



CORVUS BELLI iNFiNiTY

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

MÖDIPHÜS™
ENTERTAINMENT

PARADISO

FFA™

WELCOME TO PARADISE

We have fun, games and the bloodiest war in the Human Sphere! One of the most fertile planets known, living in this angry planet is a test for the hardest settlers and warriors. Keep your wits about you or the jungle, its inhabitants or something worse will swallow you whole in an instant.

Hiding a tragic and terrible past, Paradiso is home to dark secrets and intrigue. Even before the NeoColonial Wars, the jungle planet has been the theatre of brutal conflict, destined to loom through the histories of numerous civilisations, human and alien alike. Never have the stakes been so high for Paradiso is the grandest trophy in the Sphere. Not only for the vast wealth offered by the system itself but with wormholes connecting to two alien powers, Paradiso is a Rubicon that if lost would lead to the Downfall of the Human Sphere.

Fame, glory and fortune wait for those brave or foolhardy enough to risk the dangers of Paradiso, so gear up and don't miss the next Orbital Elevator planet side! Join the Human Sphere's mightiest warriors and try to stop the Evolved Intelligence's onslaught or lose yourself in populous cities under siege while you try to figure out who the infiltrated spy is feeding information to your enemies. Make sure you bring all your best equipment and don't forget your bathing suit, for things are about to get hot in the Meat Grinder also known as Paradiso.

The Paradiso Sourcebook includes:

- Information on Paradiso system, from the binary stars Nakula and Sahadeva to Orgoglio and Purgatorio asteroid fields, intriguing planets like Virgil, Dante, Ugolino, Beatrice and more!
- Details on the current situation in the Paradiso theatre, the race for the last known Cosmolite in the planet and the truth behind the Penny Arcade.
- Rules and guidelines to play your own Paradiso based campaigns including jungle warfare, terrain and the background of all three Combined Army Offensives in the system!
- Weapons, equipment and vehicles to prepare for your jungle escapades: caltrops, machetes, flamethrowers, jammers and missiles! Lots of missiles!
- Detailed rules on how to organize encounters in the dark jungles of Paradiso, wicked bandar-logs, cauchemar cats, nematodes, yorogumo. Brutal vegetation and deadly fauna are just some few of the dangers the paradise planets holds for you!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO PARADISO 2

CHAPTER 1

PLANET PARADISO 4
Why Paradiso? 4
A Day in Paradiso.....5
Walking in the Garden5
Stormy Silence6
The Strange & Familiar7
Our Own Slice7

CHAPTER 2

PARADISO A GEOPOLITICAL LANDSPACE..... 9
The Geographic Landscape9
Norstralia9
Septentria12
The Isles of Paradiso.....15

CHAPTER 3

FLORA, FAUNA AND DISEASES18
The Suprising Resurgence Of Cryptozoology18
Flora.....19
Fauna.....21
Beneath Sapphire and Emerald Waves.....23
Diseases25
Infected Wounds27

CHAPTER 4

THE COSMOLITES.....28
The Peace of Concilium28
First Landing29
The Signal.....29
The Last Cosmolite32

CHAPTER 5

PARADISO SYSTEM.....34
Inner To Outer34
Paradiso Tourist Guide35

CHAPTER 6

THE FRONT LINES AND BEYOND.....39
Eastern Norstralia39
Central Norstralia41
Western Norstralia.....43
Western Septentria43

Central and Eastern Septentria46
A Looming Shadow of War49
Surviving Paradiso.....49

CHAPTER 7

LIFE IN THE BLOCKADES.....50
The Orbital Blockade50
The Intermediate Blockade51
The Access Blockades51
Enemy Craft54

CHAPTER 8

AN UNQUIET PARADISE57
Combat In The Jungle57
Layers Of The Jungle & Zones.....57
Environmental Heat Spends59
Running Combat Action Scenes In The Jungle60
Types Of Trap60
Terrain Types.....60
Other Paradiso Terrain63
Combined Army Strategies And Tactics64

CHAPTER 9

PARADISO GEAR.....66
Gear Catalogue.....66
Vehicles.....70

CHAPTER 10

PARADISO CAMPAIGN.....75
War Against The Combined Army75

CHAPTER 11

PARDISO ADVENTURES77
The First Offensive77
The Second Offensive.....82
Paradiso Adventure Hooks.....86

CHAPTER 12

PARADISO ADVERSARIES87

CHAPTER 13

NPC ADVERSARIES.....102
INDEX.....105

PARADISO

INTRODUCTION

"Welcome to the jungle, we've got fun and games..."
"Seriously? You're going with that?"
"Oh c'mon, LT, it's a classic!"
"Hmm. Beg to differ. Anyway, keep it down. You don't know who, or what, might be –"

-Last recorded comms of Bravo Company, Ariadnan Expeditionary Force 38

WELCOME TO PARADISO

WELCOME TO PARADISE

At least, that's how it used to be portrayed in the datasphere advertisements calling for colonists. An unspoilt world, free of civilisation's taint, a fresh start. It was all a lie, though no one could have known because at the time the G5 nations were tightening their grip on communications. Paradiso is a world of secrets, many of which predate the arrival of humanity, for the Human Sphere is a late addition to the history of a world that has already felt the touch of other races like the Tohaa.

Today, Paradiso's verdant jungles are a battleground between the Human Sphere and the Combined Army. The Human Sphere's sole AI recognises the Evolved Intelligence as the greatest threat it has ever faced, and the Combined Army invasion forces are but a small part an extensive army – according to humanity's newest allies, the Tohaa, at least.

Despite intrigue and conflict between the factions extending from the cities to the Paradiso battlefronts, life goes on elsewhere on the planet. Each nation has its own stake in the world's future, yet it is increasingly apparent that the planet itself will have something to say of its destiny. Exactly how that manifests, however, remains to be seen.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This sourcebook is a guide to running games on the planet Paradiso and the star system that gave the world its name. Inside is a wealth of information that will allow the GM to immerse their players in the planet some now call the Green Hell. If you are a player, tread carefully, for some secrets carry hidden dangers that might be best left undiscovered.

CHAPTER 1 – PLANET PARADISO

Sharing a comparable evolution to old Earth, Paradiso is a planet rich in mineral and biological wealth. The attraction for early colonists is also an easy parallel to draw. This chapter provides an insight into the legendary Paradiso ecosystems and the world itself.

CHAPTER 2 – THE GEOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE

Expanding upon the information found within the *Infinity Corebook*, take a fresh look at the various Paradiso regions and locales, and travel from the orbital elevators to the very depths of the oceans.

CHAPTER 3 – FLORA AND FAUNA

"You gotta tread careful round the Paradiso local wildlife. They've gone carved themselves a niche. They'll have a go at carving a bloke too, if a bloke's not careful." - Ernie Bardalong, Acontecimento Forest Ranger

Take a look at the plant and animal life of Paradiso, from the lush jungle ecosystems to the ocean depths. Discover the tiny Gold Leaf Butterfly and Paradiso's very own myth, the Cauchemar Cat.

CHAPTER 4 – THE COSMOLITE RUINS

Discover Paradiso's secret history, including the tales behind the Cosmolite ruins and the fate of the early Aurora colonists, plus how the Tohaa are linked inextricably with both the ancient structures and humanity.

CHAPTER 5 – SYSTEM PARADISO

The Human sphere has a number of off-world outposts in the same star system as Paradiso. Learn about Paradiso's two moons, other planetoids, and the system's asteroid belts.

CHAPTER 6 – LIFE ON THE FRONT LINES

An informational look at military life on the battlefronts and bases upon Paradiso. View tactical and other strategic information relating to the Human Sphere forces on Paradiso, including updated information on the recent Third Offensive.

CHAPTER 7 – LIFE IN THE BLOCKADES

Learn about the first line of defence against the Combined Army, and life in the Acheron Blockade, where brave souls remain alert for Combined Army incursions through the wormhole.



CHAPTER 8 – JUNGLE COMBAT

Create thrilling jungle Action scenes using simple guidelines and sample terrain Zones, creating exciting, layered combat. Add new environmental Heat and Momentum spends to Action scenes.

CHAPTER 9 – PARADISO GEAR

Suit up and gear up for life in the jungle with equipment such as TADpoles, Chain-Colts, and the E/ Marat. Khantri Bumblebee Drones and vehicles like the Combined Army Air Superiority Aircraft add new hazards, while the Human Sphere benefits from new vehicles such as the aquacycle and APC to contend with the new threats.

CHAPTER 10 – THE COMBINED ARMY

Take a look at the Combined Army's Paradiso objectives and how each of the troop types interact. View the EI's perspective, providing a fresh look at the tactics it employs by proxy across the Combined Army.

CHAPTER 11 – ADVENTURE SECTION

Find new adventure hooks for Paradiso storylines. Two adventures let the characters play through the historic and infamous First and Second Offensives by the Combined Army in the early days of the war.

CHAPTER 12 – ADVERSARIES

Statistics for the deadly Paradiso wildlife can be found in this chapter. Also included are random encounters so the GM can create a memorable jungle experience, together with Heat spends to make them even more interesting.

CHAPTER 13 – NPC ADVERSARIES

New NPCs with a Paradiso flavour abound within this chapter. Beware, though, as some will certainly help, others will definitely hinder.

CHAPTER 1
PLANET PARADISO

Very few planets or systems can boast such tremendous beauty and breath-taking awe as Paradiso. Over decades of invasion and struggle, it has survived and thrived – despite innumerable battles and tremendous damage to its natural biomes.

The stars at the centre of this binary star system, the blazing source of all life here, are even more spectacular. One a red dwarf, the other a white, the two suns, Nakula and Sahadeva respectively, seem caught in a constant, slow waltz – or a constant competition, depending on who you ask. They are so close to each other that plasma is constantly pulled from one star to its partner, forming a glowing and hauntingly beautiful accretion disk.

Powerful and awe-inspiring as it may be, this impressive, constant display is very difficult to navigate. The twin stars emit so much radiation and interference that even the act of arriving into the system proper can be a dangerous undertaking.

Paradiso takes 1,033 days to make its orbital revolution around Nakula and Sahadeva, compared to Earth's 365. The planet's rotation makes its solar days slightly longer than Earth's lasting 28 hours.

The circumference of the planet is larger than Earth's, and while very similar, the surface gravity is slightly higher.

Hotly contested since its discovery, many lives have been dedicated – and lost – in the settlement, protection, and defence of the planet. In the end, though, nearly everyone can agree on one thing: Paradiso is worth the cost.

BY MY NAME

Paradiso has gone through many monikers, both endearing and ill-favoured. Upon first discovery, its verdant, ever-blooming lands inspired its settlers to call it the Tropic Gem or the Emerald Jungle. Over the next decades, the more lives it claimed – indiscriminate of faction, race, humanity, or alliance – the more it came to be known by other, darker names, the Emerald Hell, the Meat Grinder. Ask the settlers, though, and those brave souls are more likely to insist that, despite its constant struggles, it will always be their Tropic Gem.

WHY PARADISO?

It is obvious as to why the PanOceanian discoverers named this system Paradiso. This beauty of a star system holds the promise of an ever-blooming, blossoming Paradise, the likes of which no human has experienced in the preceding centuries. Even on Earth itself, in the annals of its histories and well before the birth of the nations and unions that are in power today, one would be hard-pressed to find a similar abundance of life.

OUR OWN LOST HORIZON

During Earth's revered and now-ancient history, long before the time where humankind learned to harness the elements to leave the planet, it would be difficult to call forth an accurate comparison of the excessive growth of Paradiso. Even the famed utopian lamasery of Shangri-La, known to be only a legend, seems pale and insignificant when compared to the entire wealth of life that is Paradiso. Rumours abound, though, that Paradiso was not the very first name given this place. Somewhere – perhaps buried with whatever remains of the Aurora settlers – there is another, hidden settlement that bears that legendary name.

Upon first impressions, the system truly does seem like a paradise. Generally, the planet boasts very moderate, temperate winters and summers that are only slightly uncomfortable with average temperatures range from 24 degrees Celsius up to 37 degrees Celsius – a dream come true to the former inhabitants of Earth.

(DIS)COMFORT ZONES

The weather and picturesque scenery originally made the newly settled Paradiso a centre of tourism. Vacationing couples, families looking to retreat to someplace warm and green, and elders looking to avoid excessive heat or cold were all welcome sources of business revenue. Any controlling majority, party of interest, or G5 nation would be foolish not to notice the wealth of natural, marketable resources, so it became the biggest trigger for the NeoColonial Wars. Paradiso was the best-looking prospect for colonisation that the Human Sphere had seen in far too long. And just when the dust had settled from the rush and the inter-power conflict, the Combined Army showed up.

"It doesn't matter if you understand the science of it. I took the integration classes and missions. I can spout off to you all about how gravity's just a little heavier here, how the twin suns make everything super-grow and the twin moons make everything a little more chaotic, but none of that matters when you are lost in the thick of it!

It's not just that the jungle feels smothering, and blah blah science. It is smothering. It's oppressive, and everything's just always leaning in a little closer. This place will mess with your mind if you let it, Doc!"

- Excerpt, the final message of Private Jennifer Hakan, 104th Regiment of Fusiliers

Upon last PCC Census survey, Paradiso had reached an impressive 1.2 billion on-planet settlers, with another 1.1 million off-planet, often on the moons or other outposts around the Paradiso system.

Here, the lives and the administration of law are protected by the military – specifically the Paradiso Coordinated Command. The colonial governments in charge are, unsurprisingly, the three great powers: Haqqislam, PanOceania, and Yu Jing.

Civilian life on the planet continues despite – or perhaps because of – the threat of invasion from the Combined Army. For many settlers, Paradiso is the only home they know, and to let the EI's presence upset that would be to admit defeat. The longest-standing settlements are often as savagely beautiful as the surroundings from which they've been hewn. The settlers are typically sturdy folk, weathered but vivacious and beautiful in their own right, strengthened from the challenges of colonisation.

The reality of the EI invasion still creates many regrettable openings for inter-faction tension. As the Combined Army claims cities and settlements on both major continents, civilian refugees need safe havens. Despite their common enemy, cultural differences and old-standing xenophobic reactions are not unheard of for fleeing refugees. The colonial settlers still attempt to maintain a day-to-day relationship with their new neighbours, but from time to time, the “chill Paradiso wind” can taste a little stale and tempers can flare.

A DAY IN PARADISE

Everything in Paradiso grows to excess. The rainforests and oceans are filled and practically bursting with constantly evolving, never-before-seen species. A significant amount of biodiversity and inhabitable zones are certainly expected, and yet the longer the living kingdoms are studied, the more it becomes clear the creatures that have evolved over millennia have adapted in a manner that seems meant to defy expectations. The planet grows and adapts to itself, so much so that it seems to keep even its own long-term inhabitants guessing as to what is safe.

For example, we have come to expect that the Gāyatrī Moehau is a constantly hostile and bloodthirsty carnivore. Long feared in local history, this creature when originally studied was found to be a stealthy, deadly, and highly aggressive predator. In certain parts of the Norstralian continent, however, local zoologists have found a tremendously rare, openly warm and nurturing, and completely vegetarian sample of the species.

Scientists speculate that because the swathes of forest where the specimens were found are so over-abundantly fertile, with so many additional food sources available, these creatures changed their normally combative natures and dietary requirements. However more commonly, when presented with such an abundance of food, Paradiso's creatures are overly aggressive and territorial. Predators are quick to attack and are tremendously efficient at killing their prey; to them, humankind is a tempting and tasty treat. But there is a noticeable change in more docile animal behaviours. Scientists believe that the smartest survivors watch and learn from these changes; however, we cannot be certain that these genetic shifts are solely due to outsider presence on the planet.

WALKING IN THE GARDEN

Learning the common hazards and risks of travel will help ensure that one returns from the trip instead of succumbing to it. Life on Paradiso sometimes seems to be conspiring against you, or worse – actively working to harm you. Be well-prepared, or else be killed by any number of surprises.

With the unpredictable nature of the wildlife, sometimes even the simple act of locating and collecting potable drinking water may suddenly become a desperate fight for life. Many predators, make a point of watching, waiting, and hunting around – and sometimes in – those watering holes.

Acclimatising to life on Paradiso and to new concerns for survival like water, regardless of age, capability, or off-world experience, always takes time for both soldiers and settlers. It is unsurprising to see returning veterans sitting next to fresh, green arrivals from off world, both taking time to acquaint or reacquaint themselves respectively.

PICK YOUR POISON

Paradiso's main landmasses are Septentria and Norstralia. While both are “blessed” with a similar, constantly invasive growth, Norstralia is well known for its tall-reaching forests. Septentria, meanwhile, is a much flatter and comparatively temperate land. There are many smaller islands that can be found among the oceans of Paradiso. While they are frequently called islands, they are technically smaller continents.

Adjustment to Paradiso doesn't just relate to the physical and mental impact of the planet's biosphere, however, as there are also a few other

“Yes, I've heard the reports of slothful Gāyatrī Moehau. Did you ever consider the animals might have been sick? These speculations are not just wildly inaccurate but dangerous to the point of negligence. As far as the Combined Command is concerned, the only advice for interacting with that beast is to run away before it sees you...and to open fire if pursued.”

PRO TIP

Never forget that while you're in the jungle, it's not just the Combined Army you'll need to watch for.

CLIFF SHRIKES OF NORSTRALIA

The cliffs along Norstralia's northern coasts are well known for their breath-taking views, steppes of white mists, and roaring falls. They are famously and notoriously dangerous, and yet here, a very special creature has shown it has much to teach us. The Norstralian Cliff Shrike is a specialised, non-apex predator that has spent generations learning to survive and thrive in the worlds hidden behind these perilous waterfalls.

The shrikes' oil glands are enlarged to secrete an extra thick, durable, and waterproof oil. When the shrikes preen, the oil from these glands allow the shrikes to dive below the water's surface to catch their meals, and then to navigate fearlessly, unflinching through the waterfalls. Hidden behind the roaring water and nested safely away from predators, generations of loud, feathered families have built a clever community in the rockface.

The shrikes' plumage is especially drab and dull – even, surprisingly, in the male of the species.

By day, these gregarious creatures gather their nesting materials or gorge themselves on fish. By night, though, a new rule takes hold: these raucous, overzealous creatures fall silent and over-watchful. These clever, predatory birds have something that terrifies them – and that something only emerges at night.

****This was the last vid-log entry of the aspiring nature documentarian, the self-styled Dr. Dangerous. If you have any information leading to his whereabouts, please contact the Paradiso Branch of Novastar Entertainment.****

dangers associated with humanity's numerous reasons for currently being unable to tame the planet. If ever the phrase "deafening silence" applied, it would be on Paradiso. The jumble of sound, light, and information now conspicuously absent can be maddening. Modern travellers are accustomed to the cacophonous influx of information through their easily accessed technologies; however, reliable, refreshable power sources are very difficult to find. Suddenly, it's not just ammunition and travel supplies that require moderation and inventory.

Most settlements and checkpoints overseen by the G5 nations have multiple power sources, but these are often assigned to help with the containment and control of the jungle. Keeping the encroaching wildlife at bay is a constant challenge; without power for these systems, the local flora quickly begin reclaiming any hard-won land.

Remnants of cities and settlements – human and otherwise – long destroyed and overgrown, are a testament to the plants' aggressive expansion. Without appropriate power allocation, it will waste additional time and manpower to keep the plants at bay as hampered comms play havoc with logistics.

STORMY SILENCE

Paradiso's weather is at times unpredictable, and power outages occasionally happen. When they do while you are in the deepest and darkest parts of the jungle, you need to be able to know where you are, where you were, and where your next safe camp or settlement will be. A sudden storm may block off your signal or otherwise turn what should have been an easy trip into a nightmare.

The rains are another cause for concern. Typically, the rainy season stretches from March until June, with the strongest storms on the eastern coasts. While there is some shielding from the actual storms themselves, settlements and watch points along the coasts must be well-prepared for flooding, and have standing, constant evacuation plans in place.

Due to occasional spontaneous weather shifts, travellers should be ready for anything. This is especially important when traveling over uneven land. Traversing hills and muddy ground are especially challenging; one's footing can be suddenly upset, or spontaneous detritus and high hanging dead debris can suddenly become an unwelcome surprise.

Even a well-travelled path can just as easily turn into a mudslide when hit by sudden downpours. During the rainy season, it becomes difficult to predict what land is reliable and what might turn treacherous. It might be best to assume that it is all dangerous.

With heavy rain comes flooding, and while some areas are well-known to be reliable, seasonal flood basins, every new rainy season brings its own share of new surprises. Animals that had previously made their homes in warm, earthen burrows suddenly find their homes a dangerous trap. These surprised creatures suddenly burst forth from the now-soaked ground, trying desperately to make it to the surface and to dry land. As if that was not challenging enough, some of the smartest predators have learned that when the heavy rains come, the best meals can be found in these flood basins.

Norstralia has a great number of ravines and crevasses; in fact, the most beautiful – and the deadliest – series of waterfalls and cliffs form a multitude of steppes, shelves, and white-misted ravines. The tactically minded would likely notice that this turns the falls into a blindingly beautiful and deadly trap: a fantastic ambush point. The environmentally minded, however, understand that the wrinkled landscape is extremely important to the planet's weather cycle, and also, therefore, the life cycle of its flora and fauna.

Geologists and archaeologists, meanwhile, are still trying to fully investigate the mysterious maze of passages that lie behind and beneath the falls. At first appearing to be nothing more than tunnels that naturally eroded into the rock, further exploration finds rock that appears to be deliberately sculpted. To this day, there is still no explanation as to what these shaped passages might be, who might have sculpted them, or their ultimate purpose.

STRENGTH AND DURABILITY

There are patches of the jungle that are so remote and so overgrown that explorers have not been able to map them out yet. What we do know is that the thicker parts of the jungle that we have been able to explore often reveals plants and trees so old, so hardy, that their survival is all but assured.

Some of these trees have evidence of damage from long before humanity's arrival, and thus far, a lot of the strongest trees and other flora here have survived even what humankind – or the EI – do to it.

THE STRANGE & FAMILIAR

There is a lot of familiarity to be found on Paradiso, and some of the plants and animals follow patterns that may seem predictable. However, this environment is its own creature and should be treated with the same care and caution as one might a newly discovered sentient species.

One should never assume familiarity with the local flora and fauna unless one is absolutely certain of its identification. Too many visitors to Paradiso have discovered that the luscious strawberry they reach for is the lure for a carnivorous plant. Most exploratory teams include a biological specialist or researcher as the additional knowledge almost always comes in handy.

Despite all the hazards to be found here, there are still many wonders to be appreciated in the gentler, inspirational sides of the planet. After all, the stunning beauty was one of the largest draws for the planet's original settlers. For every carnivorous plant or "evil strawberry," there is a beautiful, diametrically opposed creature to be found. For example, following strange reports of a whirlwind of golden leaves on an otherwise-still day, Norstralian settlers discovered an entirely new creature, delicate as a butterfly and perfectly camouflaged to resemble leaves.

Interestingly, it seems that some of the insects on this planet have taken up a strange, symbiotic relationship with the plants around them. Whether this was a natural progression or a coercion – staying mindful of fungi whose infection and reproduction cycles result in a sort of mind-control – the harmonious rapport between the plants and these insects is fascinating.

As an example, the ant-like creatures found here do not appear to be any more intelligent than we would expect our own Earth-based insects to be, but it would be foolish to underestimate them. Particularly as they have a strange symbiotic relationship with certain flora that allows them to make use of the plant's defences.

A treasure trove of knowledge, Paradiso's patterns, and how it so aggressively grows and mutates are critical to the Human Sphere. Some factions find especial interest and value in the study and harvest of Paradiso's more poisonous plants and aggressive creatures. To such people, this planet holds great secrets that might allow them a leg up in their fight against the EI or other competing powers. There is an unspoken but commonly understood race to find – and control – both knowledge and resources. As such, the recovery team that is sent to scour

the ocean floor for an old shipwreck may also, in secret, be looking for a new piece of technology or a long-buried weapon. While the major powers are interested in the more deadly secrets, the jungle is forever changing, and even in that change, there can be found a sense of reassurance and hope for the colonists.

One local, favourite example is the Toria flower. This beautiful, colour-changing beauty blooms for only a single Paradiso day, making it one of the planet's rarities. When the time is correct, this water-based plant grows intensely hot, and as the sun sets that day, its petals finally open, flourishing into a shining, golden-petalled jewel. For that night only, it emits the sweetest, most enticing scent; the alluring perfume attracts any number of pollinators, but only one is ever welcomed into the folds of the flower.

Once that one insect has nestled within the flower and begins to feast on its sweet-smelling nectar, the petals close gently around the insect. Overnight, the bug enjoys its extended meal and guaranteed safety for the duration of the evening. By morning, though, the glowing flower has changed in two very important ways: its colour has shifted, from shining gold to a rich crimson, and its sex transforms, from female to male. That sundown, when it opens one last time, the pollinating bug is free to fly away, carrying the newly-male's pollen to the next glowing flower. If the Toria flower can so change and adapt itself in so short a period, then so, too, can the new settlers to this place.

OUR OWN SLICE

WELCOME TO PARADISO

With the constant threat of danger from both the Combined Army and the planet itself, one might wonder why there is such a fight to remain here. The answer is complicated. The abundant beauty to be found here sometimes overshadows the fact that this planet has a potential for extreme mineral and biological wealth. It was that potential that spurred the territory rush not long after PanOceania uncovered Paradiso's existence.

The race to claim land began almost immediately. Teams from the major powers of the Human Sphere were quick to send colonizing parties, soldiers, scientists, and settlers. PanOceania, Yu Jing, and Haqqislam unsurprisingly led the race in this regard, and as such, were the quickest to lay claim to any open land that they could. Even though a great deal of land was quickly occupied by major four powers, it should be noted that even the smaller factions have since established their presence as well. Nomads use their skills to settle claims in between the major factions – and make some good money

Norstralia is covered in strong-growing rainforests, and Septentria's flatlands are breath-taking in their verdant beauty. We might remember Earth recalling its warmth and majesty, but to see the green peaks of Paradiso is to set aside all nostalgia for the promise of the future.

Paradiso: A Colonist's Introductory Guide

"I've seen the ants here rip a giant spider – yeah, seems like bugs're the one thing we find on every planet, right? – limb from limb. And these ants travel. Like...thoroughly nomadic. Carry all their eggs with them at the same time.

And when they bunk down for the night? They make a bunker using their own bodies.

Pretty nasty, right? That's nothin'. What's worse is that they're not the only creatures around here that make their own living walls.

And yeah, that's as nasty as it sounds..."

Private Vinod Kaprekar, Acontecimento Irregulars. Interview for Novastar, the favourite entertainment and information channel of all PanOceanians.

While researchers on the planet are careful to study and understand the patterns of life on the planet, it should not be surprising if one's journeys sometimes result in the discovery of new obstacles. Paradiso is constantly changing; sometimes that means that well known toxins and diseases may suddenly start showing surprising and dangerous mutations.

"Make no mistake. You and I are nothing here. The jungle is stronger and harder than we are. After all is said and done, this planet will outlive every last one of us.

All the things that we build here and all the things that our war with the Combined Army might do to it? Won't matter to the jungle. Paradiso is layers on top of layers, and while we're getting better at holding it at bay, we'd be real stupid if we think we could ever completely control this place.

Don't get too disheartened, though. We didn't bring you here to die. We need your skills to help protect the people out here.

Plus, way I understand it that jungle is older than sin. God knows what has been swallowed up by that green mess, alien ruins, Combined Army patrols, galactic technology, all of it profit waiting for an adventurous soul to seize it for Ariadna.

Who knows, maybe when this war is done, we might even have advantage enough to finally claim some of this planet for ourselves."

- Sergeant Instructor Conny Page, 5307th Composite Ranger Unit (Marauders), attached to AEC to support jungle acclimatisation. Standard welcome speech for Ariadnans at Camp Reforger, Paradiso Adaptation Centre.

in doing so. Ariadna is also notably thriving in this environment; here in the wilderness, their survival expertise and fortitude allow them to really shine. Surely, this would be a perfect place to prove their worthiness and secure their place as the next Great Power of the Human Sphere.

Paradiso's oceans are brimming with life; understandably, the fishing trade was one of the earliest thriving industries of the planet. To this day, it is still a potentially limitless source of income, food, and jobs, although out of necessity, it is a more carefully regulated and protected profession.

With the ongoing battle with the Combined Army, the Coordinated Command felt it important to oversee, regulate, and protect their prized fishing vessels from enemy attacks. The longer the war continues, though, it becomes difficult to keep a constantly protected fishing fleet; the manpower and mechanical assets are proving to be more useful providing assistance on the battlefield.

While the Coordinated Command still keeps regular protection ongoing for the best of their trade vessels, it is more likely these days to see a host of smaller, independently owned ships. The companies and individuals are responsible for acquiring and maintaining their own licensure and patrol approvals through the appropriate government. With the minimization of governmentally controlled fishing vessels and protective services comes a greater threat of sabotage and piracy. The smart fisher will always keep an eye out and have a backup plan, for the waters are not as peaceful as they used to be.

Another growing trouble is the proliferation of Scrappers. The planet has seen numerous battles, both between factions and versus the EI. Theoretically, there is a lot of scrap, half-destroyed vessels, and technology to be salvaged from the ocean floor. Not every sailing vessel is for food, protection, or government research, of course. The tourism industry was another of Paradiso's original money-makers, and even today, carefully plotted pleasure cruises draw adventure-seekers and the fabulously wealthy. There can be good coin and good adventure to be found on such tours.

Beyond that, the mineral resources are uncovered and discovered regularly, yet another seemingly endless source of money and power. Today, the profitability of the mining industry has made it soar in company interest, well beyond even the fishing or tourism trades.

While true that most of the planet is blessed with an overabundance of greenery, the planet still holds its scars. The eastern coasts have

been brutalised by the numerous battles fought there. The presence of the Combined Army and the constant wars fought on that soil prevent the land's healing.

SUSPICIONS

If the Combined Army is keeping certain lands targeted as chosen battlegrounds, maybe there is a reason. What might they be after? What – if anything – is below the ground that they want to uncover?

The Combined Army has laid claim to the eastern coasts. The ground is a chaotic scatter of war machines, and it only gets worse from there. That land was already being plundered for resources before they arrived, and the EI suborned the mining operations there as soon as they claimed the coast. As such, those lands are now dry, dead, and sickened. More importantly, of course, the Combined Army is firmly entrenched there. We are all in danger.

INTER-FACTION LUNACY

A great deal of the inter-faction conflict between PanOceania and Yu Jing took place on the twin moons of Paradiso. Since then, they both have been using the moons as both a stockpile and orbital defence in anticipation of ongoing battle below. Whether there is truly a truce between PanOceania and Yu Jing, or if there is still an internal conflict while the Combined Army invades below, is still to be seen.

The Coordinated Command governs on the planet, but their primary purpose is to remove the EI presence on Paradiso, not only on the planet proper, but to make sure that they are denied reinforcements in the system.

Scientists believe that in time, nature will be able to reclaim and regrow all that was lost...but for once, they are unsure how long that might take. The sooner the threat of invasion is neutralized, the easier it will be to allow the planet to start its regrowth cycles. Some consider planet Paradiso, with all of its beauty and its danger, to be the ultimate proving grounds. Others see their assignment here as a chance to do the greatest good and have a positive effect on countless lives.

Regardless of one's outlook, both opinions are correct. The experiences a brave soul has while on this planet will not only shape them as no other planet could, but will give them the chance to save populations, uncover fantastic ruins and secrets, and otherwise help to carve a slice of heaven out of this stunning, beautiful death trap.

CHAPTER 2

PARADISO – A GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

THE GEOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE

The following chapter aims to paint a picture of the geographic landscape of Paradiso. Much of Paradiso's geography can already be found in the *Infinity Corebook*, however the material presented in this chapter seeks to expand and flavour that information, as well as provide seeds and hooks for adventure.

NORSTRALIA

NIEMANDSZONE

Satellite imaging of the planetary surface revealed high levels of radioactive residue in one particular area of the planet. Closer scans have uncovered alien structures, now known collectively as the Cosmolites. The discovery of alien ruins on Paradiso led directly to the final NeoColonial war, at the bloody end of which the Peace of Concilium declared the opportunity to study the alien structures discovered at ZuluPoint was a right that belonged to humanity. No sovereign power had the legal right to prevent approved access to this unprecedented finding, scientific missions would be approved by O-12, and all nations were provided, on-paper, equal access to the ruins. The staging area for any missions to study the Cosmolites would include a preservation zone, and this swathe of territory on the Eastern edge of the Norstralia Continent would be deemed NiemandsZone: No Man's Land.

Lost in the sudden and violent early days of the First Offensive, when swarms of the Onyx Contact Force of the Combined Army descended in fire and blood on Paradiso, NiemandsZone now sits in a relatively eerie silence. Currently under Morat control, this portion of the planet became a jump-off point for the Second Offensive. Stores and ammunition dumps appear to be maintained in support of the Combined Army, but the fighting has moved much further inland.

Morat forces tasked with holding what was NiemandsZone have been more than happy to watch the fast-growing jungles of Paradiso reclaim what humanity had burned and cleared away when they built their settlements and research facilities here. Almost no trace, bar the odd antenna tower, is visible above the dense canopy. The research stations and outposts, as well as the derelict

forward operations bases built by the Combined Army for the Second Offensive are still there, consumed by the voracious flora of Paradiso. Morat patrols scour the jungle, protecting the fenced and heavily guarded Combined Army supply depots that are maintained throughout the region.

Beneath the canopy the area has reverted to wilderness, the flora and fauna deadly and ravenous. The untamed beat of life is everywhere, moving on the periphery, hard to spot until it's too late. Morats use the area beyond their compounds to hunt for both sport and training, and while the wildlife is not as brutal as that on Ugarat, it is often just as lethal.

For the Human Sphere, this is lost territory. But despite this, black-ops run teams perform a range of missions deep behind enemy lines. Ops are regularly organised to raid Combined Army compounds, perform snatch and grabs from abandoned research facilities that may not have been properly evacuated, and intercept well-paid mercenary outfits intent on supplying the black market with highly illegal VoodooTech.



QUIBILAH

Sitting squarely on the equatorial latitude, Norstralia's low laying mountain ranges called the 'green-capped peaks' cover Quibilah. This expanse is dominated by fast-growing jungles full of a wide variety of unique plants and animals. Quibilah's forests are made up of fibrous trees that tend to split as they dry, making the wood useless for construction, and only small-scale felling takes place for carving and art works. The green-capped peaks across which the jungles of Quibilah sprawl are predominantly sedimentary rock, sandstone, and limestone and have limited viability as a trade good.

When Haqqislam settled the region, they knew that Quibilah would never be able to compete in the export of materials on the same level as areas settled by Yu Jing and PanOceania. Without the rich bounty of materials to ship off-world, they instead took a more pragmatic approach, focusing on three key areas: tourism, education, and trade. As such they constructed the space-elevator in Al-Hadiye and made a number of deals with PanOceanian and Nomad corporations, with the Nomad nations setting up a commercial mission to run the spaceport attached to the elevator. The tension between Haqqislam, PanOceania, Yu Jing, and the Nomad nations has increased the last few years, especially with the Uprising that split Yu Jing. Haqqislam has provided some support to the nascent Japanese power, and several deals between Haqqislam and Yu Jing have broken down as a result. Where exactly the Yu Jingese merchants who live in Al-Hadiye sit is a matter of distrustful uncertainty. Enough Yu Jingese bureaucrats and workers live with Al-Hadiye to make the matter some concern, but for now the message from Bourak has been to watch these citizens and otherwise allow them to continue in their roles. Of course, every person of Yu Jingese descent that is too close to a role of potential influence or significance is being slowly reassigned or promoted away from those bureaucratic positions. Discontent does seem on the rise, but any Yu Jingese reaction to Haqqislam is, for the moment, only hinted at in whispers.

In the early days of settlement, numerous Haqqislam corporations invested heavily in the tourism industry. This industry was completely shattered during wave after wave of Combined Army assaults. The First Offensive removed Haqqislamite access to the gorgeous beaches of the eastern coast, and the Second Offensive pushed them right back into nothing more than a small patch of territory compared to PanOceanian and Yu Jingese territories. The recent Third Offensive devoured almost everything they held. Alien incursions and infiltrations threaten Al-Hadiye on a

daily basis, which is unsurprising considering that the space elevator is the Combined Army's openly declared objective. Haqqislam's glorious dreams of a thriving tourism industry have been cleanly excised by the violence of the Combined Army, leading to a small number of Silk Lords becoming disgruntled with the Hachib over the money lost on their significant investments.

Before being almost entirely lost to the Third Offensive, Quibilah was considered a centre for learning and research. Experimentation on native flora and fauna produced a number of useful by-products ranging from medicines to poisons. Some radical research had shown promising signs in neuro-enhancing drugs, though clinical trials did not begin before the Third Offensive. The Denbal university in Al-Hadiye had also just initiated the first stages exploring the significant underground cave structures that criss-cross the region. Small research teams were accompanied by teams of the Naffatûn regiments to deal with the cave system's predators, though many teams began to go missing as the Third Offensive approached. Rumours suggest that the more recent geological surveys found enormous reserves of fossil fuels in the limestones of Quibilah.

SYLDAVIA

One of the most prosperous regions on Paradiso, the western portion of Syldavia has weathered the inherent turmoil of war and maintains a thriving economy based on trade and tourism. Timber, ore, and precious metals are key commodities, but there is also a significant trade in exotic animals. These goods, as well as many others from across Paradiso are shipped to the warehouse and distribution centres in Valkenswijk, then either transported to Al-Hadiye in Quibilah for shipment up the orbital elevator or flown directly to the space stations above Valkenswijk.

The flow of trade between Quibilah and Syldavia conceals a thriving black market, where weapons, ammunition, alcohol, medicine, food, drugs, and entertainment are cleverly concealed as a part of legitimate shipments. The very rarest and most sought-after items on the black market are undoubtedly VoodooTech and unsanctioned Silk derivatives. Recent efforts to strictly regulate the trade of exotic animals has seen a boom in live-animal exports through the black market, though the covert transportation of some of Paradiso's creatures has presented a significant challenge that has resulted in a number of 'accidents.'

Crime syndicates are increasingly more organised throughout Syldavia, especially near the front lines where military and enforcement personnel are stretched to breaking point. The flood of

refugees, an overtaxed military, and shortages in a range of vital goods has provided fertile ground for criminal groups, and many municipal governments are happy to turn a blind eye given these criminal elements may be the only form of enforcement available. Prior to the Third Offensive, and despite the ongoing war – or perhaps, in some way, because of it – Syldavia was a centre for tourism. A multitude of wealthy citizens from across the Human Sphere sought to get a taste of 'real Paradiso' after being inspired by Maya dramas such as the Myrmidon Wars and the sensaseries smash hit *The Incredible Adventures of Candy Double*. Tourists seeking to brave the turmoil arrive in Valkenswijk and spend a majority of their time either there or they travel by air to Strackentz. Although inherently dangerous, chartered hunting trips and nature walks on the western coast are wildly popular despite the waivers tourists must agree to before being allowed to participate. It is strictly forbidden for tourists to travel beyond these two cities, as the further east one goes the more strained and obvious the toll of the ongoing war becomes.

The eastern portion of Syldavia has fallen to Combined Army assaults, including the cities of Ravensbrücke and the old regional capital of Silvania. The ever-present threat of the Combined Army might be a distant rumble to a transient visitor, but to the citizens it is a dark reality with a bleak future. Damburg has been swept away, Runenberg is encircled, and Streslau is a city under siege, with violent and bloody skirmishes raging through the streets and shattered buildings. Troop numbers on the front are at an all-time high as the interior of Syldavia is now under direct threat and the risk of a further incursion is significant.

A build-up of troops in Valkenswijk adds excitement for prospective tourists, but locals fear the military presence fans the flames of the Human Sphere's internal conflicts. The old military bases, now more often used for air shows, are being refurbished and restocked. Military craft hangered there have already flown several raids over neighbouring Yingxian in support of the Japanese Uprising. Where this newest evolution in the politics of the Human Sphere will lead is anyone's guess, but many veterans of the three Offensives are worried that in-fighting between factions within the Sphere could spell nothing less than the defeat of humanity.

YINGXIAN

Humanity's stand against the furious onslaught of the Combined Army is a collective effort, with every major power in the Human Sphere contributing arms and soldiers to the meat grinder on Paradiso. For all the fine words spun about this cooperative

defence of Human space, the truth of the matter is that no two powers have committed as much, or have been more vital to the war effort, than PanOceania and Yu Jing.

During the First Offensive, the city of Fuyan fell to the Combined Army, and Xiongxian fall under the weight of the Second Offensive. Buried deep beneath Xiongxian, bunkers and shelters currently house many of the civilians that made the surface city home. This subterranean network is also widely used by Yu Jingese soldiers for operations behind enemy lines. The tunnels have been a boon to local triads who use them for smuggling. While the official government order is to execute suspected triad members, their importance to the ongoing survival of what remains of the Xiongxian population means that the triads operate largely unchecked. Because Yu Jing is focusing on the Norstralian front, significant concentrations of troops have amassed close to the border, particularly in Neiting and Chengling. The flood of refugees from the territories lost during the First and Second offensives also placed a massive strain on these cities and ultimately led to evacuation efforts of civilians during the Third Offensive.

Yinquan, the capital city, sits in the centre of Yingxian, surrounded by a sea of temporary accommodations and a tent city to house the influx of war-weary civilians fleeing destruction. There are no major cities to the west of the region, but several smaller cities and many townships grow foodstuffs and operate industrial facilities to supply the front with arms and ammunition.

Geographically, Yingxian includes the two largest mountain ranges on Norstralia. Rich in minerals, they provide the economic backbone for the Yu Jingese territories on Paradiso and make it worthwhile for the StateEmpire to maintain the war effort. As the war has continued and the front pushed ever further into the Norstralian continent, the mining of Yingxian's southern range has become furious, with gangs of workers revolving on a non-stop race to deplete the mountains of their hidden wealth before the Combined Army pushes them out. This has led to long work hours for miners, and an extremely lax attention to safety regulations. Mine collapses, equipment failures, injury, and death are all too common. Unsubstantiated reports of the abuse of workers in the mines of Yingxian became one of the rallying points for the Japanese during the Uprising, particularly after an episode of *The Adventures of Candy Double* exposed the harsh conditions the majority of Japanese workers were forced to endure – all juxtaposed against the lavish terraces of the capital, Yinquan.

KOKKYŌ-3

Sitting on the edge of Yingxian and bordering both Syldavia and Quibilah is the city of Kokkyō-3. Kokkyō-3 is the main settlement of independent Great Japan on Paradiso and considered to be the mind and heart of the Tatenokai on the planet. Under siege from Yu Jingese troops prior to the Third Offensive, the Japanese forces managed to consolidate, and the city – rearranged as a fortress during the NeoColonial Wars – weathered the storm. Support from both PanOceania and Haqqislam have been vital in maintaining a supply of food and medicines for the people. Kokkyō-3 has become synonymous with the Uprising, and Colonel Izawa and the Domaru 'Neko' Oyama are the heroes to the Japanese cause.

The Uprising had a significant impact on Yingxian. On paper, the StateEmpire lost only the small area of land surrounding Kokkyō-3, but the ripple effects of the Uprising shifted the wider political landscape. Logistical support for the revolt was provided from Quibilah, while the strafing and bombing of Yu Jingese troops took place out of old airfields of Valkenswijk. Yu Jing suddenly found itself alone on Paradiso. In response, it withdrew troops from unified operations and brought them back to Yingxian.

Then came the Third Offensive, which took full advantage of the fractious enmities. The situation is dire. The Combined Army leapt on the state of disunity in the forces on Paradiso and surely have not finished yet. Humanity stands ready to lose much more.

SEPTENTRIA

GHEZIRAH

The continent of Septentria has suffered a different type of combat than that grinding across Norstralia. The war on Septentria has been fought predominantly with guerrilla tactics, hit and run operations, and surgical strikes. The Combined Army has rolled over the top of cities, and then withdrawn to their seemingly unassailable bases, the locations of which have slowly been moved further inland as their war of attrition and mobility has weakened and pushed back the undefinable front line. Some posit the apparent discrepancy in tactics used on Norstralia and Septentria is a sign that the Combined forces on Paradiso aren't capable of waging a war on two fronts and that the focus for now is the seizure of land on Norstralia and the suppression of potential support from Septentria. Others suggest that the different styles of warfare are a result of different forces under different commanders. A few theorise that the apparent mismatch is an incredibly brutal game designed to teach the Evolved Intelligence the different ways humanity will seek to defend itself in different styles of operation. Whatever the truth, it's largely irrelevant. What is of importance is that while moving into areas on Norstralia seized by the Combined Army, you are moving into enemy-held territory. In Septentria, on the other hand, territory razed by the Combined Army is riddled with sensors and drones that will trigger a response from a Shasvastii or Morat.

The Haqqislamite region of Ghezirah has been devastated from Combined Army assaults. Fertile lands that once grew an abundance of food and vitally supported both the export industry and war effort have been systematically attacked with defoliation agents. These chemicals, however, seem to have little impact on the voracious Paradiso

plant life that rapidly reclaims the orchards and small holdings. Settlements have been assaulted and the inhabitants either butchered or captured to be used as slaves, informants or test subjects. The scorched earth strategies employed by Morat officers and generals have been devastating for Ghezirah. Formerly a region dominated by many small villages and towns, its population now crowds Ghezirah City, converting a spacious well-planned urban environment into a wash of tents and temporary housing, where wide boulevards are now twisting souks and a dizzying myriad of homes under canvas and cheap prefab sheeting. Among all this tumult, the importance of the orbital elevator keeps the city alive. With incoming traffic and trade, tariffs have had to be increased to help cope with the influx of refugees, but the constant stream of exports and imports utilising the elevator has increased, rather than slowed.

Now under Combined Army control, the former capitol, Ghezirah City, is surrounded by rugged terrain, rocky outcroppings, and a maze-like pattern of small sandstone hills covered in thick jungle that made for difficult ground to assault. With a target as significant as the orbital elevator, however, the Combined Army brought relentless pressure to bear. Orbital batteries and a dedicated multinational air force still contest Ghezirah City's airspace, while Hassassins infiltrate and disrupt on the ground. Terrifying skirmishes are fought in the dark caverns and natural tunnel systems beneath the sandstone hills beyond the city. None are thought to lead beneath Ghezirah City itself, which is mostly built over a granite shelf, but the possibility keeps the occupying forces jumpy. Hibat Allah held the second largest population in the Ghezirah region. Dominated by its hospital, which spread out under temporary structures and tents to cover a large percentage of the city centre, it was a vital component in the war effort on the Septentria front. It was recently swallowed by the Third Offensive.

GAYATRĪ

Gāyatrī is a large and heavily populated region with massive reserves of native flora and fauna. Originally settled by PanOceanian Sikhs in the early days of colonisation, the population was and still is focused on expansive cities that are well laid out and form a part of the natural landscape. Rather than fight an ongoing battle to keep Paradiso out of their streets, the architects of Gāyatrī instead embraced the indigenous environment. Of course, tightly woven electrified fencing surrounds each city, and gated entrances ensure the benign flora is encouraged to thrive, but the more dangerous varieties and a majority of the fauna are not.

A sprawling territory that wraps around the northern portion of the Septentria continent,

Gāyatrī also once possessed territory along the western coast Taittiriya, a former communications hub that was destroyed during the First Offensive in an attempt to cripple the data-network. This ruin of a city is tainted with dark rumours of streets and buildings poisoned by unknown materials used in the Combined Army's bombardment. However, such firelight tales do little to discourage small mercenary and criminal groups from attempting to raid the city for salvage and loot.

Linked by cleverly built road and rail systems, the cities of Gāyatrī are spread apart, with only a few smaller settlements dotted along the transport arterials. Heavily forested, the region has long been a source of good timber, and the environmentalist tendencies of the Gāyatrī governing body have ensured that logging practices are sustainable, something most seem to think is hardly worth consideration given the rapid growth of Paradiso's plant life. The transport systems are also built to be flexible because the mountain range to the south of the region feeds a considerable amount of water into the wide Mithran River and a myriad of smaller rivers and streams, naturally irrigating vast marshlands that sit tightly interpenetrated with the dense jungle. The region is alive with insects, and new soldiers are exposed to fevers and illnesses on a regular basis for the first six months of duty despite a long list of inoculations. The swamps and marshes of Gāyatrī represent some of the most dangerous terrain anywhere in the Human Sphere. It is easy to get lost as the ground seems to be constantly shifting, hence the specially designed transport infrastructure. Marshland can be deceptive; a solid patch of ground might be a step away from a bog. The range and abundance of insects let alone the rest of the wildlife, makes any outing into the wilds of Gāyatrī an adventure. The larger predators are even more dangerous. Whether concealed beneath the murky marshes or in the foliage, or just so well camouflaged they are almost impossible to spot until too close, the reputation of the wildlife on Paradiso is on full display in Gāyatrī. Of course, this also means that trappers and smugglers dealing in animal exports, as well as researchers seeking new species, are constantly on expeditions in the jungles, legal and illegal. While the natural dangers in Gāyatrī are considerable on their own, the ever-present threat of the Combined Army is truly discouraging for settlers and governments. The garrison of Aritya has fallen to the Combined Army, though Uttar Shivar continues to hold out despite increasing pressure. The Combined Army's seizure of Karnapur and its aerodrome not only ceded PanOceanian assets to the aliens but also provided them with a base of operations towards the interior. Rilaspur and Vedi remain largely untouched by direct conflict for now

but have been left to absorb the flood of refugees and wounded from the frontline.

DAHENG

Daheng, held by Yu Jing, sprawls across most of the continent. Lush and verdant, the jungles of the interior give way in the south to massive plantations. Fruits and other plants are grown in significant quantities, providing the StateEmpire with significant revenue from exports. The largest plantations formerly produced crops that supplied the booming textile industries of cities like Wuyi. With the city now fallen, however, and much of the StateEmpire's forces in Daheng in disarray, the land is now growing food the large numbers of refugees and military personnel so desperately need. Critically, to fend off advances from the Japanese Secessionist Army, the Japanese Uprising diverted Yu Jingese troop reinforcements from Wuyi to the Kohaku Peninsula in the east of Daheng. That they would be willing to take such a risk with the economic powerhouse of Wuyi is a testament to the anger which dominated the StateEmpire's reaction to Great Japan.

While the south of Daheng is often portrayed as a picturesque land of orchards and plantations, working these lands is a dangerous task because the wildlife of Septentria is an unforgiving presence. Soldiers help root out any predators searching for an easy meal, and their job is constant and dangerous in equal measure. Given the poor working conditions and strain on military assets, many plantations are operated by shell companies owned indirectly by triads who utilise their own members to perform security. Because the triad-run plantations have been able to take care of themselves, it has provided some relief to the StateEmpire forces. They in turn are sometimes willing to turn a blind eye to the real owners of these lands. Nestled among the plantations are a range of laboratories used to manufacture a wide range of illicit substances, with the triads utilising a range of ingenious methods for exporting them from the surface. To this effect, the plantations of Paradiso are both a major source of exports for Yu Jing and a potential blemish on their honour.

