber-eyes, parents convinced her cyberneurosis is real, worries a lot.
3	2	**Archana Patil:** Quality assurance compliance officer at Tetsuo; master of paperwork.
3	3	**Zeinab Hashemi:** Has an online business knitting covers for external augments.
3	4	**Direito Esquerdo:** Has an identical twin named Dave.
3	5	**Mei Lin:** GPol student; watches martial arts films instead of studying, but is hugely talented.
3	6	**Haruhi Mochizuki:** Up-and-coming actor; just got her first major role in a sci-fi film.
4	1	**Zvjezdana Tomic:** Suing Hergatz Liao after defective cyber-heart almost killed her.
4	2	**Lan Nguyen:** Deaf activist; so fucking tired of being asked "have you tried augmenting?"
4	3	**Vivian Boateng:** Recently cyberized; still getting used to her cyber-hand.
4	4	**Abyssinia Coelacanth:** Got to space through connections in the UK House of Lords.
4	5	**Koa Sanada:** Voice actress, cosplayer, top-tier Astral Burst player.
4	6	**Kasey Padilla:** Has a business selling "verified" door crests and other crafts to influencers.
5	1	**Eve Jensen:** Former Builder; augmented after spending too much time in microgravity.
5	2	**Steve Fish:** Keeps trying to make " *does mannerism* " a meme (don't ask).
5	3	**Yen Tran:** Calls things she likes "extreme!"; owns too many Internet of Things gadgets.
5	4	**Mohamed "Megaloldon" Samara:** Makes HeoCities pages on commission; is amazing at it.
5	5	**Young-soo Lee:** Got cosmetic augments with LED strips to stand out more.
5	6	**Siddharth Chaudhari:** Small business owner struggling to deal with a hacker.
6	1	**Temitope Idowu:** Having a messy affair with an android coworker.
6	2	**Antares Battle:** Ex-Hoshi Group member; left to get married and have a family.
6	3	**Orcus Chau:** Double Crosser; skateboard tricks like you wouldn't believe.
6	4	**Yahya Attar:** Office drone; secretly the famous anime fansubber "LMJ Wanter."
6	5	**Genoveva Coronado:** Cyborg ex-boxer; actress in a Grand Cross telenovela.
6	6	**Bobby Tables:** Double Crosser; teachers hate him.

D66 Androids

Various androids. (Androids are still figuring out their culture, so they don't have "traditional" names.)

1	1	**U-81:** A glitch in the AGI compiler gave him face blindness and an interest in programming.
1	2	**Andrew Link:** Labor-model construction android turned private investigator.
1	3	**Chiptina:** Tabletop RPG developer; has a dice tower built into her arm.
1	4	**Nordom Quad:** Works at an android rights nonprofit; as intelligent as he is weird.
1	5	**JC-0:** Trained paleoartist and graphic designer for the GOTM (p. 156), jailbroken LMJ Augvert.
1	6	**Tsune 39:** Singer; chassis got redesigned with a detachable head for a music video.
2	1	**Mayeso:** Android artist; makes covers for sci-fi and fantasy novels.
2	2	**0xDEADBEEF:** Extremely weird indie game developer; quit RVRE in disgust two years ago.
2	3	**Mbali:** Station worker; part of the team that makes adjustments to the station's position.
2	4	**Hexspeak:** Double Crosser, programmer, android-goth-witch fashion pioneer.
2	5	**Baz Gort:** Admin for the LEETNet tech forum and IT guy at an android nonprofit.
2	6	**Roy Beta:** Works at an android nonprofit; networks with others via an IRC chat room.
3	1	**One-18782:** Crochety old Builder; part of a group opposing the Builder Museum (p. 152).
3	2	**OT-3:** Double Crosser, webcomic artist, dreams of a job at a major animation company.
3	3	**Peter Byte:** Labor-model fashion model; looks incredible in a nice suit.
3	4	**AR-V:** Orbiform activist; resents being told to "upgrade" into a more human-like model.
3	5	**Lolly:** Hosting a refugee friend in her apartment since it has human facilities she doesn't use.
3	6	**Musubi A.**I.: VTuber, saving up to get a modern body; viewers assume she's human.
4	1	**QT:** Video game streamer big with androids; sponsors offer less money than human peers.
4	2	**Neon Johnny:** Stand-up comedian working on Grand Cross's first all-android sitcom.
4	3	**Wayfarer:** Double Crosser; wants to get a job as an outer solar system probe.
4	4	**DDR Jones:** It's a nickname referring to their passion for rhythm arcade games.
4	5	**Danf00:** Former Antarctic exploration unit, current dock worker, spacewalks for fun.
4	6	**Gregabyte:** Part of a horror movie film crew; learning to be a director.
5	1	**K6-8D:** Musician who composes brain-melting tunes for Space Banshee (p. 244).
5	2	**Emma-0:** Labor-model; tells people to "talk to the hand" because she has a third one.
5	3	**Beepjamin:** Electrician and Neo Miami regular who dresses like a cowboy.
5	4	**Cachetopher:** Professional CCG player; dating a full-body cyborg he met at a tournament.
5	5	**Foobarclay:** Maintenance specialist; custom body makes him resemble Bigfoot in a coat.
5	6	**Digitimothy:** Marukyu Ward Council member working their way up in the Technos.
6	1	**Gaige:** Excitable GPol student studying under Tachiko Masamune (p. 123).
6	2	**Alicia Hadaly:** Adams-model "sci-fi nerd" at the Book Club Cafe (p. 165).
6	3	**Maxamed:** Has a job telling kids not to do drugs; puts emoticons on his face-screen.
6	4	**15 Nguyen:** Works at a shopping mall, hangs out in a different one; has strawberry chassis.
6	5	**Nexus-6:** Bastard IT guy at Tetsuo; uses expertise against people who are rude to androids.
6	6	**Sei-50:** Rapping idol; rhymes allegedly so hot she had to add heat fins.