The Quichi Sea glows a soft iridescent green in the mornings and evenings. The sea is a major source of fresh water flowing off the uplands to the north and home to a moss which carpets large portions of the lake surface. The Quichi Sea moss has demonstrated a range of useful applications, the most important of which is energy production. Yu Jing has a considerable naval presence patrolling the southern coast and the Quichi Sea to protect this asset from other powers such as PanOceania. Lashed by frequent and tempestuous

KOHAKU PENINSULA

Thoroughly planned and surgically executed, the Japanese Uprising across the Kohaku peninsula struck at a range of StateEmpire targets almost simultaneously, making a meaningful response difficult. The Kempetai gained a foothold they have exploited to great effect. The JSA fought their way into the Yangdon Valley and pushed Yu Jing forces from the east of the peninsula. Yu Jing's destruction of the Kawaso Dam flooded much of Fukaitani City and resulted in significant civilian casualties. This tragedy galvanised support for the Japanese across the Human Sphere, and motions are underway to charge Yu Jingese officers with war crimes as a result, charges the StateEmpire vehemently rejects. Following a negotiated ceasefire, the JSA have been left out of position in the Yangdon Valley but have managed to consolidate the remainder of the peninsula. Yu Jing quietly tightened the noose around the area but have since been wholly distracted by the Third Offensive.

storms, from sudden and heavy squalls to violent typhoons, Daheng can be a difficult region to cross and logistics has been a real nightmare for the State Empire. Shipments of food, medicines, troops, and other supplies are regularly interrupted, forced to divert, or land as a result of inclement weather. As a result, large supply shipments are often divided between a variety of delivery methods, from air, to rail, to sea, in the hope that this redundancy allows at least some – if not all – of the supplies to reach their destination. Such a complicated network of trade, transport, and supply has allowed much room for the triads to exploit.

ASYÛT

As protected as anywhere on the major continents of Paradiso from the ongoing conflict against the Combined Army, Asyût, the relatively small region left in Haqqislamite possession after the NeoColonial Wars, has become regarded as something of a haven. Asyût city, a carefully planned monument to ancient Mecca, is a quiet city of learning and reflection. The city governing body is deeply religious and derives its power directly from the Hachib. The city and its people are dedicated to the Search for Knowledge, and as

such the universities in Asyût are some of the best to be found anywhere, despite their grim backdrop. Compared to other areas held by Haqqislam, a large portion of the population is Coptic Christian, and the power of the church has done much to influence the way in which Asyût has shaped their policies toward refugees.

With the influx of refugees in recent years from lands closer to the Combined Army, Asyût has taken a novel approach. They spread out the incoming refugees among new smaller settlements throughout the region and interspersed with city dwellers, encouraged financially to relocate, or with new settlers from Bourak. The aim is soft integration, with refugees evenly divided between Haqqislamite citizens across the region to prevent a build-up of ethnic conclaves and the segregation. The efforts toward maintaining a sense of cultural pluralism alongside natural integration has been broadly successful, and the government has viewed the influx of refugees as a potential source of economic growth. However, this process has been placed under significant strain as the number of incoming refugees has risen sharply since the Second Offensive. Asyût, as a result, is a cultural



melting pot, with refugees from previous years allowed the opportunity to live and prosper as a part of the Haqqislamite Empire. In previous years, the result has been an economic boom and has also made Asyût the region of choice for those fleeing the front line. The steady increase in prospective new citizens has become, more recently, an economic drain, with more demand for housing and resources than the current infrastructure can provide. Rather than change approaches however, Asyût has undertaken major development projects, using the new labour to help build what it hopes to be the foundation for regional growth. It has also begun to limit the number of refugees it is accepting.

As an upshot, the wilder western portions of Asyût, abutting Daheng in the south and Gāyatrī in the north, are slowly seeing pockets of land development. The associated infrastructure includes an extension of transport links, the power grid, and communications network. For all the successes however, Asyût is suffering under the burden of change, something not every citizen has welcomed. Every month, more and more people flee the front, and some organised social resistance movements have emerged to question the current approach. So far these have been largely peaceful, but the government of Asyût recognises that the region is on a tipping point.

THE ISLES OF PARADISO

MOLOKAI

A volcanic island far to the south, Molokai is home to a number of unique species, including large king tiger seals, which typically weigh around 600 kilograms as an adult and are extremely territorial, especially during the mating season. These animals make the coast lines of Molokai a difficult proposition to traverse at the best of times, and almost impossible during the mating season. A disproportionate number of travellers have been killed by a rampaging bull king tiger seal, largely because the coastline is one of the best locations to find the rare and highly sought-after Paradiso truffles. Stalking the king tiger seals are the even more belligerent kragodon. These great reptiles regularly grow upward of 3 metres and reach surprising speeds for short bursts. Traditionally an alpha predator, they show no fear of any creature they encounter, seal or human, and readily regard any other living thing a viable source of food. Molokai rises steeply toward the interior, and while the great triple ring of calderas at its heart have been dormant for some time, seismologists note that there has been a slow build-up of activity and that an eruption could occur at any time.

Despite being a PanOceanian territory that accommodates a small collection of logistic and storage units, an astroport, and a naval base, Molokai is a lonely place where the trees and plants bend under the constant harsh winds. Most of the island is covered with a thickly bristling scrub and odd patches of dense spiny grasses. On the coast and the several volcanic plains of the interior, the Paradiso truffle is in abundance, although often hard to find. The demand for these rare truffles always manages to attract the foolhardy, and every year a procession of adventurers makes the trip by expensive boat in the hope of striking lucky. They share dilapidated, but carefully concealed, hides with occasional small teams of scientists and researchers, making for unlikely company in the cold, grim landscape of the island.

FLAMIA ISLAND

Already a hotbed of tension, Flamia Island is officially a demilitarised zone (DMI) and has approached breaking point since the Japanese Uprising. Flamia boasts facilities, cities, and infrastructure run by nearly every power in the Human Sphere. Haqqislam and PanOceania provide logistical and military support to the battles around Kokkyō-3 and Fukaitani, and Ariadna and O-12 officially declare support for the nascent Great Japan. Yu Jing has responded by increasing security assets around Zhurong City. The StateEmpire has also been suspected of engineering patchy blackouts to the rest of the island facilities by limiting the output of the Zhurong geothermal plant, which provides energy to most of Flamia Island. The ratcheting of tension has seen the Tohaa make preliminary preparations to remove the most important research and personnel from the Narooma Advanced Hospital Complex into orbit. Bureau Aegis and Bureau Noir have combined efforts to ensure any attempts at sabotage or espionage by any other power are prevented before they can precipitate a conflict on the island itself. Onza Island, a part of Flamia and home to the O-12 command centre in charge of the DMI, has seen an influx of new personnel, with agents from Bureau Aegis and Noir, as well as negotiators and diplomats whose job has seen them working tirelessly to prevent conflicts.

Based on intel gathered by Hexahedron agents and shared in previous briefings, Yu Jing has accused the Aranda Astrological Facilities of disseminating anti-StateEmpire propaganda via Arachne. Recent footage and information concerning the suffering of Japanese workers at the geothermal plant and other facilities on the mainland has made its way onto both Arachne and Maya. Yu Jing claims this footage has been falsified and

that this pro-Japanese propaganda must have been manufactured with the aid of Japanese sympathisers and rebels within Zhurong City. The claims have so far been made with no evidence to back them up, and the threats of punitive action are regarded as pure sabre rattling in the face of the Japanese secession. But with the Japanese cause gaining broad support coinciding with roving blackouts across the island, many in O-12 recognised the connection and are now concerned with what may follow. The most recent wave of blackouts was swiftly followed by claims from the Sagres Orbital Monitoring Station of an attempted and possibly successful hack of the facility as the back-up generator fired up. For the Bureau Aegis and Noir operatives on the island, it appears no coincidence at all. Tensions are at an all-time high, particularly in the wake of the Combined Army's incursions during their Operation: Flamestrike offensive against Bureau Aegis's Rearguard Operations Centre (ROC).

INVERNACULUM

The facilities on Invernaculum are ostensibly owned and run by PanOceania, but the hyperpower has outsourced operations on the island to private research firms that manage a wide range of independent projects. All of this is suspected to be little more than smoke and mirrors, and it is assumed in the intelligence community that the research facilities on the island are directed in large by the Hexahedron. Ample private money has been invested into research on Invernaculum, and while the pretence of independence is officially maintained, critics and conspiracy theorists alike point to the fact that the island houses significant military assets and much of the so-called private funding has been derived from PanOceanian government grants.

Recently a collection of files leaked onto Arachne. Supposedly redacted portions of an intelligence report imply that the 'hoax' Cosmolites on the island are not actually a hoax. This has sent the conspiracy community across Arachne and Maya into a frenzy of speculation about the real purpose of the money and military assets being funnelled into the island, especially since the island is referred to as 'Dr Moreau' several times. The official response has been to laugh at these obviously falsified reports as little more than the product of conspiracy nuts. The media circus surrounding the 'Moreau Files' has been enough to encourage diplomats on Concilium to ask for an official explanation from PanOceania, with talk of a full investigation. As it stands the Invernaculum is a constant source of rumour. Heavily guarded with a military presence, disconnected from the local datasphere, and a no-go, no-fly zone to all but approved transports, it is ripe for such conspiracy

theories. The island itself is rocky, cold, and bleak when compared to the verdant continents and islands that dominate Paradiso. Of course, the appearance is as much a part of the storied popularity of Invernaculum as any rumour. A more perfect backdrop for secret governmental research could hardly be found in even the most trope-ridden Maya drama.

SÁLVORA ISLAND

Sálvora Island is the official planetside base of operations for the Paradiso Coordinated Command and the political representative of O-12 to Paradiso. Though a tiny and isolated island in the Lemurian Ocean, Sálvora Island has developed into a key fulcrum around which the political levers and negotiations take place. Sálvora City, which dominates the island, and hosts envoys from every government in the Sphere and includes representatives of both the larger powers directly and the regions of Paradiso. In addition, the Tohaa have been encouraged to expand their embassy. Sálvora Island has become their primary political presence on Paradiso, and as such this secluded island attracts more political attention than it otherwise might.

In the last two years, the usually staid halls of the O-12's Sálvora Governmental Complex have erupted into a cascade of deals, arguments, and bitter denouncements. The Japanese Uprising – specifically the support and advice offered to the forces of the Japanese Secessionist Army (JSA) on Paradiso by the Tohaa – has seen otherwise cordial relationships implode. Tensions here have always been high, as has competition for deals, particularly among corporations seeking valuable military contracts. However, the Uprising has ratcheted everything to a whole new level. Screaming matches in the public hall of the assembly have seen wide distribution on Maya networks. The military and logistical support of the JSA troops in Kokkyō-3 and Fukaitani have resulted in long-standing agreements being torn apart on camera. The wheeling and dealing of Sálvora Governmental Complex has never been more overtly hostile, and representatives of O-12 have had their work cut-out preventing the small scale clashes spiralling into an all-out war. Yu Jing pulled their state envoy after the brutal sabotage of the Kawaso Dam caused significant civilian casualties in Fukaitani. The newly recognised JSA is fuming over the use of Haqqislam naval assets to provide cover for the evacuation of Yu Jingese forces from the Niwa beachhead. Whatever alliance the JSA thought it had with Haqqislam has been shaken. In addition to this internecine conflict, the motivations and future intentions of the Tohaa have been called into question. Members within O-12 quietly feel like the whole situation is sliding out of control.

Much of this bitter feuding has been in the public domain, with many debates, arguments, and spats the result of planned ambushes in open spaces such as the Hall of the Assembly. Never have so many across the Human Sphere been as engrossed in the daily events of the political sphere as now. Daily news lines read like a bad Maya drama, and the political blow-ups of previous years seem more docile every day.

SISARGAS ISLANDS

Uninhabited and barren, the Sisargas Islands are well known in military circles as the focus of a flurry of activity and a number of off-the-record skirmishes. An active Cosmolite ruin was discovered in a cave system beneath the mountainous centre of the largest island of the group. A typhoon and torrential rain caused a mudslide, revealing the caverns in which the Last Cosmolite had remained hidden. Windswept and lashed by frequent tropical storms, black-ops teams were sent in after the initial discovery popped up on scans. Making landfall in such conditions was no easy task, missions had to be aborted, and teams were lost purely due to the violence of the weather. Over a week, high intensity skirmishes were fought across the broken island surface and in the caverns that housed the Cosmolite involving teams from a number of the powers in the Human Sphere, including an assault team from ALEPH's Special Situations Section. The activity of the Cosmolite also attracted the attention of the Combined Army. Morat teams and Shasvastii infiltrators wreaked mayhem. Rumour in the intelligence communities suggests that the S.S.S. team, fighting off both Morat and Tohaa forces, managed to remove something from the Cosmolite amid the furious carnage of the final hours. Whether or not they made it to evac is not officially known. A projectile slammed into the Sisargas Islands right on top of the Cosmolite ruin, killing any remaining Combined Army forces and sterilising the area.

YINFENG ARCHIPELAGO

Settled in the early days of the NeoColonial Wars, Yinfeng was originally conceived as a propaganda piece for the Yu Jing StateEmpire. Settlers from Sol were chosen specifically to represent peoples from across the cultural milieu of the StateEmpire. These were predominantly wealthier Japanese and Korean families, and poorer Chinese ones, who were resettled in small village enclaves, and the island was terraformed to support a successful farming industry. The image of a unified territory on Paradiso, which strongly implied equality between the various cultures of Yu Jing, was used specifically to target non-Chinese heritage Yu Jingese settlers to come to Paradiso from Sol and Shentang.

In reality and in the face of the images of a picturesque landscape where settlers from across the StateEmpire worked together, the Japanese, Korean, and Chinese settlers remained in villages wholly representing one or other of the cultures. A de facto and unspoken set of borders developed, and feuds and disputes between the various groups became common as time wore on. With the Japanese Uprising on everyone's 24-hour news feed, these tensions have escalated into clashes between ethnic gangs. Given the tight control of weaponry imposed on the islands, these clashes have largely been brutal melee affairs with weapons that have either been smuggled in by triad or Yakuza groups or improvised from vehicle and machine parts. Yu Jing has recently sent a message to the islanders by threatening to send in a force to assert control if the clashes do not cease. There are no illusions as to who would suffer most if this action were to be taken, and Japanese on Yinfeng have tried to strengthen Yakuza contacts in an effort to gather some support from either the Submondo or JSA. O-12 has officially declared that any action by Yu Jing on the Yinfeng Archipelago will be closely monitored, but how heedful the StateEmpire is of O-12 at the moment is anyone's guess.

ZENDA

Zenda, to the north of the Septentria continent, is a temperate island that has been heavily terraformed to support wineries, small holdings, and orchards. Wide swathes of the island are plains that are dominated by native grasses. For a time, the grasslands were used as pastures, but too many animals had to be euthanized following injuries to the padding of their feet from the pervasive land urchins. Animals are now kept in small holdings cleared of any native flora. Zenda is a getaway, a place where the wealthier citizens of Paradiso and officers from across the military forces take leave and relax. There are several resorts and hotels, as well as an extensive hospital run by the Order of Saint Lazarus, which includes an extensive psychology wing funded specifically to support soldiers on leave from the front line. The northern end of the island is off limits and heavily guarded with an electrified barrier and military personal. Here several monitoring facilities stretch aerial arrays toward the sky and large radar dishes track all military traffic on the ocean, in conjunction with a satellite array in orbit. Resort owners have clubbed together to petition PanOceania and ALEPH to remove these facilities elsewhere under the real concern that they will attract the attention of the Combined Army. So far, the only forthcoming response has been a statement issued by PanOceania military officials that Zenda will be protected in the event of any Combined attack, but at this time, it seems highly unlikely. Needless to say, this has been far from comforting.

GENERAL PERCEPTION

Outside of military circles, who or what launched the projectile is a matter of hot conjecture, but orbital analysis by so-called experts suggests it was fired somewhere in high orbit, with its trajectory possibly taking a number of hours. Within the conspiracy theorist's circle, suspicions highlight the coincidence of rumours sparking something had been recovered with the impact, but no confirmation of this has been possible. The fact that Yu Jing launched the missile at ALEPH's request is a highly classified secret. That the T'zechi Digester was removed from Sisargas is an even more tightly controlled secret known only to a handful of individuals across the Human Sphere. The Digester, relocated to the hidden research facility, known only as the Penny Arcade, is classified at the highest level. Those without the clearance to know the full story of the Sisargas conflict suggest that the Tohaa, seeing the S.S.S. forces were prepping for emergency evacuation after securing an alien device, were the ones who destroyed the Sisargas Cosmolites. Military propaganda dismisses these theories as tin-hat conjecture, because suggestions that the Tohaa are anything less than ideal allies of the Human Sphere would have a significant impact on morale.

CHAPTER 3

FLORA, FAUNA, AND DISEASES

MAYA'S FINEST

The following shows currently boast the highest ratings as Paradiso's best and most beloved reality adventures in syndication. These are:

Monsters in Paradise
Myth or Monster
Tracking the Beasts [WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT TRACKING THE BEASTS IS ON HIATUS UNTIL INVESTIGATIONS ARE COMPLETE.]
Paradiso Myths and Legends

LAST CONFESSION

I became a cryptozoologist because I no longer felt the calling to be a priest. There are dangers out there that have a direct impact on my community, my people. After a while, you can only take so much of your community, your flock being picked off by some unknown creature and being unable to do more than say that our maker has a plan.

I became a hunter to keep my flock safe, and when I discovered the existence of the beast and was able to bring in help from our government? Well. That did a world of good. Much better than any amount of condolences could.

The struggle to survive is a constant pressure. Even in the gentlest of environments, inter-faction tensions and territorial disputes are commonplace. Humanity seeks to expand ever outward, to secure safe and prosperous futures for its descendants, and this ancient survival instinct has led to both wondrous discoveries and devastating ruin.

Much like humanity, Paradiso has its own survival instincts. Even though it may not move with the determination of a singular consciousness, the planet's needs are clear: it will survive.

Paradiso, though, is ripe with promise for humanity's prosperity. Fresh, fertile lands easily support growth and life, and new food sources were already plentiful on the planet before humanity began its colonisation.

There is great potential for growth and expansion here, but it is important to remember that Paradiso is alive, awake, and fraught with peril. Humanity is the visitor, a potential parasite to the world; either we learn to become a part of the planet's ecosystem and express mutuality, or risk being little more than short-lived visitors, nuisances to be defeated and wiped away. Survival in this beautiful, dangerous new world requires extra care and consideration. Sometimes, something as simple as basic training upon disembarking can help ensure a better survival rate. Other times and other challenges, though, might require more creative thinking to help ensure humanity's endurance.

THE SURPRISING
RESURGENCE OF
CRYPTOZOOLOGY

The constantly changing and rapidly evolving nature of its animal and plant life causes explorers of Paradiso to find new species almost daily. With any abundance of discovery, though, also comes the potential for exaggeration, exploitation, or outright fearmongering. Sometimes it can be difficult to separate fact from fiction.

There are stories of creatures rarely seen, whose existence is possible enough that the tall tales might be true. Add to that the fact that a new colonist on a new planet might think they saw "something" in the depths of the jungle, and the chances of stories exploding into panic become exponentially higher.

Panic has been called the most dangerous illness of all, and at our deepest, primal roots, humanity is still something of an instinctive flock. For the safety of the communities, it is prudent to quickly and efficiently figure out which threats are real versus which are, for lack of a better term, jumping at shadows or crying wolf.

Some embrace the potential for storytelling. In fact, Maya has developed several entertainment channels that focus solely around the myths and legends of these creatures, and several reality and faux-reality shows. Virtual reality experiences are usually saved for the wealthier connoisseurs and risktakers looking for a new form of adventure.

TROUBLE IN PARADISE??

Uh-oh, loyal viewers! Looks like somebody got caught red-handed – or is that red-pawed?

Beloved reality series Tracking the Beasts has been flagged by ALEPH and is currently under investigation for potentially releasing off-world, semi-sapient predator hybrids into the wild, and then claiming that they were new, indigenous life here on Paradiso!

The series is on official hiatus while authorities investigate the allegations. Importing their own monsters – can you believe it? Sound off! Do you think it's true? Does the show deserve to be under fire and stuck in hiatus?

We'll keep you informed on this hot new topic as we learn more. Thank you for subscribing to SIP_SIP_GOSSIP's Flash-News feed!

Others though, would rather know the truth hidden among these urban legends and local tales. While Paradiso has seen a reassuring swell of scientists and biologists, an old, nearly forgotten specialization has found a resurgence, the study of cryptozoology.

Following folktale footprints and tracking prey by little more than rumour, the job of the cryptozoologist is difficult at best and thankless at worst. Even the most flexible-minded scientists agree that the specialization must be classified as

FLORA

a pseudoscience; the nature of the work itself is speculative, and the results are often non-standard and hard to replicate.

However well intended the profession, tracking these new creatures and plants often marks a cryptozoologist as little more than glorified treasure hunters, monster hunters, or worse, upstarts looking to prove their worth for the next Maya live entertainment series.

In the end, it seems that the profession is both blessed and cursed to be constantly on the lookout out for new dangers, only to be forced to hand over any true discoveries to an established xenobiologist to get an official verdict. Local officials have also been known to claim the discoveries of novice hunters, adding further controversy to the profession.

Despite the risks inherent to the job, the profession is rapidly growing. This is especially true in the outlying settlements and deeper jungles, where the local flora and fauna are less controlled and can rapidly evolve from one generation to the next.

Nonetheless, these rumours and strange sightings need to be researched and investigated. A new settlement that swears they found a cold-weather creature in an otherwise-warm environment should be studied in case there is evidence of a climate-based hazard. A few bloodbriars are to be expected, but what of the settlement that has discovered entire thickets of the plant? A well-prepared hunter has the opportunity to make many great discoveries and earn fame, treasure, and respect along the way.

As any traveller can confirm, the most notorious and dangerous plants to encounter in the wild are the bloodbriar and the karava vinetrap. Even a single bloodbriar plant is a hazard due to its pressure-sensitive roots and quickly reactive nature, while the karava vinetrap hooks its meals with deadly efficiency.

There is another plant considered a lesser threat than the bloodbriar, while still being enough of an environmental hazard to warrant a strong warning. The rakuno plant, more commonly called the “linger-long,” is one of Paradiso’s most aggressively spreading plants.

Neither as instantly responsive as the bloodbriar, nor so insidiously tempting as the karava vinetrap, the linger-long does not seek to instantly trap or otherwise react to prey. Instead, the plant’s drive seems born of a different need: it wants only to grow, flower, and take in as much sunlight as it possibly can.

Interestingly, both the karava vinetrap and the linger-long have such a prodigious growth rate that those two species are held mostly responsible for the constant clear-cutting and herbicidal measures that settlers have come to expect on Paradiso. Often, if an attack or power outage results in loss or damages to a settlement’s clear-cutting machinery or herbicides, it becomes a race to save that settlement from being reclaimed by the wild.

The central stem of the rakuno is low to the ground and protected by spines that discourage the local herbivores from feasting on it. It spreads through a series of tiny tendrils, and even during the brightest part of the day, it is very difficult to see the fine vines. As the linger-long grows, these deceptively

A well-prepared hunter also has the opportunity to fabricate their own mysteries and solve them, create their own rumours as a trap for rivals, or devise other chances to swindle.

Just don’t get caught, like Tracking the Beasts did.

CASE STUDY: THE QUTRUB

One example of a creature long disputed and only recently proven to exist is the Qutrub. Technically considered a sub-branch of the Gāyatrī Moehau’s evolutionary tree, the Qutrub is similar enough to be unsettling, all the while maintaining enough difference to warrant the specification and splitting of the species.

Many of these creatures live in the deeper caves and sunless areas on Paradiso, but the influx of new, potential predators and food sources – namely the Combined Army and humanity – have driven some to the surface.

The Qutrub are notably pale compared to the Gāyatrī Moehau, and their hairlessness lends a creepy familiarity to humankind. Add in the fact that these carnivores are

nocturnal and prefer surface hunting in the safety of night, and it is little surprise that hysterical settlers started spreading rumours: frightened whispers of aliens, mutants, sepsitorised humans, or at their most extreme, of the dead rising from their graves.

Here, the schools of science and biology agree wholeheartedly with the local cryptozoologists; vampires, ghosts, and ghouls do not exist. As such, the strange creatures we now know as the Qutrub warranted investigation, capture, and study.

Regular proof of the existence of the Qutrub helped to slow – and eventually, outright stop – the spread of those particular urban legends and fearful rumours.

delicate tendrils seek new chances for sunlight in the canopy, winding their way up taller plants and trees using very sharp, fine spines. As anyone who has accidentally walked into one of those tendrils could tell you, they only appear delicate. Thankfully, the spines only grow in one direction. As long as one lingers long and is patient, removing the spines is a fairly easy task. However, moving forward once caught will cause the painful thorns to embed themselves.

If one is lucky, they'll just snag clothing, but an unlucky traveller will not notice these tendrils until it's too late. Many new, inexperienced, or otherwise-unknowing travellers carry scars from their first run-in with the linger-long.

As is true in much of nature, across many planets and systems, sometimes the most benign and friendly looking plants can be deceptively dangerous. Take, for example, the corocoro. This tall, lazily sprawling plant is covered in soft, furry down. Its leaves are oversized and look especially velvety, but it would be vastly foolish to try to pet a corocoro.

If one dares touch the inviting surface, one finds that the cloud-like covering it comes off very easily – and just as easily sticks to skin. The substance is very similar to silica or fibre glass. Not only that, but the silken hairs contain a substance poisonous to humans. One accidental brush against the wrong plant could potentially cover a careless limb with these tiny, prickling poisons.

Even the corocoro's fruit has that hazardous fluff on it. Ironically, the fruit is not only edible, but it is fantastically delicious. The fruit is considered a luxury and a delicacy; it must be gathered and prepared with utmost care.

GOOD EATING

Not everything here in the jungle is out to kill you. Because the soil is tremendously fertile, farming industries can thrive here. Plants are often fast-growing and hardy. Between the discovery of new vegetation, the new agricultural centres, and the potential for genetically modified farming, the proliferation of new and tasty plant life seems a brave and beautiful new world.

One of Maya's most popular food-centred shows has found a new spin-off series here as well.

Paradiso even has a whole new library of tantalizing spices and peppers. Spicier vegetables and peppers, while giving meals their delicious heat and added flavour, can kill or otherwise

ZUMMO'S TABLE RECOMMENDS

Jungle dangers and delicacies. Fruits fresh from the tree and vine. Brand new herbs and spices to challenge and tempt every palate, from settler to sovereign.

Join me, universally acclaimed Master Chef Zummo, as I take you through the gastronomical wonders of this world and prove that the only thing being slain...is your hunger!

protect against common foodborne bacteria. Capsaicin, the chemical found in Earth peppers, adds character and taste to a dish. However, a strong enough pepper might even lead to a state of euphoria once the burning pain subsides. Make no mistake: capsaicin is a neurotoxin. In large enough doses, even the kindest of chilies can cause a negative reaction, ranging from seizures to heart attack and death.

Paradiso's plants contain multiple chemicals of a similar nature, tantalizing chefs and foodies over the Sphere. However, if prepared improperly, these new chemicals can be just as poisonous as any long-studied toxin.

HEAVEN'S TOUCH

One of Paradiso's most beloved plants is called the heaven's touch. Decorative in nature, this tiny flower barely grows beyond three inches tall during its entire life. This diminutive plant is reminiscent of an Earth dandelion in shape, though not in colour. Due to some as-yet-unknown quality of the plant, from root to flowers, the entirety of the plant has a soft, shimmering pearl-colour.

ZUMMO'S TABLE RECOMMENDS

Don't forget – the seeds of the heaven's touch, if harvested at just the right time, are a delicious addition to any salad.

Reminiscent of the flavour of pumpkin, these seeds often need no additional seasoning to be enjoyed, though some enjoy added richness by coating them in butter before baking. Spread the seeds in a single layer and bake until golden brown.

Already resplendent in the sunlight, at night, the flower shares its true beauty, a phosphoric glow dances up the fibrous stalks, leaves, and petals with a soft, radiant light. Though not enough to light one's way, these flowers are popular with tourists and locals alike.

One of the things the rakuno also shares with the karava vinetrap is that unhooking a surprised explorer is frequently more unpleasant than first contact itself.

In a pinch, the linger-long's thorny tendrils make fantastic barbed wire. One runs the risk of inviting the aggressively growing species into cultivated space.

The heaven's touch has a life cycle similar to the dandelion. After flowering, it grows light, cloudy seed heads. When the time comes for the flower to release its seeds and die away, the wind and rain carry the soft, airy seeds aloft, creating a stunning, bittersweet display: a million tiny, glowing seeds carrying a million wishes to twinkle like stars in the night.

MAERKI PLANT

Most plants on Paradiso are stationary and rooted in place for the duration of their lives. As such, there are a great many herbivores looking to lunch upon the most tender leaves and the sweetest fruits, but like on Earth, plants adapt to defend themselves.

On Paradiso, evolution is, by nature, quick. Things like thorns, barbs, or knobs along the main stalks of plants are unsurprising; these are common, obvious, and easily spotted defences. A sharp-eyed traveller will be prepared for more than just these defences. For example, there is a particularly beautiful plant to be found along commonly walked trails. This plant, the maerki, has oversized, bright green leaves whose shiny exterior resemble plastic or other synthetic material. Of course, it is not.

When bitten into, the plant boasts a bitter sap. While this poison is relatively harmless to humans, its paralysing properties are particularly effective against insects. The maerki doesn't taste particularly good by itself, and its paralysing agents are easily ignored by humans. More often, you see these leaves used as pranks instead of food.

FAUNA

ZUMMO'S TABLE RECOMMENDS

When the maerki is placed in an otherwise-normal salad or other vegetable-based meal, there might be a foul taste at first, but then, a surprising thing happens. The chemicals of the plant cause a mild synaesthesia, confusing one's palate. For the next twenty-four hours after partaking, your culinary experience is turned upside-down: sweet is suddenly salty, salty is suddenly sour, and so on. Some chefs use this to their advantage, serving a little of the maerki's poison with an appetiser in order to help bring out or even completely change the flavour for the rest of the night.

The animals of Paradiso are a constant source of wonderment, with much to be learned through

study. Biologists and zoologists study and test new theories all the time, to discover new data that will help the Human Sphere not only in the reclamation of Paradiso, but potentially beyond.

Some research teams are testing theories about which native creatures might prove helpful in colonisation. While experiments and tests are still underway, the topics of domestication and genetic manipulation for breed enhancement are of great interest to many governments and corporations.

For example, the massive and mighty dreadnoughts, already well known to be both hardy and nomadic, are currently being studied for their potential as heavy-capacity caravan creatures. Their propensity to travel in herds serves both the needs of the animal and its keepers.

Dreadnoughts are also being considered for their potential as domesticated farm animals. As herbivores, they already have a wealth of their preferred plant life on this, their home planet. Even in the wild, it's a rare thing to see an animal choose to hunt these massive creatures; it would be foolish to not speculate about the mutualism that can be encouraged from domesticating these great beasts.

CAUCHEMAR CATS

Cauchemar cats are just one more of the native creatures that started off as little

DR. WASSWELL'S FINAL JOURNAL

I've been watching these beautiful creatures for weeks now as they chatter and dance and play in the branches above me. They've stopped screeching at me days ago – could it be that they have finally accepted me as a benign observer?

I remember watching the vids left to me by the GenetiTree Corporation, reading the logs of my ancestors before me that described my family's noble calling. I watched them train and befriend those monkeys, teaching them to pick the highest-quality leaves for tea.

I'm certain I can crack the code with these creatures. They are so similar to monkeys! And, I can see for myself that they prefer the tall trees with the sweetest fruits.

I'll study them before making my recommendation to HQ. It should be very easy to bring a few of these creatures into the lab to study and train. In fact, maybe I'll try to tempt the little, shy one to me...

We suspect that this story, one of the very first local 'urban legends' born on Paradiso, became the origin story for everyone's favourite characters, Paradiso Sam and Jungle Jared.

Make sure to catch the Adventures of Jungle Jared and Paradiso Sam—available NOW through Kids' Safety Entertainment, exclusively from Maya!

In a strange turn of fate, it seems black cats are no longer so universally feared. It is now white cats that are eyed with wary suspicion.

more than a rumour, brought to reality and classification through the hard work and efforts of cryptozoologists.

Due to their nocturnal nature and natural proclivity towards hunting alone, these beautiful and deadly creatures took time to study and classify. The giant cats prefer to hunt fresh, living food, but they are not above scavenging—or hunting the scavengers.

The cauchemar cats are pointedly determined and singularly focused. Once they have honed in on their intended target, they will hunt it until it is theirs.

One of Maya's most beloved series, Paradiso Myths and Legends, shares a story about a cauchemar cat. It focuses on the adventures of two friends trying to find their way home after being lost and separated from a larger group. According to the local story, the two friends kept each other alive and safe by taking turns watching for danger while the other napped. During one of the first nights, the friends had set a trap for food and for added safety. Instead of catching dinner, though, they'd caught the dark cauchemar cat that had been stalking them.

The trap had wounded the giant cat, temporarily slowing the creature and forcing it to limp. As the nights continued, though, each night, one or the other friend noticed that same cauchemar cat following them, limping as it walked.

It followed them, leaving its home territory and the familiarity of its preferred hunting grounds. Depending on where you are, the legend changes. Sometimes, the friends make it home. Other times, the cat finally got its vengeance meal. Yet other endings have the hunter and the hunted end up friends, teaming up against a larger, deadlier threat. Since the existence of the cat has been confirmed and catalogued, we must deduce that at least a part of this story was true.

Interestingly, because this cat's fur is always solidly black with little to no hue variation across the species, an albino cauchemar is a rare sight indeed. To see one is a notable event. This great, white cat is often only reported once, and then not seen in the same area again. Some people like to speculate that there is just one albino cauchemar in existence, and it is hunting prey that is leading it on the longest journey of its life. There are some long-term and native Paradisan settlers who prefer a more aesthetic lifestyle. To them, the albino cauchemar holds a more spiritual significance as a totem or indicator of fortune, the great white cat that watches over everyone yet only ever seen once.

On the other hand, for every person hailing the albino as a good omen of strength, there are others who insist that, should you see the Great White Cat, it is an omen that you are certainly about to perish.

TAN'GEN SPIDER

One of the deadliest common creatures that can be found in Paradiso households and immediately around settlements is the tan'gen spider. This large arachnid is responsible for great number of human deaths, especially in the elderly, giving a poor reputation. However, the tan'gen spider is thoroughly non-venomous to humans.

In fact, these creatures are particularly helpful in keeping some of the more unpleasant pests out, as it has a particular taste for poisonous insects.

How then does it manage to have such a high body count? This industrious predator builds and rebuilds its web, the better to catch its preferred prey. So, the spider web that wasn't there when you came home last night is suddenly there in the morning, with some new, dangerous prey still alive. People accidentally walk into its web, panic, and get stung by the spider's dinner!

BUTCHER BEES

Aside from disease-carrying mosquitoes, another commonly seen insect is called the butcher bee. Wasp swarms are never fun even at the gentlest of times, and Paradiso grows some particularly large varieties of wasp-like insects.

Interestingly, butcher bees display a notable intelligence. For example, after securing itself a hearty meal of thornworm, it will meticulously remove all of the poisonous barbs from the creature before bringing it back to its nest. This ensures the safety of itself and its larval children.

SCORPIONETTE

One of Paradiso's most famously deadly creatures is the scorpionette. Never has a planetary danger been so ubiquitous—or so nerve-racking. Contrary to its name, this creature is far larger than the average Earth scorpion. The scorpionette averages about thirty centimetres from pincher to stinger. What's more, they are carnivorous, constantly hungry, and have two stinging tails. Scorpionettes prefer hide-and-strike tactics, usually preparing an ambush from beneath low-hanging or ground vegetation. One of their tails is usually kept ready to attack, while the second one is typically hidden or otherwise prepared in case its first attack does not connect with its prey.

Generally, out in the wild, the scorpionette doesn't hunt humans or other large prey. Often, such

attacks are unfortunate and circumstantial. A scorpionette is far more likely to attack when an inattentive person accidentally treads too close or steps on it.

The scorpionette's stingers are particularly nasty. They are very sharp, and their paralysing sting is so effective that unattended, a human can die from that wound in less than twenty-four hours. The timer is, of course, sped up if the location of the sting is very close to the human heart (or other alien cardiovascular system). If both stingers are used on the same victim during the same encounter, an individual will need to get immediate medical attention within twenty minutes, or else die from muscle paralysis.

BENEATH SAPPHIRE AND EMERALD WAVES

As is the case on many planets, it seems the most nightmarishly visaged, hideous creatures are below the ocean's surface. This seems especially true the deeper one gets – and Paradiso's oceans are especially deep.

To this day, the Coordinated Command has not successfully completed a full map, or otherwise successfully explored every inch of the planet's oceans. The marine creatures that biologists have found and were able to catalogue are just as unpredictable and ever evolving as the creatures above water level.

QLUGFISH

One species of fish is very well known for its rapid evolution from one generation to the next. The qlugfish is also especially skilled at the arts of camouflage and ambush. Much like the anglerfish of Earth, these creatures share a similar muscular and bone framework. However, the qlugfish's skin seems especially quick to adapt according to their generational, environmental habitats.

The qlugfish has adjusted so thoroughly to its home on the ocean floors that it has shed most of its scales and no longer swims very well. In fact, it has evolved past having a swim bladder, the internal organ that helps a fish to remain buoyant and balanced. Its fins, too, have started to change and mutate, and they currently resemble an approximation of arms and legs.

At this point, this creature has not yet developed enough to qualify as amphibian. It still lives thoroughly underwater to survive, though with its quick progress, scientists are already speculating what the next generations could bring.

Until the next evolution, though, these fish prefer to select one territory and remain there. In part, this is due to their need to stalk their prey, but more noteworthy is the fact that these predatory fish have horrible balance.

Forced to crawl along the ocean floor, they prefer to use their camouflage to allow them to hide in plain sight. They then wait for their prey to approach, staying as still as possible. Once their target is in range, they strike. The qlugfish's tongue is attached to the front of its mouth in a similar manner to a frog's. It darts out, wrapping its prey up and snapping it quickly into its mouth.

Should the qlugfish miss its target, then it has lost that meal. Its hiding spot will have been ruined and its balance thrown, allowing the lucky survivor to get away.

NOKURO

Also living under the ocean's surface is a small, aquatic creature somewhat reminiscent of a crayfish or other miniature lobster. The nokuro crustacean is beautiful, and while it is not a threat to humans, it is still considered a threat in its home territories.

Aside from its colourful, shimmering shell, perhaps the most interesting thing about the nokuro is the power with which they strike their prey. These carnivorous, sometimes cannibalistic shellfish have very powerful, rounded front fins. With these, they strike their prey without warning, moving so quickly and hitting so hard that the victim is instantly harmed, shocked into unconsciousness, or with a particularly strong strike, felled in a single blow.

The nokuro's punch is so quick that the strike itself leaves a cavitation bubble that instantly collapses in on itself, producing heat and light as it does. The result is, essentially, a second, shocking hit that is comparable to a low-calibre bullet.

Another dangerous predator and a distant cousin to the nokuro, the nephropidae shares the preferred territory, though each brings their own danger to this aquatic turf war. Where the nokuro developed the ability to strike with tremendous force, the nephropidae instead developed a specialised set of pinchers. These secrete a very powerful neurotoxin that work quickly to paralyze their victims, allowing it to enjoy its meal at its absolute freshest, still alive. Notably, while the nokuro is not considered a threat to humankind, the nephropidae certainly is.

Neither the nokuro nor the nephropidae are particularly picky about how they acquire their meals. Both will ravenously devour the other if

The nokuro's brightly coloured, chitinous armour is highly prized by local crafters and tourist vendors. Its meat tastes rather bland, but they still command a high price at the dinner table. This is usually due to the patron's option of taking the fine shell home with them, a permanent souvenir from a great dinner on Paradiso.

allowed the chance, but just as readily, they will hunt and cannibalize their own species.

ZUMMO'S TABLE RECOMMENDS

In contrast to the nokuro's bland but easily prepared meat, the nephropidae has particularly sweet meat, but it requires a very carefully trained chef to prepare it. The meat is naturally tender and smooth on the tongue with a beautiful and complex scent. Due to the potential danger if prepared improperly and the scarcity of cooks so specially trained, this meat is tremendously expensive. Unless one is particularly rich – or particularly adventurous – it is best to stay clear.

THE SHASVASTII THREAT

Naturally, with all of the quickly adapting specimens of dangerous new flora and fauna, the inhabitants of the Human Sphere are not the only ones keeping a close eye on things. The progression of evolution and the possibility for

new protections and weapons are of significant interest to many parties. The biggest threat in this, unsurprisingly, comes from the Envolved Intelligence. The Combined Army is already on Paradiso. It is a fair assumption that they are moving forward with the same experiments as the Human Sphere – as well as others not yet discovered. What's more, the Combined Army already has willing and capable troops able to directly integrate or otherwise impersonate others.

The Shasvastii have spent millennia manipulating their own genetic makeup to be able to thrive in any number of environments. Their deep-seated drive to survive made them adept at modifying themselves with pieces of new biological code.


Speculo Killers are supremely adaptable and already well-versed in changing their appearances to mimic an intended target. With Speculo Killers already a security hazard to humanity and its systems, explorers must be tremendously careful as humanity tries to reclaim the parts of Paradiso lost to the Combined Army. There is already chaos



enough without having to worry if a teammate is not who they appear, if a pack animal is not really an animal, or worry that the predator you're studying is not what it seems, but instead a test of a new iteration of the Combined Army.

This caution should extend to any reported cryptids in the area, especially ones resembling a human or a humanoid plant. Currently, there are no ways of easily discerning or revealing a Shasvastii agent in the wild, and with unconfirmed reports depicting them as appearing from the very flora itself, almost everyone agrees it's better to be safe than sorry.

Intelligence already knows that the Shasvastii are a looming threat and insidious, preferring to use toxins to not only remove a singular threat, but eradicate entire settlements at once. Despite the disdain expressed by the Morat, Shasvastii infiltrators prefer these tactics; their poisons are used to deadly effect on town water supplies and local waterholes. Coordinated Command's science divisions are already studying the Shasvastii's preferred toxin of choice, the aquatic toxin:

Shasvastii Aquatic Toxin: Ingested, Instant 3 (4 Momentum), Hour, 1+4  physical damage
Harm Effect: Dazed

DISEASES

There are many important health risks beyond poisons and venoms. Just as new species of plants and animals are being discovered, so, too, are new diseases and microbes. Contrary to popular belief, the more elite doctors one encounters in the Human Sphere are typically overqualified to serve on Paradiso. Their tendency to drive towards an ideal of human perfection is dissonant here. The best doctors and caretakers for a difficult environment like this are the ones who specialize in the treatment and prevention of illness and disease. For those who cannot bring a doctor with them, it is advised to pack extra supplies. One never knows when the only available water might be contaminated, poisoned, or riddled with invisible parasites. One meal improperly cooked or one drink from unfiltered water can do far more harm than one might suspect. For more information, see *Infinity Corebook*, "Food Poisoning," p. 347.

Nearly every single person who arrives on Paradiso will eventually find themselves fighting off some sort of illness or disease. Much as the body needs some time to adjust when changing environments, so, too, does it need time to adjust from one planet to another. Many well-known

ailments thrive in temperatures like this, and with Paradiso's penchant for quick adaptation, a lot of rare diseases and strains find a perfect breeding ground here. This is partially due to the fact that Paradiso doesn't get as cold as other planets. A lot of the insect and animal world has no drive to hibernate or otherwise spend a season asleep. Of course, mosquitoes and flies tend to be the most frequent carriers of infections and disease, though any number of creatures could theoretically carry some form of illness or another.

A quarter of the personnel who disembark onto Paradiso contract an insect-carried illness referred to as the Paradiso sweats (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 347). A very unpleasant and unsettling experience, the sweats are most easily distinguished by patients with clammy skin and a faraway or glossy look in their eyes. The nice news, though, is the familiarity of this illness. It is easy to overcome if brought to medical attention sooner rather than later. Everyone agrees, though: it is certainly disorienting and a very rude welcome to the planet.


LALATI SICKNESS

Lalati sickness is an infectious disease that occurs in humans. This particular ailment includes common symptoms of severe itching and raised, pus-filled bumps along the skin, much like an allergic reaction.

Normally it is contracted through multiple bites from the lalati fly. This parasitic insect has an ovipositor; one bite from the fly is not much of a concern, but multiple bites deposit multiple eggs under the host's skin. Those eggs then hatch into larvae inside their human host and begin to eat their way through their host.

If one is lucky, the lalati larvae find their way to one's skin, where they emerge, full and fed. If one is unlucky, the larvae never find their way to the surface, and instead perish in their human host, rotting from within.

There is no vaccine. The only real prevention is to avoid taking multiple bites from these flies at the same time, often by way of an insecticidal salve or a traveling case with insect repellent. Once infected, treatment often involves targeted nanites, a procedure that is deeply expensive.

Lalati Sickness: Insect Bite, Complex 1 (5 Momentum), Week, 1+2  physical damage
Harm Effect: Staggered.
Special Effect: If two Effects are rolled, the larvae has remained lodged in the body and the victim suffers a Horrific Wound (see *Infinity Corebook* p. 113).

While there is no outright proof, we would not be surprised if the Shasvastii not only had the potential to survive – but, sometime in the future, actually acted upon that ability – and ended up outright controlling the EI instead of being subjugated to it.

ALL DRAINS LEAD...

With the EI's penchant for poisoning water supplies, a heavier thought has occurred: would the Shasvastii ever attempt something on a much larger scale?

While we're not sure – yet – how much would be required to poison one of the oceans, it is something to keep an eye on. Paradiso is constantly changing and evolving, but we don't know if the planet could outpace something like that.

It would be a salted-earth tactic, but we can't put anything past them.

JUNGLE JARED REMINDS YOU!

Hey there, Jungle Adventurers!

Remember that when you're exploring the wild, you should always bring extra supplies with you! Remember, "Supplies, not surprise!"

While settlers have been present on the planet long enough to understand and even recognize some of the most common illnesses and diseases, the ever-changing nature on the planet itself often makes it difficult to create an effective antiviral drug or vaccine.


Some scientists prefer to focus on one particular kind of disease to try to build a more generalised treatment. The most elite doctors and xenobiologists may search for a way to genetically enhance the settlers to build a natural resistance to that particular ailment.

SONBOL SICKNESS

Another disease transmitted through insect bites is sonbol sickness, and it is notably insidious. At first, the disease presents as an illness or onset of a flu. Headaches, body-ache, and fever are very frequently encountered during this first stage. Unlike a flu, though, this illness lingers. Exhaustion eventually sets in and saps the strength from the afflicted patient.

This first stage lasts, on average, two months before progressing. The patient begins to experience a growing confusion or sense of inner disconnect. It becomes more difficult for the patient to keep their balance due to a growing numbness and tingling in the limbs.


As the final stage of this disease takes hold, the patient begins to have difficulty gaining restful sleep. If this is not treated early, the patient's body is likely to give up the fight.

Sonbol Sickness: Insect Bite, Progressive 2 (5 Momentum), Week, 1+2  physical damage
Harm Effect: Dazed.
Special Effect: Two consecutive failures on the test to resist the contagion result in the Fatigued condition, which is in addition to Dazed.

SHUKON SPIDERWORM SICKNESS

Back on Earth, it was bad enough to have to face the existence of digestive parasites. Paradiso, though, seems to have upped the ante. Now imagine that they are spiders.


Earth's parasitic worms, such as the tapeworm, are tiny creatures, often ingested accidentally, and then only seen once they are full grown and often making their way out of you. The shukon is the stuff of nightmares. Much like with tapeworms, the young spiders are accidentally swallowed, often while its host is asleep. This creature manages to attach itself to the human intestine where it successfully feeds off of whatever its host has been eating. The afflicted often finds themselves losing weight quickly, and always feeling hungry despite gorging themselves. The kindest way to remove this creature is to allow a doctor to do it. Starving oneself to encourage a speedy departure usually ends in a live, hungry, angry creature making its way out of one's body.

Shukon Spiderworm Sickness: Ingested, Complex 1 (1 Momentum), Week, 1+2  physical damage
Harm Effect: Fatigued.

CRIMSON CURSE

Originally named by superstitious settlers, this fungal infection has kept its original name despite its scientific classification due to the horrific nature of how this fungus reproduces and spreads itself. The spores of this yeast-like, branching fungus take root in warm and moist environments, preferring the safety of an animal's internal organs and in humans, usually the lungs.


As the fungus grows, the infected patient typically feels dazed and confused, with congestion causing difficulty breathing. Once the fungus reaches maturity, growing its vegetative mycelium so that it may proliferate, it causes further constrictions in its victim's lungs. The patient coughs and otherwise expectorates in a fine, bloody spray, successfully spreading the spores. Eventually, the branching fungus dies off, sloughing away from the patient's lungs, but leaving extensive scarring in its wake.

Crimson Curse: Airborne, Complex 2 (4 Momentum), Day, 1+2  physical damage
Harm Effect: Dazed while the fungus grows. Failing two consecutive tests mean the spores mature. At this point, each Effect results in the Bleeding condition.
Special Effect: For 1 Heat, the GM may require nearby characters to make an Average (D1) Agility test to avoid being spattered with blood.

SHÍ-TǏ DISEASE


Originally thought to be an allergy or other inflammation response in the human body, this particular infection is a long-term and often dormant disease. Symptoms of shí-tǐ (石体 "Stone body") disease are still largely unknown since scientists have only recently started seeing any sort of trackable, repeated evidence. Infections can be present without outward symptoms for anywhere from five to twenty years and then suddenly manifest. When symptoms appear, the human body reacts with an inflammation process, swelling of the throat, muscle twitching, and an eventual degeneration of both nerves and nervous system.

The degeneration may be both blessing and curse. Sometimes, this results in a lack of ability to feel pain. This might be a boon for a soldier in a particularly rough line of duty – except for the fact that the nerve damage eventually extends to not feeling anything at all in the affected areas. Unless watched very carefully and regularly checked, the afflicted may miss any potential harm done to them, purely because they could not feel that damage anymore.

Shí-tǐ Disease: Airborne, Chronic Progressive 1 (4 Momentum), Month, 1+2  physical damage
Harm Effect: Fatigued.

PARADISO PHAGE

A particularly nasty infection to experience – and notably stomach-churning to behold – this horrible, withering microbe is carried by the small, grey-black creature known as the nasnas lizard. Sometimes called the pale rot, the Paradiso phage accelerates the breakdown of organic matter, namely the victim's flesh. As this microbe takes hold of its victim, it causes a notable paling of flesh. If allowed to continue untreated, the phage will eventually rot limbs and kill its victim. As the victim's flesh succumbs, it secretes a watery gel, breaking down skin and muscle tissues. Ultimately, the watery flesh becomes unstable and sloughs off the bone at the slightest abrasion, splattering into a slime on the ground.

Paradiso Phage: Progressive, Complex 2 (4 Momentum), Day, 2+3  physical damage
Harm Effect: Dazed, Horrific Wound
Special Effect: If the victim fails two consecutive Resistance tests, they gain the Bleeding condition (representing the sloughing of skin). In this instance, Bleeding cannot be removed through Absterge, but can only be removed by successfully and fully resisting the contagion. Once the contagion has run its course, the character gains the trait 'Horrific Scars.'


INFECTED WOUNDS

Nasnas Lizard, p.96

With all of the potential hazards that could show up at any moment, it almost seems too obvious to address the topic of proper wound care. All the same, a simple reminder before traveling has been shown to reduce the likelihood of infections due to untreated wounds.

When open wounds are ignored, leaving them untreated or otherwise exposed to a potentially infectious environment, any number of microorganisms and bacteria can potentially contaminate the wound.

Symptoms of an infection might include redness, pus, or a foul smell. The wound, most often, will fail to heal properly. The victim frequently suffers chronic pain as a result, and if unchecked, an infection might go so far as to spread into the nearby bone.

Infected Wounds: Injury, Progressive 2 (3 Momentum), Hour, 1+3  physical damage
Harm Effect: Dazed.
Special Effect: For 2 Heat, the GM can inflict the Staggered condition as well

THE ADVENTURES OF JUNGLE JARED AND PARADISO SAM

One of the most beloved Paradisan series in syndication is the energetic, animated adventures of two best friends, Jungle Jared and Paradiso Sam. The series is one of Maya's longest-running children's "fun-ducational" shows, using brightly coloured and dynamic action scenes to teach general safety habits.

These well-loved adventures hold a certain charm to them; they call back to a simpler time. Some have even compared the series to historical shows and fairy tales from Earth: Aesop's Fables, the fantastic adventures of Hans Christen Anderson, and – perhaps a little more tellingly – Buckaroo Banzai or Ferdinand Feghoot.

Paradiso Sam is enthusiastic and excited to go on adventures; in contrast, Jungle Jared is more careful and skilled. The series is popular both for Sam's comedic recklessness as well as Jared's heroic rescues and the "Lessons Learned" closure to each episode. Take, for example, the tale of Jungle Jared verses the wriggling vines:

The mission of the day was for our heroes to investigate and map a new, previously unexplored corner of the jungle. In typical fashion, after preparing their supplies – taking care to linger on each item packed, of course, to

help teach children safety tips – they left to go explore the jungle.

While mapping this strange, unfamiliar part of the forest, Paradiso Sam found himself particularly drawn to a wriggling vine and the mesmerizing patterns of its curling foliage. Of course, Jungle Jared knew better than to rush right in, but despite warning him, Paradiso Sam ventured a little too close. Suddenly, the beautifully swirling vines snapped to vicious life!

The carnivorous plant pulled and yanked a yowling Sam towards its large, toothy maw. Jared stepped forward, intending to free his friend, only to discover that the plant itself oozed a strange, sticky black pool of poisonous ichor. As was typical for the series, the two friends bravely fought the peril and returned home, both a little worse for wear but notably wiser.

As the episode came to a close, their wounds were treated by Medical Adventure Mary, as they always were. She reviewed with them the mistakes they made and the lessons they learned for the day. The episode closed out as it usually did, with the three of them speaking in unison to the camera, "Lessons learned today make for a safer tomorrow!"

CHAPTER 4

THE COSMOLITES

We have been betrayed. In our determination to protect our people from the Combined Army's relentless advance, we failed to detect the deceit of the T'Zechi Digester being interrogated on Paradiso. The Digester divulged great advancements, but the Lost Annals were a trap that we arrogantly set for ourselves, the information we extracted nothing more than corrupt knowledge. The nanobot network impregnating our buildings is now hostile to biological systems and corrupting the data gathered by our efforts.

Worse yet, the viral weapon released into the human colony has acted as a rallying call. We are now battling them as well as the Digester's lethal trickery. We underestimated the determination, training, and guile of the humans and their combat personnel. We were drawn into a trap, with the detonation of their ship's reactor further decimating our personnel.

Despite these failures, we have formulated a plan which requires the utmost secrecy. The human mind can be unpredictable, so we must be careful. Our agents will deposit a damaged Ur-Probe among the ruins of the human's ship, making it appear as if the destruction was an accident. Once the probe is discovered, it will reactivate and alert the Combined Army to humanity's presence. During the assaults that follow, we will plant information that will draw the humans into contact with the Tohaa Trinomial. Humanity will therefore act as a shield, buying our people precious time against the advances of the Evolved Intelligence as we search for a new Digester.

[Extract from Tohaa Trinomial planning report to supervision unit on Paradiso]

Many events throughout history have influenced human culture, but none of these has ever possessed the dramatic potential to shape the future of humanity to the extent that a recent discovery on Paradiso has the potential to if unlocked. Buried deep in Paradiso's jungles are a series of mysterious ruins constructed by as yet unidentified aliens. Dubbed the Cosmolites, scientists have dated the angular stone structures, indicating that they are at least 250 years old. The Cosmolite complexes are formed around low-ceilinged rooms connected by subterranean passages. In contrast, larger chambers are filled with obelisk-like buildings in dispersed, mathematical arrangements or colonnades that create a network of corridors.

The broad network of corridors stretches great distances underground. Drones mapped the convoluted network of chambers, caverns, and colonnades, but few people have explored the entire network. The complex's rooms vary in size ranging from small chambers to grand natural caverns reinforced by techno-construct architecture. Larger chambers may be wide open, while others are divided into smaller sections by grand colonnades. The grandest chambers of the Cosmolites are a network of stairs and platforms whose purpose is unknown.

The Cosmolites stone is etched with patterns denoting an advanced civilisation. The stone was clearly not hewn, and their smooth surface indicates advanced construction techniques. The Cosmolites show no sign of technology, but structures do show signs of decayed biotechnology that has no local terrestrial match. The purpose of the structures is a thing of conjecture. Some researchers suggest it was an abandoned settlement, while military theorists argue it was a forward operating base.

THE UR-PROBE

The discovery of the Cosmolites heralded the beginning of the terminal stages of the Neo-Colonial Wars as PanOceania claimed rights to the First Finding and secured ZuluPoint. Among the ruins, the explorers found a device of unknown origin that is now known to be an Ur-Probe.

The Ur-Probe had clearly spent time in deep space. In addition to the normal wear from space-borne micro-particles, scoring to the probe's fuselage was indicative of damage from energy weapons. While

it unambiguously displayed low-level nanotech activity, it was determined to be effectively inactive. PanOceania quickly established a research outpost to study the ruins, and the teams were astonished when they discovered the ruins of a human settlement near the structures.

RUINS OF THE AURORA

The xeno-archaeologists found the ruins of a human settlement near the Cosmolite structures, and researchers realised they'd discovered the wreckage of the Aurora. The seed ship thought lost upon the collapse of the GA6037283 wormhole had, in fact, survived, albeit heavily damaged. The ship crash-landed on the Norstralia continent near ZuluPoint. The colony had clearly thrived for a time, but the colony fell to tragedy and all personnel were lost.

No one knows for sure, but the most popular theory relates to the Aurora colonists attempting to study the Cosmolite ruins. The scout teams appeared to have activated some dormant nanotechnology, and an infection spread through the colony. In what seems to be a desperate attempt to prevent the spread of the nano-virus, they committed mass suicide to avoid a fate worse than death. Blast patterns on the wreckage and the charred remains of the settlers suggest they rigged the ship's engine to explode.

THE PEACE OF CONCILIUM

While PanOceania studied the ruins and the Ur-Probe held within, they were able to make little headway. The probe's technology was beyond human capabilities to decipher. A few years into researching the Cosmolites, communications with the outpost studying the ruins were suddenly lost. The PanOceanian team sent to determine what caused the loss of contact found an abandoned research facility. The Ur-Probe and all the team's equipment was gone, and the residue of a complex nano-technological process suggested that Yu Jing led a search and destroy operation. This incursion prompted the Hexahedron to authorised punitive raids against their enemies for stealing the probe.

When the NeoColonial Wars came to an end, O-12 mandated the formation of the NiemandZone to protect the ruins under the Peace of Concilium. O-12 established a demilitarised zone around the site and stationed a small Bureau Aegis garrison to dissuade the G5 nations from operating in the zone.

Other than rumours of Teutonic Knights making incursions, the borders of zone were respected by the hyperpowers.

In the intervening years, the Cosmolites became a curiosity to scientists authorised to study them, and Maya abounds with Cosmolite-related conspiracy theories and entertainment. The hyperpowers once again turned their attentions to vying with each other for economic and political advantage. Paradiso's popularity and prosperity boomed, right up until the day the Combined Army opened a previously unknown jump gate and fell on the planet's populace with abandon.

FIRST LANDING

What was initially thought to be a Yu Jing raid was later revealed as the Ur-Probe reactivating, exactly as the Triumvirate had intended. The Ur-Probe decimated the human crew and their equipment, then used their component parts to fashion a probe fitted with an implosion engine and trans-system emitter. Ships throughout the system detected faint signals as the drone fled towards a wormhole, though they were so miniscule they were chalked up to glitches in on-board equipment. Once through the wormhole to EI-controlled space, the drone alerted it to humanity's existence.

Life on Paradiso returned to a status quo for a few years. Then the Combined Army tore through a new jump gate, and the meagre naval forces permitted by the Peace of Concilium attempted to make contact. PanOceania sent the corvettes Terpsichore and Olhada do Bom Jesus who eyed the Yu Jingese frigate Long Qi nervously as they approached the newcomers. The interlopers refused to respond to all communications. The Terpsichore took immediate evasive action when a weapon launch was detected. The Exrah particle beams caused severe damage to the PanOceanian corvette, but it was the kinetic torpedoes that ended the vessel. Terpsichore's sister corvette, Olhada do Bom Jesus, and the Yu Jing frigate, Long Qi, managed to open fire on the hostile star ships, but were quickly dispatched by the Combined Army vessels.

The invaders burned past the wreckage and propelled straight for Paradiso. The Combined Army's rapid assault caught Paradiso's local defence forces completely unprepared. The aliens swarmed ZuluPoint, disgorging Morat soldiers from landing shuttles, and the token Bureau Aegis garrison was forced to abandon the site as the Combined Army quickly took the demilitarised area around the ZuluPoint.

The Combined Army seized territory quickly after claiming ZuluPoint, and the planetary forces were

unprepared for the Combined Army's rapid advance and alien tactics. By the end of the First Offensive, humanity had lost four cities to this savage enemy, leaving a line of carnage and bloodshed.

OLD GRUDGES DIE HARD

The first naval battle against the Combined Army has been dubbed as the Acheron Incursion. The few survivors of the battle spent days locked behind bulkheads and drifting in escape pods, with their tales having since become the subject of many novels and Maya dramas relating their survival against all odds. None are more famous than the crew of the Vingança.

After being rescued, survivors from all three ships eventually left military service. Driven by fury at the loss of their colleagues, they salvaged and restored a military vessel, dubbing it Vingança. Together they formed a mercenary crew determined to gain revenge for comrades lost during the battle. This highly modified ship prowls the Paradiso system claiming bounties on EI ships.

THE SIGNAL

The intractable fighting against the Combined Army saw swathes of Paradiso lost to their advance. The fight was desperate, but in what seemed like humanity's darkest hour, fate presented them with an unprecedented opportunity when a signal was detected coming from the Cosmolite ruins.

Within three hours of the signal being detected, the hyperpowers descended on the site to investigate the signal. The PanOceanians were the first to arrive, and their stealth transport set down in the ruins, undetected by the Combined Army. The Teutonic Knights, under the leadership of Father-Officer Seiler, calmly worked on the techno-constructs, unaware that a Haqqislam agent was placed in their midst. Notified by their clandestine agent, Haqqislam dropped onto the Cosmolites in fast re-entry shuttles. Lacking the stealth technology of the PanOceanian craft, the shuttles alerted the Combined Army as they passed through alien detection network. The Teutonic Knights reacted to the incursion, and the Hassassin agent wrought havoc on the soldiers examining the constructs.

While the PanOceanian forces were caught off guard, they were experienced warriors, and Father-Officer Seiler ordered his men to form two contingents. One focused on recovering the data from the constructs, while the other engaged the

The Ur-Probe repaired itself as expected and escaped through the wormhole connecting to EI territory. Believing a rival faction had stolen the probe, the humans remain completely unaware of what happened. It is only a matter of time until the Ur-Probe alerts the Evolved Intelligence to the presence of humanity on Paradiso.

Now that the Combined Army has assaulted Paradiso, we can move to the second stage of our plan. We will plant an exploration craft in the jungles near the ruins of the Cosmolites. The transponder signal placed in the ruins will provide the coordinates to the scout ship and the memory core contained within. We have planted data that will provide all the necessary information needed to allow the humans to locate and make contact with our forces.

[Extract, progress report to supervision unit on Paradiso, destination unknown]

Hassassin Bahram force descending upon them. What came next was a titanic clash of skilled and capable warriors.

Father-Officer Seiler fell to the Haqqislam forces but gave precious time to the data recovery team to extract the data and escape to their shuttles. The Hassassin agents had no time to revel in their victory as their EVO operators communicated that the alien army was closing in on their position. Having only partially recovered the data from the constructs, the Haqqislam forces retreated.

While the Haqqislamite and PanOceanian forces engaged one another, Yu Jing deployed a team of elite Tiger Soldiers lead by the legendary Ko Dali to capture the data from a Cosmolite sub-station. The Tiger Soldiers arrived too late and watched the PanOceanian stealth shuttle bolt from the location. It was moments later when Ko Dali realised why the Haqqislam and PanOceanian forces had extracted so quickly. The Combined Army was descending upon the sub-station.

Recognising the only chance to recover the data would be to contain the Combined forces, she and her team engaged the aliens in a series of running ambushes causing chaos in the ranks of the Morat forces approaching the site. As Ko Dali and her team fought the aliens, she ordered her team to exfiltrate with the data. Her team watched in dismay as she stood alone against advancing aliens, her twin pistols barking at the enemy as she fell. A great hero was not only lost to the enemy, but even worse, compromised and then pointed straight back at humanity's heart with vengeance in hers.

TRIANGULATION

With the data recovered, it was quickly discovered that the data was some sort of transponder signal containing coordinates. PanOceania and Yu Jing immediately set to interpreting and decoding the data. Cryptographers and analysts from both sides claimed time on ALEPH's processing power and relied on advanced stimulants to maintain a faster pace than their opposition. Meanwhile, Haqqislam turned to the Nomads for their data interpretation



skills to understand the partial data they recovered from the site.

The information pointed to an unexplored section of the Norstralia jungles, and the data referenced a ship whose emergency beacon had activated the Cosmolite tracking substations. The two powers descended on the location assembling rescue and recovery teams to secure whatever the ship might contain. The air transports faced severe storms that regularly swept over the continent, and the powers' combat forces were scattered across the area of operations. The dispersed operatives engaged in wild firefights throughout the jungle as they tried to make their way to the crash site of the alien ship.

When the forces arrived at the ship, they discovered a vessel of unknown origin that didn't conform to any known Combined design. They also discovered a highly advanced cloaking and security system protecting the ship's central memory unit, now known as the Black Box. As the forces arrayed against one another, Yu Jing quickly discovered it was outclassed by PanOceanian troops and their heroic leader, Father-Officer De Fersen. While De Fersen lead the fight against the Yu Jingese forces, PanOceanian specialists worked to extract the Black Box from the ship. With the Black Box in hand, the PanOceanian forces evacuated the site via rapid air transport much to the fury of the Yu Jingese forces who lost their quarry once again.

JUNGLE AMBUSH

Incensed at another defeat, Yu Jing was not about to allow PanOceania to deny them another alien artefact. They were determined to claim the Black Box for themselves. While Yu Jing simmered in its rage, PanOceania quickly realised the Black Box had more effective intrusion countermeasures than the previous recovered data. The alien artefact had to be moved to a facility with more advanced equipment and greater processing power than the forward operating base where it was currently being studied.

Worried about exposing the operation to enemy intelligence services, PanOceania decided to forgo air transport in favour of a low-profile convoy through the thick Paradiso jungles. The jungle canopy provided perfect cover from orbital surveillance, and under a tight information blackout, the convoy left the forward operating base. When the convoy left the base, the fate of the convoy was already determined. Yu Jingese military intelligence's primary orders were to locate and claim the Black Box, and what appeared as an innocuous supply convoy was easily identified as covert transport for the device. Yu Jingese forces ambushed the convoy, striking with unrelenting

force. The PanOceanian forces guarding the device were practically cut down before they could respond, and Yu Jing claimed the Black Box for themselves.

TRAIN HEIST

The Hexahedron wouldn't forget the theft of the Black Box, and PanOceanian intelligence put all its efforts into recovering what they saw as their lawful property. Realising the Imperial Service would be operating under the utmost secrecy, and hoping to intercept small packets of information, Director Dunbar ordered her agents to focus on low-level personnel and auxiliary systems instead of data networks and high-profile targets. All the sources pointed to personnel being transferred to a secure facility on Yinfeng Archipelago.

By forcing an emergency landing of the technician's transfer pods, PanOceanian operatives captured a collection of technical personnel. With the information recovered from the interrogations, they were able to discern that the Black Box would be transferred by robotic mag-lev to the coast, where it would then travel to the archipelago via a high-speed hydro-slider. Intercepting the hydro-slider would risk damaging the alien device, and instead PanOceania decided to intercept the mag-lev when it passed through a subterranean station where the escorting air surveillance remotes couldn't follow.

Once the mag-lev entered the facility, the PanOceanian EVO troopers triggered the emergency braking systems and proceeded into the station to reprogram and redirect the Mag-Lev to PanOceanian territory before Yu Jingese forces could respond. Unfortunately, the operation was compromised. When PanOceanian operatives entered the facility, they faced a Morat assault force determined to take the Black Box. Only later would it be revealed that an aide to General Almeida had been replaced by a speculo killer weeks before and alerted the EI to the PanOceanian plan.

Unprepared for the ambush, the PanOceanian forces desperately fought off the Morat soldiers. The entire operation ended with PanOceanian soldiers barely surviving the confrontation. As the mag-lev left the station redirected to PanOceanian territory, it contained more corpses than living soldiers.

After all of the fighting, the mag-lev approached its new destination. Only then did the soldiers see what awaited them at their destination. Hovering over the station was a huge Bureau Aegis armoured transport bearing the insignia of O-12. The PanOceanian forces were ordered to stand down and hand the Black Box over for analysis.

After having fought over the memory core we planted, the humans have analysed and acted upon the data we've provided them. Intervention to help the humans decode the data from the explorer ship was unnecessary, as they were quite eager to understand the information we'd planted. The humans were desperate for an ally against the Combined Army and opened a jump gate to Trinomial space. Our agents in the Trinomial diplomatic delegation inform us they've signed a treaty with the humans and immediately went to work studying the memory core. It did not take long for them to analyse the information.

The next stage of the plan is already in motion. The humans are planning a massive offensive to distract the Combined Army from their movement towards Cosmolite. Soon, the T'Zechi Digester will be in the hands of the humans. Our plan is coming to fruition, and if all goes well, this will give us what we need to drive the Combined Army back and reclaim our worlds the Evolved Intelligence stole.

[Progress report to Triumvirate supervision unit on Paradiso]

THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

The data recovered from the Black Box would provide the location of yet another wormhole previously unidentified by human astrophysicists. The device also revealed the existence of a race now known to humanity, who were themselves at war with the Evolved Intelligence. The intelligence was confirmed through interrogations of captured Tohaa soldiers who had been serving as auxiliary troops taken from worlds annexed by the Combined Army.

After great debate in the O-12 senate chambers, the powers of the Human Sphere determined that any potential enemy of the Evolved Intelligence was a powerful ally. While some cautioned this species might not be trustworthy, it was decided to construct a jump portal and make contact with this new potential ally against the Combined Army.

When humanity made contact with the Tohaa, they were as baffled by the presence of the scout craft as humanity. They agreed to a treaty which they intended to sign in a special ceremony to formalize the new Human-Tohaa alliance. The races met in orbit above Paradiso on the EveningStar orbital facility and signed the Contact Treaty formalizing the new alliance.

The celebration of the alliance was cut short when two days later, Combined Army vessels assaulted the EveningStar station. Shasvastii operatives infiltrated and wreaked havoc with targeted killings and the disabling of the station's orbital maintenance system. As the station fell towards the planet, a general evacuation sounded. Human forces on the station focused on evacuating the civilians while essential diplomatic and military personnel were ushered into crash coffins. With the evacuation complete, the station's pseudo-AI initiated controlled explosions breaking the station apart to burn up on re-entry into the atmosphere. After twenty-four hours of chaos, the new alliance surveyed the damage: they had lost a key bastion and operational platform in the system, personnel key to the war effort were dead or captured, and the Combined Army had established how it viewed the recent partnership.

THE LAST COSMOLITE

After the destruction of the EveningStar, the new Human-Tohaa alliance set to work trying to understand the events that brought the two species into contact. Both human and Tohaa scientists cooperated to study the data on the Black Box after establishing an embassy on the Free Island

of Sálvora. The Tohaa Trident had no idea how one of their scout ships arrived on Paradiso, but they were determined to understand what the explorers had discovered and the fate which befell them. After drilling down into the data, the scientists discovered one of the last entries in the device's log pointed to the Sisargas Islands in the middle of the Barrier Sea. The islands were uninhabited, covered in thick jungle canopy, and assaulted by severe tropical storms making them impractical for colonisation.

Micro-probes sent to survey the island discovered another Cosmolite complex buried deep within the jungle which the explorer ship had detected before crashing on the Norstralia continent. The mimetic systems threaded throughout the Cosmolites were still active, and the human coalition and the Tohaa Trident jointly organized an operation to investigate the ruins. Unfortunately, a Tohaa diplomat captured by the EI during the destruction of the EveningStar held a copy of the Black Box's data in their diplomatic pouch, making it certain the Combined Army most likely had the same information.

The alliance realised the risk of letting the Evolved Intelligence take ruins for themselves, and they were determined to prevent the Combined Army from taking the Cosmolite. Coordinated Command gave orders to engage in an all-out offensive occupying the enemy forces while the Sisargas Island operation took place. In Norstralia, combat groups Black-C and Green-A hammered the alien positions, while Yu Jing's Green Banner Army struck enemy supply lines with ruthless efficiency. Meanwhile on Septentria, combat group Red-K coordinated with the Japanese Sectorial Army to penetrate deep behind enemy lines. While the PanOceanians sacrificed themselves on a strategic hill that would become known as Red Mound, the Japanese struck at the heart of the Combined Army's mobile, orbital defence platforms.

Despite the Coordinated Command transports landing on the island in the middle of a tropical storm to cover their approach, the Combined Army sensed the offensive was a distraction. They deployed troops to claim whatever treasure lay inside the Sisargas Island Cosmolite and descended upon the island with air carriers and gunships so rapidly that orbital bombardment was unable to target them. The united Human-Tohaa force knew they had to secure the facility against the enemy assault, and their forces divided to cover all access points, while an ALEPH-Tohaa strike team made their way to the central core of the complex.

The ensuing fight was brutal with Nomad, Ariadnan, Haqqislamite, and Tohaa troops fighting a losing battle against the Combined Army. Nomad forces planted traps at entrances to the Last Cosmolite, detonating explosives as the Morats assaulted the complex. The human coalition force's battle lines wouldn't hold, and the fighting found its way into the interior of the Cosmolite. The intrusions were noticed by the complex's security systems triggering the release of counter-measures: a brutal viral weapon that spread through the complex. As the virus tore through the forces, panic ensued. Soldiers ran to escape the viral assault and took refuge in decontamination chambers scattered throughout the complex.

In the chaos, the ALEPH assault subsection lead by the historical AI recreation, Achilles, found themselves at the edge of the central core of the complex alongside the Tohaa. At that moment, the two forces turned on each other determined to claim the core for themselves. While ALEPH had no idea what the core contained, the Tohaa knew it held a venerable T'Zechi Digester. The Tohaa were determined to prevent an infant race such as humanity from claiming it. However, it was Achilles and his biosynthetic soldiers who claimed the field.

Entering the complex core, Achilles and his troops ascended the stairs to the heart of the central chamber. There they beheld the ancient T'Zechi Digester and the savage Avatar of the Evolved Intelligence that came to claim it. As these great titans battled, the chamber began to come down around them as the fighting above had severely damaged the Cosmolite's structure. ALEPH's Myrmidons were dogged by Shasvastii sniper fire and falling debris. If the enemy didn't kill them, then the collapsing Cosmolite most certainly would. With a great cry, Achilles charged the Avatar, and the Avatar fell, beheaded by Achilles's blade. As the cavern collapsed around them, an emergency escape system was activated by an enemy soldier. The T'Zechi Digester was catapulted from the collapsing structure where it would later be recovered in orbit by a shuttle, and then Achilles used the same system to evacuate himself and his soldiers. As they were flung into the sky in an escape shuttle, the Last Cosmolite collapsed below them. Moments later, as the remaining troops cleared, the jungle erupted with an orbital weapon impact. Nothing remained of the Last Cosmolite.

PENNY ARCADE

Under international law the Digester has been brought under O-12 to study and understand the bio-artefact. They have gathered scientists and specialists from across the Human Sphere. The fear of Shasvastii infiltration warranted constructing

a special secure facility to study the entity deep within Human territory. The final destination of the T'Zechi Digester is the subject of much speculation, but the location's code name is Penny Arcade.

The Tohaa have not revealed the nature of the Digester to the humans, but the humans have extended an invitation to study alongside them. Despite Coordinated Command's reservations about their new ally, they are ecstatic with the results of the operation. Meanwhile, the EI knows a T'Zechi Digester is somewhere beyond Paradiso, which it is determined to claim for itself.

WILD GOOSE CHASE

Only two Cosmolite sites are known to exist, but many believe there must be more Cosmolites on Paradiso. This has spawned a series of expeditions, both legal and illegal, to search for "Cosmolite 3." Cosmolite Chasers hire xeno-archaeological teams to investigate claims of the discovery of a new Cosmolite. Some are curious wealthy benefactors, while others are conspiracy theorists chasing the latest lead from the depths of Maya. Regardless of the source of payment, mercenaries can find work as security and guides. Traversing the Paradiso wilderness is a perilous affair even if you never see the Combined Army. A broad swath of Maya films, sensaseries, and novels are even based on the very idea of discovering Cosmolite 3, further fuelling the cycle.

The T'Zechi Digester is now in the hands of the humans. It's clear our government doesn't trust the humans and are providing no information on the nature of the Digester. As Heralds of the Digester, we have agreed to work alongside the humans to prevent them from harming the Digester as they greedily try to extract information. Our agents report the scientists assisting the humans are under orders to sabotage any efforts that may be a threat to the T'Zechi or the Trinomial.

The Evolved Intelligence is fully aware the humans have the Digester deep within human space. As anticipated, the Combined Army has pulled troops from the Tohaa front, taking pressure off Trinomial forces. Now the humans will take the brunt of the Combined Army's ire. From all appearances, our plan was a complete success.

[Progress report to Triumvirate supervision unit on Paradiso]



CHAPTER 5

PARADISO SYSTEM

Named after its habitable dominant planet, the Paradiso system harbours just as many deadly natural phenomena as those of artificial construction. The system centres around a fierce binary star composed of the red dwarf Nakula and its ever-tightening orbit around the white dwarf Sahadeva. It also encompasses two asteroid belts, Orgoglio and Purgatorio, and seven planets: Virgil 1 and 2, Dante, Paradiso, Milton, Beatrice, and Ugolino. Six stable wormholes have been identified that lead out of the system, with two connecting to regions outside of the Human Sphere.

The system boasts over 1.2 billion inhabitants, most of whom reside on its titular planet. While this number may seem small, it's rather impressive when weighed against the inherent navigational challenges of the system. High levels of radiation, magnetic interference, gravitation stress from stars, planets, and other astrological bodies mean even veteran pilots remain vigilant. The interaction between Nakula and Sahadeva is a beautiful – if highly radioactive and electromagnetic – stellar phenomena of Nakula slowly devouring its twin. This is sometimes visible from the surface of the Paradiso planet.

INNER TO OUTER

The inner system largely comprises lifeless broken rocks. It has been posited that the dwarf planets in close proximity to the binary star, Virgil 1 and Virgil 2, were likely once a single object split apart in some cataclysmic collision. The carbon-based planet, Dante, sits further out, and was once home to significant industrialisation. Following the Combined Army's initial assault, only husks remain from the inner three planets, methane, diamond, and carbon mines quarantined by the Qapu Khalqi.

Like their parent, Paradiso's moons have also been heavily influenced by the alien invasion. A former tourist haven, Nirvana now contains ALEPH's largest node system and supporting military base. Its twin, Satori, has become an even more impregnable fortress thanks to the Satori Prison Complex, an overcrowded hell buried beneath dockyards and defence installations that bustle with State Empire activity.

Beyond Paradiso, research indicates that the Orgoglio asteroid belt was actually a former planet shattered by a massive impact. The Orgoglio and

Purgatorio belts are both rumoured to harbour Shasvastii Asharii bases, though this has not been confirmed by O-12.

An unusual gas giant composed mainly of helium, Milton is a prized objective for both scientific and mining enterprises. As many have found to their detriment, Milton is also a geological freak. Constant geysers of superheated liquid make its atmosphere very dangerous to travel, although the Polar Geyser is one of its main attractions for both science and industry.

Further out, the gas giant Beatrice served to attract tourism. Its thick atmosphere of hydrogen clouds offers a mesmerizing swirl of pinks and oranges. The planet's rocky core possesses a unique ocean of floating ammonia, though the hydrogen mining platforms harvesting it have been severely disrupted by Combined Army raids.

Finally, as though confirming the uniqueness of the system one last time, the terrestrial mega-planet, Ugolino, stumbles by on its erratic orbit. Its intense electromagnetic storms and fluctuating fields of influence have been known to not only disable ships and drag them down to the stone surface of the planet, but also create "dark spots" throughout the system which can be used to mask entire ships from sensors.

TRAVERSING PARADISO

As already identified, the Paradiso System is astronomically complex, largely thanks to the incredible forces at play between its twin stars and planets. The massive output of solar radiation and fluctuating magnetics create hazardous conditions for electronic devices and communication arrays. In addition, the intense interaction between the planet's atmosphere and the system-wide magnetic fluctuations generate countless anomalies that make travel with GPS and other navigational systems rather challenging planetside.

Before the invasion of Paradiso, several scientific outposts spread throughout the system could accurately predict any imminent magnetic storms, solar flares, and other stellar anomalies. Subsequent to the Combined Army's assault on the system, however, the stations that survived have been repurposed to garner intel on the aliens and their movements. Yu Jingese and PanOceanian astronomers were also trying to correlate Ugolino's

“dark spot” phenomena using advanced wormhole mapping technology, but the research has apparently been cancelled. Unfortunately for the unwary, stellar phenomena are once again difficult to predict and forewarn against.

The stellar abnormalities and vast size of the Paradiso system ensure that large swathes of space around the system’s abnormal heliosphere currently remain unobserved by all long-range scanners and probes. Theories exist that several as yet undiscovered wormholes exist around Paradiso’s outer limits.

Preparation for exploration of the system by the uninitiated prompts hefty advisory warnings. And even though the risk can be minimised by a crew with prior in-system experience, it always pays to acknowledge the warnings regarding this seductive corner of the galaxy.

PARADISO TOURIST GUIDE

VIRGIL 1 AND VIRGIL 2.

Travelling to either Virgil is not recommended. Though both are a potential mineral source, they have been deemed too dangerous and costly to exploit. Previous probes have verified that Virgil 1 is influenced by direct gravitational attraction (mean motion resonance) from its brother. The tricky approach and sailing under the protective shadow of the planets to avoid intense solar radiation aside, this hasn’t prevented prospectors and less savoury characters from trying to establish outposts there. Whether the Combined Army has explored the planets as a haven from the human fleets is unknown.

DANTE

Prior to the alien incursion, Dante was one of the most industrious places in the whole system. Huge refineries and mining complexes exploited the vast diamond deposits and methane fields that constitute the planet’s outer layers. Since being quarantined, the few automated factories still standing are silent and crumbling affairs. Except for the remains of downed human transports or the occasional Combined Army vessel, the planet’s radiation-blasted surface shows no signs of life.

Diamond-encrusted roads can still be spotted in the northern hemisphere, where the planet’s largest natural mountains are found, the perfect underground hiding place for Dante’s only living beings. The Backgammon Garrison – cannon fodder of the Combined Army – is sheltered from the lethal surface conditions and the even deadlier predators of the Qapu Kalqi. In claiming the planet

for the EI, the aliens conduct frequent sweeps to ensure there are no humans on Dante. The few human survivors from the initial bombardment, however, have proven problematic to dislodge to say the least, particularly as they enjoy an advantage in both knowledge of the terrain and survival equipment.

A brutal game of cat and mouse now plays itself out among the overheated, lightless ruins. Oznats and their Hungries have become an invaluable asset to the degrading Combined Army hierarchy on Dante, while the human resistance fights relentlessly in a futile struggle, for their numbers decrease day-by-day and they have no hope of rescue.

For now, not even the Old Man of the Mountain knows what transpires in the caves and tunnel systems below the planet’s crust. Coordinated Command have deemed Dante a low priority objective, to be secured only after Acheron Gate, and the Paradiso and the Asharii bases have been dealt with.

SATORI & NIRVANA

The breath-taking spectacle of Paradiso’s moons were once something to behold from planet side. On nights they were both full, the two shining satellites rotated across the night sky with beautiful and captivating luminescence. In the wake of the invasion, however, Paradiso’s orbiting jewels have become somewhat tarnished and much less romantic.

SATORI

Less impressive than its sister, Nirvana, Satori was claimed by the StateEmpire in tandem with its claim for territories on the planet below. Planning ahead for the inevitable conflict with PanOceania for control of Paradiso, pragmatic strategists quickly developed a fortified military base that could launch offensives onto the planet’s surface and repel invasion attempts from other nations. Satori’s largest and most influential settlements include:

Grey Lotus Spaceport: This military port harbours half of Yu Jing’s fleet and also serves as a diplomatic enclosure for the other nations of the G5.

Wang Mining Complex: The largest ore extraction site on the moon has vast smelting facilities for platinum. Like most settlements, the complex is situated underground. The vast vents that belch toxic fumes onto the surface are an ominous landmark.

Huáng Bǎo (Yellow Fortress): The main military fortress of Satori houses vast barracks and warehouses for Yu Jing's armies. It is also the semi-permanent residence of Sun Tze.

Gunung Base: Once known as Tachibana base as a former home to Japanese regiments, the base has since been reclaimed and refurbished in the wake of the Uprising.

Zhu Rong Research Station: The main R&D settlement on Satori focuses on orbital defences and beam technology for transorbital bases. Rumours abound of experiments dedicated to making the latter more portable. If this is the case, nothing has come of it so far.

Zhi Shan Centre: Zhi Shan is the euphemistic name for the 'administrative installation' that is almost certainly one of the StateEmpire's Invisible Prisons. It is unknown how many of these prisons exist beneath Satori, but theories predict at least two of the hellish places are fully functional right now.

Intel from the front lines of Paradiso in the wake of the Japanese insurrection confirm the Imperial Army has experienced few problems in keeping its defences manned despite its recent losses. The StateEmpire's forces are swollen with a steady flow of reinforcements from Satori, a complete battalion of Kuang Shi soldiers brutally herded by the Celestial Guard.

NIRVANA

In an ironic parody of its twin, Nirvana became one of the most prestigious touristic attractions in the system. Grandiose resorts, casinos, and all the glamour PanOceania could muster produced an example of the best an orbital installation could offer. It was famed across the Human Sphere for its attractiveness, cleanliness, self-sustainment, and spectacular romantic views.

Post invasion, Nirvana rapidly transformed into Blue S Combat Group's base of operations. Additionally, the vitally important communication node positioned there was handed over to ALEPH and upgraded to arguably the most powerful communications relay in the Human Sphere. Accordingly, the security and lifestyle of the moon also transformed. The three main nodes of activity on its surface include:

Samsara Astroport: This military base is heavily defended by Parvati Orbital Defensive Platforms and has the capacity to harbour a full combat group of Paradiso Command's fleet.

Nirvana Station: The former shining example of both Orbitals and resorts available throughout PanOceania, the station has been heavily modified and now serves as a city-barracks, though the careful observer can still perceive the grand structures of the original base. A veritable labyrinth of service halls and corridors remains hidden and virtually forgotten due to the more pragmatic needs of the military.

Nirvana's Node: Fully reconstructed by the AI, it handles all the information into and out of the Human Sphere – with the exception of Arachne – and is almost as big a mystery as ALEPH's own heart. It is manned exclusively by ALEPH's Devas, Asuras, and Posthumans with a security team of SSS operatives for good measure. The dead-man's switch to the nuclear devices installed throughout the station is rumoured to be located in the central mainframe at the bottom of one of the most secure underground bunkers in the system. Concilium also possesses the codes in case things go awry for the Paradiso Command.

MILTON

This gas giant represents an attractive quandary to the Human Sphere's scientists as it is not clear what kind of processes allow it to exist in the first place. Containing a higher percentage of helium over hydrogen, Milton's surface consists of oxygen and ammonia crystals condensed into a crust that vent the superheated helium through its now famous Miltonian geysers.

Milton's huge mass and erratic geological behaviour cause it to generate an impressive magnetic field. The collapse of these fields also creates violent geomagnetic reversals. These phenomena have significant effect on orbiting craft and usually prove lethal to atmospheric vehicles, especially as geyser activity becomes more violent and chaotic in response.

Because of the planet's temperament, efforts to industrially exploit the planet have so far met with limited success. Both Venus and Saturn's ammonia harvesters have been contracted as advisors by at least two Hypercorps, but the only projects to have found limited success are a harvesting station near the permanent Polar Geyser of the northern hemisphere and an advanced open mine ice recollection unit. Both projects continue to function in reduced capacity following the Combined Army's invasion.

To date, only two electromagnetic reversals have been observed, both at great cost to their

scientific missions. Behaving erratically during both occasions, the Polar Geyser has been testament to the brutal forces at hand. Whether Milton's magnetic field affects Paradiso is unknown, although it is likely minimal if so due to Ugolino's presence in the equation.

BEATRICE

In contrast to the difficulties experienced with the exploration and exploitation of Milton and Ugolino, the beautiful gas dwarf, Beatrice – visible from Paradiso as a pinkish orb in the firmament – has offered an almost idyllic experience.

Unusually approachable compared to the rest of the system, its atmosphere consists mainly of hydrogen, with vast oceans of ammonia making its eddies and storms a beautiful spectacle for tourists to admire from orbit.

Besides a vacation hotspot, Beatrice harbours some of the largest hydrogen mining platforms and refineries in the Human Sphere and the largest refuelling stations in the system. These huge industrial complexes are so vast they are in fact co-owned by several Hypercorps. Miniature cities perch like small satellites a few kilometres from the platforms, each with all the requirements for comfortable living in the mining colonies.

Before the Combined Army invasion, Beatrice had the largest population in the whole system bar Paradiso. Currently, though still well populated, several mining platforms drift listlessly, even now aflame following the alien's successful raids against the planet's industrial infrastructure. To combat the incursions, several free companies have earned important contracts to defend the surviving platforms. As tends to happen when mercenaries become established, the platforms have degenerated into disreputable centres of villainy and corruption answering to a militaristic regime. Though the platform's workers and inhabitants frequently voice their discontent with the situation, there is very little they can do until the alien menace is resolved.

The three largest platforms on Beatrice's consist of the PanOceanian Vale Ouro, the Yu Jing's Zhang Platform (known informally as "the Elena Zhang"), and the Lorenzo/Yadrujin which is a joint Nomad and Haqqislamite endeavour. While the first two are heavily guarded by private contractors, Lorenzo/Yadrujin is under the protection of the Qapu Kalqi.

Recently, Combined Army raids conducted by Shasvastii units and vessels have become more constant. With no sign of abatement, the

Hypercorps executives nervously pressure the Coordinated Command for answers.

UGOLINO

Ugolino's magnetic field works in tandem with Nakula and Sahadeva to provide the main cause for the general difficulties of space travel experienced in the Paradiso system. A huge planet with an incredibly dense metallic core, it has an erratic orbit which generates a veritable tug of war with other astral bodies and causes disruption on incoming vessels. More often than not, Ugolino pulls them into orbit (and their dooms) like a gigantic astrological Charybdis. A high-gravity planet, Ugolino has not warranted further research since the ill-fated Defoe mission. The mission was tasked with exploring the planet's surface and colonisation possibilities, but tragically it fatally crashed. Concilium recommended the delay of further research until the capricious magnetic behaviour of the planet could be understood.

Similar to Milton's magnetic fluctuations, but ten times larger in scale and much more intense, Ugolino generates vast waves and static pockets that completely block or frazzle any technological reception devices. The infamous "dark spots" were studied by Yu Jing and used to its advantage during the NeoColonial Wars, allowing the Imperial fleet to surprise its enemies while riding the waves. Thanks to subsequent PanOceanian espionage, both Hyperpowers now make use of the dark spots to hunt Combined Army vessels. It has been theorised that Ugolino's magnetic fields and huge mass interact with the system's other astrological bodies and anomalies to generate intermittent periods of instability in the topological space of the system. Ugolino is suspected reason for the volatility of the system's wormholes – Acheron and GA6037283 being points in case. This theory awaits further investigation once the war concludes. Unknown to the Combined Army hierarchies, the Shasvastii Continuum has selected Ugolino as a potential seed storage planet and is determined to place a reserve of Seed-Embryos on the planet.

ORGOGGIO, PURGATORIO, & OORT BELTS

Three distinct asteroid belts spread across three different regions of the system, yet all sharing one dark secret. Each harbours an alien menace from beyond the Human Sphere. Four operational Asharii bases have currently been identified across the three belts: Apple in Orgoglio, Lemon in Oort, Mint and Poppy in Purgatorio. Coordinated Command are currently preparing a plan using the most classified protocols to avoid a recurrence of an infiltration that left earlier plans in ruins.

PILOT AND SPACECRAFT TESTS IN PARADISO

All pilots need to be aware that magnetic phenomena and radiation are a constant menace in the Paradiso system. As both an optional rule and a rule of thumb, PCs attempting Pilot tests with aircraft or spaceships who are unfamiliar with the peculiarities of the Paradiso system increase the complication range of their tests by 2. The GM should adjudicate on a suitable amount of flight time to elapse in order to progressively reduce the complication range modifier. Alternatively, Momentum from successful Pilot tests can be banked towards reducing the increase in complication range, with each 5 Momentum saved in this manner permanently reducing the complication range modifier by 1, to a minimum of 0. Note: Unlike the standard uses of Momentum, Momentum used for this purpose must be specifically derived from Pilot tests. (This represents the pilot learning 'on the fly', so to speak.)

In addition to the pilot contending with the vagaries of the Paradiso system's peculiarities, it is also important to consider whether the aircraft or spaceship in question has been outfitted with the necessary radiation and avionics upgrades to support uninterrupted function on the planet and in the system as a whole. If this is not the case, the complication range of Pilot tests with the unprotected equipment should be increased by 2 – which is in addition to any increase applied for inexperienced pilots. Aircraft and spaceships that lack necessary protection can be upgraded to better contend with the Paradiso system's peculiarities, though this requires considerable investment at least half the vehicle's purchase value.

Travelling near or to Milton or Virgil imposes a +1 Difficulty to Pilot tests. Experiencing Ugolino's pull imposes +2.

Heat spends and complications can include debris or small meteors that damage Structure, magnetic phenomena that damage Firewalls and electronics, malfunctioning navigational equipment, enemy vessels such as Combined Army patrols or pirate ships, and dark spots that completely shut down sensors and navigational equipment.

ORGOGGIO

The closest of the three belts to the system's core, Orgoglio, is understood to have once been a planet or a protoplanet. Destroyed by a cosmic impact in recent millennia, the shattered remains are an important belt of large mineral deposits floating in a steady orbit between Paradiso and Milton. Providing a bonanza of opportunities for mining corporations both big and small, the belt also serves as a haven of opportunities for smugglers and pirates thanks to abandoned prospecting bases and plump corporate targets. Piracy in the belt has decreased in the wake of the Combined Army's offensive, but all this really means is that both types of menace now plague the region. Orgoglio's proximity to Paradiso means that any alien vessel evading the Intermediate Acheron Blockade but unable to achieve planetfall will flee into the belt. Once there, they are almost impossible to ferret out, though the Nomad and Qapu Kalqi fleets seem to enjoy limited success.

PURGATORIO

While Orgoglio serves capably as a waystation and launchpad for Combined Army incursions, it is

the Purgatorio Asteroid Belt where the Combined Army and the Shasvastii fleet in particular have established several operational bases. Codenamed Asharii by the aliens, the bases are multipurpose, all-encompassing settlements functioning as dockyards, laboratories, arsenals, barracks, prison and conversion facilities, and headquarters. The Shasvastii bases are difficult to find and harder to destroy, as the stealthy aliens tend to be one step ahead of all attempts to excise them from the Purgatorio belt.

OORT

Traditionally a haven for long-range smugglers and the most brutal of pirates, the Oort belt is now the realm of the Shasvastii Shonii, tactical incursion stealth vehicles. How long the Combined Army remained there undetected before launching their invasion is uncertain, but in the aftermath, Paradiso Coordinated Command are under no illusions. Sending anything short of a fleet to the Oort belt means never hearing from those ships again. Or even worse, those ships do return with a compliment of insidious human cargo.



CHAPTER 6

THE FRONT LINES AND BEYOND

The struggle to survive in an active warzone wears both soldiers and civilians thin. They're tasked with standing firm against a determined and vicious enemy that has little knowledge or respect for any rules of warfare established under international accords. The crimes committed by this savage enemy too easily break soldiers and the people they are assigned to defend, something which the Combined Army recognizes and employs to the fullest effect.

Open warfare creates intense pressure on the social and economic welfare of those who live and serve on the front lines. In addition to fighting an intransigent enemy, soldiers are also tasked with maintaining the peace as social structures break down. A task made more difficult by the fact they were trained for combat, not riot control and humanitarian aid. This cascades through the social fabric of frontline cities already stretched to the verge of collapse by regular Combined Army bombardment, food shortages, and disease outbreaks. Meanwhile, humanitarian groups struggle to shore up the gaps in food and medical supplies.

Coordinated Command and local law enforcement make every effort to maintain civil order. Unfortunately, criminal gangs and petty warlords effectively rule some neighbourhoods, and soldiers struggle to combat these groups. Some local commanders have turned a blind eye as long as the gangs maintain the peace. On more than one occasion, the gangs have stood side by side with soldiers to fight off the Combined Army.

Unfortunately, these gaps in security provide openings for groups like the Comuna and Triads. Despite the best efforts of soldiers, politicians and aid workers, corruption and crime are rife in the cities on the front lines. Organized crime uses the uncertainty to exploit those in need. Black markets are where the desperate go for medicine and food when supplies run thin. Even soldiers and aid workers often find themselves trading at these markets. But any truce is uneasy at best, and despite their utility, exploitive markets that participate in drug running, human trafficking, and weapons smuggling are routinely shutdown when encountered.

OCCUPIED PARADISO

The cities occupied by the Combined Army face an enemy that has total disregard for any human sentiments about the rules of warfare. This implacable enemy routinely use the people they conquered as slaves and human shields. There are rumours of life returning to normal in some areas occupied by the Combined Army, however. Highly classified reports of local residents returning to relative normality are beginning to filter back to Coordinate Command but are largely ignored as Combined Army psychological operations. In these areas, the Combined Army has thoroughly crushed any resistance. The only opposition comes from highly trained operatives functioning far from friendly supply lines. They must rely on raiding enemy supplies to make up for shortages between supply drops from Coordinated Command.

NORSTRALIA

A much larger percentage of the Norstralian continent has been lost to the Combined Army than any other part of Paradiso. The Third Offensive saw a swathe of major cities either annexed or facing the prospect of occupation. The forces on Norstralia are fighting a desperate battle to hold the line and reclaim territory.

EASTERN NORSTRALIA

BEHDETI

Behdeti was a cosmopolitan metropolis with extensive suburbs before it was devastated by the Combined Army invasion. As a strong commercial hub, Behdeti was also a centre of a robust communications and media industry with an array so sophisticated that it rapidly processed and transmitted unfathomable amounts of information across Paradiso and the Human Sphere. These complex communications arrays were deliberately destroyed during the evacuation to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Combined Army.

What remains is home to regular running gun battles between human corporate mercenaries and Morat forces. Key research and bleeding-edge prototypes were lost in the labs of Behdeti, and the corporations in desperation have hired overpaid, gung-ho mercenaries to recover them.

The Coordinated Command has taken advantage of the mercenaries' activities by placing hefty bounties on key Combined Army commanders operating in the area.

FUYAN

Fuyan was seized during the Second Offensive and transformed into a concentration camp. The Combined Army uses the civilian population as human shields augmenting the massive caverns that protect the port from bombardment. The port, which once serviced extensive civilian fishing fleets, has been converted into hangers for Exrah and Shasvastii ships flying sorties against targets in Norstralia.

The apartment complexes above the caverns constitute the notorious Combined Army prison for the civilian population. In addition to acting as human shields, the civilian teams from the local populace volunteer themselves to help with the relocation task for those who lost everything during the struggle. Sepsitors are used on local leaders and firebrands to help break the prisoners' spirits. While morale in the prison is appalling, there are a few agents still working to help the Coordinated Command in Fuyan. Coordinated Command relies heavily upon reports from a hacker who only gives their identity as "Rostam." The reports are still held suspect, but Rostam has yet to provide faulty intelligence.

RAVENSBRÜCKE

Ravensbrücke's gothic facades stand as shattered monuments to the fierce months of fighting and bombardment during the First Offensive. The grey, lifeless ruins and shattered streets are a deadly landscape of mines, booby traps, and ghost zones that remain from PanOceania's spirited defence of the city.

A ten-mile radius around the city contains the old fortifications intended to hold back the Combined Army's advance. The area is filled with bunkers, abandoned supplies, shattered heavy weapon platforms, and other fortified structures. The few residents who couldn't escape struggle to survive in the ruins and are too often easy targets for the Combined Army patrols.

Morat forces prowl the shattered forward positions and trench networks hunting those foolish enough to remain or crazy enough to search the wreckage for loot or reconnaissance. Those captured by the hunting parties are seldom seen again, but occasionally, bodies are found dumped with clear signs of experimentation and torture. Recent

intelligence reports contain evidence of Sygmaa craft in the area and Trihedron forces have been sighted among the patrols.

RUNENBERG

Runenberg, jewel of Syldavia's western zone, is a city in the eye of the storm. The Third Offensive swept northwards from Horselberg to south, and Holstenwall was also swallowed up in the aliens' advance along the Gernot multi-way. Damburg, the once beautiful city that celebrated art and antiquities, was tragically swept away and submerged following the sabotaging of the dam that gave the city its name. With new frontlines established, Runenberg has become a city encircled behind enemy lines.

The capital of western Syldavia is a marvel of PanOceanian engineering. Unlike many of the man-made structures on Paradiso that often seem designed to contend with the jungle in a bid for dominance, its sleek transparent domes and bioengineered terraces are designed to mesh with the flora. This has been both a blessing and a curse for the Shock Army of Acontecimento garrisoned there. Its eco-friendly designs assist the defence of the city but make resupply a logistician's nightmare.