D66 Hackers and Handles
Various citizens of Grand Cross.

1	1	**Tsubaki²:** Dishevelled otaku; daughter of a famous erotic artist.
1	2	**Rasterbator:** Internet troll who gets off on hurting people; closet transgender; very depressed.
1	3	**CazCade Failure:** Casual drug user, easily goaded by questioning his elite skills
1	4	**Gu-Sung:** Former habitat engineer who inside knowledge on the Grand Cross power grid.
1	5	**Doctor Synapse:** High-strung; obsessed with own intelligence; very anti-android.
1	6	**Seppun Baka:** Anime fan obsessed with Japan; whiter than a game convention panel.
2	1	**Aoife:** Former heiress who erased her past identity.
2	2	**Hello Helpdesk:** Claims a corner table at their local coffee joint; chugs coffee all day.
2	3	**Pac Man Fever:** Lives in a forgotten server room in the station basements.
2	4	**ROMantic:** Unsuccessful streamer; had 15 minutes of fame in high school and still isn't over it.
2	5	**Jargon Wagg:** Mostly annoys corporations by sneaking puns into their websites.
2	6	**Chillthulhu:** Day job at the library; sells hacking tools via dead-drops elsewhere.
3	1	**Wobbly William:** Script kiddie; takes payment in MMO items.
3	2	**Vanilla Gorilla:** Two French hacktivists with matching beards; really into VR art.
3	3	**Casablitter:** Ogremoch employee bored out of their mind at office job.
3	4	**Helvetica:** Plays bass in a rock band with her pals Exocet and Wingdings.
3	5	**Swingline:** Former office drone who stole from former company; loves destroying fax machines.
3	6	**OverdriveRoland:** Former pro gamer banned for aimbotting and casual racism.
4	1	**Neon Trotsky:** Former Singularist; doxxes New Barons; secretly works at a library.
4	2	**Mari Lagrange:** Has a side job teaching board games to kids at Meeple Mocha (p. 172).
4	3	**Nomenklatura:** Gray hat who designs fonts for a living.
4	4	**Robie Junior:** Buddhist android; sells "second chances" (fake IDs); collects old robot toys.
4	5	**Hackerman:** Runs a "tech museum" in the Chandrasekhar district; collects old cables.
4	6	**Tarpit Turing:** Lives in a basement apartment with secret base in the nearby station basements.
5	1	**Berzerkeley:** Expelled from UC Berkeley years ago and still gripes about it.
5	2	**Third Eye:** Hacks security cameras and people-watches.
5	3	**Zaibatsu Game:** Anarchist hacktivist obsessed with uncovering corruption within Tetsuo.
5	4	**Gobbledok:** Station's foremost expert on computer chips.
5	5	**Connie Turner:** Cool old lady; owns an Amiga; once hit a New Baron with her cane.
5	6	**NECromancer:** Collects and restores old computer hardware; occasional absence seizures.
6	1	**Onbekend:** Disaster refugee raising money for a home; regular at Early Access (p. 182).
6	2	**Unknown Skies:** Amateur skywatcher; sneaks SETI programs into appliances.
6	3	**AIDS Haver:** Irony-poisoned weirdo; loves examining hacks to discover how they work.
6	4	**Gender Tartakovsky:** Trans activist; secretly runs a popular comics forum.
6	5	**Hacklemore:** Uses refurbished second-hand hardware for the challenge.
6	6	**Sumimachine:** Android bartender; expert at demolishing Internet of Things devices.

D66 Corporate Types

Corporate executives and employees. Where they work and their position in the heirarchy are up to the GM.