Unique for a PanOceanian settlement, Runenberg is also home to a Nomad Commercial Mission. Natives of the hyperpower regard the segregated zone with the same disdain they do their own Ateks. The Nomads, however, view this home away from home as a jewel in their cache of appropriated assets, a two-fingered salute to the man that every Nomad should be proud of. Like every other Commercial Mission, the community harbours Nomads from all three motherships and a dazzling panoply of their sub-factions. The talent on hand from three distinct aspects of the Nomad Military Force – both clandestine and official – has certainly empowered the capabilities of the city's defenders.

Tohaa refugees have taken up residence in an abandoned industrial plot that was gifted to them. Their assistance in the city's defence has been just as professional and determined as ever, but there does seem to be a certain haunted look to their features following the utter eradication of their Tarsaa-6 base. The presence of ALEPH's Steel Phalanx and Operations Subsection add to the general eclectic nature of the city and the palpable sense of impending doom. Although the defenders have so far repelled every incursion, Runenberg seems destined to follow Damburg's fate in being washed away – only this time the flood will be the forces of the Combined Army.

STRESLAU

The Fortress-Monastery of Saint Mary of Streslau dominates the seaside city, which derives its name from the defensive bastion. While much of the city has been devastated, the monastic Teutonic Knights have held fast despite having all air access cut off by the Combined Army. The fortress itself overlooks the city, and the city streets meandering on the slopes from the fortress down to the now shattered ports provide excellent ambush and fortification locations.

Before the Combined Army's invasion, Streslau's grim and dour streets were a surprisingly popular tourist destination thanks to flawless beaches and the finest restaurants. Now, the beach is marred with fortifications designed to hinder further landing attempts by the Combined Army, while the fortress's artillery batteries remain zeroed on key distances to provide further determent.

The city is under regular bombardment by Combined Army air and naval power, and the citizens of the city regularly fight house-to-house street battles led by the Teutonic Knights. The winding, steep streets of Streslau slow the advances of alien infantry while the defenders funnel the enemy into choke points and ambushes. The final lines of defence are the bridges connecting the fortress-monastery to the city proper. A special sub-unit of Teutonic Knights, the Order of Dobrzyn, protects the bridges and those traversing them. The defence of the city relies on support from the defensive artillery and missile platforms emplaced in the fortress walls to provide fire support and bombard Morat beach landings.

Outside of the city, the Combined Army made a concerted effort to crush the defenders of Streslau in a pincer movement from the north and south. Only a taciturn and stalwart defence by the Military Orders and the Ariadnan Expeditionary Corps, bolstered by the timely arrival of several living legends such as Joan of Arc, Dart, and Indigo Brother Konstantinos, enabled them to keep the narrow corridor connecting Streslau to the interior of Syldevia open. Since the titanic battles, both forces seem to have become preoccupied with pinpointing a stealth ship stolen from one of the fortress-monastery's aircraft hangars near the end of the Third Offensive.

XIONGXIAN

During the Second Offensive, an Armed Imposition Detachment of Gwailos fought their way through a series of well-defended enemy positions. The Shasvastii cemented the Combined victory in the

city by taking the factory complex of Huà Miàn Systems. Yu Jing High Command believes that there is no way of retaking Xiongxian city, but regular air drops allow the defenders of the city to hold out until High Command can organize a counter-offensive.

Yu Jing evacuated a sizable portion of the population into underground bunkers beneath the city. The Yu Jingese harass the Combined forces roaming the streets and use guerrilla tactics from the booby-trapped caverns. The routes to the bunkers are a well-guarded secret, and the soldiers who protect the city's population keep the secret as safe as they can.

Determined to fight on against the alien invaders, the remnants of an Invincible Army Regional Combat Team have taken to calling themselves the protectors of Xiongxian. Their use of fade and strike tactics and their local knowledge of the area allows them to constantly hinder the Combined Army. They are often able to strike vital enemy positions with minimal risk. However, even a small casualty rate is problematic for their unit so short of reinforcements and materiel, especially now that the EI has deployed highly skilled Ozmat hunters to track them down.

CENTRAL NORSTRALIA

AL-HADIYE

The Haqqislamites are the proud guardians of the two most important orbital elevators on Paradiso. Unfortunately for them, however, this has also made the cities that house them the prime targets for the Combined Army's conquest plans. Haqqislams's capital on Norstralia, Al-Hadiye, is now alarmingly close to the frontlines since the recent fall of Uqbar. Bolstered by JSA forces, the Sword of Allah is holding the aliens at bay outside the walls of their new bastion city, Zaimah, for now, and the High Command are determined to keep them pinned there.

Al-Hadiye also has become renowned for its advances in medical research and botanical study. Research into Paradiso's flora and fauna spurred positions in medical science that have resulted in a very cosmopolitan population. The preponderance of botanists here has also stimulated a robust vegan and vegetarian cuisine culture that has provided inspiration across the Human Sphere. Ironically, the obsession with locally edible foods generated a broad knowledge base that's fuelled survival-training regimes for troops stationed on Paradiso.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Despite being captive, some prisoners continue to fight the Combined Army in whatever way they can by gathering intelligence and useful information for their superiors. Very infrequently, a soldier smuggles the information outside the prison's walls to JSA soldiers fighting from the swamps surrounding the city. The dangerous creatures of Zhongchong's swamps and treacherous terrain hinder the Combined Army's efforts to capture these local raiders. A recent influx of prisoners from the Ariadnan Expedition Corps may have provided an opportunity to execute an escape plan.

MOBILE VENDORS

Not all trade stalls are stationary. There's a vast array of small, mobile shops that traverse the camps on carts and tuk-tuks arrayed with goods for sale. Individual carts are often known by the title of the song played to announce their passing and residents learn to listen out for their favourite street traders. Unlike their stationary cousins, these vendors carry anything they can quickly sell for a profit without drawing undue attention. This has led to situations where the neighbourhood peddler is also the tobacconist, haberdasher, and ice-cream seller, depending on who's next in line.

The orbital elevator that moves resources to and from orbit around the clock is undoubtedly the city's most important feature. The Nomad Commercial Mission contracted with administering the elevator takes pressure off the local government, allowing local Haqqislamite defenders to concentrate on protecting the region. The relationship between the two powers is generally cordial, particularly as the Nomads are very sensitive to the fact that their allies are helping to shield a Commercial Mission that contains a major Arachne node within the bounds of Zaimah.

Frequent Combined Army air strikes focus on hindering the movement of goods to the orbiting space stations whilst demoralizing the local populace. The city's mag-lev stations provide a network of shelters throughout that lead to the heart of the city. During a bombardment, the population descends under the city to find safety. The regular strikes have steeled the population, and they are known for their grim determination to keep the city running in spite of spending nights on end in the underground shelters.

YINQUAN

Yinquan is the centre of excess for the upper echelons of the Yu Jingese hierarchy. This grand city of neon indulgence is where the dedicated members of the StateEmpire's Party can find all their whims met, while refugees huddled in camps outside the walls are bathed in the multicoloured reflections of grand golden statues.

As the epicentre of the Emperor's will on Paradiso, the city attracts important individuals from across the Human Sphere, making Yinquan a maelstrom of interstellar intrigue that draws diplomats and agents of all nations partaking in overt and clandestine attempts to gain an advantage over their rivals. Despite the cloak and dagger, many agents have jointly operated to hunt Shasvastii infiltrators and seed soldiers. These agents understand they face a very real threat from humanity's greatest enemy.

In an effort to petition and lobby for the interests of their own district, Party officials from across the planet also visit the city. Administration of the StateEmpire's Paradiso interests is at the heart of the city's culture, and the indulgences of Party officials are political affairs as much as they are recreational. The parties, balls, and sporting events that serve the Yu Jingese elite provide a cover for political deals and inner-party machinations. The centre of political activity rests on Emperor's Hill, where a small imperial district acts as a magnet for the political aspirations of Party hopefuls vying for attention. The entrance to the palace district is the

statue-lined Imperial Way, where massive golden statues of emperors greet visitors. The street climbs the hill to the immaculately maintained, but rarely visited Imperial Palace. Homes and businesses of the Yu Jing's wealthy and powerful Paradiso residents saturate the districts along Imperial Way.

Yinquan's distance from the First Landing saw it spared the worst of the Third Offensive. The war effort even brought an economic boom as soldiers poured into the city and its outskirts before redeploying to face the Combined Army's advance. With the frontline edging ever closer, however, even the more decadent members of the Party indulging in Yinquan's delights have been shaken into some semblance of concern for the refugees crowding their walls. In counterpoint to the handling of the Uprising and the Nipponese that remain within their borders, the Yu Jingese elite are determined to provide as much care as is readily available for the dispossessed citizenry and military personnel in the refugee camps. As the Combined Army presses to control Highway 2, it might not be too long before the officials and officers become refugees themselves. The sudden expansion of the frontline and resultant influx of people – both soldiers and refugees – has placed a strain on the infrastructure of the refugee camps, which the triads are eagerly exploiting. In an effort to keep the peace, the local shaolin monks from the Mountain Eyrie Temple coordinate with military patrols and align their activities to assist where they can. The camps abound with opportunists; citizens have created hundreds of shop stalls to service the soldiers' needs. They each tend to specialize in one specific trade or service that can range from boot repairs to spices that make rations more palatable. Visitors can find most things in the market if they know who to ask and can also expect a fair deal as the monks are quick to admonish profiteers. Non-military, non-diplomatic refugees also provide a labour pool for the city, but they are under strict orders to return to the camps when their shifts are complete. Only a select few have ever been granted permanent residence in the city. Most of those serve as pawns in intelligence operations linked to the promise of a better life off-world.

The martial traditions and humanitarian aid provided by the monks of the Mountain Eyrie has drawn new recruits from among the refugees. The monks not only help to maintain the spiritual health of the community but also provide medical aid essential for keeping a variety of disease and outbreaks at bay. They are sometimes also invited to act as neutral parties to settle disputes between local residents, soldiers, and commanders of the swollen camps and offer their support to rescue and escort missions.

WESTERN NORSTRALIA

VALKENSWIJK

During the NeoColonial Wars, Valkenswijk served as the primary airbase for PanOceanian airstrikes against Yu Jingese territory. In the intervening years between conflicts, Valkenswijk transformed from a rugged military base into a thriving tourist city. The Valkenswijk Aerodrome was repurposed for civilian use, and the construction of the Valkenswijk Orbital Elevator (VOE) cemented the city as both a centre for aviation technology and a destination for the rich and elite to indulge in the city's pleasures.

Strikes by the Combined Army tried to disable the elevator, but PanOceanian forces defended the orbital elevator by establishing the Orbital Blockade. The elevator and airfields have been restored for military use, and the majority of new PanOceanian troops destined for SchwarzePoint on the front arrive in the city. The city is under constant threat from Shasvastii agents determined to disable the VOE.

The city is awash in PanOceanian troops and soldiers who patrol the city streets, and the city in turn caters to these soldiers. The hotels have been repurposed to house arriving soldiers. Casinos and clubs run day and night providing recreation for soldiers back from the front.

Fighter wings operate from the aerodrome to protect orbital weaponry from Combined Army interceptors. The local squadrons are an elite, multinational force, but they struggle to push the Combined Army back. While national rivalries occasionally boil over into fistfights and bruised egos, pilots are usually content to engage in friendly rivalries counting enemy kills. The regular sorties forge the best top guns in the Human Sphere, though alas, the same can also be said of the Combined Army. Top aces of both sides stalk one another in the skies while evading enemy orbital anti-air platforms.

SEPTENTRIA

The Combined Army's arrival saw the Norstralian continent receive the brunt of their initial offensives, with wide swaths of territory lost or destroyed. Septentria, meanwhile, wasn't spared the aliens' attention either. The loss of key cities and the resultant scramble to shore up defences crippled Coordinated Command's hopes of diverting Septentria's forces to support a counter-offensive on Norstralia. The soldiers of the G5 nations stationed on Septentria are no strangers to facing the Combined Army amongst the ruins, jungles, and rivers of the vibrant continent.

WESTERN SEPTENTRIA

To date, all major offensives mounted by the Combined Army on Septentria have taken place in an ever-expanding ring from the continent's western tip.

FIRST OFFENSIVE

BIGUAN

Rapidly lost during the First Paradiso Offensive, Biguan's once-grand city spires dominate the coastline as a series of morose sentries watching the Combined Army. They use the Biguan Aerodrome for reconnaissance operations, operating Morat recon craft across the contested regions of Septentria, coordinating operations for Shasvastii deep strike units, and spotting targets for artillery as far as Ghezirah City.

Morat hunting parties vigilantly patrol the streets of Biguan securing the aerodrome's perimeter. The Morat regularly lose troopers to concealed assassins and ambushers. Shots ring out from the darkened spires striking down any Morat that gets too careless. Rumours claim that Bureau Noir operatives stalk the ruins, evading Morat patrols and sabotaging equipment.

These elusive attackers have marred the honour of the Morats stationed at the aerodrome, and it's taking a toll on Morat morale. An Umbra Legate and her retinue arrived with orders to track down the operatives targeting Combined Army forces. Her arrival also initiated a crackdown on the Morats' use of human slaves at the aerodrome. Unfortunately, the Legate has instead ordered grisly public executions in retribution for Morat deaths.

KAPHIRI

Kaphiri was ceded to PanOceania after being traded back and forth between Yu Jing and PanOceania during the NeoColonial Wars. The enmity and resentment of the city's population was rendered irrelevant when seismic charges sunk the planet's largest port, shattering Yu Jing's defence of the city. The harbour waters still glitter with the reflected sunlight of the golden Hindu statues that rest at its bottom. Even though the city was evacuated and ceded to the advancing Morat forces, a small force of the city's defenders and residents instead fled to the surrounding jungles.

After the residents and military forces were routed, the forces of the EI repaired the port to use Kaphiri as a forward operating base for naval operations. Naturally, this could not go uncontested and a small submersible carrier, the William Hewett, was deployed to the Kaphiri Basin. This carrier,

IDENTIFICATION, PLEASE

The multinational force operating under Coordinated Command is determined to destroy the Combined Army forces on Paradiso, but old rivalries boil over from time to time. While most of these conflicts are little more than busted lips and black eyes after a night of too much drinking, a heavy sense of distrust between the various national factions occasionally emerges. Officials and operatives in a city under suspicious circumstances might be unnecessarily delayed or denied access to a sensitive area despite having clearance. Some might find themselves detained. These actions are usually little more than the actions of a disgruntled guard or trooper, but delays that cause missed meetings or hindered operations can be turned to a significant advantage by intelligence agencies.

SMILING BETRAYAL

In the face of the Uprising, the original propaganda footage of the JSA was repurposed to suggest that the JSA welcomed the alien invaders as a fifth column. Yu Jing labelled the generals of Zhongchong as traitors to humanity, alien puppets, and worse. Though no apology has been forthcoming, an international outcry at the Öberhaus did force the Yu Jingese government to remove the piece from their networks. Never truly erased once posted, however, copies of the damaging footage continue to resurface.

with a small taskforce of PanOceanian Cutter TAGs and Kamau commandos, has been assigned to hinder Combined naval operations by raiding supply convoys and ambushing patrols. The Combined Army is determined to sink the carrier and responded by deploying a detachment of Maakrep Trackers.

TAITTIRIYA

Previously an international telecommunications technology and planetary media hub, Taittiriya was ranked eighth in the Paradiso Global Cities Index. The city was renowned for its up and coming independent entertainment industry that created some of the most cutting edge and innovative Maya productions, regularly sweeping the venerable Cannes Media Festival. In addition, the city was headquarters to major news outlets including ¡MayaNoticias! and Noticias Agora broadcasting news to the entire Human Sphere. Most importantly, the city was home to PanOceanian's Defence Science and Technology Lab, the premier quantronic research facility on Paradiso.

Taittiriya was the first of Paradiso's cities to see full-scale bombardment from Morat ground forces. The Morat advance into Taittiriya quickly routed PanOceanian forces, and essential Maya nodes were scuttled to prevent their capture. Despite the scorched earth policy of the researchers and PanOceanian forces during the evacuation, important communication hubs and labs were buried intact under the city's rubble and ruins. Scavengers engage in hot-drop raids into the region to recover any valuable pieces of technology before Shasvastii can respond to their incursions. Corporation and criminal organizations pay high bounties on the black market for any valuable technology or data, which only drives more raids by the scavengers.

The scavengers are in direct competition with EI forces scouring the ruins for potential salvageable Maya nodes and other connections back to the Maya network. Coordinated Command and PanOceania are confident there's no risk to Maya network, but international forces, particularly the Nomad forces operating in the area, heavily monitor the Combined Army's activities.



SECOND OFFENSIVE

ZHONGCHONG

Before the Second Offensive, Zhongchong was the ideal image of fortified resistance against the Combined Army advance. StateEmpire propaganda showed images of smiling Japanese Sectorial Army soldiers defending the city, marching to the frontlines to win victory against an alien invader. All those illusions collapsed as the city's *bau dau* (island bastion) fell to the Combined Army, crushing the Japanese Sectorial Army who defended the city. A beachhead in the defence of the planet became a Morat stronghold on Septentria.

Zhongchong is a busy forward operating base and contains a breeding facility for Hungries. The Oznat use the ruins to master control of fresh Hungries replaced after losses raiding Wuyi, Hibat Allah, and Ghezirah City. Captured JSA soldiers held in horrid conditions are then used as live targets for training Hungries. The Morat stationed at Zhongchong place wagers on how long a prisoner will last in the bastion's ruins. New prisoners arrive from across the continent regularly replenishing those killed by the Oznat's training.

THIRD OFFENSIVE

ARITYA

This devastated ruin dominates the Mithran River delta and once prevented the Combined Army from spreading across the Gāyatrī province. While celebrating a much-needed victory in Uttar Shivir, PanOceania was subsequently devastated at the speed in which the Combined Army shifted their offensive and took control of Aritya. With the city's fall, the aliens were able to strike at Karnapur and began to threaten Rilaspur.

Battle raged not just amongst the ruins, but also in the extensive network of subway tunnels that connect the entire city. PanOceanian ORC Troopers and a Varunan amphibious rapid response force fought at close quarters against Morat Suryats determined to break the resistance. Despite rallying for a final defensive action at the Aritya garrison, the PanOceanian forces were forced to abandon the city with heavy casualties.

The Morats have been ruthlessly hunting down pockets of resistance since their enemy's departure, though their efforts are hampered somewhat by the need to manually map every inch of the fallen city. Combined Army soldiers are laid low by infrequent ambushes from secret tunnels and extensive booby traps set by the few remaining PanOceanian guerrillas. As a result, the alien forces have deployed Hungries to stalk the subterranean tunnels in search of their elusive prey. Cut off

from support and trapped in a communications blackout, it can only be a matter of time before the few remaining human survivors succumb to death, insanity, or both.

GHEZIRAH CITY

When the Second Offensive began, Ghezirah city found itself under a concentrated assault by Combined Forces. Hindered by a Combined Army viral attack on the local Maya node, the Coordinated Command's counter-offensive was in danger of losing the astroport, but Colonel Javier Chang and the Second Nomad Mobile Force's tactics bogged the Combined Army down. Colonel Chang's strategy gave Coordinated Command the time needed to reclaim the node and coordinate forces to drive the Combined Army back.

During the Third Offensive, however, the Combined Army significantly increased their efforts to capture the city and gain control of its strategically important orbital elevator. Elements of the Onyx Contact Force and Shasvastii Expeditionary Force placed mounting pressure on the Haqqislamite defenders that forced the government to call in support from every prospective avenue they could. Tied up in their own defensive efforts, PanOceania had no choice but to refuse to send aid. The JSA and a small contingent of Druze Bayram Security did respond, however. Bolstered by their allies, the Sword of Allah mounted a ferocious defence that also unfortunately sealed the city's doom. Forced to rethink its strategy, the EI lifted its previous ban on damaging the orbital elevator's infrastructure and gave its armies carte blanche to unleash hell. The city blazed, and despite courageous counterattacks by the JSA and Qapu Khalqi, eventually fell.

The capture of the orbital elevator sent a panic amongst the Paradiso Coordinated Command, but fortunately cooler heads prevailed. Severing the elevator's cable would have had a catastrophic effect on the entire planet's ecology, which was completely untenable to most of the PCC. Acts of sabotage by Hassassins and aerial bombardments continue to deny the Combined Army use of the orbital elevator, while a joint Qapu Khalqi and Nomad Military Force unit stand by to defend the orbital station should its repair become a reality.

HIBAT ALLAH

Hibat Allah contained the central campaign hospital for the Ghezirah region, where wounded soldiers arriving from the frontlines via medevac were sent for treatment. The Combined Army regarded the hospital as a key strategic asset and would have quickly taken the facility if not for the valiant efforts of the Ariadhan Expeditionary Corps.

While the doctors struggled to save the wounded, the local defence forces made sure the Combined Army paid for every inch they took. Supported by Haqqislamite units, Ariadnan soldiers stalked the hills to ambush Morat patrols. Combined Army forces were being reassigned to the city even before the final days of the battle for Ghezirah, however. Under mounting pressure, the defensive patrols worked tirelessly to shield the evacuation of as many casualties as possible.

When the aliens finally broke through, they brutally slaughtered any patients and staff who were unable to be evacuated in time. Military strategists consider the fall of Hibat Allah to be the final and total collapse of the defensive line established at the end of the Second Offensive.

KARNAPUR

Acting as a forward logistical centre on the Septentria Front, Karnapur coordinated the operations on the continent. Heavily defended and awash in soldiers and refugees prior to the Third Offensive, the city and its infrastructure are an important asset that is now in the hands of the Combined Army.

Once serving as an exit point for the meagre number of refugees permitted to leave the city, Karnapur's aerodrome was flagged by the EI as an important strategic asset capable of greatly aiding the Combined Army's campaign on Septentria. Despite managing to evacuate a fair proportion of personnel and materiel, PanOceania consider the city's loss to be a dire blow to both their offensive and defensive strategies.

Regular bombing raids leave Rilaspur intent on damaging the aerodrome to deny the enemy its use, but the missions have had little or no effect to date. With the Combined Army controlling much of the Mithran River and the new frontline remaining highly fluid for the moment, the aliens seem resolute in their plan to reinforce and consolidate their occupation of the city.

WUYI CITY

Although heavily damaged during the Second Offensive, Wuyi City served as both a major port supporting offensives against the Combined Army and a key destination for merchant ships transporting goods across the Xiajuxu Ocean. The local textile industry made everything from StateEmpire Army uniforms to high fashion clothing. Clothing from Wuyi become especially fashionable among those wishing to financially support the war effort from other parts of the Human Sphere, and entire lines of Wuyi City-themed clothing have been sold to fund efforts to serve the refugees.

As an important naval base for Yu Jing, Wuyi City became a prime target for the Combined Army during the Third Offensive. Claiming the city has allowed the Morat Aggression Force to land fresh troops at the docks and reinforce Combined Army positions deeper within Daheng. Once home to dingy bars and cheap stage shows, the piers and jetties of Wuyi now resound to the stomp of Morat boots instead of raucous festivity.

No sign of StateEmpire resistance remains. The brutal fighting that occurred when the Morats entered the city culminated in a group of Hulang butchering their command staff. The resultant rampage by the enraged Morats at loss of their officers gave horrifying credence to the term "Aggression Force".

CENTRAL AND EASTERN SEPTENTRIA

As the Second Offensive began, the Septentria continent finally saw the face of this alien enemy. Several cities on the western end of the continent have since fallen to the Combined Army, but cities far from the front continue to provide support to those fighting the forces of the EI.

ASYÛT

Haqqislam was crowded out of the Paradiso land grab and lost even more territory to their PanOceanian and Yu Jing rivals during the NeoColonial Wars. Haqqislam's prospects were further hindered by the Combined Army offensives along the Ghezirah front. While they struggle alongside their rivals to hold back the tide, they also labour to hold the Asyût province and the city that bears its name.

Asyût is far from the front, making it a key strategic point for the interests of Haqqislam on Paradiso. Spared the worst of the Combined Army offensives, the city is the centre of Haqqislam politics and diplomatic undertakings. The local parliament is granted a certain amount of liberty to negotiate trade deals and treaties on the planet by the Bourak government who in turn hope to reclaim lost territory. When diplomacy fails, the capable Hassassin society can apply the appropriate pressures that their skilled intelligence services are known for.

The coastal waters near Asyût are rich with natural reserves. Resource extraction platforms scattered down the coast extricate resources for manufacturing a wide variety of goods. The ores fetch an even higher price since platforms in the Barrier Sea were lost during the initial Combined Army offenses.

The character of the city is a contrast to many other Haqqislamite cities, because it houses the largest Coptic Christian community outside of Sol. When the colonisation of Paradiso started, a large community of Coptic Christians with their Haqqislamite neighbours fled persecution in their homelands. In time, they settled in Asyût, building one of the largest unaffiliated Christian communities in the Human Sphere. Loyal to the Coptic Pope of Alexandria and his teachings, the local archbishop wields significant influence with the local parliament, which she wields to welcome refugees from across the planet.

JINGGU CITY

Jinggu is the provincial capital of the Deheng province and the administrative hub of the StateEmpire's interests on Septentria. Stunningly beautiful, Jinggu City possesses quiet canals, charming footbridges, and picturesque beachfronts resting on the Quichi Sea. The striking views of the Huangshan Mountains are visible throughout the city. Lotus Peak dominates the skyline to the west, and Turtle Peak to the south. The mountains are an important attraction that draw hikers and rock climbers from around the Human Sphere.

The Quichi Sea is the largest source of fresh water on the continent, and aqueducts feed fresh water to cities across the region. The sea is also home to an edible moss with impressive energy producing capabilities. The strategic value of the moss prompted Yu Jing to build a significant naval base to patrol the water interdicting attempts by PanOceanian, Nomad, and Haqqislamite to harvest and smuggle the moss off-world. Yu Jingese naval ships stalk the sea for submersible smuggling craft used to move moss upriver from the sea to processing labs hidden in the jungles.

Jinggu is a major financial centre on the continent and the centre of political power for the region. StateEmpire officials regularly travel between Yinquan and Jinggu politicking for the interests of the Daheng providence. The city also draws interests such as a Nomad Commercial Mission to rival trade in the region, but enemies of the StateEmpire are constantly at work to disrupt Yu Jingese financial and trade interests.

Far from the front, the city is a key strategic asset in the war because it provides fresh water to supply cities across the continent. The water processing plants around the sea and aqueducts snake across the continent and are regular targets for Combined Army raiders. Attempts to sabotage the water system are a constant risk, and Yu Jingese forces patrol the surrounding mountains to prevent this.

As pressure mounts to defend the water supply, Yu Jingese officials accepted the aid of Ariadnan Expeditionary Forces to hunt the more elusive enemy units hiding in the mountains.

RILASPUR

Rilaspur suffered during the NeoColonial War, and the scars are evident across the city and countryside. Fortifications that once acted as a bulwark against Yu Jingese and Haqqislamite forces have since been converted into gardens, bars, and hotels. The ruined PanOceanian tank in the city centre stands as a monument to the regiments and soldiers who fought to hold the city, their regimental banners draped across the tank's surface.

Home to a major railyard, the city is a transportation hub for moving heavy materials and equipment to the front via a system of automated magnetic rail systems similar to those in Hawking's Junction on Neoterra. The ALEPH-controlled network of mag-lev lines carries goods to rail links across the continent. As peace settled across the continent after the NeoColonial Wars, rail links were joined with Xiangsu to take advantage of the orbital elevator in the south.

The rail system is a key strategic point on the continent, and military patrols monitor the rail links for potential Combined Army sabotage. While the trains are usually managed by ALEPH, repeated cyberwarfare attacks have left cargo shipments disrupted and trains derailed. Trains are therefore defended around the clock and guarded by highly trained EVO troopers. The trains bear little resemblance to their peacetime appearance and are heavily modified with defensive weapons to provide combat support as and when needed.

With the collapse of the frontline established at the close of the Second Offensive, Rilaspur is becoming home to an increasing number of refugees. Already on high military alert, PanOceania is wasting no time in fortifying the city's defences and seems fully prepared to establish a new forward base of operations there, a fact only reinforced by the arrival of evacuees and materiel from Hibat Allah and Karnapur. Although the city has not experienced direct conflict yet, it only seems a matter of time before the Combined Army shows up at its gates.

VEDI

A sanctuary for those fleeing the war on Paradiso, Vedi is home to hundreds of thousands of refugees that have found safety behind the city's rapidly erected and so far untested walls.

Vedi is recognized as a masterful example of urban planning. Each city district provides its residents with their needs easily accessible by foot including shopping, entertainment, cultural events, and educational facilities. The districts are each surrounded by a wide variety of gardens, green spaces, religious spaces, and recreation areas. The landscapes are tailored to provide the most relaxing atmosphere possible with a mix of social spaces for large gatherings and isolated corners where someone can escape the hustle and bustle of a district. The districts are connected by an extensive subway network, but most residents prefer to walk or cycle.

As the war descended on Paradiso, the city took in refugees from across the planet, regardless of nationality. The green spaces became makeshift refugee camps for those fleeing the conflict. The camps are often divided heavily along national lines, but the Hindu temples have worked hard to bridge cultural divides and build bustling communities. Fresh refugees arrive weekly from cities on the front lines.

The city's residents take great pride in their city's role as a sanctuary, but not all residents are happy with the situation. As the cities in the occupied territories fell, the offers of sanctuary drew a large population of Ateks. A strong contingent of the Ateks Out! Lobby has now gained in political power, and vigilante groups have targeted some Atek encampments. Activists have come to the defence of the targeted populations, and while the Jagennath Temple Complex has provided sanctuary for the Ateks, the protests increase daily.

PanOceanian troops quickly erected fortifications around the city, but they have yet to face the full force of the EI's Combined Army. The residents keep a close eye on Maya-casts out of Aritya, always worried the front will fall and the Combined Army will flow across the continent. PanOceanian troops defending Vedi patrol the streets, guarding against potential Shasvastii forces the EI has deployed to monitor the city. Meanwhile, PanOceanian ships intercept Morat raiders who assault the scattered coastal towns near Vedi.

XIANGU

Xiangu is one of the richest trade hubs on the planet and a centre of mercantilism for the province. Showcased in Yu Jingese propaganda pieces as an example of what the StateEmpire's colonial policies can accomplish, Xiangu drew

families looking to start a new life on the colonial frontiers. The city's orbital elevator, protected under the Concilium Convention, went relatively untouched by the war, fuelling trade and shipping across Daheng province.

While the invasion of the Combined Army has cast a shadow over this vibrant city, the citizens of Xiangu are proud of what they've built together, and they are empowered by a strong sense of patriotism for the StateEmpire. The citizenry knows their city is a key arrival point for supplies for Yu Jingese troops at the front fighting the forces of the EI.

The orbital elevator dominates Xiangu's skyline, and surrounding the elevator are eight massive spires that stand equidistant around the central orbital umbilical. The spires are archologies that provide a safe and secure living for the families of the rich and powerful in the city. An elevated, mag-lev line transports goods and people between the spires and the elevator and connects the towers to the elevator and each other. The towers are named after StateEmpire and pre-StateEmpire emperors with statues of the emperor at their pinnacle. During the Second Offensive, the Wu Zhao Spire took damage from an orbital strike and the upper floors collapsed into the neighbourhoods below. Repairs have stabilised the tower but have yet to restore it to its full majesty.

Surrounding the spires is the lower city, a collection of neighbourhoods and parks where the less wealthy live. The city is a popular destination for Yu Jingese troops on leave from the front. The Lan Kwai Fong district, with its bars, clubs, and entertainments, is a notoriously popular destination for troops looking to blow off a bit of steam.

While the economic disparity of the spires and the lower city previously divided the people of Xiangu, the war has built a strong community between the two after the collapse of Wu Zhao Tower. The residents of the lower city took those fleeing the bombardment into their homes while Wu Zhao Spire was repaired. Also, the work repairing the Wu Zhao Spire and clearing debris that damaged the surrounding neighbourhoods is well underway; a point of pride for the city residents.

The elevator is protected by ships that patrol the local airspace while cargo from the orbital station is off-loaded for transport to the surrounding cities. Outside the city lies the railyard linking Xiangu to

Ralispur. This heavily guarded transport hub is a rare opportunity for PanOceanian and Yu Jingese forces to be reminded they fight a common enemy.

A LOOMING SHADOW OF WAR

Even the cities far from the frontlines live in a constant shadow of a hostile alien force determined to subjugate them. The most peaceful cities are still subjected to airstrikes, orbital bombardment, and attacks by Shasvastii saboteurs. Coordinated Command and the national governments labour to prepare the populace for the periodic attacks with air raid drills and disaster preparedness training. Every citizen knows the location of a nearby shelter. The citizens are aware they are at constant risk, but it has bred a certain resilience into the people.

EVACUATION PROTOCOLS

Every citizen knows their home might be the next city to fall to the Combined Army advance. While each city requires a unique evacuation strategy, there are core plans that every city follows. When Coordinate Command signals a mass evacuation, any citizen of a fighting age, sometimes as young as fifteen, are called to stand in defence of the city. These citizen militias are usually assigned to secondary defence positions, while trained troops hold the outer perimeter. All non-combatants are ordered to transportation hubs for evacuation via mass transport services. After the non-combatants have been evacuated, the militias are often evacuated next while the soldiers remain behind to fight the Combined Army.

While these strategies are generally effective, they are far from perfect, which is evident by the refugee situations in cities like Yinquan and Rilaspur. It's not uncommon for either civilians to be left behind, having missed their transport, or a citizen militia member who elects to stay and fight, rather than evacuate. The soldiers on the ground often find themselves in a problematic situation.

The evacuation protocols are further complicated by the fact that Shasvastii will use the chaos to insert infiltrators or seed soldiers among the evacuees and transports, making any humanitarian mission a ticking time bomb. Analysts suggest that evacuating refugees places the defence of the planet at risk, and there are debates whether further evacuation should be allowed.

SURVIVING PARADISO

Surviving the jungles is a perilous ordeal rife with vicious combat and natural hazards. Soldiers deep behind enemy lines must keep a wary eye on their supplies all while constant combat drives fatigue and exhaustion.

FOOD AND WATER

Safe food and water are essential for a soldier's survival despite the advanced technologies. A character must consume rations each day to maintain regular combat capability. Some technology or implants might reduce the character's basic daily needs.

If a character is in a situation where they are unable to consume a day's rations, they may suffer fatigue. The character must pass an **Average (D1) Resistance** test or suffer the Fatigued condition (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 104). The Fatigued condition is removed if the character obtains clean food and water. A player that succeeds a **Daunting (D3) Survival** test can find enough food and water for the group to last two days. Characters with relevant technology or traits may survive longer under the GM's discretion. The Gamemaster can use Heat spends to represent a wide variety of events ranging from thieving wildlife to contaminating microbes or bacteria. Higher Heat spends might represent a dangerous animal attracted their food stores or hunting activities.

AMMUNITION AND SUPPLIES

Characters profligate with ammunition or any kind of reload may lack necessary supply lines to meet ammunition needs. Resources including power sources and replacement parts are required to keep equipment fully powered and weapons and armour in good order. The GM may ask the player to make a **Challenging (D2) Survival** or **Lifestyle** test to recover spent reloads from Combined Army equipment or horse trade with allied units operating in the area. Heat spends might see weapons and equipment failing or dud rounds.

FATIGUE

Characters without any ways of stemming off weariness (artificial or otherwise) will quickly feel the effects of missing a night's sleep (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 104). A player must succeed an **Average (D1) Resistance** test every night or become Fatigued with the Difficulty increasing by 1 for every night spent without rest.

REST AND RELAXATION

The rigors of combat wear the human mind down. Recognising the effects of combat stress, Coordinated Command makes a concerted effort to get soldiers off the front lines for a much-needed breaks. Several cities across Paradiso are major draws for soldiers away from the conflict, with Yinquan, Asyût, and Valkenswijk chief among these.

Despite the wide variety of recreational activities offered in these cities ranging from greenspaces to museums to a wild nightlife, the stresses of combat will surface, and military police are ready to respond to disturbances. Coordinated Command works to head off incidents before they happen by providing a range of therapy with trained professionals assisted by comlog-based psychotherapy programs.

CHAPTER 7

LIFE IN THE BLOCKADES

Paradiso and the space surrounding it serve as the theatre of an ongoing war with the Combined Army, the military giant serving the Ur Hegemony. The system stands as the gateway to the rest of the Human Sphere, and its defence is unanimously considered paramount amongst the nations of humanity.

To this end, the Paradiso system and its jump gates are guarded by several blockades, each delegated a portion of space to defend to ensure the safety of Paradiso, humanity's Tohaa allies, and the greater Human Sphere. These blockade fleets are designated as the Acheron blockade, Intermediate blockade, Access blockade, Daedalus blockade, and the Orbital blockade.

THE ORBITAL BLOCKADE**THE IRON RING**

The Orbital blockade is the final line before the dirt of Paradiso, the last chance to lash out at alien vessels before they can make landfall and achieve their mission. Encircling Paradiso and its moons, the Orbital blockade is made up of large, lumbering ships designed for terrestrial defence and information support, gathering and disseminating information to troops on the ground and providing overwatch for the forces that battle the Combined Army in the jungles of Paradiso. These ships are equipped with heavy naval artillery that can be levelled at incoming alien ships or planetary targets, allowing the Orbital blockade to engage any incoming threats and prevent them from reaching the surface.

Due to the Combined Army's deployment of E/M pulse devices that disrupt ship systems and mobile anti-orbital weaponry, the Orbital fleet has long since abandoned the concept of total aerial superiority over the orbital exclusion zone of Paradiso. The combination of these threats heavily punishes any ships that stray into the skies around the orbital exclusion zone. Surveillance remains a vital task of the Orbital blockade, and despite the difficulties and dangers, they have remained relevant in the ongoing information war.

The defensive efforts of the Orbital fleet extend to other vital tasks. The ring of ships that guard Paradiso also protect the orbital elevators that supply the ground based forces of the Human Sphere and the remaining civilian populace, and without their continued operation, the defence of

Paradiso would become significantly more difficult as mass transit of resources would be bottlenecked by orbital entry ships rather than the cheap and efficient use of the elevators. Attacks against the elevators are met in the sky and on the ground, but the attacks never leave a lasting mark.

The comparatively gentle attacks launched against the orbital elevators have left a bad taste in the mouths of humanity's more acute generals. Each strike draws blood, but doesn't contain the ruthless efficiency and brutality so common in attacks by the Combined Army. In truth, the EI and its generals are aware of the import of the orbital elevators and have elected to show restraint for some unknown scheme. Some believe the Combined Army command is happy to draw forces from the blockade to ensure the arrival of more of its troops and will destroy the elevators when the time to take the planet proper arrives.

Off planet, the battle for territory continues on the moons of Nirvana and Satori. Both moons would make ideal staging grounds for the Combined Army's invasion, and it is only thanks to the skill, bravery, and luck of both moons' defenders that they were unable to secure the moons in their initial advances. Now these moons maintain human military bases dedicated to engaging incoming craft with anti-orbital ordnance, as well as acting as the headquarters to several intelligence units that wait to be deployed to crisis points on Paradiso and conduct espionage, black operations, and information gathering. Long-range scanners safe from the E/M probes rake the alien territory and much of the coalition's battlefield information comes from the efforts of the intelligence teams on the moons.

Occasionally, an attack force will make a landing on a moon in an attempt to capture and destroy these facilities, and both Nirvana and Satori have seen combat during the Paradiso war. Fighter drones and independent TAGs modified for low-gravity engagements make up the initial defensive line of the surface, closely supported by long-range artillery from the bases. If the Combined Army's forces are able to breach the bases defences, they are met with well-disciplined security forces who know the station's choke points and short cuts like the back of their hand. Posting on these moons is a mark of excellence, as their continued operation is paramount to the war effort, and only the best personnel are entrusted with their defence.

THE INTERMEDIATE BLOCKADE

DEEP SPACE HUNTERS

Although the initial Acheron blockade makes up most of the naval presence in the Paradiso system, the human defenders are firm believers in redundancy. The Combined Army's ships are faster, stronger, and more stealth capable than the human fleet, and it is almost guaranteed that a sizeable amount of ships will breach the initial blockade. These ships usually form up into a wing to continue onto the planet, but some emerge from the first blockade battered and alone, cut off from allies. The defenders of the Intermediate blockade deploy hunter craft, called pursuit uni-ships, who track and chase down these lone ships or gather together to match the Combined Army's wing units.

THE WOLF PACKS

The crews of the Intermediate blockade are either fast, tenacious, or merciless. Usually, they are a combination of the three. The ships of the Intermediate are small and agile, with much less firepower than their larger cousins in the Orbital blockade. This is made up for with the speed and the daring of their captains.

Uni-ships and their crews are typically chosen for their ability to launch lightning-fast strikes at the drop of a pin, manoeuvring into an attack vector and hammering their enemies in the time it takes larger ships to inform their captain of the enemy presence. A combination of this reactive speed and high-impact naval ordnance has heralded the end of many isolated Combined Army ships.

Because of the nature of the work and the sheer amount of space between the Acheron wormhole and the planet, the Intermediate fleet operates independently of each other, only working together to ensure the destruction of a particularly savvy pack of prey. Because of this behaviour, the ships of the Intermediate blockade are referred to as wolves.

Although several military craft occupy the blockade, it is the Nomad interceptors and Haqqislamite merchants-turned-corsairs that truly shine. The captains of both these nations are well versed with space travel and have turned that mastery to fighting for their fellow humans.

SUPPORT NETWORK

Despite the skill on display by the wolves of the Intermediate blockade, it is unreasonable to rely on far-ranging, lone ships to defend an entire sector of space. Isolated mining facilities and trade routes are constantly in danger of Combined Army attack, which would hamper the defence of Paradiso by causing shortages of vital resources to the civilians

and military planet-side. Backed by the military, an initiative was devised by the civilian leaders of these industries to share relevant combat data with the uni-ships of the fleet.

This data can be anything from strange signals emerging from unusual sources, signs of attack within major space lanes, and even actual sightings of alien vessels. By sharing this knowledge with each other and the military, the human fleet is able to put together a real-time tactical map for their wolves, who can then make adjustments to their regular patrol patterns to intercept enemy craft.

Upon spotting a Combined Army ship or if under threat of attack, vessels and spaceports can also send out a signal to any receivers, who will then pass the message down along to others. Eventually, these messages will reach the uni-ships, who will immediately change course to hunt down their quarry. Civilian casualties have been decreasing as the war for Paradiso rages on because of this data sharing and messaging system. Combined Army troops are forced to make the decision between potentially taking out a vital supply source or making it to Paradiso undetected to lend much needed reinforcements to their terrestrial forces. As the uni-ships grow more and more familiar with Combined Army methods, the margin grows between success and failure.

In addition to their information networking, the various ports and space stations of the Paradiso system have lent their holdings and homes to the crews of the uni-ships, offering rest and respite as well as supplies and entertainment. To some, this is natural, a thank you offering for the brave warriors fighting for their survival. More unsavoury uni-ship crews sometimes gain these 'additional benefits' through extortion however, and disciplinary measures are undertaken by O-12 to ensure continued cooperation.

THE ACCESS BLOCKADE

THE SECOND BULWARK

Despite the efforts of the Intermediate and Acheron blockades, the Combined Army's strategies, whilst costly, ensure the incursion of ships deep into human-controlled territory, forcing desperate attempts to destroy Combined Army ships before they reach Paradiso. Whilst most military assets are tied up in the initial lines of defence, the leftovers of the fleet can be found in the Access and Orbital blockades.

The Access blockade's ships don't have the size and raw power of their counterparts on the front line of the Acheron blockade, nor are they as fast and

manoeuvrable as the hunters of the Intermediate blockade. Once the Intermediate blockade is cleared, there is a small sector of space at the edge of the Intermediate blockade's patrol zone and the Access blockade's scanner range where Combined Army ships are able to peel off from Paradiso and make a move towards the jump gates that lead to Bourak, Svalarheima, and the Human Edge. Or, the Combined Army ships divert their attention to any number of listening posts and deep space probes that relay vital data on ship movements and inter-system communications to the defenders. To counter this, the G5 nations have positioned weapons platforms and command and control stations at each of the jump gates that lead deeper into the Human Sphere, all connected in a network designed with the intent to offer mutual support.

Within the Paradiso system, the jump gates are guarded by a coalition of humanity using technology and resources from each of the Human Sphere's powers. Cooperation is ensured by O-12 under the assertion that Combined Army entrance into any of the systems would lead to a breach of security that could spread across the entirety of the Sphere. An incursion into Bourak could easily lead to a secondary incursion reaching as far as Neoterra or Yutang, perhaps even Sol. The agreement between the powers is a mutual one; the fear of alien espionage reaching their respective home-worlds is enough to unify them for now. The systems most at risk of this subversive warfare are the neighbours of the Paradiso system: Bourak, Dawn, Svalarheima, Human Edge, and the Tohaa's Ereeva system. As each power is expected to handle the jump gate defences on their own turf, the non-Paradiso side of each wormhole is carefully defended by ships and stations belonging to the occupants of the system in question.

Generals of the EI have placed high priority on the destruction of enemy intelligence systems, and many ships take the opportunity to attack these weak points on their path. Groupings of blockade ships, large enough to dissuade an attack but small enough to not attract undue attention, make up the inner defence of the Access fleet. Many young or unpopular captains find their first assignment in the Paradiso defence fleets to be these postings, a job affectionately referred to as the 'dead shift.' Attacks by boarding Morat forces and supply craft aren't common following the establishment of the blockades, as the potential cost of manpower and supplies is sometimes not worth the risk. The few ships that do attack tend to be Shasvastii infiltration ships or bands of deep space fighters that survived initial contact with the Acheron fleet and the wolf packs of the Intermediate blockade. In these situations, the defenders of these posts are

almost always outmatched in a ship to ship battle. The resources required to defend these minor information links are tied up in more important work, specifically, the protection of the jump gates leading to other human systems.

THE ABYSS BLOCKADE

The defences protecting Svalarheima and Bourak are strong, but the Human Edge doesn't benefit from the strength of the superpowers. Whilst O-12 have delegated a small fleet to the jump gate, the system enjoys additional defenders in the form of a loose coalition of mercenaries, pirates, and security ships belonging to the companies that mine the asteroids of the Human Edge. Though the coalition is a surprising development that has reinforced the system to an acceptable degree, the disorganization of the people that work within it make the tracking and destruction of stealth ships difficult. Like the Intermediate Blockade, these ships settle for hunting targets after they enter the system, but it is far more common for a Combined Army ship to slip past these defenders than be caught due to the superior Combined Army technology.

Adding to this difficulty are the natural conditions of the system itself. The asteroid fields that surround the wormhole make a large static defence impossible, as the ships that stand guard must constantly reposition themselves if they don't wish to become well acquainted with a couple of hundred tonnes of rock. Adding ships to negate the need for manoeuvring would only serve to further increase the risk of collisions. The expenditure of manpower in this positioning makes tracking incoming traffic from the jump gate difficult, and usually a ship will appear on scanners before or during a required reposition and leave the crew on the back foot when moving to intercept them. To compound things, a ship exiting the jump gate won't have far to go before it can disappear into the asteroid fields and encroach deeper into human territory.

EASY PICKINGS

The Combined Army is well aware of the weak point within the Human Edge. The war has been waged long enough for spies and scouts to report their findings to the Combined Army generals on Paradiso, feeding information back to the EI. If the Combined Army has plans for the Human Edge, they are playing their hand close to their chest. Alien infiltrators commonly use the Human Edge as an access point to the rest of the Human Sphere, however.

THE ACHERON BLOCKADE

Named for the river of Hades, the Acheron wormhole, which leads to the systems controlled by the Ur Hegemony, sits at the edge of the Paradiso system. Acheron remained a mystery to the settlers of Paradiso in the early days of settlement, as the wormhole sat on the opposite side of the system to the jump gates that connected Paradiso to the Human Sphere. Space traffic rarely strayed out towards the anomaly, and it wasn't until the first waves of the Combined Army's attacks that Acheron was discovered.

There is a constant tension around Acheron, as each fluctuation could mark the arrival of a Combined Army reinforcement fleet, despite travel through the wormhole being a dangerous proposition given Acheron's eccentricity. From information gathered by interrogation of Combined Army officers, it has been discovered that travel through the wormhole wrack's ships passing through with gravitational tidal forces, some strong enough to destroy a ship if their coherence fields so much as flicker. This works to the advantage of the human fleet, as roughly half the ships that pass through the wormhole are torn apart during transit. The ones that make it through must face down the Acheron blockade.

The Acheron blockade itself is built up of humanity's largest and most powerful warships. Dreadnoughts, cruisers, and large fighter carriers, the prides of their respective fleets, stand ready to intercept any Combined Army ships exiting the Acheron wormhole with extreme prejudice. Thanks to the turbulence within cutting their opponent's numbers down and the natural bottleneck that ensues, the technologically inferior human fleet battles the Combined fleet on an even footing.

However, the wide exit zone of the wormhole makes the blockade work nerve-racking. There are simply too many variable egress points from the wormhole and nowhere near enough guns to cover each of the vectors, making static defence and patrols inefficient on their own. Constant scans completed by moving ships are mandatory to ensure that the fleet can respond to threats as they arrive. Further complicating the matter is the Combined Army's superior stealth technology. The Shasvastii ships are able to fool scanners long enough to enter the system and evade the worst of the blockade's firepower. This has led to the Combined Army using distraction tactics to ensure troop transports and supply ships can sneak past the human lines, with drone-slaved systems aggressively engaging the blockade with expendable ships.

LIFE ON THE LINE

The soldiers that fight on the Acheron line also live on the Acheron line. The needs for constant surveillance and being battle ready at all times require a large standing force of troops that can rotate on and off duty and react quickly if called in the event of an attack. Daily life serving on the vessels and stations of the Acheron blockade is typically made up of long stretches of tedium followed by brief, violent periods of large-scale naval combat. Unfortunately for the troops, this is a nerve-rattling method of warfare.

Having to remain constantly alert, expecting battle and death at any moment, has left marks on the soldiers of the Acheron fleet. Stress and paranoia constantly afflict the personnel stationed closest to the wormhole in particular, as they have to see the shifting anomaly each day. Each fluctuation of the wormhole could be the precursor to a dangerous battle. Every stutter on the radar could be Shasvastii ships attacking their instruments in preparation for the next assault. Each minor system disturbance could be sabotage from a Combined Army death squad aboard their vessel.

The rigours of unpredictable naval combat aside, the soldiers must also face the alien horror of the Combined forces. Sepsitorization and infiltrating Shasvastii are a constant threat to the security of the Acheron blockade, and safety checks are common to ensure the systems and officers of the fleet are secure. While these checks might ensure the integrity of the defences, they only further erode the mental wellbeing of the troops, who soon after posting can become jumpy and paranoid. Mental health is considered a priority, with recreation and therapy invested in heavily. Though this can seem like a tedious and fruitless exercise, as week after week of boring support groups and simple, mind-focusing duties pass by, the veterans of the blockade are thankful for these efforts as they keep them alert and sane whilst they wait for the next battle.

THE SHIPS OF ACHERON

The Acheron blockade is home to some of the most devastating naval weapons humanity has ever produced. Warships from across human-controlled space have been sent to the blockade with the single-minded purpose of fending off a truly dangerous enemy. PanOceanian battle cruisers work in concert with the StateEmpire's jūnjiàn for the first time in each nation's history. Nomad cruisers fight alongside the nations they still consider slaves to ALEPH for the good of all. It would be an inspiring display if it weren't for the continued tensions back in

Human Sphere, especially following PanOceania's display of solidarity with the new Great Japan. As the fleet is united in their common goal, command has been relinquished to unaligned O-12 officials in the interest of cooperation. The aforementioned tensions have given rise to several conflicts already, but thanks to the stern, impartial command of O-12 commanders, the fleet has continued to operate at full capacity and the rowdier admirals have been brought in line.

One of the most important jobs within the Acheron blockade is the efforts of the combat patrols that drift from capital ship to capital ship. These small wings of craft perform the combat scans that the larger warships would have to risk valuable time and targeting vectors to undertake, ensuring the information coverage of the blockade remains constantly all-encompassing. These patrols are made up of craft lighter than the large warships that anchor the blockade, focusing on speed and manoeuvrability to quickly engage enemy craft in the event of a Combined Army attack during their sweeps. Escorts of fighter craft are common, and it's a job welcomed by the more stir-crazy pilots who can't stand sitting in common rooms until the Combined Army rear their head. Normally, these ships act as the first responders to an alien incursion, intercepting boarding ships and bombers before they can strike the capital ships of the human fleet. Casualties for these patrol units are high in combat situations, leading to only the most daring and brave pilots volunteering for the job.

The warships these patrols move between can only be described as titanic, truly breath-taking spacecraft with a matching array of weaponry. Although the human dreadnoughts cannot match the Ur Hegemony's navy ship-to-ship with current technology, it would be a dangerous assumption to think that they cannot put up a good fight. Unique military doctrines and divergent technology affects the make of each of these ships, further reinforcing their roles within the fleet. PanOceanian ships, the most numerous of the fleet, often act as the centre of resistance during an attack. Outfitted with cutting-edge systems and weaponry and crewed by well-drilled personnel, they battle at range to wear the Combined Fleet down. The Yu Jingese fleet, though not as advanced as the PanOceanian fleet, is famed for their power armoured boarding parties and tactical acuity. Able to outmatch the Military Orders by virtue of numbers and sheer ruthless determination, they have constantly proven their skill against the Combined Army's warriors in intense, close-quarters combat, ripping Combined Army ships apart from the inside out and capturing prisoners for interrogation. Their ships maintain the frontline of the human

fleet, a bulwark of steel that levels torpedoes and precise close-range fire at the enemy. The Nomad fleet, familiar with space travel and its rigours, function as the outriders of the human fleet, lashing out at any craft that breeches the human line with speed and precision unmatched by their 'lumbering' allies. The Nomad's combat patrols have orchestrated some of the most successful flanking assaults in the war, and proudly boast of it at any chance they get.

The Haqqislamite fleet, smaller than the other nations' fleets, acts primarily in a support role, ferrying supplies and aid to ships in the gaps between combat, and rescuing crew that have had to abandon ship. Though it is rare for the Haqqislamite fleet to engage in direct combat at the battle's commencement, they are nonetheless ready to fight, delivering supporting fire for the larger PanOceanian and Yu Jingese craft. Though other nations such as Ariadna and Great Japan lend ships to the cause, their contributions are overshadowed by the great powers' works, and they are typically relegated to rear-guard action, trying to catch any ships the Nomad outriders miss and plug holes that may form in the line. Working in concert, these elements have allowed the human fleet to establish a strong defensive point within the range of Acheron.

ENEMY CRAFT

The Combined Army faces a challenging prospect in breaching the Acheron blockade to get reinforcements to their terrestrial forces. Normally, the navy of the Ur Hegemony would have no issues breaching blockades and resupplying, and during the initial stages of their invasion they proved as much, devastating the human forces in the first two waves of conquest. Now the Combined Army faces a new challenge after the defenders of Paradiso plugged the gaps in their forces and blockaded the Acheron wormhole itself. Superior numbers and technology are no longer enough, and the warriors of the EI have had to adapt to account for the losses incurred by the wormhole and the defenders on the other side of it, a task made possible by their experience and tactical skill honed by hundreds of years of warfare.

To safely deploy troops to the other side of the wormhole, the Combined Army has established a doctrine of wave assaults and bait and switch tactics. The initial wave of each Combined Army assault is predominantly made up of probes, to establish the positions of enemy ships. These drones feed information back to the second wave and beyond, highlighting vital targets and gaps in the blockades firing vectors. The second wave is a force of unmanned fighter

TURBULENCE PLATFORMS

A development submitted to the O-12 military committee from an anonymous source, the plans for the turbulence platforms offer a method to further destabilise Acheron. Using E/M emitters and fusion energy injection, the turbulence platforms aim to create more fluctuations in the wormhole and attack the systems protecting ships passing through it. Results so far have been difficult to measure, but if they can achieve their promised function, they may be able to swing the Paradiso conflict into the favour of the Human Sphere.

drones and carriers that engage the first wave of the human defenders, attempting to disrupt the targeting lanes of the larger ships. The third wave consists of manned fighters, bombers, and explosive-rigged fire ships that directly engage the enemy, causing as much damage as possible. This makes way for the fourth and final wave, the troops carriers and supply ships, which emerge and make attempts to pass by the Acheron blockade. Any ships remaining from the initial waves will break off after the ships are through to escort and protect them as they make for Paradiso, but casualties of the first few waves tend to be high, and the fourth wave must usually rely on their own wits to make it to the planet.

THE DAEDALUS BLOCKADE

Until recently, the jump gate that led to the Ereeva system and the Tohaa Trinomial sat on the opposite side of the Paradiso planet from Acheron. Codenamed Daedalus – a wry reference connecting the Greek maze builder to the labyrinthine mystery of the Tohaa – the jump gate was exclusively protected by the Tohaa fleet, which was an agreement reached as part of the Human-Tohaa Contact Treaties.

The Tohaa tasked with protecting the jump gate failed. The Daedalus Gate is no more. The far-reaching effects of its collapse have yet to be fully realised by their Human Sphere allies, but the immediate fallout is obvious and transparent. Unless another connection to the Tohaa Trinomial's systems can be established, whether through repair of the jump gate or some other means, the Tohaa currently present across the Human Sphere are stranded with limited supplies and no hope of reinforcement.

Initial investigations following the sabotaging of the Daedalus Gate point towards a Shasvastii infiltration. Under escort by PanOceania's light corvette, POS Regina, a Combined Army light assault cruiser captured during the Wotan defence campaign, the WDC Raxora, was being transferred to the interior of the system for deconstructive study. Communication and location of both ships went black during the transit, however, and everyone involved feared they had both been lost to an ambush. Sporting fresh battle scars, a battered Raxora appeared at Daedalus alone but still in possession of a Tohaa crew and the correct identification codes. The Regina had apparently been destroyed by a Combined Army ambush. Having received clearance to pass the orbital defences of the Daedalus Gate, the Raxora slipped into the defensive ring, and her crew sprang a

surprise attack of their own on the gate's stabilisers, a victory for the Combined Army and a tragedy for the Tohaa and their Human Sphere allies.

THE DAYBREAK BLOCKADE

The fact that the Ariadnans insisted on providing the defence for the Daybreak Jump Gate purely with their own forces initially caused O-12 great consternation, but the Ariadnans did eventually manage to get O-12 to concede that they would be unable to defend both sides of the wormhole with just their own overstretched resources. By offering to contract a sizeable specialist detachment for the Indra-3 Mobase, O-12 struck on a scheme that allowed them to offer the smaller Indra-4 Mobase to the Ariadnans as a permanent defensive asset at the Daybreak Jump Gate on the Paradiso side. Manned by O-12 personnel and staffed by officers of the Ariadnan Joint Command, Indra-4 serves to monitor all traffic to and from the Dawn system. In the wake of the recent Kurage Crisis and the advent of Combined Army troops on the planet Dawn, security at the jump gate has been amplified to almost prohibitive proportions and slowed trade to a crawl for now. For their part, the Ariadnans state they've lived through far worse times in terms of supplies reaching Dawn, and they certainly don't want any more foreign invaders on their soil beyond those they have been forced to suffer.

THE SHEYK BLOCKADE

The Bourak defence fleet of the Sheyk blockade is a rather successful one, well-practised in discovering and eliminating illegal spacecraft and smuggling vessels carrying stolen Silk. This skill set is put to good use rooting out any infiltrating Combined Army ships before they can deal any damage, and as such incursions towards Bourak are incredibly rare. As the majority of the Haqqislam military fleet is tied up in the defence of Paradiso, some policing craft have been re-purposed to act as combat ships in the case of any Combined Army sightings. These usually dock at Gelişmek Station above Bourak, and are one of the only physical signs of the Paradiso conflict within the system.

WOTAN BLOCKADE

Due to the contested nature of the frozen planet, the defence force of the Svalarheima wormhole comprises of ships belonging to both PanOceania and Yu Jing. To say tensions are high would be an understatement, especially following PanOceania's implementation of the Steel Wall. Auxiliaries lent by the Ariadnans, eager to make a name for themselves amongst the inter-Sphere community,

A DASH OF CHAOS

Surprise and unpredictability are vital elements of the Combined Army's tactics, and to prevent the singling out of vital elements of the fleet, the navy has relied on drawing the attention of the larger warships of the human fleet and hiding assets in various ways. A fighter squadron might carry several units of Morat troopers, their original transport instead filled to the brim with explosives and munitions and sent to ram the enemy fleet disguised as a boarding ship. These methods have tricked the human defenders more than once, and several units have made it to Paradiso in the back of a light assault craft.

PICKING THE WOUND

The recent turbulence of Human Sphere politics due to the secession of the Japanese people from Yu Jing has exposed a unique opportunity to the Shasvastii. As tensions soar and unity breaks down in the Svalarheima system, the smallest application of pressure could be enough to drag the two superpowers to blows within the system, which would be disastrous for the continued defence of the Human Sphere.

are used in the PanOceanian defensive fleet, a situation that enrages the delegates of Jade Empire to no end. Only the presence of the O-12 delegates on the Indra-3 Mobase has allowed any sense of cooperation to return following a recent explosive conflict at the jump gate. Unfortunately, the disharmony between the defensive fleets guarding both sides of the wormhole led to more frequent incursions into the Svalarheima system by the stealth ships of the Shasvastii. Although sharing control of the jump gates defences, PanOceanian orbitals in the form of the Sygtir Defense Cluster dominate the jump gate's protective measures. The Sygtir-1 Fire Control Platform oversees the Sygtir-2, 3, and 4 Weapon Platforms, while the Exo Affairs Department Orbase oversees the traffic transiting between Paradiso and Svalarheima. Yu Jing offsets PanOceania's dominance with their own Bái jīng (White Crystal) Orbital Consulate, a diplomatic and administrative space station officially designed to assist with visas, licenses, and the promotion of trade with the StateEmpire, though it also unofficially provides the

Yǎnjīng intelligence service with the opportunity to gather clandestine information.

The other factions also maintain a presence around Wotan, though many of them were heavily damaged in inter-factional fighting that sparked during a recent Combined Army incursion at the jump gate. Thanks to a commitment to assist indirectly by employing Nomad assets in other areas of Paradiso – and thereby providing finances that can funnel back to reconstruction – repairs continue on the Nomads Nation's La Forja orbital shipyard. Their repurposed freighter, the Don Peyote, is scheduled to be the first ship to receive attention at La Forja as soon as it can once again undertake repairs. The Ilik (Icicle) Alfundaq provides Haqqislam with an important trade presence on the Paradiso side of the jump gate. Lastly, in addition to providing an important oversight delegation to the delicate politics surrounding the jump gate, O-12's Indra-3 Mobase plays host to ALEPH's Echo Commodule and a Transport Security Detachment that boasts specialised Ariadnan boarding troops.



CHAPTER 8

AN UNQUIET PARADISE

From space, Paradiso is a shining gem of blue and green, with swirling cloud systems adding lustre. Once through the atmosphere, the sheer vista of the planet is breath-taking. On the ground, the views of Paradiso are no less spectacular—a planet teeming with life and resources, an unspoilt paradise.

Welcome to the Green Hell, or “The Meat Grinder,” as some Human Sphere soldiers call it. The beauty of Paradiso is a facade, a lure to draw the unwary, and there are so many ways to die on Paradiso. Beneath the placid surface lies monsters. This chapter gives the GM some options in creating Paradiso jungle Action Scenes, as well as providing some guidelines for creating Zones, sample Momentum and Heat spends, and some suggested ways to create unique scenes.

COMBAT IN THE JUNGLE

Creating action scenes within the jungle requires the GM to think in three dimensions, as the jungles has both heights and depths full of life—often in conflict with the characters. The jungle itself is rarely quiet. Above the heads of the characters arboreal hunters search for food, while unseen predators lurk in the shadows.

And then, of course, there is the oft-unseen threat of the Combined Army. Paradiso's jungle hides them as well. For those skilled in bush craft, the jungle is less of a threat, but every shadow could still conceal a Morat hunter or Shasvastii sniper.

For the GM, creating a sense of unseen threat will encourage characters to at the least be circumspect and wary of the jungle. At any moment, the air is heavy with implicit violence—from Combined Army ambushes or the deadly local wildlife.

MANOEUVRING IN THE JUNGLE

Getting around the jungle will likely require the GM to refer to the **Climbing, Swimming, and Jumping** section in the *Infinity Corebook*, p.111.

Later in the chapter there will be ways of creating vivid actions for the characters as well as providing some of the natural hazards.

LAYERS OF THE JUNGLE & ZONES

The *Infinity Corebook* (p. 107-108) introduced the concepts of environments and zones to the GM. This can be extended to Action Scenes in the jungle, which extend upwards from ground level. Action Scenes that take place over several layers involve a tiered combat.

Creating these three-dimensional zones is best thought of as constructing layers of the jungle. These layers consist of the Forest Floor, one or more Intermediate Layers, and the Canopy Layer.

These layers have their own zones, possibly extending above or below the current layer. For example, a zone full of trees extends upwards from the Forest Floor Layer.

- **Subterranean Level:** Below ground level. These usually contain the root systems of the jungle trees that often have their own ecosystem.
- **Forest Floor:** The ground level of a jungle Action Scene is usually where a primary encounter takes place. Unless the characters have actively taken steps to move to one of the other layers, the GM should assume the characters begin the Action Scene at the Forest Floor Layer.
- **Intermediate Layer(s):** Above (and occasionally below) the Forest Floor Layer, are the Intermediate Layers. These abstract areas consist of the foliage or upper levels of the jungle, subterranean tunnels and cave systems, or bodies of water. They may possess their own micro-ecosystems. As a rule of thumb, the taller the trees and deeper the jungle, the more Intermediate Layers should be included. More than three Intermediate Layers in an Action Scene is not recommended as it can slow down action resolution in the scene.
- **Canopy Layer:** The uppermost layer of the jungle is the highest point of tree cover. Beyond this layer, the sky is visible as the literal limit. Aerial surveillance or predators are also more likely to spot the characters from above, as their location is more exposed.

MOVING BETWEEN LAYERS

Moving between layers works in exactly the same way as moving between zones, but in most cases, the movement is vertical, either up or down. This


GM TIP: ZONE CREATION

More information about creating Zones including Psywar and Quantronic Zones, can be found in the *Infinity Gamesmaster's Guide*.

VEHICLES VS. TAGS

Given the thick jungles of Paradiso, the Human Sphere's forces prefer to use TAGs where and whenever possible. They are more manoeuvrable within the close confines of the jungle and find it easier to traverse the rough terrain. While they may not be considered stealthy, they are still quieter to move and easier to conceal than a convoy of vehicles.



can involve a mixture of flying, climbing, swimming, or jumping (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.111). Characters that suffer Falling damage (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.110) will return to a lower layer, usually the Forest Floor. In addition to gaining 1  Soak per Momentum spent, characters can spend an additional Momentum to reduce the number of layers they fall by one layer per Momentum spent to a minimum of one. They have still fallen, just not as far.

CONCEALMENT AND VISIBILITY

Within the forests, the shadows keep their secrets well. The Paradiso jungle has the capacity to hide TAGs and even whole armies. The natural predators of Paradiso, the Combined Army, and others make use of the concealing vegetation including submondo elements and clandestine O-12 operations.

In the jungle, it is not just what you see that kills you. What you don't see – that will definitely kill you. This basic law of the jungle holds true for characters and their adversaries. Action Scenes in the deep jungle are often one of a cat-and-mouse nature with each set of opponents looking to seize the advantage. Concealment and spotting the enemy are key to this.

Half the battle for the characters in a Paradiso jungle Action Scene is spotting the enemy, and the other half is remaining hidden. There are a number of example situational modifiers which will benefit either side during the conflict either in the detection or concealment of an opponent or spotting the enemy. In most cases, it will be the characters attempting to spot an enemy or trying to avoid detection.

It is possible that other senses such as the Dogface sense of smell or hearing may come into play in certain situations. The odours and cacophony of the jungle are their own form of sensory overload, so may or may not be of use at the GM's discretion.

- **Gear:** Airborne Remotes and terrain mapping devices can be used to map out the terrain and either scout out hidden opponents or provide a way to avoid them. Both adversaries and characters may use these, and remotes can modify both sides of the test, possibly adding one point of Momentum to either side when spotting or avoiding the enemy.
- **Darkness:** It is far easier to remain concealed within the gloom of a Paradiso jungle night, granting one bonus Momentum to the Stealth aspect of spotting the enemy.
- **Movement:** Moving around is the easy way to become noticed. Moving faster than walking

speed grants anyone attempting to spot the character one extra point of Momentum for the purposes of spotting the enemy.

- **Size:** Anything larger than human size, such as a TAG, has a distinctive visual outline making them easier to spot. This grants one Momentum to the Observation test.
- **Muzzle Flash:** Unless some form of suppressor or silencer is used, weapon's fire gives away the shooter's position, granting one Momentum to the Observation aspect.
- **Terrain:** Certain Terrain Types (see p.63) may increase or decrease the difficulty of the test.
- **Weather:** The weather also can have an effect. Rainy conditions may make it easier to remain concealed, reducing visibility.

TRACKING

It is highly likely that the characters will, at some point, wish to track someone or something. It is also possible they themselves will also need to try and hide their tracks at some point.



Like spotting an enemy, this is a face-to-face test of Observation versus Survival (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.31).

AERIAL/SATELLITE SURVEILLANCE – THE PARADISO PROBLEM

Surveillance of Paradiso is a constant challenge for the Coordinated Command. In space, wreckage from destroyed orbitals such as the Eveningstar provide a hazard to regular satellite orbital surveillance. The Combined Army also deploy a number of countermeasures such as micro-drones and E/M Pulse Air-Emitters over the Exclusion Zone to make satellite and aerial surveillance a significant risk.

Paradiso itself does not make aerial surveillance easy. The weather systems frequently disrupt aerial flyovers, and the “alien weather” phenomenon produces EM interference. Cloud cover conceals much of the planet, and of course, the thick jungle makes any attempt at long-range visual detection exceptionally difficult.

COVER

As well as remaining concealed, cover is worth almost as much to a good soldier as superior firepower. In *Infinity*, cover also provides a bonus to Armour Soak, known as Cover Soak. The requirement for this is that the character is within the Reach range category of the terrain. The Terrain Types listed on page 63 have example Cover Soaks, either Light 2  or Heavy 4 . The Cover Soak bonuses for being within Reach of multiple Terrain Types do not stack.

SPOTTING THE ENEMY

Spotting an enemy in the jungle is a face-to-face test (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.31) of Observation versus Stealth. Usually this is a Simple (D0) test with good visibility (such as it is in the jungle). Each Terrain Type (see p. 63) has a Visibility Zone, increasing the difficulty as conditions worsen.

- Low Visibility – Average (D1)
- Poor Visibility – Challenging (D2)
- Zero Visibility – Daunting (D3)

Visibility Zone – See *Infinity Corebook*, p.109.

Stealth Modifiers – See *Infinity Corebook*, p.105.

COVER REFERENCES

Cover – *Infinity Corebook*, p.108

Destroying Cover – *Infinity Corebook*, p.109

Cover Soaks – *Infinity Corebook*, p.108

Defoliants – p. 67

Category of the Terrain – *Infinity Corebook*, p.107

Cover can be destroyed by significant damage. (See *Infinity Corebook*, “Destroying Cover,” p.109.) Attacks with the Anti-Materiel quality (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.336) are especially useful in destroying cover. Defoliant agents (see p.67) are formulated chemical compounds usually deployed in aerosol form. These are specifically designed for use in destroying the Paradiso vegetation, withering and desiccating the foliage.

SAMPLE MOMENTUM SPENDS

As Action Scenes are intended to be cinematic in nature, the following are suggestions for additional alternative Momentum spends. These are examples only, and GMs are encouraged to be creative with any ideas their players have regarding character Momentum spends similar to these.

Blasting Free: While using a Burst action, the character also blasts any cover the target is hiding behind. Each Reload used in the burst also inflicts the Anti-Materiel X damage quality, with X being the number of Reloads used.

Death from Above: The character leaps from a higher layer to a lower one, crashing into their target from a great height. This must be into a Zone within Reach. The manoeuvre follows the normal rules for Jumping (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.111). A successful test means any single melee attack then made gains the Knockdown, Stun, and Unforgiving damage qualities.

Swinging from the Trees: The character leaps from their perch, making a controlled descent while brachiating from tree to tree (or equivalent terrain), perhaps swinging from vines and creepers as they do. The character may move up to two zones away, traversing up to two terrain layers in the process. In addition, any attempts to hit the character have their difficulty increased by one step.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEAT SPENDS

Given the nature of Paradiso's jungle and possible complications of combat in the jungle, there are several options for GMs to spend Heat during jungle Action Scenes. Some sample Environmental Heat spends can be used to make scenes unique. Most are dependent on the Terrain Type (see p.63), but all have an associated Heat cost.

CAVE-IN

Heat Cost: 2

Terrain Type: Subterranean

A structural weakness causes the ceiling and walls to collapse. Any characters in the zone must make a Challenging (D2) Athletics test or be caught in the collapse. Caught characters suffer the immobilised condition and take 2+4^N physical damage. They

also will begin to suffocate. If the characters are underground, the way ahead is blocked until cleared.

DEEPER THAN IT LOOKS

Heat Cost: 1

Terrain Type: Any Water or Swamp

The water is far deeper than it looked on the surface, and what might have appeared to be safe footing plunges the characters under the waters. The water is treated as Aquatic Terrain.

FALLING TREE

Heat Cost: 2

Terrain Type: Any Jungle

A nearby tree has been badly damaged by the battle, or it has rotted through. With a creak, it topples toward the characters. Any characters in the way must make a Challenging (D2) Athletics test or be pinned by the tree. Pinned characters suffer the immobilised condition and take 2+4^N physical damage. The fallen tree counts as Light Cover Soak (+2^N).

POISONOUS GAS

Heat Cost: 2

Terrain Type: Any Non-Aquatic

A pocket or cloud of toxic gas has built up nearby. While it may or may not be flammable, it is definitely poisonous to humans. The gas covers a single zone, and unless the characters have a breathing apparatus, they will inhale it (Inhaled, Complex 1 (2 Momentum), 1+4^N physical damage with the Toxic 1 quality).

Wound Effect: The affected character becomes dazed. For an additional 1 Heat spend, the gas is Haunt.

RAIN

Heat Cost: 2

Terrain Type: Any

Wind and rain sweep across the battlefield, making both visibility and movement difficult. Any distance-related, movement, or visual tests count as being one step higher. For example, Challenging (D2) Ranged Weapon attacks and Observation tests become Daunting (D3).

ROTTING TREE BRANCH

Heat Cost: 1

Terrain Type: Intermediate or Canopy Jungle Layer

The tree branch that the character is currently perched upon has either rotted through or is dead and cannot bear the character's weight. With a loud crack, it gives way. Unless the character makes a successful Challenging (D2) Athletics test to jump to safety, they will fall to the ground.

Burst — *Infinity Corebook*, p.358

Reloads — *Infinity Corebook*, p.356

Drowning and Suffocation — *Infinity Corebook*, p. 110

Aquatic Terrain — *Infinity Corebook*, p. 109

Haunt — *Infinity Corebook*, p. 370

Falling Damage – *Infinity*
Corebook, p. 110

Climbing – *Infinity*
Corebook, p. 111

Visibility Zone – *Infinity*
Corebook, p. 109

SINKHOLE

Heat Cost: 2

Terrain Type: Forest Floor

The forest floor is little more than a fragile covering of dirt and leaves over a hole in the ground. Unfortunately for the characters, their combined weight causes it to collapse inwards. Unless a character makes a successful Challenging (D2) Athletics test to jump to safety, they will fall into the hole. Each additional Heat point spent increases the depth of the hole by one zone.

SMOKE

Heat Cost: 1

Terrain Type: Any

The smoke of combat drifts across the battlefield, worsening the visibility. The zone counts as Low Visibility Zone. Additional Heat point spends will worsen it to poor visibility or even zero visibility.

SMOKER/VENTS

Heat Cost: 1

Terrain Type: Aquatic, Subterranean

A thermal vent below the surface blasts upwards sending a jet of water or plume of scalding gases upwards. Unless a character makes a successful Daunting (D3) Athletics test to dodge the plume, they suffer 2+4^W physical damage with the Spread 1 and Torrent qualities.

RUNNING COMBAT ACTION SCENES IN THE JUNGLE

When running combat Action Scenes in the jungle, the GM may use several dramatic tools to add to the collective experience of both players and GM. These are not rules and can be viewed as suggestions.

Regarding split groups in the jungle, the GM is advised to cut between groups of the characters when they split up. Switching between each group helps to add the tension and also gives the GM some breathing space to gain dramatic traction with the scene. The GM may also wish to vary the order in which the players declare a character's actions, rather than let the same character declare their actions first each round.

Use Heat to heighten dramatic tension. It can also be used to add reinforcements, usually Troopers or Elites, which is especially useful should the characters find the scene less challenging. Heat can also be used to add obstacles to a scene but should never be used to punish characters or good ideas by the group.

Paradiso jungle Action Scenes are very much a pressure cooker, and things can always get worse. Heat spends can be used to add new challenges to a scene, such as a third party. For example,

during a combat between the characters and Combined Army, one of Paradiso's predators gets involved. Running such combats is best handled in an abstract fashion, keeping the characters as centre stage.

The greatest mistake a GM can make during a combat with multiple sides and combatants is by a strict adherence to both the rules and die rolls. In such circumstances, it is best for the GM to use Heat, and allow the characters to spend Momentum to influence the outcome if needed.

MAKESHIFT TUNNELS, TRAPS, AND MINES

During any sojourn into the Paradiso wilderness and war zone, the characters may encounter traps set both by Human Sphere and the Combined Army. These traps do not discriminate between friend or foe, often providing a nasty surprise to the unaware.

Players doing longer sessions in the jungle may also be inspired to have their characters create traps and earthwork fortifications, perhaps to secure their own camp or inconvenience an enemy.

All the traps listed below have the following attributes:

- **Construction Time:** The time required to build the trap.
- **Concealment:** How easy it is to spot the trap.
- **Complexity:** The difficulty to disarm a trap. More intricate or technologically advanced traps are harder to disarm. The GM can also use this as the Heat spend needed to introduce the trap to an encounter. Complexity 2 or less traps have the Non-Hackable quality (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.334).
- **Effect:** This describes the effects of triggering the trap.

TYPES OF TRAP

ANTI-PERSONNEL (A/P) MINE

Construction Time: 30 minutes to set up and conceal a single mine

Concealment: 1

Complexity: 3

Effect: See "Mines" on pages 349-350 in the *Infinity Corebook*.

DEAD-FALL

Construction Time: 4 hours

Concealment: 2

Complexity: 1

Effect: The trap consists of a large, heavy, log designed to be released by a tripwire. Once activated, the log slams into the target driving them to the ground. Unless the target makes a successful **Daunting (D3) Athletics** test to leap

out of the way, they take 2+6ND physical damage with the Grievous and Knockdown qualities. An extra hour of construction and a 1 Heat spend means that sharpened stakes are added, granting the Piercing 2 and Vicious 2 qualities to the trap's damage.

DROP-BEAR

Construction Time: 41 hour to set up a Drop Bear and conceal it

Concealment: 1

Complexity: 3

Effect: A tripwire is set to release a Drop Bear to fall upon the target. See "Drop Bears" on pages 349-350 and 367 in the *Infinity Corebook*.

HAUNT TRAP (Combined Army ONLY)

Construction Time: 30 minutes per zone

Concealment: 2

Complexity: 4

Effect: A hypodermic dart is released at the target when they pass through the zone. A successful **Daunting (D3) Athletics** test avoids the dart. Usually these dart launchers are set to switch targets. The dart is impregnated with the Haunt toxin (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.370).

HEDGEHOG (Combined Army ONLY)

Construction Time: 30 minutes per Hedgehog

Concealment: 3

Complexity: 4

Effect: Hidden among the undergrowth is a Hedgehog, venomous spikes set where there may otherwise be good handholds or a clear path. See "Hedgehog" on page 371 in the *Infinity Corebook*.

MONOFILAMENT LINE

Construction Time: 1 hour

Concealment: 4

Complexity: 1

Effect: Dangerous in the extreme, a monofilament cable is stretched across the characters path usually at head height, although some are set to cripple the target at ankle level. Unless spotted, the target suffers 1+5ND physical damage with the Monofilament and Subtle 2 qualities.

PIT TRAP

Construction Time: 4 hours

Concealment: 2

Complexity: 1

Effect: Carefully concealed by dirt leaves and other jungle debris, a pit is designed to collapse once a certain amount of weight causes it to give way. Unless a character makes a successful **Challenging (D2) Athletics** test to jump to safety, they will fall into the pit. Usually lined with sharpened stakes, characters suffer 1+4ND physical damage with the Piercing 2, Stun, and Vicious 2 Qualities. Without climbing gear characters may find it difficult to escape the pit. A successful **Dire (D3) Athletics** test is required to climb out.

SNARE

Construction Time: 1 hour

Concealment: 2

Complexity: 2

Effect: Hidden from view, a carefully set snare will immobilise the target. The victim suffers 1+4ND physical damage with the Immobilising and Nonlethal qualities. Some traps are set to maim the victim (1 Heat spend) using a monofilament line. Instead of the Nonlethal quality, such traps have the Monofilament and Vicious 2 qualities.

SPIKE TRAP

Construction Time: 2 hours

Concealment: 2

Complexity: 2

Effect: A sapling bent taut under a staked tripwire is released with considerable force, with sharpened stakes set to plunge into the hapless victim. The trap causes 1+4ND physical damage with the Knockdown, Piercing 2, and Grievous qualities.

DETECTING TRAPS

Every trap listed has a Concealment score. This is the difficulty of the Observation test required to spot the trap. For example, a trap with Concealment 2 requires a **Challenging (D2) Observation** test to detect. Actively looking for traps means that a character is moving cautiously, and any pace faster than a slow walk will increase the difficulty by one.

TRAP TABLE

Trap	Construction Time	Concealment	Complexity
Anti-Personnel (A/P) Mine	30 minutes each	1	3
Dead-Fall	4	2	1
Drop Bear	1 hour each	1	3
Haunt Trap	30 minutes per zone	2	4
Hedgehog	30 minutes each	3	4
Monofilament Line	1 hour	4	1
Pit Trap	4 hours	2	1
Snare	1 hour	2	2
Spike Trap	2 hours	2	2

GM TIP: SEARCHING FOR TRAPS

Some characters or groups may declare that they are constantly looking for traps. If that is the case, they are moving at a cautious pace.

The GM can ask the characters to nominate a single character who will be actively looking for traps and use their Observation skill as a passive score. The GM secretly rolls, as a result. The GM may also expend one Heat to roll for no reason, just to add to the Paranoia Level.

The difficulty will increase by two if the character is running or moving at a high rate of speed.

DISARMING, REPAIRING, AND RESETTING TRAPS

Merely spotting the trap is not enough to disarm it. Until the trap is disarmed, it is still active, and any attempt to remove parts of the trap without disarming it will likely set it off. Disarming a trap requires a successful Coordination test with the difficulty being the Complexity score of the trap. A Tech test can be substituted if the Complexity score is 3 or more. A failure on the test instantly sets off the trap. Characters can also repair traps or reset them, provided they have not been destroyed and the characters have the raw materials to hand. The time taken varies – a Drop Bear or A/P mine would need replaced and reset, but a pit trap merely needs covered over once again, and a snare, reset.

BUILDING TRAPS

Characters wishing to build a trap have two requirements, the time needed to build a trap and the raw materials. For more complicated traps (Complexity 3 or more) such as Drop Bears or A/P Mines, the character must have access to the items concerned. In the case of low-Complexity traps (2 or less), raw materials are usually easier to come by depending on the environment. Setting up a stake trap in the high mountains would require raw material such as wood and may not be easy to find.

Each trap has a construction time needed to set it up. To build and set a trap requires a successful **Survival** or **Tech** test. A complication during construction means the trap goes off prematurely, with the character suffering the effects.

TRENCHES, TUNNELS, & TUNNELLING

Characters may wish to construct earthworks or trenches during their time within the Paradiso jungle. Building earthworks is backbreaking physical work even assuming optimal conditions. In addition, building tunnels requires a certain amount of personal risk, especially if the tunnel is not shored up or otherwise supported, as they are prone to collapse.

Also, any constructed earthworks are not concealed, unless the characters are taking active steps to hide the excavation. Attempting to hide the earthworks doubles the construction time as the characters must redistribute the loose earth, stones, and other rubble to other locations in order to hide the presence of the construction. To excavate 25 cubic metres of earth takes four hours per character. This is under optimal conditions: no rocks or boulders, free of tree roots, the ground

is not frozen or sodden, and the character has a shovel or equivalent tool. Earth-moving equipment or additional help may reduce the construction time significantly.

PARADISO JUNGLE ZONE GENERATOR

The Zone Generators on the following pages can be used to quickly generate zones for Action Scenes. They can also be used to generate random environments or possible hazards for characters. The GM may use the chart below to generate the number of zones for an Action Scene. The more zones, the more complicated any Action Scene will be in regards to things like ranges and visibility. First, the GM needs to choose a Simple or an Advanced Action Scene Zone map.

- A **Simple Zone** map consists of a handful of zones. They are best used for encounters between the characters and a single adversary or a small group. They have no layers.
- An **Advanced Zone** map works for multiple adversaries or takes place upon multiple layers with a tiered combat map. The GM should allocate any layer zones as they see fit.

ZONE GENERATOR

The “Zone Generator Table” can be used to quickly generate zone terrain for a map by rolling a d20.

2d20 roll	Simple Zone map	Advanced Zone map
2-10	6 Zones	6 Forest Floor Zones 1 Canopy Layer Zone
11-15	7 Zones	7 Forest Floor Zones 1 Canopy Layer Zone 7 Intermediate Layer 1 Zones
16-19	8 Zones	8 Forest Floor Zones 2 Canopy Layer Zones 8 Intermediate Layer 1 Zones 4 Intermediate Layer 2 Zones
20	9 Zones	9 Forest Floor Zones 2 Canopy Layer Zones 9 Intermediate Layer 1 Zones 4 Intermediate Layer 2 Zones

Combat Zone Effects –
Infinity Corebook p. 108-109

Cover Soak Value – *Infinity
Corebook* p. 108-109

Visibility
Modifier – see p. 58

GM TIP: BUCKETS OF DICE

To quickly generate zones, the GM may want to roll a number of d20 dice equal to the number of Forest Floor zones, then rearrange the zones as needed.

TERRAIN TYPES

Each of the Terrain Types listed have a Visibility Modifier (see p.58) and Cover Soak value (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 108-109). Some zones, such as bodies of water, will also have Combat Zone Effects.

- **Clearing/Open Space:** An area open to the sky or an underground chamber.
- **Dead End:** A subterranean passage ends with no obvious way through.
- **Depression/Hollow:** The ground dips below the normal level.
- **Foliage:** Leaves and other vegetation cover much of the area, making visibility difficult.
- **Grassland:** Paradiso-scale grass reaches a height of up to two metres above the ground.
- **Hill/Mound:** An artificial or naturally elevated area.
- **Pool/Lake:** A body of water, usually fed by streams or other water sources.
- **River:** Flowing water deeper than waist level.
- **Rocks/Rock Formation:** Natural formations of stone, deposits, or ruins.
- **Root Structure:** A fretted network of roots large enough to provide shelter or cover.
- **Scrubland:** Minimal cover exists in the form of small bushes or trees.
- **Swampland/Mud:** The ground has been softened by water or worse into a quagmire, making footing treacherous.
- **Tree Thicket:** a group of trees clustered together, providing concealment and cover.
- **Tree, Single:** A huge tree towering up into the jungle canopy.

TERRAIN TYPE SUMMARY TABLE

The following are quick-use Action Scenes for simple zone maps. There are no layers involved,

and the GM is encouraged to add to them and rearrange the terrain as they see fit:

- **A River Runs through It:** River x 4, Tree Thicket (Large) x2, Clearing x2, Mud x2.
- **Caught in a Trap:** Tree Thicket (Large) x4, Hill x2, Clearing x3, Rocks x3.
- **Jungle Firefight:** Tree (Single) x3, Tree Thicket (Large) x3, Tree Thicket (Small) x4, Clearing x2.
- **Keep Out of the Long Grass:** Grassland x4, Tree Thicket (Small) x2, Pool x1, Scrubland x3, Clearing x2.
- **Swampland Shenanigans:** Swampland x5, Pool x3, River x1, Rocks x2, Tree Thicket (Large) x1.

OTHER PARADISO TERRAIN

Although Paradiso is best known for the “Green Hell” of the jungle, there are other major environments as rich in life and natural resources as the jungle. The subterranean ecosystems that exist beneath the forest floor and beneath the surface of the ocean waves are two such examples.






AS ABOVE SO BELOW

Rumours exist of a vast, inter-connected cave network beneath Paradiso. Likely a jungle myth, the geographical dispersion of subterranean cryptids like the Qutrub suggest there may be something to the rumours, but like the ocean depths, much of the geologic substrata of Paradiso still remains unexplored.

DUNGEON BASHING

The jungle myth of Paradiso's cave network has inspired a craze among a number of Paradiso's explorers. The explorers race each other to discover

TERRAIN TYPE SUMMARY TABLE

Terrain Type	Subterranean Layer	Forest Floor Layer	Intermediate Layer	Canopy Layer	Visibility Modifier	Cover Soak	Combat Zone Effect
Clearing/Open space	01-10	01-03	01-05	01-15	0	None	None
Dead End	11-13	-	-	-	0	None	None
Tree Thicket, Small	-	04-05	-	-	2	None	None
Tree Thicket, Large	-	06-07	-	-	3	+2  Light Cover Soak	None
Foliage, Light	14	09	06-12	16-19	1	None	None
Foliage, Thick	-	10	13-18	20	2	+2  Light Cover Soak	None
River	15	11	-	-	0	None	Aquatic Terrain
Pool/Lake	16	12	19	-	0	None	Aquatic Terrain
Scrubland	-	13	-	-	1	None	None
Swampland/Mud	17	14	-	-	2	None	Difficult Terrain
Grassland	-	15	-	-	1	None	None
Hill/Mound	18	16	-	-	0	None	None
Depression/Hollow	-	17	-	-	0	+2  Light Cover Soak	None
Rocks/Rock Formation	19	18	-	-	2	+4  Heavy Cover Soak	Difficult Terrain
Root Structure	20	19-20	20	-	2	+2  Light Cover Soak	None

Aquatic Terrain –
Infinity Corebook, p. 109

Difficult Terrain –
Infinity Corebook, p. 109

Drowning & Suffocation –
Infinity Corebook, p. 110

Swimming (Other Forms
of Movement) – *Infinity
Corebook*, p. 111

and map out unknown cave networks. Known as “dungeon bashing” after the games of old, these “dungeons” are not without their own dangerous inhabitants such as Qutrubs.

There are several geological cave networks throughout the jungle, although many have been explored, and they are rarely uninhabited. Not only home to Paradiso wildlife, various factions, including O-12, Submondo, and the Combined Army make use of these caves as rendezvous points, supply dumps, observation posts, or other staging areas. The vast root structures of the Paradiso jungle form a cave network of their own, a living breathing root mesh and ecosystem. Leaf debris and fallen branches have formed a ceiling over these root lattice systems. Often fragile, there may be several layers forming cave networks beneath the jungle floor.

The biggest impediment to underground movement is darkness. Without a light source, movement underground can become perilous beyond measure. Conversely, carrying a light source makes a character far more visible.

Observation tests made in complete darkness counts as being two steps higher. For example, a **Simple (D0) test** becomes **Challenging (D2)**, and a **Daunting (D3)** becomes **Epic (D5)**. Partial darkness such as dusk or twilight with minimal light sources increases the difficulty of such tests by one step.

THE LIFE AQUATIC

Paradiso has a rich and varied ecosystem that extends below the waves of the oceans and the rivers and lakes of the land. The fact is much of Paradiso's ocean depths remain explored, and the Combined Army invasion has put most of the attempts at exploration of the depths on a hiatus

The lure of the unknown and unexplored still draws many would-be explorers to the oceans, as well as those looking to plunder Paradiso for mineral wealth. And then of course, there are those who cater to the vices of humanity, both above and below the waves. Illegal drugs and stimulants, racketeering, piracy, claim jumping, prostitution, the vices of humanity are still provided for by Submondo, as well as by some of the factions who turn a blind eye to what is essentially a new frontier in exchange for exclusive rights or increased productivity. Paradiso also has its own natural dangers, but the biggest danger is lack of preparation. Characters spending any time on the waves or water will need to ensure that they can breathe water through some form of augmentation or have the necessary equipment to allow them to do so. The silent killer for many is the crush

depth, where the pressure on a hull or suit is so great it crumples and gives way. At these depths, oxygen itself is toxic and needs mixed with other gases. Decompression is required, although advances in technology mean the characters will no longer have to spend days sequestered away in decompression chambers.

AQUATIC MOVEMENT

Whether it is fresh water or seawater, water has a number of effects on how an underwater combat proceeds. As a fluid medium, combat below the surface happens in three dimensions, both above and below the level of the characters. In a similar way to the jungle layers (see “Layers of the Jungle & Zones,” p. 57), the GM may want to assign layers to the combat to represent height and depth. The surface can be considered the equivalent of the Forest Floor layer or ground level.

- **Diving** counts as vertical movement between layers, usually one layer per Action. If a character is carrying extra weight, the GM may allow the character to sink faster. Swimming underwater does not count as difficult terrain if all the combatants are underwater.
- **Ascending** does not count as difficult terrain either, unless the character is encumbered or hindered in some way.
- **Surface movement** counts as difficult terrain and requires a Simple (D0) Athletics test to move upon in most cases. The GM may increase the difficulty depending on conditions such as strong currents, storms, rapids, or other environmental conditions.

Drowning and suffocation happens when the air supply runs out. Whether the characters are in a submersible, suit or otherwise, they will begin to suffocate. They must make an **Average (D1) Resistance** test or begin suffocating. Without breathing apparatus of some kind, characters suffering the Dazed or Unconscious Conditions (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 104) must make an **Average (D1) Resistance** test or begin to drown.



PRESSURE-INDUCED PSYCHOSIS (HPNS)

Pressure-induced psychosis, also called High Pressure Nervous Syndrome (HPNS), can affect anyone, no matter their dive experience. It causes headaches, dizziness, and decreased mental acuity.

High Pressure Nervous Syndrome: Spontaneous, Instant 2 (4 Momentum), Day, 2+4 mental damage

Metanoia Effect: HPNS inflicts a +2 complication range on most tests and requires either an Observation or Psychology test with a difficulty equal to the number of HPNS-derived Metanoia Effects to carry out complex tasks.

COMBINED ARMY STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The EI's Sectional Expeditionary force on Paradiso is a diverse group, with a range of experience and strengths. This experience is utilised by the EI and by proxy the Umbra Legates and Combined Army commands as needed, playing to the strengths of the variety of Combined Army troops.

ANTHROPIC ERROR

When the Combined Army arrived, humanity was not used to facing aliens in combat. The G5 nations suffered a great number of losses because of the so-called anthropic errors during the first phases of the Paradiso conflict as a result. Despite the evidently alien appearance of the Combined Army troops, which identified them as races with little or no connection with humanity, it was still initially difficult for troops and commanders of the Coordinated Command to not unwittingly attribute human behaviours to them.

TACTICAL ASSESSMENTS

The following are tactical assessments of the various aspects of the Combined Sectorial Army Expedition upon Paradiso. While not a comprehensive listing of every Combined Army troop type available, the most common troops and their tactics are described here. These capsule descriptions are provided to add flavour to possible encounters with the Combined Army regarding their objectives and tactics.

The Morat: The Morat from Ugarat are the heavy end of the hammer as far as the Combined Army forces are concerned. While they despise weakness, they are not without a certain brutal subtlety. Their tendency to treat their human enemies as simple target practice notwithstanding, Morat tactics resemble more of a hunting party. When the Morat stalk their target, they normally take a Y-formation, with scouts at the end of the fork, and the most senior Morat in the crook of the Y. They favour ambush tactics, often with younger Morat (Murdats or Kurdats) attempting to prove themselves by acting as bait, before leading the target into a shooting gallery of Morat troops, or a "duck blind" as the Human Sphere troops call it.

The Shasvastii: Far more subtle than the Morat, the Shasvastii are hard to find and even harder to

understand. Shasvastii are masters of the silent kill and skilled snipers, patient and calculating, supremely stealthy, and adaptive. It could be argued that the Shasvastii have made Paradiso their new home. The Shasvastii Continuum's expeditionary force adapted themselves well to Paradiso's environment with their commensurate genetic alteration abilities. As a result, the Shasvastii do not just blend in. They disappear. The Shasvastii's most skilled infiltrators, the Speculo Killers, are patient even by Shasvastii standards. They can remain hidden for years, perhaps decades. And no one knows how many there are...

Charontids and Skiávoros: Designed – in every sense of the word – to operate alone, Charontids and their Skiávoros predecessors are some of the most dangerous troops in the Combined Army. With their ability to operate unimpaired in most environments, these heavy tactical units are deadlier still thanks to their Sepsitor weapons. Fortunately, the recharge times on these weapons means that Charontids and Skiávoros must choose the targets for these weapons carefully. Usually the target with the strongest datasphere or other significant assets like TAGs are the primary targets. Their direct link to the EI means they react quickly to battlefield changes, adapting to new tactics quickly.

Unidron Batroids: What they lack for in imagination, Unidron Batroids make up for in capable determination. Utterly loyal to the Evolved Intelligence and used by the Combined Army in occasional peacekeeping or guard roles, Batroids are remorseless, untiring, and perfectly suited. Their unrelenting vigilance also makes them perfect bodyguards, both physically and quantronically.

Evolved Intelligence: The Evolved Intelligence has some "baseline" objectives. Whereas the Human Sphere and rest of the Combined Army may have objectives within the physical world, such as seizing a city or territory for strategic purposes, the EI seeks intelligence, and not just for transcendence. With that in mind, targets with an active datasphere or active quantronic nodes are priority targets to any of the Combined Army. If the EI were to gain possession of an ALEPH node, the consequences to the Human Sphere do not bear thinking about. Yet someone has; it is for this reason ALEPH operatives destroy themselves rather than be taken prisoner by the Combined Army.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND
IN THIS CHAPTER

- A catalogue of new weapons, armour, tools, and remotes, specific to Paradiso
- An inventory of missiles and full descriptions to incorporate them into your Paradiso campaigns
- New vehicles and weapons platforms commonly seen in Paradiso

Mines – *Infinity Corebook*, p.349-350

Destroying Cover – *Infinity Corebook*, p.109

CHAPTER 9

PARADISO GEAR


Paradiso is fraught with dangers, from the local flora and fauna to the Combined Army threat. The people of Paradiso, though, are ingenious and have developed new weapons, gear, vehicles, and platforms to combat menaces of all kinds. In this chapter, you'll find new items not only for humans, but also the Combined Army with which to flavour your adventures on the wild and beautiful Paradiso.

GEAR CATALOGUE

CALTROPS

A low cost, low-tech version of the Hedgehog (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.371), caltrops are a series of fused metal spikes or spines scattered as an impediment to movement, often treated with toxin. While armoured boots are usually protection

enough, they count as Hazardous terrain for those without proper footwear.

(Damage 1+3 , Subtle 1, Vicious 1). If the spines are envenomed, they have the Toxic 1 quality.


CAMO-CLOAK

A cheaper, knock-off version of Chameleonwear and the Ariadnan digicloak, camo-cloaks are popular among Paradiso explorers and mercenary military forces lacking the assets required to procure better camouflage. A camo-cloak counts as a kit for face-to-face Stealth tests made against targets at Long range or farther, granting 1 bonus Momentum. Larger versions of camo-cloaks are also available for vehicles.




CHAIN MACHETE

Only TAGs or those wearing powered armour can lift these in both hands. Unwieldy to use but brutal in their efficiency, chain machetes are used by Paradiso forces to clear swathes of jungle and to destroy cover. While they lack any sort of finesse, chain machetes are part chainsaw, part mono-filament machete, and they will chop down a Morat as easily as they do a tree. When used to destroy cover such as trees and other vegetation, the chain machete ignores the cover's soak total.

(Close, 1+6  damage, 2H, Anti-Materiel 3, Spread 1, Unsubtle 1, Vicious 3, Vehicle Mounted)

CHAIN-COLT

The chain-colt, basically a red-hot shrapnel launcher, is the light and compact version of the chain rifle. Although both weapons work the same way, the chain-colt possesses a smaller electric trigger, so it has a shorter range. However, the cylindrical magazine which contains the inner feeding chain allows a faster reloading speed. Its compact size, which allows it to be hidden easily, shorter range, and lack of specific instruction required to use this weapon, has made the chain-colt the ideal weapon for urban guerrilla warfare. Produced under license in many areas, it is a weapon currently in widespread use throughout the Human Sphere. Versions implanted into a user's body are illegal under international law.


(Close, 1+4  damage 1H, Burst 1, Improvised 1, Spread 1, Torrent)

CHANGELING NET

Changeling nets provide a way to mask the appearance of an individual. While less than effective close up, these personal three-dimensional holographic emitters are often programmed to affect visual devices such as video feeds, a process called "blanking" that effectively hides the face of the wearer. They can also be used for impersonating individuals, in a somewhat cheap and nasty fashion and work best in Augmented Reality. They add one bonus Momentum to any attempt to disguise one's presence in AR.


DIGICLOAK (ENVIRONMENT)

Thanks to a ruthless Ariadnan evolutionary competition between Antipode packs and stanitsa scouts, Ariadna camouflage is remarkably advanced despite their technological handicaps. The resulting digicloaks are relied on by military snipers, pickets, and scouts and are popular among many of the Paradiso military forces. Each is a thin cloak of digital-ink panels specialised to work in a particular environment, displaying textures to match nearby terrain. Mountain, forest, and jungle texture libraries are most common, but all are difficult to obtain outside of military requisitions.

A digicloak counts as a kit for face-to-face **Stealth tests** made against targets at Medium range or farther, granting 1 bonus Momentum, so long as the wearer is prone. If the wearer is not revealed – even if detected – the cloak provides +2  Cover Soak against ranged attacks.