1	1	**Noel Narvaez:** Slumlord; considering pressuring tenants into work contracts.
1	2	**Bai X:** Birth name was so associated with wealth, she sold it.
1	3	**Dieter Tranter:** Useless; coasts along by taking credit from his coworkers; usually drunk.
1	4	**Sung-Hoon Jung:** Cyber-arm includes Wi-Fi hotspot; in trouble with HR for "hot spot" puns.
1	5	**Misophonia Luck:** Incompetent; convinced he's a self-made genius but relies on his father.
1	6	**Bob Dugnutt:** Runs a comic publishing company; high-strung skeletons in his closet.
2	1	**Jeremie Zheng:** Sometimes goes on firing sprees, just because he can.
2	2	**Levi Florez-Summer:** Has a thing for cheating on his wife with strangers.
2	3	**Dylan Dillon:** Influencer with a startup but underpaid "executive assistant" does the actual work.
2	4	**Trees Padmore:** Souped-up full-body cyborg looking for good space companies to invest in.
2	5	**Victor Oster:** Describes himself as a "Paradigm Sensei"; absolutely insufferable.
2	6	**Jay Tokugawa:** Runs black market medical cybernetics business, but only as a side thing.
3	1	**Daley Maggs:** Spends thousands on PR stunts in hopes of pivoting into politics.
3	2	**Mercure Leroux:** Has a habit of blurting out breathtakingly sexist jokes at meetings.
3	3	**Fei Xian:** Currently getting revenge on a rival from another company by banging his wife.
3	4	**Simon Polk:** AI programmer; verbally abusive; dealing with a harassment lawsuit.
3	5	**Steeve Maverick:** Got rich off an Earth friend's program; moved to space to dodge lawsuit.
3	6	**Monika Yáñez:** Spends most of her time building up her Pulser following.
4	1	**Monica Nguyen:** Likes to flaunt her wealth in front of underpaid employees.
4	2	**Ivo Berger:** Void Dragon mole; didn't expect to be promoted this far and is starting to worry.
4	3	**Jay D'Cruz:** Great with people, but has virulent anti-android views drilled into him by past bosses.
4	4	**Koray Teke:** Landlord; posts covert photos of tenants to secret "Tenant Fails" group.
4	5	**Wayne Corrigan:** Abusive to employees; got "side-promoted" to a role without any.
4	6	**Grover Häusler:** Infamously responsible for the uninhabitable apartments in Virek district.
5	1	**Thanh Tran:** Tries to cultivate a "family man" image but obviously insincere.
5	2	**Michael Newby-McMahon:** Workaholic, has a collection of "funny" coffee mugs
5	3	**Nicodème Calvin:** Insists on referring to the rich as "people of wealth."
5	4	**Carlos Jefferson:** Cyber-eyes make everything blue; he believes this makes him smarter.
5	5	**Endri Dibra:** Obviously sliding into dementia; android assistant slowly taking over his job.
5	6	**Killian O'Caellaigh:** Private security heir; acts before thinking; Void Dragon friends.
6	1	**Radmilo Kovačić:** Cultivates "family man" image; keeps touching women's hair.
6	2	**George Beaumont:** Definitely dead, but Cartel is pretending he's alive to close a deal.
6	3	**Stewart Spencer-Martin:** Old white guy; heading his company's new Diversity Committee.
6	4	**Mani Ahmed:** Left Earth to get away from the rain; absolutely furious that it rains here.
6	5	**Nitride Wei:** Has several illegitimate kids he pays hush money; one is a pop star now.
6	6	**Bob Fenestre:** Tech magnate; began as a mere programmer at a telephone company.

D66 Cops
The brave officers of the Station Police Service.

1	1	**Natsumi Matsuda:** Ace scooter rider; idealist rookie; coworkers trying to get her fired.
1	2	**Clarence Chau:** Uses friendly face to get informants in criminal gangs and activist groups.
1	3	**Ralphie Govender:** End cap mountain rescue specialist; fiddles with drones for fun.
1	4	**Marcos Armstrong:** Goes undercover at protests and tries to steer them toward violence.
1	5	**Bard Nicholson:** MMO addict; harasses women on Pulser from his work computer.
1	6	**Jack Phoenix:** Once fell into the station basements and got lost for two days.
2	1	**Marlon Kett:** Likes to antagonize people until they snap so he can arrest them.
2	2	**Dalton Dillon:** Extremely focused on road safety after losing friends to a van accident.
2	3	**Zhan:** Android with built-in cameras; coworkers openly avoid working with him.
2	4	**Damo Wesrey:** Cyber-stalks an activist who criticised his department four years ago.
2	5	**Reiner De Witt:** Big Bruce Springsteen fan; tends to sympathise with rock fans.
2	6	**Calvin Bentley:** Informs on the police for Law Zero, who upgraded his cybernetics.
3	1	**Jean-Luc Fontaine:** Veteran police officer, mere days before retirement.
3	2	**Jane Song:** From a cop family, but regrets signing up and wants to be a painter instead.
3	3	**Max Power:** Once had to get cybernetic augments after an embarrassing library accident.
3	4	**Warren Burnett:** Covered in second-hand miltary tech despite working in Dog Squad.
3	5	**George Medal:** Will be transferring to a small private security corporation in a few weeks.
3	6	**Pete Maverick:** Once accidentally tased himself in the groin.
4	1	**Brian Stone:** Third-generation police family; always looking to show off pics of his kids.
4	2	**Drummer Short:** Has four tattoos; the swastika is the wrong way around on three of them.
4	3	**Glenn Guzman:** Used to work in a US school, got transferred for throwing kids around.
4	4	**Simon Storm:** Once ended up in a viral video after tripping down stairs while eating donuts.
4	5	**Ward Douglas:** Really good at making presentations; keeps looking for excuses to.
4	6	**Bruce Laser:** Once fell off a Segway and fractured his skull.
5	1	**Monty McIntosh:** Puts a hand on his gun to assert dominance when he interacts with others.
5	2	**Leeroy Gutermuth:** Has an online self-defense equipment business with a New Baron friend.
5	3	**Barney Heeler:** Fancies himself a martial arts master but mostly fights restrained people.
5	4	**Jake Bullet:** Once had the crap kicked out of him by a gang of street kids.
5	5	**Guy 000:** UK-made android, discriminates against "foreign" androids to fit in at work.
5	6	**Daniel Torregrosa:** Would love to take bribes but too nervous to solicit any.
6	1	**Dan Popovski:** Seems nice, passes info on a local woman to her New Barons ex-boyfriend.
6	2	**Cornell Chudd:** Deeply insecure; uses excessive force to feel like a big man.
6	3	**Chaz Heeler:** Patrols nightlife districts looking for drunk kids to fight.
6	4	**Felicia Warner:** Takes bribes from the Cartel and spends them on designer drugs.
6	5	**Dorek Jaskulski:** Takes phone calls, does comedy routines about them in the break room.
6	6	**Clive Pugh:** Police spokesman who constantly uses overly complex passive voice.