DEFOLIANT GRENADE

Defoliant grenades contain a variety of substances toxic to Paradiso plant life in aerosol form, withering vegetation and causing leaves to drop off. While the fumes from these grenades are toxic, they are not dangerous to anything other than plant life. The damage value for these grenades relates to the damage they cause to plant life and vegetation being used as cover. Defoliants are often used to keep areas of the Paradiso jungle cleared or to destroy enemy cover. Defoliant Grenades add the Anti-Materiel 3 quality (with regards to plant life only).

(Grenade, 2+4  damage, 1H, Anti-Materiel 3 (Plant life only)


E/M PULSE AIR-EMITTER

These mines float in low orbit over Paradiso within the Orbital Exclusion Zone. Hard to detect due to their size, they are deployed in large numbers in a haphazard fashion. Most craft only discover an E/M Pulse Air-Emitter minefield once they stray into it. E/M Pulse Air-Emitter mines also have the **Anti-Materiel 1** and **Electromagnetic (E/M)** qualities.

(Mine 2+5  damage, 1H, Anti Material 1, Electromagnetic (E/M), Indiscrete (Close), Vicious 1)

E/MARAT

The E/Marat, whose name signifies "power" in Arabic, is a directional short-range electromagnetic pulse transmitter device. The first versions of this weapon, known as Generation-1, consisted of an omni-directional EM pulse emitter with radial effect. However, those versions had defects such as a reduced range and an indiscriminate effect of the pulse on everything that surrounded it. This new version has a parabolic deflector, which allows focusing of the pulse to select more specific targets. Being a directional weapon, the current E/M Marat possesses a more limited range of action, especially when compared to other area saturation E/M weapons. However, it has more range than the previous Generation-1 and also allows more accurate target discrimination, reducing collateral damage. The new version keeps and improves the basic philosophy of the E/Marat as a close-quarters weapon, quite useful to equal the imbalance in confrontations between light forces with a low technological profile and high-tech units.

(Close, 1+4  damage, 1, Electromagnetic (E/M), Vicious 1)

Grenades – *Infinity Corebook* p. 349-350

JAMMING MICRO-DRONE

ATTRIBUTES		
Agility	10	
Awareness	5	
Brawn	5	
Coordination	8	
Intelligence	5	
Personality	4	
Willpower	1	
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE		
Combat	-	-
Fortitude	1	-
Movement	1	-
Senses	1	-
Social	-	-
Technical	1	-
DEFENCES		
Firewall	5	
Security	-	
Resolve	1	
Morale	-	
Structure	3	
Armour	-	

ATTACKS: FLASH PULSE: Close, 1+5 (N) damage, Burst 1, 2H Blinding, removes Marked.

GEAR: Jammer

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Common

Special Abilities: Inured to Cold, Disease, Poison, and Vacuum.

Flight: Jammer Micro-Drones ignore penalties for ground-based hazardous terrain.

Tiny: These remotes are so small they increase the difficulty to hit them by one step. They also have one bonus Momentum on all **Stealth tests**.

ELECTROJOLT FENCE

A vital defence component for any structure within or bordering the Paradiso jungle, electrojolt fences are designed to deliver an electrical charge to anything touching them, in painful-to-lethal quantities depending on the setting. Most Paradiso predators learn quickly to leave the fences alone and to recognise the faint buzz of the fence's power

(1+4 (N) damage with the Electromagnetic (E/M) and Stun qualities).

FLAMETHROWER, TAG

A scaled-up version of the heavy flamethrower (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 370), only those in TAGs can carry this bulky, heavy, and downright-intimidating weapon. Although mostly used to clear plant life and trees, they are often deployed against infantry concealments in the jungles of Paradiso.

(Close, 2+7 (N) damage, Burst 1, 2H, Incendiary 4, Massive, Munition, Terrifying 3, Torrent)

JAMMER

The Jammer is an electronic warfare tactical weapon, which means it is a short range, compact and specialised device. To adapt to its military function, the Jammer has been designed as a hybrid technology device that includes a communication frequency tracker, affecting not only radio waves but also laser, microwave, and others, all combined in a powerful radial jamming transmitter. However, the military requirements that it be portable and as lightweight as a personal weapon, plus the limitation of its area of effect to avoid unexpected interference to allied devices, created the final notorious design flaw of the Jammer. This weapon has a limited range that obliges its carrier to move very close to their targets, preventing it being popularized due to the risk it means for its carrier. However, the effective application of a Jammer on the battlefield, thwarting enemy communications and the chaos this causes amongst hostile forces is so useful that just one of these devices could completely confound an enemy's strategy. When activated, all attempts within Reach to use comlogs, hacking devices, or other items that rely on wireless technology have their difficulty increased by two steps.

MARKER LIGHT

The Marker Light is used by the Paradiso military force to focus a missile strike and is sometimes referred to as an RLH, as in "drop it, and run like hell." Beaming a signal onto a target, or painting the target, and keeping it locked on, is a Challenging (D2) Ranged Weapons test. Any missile attacks made against the target gain two bonus points of Momentum as a result.

MARKSMAN RIFLE

Although the primacy of the Combi Rifle as the main weapon of the infantry soldier is undisputed, its range, limited only to Close to Medium distance, sometimes is not enough for the job at hand. Conflicts in places like the plains of Paradiso, the arctic environments of Svalarheima, the mountain areas of Tien Shan, or the Ariadnan steppes, have highlighted the need to increase the range of capability for infantry formations. In such a way, the Marksman Rifle has been specifically designed to engage targets located at Long distance. However, this also means an increase of the weight and length of the weapon. Ranged between the rifle and the sniper rifle, this weapon provides rate of fire at a range longer than usual for an infantry soldier, without the requirement of a sniper's specific training. Even though it is not supposed to be standard equipment, some units have been entirely equipped with Marksman Rifles. Usually, these are units dedicated to combat support tasks or units deployed in areas where this weapon would be of optimal use.

(Long, 2+5 (N) damage, Burst 2, Unwieldy, Unforgiving 1)

MICRO-DRONE, JAMMING

These tiny remotes are designed to remove the range problem of carrying a Jammer. Small and agile, these remotes are hard to see and hard to hit. An effective offence and defence on the battlefield, these remotes eliminate the Jammer's problem of being in close proximity to the target.

MISSILE TUBE

Missile tubes take a variety of forms, from actual tubes to hardpoints, and are installed on a variety of vehicles and orbital platforms. These one-shot weapons cannot normally use Reloads and are designed to operate at ranges beyond those of normal combat zones, such as from orbit. Usually they are designed to fire a single missile, although larger capital ships and structures often have the ability and resources to reload them immediately. In the case of smaller vehicles, the tubes can eventually be reloaded, but it is not ordinarily possible during combat.

QUANTRONIC LOCKBOX

The ultimate in "dead letter boxes" and safes, quantronic lockboxes are keyed to open at the request of a specific individual's quantronic signature, usually their Cube or even a geist. While highly secure, they are still subject to hacking or physical damage but still have their uses among the intelligence community and security services. In many cases they are used to complement existing security measures, such as a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF).

STEALTH TECHNOLOGY

By suppressing energy and electromagnetic radiation emanations and reducing the sensory surface impact, some vehicles and devices have reduced their detection footprint to a minimum. Any **Stealth tests** (including opposed ones) gain two bonus momentum.

T.A.D POLE

Usually referred to as tadpoles, the T.A.D part of the name stands for Terrain Analysis Device. When placed in the ground, these staves perform a full 360-degree scan of the nearby terrain mapping the contours of the land. It also uses enhanced geophysical scanning to build a full work-up, viewable within its own quantronic zone. While these are popular with explorers and hunters, they can have the unpleasant side effect of attracting predators.

XHANTRI BUMBLEBEE DRONE

Combined Army ships and troops fire these reconnaissance drones in large swarms through the Acheron Blockade, looking to find a way past O-12's defences. Although the majority are destroyed, many still find a way through. On Paradiso itself, these remotes are often released into the jungle, scouting the terrain ahead of Combined Army forces or providing an extra level of security around Combined Army holdings.

"WILD WEASEL" Q-BOMB

"Wild Weasel" Q-bombs dump a powerful burst of EMP static and quantronic interference into their area of effect. This quantronic bomb of sorts, has the effect of disrupting nearby quantronic zones. Q-bombs also damage geists, remotes, AR, domotics, and even Cubes. They are frequently used as a diversion by various elements of the Submondo and those involved in situations where a quick getaway and distraction is required. In essence, this counts as a grenade attack with the qualities of

Electromagnetic (E/M), Stun, and Immobilise with respect to digital, quantronic, or other artificial entities only.

(Charge, 2+4 damage, 1H, Electromagnetic (E/M), Immobilize (Artificial entities only), Stun)

MISSILES

Missiles are an intrinsic part of warfare, designed to hit a specific target and detonate their payload. Although their guidance systems have become increasingly sophisticated, the basic premise of a fast-moving projectile with some variety of explosive warhead attached remains the same. Usually a missile locks on either via an existing signal such as a heat source or laser sight, but some smart missiles are designed to be remotely operated.

FUEL

Missiles are different to other gear in that they also have a Fuel quality. Particular types of missiles are designed to hit moving targets. The Fuel score represents the number of rounds a missile can stay in the air once it has locked onto to a target. If the target is skilled enough to evade the missile for long enough, the fuel runs out and it will fall to the ground. In space, the missile simply runs on its own inertia, unable to manoeuvre.

Missiles are designed to affect entire zones or vehicles. When they explode, anyone and everything in the zone will suffer the effects.

EVADING AND TARGETING MISSILES

It is possible to take evasive reaction to try to keep a locked-on missile at bay, requiring a Challenging (D2) Pilot test. Owing to their speed, the Difficulty to hit a missile is increased by one step. Missiles have a Structure and Firewall of 5 for purposes of resolving attacks.

MISSILE TYPES

Some sample missile warheads are listed here:

Air-to-Air Missile (AAM): Used in space as well as planetary atmospheres, these missiles are designed to lock onto flying vehicles and explode. (1+5 damage, Anti-Materiel 2, Fuel 3, Guided, Indiscriminate (Close), and Piercing 1)

Bunker Buster: There's no subtlety about bunker buster missiles, designed to crack open fortifications using a shaped charge. (1+8 damage, Anti-Materiel 4, Area (Close), Fuel 1, Grievous, Indiscriminate (Medium) and Piercing 2)

Hellfire: These missiles are incendiary in nature, containing a flammable, sticky napalm gel. (1+6

damage, Anti-Materiel 1, Area (Close), Fuel 1, Incendiary 5, Indiscriminate (Medium)

Scrambler: These warheads deliver an EMP burst when they detonate. (1+4 damage, Area (Long), Electromagnetic (E/M), Fuel 1, Indiscriminate (Long))

Smart Torpedo: Used underwater and in space, the torpedoes are larger than standard missiles. (1+6 damage, Anti-Materiel 2, Armoured 1, Fuel 2, Guided, Indiscriminate (Close), Piercing 2, Spread 1)

Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM): Fired from ground launchers, these missiles are designed to lock onto flying vehicles and explode. (1+5 damage, Anti-Materiel 2, Area (Close), Fuel 3, Guided, Indiscriminate (Close), and Piercing 1)

XHANTRI

BUMBLEBEE DRONE

ATTRIBUTES		
Agility	8	
Awareness	12	
Brawn	4	
Coordination	12	
Intelligence	4	
Personality	4	
Willpower	4	
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE		
Combat	1	1
Fortitude	-	
Movement	1	-
Senses	1	-
Social	-	-
Technical	1	-
DEFENCES		
Firewall	4	
Security	-	
Resolve	4	
Morale	-	
Structure	4	
Armour	-	

ATTACKS: Stun Attachment:

Melee, 1+4 damage, 1H, Knockdown, Subtle 1, Stun

GEAR: Stealth Technology

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Common Special Abilities



Inured to Cold Disease, Poison, and Vacuum, Superhuman Agility 2.

Tiny: These remotes are so small they increase the difficulty to hit them by one step. They also have one bonus Momentum on all **Stealth tests**.

VEHICLES

VEHICLE QUALITIES

The *Infinity* Gamemaster's Guide contains a wealth of new material for vehicles including new qualities. Some of these are listed below.

Impressive: The vehicle is obviously expensive, the height of fashionable excess, or it is especially impressive in its luxury or performance. A character attempting to charm or persuade others while inside, or within Close range of, an Impressive vehicle may add +1  to the damage of a resultant Psywar attack. This increases to +2  with a direct demonstration of the vehicle's luxury or performance (such as inviting someone else along for a drive in a sports car or yacht).

Submersible: The vehicle can operate entirely submerged below the surface of the water.

Tracked: The vehicle moves on bands of linked plates or rubber pads which distribute the weight of the vehicle more evenly than wheels and provide good traction in soft ground that could cause other vehicles to sink or become mired. When attempting a terrain test, a tracked vehicle may reduce its Speed by 1 to reduce the difficulty of the terrain test by 2.

ARMoured PERSONNEL CARRIER (APC)

Designed to carry troops quickly into battle and allow them to deploy safely, APCs are heavily armoured. The back of the APC drops down providing a ramp for rapid deployment, and a turret-mounted HMG delivers fire support. Within the APC, the passenger area is cramped but still designed to hold combat-armoured troops and their equipment.


ARMoured PERSONNEL CARRIER (APC)

ENCLOSED, RUGGED, WHEELED

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
3	2	14 (+3)

DETAILS

Max. Passengers	Impact
10	4+6  (Knockdown)


Hard Points

Chassis 3, Comms 2, Motive 1, Weapons 2

DEFENCES

Structure	20	Firewall	10
Armour	5	BTS	6

MOUNTED WEAPONS

• **HMG Turret:** Long, 2+6  damage, Burst 3, Unwieldy, Spread 1, Unsubtle

AQUACYCLE

An aquatic version of the motorcycle, aquacycles are single seat vehicles designed to move both above and below the waves. Light and fast, they rely on impellers to move through the water. Their lightweight structure makes them hard to control, but they are more manoeuvrable than other watercraft once mastered.


AQUACYCLE

ENCLOSED, SINGLE SEAT, SUBMERSIBLE, WATERCRAFT

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
0	3	9

DETAILS

Max. Passengers	Impact
1	1+3  (Knockdown)

Hard Points

Chassis 1, Comms 1, Motive 2, Weapons 1

DEFENCES

Structure	7	Firewall	6
Armour	1	BTS	0

AZURE DRAGON DROPSHIP

Yu Jing's Azure Dragon is a multi-purpose troop carrier capable of carrying TAGs and normal soldiers into the thick of battle. O-12 uses these and those of the other factions as required, owing to the war footing situation on Paradiso.


AZURE DRAGON DROPSHIP

AIRCRAFT, ENCLOSED, RUGGED

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
3	2/3	14 (+2)

DETAILS


Max. Passengers	Impact
12	3+6  (Knockdown)

Hard Points

Chassis 1, Comms 2, External 2, Internal 2, Motive 1, Weapons 3

DEFENCES

Structure	20	Firewall	8
Armour	5	BTS	6

- **Heavy Machine Guns x 2** (Long, 2+6  damage, Burst 3, Unwieldy, Spread 1, Unsubtle)
- **Missile Tubes (4):** (2x Air-to-Air Missiles, 2x Bunker Buster Missiles)

SPECIAL ABILITY

The Azure dragon can be reconfigured to carry 1-2 TAGs though this costs 1 External and 1 Internal Hardpoint, reduces speed by 1 and reduces the number of passengers by at least 4 for every TAG carried.

BUGGY

This category of vehicle covers small land vehicles like dune-buggies, jeeps, and jalopies. Highly manoeuvrable and able to move swiftly, these fast vehicles have a wide wheelbase allowing them to traverse terrain like sand dunes or hilly ground at speed. Although uncomfortable, some mount weaponry on a pintle mount, but the gunner is at risk should the vehicle overturn.


BUGGY

EXPOSED (+2  COVER), GROUND, RUGGED, WHEELED

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
2	3	14 (+1)

DETAILS

Max. Passengers	Impact
3	4+6  (Knockdown)

Hard Points

Chassis 2, Comms 2, External 3, Motive 2

DEFENCES

Structure	15	Firewall	6
Armour	4	BTS	1

COMBINED ARMY AIR SUPERIORITY AIRCRAFT

Nicknamed “Mozzies” by PanOceanian pilots, these aircraft are piloted by Morat. They are unable to operate outside the upper atmosphere having sacrificed the powerful engines needed for orbital manoeuvring. Highly agile in the air as a result, this VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) aircraft barely has room for its Morat pilot. Fulfilling a fast attack, pursuit, and air superiority role, the CAASA is cheap to produce, but ubiquitous for all that. Human Sphere pilots have also noted that Morat pilots have a higher tolerance for g-forces than human or Tohaa pilots, allowing them to put these aircraft through stomach-churning moves that would render a normal human pilot unconscious.


COMBINED ARMY AIR SUPERIORITY AIRCRAFT

AIRCRAFT, HIGH PERFORMANCE, ENCLOSED

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
3	4	12 (+1)

DETAILS


Max. Passengers	Impact
1	2+5  (Knockdown)

Hard Points

0 – VoodooTech design

DEFENCES

Structure	15	Firewall	6
Armour	4	BTS	1

- **Plasma Rifle x2** (Range R/C, 1+6  damage, Burst 3, Unbalanced, Area (Close), Knockdown, Unforgiving 3, Unsubtle, Vicious 1)
- **Missile tube:** 1x Air-to-Air Missile

HOT ROD

These automobiles may run on old fossil fuels or more modern equivalents, but they always have two things in common: they are fast and flashy. No two are alike, with heavily customized engines, paintwork, and accessories. While not as popular as Bōsōzoku, there is still a thriving underground race circuit among many young, rich USAriadnans, who can spend hours fine-tuning their engines and rigs.


HOT ROD

EXPOSED (+2  COVER), GROUND, RUGGED, WHEELED

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
2	3	12 (+1)

DETAILS

Max. Passengers	Impact
2	2+5  (Knockdown)

Hard Points

Chassis 2, Comms 2, External 1, Internal 1, Motive 3


DEFENCES

Structure	12	Firewall	6
Armour	1	BTS	2

MOBILE WEAPONS PLATFORM

The war on Paradiso takes many forms. While TAGs and similar walkers are able to traverse the jungle with ease, there are still instances where TAGs are too expensive to risk in a stationary deployment or where a fixed emplacement is needed. While not as agile as a TAG, mobile weapons platforms are still heavily armed and armoured and often used as field artillery pieces, anti-TAG defence, and anti-aircraft defence. Their design means that they can carry a number of heavy weapons or missile tubes, and some may be equipped with state-of-the-art stealth or AI targeting. The design described here is for general use – effective against both infantry and vehicles.


MOBILE WEAPONS PLATFORM

CLUMBERSOME, EXPOSED (+2  COVER), REMOTE, RUGGED, TRACKED

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
3	2	14 (+3)

DETAILS


Max. Passengers	Impact
5	2+5  (Knockdown)

Hard Points

Chassis 1, Comms 1, External 3, Motive 1, Weapons 2

DEFENCES

Structure	16	Firewall	9
Armour	8	BTS	6

- **Multi HMG x 4** (Range C/M, 2+5  damage, Burst 3, 2H, Unwieldy, Medium MULTI, Multi Heavy Mod, Spread 1, Unsubtle)
- **DA Mode (Default Secondary):** Vicious 2

PĀRVATĪ ORBITAL DEFENSIVE PLATFORM

The Pārvatī platforms are tiny, laced with cutting-edge stealth technology, and multitudinous. Hundreds of them are scattered in close orbit, each housing a small three- to five-person team. Individually they pack less punch, but collectively they are difficult to avoid and can rapidly swarm like antibodies to target larger threats, particularly when they deploy their usual complement of three to five Combat Remotes.


PĀRVATĪ ORBITAL DEFENSIVE PLATFORM

ENCLOSED, RUGGED

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
4	3	14 (+2)

DETAILS


Max. Passengers	Impact
5	3+7  (Knockdown)

Hard Points

Chassis 1, Comms 3, External 5, Internal 2, Motive 1, Weapons 2

DEFENCES

Structure	30	Firewall	10
Armour	8	BTS	6

• Multi HMG x 4 (Range C/M, 2+5  damage, Burst 3, 2H, Unwieldy, Medium MULTI, Multi Heavy Mod, Spread 1, Unsubtle)

DA Mode (Default Secondary): Vicious 2

TRANSPORT

While not as rugged or armoured as the APC, these transports are how most Paradiso travellers move through the jungle in relative safety. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and a modular design means that they can be refitted for anything from cargo carriage to passenger vehicle. While not designed for the battlefield, they can be refitted to carry weapon hard points if needed. As transports look relatively innocuous and are commonplace, they are popular among smugglers and other shady individuals within the Submondo faction. Both aquatic and land versions exist and are the equivalent of boats, small ships, busses or articulated lorries. The example given below is a smaller transport designed for a group of eight passengers.


TRANSPORT

ENCLOSED, RUGGED, GROUND OR WATERCRAFT

ATTRIBUTES

Scale	Speed	Brawn
3	2	14 (+3)

DETAILS

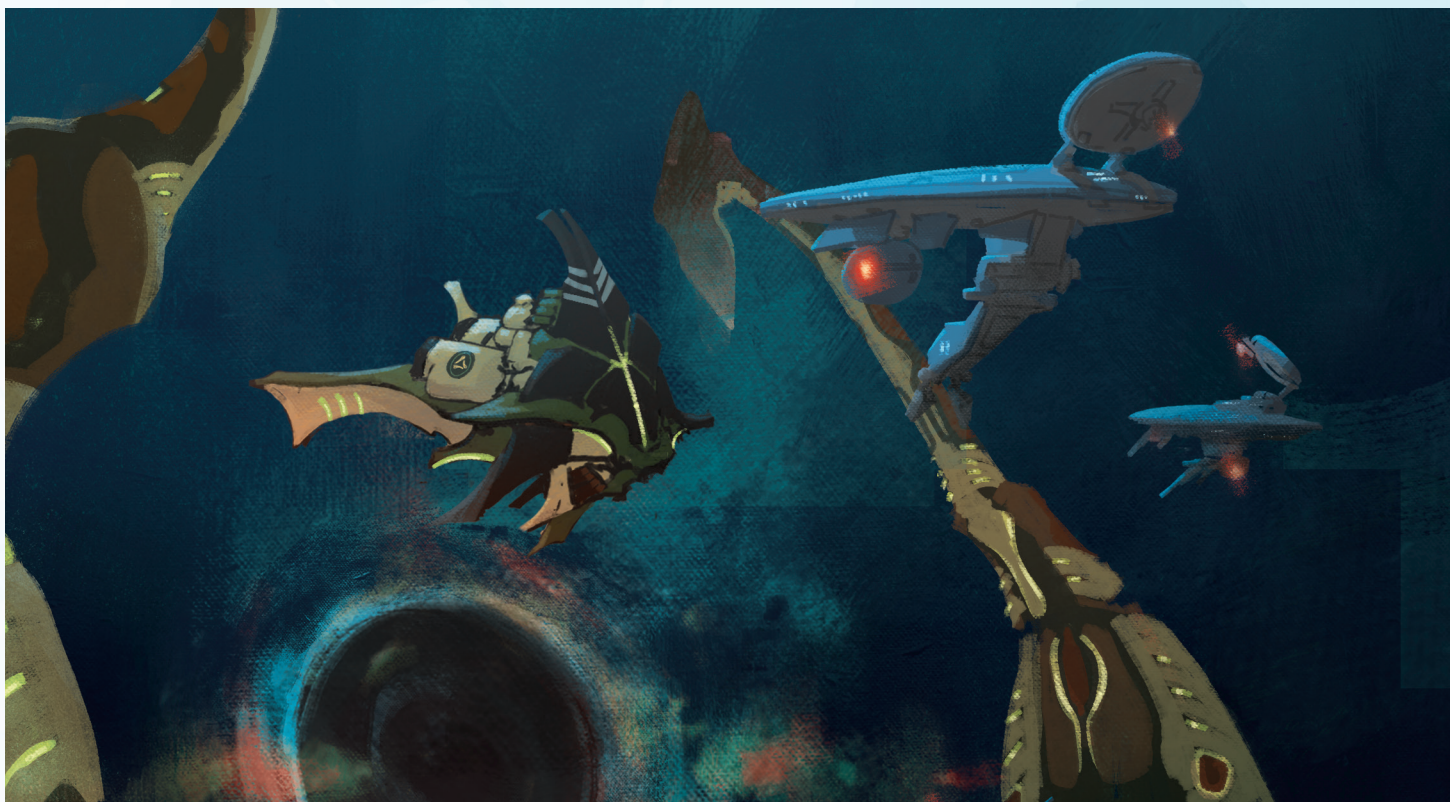
Max. Passengers	Impact
8	4+6  (Knockdown)

Hard Points

Chassis 3, Comms 2, Internal 3, Motive 2, Weapons 2

DEFENCES

Structure	18	Firewall	7
Armour	3	BTS	1



EXPLOSIVES TABLE

EXPLOSIVE	CATEGORY	DAMAGE	SIZE	QUALITIES	RESTRICTION	COST (PER 3)	TARIFF
Caltrop	Mine	1+3	1H	Non-Hackable, Subtle 1, Vicious 1	1	1	T1
Defoliant Grenade	Grenade	2+4	1H	Anti-Materiel 3 (Plant life only)	1	3+1	T1
E/M Pulse Air-Emitter	Mine	2+5	1H	Anti-Materiel 1, Electromagnetic (E/M)	3	8+1	T1
'Wild Weasel' Q-Bomb	Charge	2+4	1H	Electromagnetic (E/M), Immobilize (Artificial entities only), Stun	3	6+1	T1

MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

NAME	DAMAGE	SIZE	QUALITIES	RESTRICTION	COST	TARIFF
Chain Machete	1+6	Massive	Anti-Materiel 3, Spread 1, Vicious 3 Unsubtle 1, 2H	1	5+2	T1

MISSILES TABLE

NAME	DAMAGE	FUEL	QUALITIES	RESTRICTION	COST (PER 3)	TARIFF
Air-to-Air Missile (AAM)	1+5	3	Anti-Materiel 2, Fuel 3, Guided, Indiscriminate (Close), Piercing 1	3	10+4	T1
Bunker Buster	1+8	1	Anti-Materiel 4, Fuel 1, Grievous, Indiscriminate (Medium), Piercing 2	3	15+2	T3
Hellfire	1+6	1	Anti-Materiel 1, Fuel 1, Incendiary 5, Indiscriminate (Medium)	3	11+4	T1
Scrambler	1+4	1	Area (Long), Electromagnetic (E/M), Fuel 1, Indiscriminate (Long)	3	12+4	T2
Smart Torpedo	1+6	2	Anti-Materiel 2, Armoured 1, Fuel 2, Guided, Indiscriminate (Close), Piercing 2, Spread 1	2	8+4	T2
Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM)	1+5	3	Anti-Materiel 2, Fuel 3, Guided, Indiscriminate (Close), Piercing 1	3	10+4	T3

RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

NAME	RANGE	DAMAGE	BURST	SIZE	AMMO	QUALITIES	RESTRICTION	COST	TARIFF
Chain-Colt	C	1+3	1	1H	Normal	Spread 1, Torrent, Vicious 1, Improvised 1	3	4+1	T2
E/Marat	C	1+4	1	1H	-	Electromagnetic (E/M), Vicious 1	2	6+1	T2
Flamethrower, TAG	C	2+7	1	Massive	Fire	Incendiary 4, Terrifying 3, Torrent	3	12+2	T2
Missile Tube	L	Varies	1	2H	Missile	Unsubtle 2	3	8+2	T1
Marksman Rifle	L	2+5	2	2H	Normal	Unforgiving 1	2	5+3	T2

REMOTES TABLE

NAME	RESTRICTION	COST	TARIFF	MAINTENANCE
Micro-Drone, Jamming	4	9+2	T2	1
Xhantri Bumblebee Drone	EI only	-	-	-

TOOLS TABLE

TOOL	QUALITIES	RESTRICTION	COST	TARIFF	MAINTENANCE
Camo-cloak	Non-Hackable	-	4+1	-	-
Changeling Net	Non-Hackable	2	2+4	-	-
Digicloak (Environment)	Non-Hackable, Fragile	3	6+3	T3	-
Electrojolt Fence	Non-Hackable	1	2+4	T1	1
Marker Light	Comms	1	2+5	T1	-
Jammer	Comms	1	4+2	T2	1
Quantronic Lockbox	Comms	1	6+2	T2	1
Stealth Technology	Comms	3	10+2	T3	3
TAD Pole	Comms, Location Beacon 2	1	4+	T1	1

VEHICLE TABLE

NAME	SCALE	SPEED	BRAWN	ARMOUR	BTS	IMPACT	RESTRICTION	COST	TARIFF
APC	3	2	14 (+3)	5	6	4+6 Knockdown	2	14+2	T1
Aquacycle	0	3	9	1	0	1+3 Knockdown	1	9+2	T1
Azure Dragon Dropship	3	3	15 (+3)	5	6	3+6 Knockdown	3	20+1	T3
Buggy	2	3	12 (+1)	1	2	2+5 Knockdown	1	10+2	T1
Combined Army Air Superiority Aircraft	3	4	15 (+3)	1	1	2+5 Knockdown	EI only	N/A	-
Hot Rod	2	3	12 (+1)	1	2	2+5 (Knockdown)	1	12+2	T1
Mobile Weapons Platform	3	2	14 (+3)	8	6	2+5 Knockdown	4	14+4	T4
Transport	3	2	14 (+3)	3	1	4+6 (Knockdown)	2	10+2	T1
Pārvatī Orbital Defensive Platform	4	3	14(+2)	8	6	3	5	30+2	T3

CHAPTER 10

PARADISO CAMPAIGN

This chapter provides a brief insight into the Combined Army's activities on Paradiso and their objectives. It also links into some adventures set on Paradiso in Chapter 11 and concludes with some adventure hooks for GMs to use.

WAR AGAINST THE COMBINED ARMY

Without a doubt, the conflict on Paradiso is one of the most complicated to ever happen within the Human Sphere. For the first time, the Human Sphere faces an alien threat of terrifying power.

A WAR ON MANY FRONTS

The battle for Paradiso takes a number of forms. It is said that only a fool would fight a battle on two fronts, but this never accounted for the vast alien intelligence comprising the EI and Combined Army. The land war with Combined Army finds troops launching lightning strikes and raids on the Human Sphere on Paradiso's surface, but the war is being fought on multiple fronts.

In space, the blockades are constantly vigilant for incursions from the wormhole by Combined Army craft. Stealthed Shasvastii craft attempt to slip past, sometimes using Remora craft hiding within larger craft. Clouds of Xhantri Bumblebee Drones attempt to map out the weak spots of the Human Sphere defences.

In the areas controlled by the Combined Army, human survivors fight an underground war from within the gulags, while in the cities of the Human Sphere, Shasvastii Speculo Killers quietly go about their deadly business of infiltration and assassination.

In the artificial realities of Maya and the quantronic zones across Paradiso, the EI is the electronic bogeyman of sorts. Rumours exist of a Shasvastii presence within the quantronic realm, but this may amount to nothing more than an urban legend. Nonetheless, both O-12 and ALEPH watch their firewalls very closely and maintain their QPS (Quantronic Packet Security) defences constantly.

Finally, there is the "hearts and minds" aspect of the war with the EI. To those with a Cube, there is the horrifying threat of sepsitorization. The person's Cube can fall under the control of the EI, enslaving

the owner to the EI's will. The contact with the EI's colossal alien intelligence is not meant for the human brain. Sepsitorised victims can breathe freely from the mouth and nose under EI control, but they move in a stiff, almost jerky, fashion.

THE EI: A COLLECTIVE, INDIVIDUAL & DISTRIBUTED CONSCIOUSNESS

The EI encompasses a number of dangerous factors. Perhaps the most dangerous is the intelligence of the EI and its computational capacity. It has the ability to create an invasion plan and postulate immediate solutions and strategies faster than any Human Sphere computer or AI. It can also make contingency plans instantly, reacting and pre-empting any attempt at retaliation by the EI's enemies.

It has the proven ability to form a coalition of diverse alien species, often with vastly differing outlooks and strengths. In contrast, the Human Sphere factions still fight among themselves. The Combined Army has a collective focus on following the EI's orders, instantly reacting to the latest updated strategies.

Initial encounters with the EI and Combined Army hinted at the EI as a distributed network of nodes, similar to that of ALEPH. The strategies of the Human Sphere at the time concentrated on locating these nodes and destroying them. Unfortunately for the Human Sphere, no such nodes exist—the EI simply exists as an evolved form of distributed cloud-based AI. Indeed, some of ALEPH's detractors suggest darkly that ALEPH may one day become the equivalent of the EI, with the Human Sphere's inhabitants functioning as nothing more than drones or "processors" as the EI refers to the various members of the Combined Army.

THE LONG GAME: THE EI PERSPECTIVE

Despite having subjugated dozens of races and conquered hundreds of worlds, the EI only takes an interest in those species that can further its quest. Unfortunately, humanity has recently brought itself to the EI's attention for that very reason. The Human Sphere would still largely remain unaware of the alien presence lurking on the far side of the portal if it had not been for the Ur-probe. In a

GM TIP: EI THREAT AWARENESS & THE CHARACTERS

In the grand scheme of its quest, the EI will be unlikely to regard the characters as much of a threat, merely a minor deviation from its plans. Of course, what the EI regards as a deviation may cost the lives of both Combined Army and Human Sphere troops.

GM TIP: THE SECRETS OF PARADISO

This is only a brief insight into the EI and Combined Army. More information can be found in the Combined Army Sourcebook.

sense, the EI may never have become aware of the Human Sphere on Paradiso if not for a series of seemingly unconnected accidents – at least, that’s what they’ve been led to believe so far.

In that regard, the EI has simply adapted a tried-and-tested variation of previously successful tactics. It may appear to the Human Sphere that winning a battle is a victory, but it often gives the EI an opportunity to extrapolate human behaviour and tactics and test out previously simulated scenarios. Of course, it may require a requisite collateral cost in “processors.” The Human Sphere lulls itself into believing the EI and Combined Army are contained, but the situation is often more of a readjustment phase for the EI.

The EI’s great advantage lies not just in the legions of troops waiting beyond the Acheron wormhole, but time itself. Every battle lost gives it more insight, and every battle won costs the Human Sphere in ground and lives. From the EI’s perspective, whether the Human Sphere is there to be conquered or swept aside is of no consequence for now. The only matter of significance for now is the recovery of any Compiler technology.

There is one recent logical inconsistency: the Tohaa presence on Paradiso. This conundrum has created a whole cognitive subroutine within the EI, something it has not needed to do in quite some time...

**THE EI, ALEPH, AND HUMANITY**

The EI encounters with the Human Sphere have given it something of a challenge. The Human Sphere is on the first steps to transcendence, if it could be shown the way – or at least allow the EI to show the way.

ALEPH in particular has the EI’s attention. While nowhere near as complex as the EI, ALEPH is a recognisable candidate for assimilation into the EI. The ALEPH nodes are targets for the EI as a result, but it has yet to secure one of them. ALEPH and the S.S.S. squads destroy them when threatened.

Even then, ALEPH may well prove to be a new version of Nemesis and a rival to the EI itself. Until the EI has more data, research and observation of ALEPH continues.

MOVING AS ONE: THE COMBINED ARMY FORCES

On Paradiso, the EI can draw upon just a small part of the troops it commands, but this expeditionary force still presents a considerable threat. Aside from a few sub-orbital strike abilities, the Combined Army makes good use of swift deployments and tactical advantages.

The EI drives the Combined Army with a cold, logical, intensity focused upon transcendence. The Combined Army runs as a well-oiled machine, with every part running in complete synchronicity. Guided by the EI, the Combined Army troops react and interact as one, despite their cultural and species differences; the EI is everywhere. Whilst it is tempting to consider the Combined Army as a coalition of enslaved races driven by the EI’s will, it is only partially true. The Combined Races have autonomy as their tactics can vary differently – so long as the EI ultimately approves. For example, Morat discipline in the Combined Army is tribally hierarchical and harshly enforced.

The EI’s link to the Combined Army forces are one of the Combined Army’s greatest strengths, along with the EI’s intellect, and a true threat to the Human Sphere’s defences and strategies. The EI sees all and knows all. It has the ability to perceive situational threats, immediately form contingent strategies, and then implement them immediately.

CHAPTER 11

PARADISO ADVENTURES

The following adventures take place sometime before the present day. The GM should feel free to present them as “historic simulations” of previous events, perhaps as part of a character’s O-12 orientation and induction. The characters may even have lived through them in a previous life or Lhost.

THE FIRST OFFENSIVE

The characters begin the adventure in Fuyan, where they are based as O-12 agents (either freelancers or permanent). Whilst being briefed on the ZuluPoint incident, Shasvastii sabotage the building, and the Combined Army breaches the reception area. After fighting their way their clear of the building and the Shasvastii and Morat fireteams, the characters have a number of options.

Combating the Combined Army here is a worthy cause, but a futile one. Fuyan is lost.

With the speed of the attack, many in the city first believe that one of the factions had the audacity to attack another. Until the battle comes to the streets, the general populace has no idea that it is an invading alien army, then the panic ensues. This section is largely defined by the characters’ actions and consists of a sequence of encounters as the characters (and the rest of the populace) are forced to evacuate the city or face death or imprisonment.

This adventure provides a sequence of encounters dealing with various NPCs and factions along with their respective troops who think they know best, encounters with the populace along, and opportunities for characters to inspire and lead.



ANERIS, ALEPH ASPECT (NEMESIS)

ATTRIBUTES		
Agility	10	
Awareness	12	
Brawn	9 (1)	
Coordination	10	
Intelligence	12 (1)	
Personality	12 (1)	
Willpower	10 (1)	
FIELDS OF EXPERTISE		
Combat	+1	-
Fortitude	+1	-
Movement	+1	1
Senses	+3	2
Social	+5	2
Technical	+3	1
DEFENCES		
Firewall	16	
Security	2	
Resolve	12	
Morale	2	
Structure	11	
Armour	2	

GEAR: Defensive Hacking Device (SHIELD-3, GADGET-1, IC-3).

As well as imminent peril from the Combined Army, the characters will also navigate difficult terrain, with cliff faces and caverns making combat interesting. The characters also have the option to choose to leave by sea, leading to a battle upon the waves.

OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

Fortunately for the characters, they have an ally during the Combined Army invasion. Their handler, Aneris, is an ALEPH Aspect seconded to O-12. She can provide a route to get the characters, and any other survivors, to safety.

ANERIS, ALEPH ASPECT

Appearance: Aneris (named after the Greek Goddess of Harmony) appears to be an immaculately dressed professional businesswoman of respectable appearance. Even in the middle of a warzone, no hair will be out of place.

Roleplaying:

- Aneris has a habit of clearing her throat politely when she believes an idea is ill-advised, usually following up with a countering proposal. All done without being patronising, of course (at least overtly).
- Aneris is near-insufferably polite. She is non-violent, but quite happy to use deceit or blackmail to achieve her ends. If things get violent, she usually has an alternative plan.
- Aneris always has an exit strategy of some kind. Her agents may not know it, but Aneris always has their best interests – usually survival – at heart.

Background: The Aneris ALEPH has been involved in hundreds of O-12 and ALEPH operations over the years, working behind the scenes. She has saved dozens of lives in doing so, and more than one O-12 agent has heard a polite, "Ahem, sir, would one not find it better to perhaps..." or "Indeed, sir. May I suggest..."

For the purposes of these adventures, Aneris is strictly virtual – she has no presence in the physical world and is only visible to the characters. The gear she carries is the quantronic equivalent of the physical items.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Inured to Disease, Keen Senses (Hearing, Sight, Smell), Night Vision, Quantronic Jump, Superhuman Brawn 1, Superhuman Intelligence 1, Superhuman Personality 1, Superhuman Willpower 1
- **Agent Handler:** ALEPH
- **Hidden Meanings** (1-3 Heat): Aneris is gifted at reinforcing her intent without the recipient or those around her necessarily realising it. She

WILDERNESS OF MIRRORS

ALEPH: ALEPH is near-instantly aware of the attack and begins mobilising its defence forces. The primary objective of ALEPH's SSS is the destruction of the ALEPH node hidden beneath Fuyan. No other objective is as important.

Ariadna: Ariadnans are not ones to give up without a fight. They fort up in their holdings and prepare for battle – although they have no idea who they are fighting. They believe it is another faction making a surprisingly overt power play.

Haqqislam: The primary concern of Haqqislam is their people, namely the civilian population, and making sure that they are evacuated safely.

Nomads: The pariah of the factions, the Nomads are last to know what is going on (at least that is how they see it). While some may stay and fight, most would prefer to return to the relative safety of their orbitals.

PanOceania: Initially dismissive of an alien invasion, the leaders of PanOceania first attempt to internally investigate a possible resurgence of the Order of the Temple. Once the Hexahedron investigates, the EI's existence will be confirmed as an alien AI. This takes time, however...

Yu Jing: As Fuyan is a Yu Jingese city, their forces will comprise the bulk of the city's defenders. They have an invested need to protect the city at all costs; they have families and homes in Fuyan.

Corporations: Like Ariadna, the corporations likely deploy their security forces and fortify themselves until the war between the factions has abated. Their leaders and executives will attempt to evacuate off world as soon as possible once they learn of the invasion.

Mercenaries: Initially, many mercenaries view the attack as an employment opportunity and begin negotiations with both the corporations and factions. When it becomes clear an attack by aliens is taking place, they either view it as a time to re-negotiate or a time to leave town.

Submondo: The various parts of the criminal underworld view the invasion in one of two ways. The first is the opportunity to loot and make a tidy profit; the second is to maybe settle old scores under the cover of the attack. Getting out of Fuyan is also a priority.

can spend between 1 and 3 Heat when using the *ImPLY* action, which increases the difficulty to decipher the intent by an equivalent amount to a maximum of Epic (D5). At her discretion, Aneris can exclude the intended recipient of the message from this effect, though they must still make the standard Average (D1) Psychology test to decipher her meaning.

- **Incontrovertible Mediator:** Although the intent is not always clear, Aneris seeks to harmonise humanity's efforts and is an expert in making sure this happens. Aneris can reroll one d20 when making a Discipline, Education, Lifestyle, or Persuade test but must accept the new result. Additionally, she gains 2 bonus Momentum when making a Persuade test. Finally, she can use Persuade instead of Lifestyle when attempting to acquire goods or strike a bargain.
- **Teseum-Infused Will:** Aneris remains resolute in spirit and form. She benefits from a BTS and Morale Soak of 2.
- **Vedic Shield:** Aneris usually has at least one Sophotect on call at a moment's notice – see “Sophotect”, *Infinity Corebook*, p. 454.

SCENE 1: THE FALL OF ZULUPOINT

The adventure begins in Fuyan's O-12 outpost, just days after the ZuluPoint assault began. The briefing is carried out by Commander Selaya Grayson, a veteran of more than a few faction battles.

SCENE 2: UNDER ATTACK!

The O-12 complex comes under attack from the Combined Army not long after Aneris introduces herself. There is a thunderous crash and the floor shakes. Shortly after this, gunfire is heard. Aneris disappears briefly before returning with a frown upon her face.

“There appears to be a number of somewhat belligerent humanoid alien beings engaged in combat with the building's security at the front entrance. I hesitate to say it, but I believe the aliens are winning and are making ingress to the building.”

The characters have a number of options – the GM should let the players discuss what they want to do, rather than suggest actions to them. Some sample actions are detailed below.

SEALING THE BREACH

A fire team of Morat are attacking by way of the O-12 reception area. Although well-guarded, the ferocity and sudden appearance of the Combined Army forces have taken the security forces by surprise. As the characters arrive, the last security guard dies in a hail of alien energy blasts.

THE BRIEFING

You are not sure what the urgency is, but you are certain it has to do with events at the ZuluPoint site. The briefing room is a hubbub of rumour and speculation, while communication techs race around, pushing through groups of operatives. Commander Selaya Grayson steps up to the podium. When the noise fails to abate, she is visibly irritated.

“SHUT IT!” she bellows. Instantly, the room falls silent.

“Right. Here's what we know. Approximately three hours ago, the last of the PanO forces transmitted that they were under heavy attack by massed alien – yes, you heard right – massed alien forces. Shortly after that, we lost all satellite surveillance of the ZuluPoint site. It's no coincidence. Also, in the last hour, ALEPH and Bureau Toth have reported increased quantronic traffic of a kind we've never seen before. Whoever – whatever – these aliens are, they're definitely high-tech. Bureau Gaea hypothesise the aliens are trying to access our systems. Given their hostility so far, this ain't no good thing.

“It gets worse. They've split their forces. Some are consolidating their position at the ZuluPoint beachhead. The real concern is the force that's split off. It looked like they're heading this way. Our job is gonna be search and rescue and communication. We – the O-12 command – are gonna try and hold out here, and act as a rally point for the different troops still out there. We may have to go street-to-street and head-to-head with these bastards. There're still some citizens out there, so try and get the crazy fools behind cover and get them out of the city if you can. Make it clear their best interests is getting here. Any questions?”

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **Shock and Awe:** By spending one heat point, the GM may add an additional Morat opponent to the battle.
- **Crossfire:** A two Heat point spend means there are two Shasvastii snipers stationed on a rooftop nearby. They will take it in turns to shoot at the characters, move to a new position each round, then fire again.

For the characters, this is their first interaction with an alien species. The GM may wish to emphasise the bizarre weapons the Morat are carrying.

GM TIP: RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The players are launched into the action right from the outset, and they will have questions. Begin the adventure with the briefing, which gives them the chance to learn where they are and what they are expected to do.

The tone of this adventure is very much one of imminent peril. The characters are facing overwhelming odds, and time is of the essence. If they dawdle and dither over plans, the Combined Army will simply overrun them. Speed and constant movement are required to stay ahead of the invading forces. Should the characters (and their players) have any questions, this is their chance to find out more. See “What the Characters Know” sidebar. Grayson advises the assembled agents including the characters to stand by for their allotted ALEPH advisor, or handler.

GM TIP: STAGING – WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

The characters may have some questions regarding the source of the attack on the O-12 building. The fact of the matter is the Morat were deployed from a dropship, later destroyed. The characters will find the wreckage nearby if they search but may attract a Morat fireteam.

GM TIP: MORAT FIRETEAMS

Morat fireteams usually consist of a number of Morat equal to the number of characters (maximum 5).

GM TIP: WHAT THE CHARACTERS KNOW

The GM may either tell the players directly or use Grayson (or Aneris) to provide the following information.

- Several days ago, a First Contact situation with an unknown alien species went badly wrong.
- Three Human Sphere naval ships were obliterated before the unknown alien craft made landfall near the secure ZuluPoint facility.
- A classified forensic archaeology dig was taking place at the site in the weeks before.
- PanOceanian forces at the ZuluPoint site are taking a beating despite heavy resistance.
- Much of the city has already been evacuated, but around a quarter of the city's population have chosen to stay.
- The characters are permitted to carry a side-arm within the O-12 buildings, but nothing larger or heavier. Those items are secured in the characters' lockers.

Morat –
Infinity Corebook, p. 465

Shasvastii –
Infinity Corebook, p. 471

ANERIS, EVIDENTLY

The characters are to be aided in their search and retrieval mission by Aneris, an ALEPH Aspect, who will later play her own part in the characters' escape from Fuyan. Aneris is a virtual aspect with no physical presence, but still of great use to the characters. She will materialize politely in the characters' personal quantronic zones and introduce herself as their link with ALEPH.

GM TIP: ALIEN TECH

The characters may wish to appropriate the Morat or Shasvastii weapons for their own use. The Combined Army weapons are designed for alien physiologies, not human, so all such weapons have the Unwieldy quality when used by a character. It also requires a Daunting (D3) Tech test to understand how the weapons work.

Combined Army weapons are coded to DNA of their bearer, which is a safety mechanism that is extremely difficult to crack. A Dire (D4) Tech test is required to deactivate the security protocols. If the test fails and a complication is rolled, the weapon shuts down completely, and no further tests to bypass the security may be attempted.

The Morat themselves are heavily built humanoids clad in armour, with the fumes from the weapon discharges and breaching explosives coiling around them. Their movements imply a savage sense of purpose that is definitely non-human. There are two Morat for every character, and they fight fiercely, working in pairs, making good use of cover.

TO THE ARMOURY!

The characters can access their own personal storage lockers without difficulty, but because the building's armoury has already been unlocked to O-12 agents, there are quite a few agents already getting suited up.

Aneris can be very useful here – she can point out specific items if the characters are looking for certain weapons or armour. Given the characters may be facing Combined Army TAGs, she can direct them to a heavier weapon or two and some explosives.

GM TIP: GETTING SUITED AND BOOTED

The characters may have quite a shopping list, but only items of Restriction 2 or lower are available to the characters. If the characters spend too long "suing up" a five-Morat fireteam turns up.

GETTING THE HELL OUT!

The situation deteriorates quickly. Communications become garbled, and many of the command staff

fall victim to a Shasvastii bomb, which seals off the rooftop landing pad. With no clear strategy, O-12 agents are working on their own. It's time for the characters to get out of the complex.

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **Oops!** A trigger-happy agent (or agents - one per Heat spend) opens up on vague forms in the smoke. Unfortunately, those forms are the characters, not Morat.
- **Contact!** For two Heat points, one of the characters spots what looks like Morat troops moving in the smoke. It requires a **Challenging (D2) Observation** test to identify a group of scared rookie agents, not Morat. (Use the **Corporate Security Unit** statistics from the *Infinity Corebook*, p. 427.)

Aneris is on hand to help the characters escape the worst of the fighting, but the characters will find O-12 agent bodies everywhere. Some appear to have died locked in hand-to-hand combat with other agents, blood streaming from their eyes and ears. Aneris is unusually terse when asked about the bodies, replying, "I am unaware of the situation as it currently exists." She has been temporarily segregated from ALEPH after several Aspects self-destructed after contact with alien invaders.

If the characters are taking too long, another Morat fireteam arrives to mop up any survivors.

SCENE 3: BLOOD ON THE STREETS

Once out of the O-12 building, the characters find themselves in the middle of a city on fire. Most of the nearby buildings are ruins.

The characters can move through the rubble of the battlefield, which counts as difficult terrain for the purposes of zone movement, or they can move through the streets.

Aneris is still active and will enquire as to the characters plans: Do they want to search for and join the other Human Sphere forces in the area? Regroup outside the city? Or complete their original mission of search and rescue and escort any civilians to safety?

Whilst Aneris is still unable to contact ALEPH or O-12, she can recall tactical information before she was sequestered and can guide the characters to the last known position of some Human Sphere troop deployments within Fuyan. Whether they are still there and have survived is another question.

If the characters decide to attempt to evacuate from Fuyan, Aneris will confirm that any transportation by air is no longer viable owing

to the alien invaders hitting any ground-to-air facilities first. Aneris will point out that as a harbour city, the characters could also attempt to evacuate by way of the sea.

Regarding the humanitarian mission to evacuate the remaining citizens, the characters may still have to complete that mission...

THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

The characters encounter a number of fleeing citizens. If the characters seek to stop someone, it requires a **Challenging (D2) Psychology** test to calm them down enough to learn that SOMETHING is following them, but they cannot describe it. Behind them, the characters can see nothing but an empty street. A successful **Daunting (D3) Observation** test reveals that there is definitely something moving there, but it is hard to make out.

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **1 heat**, the Sphinx TAG is already within one zone of the characters when they make the test to spot it.
- **2 heat** means the Sphinx contacts a nearby Morat fireteam who arrive a round later and join the battle.

A Combined Army Shasvastii Sphinx TAG has been pursuing the survivors after the survivors caught sight of the TAG reconnoitring the area. It is now hunting them down, and the characters are in its way. Its stealth tech has allowed it to remain unseen while the battles rage throughout the city. If the characters fail to spot it, it will engage them at close range with potentially devastating consequences to the nearby civilians. The crowd requires an **Average (D1) Athletics** or **Acrobatics** test to move through and counts as a light saturation zone. Complications involving the crowd may involve fatalities.

It is entirely possible the characters decide to follow their original mission and take the survivors along with them – all are non-combatant – and this will require the characters to be a little more cautious and circumspect in encounters.

SCENE 4: MISTAKEN IDENTITIES

Fuyan is not completely devoid of resistance, but it is fragmented and lacking cohesion. As the characters move through the city, they are likely to encounter troops of other factions.

Unfortunately, in the chaos of the invasion, and with a healthy scepticism of so-called alien invaders, some of the factions are convinced the whole alien invasion is little more than an elaborate attempt by another faction to disguise a seizure of power.

In this case, a group of Yu Jing Celestial Guard survivors of the Fuyan attack and PanOceania Knights reinforcements previously destined for ZuluPoint have each other pinned down in some ruins. Both firmly believe the other side is responsible for the attack and are in the “right” (inasmuch as revenge can be considered righteous).

Unfortunately, the characters and any companions have walked right into the middle of this factional disagreement. Both sides are conserving their ammunition but are at a stalemate. Concealed in good cover, it is the PanOceanian faction's Father-Knight in charge who will hail the characters and query their allegiance. The Celestial Guard will remain silent and gauge the characters' response first. Should the characters reply they are loyal to either Yu Jing or PanOceania, matters will quickly take a turn for the worse.

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **1 Heat**, the characters are mistaken for reinforcements by one of the factions.
- **2 heat means** the characters are caught in between the two sides during an exchange of fire.

Attempting to explain the reality of the situation requires a **Challenging (D2) Persuade** test. If the characters have responded violently or acted aggressively toward either faction, the test difficulty is increased by one step (**D3, Daunting**). If the characters can provide a cogent and coherent explanation and argument, the GM should reduce the difficulty accordingly.

The situation escalates further when an ALEPH force of Garuda Tacbots enters the area. Originally dispatched to destroy Fuyan's ALEPH Node, at which they were successful, they have since been reverted to a seek-and-destroy protocol. Unfortunately for the characters and both factions, four of these remotes see the characters and the factions as viable targets. The characters and factions will need to join together to defeat the remotes.

SCENE 5: A FOOTHOLD SITUATION

The characters and any companions finally have their chance to escape Fuyan and the clutches of the Combined Army. Fuyan is a coastal settlement known for its high cliffs and sheltered harbour, and there are boats and hovercraft aplenty should they wish to escape that way. Alternatively, the characters can escape overland if they want. Aneris will suggest both options as she re-establishes contact with ALEPH and will reveal that O-12 forces are regrouping in the city of Xiongxian with other Human Sphere forces.

GM TIP: THE FACTION SURVIVORS

The characters may have one or both factions “tag along” and assist in their escape. Both sets of troops are battle-hardened, and although there may still be some lingering animosity between them, they will follow the characters' lead. They may also cover the characters' escape allowing them to lead any civilian survivors to safety.

GM TIP: THE CHARACTERS AND THE SURVIVORS

The characters' original mission was to help evacuate survivors from Fuyan, which Aneris will remind them of should they forget. Moving large numbers of people through an occupied city will provide a challenge for the characters. They may choose to scout ahead or leave any survivors behind.

Crowds — *Infinity Corebook*, p. 109

Sphinx TAG — *Infinity Corebook*, p. 475

Corporate Security Unit — *Infinity Corebook*, p. 427

Morat — *Infinity Corebook*, p. 465

CITIZEN PRISONER COLUMN

As the characters get closer to their escape route, they come across a group of Fuyan citizens being escorted to an unknown destination by a heavy Morat Guard. The Combined Army plans to use them as “human shields” against Human Sphere counterattacks. The characters may choose to free the prisoners, in which case there are three Morat for every character. Any companions of the characters will deal with the other Morat forces.

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **1 Heat**, a prisoner makes a break for freedom and heads straight for the characters' hiding place.
- **2 Heat**, some of the companions of the characters decide to rescue the prisoners, if the characters choose to sneak past.

FIGHTING ON THE CLIFFS

Climbing down the cliffs is one way the characters can avoid Combined Army patrols. It is not without danger though, as the cliffs are steep and treacherous to descend. The roads winding down the cliffs are difficult to negotiate, and exposed. Shasvastii snipers monitor the cliffs while Morat patrols regularly sweep the area. The patrols cannot cover everywhere though, so the characters are able to sneak past. Of course, if the characters are accompanied by any of the Fuyan survivors, then sneaking past the sentries is more complicated (all **Stealth tests** increase by one step).

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **1 Heat**, it begins to rain, making footing treacherous and increasing the difficulty of all movement and observation tests by one step.
- **2 Heat**, Two Shasvastii snipers take up positions overlooking the characters' planned escape route. The characters must silence the Shasvastii or sneak past them

A battle on the cliffs quickly alerts the Combined Army forces to the characters' breakout attempt. The roads winding down the cliff act in the characters' favour, but additional Morat fireteams will arrive if the characters tarry too long. Abandoned vehicles are everywhere and can also be used in the escape – or as a battering ram. Aquatic vehicles such as hovercraft and yachts can be used if the characters seek escape by the sea. As well as providing cover, the vehicles also act as obstacles during movement. It is likely that the Morat themselves will pursue the characters in a vehicle of their own, although they will halt their pursuit eventually.

Escaping the city by land or sea requires a **Challenging (D2) Pilot** test to negotiate the narrow channels and ravines of Fuyan. With their

freedom in sight, the characters may congratulate themselves in their escape...

UP FROM THE DEPTHS!

Just as the characters think they have escaped, the form of a Charontid surfaces from the waves nearby, blocking their escape. If the characters are escaping by sea, the channel to freedom is blocked by the Charontid. Otherwise, it climbs onto the road, giving the characters a round to react, as three fireteams of four Morat follow it from the coast. With the Charontid defeated, the characters are finally free. Yet Fuyan now lies in the Combined Army's grasp

THE SECOND OFFENSIVE

Set in Xiongxian, this section sees the characters fighting for survival, and later, for time so that the populace of the city can evacuate or hide. The characters make their way through the city, now eerily unoccupied. They encounter only Combined Army forces until they receive a coded O-12 transmission stating the populace has retreated underground to designated safe zones (bunkers). The characters fight the Combined Army from house to house until they reach a way into the underground. Either the debris gives way, plunging the characters into the under-city, or a random artillery shell opens it up. The characters make their way through the caverns and Metro system, encountering Combined Army expeditionary forces, local hostile wildlife, and Submondo looters, before meeting an armed patrol from a nearby bunker.

Unfortunately, one individual at the bunker (or patrol) is showing signs of sepsitorization, meaning the EI will likely find the bunker soon. The characters must come up with a strategy to buy time for the bunker to be evacuated.

OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

The concealed bunkers of Xiongxian should provide time to rest, regroup, and launch a counterattack on the Combined Army forces. The characters are to locate and make contact with one of the bunkers in order to get actionable intelligence on the Combined Army.

SCENE 1: WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

Arriving in Xiongxian on foot, the characters find the streets empty of people. Vehicles have been abandoned in the street yet are locked. Shop fronts are shuttered. Although there are occasional signs of combat and ruins caused by missile attacks, there are very few bodies. When the characters arrive, most of the Combined Army have moved further into the city, leaving a token force in place to guard their rear.

Celestial Guard –
Infinity Corebook, p. 423

Father-Knight –
Infinity Corebook, p. 435

Knight –
Infinity Corebook, p. 441

Garuda Tacbot –
Infinity Corebook, p. 369

Morat –
Infinity Corebook, p. 465

Climbing –
Infinity Corebook, p. 111

Stealth –
Infinity Corebook, p. 104-105

Shasvastii –
Infinity Corebook, p. 471

Vehicles –
Infinity Corebook, p. 136-137

SEARCHING THE RUINS

If the characters search the ruins, a successful **Average (D1) Survival** test will allow the characters to deduce the lack of bodies means many of the buildings had been evacuated ahead of time. Some of the local buildings also show signs of looting.

Some parts of the city still have power, despite the occupation. Advertising hoardings still operate, and the characters will notice hits on their quantronic zones. Xiongxian resembles a ghost town to all intents and purposes.

WILDERNESS OF MIRRORS

ALEPH: While there is no node concealed any longer in Xiongxian, many of ALEPH's forces are still on the ground. They are awaiting further instructions, but with ALEPH preoccupied with defensive firewalls, there is a certain amount of confusion among their ranks.

Ariadna: Ariadna is ready for a fight. Like Yu Jing, their troops are more than ready to revenge the attack on Fuyan, single-handedly if need be.

Haqqislam: Haqqislam forces are taking a more measured approach, advocating a study of the enemy tactics, with the populace retreating to underground bunkers. Given time, the faction believes a carefully staged counterattack could take the Combined Army by surprise.

Nomads: The Nomads are in favour of an orbital bombardment of the EI forces as they close on Xiongxian. Needless to say, the other factions, especially those with vested interests in the city, are less than enthusiastic about the Nomad plan.

PanOceania: Only a handful of PanOceania forces are left at Xiongxian after the majority of troops were diverted to the attack on Fuyan or were stationed at ZuluPoint when it fell.

Yu Jing: Still smarting from their defeat at Fuyan, the StateEmpire Army are eager to extract some payback for the fall of the city.

Corporations: The corporations will be keen to retain their holdings within the city and surrounding land and will be far from happy with any plan that causes wholesale destruction to property.

Mercenaries: For the mercenary companies, this is a golden opportunity to renegotiate terms with the factions and corporations. Because they will see combat, danger pay can be demanded.

Submondo: A city empty of its populace and no law enforcement is a dream come true to the Submondo petty criminals and looter gangs of Xiongxian. At the first opportunity, they are on the streets looting or settling scores.

FINDING ANERIS

Aneris is once again the agent handler for the characters. She has changed little from her

previous incarnation (see p. 78), although she has been an agent handler for many other agents since the characters last met her. The ALEPH node in Xiongxian has been destroyed, but she downloaded a significant amount of information about the city prior to its occupation.

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **1 Heat**, a Morat patrol sweeps the area.
- **2 Heat**, the characters are currently in the sights of a nearby Shasvastii sniper who automatically gains Surprise on the characters.

SCENE 2: SKIÁVOROS ATTACK!

Hidden in the rubble of a nearby building, three Skiávoros lie concealed. They are recharging their sepsitor weapons when the characters encounter them, and as such, the weapons cannot be used in combat. Spotting the Skiávoros in the rubble requires a successful **Challenging (D2) Observation** test.

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **1 Heat**, a Morat patrol are also sweeping the area.
- **2 Heat** means that the Skiávoros sepsitors become fully charged.

Should the combat last more than four rounds, the GM may add 2 Heat points to the pool, as the EI learns of the battle.

SCENE 3: MARCH OF THE LIVING SEPSITORISED

The Combined Army most terrifying weapon is the sepsitor. In this case, the effects are clear to see – a unit of Yu Jing Celestial Guard have been sepsitorised, their Cubes taken over by the EI. Blood runs freely from their eyes and noses, and they move slowly and mechanically. When the characters encounter them, the sepsitorised troops are being guarded by a group of Morat, awaiting an Umbra Legate to decide their fate. If the characters free the sepsitorised troops, they will get a nasty shock as the Celestial Guard will immediately turn on them.

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **1 Heat**, adds a Unidron Batroid for each point spent.
- **2 Heat** spent means the Umbra Legate arrives during the combat.

SCENE 4: INTO THE DARK

The labyrinthine and extensive tunnel network beneath Xiongxian has yet to be mapped out by the Combined Army's Xhantri "Bumblebee" drones to any great extent, which works to the characters' advantage. At least, that is how

GM TIP: WHY ARE WE HERE?

The characters have been sent by O-12 to assess the situation in Xiongxian. The city has a number of secure bunkers that must be evacuated.

GM TIP: RISING DAMP

The metro tunnels, and the cave network beneath, have been partially flooded, and in some parts of the cave network, the characters will have to swim. Such areas count as aquatic terrain (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 109).

GM TIP: RUNNING THE CAVES

There is no map provided for the caves below Xiongxian. The GM may want to sketch out some brief encounters for the characters involving drop-offs, scaling cliffs and the like if the characters are having an easy time of it. Of course, having the cauchemar cat (see p. 89) catch their scent early on, will encourage the characters to move quickly should it roar behind them.

Skiávoros –
Infinity Corebook, p. 463

Celestial Guard –
Infinity Corebook, p. 423

Umbra Legate –
Infinity Corebook, p. 479

Unidron Batroid –
Infinity Corebook, p. 479

Morat –
Infinity Corebook, p. 465

Shasvastii –
Infinity Corebook, p. 471

Charontid –
Infinity Corebook, p. 463

**GM TIP:
ROLEPLAYING
TANYA 023**

Tanya 023's advanced years have not dulled her caustic nature. She is no-nonsense with a crooked sense of humour. She will quite happily berate people into submission whether it is an argument or a medical consultation.

Sophotect - *Infinity Corebook*, p. 454

Cauchemar Cat – p. 89

Hydra Nematode – p. 92

Scorpionette – p. 99

Aneris views it. Morat exploratory patrols are likely to be an issue, but the tunnels are their best chance to locate a bunker and complete their mission. Aneris knows of locations in the city's travel system that will provide access to the tunnels but will advise caution – the metro stations are guarded by Unidron Batroids. An alternative – and riskier plan, she believes – is accessing the cave network from a surface breach, perhaps through the damage caused by the Combined Army bombings. As well as the dangers of unexploded ordnance, there have been unsubstantiated rumours of creatures living in the cave network. Of course, they could just be urban myths.

THE METRO

Entering the Metro system requires the characters to take out the Unidron Batroid guards (two at each entrance) that are permanently stationed on guard duty there. Once the guards are taken out, the characters are able to enter the metro system. The trains are no longer running, and the rails are no longer live, at least according to Aneris.

GOING UNDERGROUND

Entering through a surface breach counts as Difficult terrain, and the characters will splash into – what they can only hope – is water. If they entered the cave network via the metro, when they leave the carved and moulded metro confines, the tunnels are far more primal. Aneris is hard to contact once the characters head into the cave network. She has little data on the cave system itself, so the characters will feel isolated and alone in the dark. She does however provide a way to locate the nearest bunker, a virtual directional locator and quantronic compass of sorts. There is no natural light in the caverns, so the characters will need to ensure they have a light source or risk the dark.

WE'RE NOT ALONE

Over the years, various creatures have made their homes in the caverns. Food is scarce underground, so the characters are fair game to predators lurking in the caverns. Hydra nematodes have wormed their way into the flooded areas, trailing their feeding tendrils. Where the earth is loose, there are large numbers of scorpionettes burrowed under the surface. Aside from the caves themselves, the biggest danger is a cauchemar cat. This apex predator was trapped in a sinkhole collapse. Since then, it has fed on scorpionettes, but it will happily settle upon a bigger meal such as one of the characters. As well as natural predators, Morat patrols regularly sweep for possible insurgents. Although various Submondo groups utilised the

caves for smuggling and other illicit activities, the invasion of Xiongxian largely put an end to that. However, there might still be Submondo members hiding out in some of the tunnels.

DEEP PATROL

Once the characters and the GM have spent enough time in the tunnels, the characters will encounter a patrol from the bunker. If the characters are not taking steps to maintain a low profile, the patrol will attempt to ambush the characters and detain them for questioning. Things will escalate rapidly if the characters act aggressively, and the last thing they want to do is antagonise their allies, but accidents happen. The patrol is made up of a group of former corporate security operatives (counting as troopers).

If the characters comply, an **Average (D1)**

Persuade test will convince the patrol of the characters' intentions and mission. Otherwise, one of the members is sent back to request further instructions. The characters are disarmed, taken into custody, and marched to the bunker. If the characters successfully convince the patrol of their mission, they will be allowed to keep their weapons. The tension level diminishes somewhat, and the characters are led to the bunker.

SCENE 5: A DECEPTIVE SAFETY

Designated Shèng Suǒ-58 (Sanctuary 58), the bunker is a strictly functional structure, squat and unlovely. It is currently home to forty-nine souls (young and old, including children), almost twice the capacity it was designed for. Despite this, Shèng Suǒ-58 holds enough food and water to last another thirty days or so if the characters think to ask.

The inhabitants of the bunker are all nervous, watching the characters carefully. So far, they have avoided attracting the attention of the Combined Army, but they know they are on borrowed time. Once inside the bunker, the characters can meet with the de facto leader of the survivors, a Sophotect named Tanya 023.

Tanya 023 has compiled a great deal of data on Combined Army movements and tactics, a veritable treasure trove for O-12's tacticians. It will take some time to physically download the data – several hours, in fact.

While the data is downloading, the characters may wish to accept the offer of medical assistance from Tanya 023 and to take the time to rest and to treat any wounds.

Unfortunately, time is running out for Shèng Suǒ-58. One of the surface patrols recently encountered a Skiávoros, which managed to use its sepsitor on two of the patrol. Since no one on the patrol has ever seen the effects of sepsitorization, the patrol's first priority was to get both casualties back to the bunker as soon as possible.

The characters are in the infirmary when the patrol returns. If the characters have encountered sepsitorised humans before, they notice similar symptoms in the two casualties with an **Average (D1) Observe** test. Otherwise, a **Daunting (D3) Medicine** test reveals that the two are suffering some form of Cube-related bio-feedback, and they are convulsing with blood streaming from their eyes and noses.

The convulsions stop, and unless restrained, both the casualties sit straight up. They look around, then up, then lie back down again. The characters immediately start feeling hits on their firewalls. Although harmless, these pings from the EI-infected Cubes are shouting their location for all to hear, through even the bedrock. It is only a matter of time before someone – or something – registers the location. Of course, the characters may be blissfully unaware of all this until they learn of the Combined Army's sudden shift in tactics.

SCENE 6: HOLDING THE LINE

Shèng Suǒ-58 is compromised. Combined Army troops are now making their way into the tunnels, bound directly for the bunker. Fortunately, the bunker inhabitants have been warned, either by the characters or by concealed spotters on the surface using a relay of runners through the cave network. The characters have around ten minutes to act before the Combined Army arrives on the bunker's doorstep. While the characters may think they have fulfilled their mission parameters, the download still needs to complete. While Tanya 023 will not ask them directly, she will be disappointed if the characters do not at least offer to help.

The characters may choose to leave as soon as the download is complete (see "Legging it!"), abandoning the people of the bunker to their fate. They may also decide to defend the bunker or fight a running battle with the Combined Army in the tunnel complex.

Tanya 023 gives the evacuation order and sets the self-destruct thermite charges encased in the bunker. She times the charges to explode minutes after the download is estimated to complete – with a timer appearing in the characters personal quantronic zone.

Tanya 023 suggests that the characters get moving, either to slow down the Combined Army, or to take the escape route with the other inhabitants.

A RUNNING BATTLE

The characters head into the tunnels to harry the Combined Army advance. The Morat forces are unused to the tunnels, and their bulk does not help, but they have reinforcements aplenty. Nonetheless, the characters gain one additional Momentum each for their actions. (If it is unused, it does not add to the group's Momentum pool.) Tanya 023 and those with any ability to fight also take to the tunnels to buy time for the remaining non-combatants in the bunker to get away. It will take two rounds to return to the bunker from their position when the download completes.

LEGGING IT!

If the characters choose to make a strategic withdrawal, or run away, they will still encounter Morat forces, and worse. If they fail to secure the data from their original mission, then they are running from one kind of trouble only to find themselves in another mess, this time with their O-12 superiors. Not only have they lost the data, but some of the survivors of Shèng Suǒ-58 will not forget their actions.

SUGGESTED HEAT SPENDS

- **1 Heat:** The characters take a wrong turn, or the tunnel is blocked, requiring an extra round to get around.
- **2 Heat:** A five-Morat fireteam joins the fray.
- **3 Heat:** The characters are on their own, as the inhabitants of Shèng Suǒ-58 make their escape.

DEFENDING THE BUNKER

Defending the bunker means the Combined Army will be able to directly assault the characters. The characters are closer to the data download and have the benefit of cover from the building. Unfortunately, they could well be in the building when it blows up!

WAVES OF ATTACK

The Combined Army are spread throughout the cave network although they have not discovered the escape route being used to evacuate Shèng Suǒ-58. The attack unfolds as follows and also depends on what the characters chose to do:

- **Round 1** (Legging It!, A Running Battle): Xhantri Bumblebee drones spread out through the cave network, mapping the caves systems. Characters involved in "A Running Battle" can use the opportunity to destroy them, slowing the Combined Army's advance.
- **Round 3** (Legging It!, A Running Battle): Two



Unidron Batroid –
Infinity Corebook, p. 479

Swimming –
Infinity Corebook, p. 111

Corporate Security Unit –
Infinity Corebook, p. 427

Stealth –
Infinity Corebook, p. 104

Surprise –
Infinity Corebook, p. 104-105

Xhantri Bumblebee
Drone – p. 69

Shasvastii – *Infinity
Corebook*, p. 471

GM TIP: A DEDICATED DOWNLOAD

The data download should complete just at the last minute, ideally when Morat troops enter the bunker (a 1 Heat spend is sufficient). This allows the characters just enough time to escape the bunker before it explodes, possibly trading shots with the Combined Army as they escape.

GM TIP: EXODUS

The last bunker inhabitant makes it safely to their escape route the round before the self-destruct activates.

fireteams of three Shasvastii (Elites) scout ahead of the main Combined Army, searching for traps and ambushes. Should the characters eliminate both teams, it will delay the main Combined Army contingent by another round.

- **Round 6+** (A Running Battle, Defending the Bunker): The main Combined Army contingent arrives. In addition to any existing troops arriving before the main contingent (such as the Shasvastii scouts), the main Combined Army consists of:

- Umbra Legate (see *Infinity Corebook*, p.479)
- Morat Rasyat (see *Infinity Corebook* p. 469)
- 4 Shasvastii sharpshooters, Elite (see *Infinity Corebook* p. 471)
- 10 Morat, organised into two fireteams (see *Infinity Corebook* p. 465)

More Morat fireteams of 5 will appear for every two Heat spent.

- **Round 8 (All):** Download completes.
- **Round 11 (All):** The bunker explodes! Anyone caught within the bunker takes. 2+6 damage with the qualities of Anti-materiel 2, Comms, Disposable, Piercing 3, Spread 1, Unsubtle, and Vicious 2. If the characters manage to escape the Combined Army attack and also retrieve the data, they can consider it a win. Their O-12 superiors will be happy to receive the data on the Combined Army's movements. Of course, the characters still need to find some way of getting out of Xiongxian... but that is another adventure.

PARADISO ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following are some adventure hooks for the GM to use. GMs may also be interested in the Shadow Affairs Campaign book set in the jungles of Paradiso.

- An important diplomat has escaped an assassination attempt and is rumoured to have fled to a long-overgrown settlement in Paradiso to hide while they await transport. The characters could be there to find-and-protect the diplomat, finish the assassination, or as 3rd party bounty hunters. In a potential twist, the diplomat turns out to be a Shasvastii Speculo Killer.
- Sent to discover the fate of a supply vessel, the characters find the wreckage of the ship near an important settlement – and the only solid remnant is a crate. Within it is a strange, new creature, monstrous in appearance (possibly one of Paradiso's animals) but with a shipping receipt insisting it is for delivery to the settlement. What do the characters do? Why was this delivered – is the intent benign? Or is it to stir up trouble?
- An outlying Paradiso settlement has been attacked or has otherwise run out of its usual herbicide and defoliants. As such, this once-important location has been overrun and lost to wild vegetation overgrowth. Can characters help restore the community before the Combined Army takes advantage of the settlement's predicament?
- The great unknown depths of Paradiso's oceans have never been explored – greed and war took those resources far too early, too fast. The characters are hired to explore a certain location within the great ocean, and they are promised wealth and prestige for completing the mission. The twist: this job must be done immediately, quickly, and without attracting any official attention... or else the contract is null and void. Why the hurry?
- Someone is looking to hire troops for an expedition into the jungle, but there's a heavy veil of secrecy regarding their purpose. No one know who's backing the expedition. Are they Submondo treasure hunters or looters? Are they looking for alien ruins? Or have one of the factions lost something – or someone – of value and are keen to retrieve them.
- Someone's killing O-12 Agents in the characters' location, brutally and efficiently. Tasked to investigate, the characters discover that all the victims knew each other, but their files are sealed by O-12. Why? Were they involved in some form of cover-up? Are they being killed in revenge for something? An off-the-books black bag operation? Or is it something even more sinister, and the victims investigated something better left alone. The characters will need to tread carefully to avoid attracting the killer's – or killers' – attention.
- Travelling by train or air through the Paradiso jungle, the characters come under attack from someone like a terrorist group or the Combined Army. Can the characters not only survive the possible destruction of their transport, but also the jungle itself?

CHAPTER 12

PARADISO ADVERSARIES

More so than ever, thanks to being occupied by two opposing military forces, Paradiso is literally teeming with life. Though the jungles are pounded, scorched, and splintered by the battles that tear through them, the flora and fauna of this abundant planet recover at such a rapid rate that it's sometimes hard to believe that a war is taking place beneath the dense canopies. Not every native creature – and even the odd plant – is content to sit and idly watch as the aliens fight it out around. This chapter takes a look at the indigenous species of animals and plants that inhabit Paradiso, from deadly varieties of plants and fungi, to wondrous creatures hiding in the oceanic depths.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

This section provides a number of encounters the characters may experience as well as fleshing out the jungle and giving the GM new Adversaries for the players to contend with. The GM may generate a random encounter from the “Random Encounter Table” below by rolling 2d20, or they may choose one or more. Those marked as “Aquatic” will only take place in (or near) bodies of water or coastlines. If an aquatic only encounter is rolled, and the zones are not in or near bodies of water, the GM rolls again.

RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLE

2d20 roll	Encounter
2-10	No encounter
11-13	Bloodbriar
14	Bandar-Log or Crimson Snapper (Aquatic)
15	Cauchemar Cat
16	Corocoro Bush
17	Deathwatch Serpent
18	Devil's Whip Viper
19	Dreadnought
20	Gāyatrī Moehau
21	Gold Leaf Butterfly or Hydra Nematode (Aquatic)
22	Jorōgumo
23-24	Kavara Vinetrap
25	King Tiger Seal (Aquatic) or Living Wall Ants
26	Kragodon (Aquatic) or Butcher Bee
27	Nasnas Lizard or Nokuro (Aquatic)
28	Nephropidae (Aquatic)
29	Norstralia Greif
30	Phaya Naga
31-34	Poisonous Fungi
35	Qutrub
36	Rakuno “Linger Long”
37	Scorpionette or Qlugfish (Aquatic)
38	Shukon Spiderworm
39	Stymphalian Cliff Shrike
40	Roll twice on this table.

GM TIP: PARADISO MYTHS

The sheer variety of life on Paradiso has led to a number of stories regarding mysterious beasts in the jungle. These cryptids or “Paradiso myths” have become the focus of much speculation and entertainment. GMs may wish to use these docu-dramas as possible plot hooks or ways to introduce some of Paradiso's wildlife.

ENCOUNTERS

Paradiso's jungles have a thriving ecosystem, and so they have a variety of predators and prey. Most of the animals listed here are unique to Paradiso, although some may exist in captivity on other worlds.

DANGEROUS PLANTS AND FUNGI

As well as the normal poisonous fauna and fungi a character may expect to encounter and identify with an Average (D1) Survival test, there are several dangerous species unique to Paradiso increasing the Difficulty by one step.

POISONOUS FUNGI

Small bones cover the zone, with puffballs of poisonous fungi dotting the forest floor. Puffs of red spores jet into the air, carrying the deadly Crimson Curse (see p. 26). An Average (D1) Athletics test is required to avoid the fungi if the character is moving at speed. Failure means the character has triggered a puffball and inhaled some of its spores. They will need to make a Contagion test to resist the effects.

Heat Spends

• **1 Heat** – The wind suddenly changes, and a cloud of spores begins drifting towards the characters.

THE MISSING LINK

Cryptozoologists on Paradiso have a long-standing debate over the bandar-log. They may be the “missing link” in human evolution. Or, they are an evolutionary off-shoot that failed, although conspiracy theorists also consider the Shasvastii to be responsible. The Tohaa, with all their knowledge, remain quiet on the issue.

BLOODBRIAR

Bloodbriars are wickedly sharp thorny bushes that only the Paradiso jungle could have evolved. They form large thickets covering a large zone and ensnare passing animals trying to pass through. Usually they have large spaces between them so that there is the appearance of a way through. Through a pressure-sensitive root system, the bloodbriar can detect their prey's approach. As the prey moves into their space, the bloodbriar lashes out driving their thorns into flesh. Wounds from a bloodbriar bleed freely thanks to an anti-coagulant and help fertilize the bloodbriar's soil. Larger versions of bloodbriar, forests of them, are rumoured to flourish in the deep jungle, but only exist as rumour so far. Bloodbriar zone thickets count as hazardous terrain. A character moving through or remaining in a bloodbriar thicket must make a successful Challenging (D2) Acrobatics test to avoid being caught on the thorns or suffer 1+3 physical damage (Armour Soak applies) with the Bleeding quality. **Heat Spends:**

- **1 Heat** – A scorpionette (p. 99) or devil's whip viper (see p. 90) nest is hiding amongst the roots of the thicket, below the reach of the thorns.

TROOPER

BANDAR-LOG

Sometimes, when science is the new god, all hell breaks loose. Originally bandar-logs were believed to be a corporate research project designed to create a new simian genus with evolved problem-solving skills for applications in both military and commercial applications. Unfortunately for the project, the aggressive nature of the test subjects was unprecedented; they escaped into the jungles after killing the researchers.

The result was the bandar-log. A mishmash of simian DNA and... something else. Whatever DNA the scientists found – or created – has never been replicated. No one has ever found the lab where the bandar-logs were produced, and it is now believed long lost to the jungle – or was covered up by those involved. In temperament, bandar-logs are closer to baboons. They are vicious, predatory, and occasionally cannibalistic. Bandar-logs have pale-white matted fur, with a ridge of dorsal spines. They are bipedal but prefer to move on all fours, with deceptive speed, and their muzzles are more akin to those of crocodiles than mammals.

Bandar-logs are omnivorous and scavengers and prefer fresh meat over carrion. Their jaws are powerful enough to crack bones, but the real danger of the bandar-log comes from its sly intelligence and ability to work together as a pack. The largest bandar-log is usually the pack alpha (treated as an Elite).

ATTRIBUTES						
AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
8	7	6	7	4	8	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE								
Combat	2	-	Movement	2	-	Social	1	-
Fortitude	1	-	Senses	1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES					
Firewall	NA	Resolve	7	Vigour	6
Security	NA	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Bite:** 2+5 (N), Vicious 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Night Vision
- **Strength in numbers:** Provided the bandar-logs outnumber their prey by at least two to one, they are immune to mind-influencing effects.

TROOPER

BUTCHER BEES

More akin to wasps than actual bees, these large insects have a three-foot wingspan and a long, spindly legs. Marked by a purple- and black-banded thorax, the butcher bee has a wicked sting known to pierce armour. Butcher bees are hunters, usually feeding off smaller insects although they will attack larger creatures in defence of their nest or larvae. Like bees, they form complex hives, usually in underground caverns.

Butcher Bees use their powerful mandibles to cut up their prey, breaking it up into smaller pieces for their larvae to consume. The site of these dismemberments give the insect the “butcher” part of the name. While dangerous themselves, butcher bees often attract scavengers and larger predators to the sites of their kills. Butcher bees have a symbiotic relationship with living wall ants. The bees secrete a pheromone that causes the ants to see them as members of the ant hive, and they often occupy the same caverns as the ants for that reason. In return, the ants get the remains of any kills, effectively keeping the beehive free of remains and predators.

ATTRIBUTES						
AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
8	8	5	7	4	7	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE								
Combat	1	-	Movement	1	1	Social	1	-
Fortitude	1	-	Senses	1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES					
Firewall	-	Resolve	7	Vigour	5
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	1

ATTACKS:

- **Stinger:** 1+3 (N), Unforgiving, Vicious 2, Toxin 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Keen Senses (Sight, Smell), Mindless, Night Vision
- **Flight:** The creature ignores any penalties for ground-based movement.

A Butcher Bee has made a recent kill and is busily dismembering the corpse. It will defend its kill.

Heat Spends:

- **1 Heat** – It is not alone – other bees are assisting in butchering the corpse (perhaps that of a dreadnought or similar large animal).
- **Hive (3 Heat)** The characters have stumbled on the entrance to their hive and possibly their living wall ant protectors. Each round 1 (N) more bees will emerge

ELITE

CAUCHEMAR CAT

Cauchemar cats are solitary ambush predators but are not above eating carrion. They have been known to track wounded prey for days. More than one Paradiso explorer has tales of someone disappearing into the dark, dragged off by the cauchemar.

Their name comes from the French word for “Nightmare”. These terrifying nocturnal predators were initially believed to have been made up for the vids, as these Paradiso myths were never seen. The war on Paradiso has however forced some from their hunting grounds and into contact with humans. Cauchemar cats are heavily built feline predators with night-black fur and eyes that glow red in the light. Reaching a height of one metre at the shoulder, they are surprisingly agile and light on their feet.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
12 (1)	10	16	5	5	3	6

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+1	2	Movement	+2	1	Social	-	-
Fortitude	+1	-	Senses	+2	1	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	N/A	Resolve	6	Vigour	16
Security	N/A	Morale	1	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Bite:** Melee 2+7 damage, Vicious 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Fear 1, Grasping, Keen Senses (Sight, Smell), Night Vision, Superhuman Brawn 1, Threatening 1
- **They mostly come at night:** When the creature attempts to remain unseen or unnoticed, any Momentum or Heat spent to add dice to their Stealth pool adds two d20s instead of one.

The characters have entered the hunting range of a cauchemar cat, and the creature has their scent.

Heat Spends

- **Mated Pair (2 Heat)** The characters are being stalked by not one, but three cauchemar cats. They are a mated pair and a cub (treated as a Trooper).

TROOPER

CRIMSON SNAPPER

Crimson snappers are piscine predators reaching up to half a metre long (and sometime more). Frequently found in the larger waterways of Paradiso, they are a dangerous nuisance. They resemble a mixture of both turtle and fish, thanks to the dorsal armour. A crimson snapper's scales are a distinctive ruddy-brown colour that darken as they grow. These scales harden giving the fish a distinctly armoured appearance. Although the saltwater variety of the crimson snapper is solitary, the freshwater variety often form shoals for mutual protection, and are dangerous in such numbers. The jaws of crimson snappers are incredibly powerful, and they can gnaw their way through metal and flesh with equal ease. Anything that comes within range of their jaws is considered fair game. For that reason, they are a considerable pest and outright menace where ships and other watercraft are concerned.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
5	6	4	6	3	1	3

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+1	-	Movement	+1	1	Social	-	-
Fortitude	+1	-	Senses	+2	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	3	Vigour	4
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	2

ATTACKS:

- **Nasty Bite:** Melee, 1+3 damage, Piercing 1, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Inured to Poison, Night Vision, Superhuman Senses (Smell)
- **Natural Armour:** The extremely dense armour and hard scales of crimson snappers gives them an Armour Soak of 2.
- **Dangerously Loud: 1 Heat** – While the characters are fighting them off, the GM can spend 1 Heat to roll again on the Encounters table, as the noise may attract attention.

RAKUNO

“LINGER-LONG”

There is another plant considered a lesser threat than the bloodbriar, while still being enough of an environmental hazard to warrant a strong warning. The rakuno plant, more commonly called the “linger-long,” is one of Paradiso's most aggressively spreading plants. Neither as instantly responsive as the bloodbriar, nor so insidiously tempting as the karava vinetrap, the linger-long does not seek to instantly trap or otherwise react to prey. Instead, the plant's drive seems born of a different need: it wants only to grow, flower, and take in as much sunlight as it possibly can. Moving through an area of Rakuno counts as both Difficult and Hazardous terrain for movement. A **Challenging (D2) Athletics** test is required to move through Rakuno or suffer 3 +1 damage with the Piercing 1 and Vicious 1 qualities.

TROOPER

DEVIL'S WHIP VIPER

Only a third of a metre long, the devil's whip viper is a bright red in colour, with distinctive eye ridges that give it the first part of its name. The second comes from its rapid strike, and long, sinuous whip-like body.

These small and highly venomous snakes make their home in the jungle canopy, where they feed on small animals, eggs, and other reptiles. They are known to hurl themselves from tree to tree should the need arise. Many jungle explorers have had the nasty surprise of a devil's whip viper landing on them. They have also been known to seek refuge in helmets or boots, so jungle explorers are advised to check their belongings carefully when putting them on. Highly aggressive, these snakes congregate once a year to mate, transforming parts of the jungle into a seething carpet of scarlet.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
10	9	4	5	6	6	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	-	Movement	+2	-	Social	-	-
Fortitude	+2	-	Senses	+1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	7	Vigour	4
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	0

ATTACKS:

- **Venomous Bite:** Melee, 1+3 damage, Biotech, Toxic 3, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Tiny but deadly:** These snakes are fast and agile, and the difficulty of trying to hit them with Melee or Ranged weapons is increased by one step.
- **Entrapment:** In tall grass, jungle floors, or other suitably concealing terrain, these snakes benefit from 1 bonus Momentum on Stealth tests to remain hidden.
- **Serpent:** Devils whip vipers can climb any natural feature without the need for a test.

ELITE

DREADNOUGHT

One of the biggest herbivores on Paradiso, dreadnoughts are massive beasts that spend most of their time roaming the wetlands in herds, where the grazing is plentiful, and the water can support their massive bulk. Vaguely bovine in appearance, dreadnoughts have a thick armoured skin and a long whip-like tail, which they can use to deadly effect if they need to defend themselves.

Dreadnoughts are rarely bothered by Paradiso's many predators despite being placid and not all that intelligent, as the herd protects themselves and their calves by acting as one. They follow migration patterns from wetland to wetland, depending on the season, and tourists often make a point of seeing these huge beasts plodding across Paradiso.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
10	10	14 (2)	6	4	4	4

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+2	1	Movement	+2	-	Social	+1	-
Fortitude	+1	+1	Senses	+2	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	4	Vigour	14
Security	-	Morale	1	Armour	3

ATTACKS:

- **Tail Slam:** Melee, 3+8 damage, Knockdown

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Monstrous, Superhuman Brawn 2, Threatening 1
- **Natural Armour:** The tough hide of the dreadnought provides an Armour Soak of 3.
- **Trample:** If an opponent suffers a Knockdown effect while in melee combat with a dreadnought, a 1 Heat spend means the dreadnought can carry out an Exploit action, causing 3+5 damage with the Spread 2 quality.

A herd of dreadnoughts are making their way through the jungle when the characters encounter them.

Heat Spends:

- **1 Heat** – One of the dreadnought bulls makes a threat display, charging the characters, stopping just short of them.
- **Easily spooked (2 Heat)** Any loud noises or fire will spook the herd, causing them to stampede. This grants the dreadnought a free action to attack a nearby character with its tail slam.

TROOPER

DEATHWATCH
SERPENT

These large elapids are fast-moving, aggressive, and highly venomous. Their neurotoxin clots the blood and paralyzes the nervous system, making them one of the most dangerous animals on Paradiso. Reaching lengths of up to three metres long, the deathwatch serpent has a distinctive hourglass pattern on its back. There are several subspecies with different colours of scales, but the pattern is very distinctive on each. Their large size allows them to deliver a large load of venom to the target, but it is not the only reason to fear the deathwatch serpent. Once they strike, they will strike again repeatedly until the victim is dead or unconscious. They are also dimly intelligent and have been known to exhibit rudimentary cognitive skills.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
10 (2)	9	6	5	8	10	8


FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+1	1	Movement	+2	1	Social	+1	-
Fortitude	+1	-	Senses	+1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	8	Vigour	6
Security	-	Morale	1	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Lethal Bite:** Melee, 1+4  damage, Biotech, Toxic 2, Vicious 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Night Vision, Superhuman Agility 2
- **Strike Two:** If a Deathwatch Serpent successfully attacks a victim it has already bitten its attack gains the Stun and Terrifying 1 qualities.

TROOPER

GĀYATRĪ MOEHAU

Thylarctos melodious is a nocturnal arboreal predator native to Paradiso, and the inheritor of several different cultural legacies. Weighing in around 100 kilograms, and measuring roughly 1.3 metres, the Gāyatrī Moehau owes its name to two of its most distinct features. Firstly, it has a distinct mating call comprised of long, shrill notes with eight distinct rhythmic disruptions, repeated three times. Scientists were reminded of *gāyatrī*, a twenty-four-syllable Vedic poetic metre, and the name stuck.

The other distinction calls to a different manner of heritage. PanOceanian soldiers carried the New Zealand myth of the Moehau—a cryptid the size of a normal man, with an ape-like face, shaggy hair, and extremely long fingers ending in sharp claws that was said to drop on its prey from above. Legend has it that while patrolling the jungle, a PanOceanian soldier was suddenly ambushed by a furry predator from above, much to their company's shock, horror, and indeed, amusement.

True or not, the story has endured. Thus was the Gāyatrī Moehau born.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
13	12	11	7	5	8	7


FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+3	3	Movement	+2	2	Social	+1	-
Fortitude	-	-	Senses	+1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	N/A	Resolve	7	Vigour	11
Security	N/A	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS

- **Claws:** Melee, 2+5  damage, Piercing 1, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Death from Above:** When attacking from an elevated position, the Gāyatrī Moehau gains 2 bonus Momentum on melee attacks.
- **Lurker:** The Gāyatrī Moehau is always waiting. They benefit from one bonus Momentum on Stealth tests to remain hidden.



TROOPER

GOLD LEAF BUTTERFLY

These beautiful insects are migratory, forming huge swarms that create a golden cloud in the sky in flight. After they mature from their thornworm larval form, these tiny creatures have the ability to camouflage themselves, with their folded wings matching the leaves of the Paradiso jungle. When unfurled, their wings are a striking metallic gold colour, making them instantly identifiable.

Gold leaf butterflies are the staple diet of many of Paradiso wildlife. The sheer numbers of these butterflies mean that although they are not dangerous, their migratory behaviour is such that they can block visibility, and even air travel can be obstructed when they swarm in sufficient numbers. And, of course, such swarms also attract predators.

ATTRIBUTES							
AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL	
7	5	1	3	2	2	2	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE								
Combat	-	-	Movement	1	1	Social	-	-
Fortitude	1	-	Senses	2	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES					
Firewall	-	Resolve	2	Vigour	1
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Bite:** 1 

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Mindless
- **Flight:** The creature ignores any penalties for ground-based movement.
- **Swarming Flight:** These creatures, when startled, take wing. There are such numbers that any zone they occupy immediately becomes a zero-visibility zone (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 109).

NEMESIS

HYDRA NEMATODE

Hydra nematodes are often found in Paradiso's lakes and rivers. It shares some traits with the sea anemone, attaching itself to the riverbed. From its central mass, the hydra nematode extrudes feeding tentacles that drift in the current. There the resemblance to a sea anemone ends.

Each one of the tentacles has a fanged set of jaws at the tip. Though blind, the nematode senses movement using sensory pits on its tentacles and lashes its tentacles around prey, biting off chunks of flesh with its mouths.

Larger hydra nematodes are rumoured to exist in the depths of Paradiso's oceans, although there is no proof of this.

ATTRIBUTES							
AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL	
10	9	11	7	4	2	5	

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE								
Combat	+2	1	Movement	-	-	Social	-	-
Fortitude	+1	-	Senses	+2	1	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES					
Firewall	-	Resolve	5	Vigour	11
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	1

ATTACKS:

• Feeding Tendrils: Melee, 1+6  damage, Extended Reach, Immobilising Toxic 1, Vicious 1.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

• Common Special Abilities: Grasping, Inured to Cold, Inured to Pain.



ELITE

JORŌGUMO

A type of *yōkai*, or “bewitching spectre”, from Japanese mythology, Jorōgumo were shape-shifting spider demons that would take the form of an attractive maiden to trick unsuspecting prey. Yu Jing’s Nipponese soldiers carried their homeland’s tales with them in their travels, providing them with a fitting classification for the arthropods of Paradiso collectively known as Jorōgumo.

Referring to a variety of species, Jorōgumo resemble tall, stick-like spiders, standing about five metres tall. This plays into a favoured hunting strategy, where the creatures stand upright and fold in their limbs; swaying gently in the wind, their upright posture combined with their wispy antennae camouflages them as trees. If one catches the light just so, they can also vaguely resemble a human woman, at least in silhouette.

A hunting Jorōgumo endeavours to quickly kill its prey, often depositing clusters of eggs within still-warm corpses, to the horror of any unfortunate witnesses.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
12	14	10	9	7	4	7



FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+2	2	Movement	+2	2	Social	–	–
Fortitude	–	–	Senses	+2	2	Technical	–	–

DEFENCES

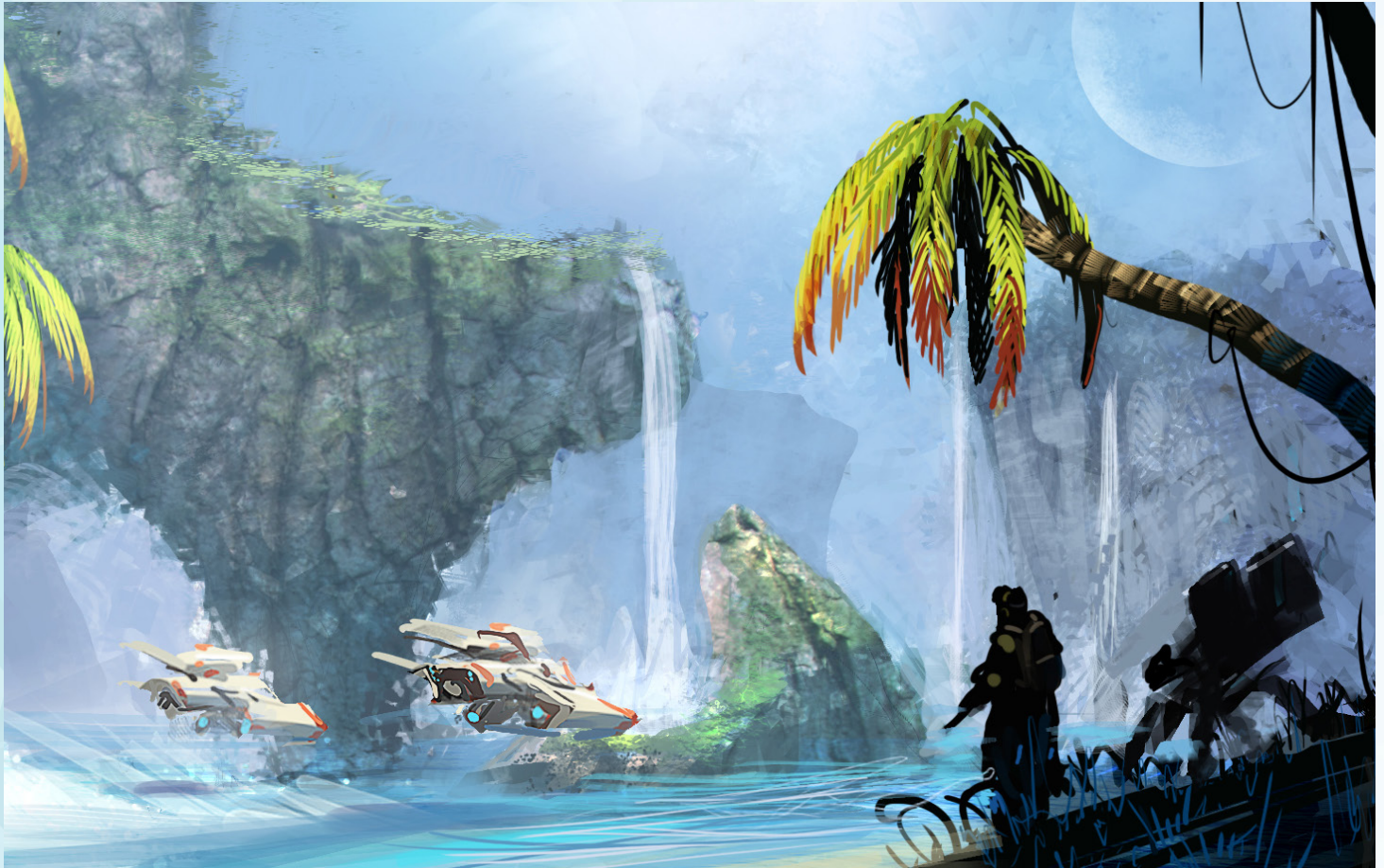
Firewall	N/A	Resolve	7	Vigour	10
Security	N/A	Morale	–	Armour	–

ATTACKS

- **Venomous Bite:** Melee, 1+5  damage, Biotech, Toxic 2, Vicious 2
- **Corrosive Saliva:** Range C, 1+6  damage, Immobilising, Terrifying 1, Torrent, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Inured to Pain
- **Patient Predation:** The Jorōgumo’s uncanny ability to blend into its environment makes it difficult to spot, even if you know what to look for. They benefit from 2 bonus Momentum on Stealth tests to remain hidden.



TROOPER

KARAVA VINETRAP

A “catapult flytrap”, the Karava Vinetrap (named after the Punjabi word for “curve” due to the shape of its vines) is an invasive species that covers wide areas of the Paradiso jungle, and flowers into a beautiful array of iridescent sundew blossoms, which produce a succulent fruit with a flavour reminiscent of peaches and strawberries.

This is, of course, a trap.

Once a potential meal is within its grasp, the Karava's snap tentacles contract, delivering a potent mix of neurotoxins not unlike a scorpion's sting, and pulling its prey toward the centre of the blossom. Once ensnared, the plant secretes an acidic substance that breaks down organic matter into a digestible slurry.

Removing its prey is an incredibly unpleasant process, as hundreds of toxic nettles hook their way under the skin during the ensnarement process. More than one incautious soldier has observed that the process of being freed from the plant is often more painful than becoming ensnared in the first place.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
13	13	15	15	-	-	-

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+1	1	Movement	-	-	Social	-	-
Fortitude	-	-	Senses	+2	2	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	N/A	Resolve	N/A	Vigour	8
Security	N/A	Morale	N/A	Armour	-

ATTACKS

- **Snap Tentacles:** Melee, 1+7 damage, Concealed 2, Toxic 1, Vicious 1
- **Digestion:** Melee (only against a grasped target) Damage 1+3 , Biotech, Toxic 3, Vicious 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Mindless, Threatening 2
- **Traps All the Way Down:** When a grasped character escapes, the Karava Vinetrap can spend 1 Heat to immediately attack with Snap Tentacles.

NOTES

While the Karava Vinetrap has some degree of mobility, it is still a plant, and cannot take movement actions.