D66 Criminals The criminal element of Grand Cross station.		
1	1	**Horse Head:** Freelance muscle; uses construction-grade cyber-arm to hurt people.
1	2	**Ox Face:** Freelance muscle; intimidating but cheap cyber-leg can hinder him.
1	3	**Twisty Turner:** Drug-addled conspiracy theorist; exceptional lockpicker.
1	4	**Cassiopeia Valdez:** High-class corporate aristocrat; plans heists and frames others.
1	5	**Player One:** Runs a minor gang specializing in videogame crimes; B&E expert.
1	6	**The Honeyeater:** Elderly thief who became a Builder to lie low for a few years; not retired yet.
2	1	**Momo Kamoyama:** Daikatana auditor who often gets sent out to correct "accounting errors."
2	2	**Kari Hvermannsen:** Block Boy; oversees transport of their products; expert drone operator.
2	3	**Kyoji Hanashika:** Likes telling strange stories; Daikatana Gumi use him as a diverson.
2	4	**Olavi Pekkanen:** Finnbogamenn guard; skeptical about the long-term viability of the market.
2	5	**Suriya Aleksandrov:** GG Noire hacker recruited from the Singularists; open misogynist.
2	6	**Eddie Vanhanen:** Liivipojat member trying to find out who's attacking their mules.
3	1	**Tom Bogan:** Hotel Melbourne salesman; cybernetics keep him alive in enemy territory.
3	2	**Shazza Nguyen:** Police sergeant; secretly a mole for Hotel Melbourne.
3	3	**Honestee Joy-Smith:** Hotel manager; former Shackleton office drone; only loyal to King.
3	4	**Kray Darwin:** Hotel drug maker; proud of his work; thinking of going full-body cyborg.
3	5	**"Drongo" Cooper:** Hotel enforcer; big on augments; planning to become posthuman.
3	6	**Dimity Spools:** Runs the Hotel front company Yarrow & Spools and takes it seriously.
4	1	**Johnny Bean:** Ex-cop cyborg; Void Dragon poached him instead of private security.
4	2	**Jie Yeung:** Void Dragon number-cruncher; runs a small accounting business as a cover.
4	3	**Paolo San Pablos:** Hitman who fled Earth; Void Dragon have him on retainer.
4	4	**Tarou Yamada:** Former office drone who joins corporations to case them for Void Dragon.
4	5	**Galaxcia Palmer:** Exiled from Hotel Melbourne, joined the Void Dragon, holds a grudge.
4	6	**Ai Lim:** Lilim-android worker at a Void Dragon-run nightclub; many Syndicate friends.
5	1	**JJ7 Active Q** Delta: Law Zero enforcer; Catholic; Olivaw found him a priest to talk to.
5	2	**Day 23564:** Former Builder, current bouncer at a Law Zero club; likes fighting a bit too much.
5	3	**Malcan Theta:** Adams-model android; manipulative as hell; loyal to Olivaw and his vision.
5	4	**Wet Josh:** Laid-back nerd; maintains Law Zero's incredibly illegal AGI compiler.
5	5	**Xiuying Zhou:** Cyborg; works at a Law Zero-run front; sometimes runs errands for a bonus.
5	6	**Chetter:** Olivaw's extremely loyal personal assistant; expert getaway driver.
6	1	**Hilal Nejem:** Hoshi Group enforcer; archer; getting more augments to compensate for age.
6	2	**ZZ9:** Hoshi dealmaker android; interested in poaching members of the Block Boys (p. 254).
6	3	**Amane Adachi:** Remote worker for Builders United; Hoshi hacker in their free time.
6	4	**Guy Hofwegen:** Hoshi cyber-doctor; former union rep; treats L4 refugees out of sympathy.
6	5	**Takagiri:** Runs an illegal Hoshi gambling operation; lurks in a late-night café in his free time.
6	6	**Freddie Pluto:** Hoshi protection money collector; wanted on Earth for violent crimes.

2D6 Crossers, Jerks

Various citizens who happen to be jerks, in case you need an antagonist.

1-3	1	**Vlasi Orlov:** Anti-android weirdo who went viral after being beaten up by an android on the bus.
1-3	2	**Przemek Pokorny:** Listens to right-wing radio; angry and worried all the time.
1-3	3	**Milka Mlakar:** Corporate drone; hardcore capitalist; constantly overworked.
1-3	4	**Lana Vichaki:** Cixin Ward Council member; secret New Baron plant.
1-3	5	**Connie Landvik:** Landvættir legal representative stalling lawsuits from refugees.
1-3	6	**Quill Kerensky:** Runs an activist group like a personality cult.
4-6	1	**Matias Wakeman:** Destroyed his block's community garden because he didn't like the colors.
4-6	2	**Jiang Pan:** Doxxes and harasses members of Liberate Orbit.
4-6	3	**Nolan Catlow:** Leader of a small, violently anti-android New Baron offshoot.
4-6	4	**Vi Travert:** Self-described "human supremacist"; hackable augverts.
4-6	5	**Blanca Trabocchi:** Op-ed columnist who claims cyberneurosis is "caused by" violent games.
4-6	6	**Kabigail Thurlow:** Posts in TERF communities for hours a day; family cut ties with her.

2D6 Singularists

Members of the Singularist movement and Omega Point posters.

1-3	1	**Dae-han Jo:** Has a podcast about the Earth arcology trend and what it might mean for space.
1-3	2	**Kurt Skalicky:** Self-styled "modern philosopher"; mostly wants to bring back feudalism.
1-3	3	**Marty Sparks:** FERMI's webmaster; hopes androids and humans will become one people.
1-3	4	**Hans Swallow:** Straight-up fascist, but also losing a small fortune on cryptocurrency.
1-3	5	**Anthony Berkovich:** Big name in cyber-eye HUDs; publishes books about augments.
1-3	6	**Aster Claesson:** Constantly starting or thinking about arguments with people on Pulser.
4-6	1	**"Logical Beaver":** Omega Point poster and anti-feminist YourTuber inspired by Max Babylon.
4-6	2	**Placid Beck:** Runs GPol's Singularist Club; exploits the student union to fund pub crawls.
4-6	3	**"PregnantAsimov":** Omega Point admin; exploits forum rules to protect far-right posters.
4-6	4	**Abdul Mutawaki:** Close friend of Cyrus Berryman; big fan of "dangerous ideas."
4-6	5	**Jared Spitznogle:** Posts radical ways to reform society in ways that might get him laid.
4-6	6	**Tipton Weaver:** Invented an app for dudes to quiz geek women on pop culture.

2D6 L4 Survivors
People who survived the L4 Disaster and are still affected by their experiences.

1-3	1	**Paige Turner:** Huge book nerd; temp worker; staying in an android friend's apartment.
1-3	2	**Malick Diop:** Adopts a "you've got to laugh, right" approach to life; cops stole his ID papers.
1-3	3	**Saida Lee:** Tetsuo recruiter manipulated her survivor's guilt to get her on a work contract.
1-3	4	**Linda Oliveira:** Mother of two; former Landvættir worker; they want to exploit her for PR.
1-3	5	**Arthur Tailler:** Wealthy and totally fine; thinks poor refugees should have been put down.
1-3	6	**Liam Matić:** Can return to Earth any time but wants to help some refugee friends first.
4-6	1	**Astrid:** Android using a second-hand Lilim after her old frame broke; works at Early Access.
4-6	2	**Maria Menke:** Was heavily cyberized post-Disaster; procedures ate the rest of her money.
4-6	3	**Séraphine Durand:** Double Crosser online singer raising awareness of refugee issues.
4-6	4	**Jacob Pherigo:** Keeps getting thrown out of camps since joining the New Barons.
4-6	5	**Abel:** Android who was thrown from an evac ship to make room for a human; wants revenge.
4-6	6	**Gerd Holzmann:** Got a job offer from Hotel Melbourne; thinking about going for it.

2D6 Androids, Jerks
Various androids who happen to be jerks, in case you need an antagonist.

1-3	1	**Ionic Robo:** Pioneer in the field of pseudo-scientific "android medicine"; big Unity donor.
1-3	2	**Drone Matt:** Conservative "online comedian" with exactly one joke.
1-3	3	**Wager Pascale:** Former cop; jumped to private security because they get less oversight.
1-3	4	**Scrappy:** Runs a small android nonprofit; spends most donations on himself or advertising.
1-3	5	**Jackernel:** Trying to set up a more pro-android spinoff of the New Barons.
1-3	6	**Graz:** Government worker intentionally stalling help for L4 refugee humans out of spite.
4-6	1	**Harry Domin:** Middle manager at Omnidyne; secretly loves bossing humans around.
4-6	2	**Hactar:** Kicked out of Law Zero for being drunk and disorderly.
4-6	3	**C-22:** Approves applications at Tetsuo reproduction facility; buys into corporate propaganda.
4-6	4	**YT-25:** Game streamer prone to trash-talking and "heated gamer moments."
4-6	5	**Phinneus:** Paid handsomely to spy on burgeoning Omnidyne union movement.
4-6	6	**Gideon Gateway:** Buys into Western human ideas of masculinity; hassles his ex-girlfriend.

D66 Grand Cross Legends

Various Crossers submitted by Kickstarter backers.

1	1	**Xheina van der Wort:** VTuber who occasionally does "station exploration streams" with the aid of a drone-mounted screen; extremely chaotic energy.
1	2	**Wing Yi McNierney:** Once a frequent sight at gaming events, she still shows up when she can in between working and raising her toddler, Ping An.
1	3	**Mae Peterson:** In between gaming events, Mae manages her husband and a community garden.
1	4	**The Botivista:** Extreme self-help guru influencer; convinced people to let her spy into their homes to help them "stay on the path."
1	5	**Samuel Bonaparte Esq.**: No-win-no-fee attorney convincing people to get themselves hurt to get payouts to fix run-down buildings.
1	6	**Scarlett Miracle:** Black market information broker; gathers her intel during her day job as an IT contractor; clients of neither service know about her other life.
2	1	**Viridia Elliott:** Daughter of gameshow winners who were unceremoniously abandoned by the network once in space; spends her time wishing there was an easy way "home."
2	2	**Clara Lovelace:** Street doc who jailbreaks and reprograms augments to let her clients live their ideal selves without license fees, DRM, or corporate surveillance.
2	3	**Linko Garcanabo:** Multilingual shitpost auteur; uses any pronouns; makes nightcore to spite the rich and radicalize the children.
2	4	**Mr. Fringe:** Runs a bathroom installation business, but hates the industry; he/him lesbian; the "Mr." is short for "monstrosity."
2	5	**Reef Nightly:** Seazy back-alley grifter who gives off a burnt oil smell; they know a guy who knows a guy.
2	6	**Victoria Vann:** Trans girl whose shoeshine stand is used by suits to talk alone (well, alone with her.)
3	1	**Rashel Delmor:** Sultry sax player with a puckish nature; desired to be claimed by those in power; wants to stay free.
3	2	**Ji-Hun "Shinesparkle" Song:** Trans male streamer, magical girl cosplayer, and the undisputed greatest Frame Strikers 3 HyperClash EX player on Grand Cross.
3	3	**Lex "Lexicon" Morgana:** Bright and cheery information broker and part-time mercenary with a penchant for theatrics, cyberware, and occult theming.
3	4	**Iris Countermark:** Cyborg rarely seen without a mask and layers of armor/clothing; has a soft spot for plants and animals; quiet but prone to sudden bursts of vocalization.
3	5	**Kool Karl:** The type of fixer that even adventure tourists don't deserve.
3	6	**Jack Amano:** Small-time hacker and information broker.
4	1	**B.Mar.0:** Street artist and aspiring actress.
4	2	**Lychee:** Rebel raver with a cause who wants to take down the Cartel and look good doing it.
4	3	**Lyioni:** Skater who likes to fly; loves to cause mischief; a bit full of herself.
4	4	**Saga Starlight:** Pink-haired punk-rock transbian who does gutter witch-craft, chemistry and hacking (of both the digital and bio variety.)
4	5	**Kore:** Tall woman with big glasses, a jumpsuit, and long, wavy, multi-colored hair; very into computers and mechanics.
4	6	**Josey:** Tall, olive-skinned, dark brown hair, wears glasses, tight cropped shirts, mid-length skirts, and heels; works publically in community outreach and privately in revolution.
5	1	**Trauma Hound:** Android thief/security specialist.
5	2	**Cardigan "RedMenace69" Lang:** Information broker moonlighting as an admin on a "dirtbag left" chat server.
5	3	**Artemis MA-4:** Android caretaker of a halfway house; former wetwork specialist.
5	4	**Gnome:** Renegade gardener fired from the Agriculture Ring for distributing surplus produce. Want something grown? Find the Gnome.
5	5	**Aunty Wendy:** Runs an independent waste management operation, re-and-up-cycling trash in defiance of corporate edicts; potential one-woman Kessler Syndrome.
5	6	**Blue Colon3:** Android thief with a catgirl aesthetic; vandalizes surveillance cameras for fun.
6	1	**Zoe Silber.** Friendly librarian; offers grey-market augments and cheap maintenance.
6	2	**Alra One:** Hacker who enjoys embarrassing Singularists with carefully crafted honeypots.
6	3	**Rilne Kitsune:** She/her; trans.
6	4	**Caitlyn Mallow:** Mid-30s techie; changes her appearance every few days; part of an anti-corporatist political group named for a bit character from an ancient video game.
6	5	**Feyli (Oufei Li):** Runs a food delivery business as a front for corporate espionage; funnels the proceeds into a high-quality video game series staring the food delivery mascot.
6	6	**"Manga" Mike Rattana:** Owns a store called “The Orbital Otaku” that sells 3D-printed anime figurines and anime-themed cyberware—all cheap, unlicensed bootlegs.

D66 Even More Legends

1	1	**Sister Chrome:** No nonsense, mirror shades-wearing, ex-corporate-asset who runs a pay-what-you-can soup kitchen from the basement of an old apartment block.
1	2	**Harrison Chapman:** Red-headed giant of a man with an innocent smile.
1	3	**Jackson Chapman:** Happy-go-lucky tall young man.
1	4	**Carlos Yoshino:** Zero-g construction worker haunted by his memories of the L4 Disaster.
1	5	**Aida Kasabian:** A passionate young vlogger looking to make a difference.
1	6	**Samusmaximus:** Immensely strong Crosser in bright-red armor who wishes to use his cyborg might to assist people in most of their pursuits.
2	1	**Ms Haw:** Raised on ancient Westerns; consistently dresses in dark blue cowboy clothes (to contrast her green eyes) and a couple of fake six-shooters.
2	2	**Jeremiah Bindel:** Formerly ruthless cybernetics "recycler"; a bad trip convinced him that his limbs were haunted and he now lives in constant fear of them turning on him.
2	3	**Andi "k1lld0z3r" Bliss:** Hopelessly addicted to the buzz of online trolling and leading hate mobs; tries too hard to be "nice" and "wholesome" in-person to make up for it.
2	4	**Mellori:** Raven-obsessed hacker with cybernetic bird legs; takes himself far too seriously.
2	5	**Alirie:** Non-binary trans girl programmer.
2	6	**Alex Hill:** Wannabe hacker.
3	1	**Lucrezia:** Wealthy socialite with a personality like coffee: ice-cold and in glasses; stunningly beautiful, but rumored to be pushing 70 underneath her illicit cosmetic mods.
3	2	**Kate-C:** Work contract office worker staving off mental and physical collapse with prescription medication; her supervisors must never learn that she's secretly a freak on the net.
3	3	**Attar Rose:** A righteous revolutionary with a mean streak.
3	4	**Faje Falenia:** Underground cyberdoc known to offer pro bono support to those in need.
3	5	**Azlade:** Consummate professional who studies every angle, builds his own gear, and absolutely refuses to be caught by surprise; never an improvisation, always a backup plan.
3	6	**Louis Reinhart:** Hacker and Huntr user who uses his hacking skills to doxx and go after people being cruel to animals; has a large fanbase.
4	1	**Oskar:** Robotic cougar with an onboard AI; former bot-fight robot acquired and refurbished by Louis; able to talk like a child via synthetizer.
4	2	**Jenna Cole:** Former Grand Cross "security officer" until she was told to break up a strike with lethal force.
4	3	**Samira Kirmani:** Brilliant scientist capable of creating almost anything if given enough time; rumoured to be working on brain uploading and AI research.
4	4	**Jinx De'Caire:** Independent space captain rumored to smuggle illicit goods, but good luck proving it!
4	5	**Fawkes:** Biogeneticist specializing in hybridizing; keeps himself busy by attempting to bring back the dinosaurs.
4	6	**DJ Freya:** Rising star in Grand Cross Station's music scene over the past few months, with a personality as bright and bubbly as her appearance.
5	1	**Mister H:** Runs a café that's never open in a corner of the station no-one visits; behind his lax demeanor he seems to know more than he lets on.
5	2	**Johnny Dethmatch:** Competes in a dangerous new underground sport that's sweeping orbit.
5	3	**Chef Chrystal:** Chef who uses cutting-edge technology to manufacture strange and expensive food out of simple ingredients.
5	4	**Skilltree:** A hacker with sideways-pointing elf ear mods; prone to forming parasocial relationships; Has never been to the Pacific Northwest.
5	5	**O Oh:** Mysterious young woman who happens to be one of orbit's greatest detectives; addicted to sweet food.
5	6	**Dexter Das:** Genius chemist and a little too enthusiastic; Ogremoch keeps him in an outer hull lab very far away from their other buildings.
6	1	**Addison Waite:** Her hobbies are slamming hoops, jamming hoops, and bamming hoops, which is slamming hoops but you yell "Bam!" when you do it.
6	2	**Azumi Kamiyama:** Double Crosser; was a delinquent in school; has two dads.
6	3	**Justin Stallman:** Ruler of the Tetsuo Complex IT department; bastard operator from hell.
6	4	**Isaac Carver:** Science communicator; everyone but him thinks he dresses like Doctor Who.
6	5	**Mariana Susana Valdez:** Artist of a long-running sci-fi romance webcomic; way too excitable.
6	6	**Gai Iwata:** Rock fan with a nice leather jacket and a sick rockabilly pompadour which he checks constantly; tends to yell "ROCK AND ROLL!" when he likes something.


NOT EVERYONE CAN HANDLE THE TETSUO OVERDRIVE
CAN YOU?
Voyager Ward
Central
Future
Venera
Zenith
Cassini
Huygens
Redeem your Life
ETI
Feelin' hungry tonight?
Pizza EMPIRE
LIVE X-TREM

D666 Place Names

These names can be used for districts, streets, and similar locations.
To use this table, roll 3d6 and read the results in a line.

1 1 1	Brahe	2 1 1	Newmark	3 1 1	Otomo	4 1 1	Aludra	5 1 1	Mimas	6 1 1	I Seikai
1 1 2	Khayyam	2 1 2	Beauvoir	3 1 2	Motohiro	4 1 2	Antares	5 1 2	Hestia	6 1 2	Geneva
1 1 3	Sharma	2 1 3	Renard	3 1 3	Akiyama	4 1 3	Scorpio	5 1 3	Triton	6 1 3	Tannhäuser
1 1 4	Zhang Heng	2 1 4	Ichinomiya	3 1 4	Sato	4 1 4	Crux	5 1 4	Umbruel	6 1 4	Neo Rio
1 1 5	Aaronson	2 1 5	Sarang Garuda	3 1 5	Watanabe	4 1 5	Cassiopeia	5 1 5	Hi'iaka	6 1 5	Neo Rio
1 1 6	Leonov	2 1 6	Orlov	3 1 6	Konaka	4 1 6	Achernar	5 1 6	Vanth	6 1 6	Neo Lagos
1 2 1	Milne	2 2 1	Hussain	3 2 1	Kishiro	4 2 1	Lysithea	5 2 1	Pluto	6 2 1	Neo Shenzhen
1 2 2	Tsiolkovsky	2 2 2	Mzantsi	3 2 2	Aramaki	4 2 2	Sagittarius	5 2 2	Namaka	6 2 2	Neo Toronto
1 2 3	Glaser	2 2 3	Ackermann	3 2 3	Oshii	4 2 3	Cepheus	5 2 3	Nereid	6 2 3	Neo Plymouth
1 2 4	Alvarez	2 2 4	Jeong	3 2 4	Ellison	4 2 4	Aquarius	5 2 4	Artemis	6 2 4	Shin Osaka
1 2 5	Chandrasekhar	2 2 5	Abascal	3 2 5	Bradbury	4 2 5	Altair	5 2 5	Hygiea	6 2 5	Novo Prospekt
1 2 6	Tereshkova	2 2 6	Vasilev	3 2 6	Cadigan	4 2 6	Algol	5 2 6	Ganymede	6 2 6	Nowy Łódź
1 3 1	Sagan	2 3 1	Afolayan	3 3 1	Morgan	4 3 1	Lyra	5 3 1	Pallas	6 3 1	Bridge
1 3 2	Laika	2 3 2	Citra Kayangan	3 3 2	Mchugh	4 3 2	Aldebaran	5 3 2	Iapetus	6 3 2	Second
1 3 3	Shoemaker	2 3 3	Pritipura	3 3 3	Clarke	4 3 3	Libra	5 3 3	Dione	6 3 3	Border
1 3 4	Salyut	2 3 4	Palayan	3 3 4	Dick	4 3 4	Perseus	5 3 4	Titan	6 3 4	Great
1 3 5	Hawking	2 3 5	Sirius	3 3 5	Gibson	4 3 5	Lerna	5 3 5	Miranda	6 3 5	Orange
1 3 6	Vostok	2 3 6	Beaufoy	3 3 6	Asimov	4 3 6	Rigel	5 3 6	Encedalus	6 3 6	Star
1 4 1	Gagarin	2 4 1	Valenzuela	3 4 1	Bester	4 4 1	Orion	5 4 1	Charon	6 4 1	Queen
1 4 2	Lemaître	2 4 2	Hochberg	3 4 2	Niven	4 4 2	Ophiuchus	5 4 2	Hyperion	6 4 2	Church
1 4 3	Dyson	2 4 3	Chanthavong	3 4 3	Stephenson	4 4 3	Vela	5 4 3	Haumea	6 4 3	Turnwise
1 4 4	Meinel	2 4 4	Benget	3 4 4	Stross	4 4 4	Auriga	5 4 4	Rhea	6 4 4	Dogwood
1 4 5	Henson	2 4 5	Parramatta	3 4 5	Rickson	4 4 5	Megaclite	5 4 5	Callisto	6 4 5	Victoria
1 4 6	O'Neill	2 4 6	Falak Kelapa	3 4 6	Delany	4 4 6	Vega	5 4 6	Io	6 4 6	Four Ways
1 5 1	Liverpool	2 5 1	Cendrawasih	3 5 1	Čapek	4 5 1	Auriga	5 5 1	Phoebe	6 5 1	Zim
1 5 2	Brighton	2 5 2	Kongbian	3 5 2	Strugatsky	4 5 2	Aquila	5 5 2	Proteus	6 5 2	White Dwarf
1 5 3	Burnham	2 5 3	Li Zhaolin	3 5 3	Vance	4 5 3	Canopus	5 5 3	Oberon	6 5 3	Logos
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1 5 6	Geimbær	2 5 6	Celsius	3 5 6	Baxter	4 5 6	Pleiades	5 5 6	Titania	6 5 6	McJanda
1 6 1	Tasman	2 6 1	Culpeper	3 6 1	Bringsværd	4 6 1	Magrathea	5 6 1	Makemake	6 6 1	Mostly Harmless
1 6 2	Shinohara	2 6 2	Sadangi	3 6 2	Polaris	4 6 2	Celeano	5 6 2	Eris	6 6 2	Mirrorshade
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1 6 5	Cosa Nostra	2 6 5	Rousseau	3 6 5	Dipper	4 6 5	Terminus	5 6 5	Iapetus	6 6 5	Zork
1 6 6	Sprawl	2 6 6	Chanda	3 6 6	Deneb	4 6 6	Arrakis	5 6 6	Oort	6 6 6	Mondo

HIDDEN PLACES

by Melody Watson

Grand Cross is a big place—big enough that sometimes things just... get lost. Sometimes it's not just things, but whole places. From derelict storefronts to secret dens built deep into the sides of the station, these places offer mystery, privacy, refuge and sometimes even community. They aren't necessarily totally off the grid—for better or worse—but they are spaces where the rules are a little different, at the very least.

This table can be used to generate hidden places for PCs, NPCs and their communities to stumble across or build from the ground up. To create a hidden place, just roll three times: one for a type of place, one for where it can be found and one for its ambience—some descriptors to help you decide what it feels or looks like. You can also take these prompts apart and put them together in any way you like!

1D10	Place
1	A dusty service tunnel; locked up, forgotten, but still crammed with old stock and signage.
2	An augmented reality arcade, restored by local teens; a maze of lights and sound unique to every visitor.
3	A cramped space with a few old couches and a fridge at the bottom of a stairwell. There was supposed to be another floor here, but it was never built. Special acoustics in the walls mean that no sound passes up or down the stairwell.
4	A small labyrinth of unused maintenance rooms and crawlspaces. Why are there so many enormous, incredibly unsafe exhaust fans?
5	A cramped room full of screens and consoles inside the hollow head of an enormous corporate mascot.
6	An unlisted floor that can only be accessed with the assistance of the building's BellBot, a cunning (but buggy) virtual elevator assistant.
7	A secret sculpture garden that gets stranger and more surreal as local artists add new creations: hot-plasma sculptures, self-building statues, VR dancefloors and more.
8	An "empty space"—a room that is entirely unwired and off the grid; a black box to any sensors.
9	A hidden bar run secretly by the local community, who only accept barter and community service as payment.
10	A small shrine, tucked away just out of sight and sheltered from the nearby noise. The specially adapted plants around it react to changes in the light, alternating between hiding the shrine and revealing it to visitors.

1D10	Location
1	Underneath a busy mall.
2	Plastered up behind a garish façade.
3	Deep in one of Grand Cross's panels, accessible only through one maintenance hatch.
4	Through a hedge in a luminescent indoor garden.
5	Hidden behind Ye Olde Shoppe, an obnoxiously loud pop-up shop that sells cartoonish medieval feastware.
6	In an artificial canopy strung between three skyscrapers.
7	In an otherwise nondescript office building.
8	In the heart of a delayed construction project.
9	At an address listed as "Old Ron's Noodles (Corporate)."
10	On the very edge of a new technology park.

1D10	Ambience (choose 1-3)
1	Peaceful, solemn, sad.
2	Charming, fun, relaxing.
3	Dangerous, loud, fragile.
4	Mysterious, creepy, weird.
5	Private, isolated, safe.
6	Rough, incomplete, uncomfortable.
7	Special, shared, comforting.
8	Inspiring, thrilling, malleable.
9	Imposing, forbidden, confusing.
10	Temporary, ramshackle, decaying.

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THANKS FOR
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HARD WIRED ISLAND
retrofuture cyberpunk

Character: _____

Handle: _____ Pronouns: _____

Player: _____

Origin: _____

Occupation: _____

Burden: _____

App: _____

Personal Prep

	Skill	Defence
Cool		
Clever		
Tough		
Quick		

Traits

Specialties	

Talents

Assets

Augments