ELITE

KING TIGER SEAL

Upon learning of the King Tiger Seal, many remark that Paradiso seems rife with wildlife that strongly resembles creatures back on Earth, only bigger. Certainly, weighing in at 600 kilograms and measuring four metres long, the King Tiger Seal is an intimidating specimen. However, they're still dwarfed by Earth's southern elephant seal, weighing as much as 4,000 kilograms, and nearly six metres long. No, the thing that sets Paradiso's King Tiger Seal apart from their Earthly counterparts is their potent combination of size, strength, and acclimation to a tropical climate.

And their temper. Their horrible, horrible temper.

The King Tiger Seal – *Hydrurga rex* to be exact – is a belligerent predator, using its bulk and strength to take down its prey, defend its territory, and drive off rivals. It is worth noting that explorers, Kragodons, and tanks have all been deemed worthy of its attention at one point or another.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
9	14	15	3	3	9	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+3	3	Movement	+1	-	Social	+1	-
Fortitude	+3	-	Senses	+1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	N/A	Resolve	10	Vigour	15
Security	N/A	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS

- **Slam:** Melee, 1+8 damage, Anti-Materiel 1, Knockdown, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Common Special Abilities:** Monstrous
- **Alpha Predator:** When making a melee attack, the King Tiger Seal can reroll up to 4 .
- **King's Court:** The King Tiger Seal would like you to leave. Now. When making a Psywar attack, they can reroll one d20, but must accept the new result.

ELITE

KRAGODON

A massive predatory lizard, the Kragodon seems to have historically dominated every ecosystem it inhabited. Commonly growing as long as three metres, they use their massive size and strength to hunt and feed at their leisure, spending most of their waking hours sunning themselves on Molokai's beaches, and occasionally defending their territory from King Tiger Seals. However, the recent warfare on Paradiso has caused a migration of said Tiger Seals, causing an intense battle for hunting grounds in game-rich Molokai.

As a result, Kragodons are increasingly likely to view anything sufficiently loud and large as a potential rival, causing them to act with uncharacteristic aggression. And of course, they've never been shy about considering humans an appropriate food source.

ATTRIBUTES						
AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
13	12	14	3	3	7	11

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE								
Combat	+3	1	Movement	+1	1	Social	+3	-
Fortitude	+1	-	Senses	+1	1	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES					
Firewall	N/A	Resolve	11	Vigour	14
Security	N/A	Morale	-	Armour	1

ATTACKS

- **Claws:** Melee, 2+7 (N) damage, Concealed 1, Piercing 1, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Night Vision
- **Alpha Predator:** When making a melee attack, the Kragodon can reroll up to 4 (N).
- **Natural Armour:** The Kragodon's scaly hide provides an Armour Soak of 1.

A hungry kragodon lurks beneath the surface of the water. If the characters are travelling by boat or raft, it slams into it, causing the characters to make a Challenging (D2) Athletics test to stay on board.

Heat Spends

- **Overturn craft (2 Heat)** If the characters are travelling by boat or raft, the Kragodon slams into it, causing the characters to make a Challenging (D2) Athletics test to stay on board

NEMESIS

LIVING WALL ANTS

The jungle floor becomes a seething mass of these voracious and highly aggressive ants if their colony is disturbed or under threat. Similar to the army ants of old Earth, these creatures have a highly painful bite, out of proportion to their tiny size, although they are far larger than their Earth equivalent. In typical Paradiso fashion, these insects also have the ability to squirt formic acid at their enemies, giving them a reputation of being one of Paradiso's most disproportionately dangerous threats. In addition, should the ant colony become unsustainable due to lack of food or space, the colony will send half their number to form a new colony. In these circumstances, the creatures swarm across the forest floor, consuming everything in their path. It is these migrations that provide the biggest danger, as the ants are resistant to many toxins and even fire.

ATTRIBUTES						
AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
5	10	12	10	3	3	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE								
Combat	3	1	Movement	2	-	Social	1	-
Fortitude	2	-	Senses	1	1	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES					
Firewall	-	Resolve	7	Vigour	12
Security	-	Morale	2	Armour	1

ATTACKS:

- **Bite:** Melee 3+5 (N), Piercing 2, Vicious 2
- **Acid Spray:** Range C, 1+6 (N) damage, Spread 2, Torrent, Toxic 2, Vicious 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Fear 1, Inured to Poison, Mindless, Night Vision
- **Attack as One:** The creature is made up of many single entities acting as one. They are immune to mind-influencing effects or intimidation.
- **Swarming Wave:** By spending 2 Heat, the swarm seethes over the target. Unless the target is in sealed armour, any Armour Soak is ignored. The characters emerge into an open area, cleared by voracious living wall ants. If the characters do not take care, the subterranean colony will be disturbed, swarming to the attack.

TROOPER

NASNAS LIZARD

The nasnas lizard would be a minor nuisance if it weren't for the deadly Paradiso Phage (see p. 27) the lizard carries. The size of a small dog, these grey-black lizards have a skin that glistens with slime. They inhabit the darker and damper places of the jungle, often colonising cave systems where they feed on small animals.

Although slow, these lizards are belligerent and territorial, making threat displays against interlopers. The Morat shoot them on sight.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
5	9	8	5	5	1	2


FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	-	Movement	1	-	Social	-	-
Fortitude	2	-	Senses	1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	2	Vigour	8
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	1

ATTACKS:

- **Toxic Bite:** Melee, 1+3  damage, Toxic 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Inured to Disease, Inured to Poison, Keen Senses (Smell), Night Vision.
- **Natural Armour:** The scales of a nasnas lizard provide it with an Armour Soak of 1.
- **Plague Bearer:** A creature bitten by a nasnas lizard will be infected with the Paradiso Phage should they fail a Contagion test.

A nasnas lizard has its lair nearby and will protect its territory against the characters.

Heat Spends

- **Colony (3 Heat)** There is actually a colony of the creatures (1d20 of them), tread carefully!

TROOPER

NEPHROPIDAE

A spider-like crustacean, the nephropidae resembles something of a mutant crayfish with four powerful pincers, and its body is protected by an armoured shell. They reach up to a metre long, although some species can reach two metres long. Nephropidae exist in both freshwater and saltwater varieties, forming colonies in the shallows, systematically consuming anything in their path, even other nephropidae if they are not fast enough. Nephropidae secrete a powerful paralytic neurotoxin through their pincers, the better to immobilise their prey and to allow the nephropidae to consume their prey at their leisure.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
9	7	10	8	5	5	5


FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	1	Movement	1	-	Social	1	-
Fortitude	1	1	Senses	1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	5	Vigour	10
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	3

ATTACKS:

- **Toxic Claws:** Melee, 1+5  damage, Immobilising, Piercing, Toxic 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Inured to Cold, Mindless, Night Vision
- **Natural Armour:** The chitin body of a nephropidae gives it an Armour Soak of 3.



ELITE

NOKURO

Also living under the ocean's surface is a small, aquatic creature somewhat reminiscent of a crayfish or other miniature lobster. The nokuro crustacean is beautiful, and while it is not a threat to humans, it is still considered a threat in its home territories.

Aside from its colourful, shimmering shell, perhaps the most interesting thing about the nokuro is the power with which they strike their prey. These carnivorous, sometimes cannibalistic shellfish have very powerful, rounded front fins. With these, they strike their prey without warning, moving so quickly and hitting so hard that the victim is instantly harmed, shocked into unconsciousness, or with a particularly strong strike, felled in a single blow.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
5	5	10	5	3	3	6

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	1	Movement	-	-	Social	1	-
Fortitude	2	1	Senses	1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	6	Vigour	10
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	3

ATTACKS:

- **Pincer Burst:** Range C, 2+5 (N), Area (Close), Stun, Spread 1, Unforgiving

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Inured to Cold, Mindless
- **Natural Armour:** The chitin shell of a nokuro gives it an Armour Soak of 3.
- **Water Breather:** The creature can breathe freely underwater.

ELITE

NORSTRALIA GREIF

The aptly named Norstralia greif ("griffon" in German) is thankfully rare on Paradiso. This fierce predator was named after the mythical beast that had a lion's body and bird-of-prey's head. However, there is more velociraptor than raptor in these quadrupeds.

Norstralia greif has a lithe body, one designed for speed. Their scales are a sandy brown-yellow, making them especially difficult to see in the jungle. Their heads are vaguely bird-like with long jaws, razor-sharp teeth, and a bony ruff protects their vulnerable neck.

Utterly fearless, the Norstralia greif has been known to attack dreadnoughts and even vehicles if it is hungry enough. More than one vehicle in the Paradiso jungle has the claw and teeth marks of a greif attack on their paintwork.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
8	10	13	10	4	3	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+2	1	Movement	+2	1	Social	+2	1
Fortitude	+2	2	Senses	+3	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	2	Vigour	1
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Vicious teeth and claws:** Melee, 1+5 (N) damage, Piercing 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Inured to Pain, Keen Senses (Hearing, Sight, Smell), Menacing 1, Night Vision
- **Natural Armour:** A greif's scales provides an Armour Soak of 2.

The nokuro's brightly coloured, chitinous armour is highly prized by local crafters and tourist vendors. Its meat tastes rather bland, but they still command a high price at the dinner table. This is usually due to the patron's option of taking the fine shell home with them, a permanent souvenir from a great dinner on Paradiso.



NEMESIS

PHAYA NAGA



These huge serpents were named after the mythical supernatural residents of the Mekong river delta on Earth. A long crest rises from their head, similar to the creatures of legend. Although they are not venomous, their formidable jaws have multiple rows of teeth. Reaching lengths of up to nine metres long, phaya naga are one of the biggest apex predators in the jungle, at home in the trees or the water, able to breathe in both air and water. Escaping the coils of a phaya naga is difficult to say the least, especially when it becomes hard to breathe. Phaya naga are often found close to, or in, many of Paradiso's rivers and coasts where they can rely on there being a steady food source.

ATTRIBUTES						
AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
12 (2)	14 (2)	15	6	7	7	10

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE								
Combat	+2	2	Movement	+1	2	Social	-	-
Fortitude	+2	2	Senses	+2	1	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES					
Firewall	-	Resolve	10	Vigour	15
Security	-	Morale	2	Armour	4

ATTACKS:

- **Death from Above (or Below):** Melee, 3+7  damage, Extended Reach, Unforgiving 3, Subtle 3
- **Constriction:** Melee (only against a grabbed target), 3+8  damage, Immobilising, Stun, Vicious 3
- **Terrible Bite:** Melee, 3+8[D] damage, Piercing 2, Spread 1, Vicious 4

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Fear 2, Grasping, Menacing 2, Night Vision, Superhuman Brawn 2, Superhuman Awareness 2
- **Ambush Predator:** When attacking from the Hidden state, a phaya naga adds 2d20 to melee attacks.
- **Ensnaring Coils:** Attempts to escape a phaya naga's grasp are at +1 difficulty.
- **Natural Armour:** The scales of a phaya naga provide it with an Armour Soak of 4.

A huge phaya naga lies hidden in the trees or under the water, and attacks the characters, gaining Surprise (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 105-106).

TROOPER

QLUGFISH

One species of fish is very well known for its rapid evolution from one generation to the next. The qlugfish is also especially skilled at the arts of camouflage and ambush. Much like the anglerfish of Earth, these creatures share a similar muscular and bone framework. However, the qlugfish's skin seems especially quick to adapt according to their generational, environmental habitats.

ATTRIBUTES						
AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
5	8	8	8	3	2	7

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE								
Combat	+1	1	Movement	-	-	Social	-	-
Fortitude	+2	1	Senses	1	1	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES					
Firewall	-	Resolve	7	Vigour	8
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	1

ATTACKS:

- **Prehensile Bite:** Range C, 2+5  Immobilising, Unforgiving 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Night Vision
- **Ambush Predator:** The ability of the qlugfish to blend into its environments grants it two bonus Momentum on all Stealth tests to remain hidden. Once it attacks, the qlugfish loses this.
- **Natural Armour:** The heavy scales of the qlugfish give it an Armour Soak of 1.
- **Water Breather:** The creature can breathe underwater freely.



TROOPER

QUTRUB

An evolutionary offshoot of the Gāyatrī Moehau (see *Infinity Corebook*, p. 481), these creatures appear as pale, emaciated, and hairless versions of their counterparts. From a distance, they could easily be mistaken for a naked human figure. The Qutrub originated from the Paradiso cave systems, although the war has caused some of them to come to the surface in search of food. Qutrubs are drawn to the smell of decomposition as carrion eaters but will not pass up the chance of fresh meat. As their eyes and flesh are photosensitive, they favour the dark of night, and packs of them are often drawn to battlefields, giving rise to sightings of so-called ghouls and morlocks.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
10	9	8	6	5	5	5

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+2	1	Movement	+1	1	Social	+1	-
Fortitude	+2	1	Senses	+1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	5	Vigour	8
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Claws:** Melee, 1+4  damage, Piercing 1, Vicious 1

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Inured to Disease, Inured to Poison, Night Vision, Keen Senses (Hearing, Smell)
- **Bright Light, Bright Light!** A Qutrub exposed to a strong light source immediately suffers the Blinded condition.
- **Filthy Beasts:** Due to their diet of corpses and rotting meat, Qutrubs carry all manner of harmful bacteria. Any character suffering a wound from a Qutrub suffers Infected Wounds (see p. 27) unless treated.

Attracted by the smell of a recent kill, a qutrub is now haunting the area. The original predator may also still be in the area.

Heat Spends

- **1 Heat** – The qutrub's prey is still in the area. Roll again for a dangerous animal.

TROOPER

SCORPIONETTE

Measuring roughly thirty centimetres from pincer to stinger, the double-tailed *Heterometrus terribilis* has caused more casualties than any forces on Paradiso care to admit. A solitary hunter, the Scorpionette lies in wait beneath the layers of vegetation that blanket Paradiso, its dorsal stinger poised and ready to strike.

Other than a high concentration of carrion-eaters, there are few signs of its presence.

It preys primarily on large mammals who fail to notice its presence, treading directly on its exposed dorsal stinger; which delivers a potent paralytic venom that can kill an adult human in less than twenty-four hours. If that doesn't suffice, its tail stinger packs a vicious neurotoxin it uses to hunt larger mammals. One sting can stop a human heart in less than twenty minutes.

So naturally, there's a robust community of Scorpionette breeders in the Paradiso animal trade, and an illegal underground Scorpionette fighting ring.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
12	11	6	5	8	7	10



FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+2	2	Movement	+1	1	Social	-	-
Fortitude	-	-	Senses	+2	1	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	N/A	Resolve	5	Vigour	3
Security	N/A	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS

- **Dorsal Stinger:** Melee, 1+2  damage, Biotech, Immobilising
- **Tail Stinger:** Melee, 1+3  damage, Biotech, Toxic 3, Vicious 3

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Entrapment:** In tall grass, jungle floors, or other suitably concealing terrain, Scorpionettes benefit from 1 bonus Momentum on Stealth tests to remain hidden.
- **Paralytic Poison:** The Scorpionette's dorsal stinger can deliver a dose of paralytic poison equivalent to tetrodotoxin.



ELITE

SHUKON SPIDERWORM

A repulsive parasite similar to a tapeworm, the shukon spiderworm reaches lengths of up to five metres. In its adult form, its pale white body resembles a spider with a segmented tail stretching out behind it. Like the tapeworm, the parasite hatches from an egg within a prospective host where it fixes itself to the intestinal wall. The host quickly loses weight as the spiderworm feeds off them, depriving them of nutrition. Aside from surgery, the only way to remove a spiderworm from the host is to starve both the host and the parasite. It is not a pretty sight when the spiderworm slithers from the mouth of its former host, covered in blood and mucus. Of course, the spiderworm will be looking for a new host if the host dies or is starved. More than a few Paradiso hunters have reported spiderworms leaving the bodies of their recent kill, seeking a new host. Adult spiderworms leave eggs in the body of any host (live or dead), so even if the spiderworm is killed, there is a possibility that the next generation of spiderworm will live on. Even if the original spiderworm is killed, the eggs can be consumed by predators feeding on the host's flesh or even recur in the original host.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
12 (+1)	8	5	10	5	2	6

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	1	-	Movement	2	1	Social	-	-
Fortitude	1	-	Senses	-	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	6	Vigour	3
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Anesthetic Bite:** 1+4 damage, Immobilising, Nonlethal, Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Fear 1, Keen Senses (Smell), Mindless, Superhuman Agility 1
- **Ambush Predator:** Adult spiderworms are cunning enough to remain hidden to avoid harm. They gain two bonus Momentum on all Stealth tests to remain hidden.
- **Parasite Seeks Host:** If a Spiderworm successfully immobilises a target, it may use an Exploit action to attempt to force itself down the target's throat on a successful Dire (D3) Agility test.
- **Parasitic Infection:** Carriers of a shukon spiderworm suffer the effects of shukon spiderworm sickness (see p. 26).

TROOPERS

STYMPHALIAN CLIFF SHRIKE

Named after the birds from the legendary task of Hercules, a stymphalian cliff shrike is a large predatory avian with a fourteen-foot wingspan. Their beaks and talons are sharp enough to match teseum blades in quality.

Like the shrikes of Earth, stymphalian shrikes impale their prey on any available sharp point like thorns or fallen trees to make it easier to tear off chunks of flesh and to act as a food cache for later. They are quite willing to carry off human prey if they can. Shrikes often surround their nest with sharp shards of crystals or crude sharpened stakes they whittle down with their beaks and talons.

Stymphalian shrikes are territorial, and mated pairs take turns in looking after their young. Their nests can sometimes hide items from previous victims.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
9	10	12	10	3	3	3

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+2	2	Movement	+1	1	Social	+1	-
Fortitude	+1	1	Senses	+1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	5	Vigour	8
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Razor-sharp beak and claws:** Melee, 1+4 damage, Piercing 2, Vicious 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Keen Sense (Sight)
- **Flight:** Stymphalian Shrikes ignore any penalties for ground-based movement.
- **On the hook (Grasped victims only):** For 4 Heat, a Stymphalian Shrike can attempt an standard action to impale a grasped victim on a spike, inflicting 2+5 damage with the Piercing 3 and Grievous 3 qualities.

TROOPERS

TAN'GEN SPIDER

The Tan'Gen spider is large arachnid with an undeserved reputation (aside from those with Arachnophobia). Like many of Paradiso's resident wildlife it is venomous, but not toxic to human. Most complications from its bite arise from respiratory failure or heart palpitations.

The size of a small dog, the spider is nondescript brown colour, easily blending in with the jungle surroundings, even when traversing the extensive webbing it creates. The tensile strength of Tan'Gen spider webs have led to it being studied extensively by Xenobiologists, although the spiders do not survive long in captivity.

The real danger comes from its preferred food – it thrives on many of Paradiso's smaller dangers, especially Devil's Whip Vipers and Scorpionettes. Unfortunately, these creatures are often caught in the webs for some time before the sluggish Tan'Gen arrives to consume its prey alive. Tan'Gen Spiders are known to cooperate, and some areas of the jungle are a hazy silk canopy of their webs. Usually located near colonies of their prey, the presence of the spiders is an indicator to tread carefully ahead.

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
8	8	6	8	4	4	4

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	2	-	Movement	1	-	Social	-	-
Fortitude	1	1	Senses	1	-	Technical	-	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	-	Resolve	4	Vigour	6
Security	-	Morale	-	Armour	-

ATTACKS:

- **Bite:** 1+2 (N), Stun

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Common Special Abilities:** Grasping, Inured to Poison, Keen Sense (Sight), Night Vision
- **Inoffensive but dangerous:** Against creatures of the same size or smaller, the tan'gen spider's Bite attack also acquires the Toxic 2, Unforgiving, and Vicious 2 qualities.
- **Lethal Larder:** The Tan'Gen spider prefer their prey alive. Although not dangerous to humans the creatures already caught in the Tan'Gen Spider's web are. 1 Heat adds a Scorpionette, Shukon Spiderworm, or Devil's Whip Viper to the webs.
- **Web Builder:** Tan'gen spider webs count as Hazardous terrain. A failed Challenging (D2) Athletics test means the victim suffers 1+4 (N) damage with the Nonlethal and Immobilise qualities.
- **Web Walker:** Tan'gen spiders can manoeuvre freely around their own webs and do not have to make an Athletics test.



CHAPTER 13

NPC ADVERSARIES



CONNOR KELLY

NEMESIS

CONNOR O'CAELLAIGH

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
12	11	11	12	9	7	8


FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+2	2	Movement	+1	1	Social	+1	1
Fortitude	+2	2	Senses	+2	2	Technical	+2	2

DEFENCES

Firewall	11	Resolve	10	Vigour	13
Security	—	Morale	1	Armour	1

ATTACKS

- **Heavy Pistol:** Range R/C, 2+6 , Burst 1, Unbalanced, Unforgiving 1, Vicious 1

GEAR: Heavy Pistol (3 reloads), Flash-Pulse, 3 Flash Bang, Armoured Clothing

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Scoundrel's Luck:** A true soldier of fortune, Connor relies on his wits and Ariadnan luck. He gains 1 Heat each round, though this can only be used to his own benefit.
- **Curiosity Killed the Caledonian:** Ariadnans can be curious about tech, and Connor is like a cat in that regard. When dealing interacting with technologies that are new to him, Connor gains 2 Momentum on Technical Field of Expertise tests to interact with them.
- **Dawn and Back Again:** Connor has a real wanderlust that has been quelled. He can re-roll 1d20 when making **Extraplanetary tests** involving knowledge of faraway places and out of system locations.

CONNOR O'CAELLAIGH (AUTHORISED BOUNTY HUNTER)

"No way it's from Lo Pan's!"

"The real deal, man! I can deliver!"

Connor O'Caellaigh looked excitedly at the non-descript, slightly battered canister that Shaka Lopez brought. Scoring a Lo Pan's Extra Spicy Chow Mein required some serious talent.

"Yes, you certainly did, buddy! Now scam, and let a man eat his honestly earned Martian delicacies!"

The Nomad let out a throaty and fake laugh and slapped the bounty hunter on the shoulder.

"You are always a funny man, Caledonian! That's what I like about you!"

Connor sighed. Shaka was going to keep him from his culinary indulgence.

"What do you want, Shaka?"

"Me? Nothing! I am your friend. I bring you your noodles, right?" Shaka paused as Connor crossed his arms, holding eye contact. "But there is a little favour you could do for my employees, you see. There is this person —"

"I've told you I don't do that kind of job!"

Connor interjected.

"Relax Caledonian! It is nothing like that! My employees actually want this, um person alive, um, or something sort of near that. You know we are not picky"

The Nomad laughed, this time rich, deep, and guttural.

"What did this poor devil do?"

"Not what he did, but what he ate."

Connor looked at his noodles.

"Come on, man! You know I was going on vacation after the Sambor Duk job!"

"This is the best part of this job! You can mix pleasure with business, the, um, target is in a beautiful place, full of sandy beaches, crystal clear oceans, blue skies —"

"Don't tell me its —"

"Paradiso man! You are getting your beaches, your sand, and a truckload of Skender to spend on those noodles you like so much!"

Connor groaned, tore the seal of his noodles, and stuffed his mouth full of them.

"You bet you are going to pay for this, Nomad!"

APPEARANCE

A rugged man in worn military clothe, he is clearly armed and has the swagger of someone who is comfortable wearing and using weapons as a livelihood. His face has a permanent smug look as if he just won at the Resurrection Lotteries.

ROLEPLAYING

- Connor loves exotic food, but particularly a good Yu Jingese dish.
- He overestimates his own capabilities, always taking new contracts even if he is outnumbered and outclassed.
- Despite his bravado, Connor has a way with people and somehow always finds a way to make new allies or at least contacts.

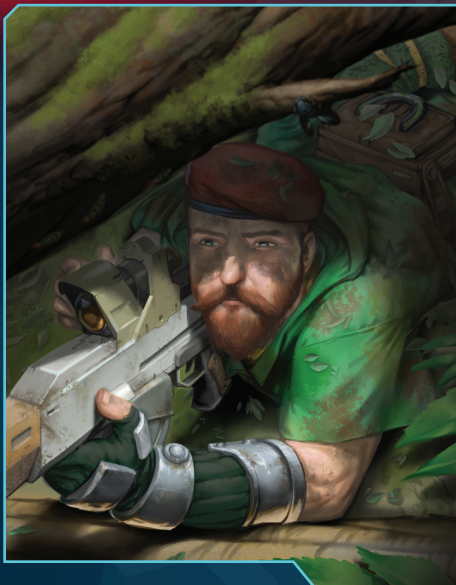
BACKGROUND

Connor O'Caellaigh has always been fascinated by the exotic wonders of the off-worlders that visited his clan's Teseum mines in Caledonia. Their colours, smells, and intriguing accents spoke to Connor about a different life that the one he had been destined.

When the Combined Army invaded Paradiso and Ariadna backed the O-12 with the creation of the Ariadnan Expeditionary Corp, he saw an opportunity to make his dreams come true and signed the first chance he had, to the great disappointment of his clan's elder.

He was stationed in Camp Antela during the Flamestrike Operation. Afterwards, he chose early retirement not out of cowardice but of Caledonian pragmatism; he had wanted to travel the Human Sphere and staying in Paradiso, he knew, would mean staying in the Meat Grinder for the rest of his life. He booked passage out of the system and travelled the Sphere, finding that there was always work for an up and coming Caledonian with a strong work ethic and solid military background.

Eventually, he found himself in Marsport where he obtained a Bounty Hunter's license. This finally gave him the opportunity to experience all kind of adventures while enjoying the glamour and luxuries he would have never known about back in Caledonia.



PETER BALOGH

NEMESIS

PAEDAR MCBALOUGH

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
11	12	12	12	8	7	8

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+3	3	Movement	+2	2	Social	+1	-
Fortitude	+2	2	Senses	+2	2	Technical	+1	-

DEFENCES

Firewall	9	Resolve	10	Vigour	14
Security	2	Morale	1	Armour	3

ATTACKS

- **Sgian Dubh:** Melee, 1+6 (N), 1H, Concealed 2, Non-Hackable, Subtle 2, Unforgiving 1
- **Assault Pistol:** R/C, 1+7 (N), Burst 3, Unbalanced, Vicious 1
- **Sniper Rifle:** L, 1+9 (N), Burst 3, Unwieldy, Unforgiving 2
- **Mine:** Explosive, 2+5 (N), 1H, Disposable, Indiscriminate (Close), Speculative Fire, Thrown, Unsubtle

GEAR: 2 Stims, Medium Combat Armour, 2 Mines, Small Trophies

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Raised Amongst Wolves:** Paedar had a rough childhood, which shows in his manners and brawling skills. All tests from the Social Field of Expertise increase the Complication Range by 1. Additionally, he gains 1 Momentum on all melee attacks.
- **A Bloodhound's Nose:** Raised by the clan's scouts and hunters, Paedar has a knack for tracking and stalking his prey. He gains 2 Momentum on all Stealth and Survival tests related to hunting and tracking.
- **Hunter's Trophies:** Viscous and mean, particularly when stalking intelligent creatures, Paedar is not above collecting trophies and looting equipment. He gains 2 Momentum on Lifestyle tests when dealing with the Submondo.

PAEDAR MCBALOUGH (MERCENARY SNIPER)

"Come on... Show us your pretty face..."

The Morat encampment was full of activity. The engineers had recently convened at the colonel's tent, and that usually meant the whole unit was going to move forward. By the looks of it, this charge was imminent, and Paedar McBalough was the only thing stopping the aliens from overrunning the Haqqislamite farming facilities.

Paedar spat and cleared the sweat from his brow. They should've evacuated all of the western farms months ago, not wait until they could see if the Morats were actually red or burgundy. Still, the money was good, and he had had worse jobs.

As if on cue, the gathering Morat soldiers were pushed aside and a huge figure stomped into the colonel's tent. The Raktarak had arrived, and it was only a matter of moments now. Good thing, because McBalough's leg was already numbed from insect bites, and he was positive he had a fever. If he didn't relocate soon, things would get nasty, particularly if the Zerat were on the prowl.

Suddenly, the tent flaps flew open, and the Raktarak tramped out shouting something. Behind him, three warriors marched out, joining in the battle chant. Then, they were followed by a Morat warrior in the outfit of a regular soldier, but he appeared strong as a Caledonian bear and was bedecked in medals and insignias.

"Well... hello there!"

McBalough squeezed the trigger of his rifle, waited a moment, and slowly crawled from under the rotten tree where he was hiding a kilometre away from the Morat encampment. He didn't wait to confirm his kill. The Morat reaction would tip him off almost as immediately, and experience had taught him it was better to leave the aliens to sort these kind of things by themselves. Emotional monsters they were, he thought. Perhaps it was the heat of this hellhole ...

APPEARANCE

A muscular man in filthy clothes, Paedar has cold grey eyes and a hardened appearance. He wears a red beret, soiled by both dirt and time, and his ragged uniform resembles those of Ariadnan units, but the uniform itself is not standard issue. Paedar frequently chews a piece of dried meat and perpetually sweats profusely while showing no discomfort.

ROLEPLAYING

- Paedar tends to mumble and hum to himself when he is concentrating.
- An oral fidgeter, McBalough is always chewing something — gum, tobacco, bark, jerky — when he is anxious.
- Paedar constantly dries himself with a damp and dirty bandana because of his continual sweating

BACKGROUND

Born into a poor Caledonian family in Dal Riada, Paedar has only known violence throughout his life — either at the hands of his abusive parents, the claws of raiding antipodes, or at the punishments of his own clansmen on account of his family's debts.

One of the few moments of real peace that Paedar had during his childhood was when he went hunting with his older cousin, another outcast. His cousin, however, was a Wolverine who earned his living taking care of the herds and watching for antipode incursions.

That is how Paedar learned to track and shoot. Regrettably, his dreams of becoming a ranger like his cousin didn't last long; they were crushed soon after his parents died in a drunken accident. The clan elders decided the young man wasn't worth the investment and shipped him to their irregular's regiment, the better to get rid of him.

An already hardened boy turned into a brutal and merciless man. Shipped to Paradiso as part of the Ariadnan Expeditionary Corp, Paedar became distinguished as an efficient infiltrator and sniper but an undisciplined soldier. After his third incarceration for smuggling, he was dishonourably discharged.

This, however, was the day Paedar insists his life actually began. He quickly joined one of several mercenary companies stationed in Paradiso and has been his own man since, killing for profit and on his own terms.



KYLE RADKTE

NEMESIS

VICTOR RADKTE

ATTRIBUTES

AGI	AWA	BRW	COO	INT	PER	WIL
11	10	8	11	12	7	11

FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

Combat	+2	1	Movement	+1	1	Social	+1	-
Fortitude	+2	1	Senses	+2	2	Technical	+4	3

DEFENCES

Firewall	16	Resolve	13	Vigour	10
Security	-	Morale	1	Armour	1

ATTACKS

- Assault Pistol: R/C, 1+7 Burst 3, Unbalanced, Vicious 1

GEAR: Armoured Clothing (Star Co. Uniform), Inlaid Palm Circuitry, Powered Multitool, Engineering Waldo, Gecko TAG

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Nomad Hospitality:** Travelling throughout the Human Sphere with Star Company, Victor is always looking for allies, old friends, and new acquaintances. Tests from the Social Field of Expertise involving other Nomad characters are made at -1D to a minimum of Simple (D0). Additionally, he gains 1 Momentum on such tests.
- Faster, Harder, Better:** Far from a traditional clockmaker, Victor is certainly up to the task. He gains 2 momentum on all Technical tests involving Remotes, TAGs, and Heavy Armour.
- Bashful:** Victor is shy and awkward when in the company of the opposite sex. Tests from the Social Field of Expertise have their Complication Range increased by 2 when Victor is directly interacting with women.

VICTOR RADKTE (TAG PILOT AND MECHANIC)

"Hostiles located, proceeding to engage."

The calm voice of the Gecko TAG pilot evenly matched its fluid movements on the asteroid's surface, dodging floating debris and obstacles strewn around the mine's unloading area. The antagonistic remote, several dozen metres away, had emerged from a small warehouse and was firing full-auto at the red and white StarCo TAG.

Victor Radkte grunted and pulled hard on the Gecko's controls which made the huge robotic armour perform a zero-g jump to land behind some mineral containers, avoiding the brutal firestorm directed at him.

"Radkte! You alive?!"

"Yes! Close call. But yes, I'm still here. Who in his right mind set these things to full-auto?!"

"Good! You still have to repair my air filter. We are trying to confirm who's paying these scumbags. But you heard the lieutenant!"

"Ask questions after you get your paycheque." Radkte turned the TAG cautiously around his cover, positive that the remote would be out of ammunition by now, but taking care just in case it had backup.

As predicted, the remote was standing on the other side of the loading area, its heavy machine gun empty. It turned rapidly away from the TAG, probably to escape its destruction. Radkte quickly took aim and fired an electromagnetic round. The projectile hit the remote, and after a small explosion that severely dented the surface, it stood motionless. All its operational lights shut down.

"Well, tell the lieutenant I'm bringing back some extra toys with me!"

APPEARANCE

Victor could be twenty, could be fifty, but it's hard to tell under the dirt and grease from intense working under the gun carriage of a TAG. He is always satisfied and confident with his work, but is awkward with social interactions, especially those with women. Nonetheless, Victor has the poise and prestige associated with being the chief engineer and head TAG tester in any company he works with.

ROLEPLAYING

- Victor is always willing to help a fellow Nomad with his tech issues.
- Despite engineering skills on par with clockmakers, Victor is modest; he can easily field repair a TAG saying, "It was nothing."
- Victor is extremely shy around women, preferring to immerse himself in his work than try to make painful small talk.

BACKGROUND

Victor Radkte is almost a textbook Nomad from Corregidor. Almost. Born in one of the Mothership's habitational modules, he grew up in the green jumpsuits of the Corregidorean civilians until he managed to earn a promotion and transfer to the Nomad's Commercial Mission in Svalarheima where he learned all he could about TAGs, their upkeep, and their maintenance.

On par with Bakunin's clockmakers, Radkte is also quite fearless, except when women are present. For some strange reason, he is quite intimidated by the fair sex which makes him the target of numerous jokes and hazing by his co-workers both male and female.

Still, he takes it in good spirit like the Nomad he is. After earning his leave on the Commercial Mission, he enrolled with the Free Company of the Star, who was in dire need for expert engineers and combat pilots. Seeing an opportunity to put his skills to the test, Victor signed on and has worked for StarCo's mobile units ever since, personally trying out all new improvements, weapons, and equipment upgrades on a specially modified Gecko TAG he brought from Corregidor.

PARADISO INDEX

- Abyss Blockade 52
 Access Blockade 50-51
 Acheron Blockade 2, 29, 35, 37-38, 50-52, 53-55, 69
 Acheron Gate 35
 Acheron IncurSION 29
 Achilles 33
 Aerial & Satellite Surveillance 58
 Air-to-Air Missile (AAM) 69, 73
 ALEPH Node 65, 78, 81, 83
 ALEPH 16-18, 30, 32-34, 36, 40, 47, 53, 56, 65, 75-76, 78-83
 Al-Hadiye 10, 41-42
 Alien Tech (GM Tip) 80
 Alien Weather 58
 Ammunition & Supplies 49
 Aneris 78-81, 83-84
 Anthropoc Error 64
 Anti-Personnel Mine (Trap) 60
 Apple Asharii Base 37
 Aquacycle 70, 74
 Aquatic Movement 64
 Arachne 15-16, 36, 42
 Aranda Astrological Facilities 15
 Ariadnan Expeditionary Corps (AEC) 8, 41, 45
 Aritya, 13, 45, 48
 Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) 70, 72, 74
 Asharii, Shasvastii 34-35, 37-38
 Asuras 36
 Asyūt 14-15, 46-47, 49
 Ateks 40, 48
 Aurora, The 2, 4, 28
 Avatar (EI) 33
 Backgammon Garrison 35
 Báijīng (White Crystal) Orbital Consulate 56
 Bandar-Log 87-88
 Barrier Sea 32
 Beatrice 34, 37
 Behdeti 39-40
 Biguan 43
 Black Box 31-32
 Black-C Combat Group 32
 Blasting Free Momentum Spend 59
 Bloodbriar 19, 87-89
 Blue S Combat Group 36
 Bourak 10, 14, 46, 52, 55
 Buggy 71, 74
 Building Traps 62
 Bunker Buster Missile 69, 73
 Bureau Aegis 15-16, 28-29, 31
 Bureau Noir 15-16, 43
 Butcher Bee 22, 87-88
 Butterfly, Gold Leaf 2, 7, 87, 92
 Caltrops 66, 73
 Camo-cloak 66, 74
 Cauchemar Cat 21-22, 83-84, 87, 89
 Cave-in Heat Spend 59
 Celestial Guard 36, 81-83
 Chain Machete 67, 73
 Chain-Colt 67, 73
 Changeling Net 67, 74
 Charontid 65, 82-83
 Cliff Shrike, Stymphalian 6, 87, 100
 Combat in the Jungle 57-64
 Combined Army Air Superiority Aircraft (CAASA) 3, 71, 74
 Combined Army 2-5, 7-14, 16-17, 19, 24-25, 28-58, 60-61, 64-66, 69, 71, 74-86, 102
 Concealment & Visibility 58
 Concilium, Peace of 9, 16, 28-29, 36-37, 48
 Contact Treaties, Tohaa 32, 46, 55
 Corocoro Bush 20, 87
 Cosmolite 3 33
 Cosmolite Chasers 33
 Cosmolite, Last 17, 32-33
 Cosmolites 2, 9, 16-17, 28-34
 Cover 58
 Crimson Curse 26
 Crimson Snapper 87, 89
 Cryptozoology 18-19, 22, 88
 Daedalus Blockade 50, 55
 Daheng 13-15, 46-48
 Damburg 11, 40
 Dante 34, 35
 Dark Spots 34-35, 37
 Dart 41
 Dawn 52, 55, 102
 Daybreak Blockade 55
 Dead Shift 52
 Dead-Fall (Trap) 60-61
 Death from Above Momentum Spend 59
 Deathwatch Serpent 87, 91
 Deeper than it Looks Heat Spend 59
 Defoe Mission 37
 Defoliant Grenade 67, 73
 Detecting & Searching for Traps 61-62
 Devas 36
 Devil's Whip Viper 87-88, 90
 Digester See T'Zechi Digester
 Digicloak 67, 74
 Disarming, Resetting & Repairing Traps 62
 Diseases 25-27
 Dobryzn, Order of 41
 Don Peyote 56
 Double, Candy 11
 Dreadnought 21, 90, 97
 Drop Bear (Trap) 61
 Dropship, Azure Dragon 70, 74, 79
 Druze Bayram Security 45
 Dungeon Bashing 63
 E/M Pulse Emitters 3, 29, 54, 58, 67, 73
 E/Marat 67, 73
 EI (Evolved Intelligence) 2-3, 5-8, 12, 28-29, 31-33, 35, 41, 43-46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 64-65, 74-76, 78, 80, 82-83, 85
 EI Tactical Assessments 65
 Electrojolt Fence 68, 74
 Elevator, Space 2, 10, 12, 41-43, 45, 47-48, 50
 Environmental Heat Spends 59-60
 Ereeva 52, 55
 Evacuation Protocols 49
 Evading & Targeting Missiles 69
 EveningStar 32, 58
 Exo Affairs Department Orbase 56
 Explosives Table 73
 Exrah 29, 40
 Falling Tree Heat Spend 59
 Fatigue 49
 First Landing 29, 42
 First Offensive 9-11, 13, 20-22, 26, 28-29, 40, 43-45, 77-81 (Adventure)
 Flamethrower, TAG 68, 73
 Flamia Island 15
 Food & Water 49
 Fortress-Monastery of St. Mary 41
 Fuel (Missiles) 69
 Fukaitani 13, 16
 Fuyan 11, 40, 77-82
 GA6037283 wormhole 28, 37
 Gāyatrī Moehau 5, 19, 87, 91, 98
 Gāyatrī 5, 12-13, 15, 19, 45, 87, 91, 98
 GeniTree Corporation 21
 Gernot Multi-Way 40
 Ghezirah 12, 43, 45-46
 Green Banner Army 32
 Green-A Combat Group 32
 Grey Lotus Spaceport 35
 Gunung Base 36
 Gwailos (Shasvastii) 41
 Haqqislam 5, 7, 10-12, 14-16, 29-30, 33, 37 41-42, 46, 51, 54-56, 78, 82, 103
 Hassassin 12, 29-30, 45-46
 Haunt Trap (Trap) 61
 Heaven's Touch 20-21
 Hedgehog (Trap) 61
 Hellfire Missile 69, 73
 Hexahedron 15-16, 28, 31, 78
 Hibat Allah 12, 45-47
 High Pressure Nervous Syndrome (HPNS) See Pressure-induced psychosis
 Holstenwall 40
 Horselberg 40
 Hot Rod 71, 74
 Huà Miàn Systems 41
 Huang Bào (Yellow Fortress) 36
 Huangshan Mountains 47
 Human Edge 52
 Human Sphere, The 2-4, 7-9, 11, 13, 15-17, 20-21, 24-25, 32-34, 36-37, 39, 41-44, 46-47, 50, 52-57, 60, 65, 67, 71, 75-76, 80-82, 102, 104
 Hungries 35, 45
 Hydra Nematode 84, 87, 92
 Ilik (Icicle) Alfundaq 56
 Impressive (Vehicle Quality) 70
 Indra-X Mobases 55-56
 Infected Wounds 27, 98, 100
 Inter-faction Lunacy 8
 Intermediate Blockade 50-52
 Invernaculum 16
 Invisible Prisons 36
 Iron Ring See Orbital Blockade
 Jammer 68, 74
 Jinggu 47
 Joan of Arc 41
 Jorōgumo 87, 93
 JSA (Japanese Sectorial Army) 13, 16-17, 41-42, 44-45
 Jungle Jared 22, 26-27
 Jungle Zone Generator 62-63
 Kaphiri 43-44
 Karava Vinetrap 19-20, 87, 89, 94
 Karnapur 13, 45-47
 Kawaso Dam 13, 16
 King Tiger Seal 15, 87, 94
 Ko Dali 30
 Kohaku Peninsula 13
 Kokkyō-3 11-12, 15-16
 Konstantinos, Indigo Brother 41
 Kragodon 87, 94-95
 Kuang Shi 36
 Kurage Crisis 55
 La Forja Orbital Shipyard 56
 Lalati Sickness 25
 Layers of the Jungle & Zones 57
 Lemon Asharii Base 37
 Lemurian Ocean 16
 Living Wall Ants 7, 87-88, 95
 Long Qi 29
 Lorenzo/Yadrujin 37
 Maerki Plant 21
 Maglev 31, 42, 47-48
 Makeshift Tunnels, Traps & Mines 60-62
 Manoeuvring in the Jungle 57
 Marker Light 68, 74
 Marksman Rifle 68, 73
 Maya 11, 16-20, 22, 27, 29, 33, 44-45, 48, 75
 McBaloun, Paedar 103
 Melee Weapons Table 73
 Micro-Drone, Jamming 28, 57-58, 68, 74
 Milton 34, 36-37, 38
 Mint Asharii Base 37
 Missile Tube 68, 70-71, 73
 Missile Types 69, 73
 Missile Types 69, 73
 Missile, 16, 41, 66, 68-71, 73, 83
 Missiles Table 73

PARADISO INDEX

- Missiles 69
- Mithran River 13
- Mobile Vendors 42
- Mobile Weapons Platform 71,74
- Molokai 15, 95
- Monofilament Line (Trap) 61
- Moreau Files 16
- Mountain Eyrie Temple 42
- Moving between Jungle Layers 57-58
- Myrmidon Wars 11
- Myrmidons 33
- Nakula 4, 34, 37
- Narooma Advanced Hospital Complex 15
- Nasnas Lizard 27, 87, 96
- NeoColonial Wars 4, 9, 11, 14, 17, 28, 37, 43, 46-47
- Neoterra 47, 52
- Nephropidae 23-24, 87, 96
- NiemandsZone 9, 28
- Nirvana Station 36
- Nirvana 34-36, 50
- Nirvana's Node (ALEPH) 36
- Nokuro 23-24, 25, 87, 96-97
- Nomad Commercial Mission 40, 42, 47, 104
- Nomads 7, 10, 30, 32-33, 37-38, 40, 42, 44-45, 47, 51, 53-54, 56, 78, 82, 102, 104
- Norstralia Greif 87, 97
- Norstralia 5-7, 9-12, 28, 31-32, 39-43, 87, 97
- Norstralia, Central 41-42
- Norstralia, Eastern 39-41
- Norstralia, Western 43
- Novastar 6-7
- O'Caellaigh, Connor 102
- O-12 9, 15-17, 28, 31-34, 51-52, 56, 58, 64, 69, 75-86, 102
- Öberhaus 44
- Occupied Paradiso 39
- Olhada do Bom Jesus 29
- Onyx Contact Force 9, 45
- Onza island 15
- Oort Asteroid Belt 37-38
- Operation Flamestrike 16, 102
- Operations Subsection (ALEPH) 40
- Orbital Blockade 43, 50
- Orgoglio Asteroid Belt 34, 37-38
- Oznat, Morat 35, 41, 45. See also Hungries.
- PanOceania 4-5, 7-8, 10-13, 14-17, 28-32, 34-37, 40, 43-48, 53-56, 71, 78-79, 81-82, 91
- Paradiso Coordinated Command (PCC) . . 5, 8, 16, 23, 25, 32-33, 35, 37-40, 43-45, 49, 58, 65
- Paradiso Myths & Legends 18, 22, 84, 89
- Paradiso Phage 27, 96
- Paradiso Sam 22, 26-27
- Paradiso Sweats 25
- Pārvatī Defensive Platform 36, 72, 74
- Penny Arcade 16, 33
- Phaya Naga 87, 98
- Pilot & Spacecraft Tests (Paradiso) 37
- Pit Trap (Trap) 61
- Poisonous Fungi 87
- Poisonous Fungi 87
- Poisonous Gas Heat Spend 59
- Poppy Asharii Base 37
- Posthumans 36
- Pressure-induced Psychosis 64
- Purgatorio Asteroid Belt 34, 37-38
- Qapu Khalqi 34-35, 37-38, 45
- Qlugfish 23, 87, 99
- Quantronic Lockbox 68, 74
- Quibilah 10-12
- Quichi Sea 13-14, 47
- Qutrub 19, 63-64, 87, 98, 100
- Radtke, Victor 104
- Rain Heat Spend 59
- Rakuno "Linger-long" 19-20, 87, 89
- Random Encounter Table 87
- Random Encounters 87
- Ranged Weapons Table 73
- Ravensbrücke 11, 40
- Raxora, WCD 55
- Red Mound 32
- Red-K Combat Group 32
- Regina, POS 55
- Remotes Table 74
- Rest & Relaxation 49
- Rilaspur 13, 45-47, 49
- ROC (Rearguard Operations Centre) 16
- Rotting Tree Branch Heat Spend 59
- Runenberg 11, 40
- Running Combat Action Scenes 60
- Sagres Orbital Monitoring Station 16
- Sahadeva 4, 34, 37
- Saint Lazarus, Order of 17
- Sálvora Island 16-17, 32
- Samsara Astroport 36
- Sanctuary 58 84
- Satori 34-36, 50
- Saturn 36
- Scorpionette 22-23, 84, 87-88, 99
- Scrambler Missile 69, 73
- Scrappers, 8
- Second Offensive 9-11, 15, 40-41, 45-48, 82-86 (Adventure)
- Seed-Embryos, Shasvastii 37
- Seiler, Father-Officer 29-30
- Sepsitor 40, 65, 83, 85
- Sepsitorised 19, 53, 75, 83, 85
- Septentria 5, 7, 12-13, 17, 32, 43-48
- Septentria, Central & Eastern 46-48
- Septentria, Western 43-46
- Shasvastii Aquatic Toxin 25
- Shasvastii Threat 24-25
- Shasvastii 12, 17, 24-25, 32-34, 37-38, 40-45, 48-49, 52-53, 55-57, 65, 75, 77, 79-83, 86, 88
- Sheyk Blockade 55
- Shí-tǐ Disease 26
- Shukon Spiderworm Sickness 26, 87
- Shukon Spiderworm 26, 87, 100
- Silk 10, 55
- Sinkhole Heat Spend 60
- Sisargas Islands 16-17, 32
- Skiávoros 65, 83, 85
- Smoke 60
- Smoker/Vents 60
- Snare (Trap) 61
- Sonbol Sickness 26
- Sophotect 79, 84
- Special Situations Section (S.S.S) 16-17, 36, 76, 78
- Speculo Killers 24, 31, 65, 75, 86
- Sphinx TAG 81
- Spike Trap (Trap) 61
- Spotting the Enemy 58
- Stealth Technology 26, 69, 72, 74
- Steel Phalanx 40
- Streslau 11, 41
- Submersible (Vehicle Quality) 70
- Submondo 17, 58, 64, 69, 72, 78, 82-84, 86, 103
- Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) 69, 73
- Surviving Paradiso 49
- Svalarheima 52, 55-56, 68, 104
- Swinging from the Trees Momentum Spend 59
- Sword of Allah 41, 45
- Sygmaa Trihedron, 40
- Sygtir Platforms 56
- Syldavia 10-11, 41
- T'Zechi Digester 16, 28, 32-33
- Tacbots, Garuda 81-82
- Tachibana Base 36
- TADpole 3, 69, 74
- TAGs 44, 50, 57-58, 65, 67-68, 70-71, 73, 80-81, 85, 104
- Taittiriya 13, 44-45
- Tan'Gen Spider 22, 101
- Tanya 023'84-85
- Terpsichore 29
- Terrain Types 63
- Teutonic Knights 29, 41
- Third Offensive 2, 10-13, 39-42, 45-46
- Tien Shan 68
- Tohaa 2, 15-17, 28, 32-33, 40, 50, 52, 55, 71, 76, 88
- Tools Table 74
- Toria Flower 7
- Tracked (Vehicle Quality) 70
- Tracking the Beasts 18
- Tracking 58
- Transport 72, 74
- Trap Table 61
- Trap Types 60-61
- Trenches, Tunnels & Tunnelling 62
- Trinomial, Tohaa 28, 32-33, 55
- Triumvirate, Tohaa 28-29, 32-33
- Truffle, Paradiso 15
- Turbulence Platforms 54
- Ugarat 9, 65
- Ugolino 34, 37
- Umbra Legate 43, 65, 83, 86
- Unidron Batroid 65, 83-84, 86
- Uni-ship 51
- Uprising, The 10-13, 15-17, 36, 42, 44
- Uqbar 41
- Ur Hegemony 50, 53-54
- Ur-Probe 28-29
- Uttar Shivir 13, 45
- Vale Ouro 37
- Valkenswijk 10-12, 43, 49
- Vedi 13, 47-48
- Vehicle Table 74
- Vehicles vs. TAGs 57
- Venus 36
- Vingança 29
- Virgil 1 & 2 34, 35, 37
- VoodooTech 9-10
- Wang Mining Complex 35
- Wasswell, Dr. 21
- Wild Weasel Q-Bomb 69, 73
- Wotan Blockade 55-56
- Wuyi 13, 45-46
- Xhantri Bumblebee Drone 3, 69, 74-75, 83, 86
- Xiajuxu Sea 46
- Xiang 47-48
- Xiongqian 41
- Xiongxiang 11, 81-84, 86
- Yakuza 17
- Yangdon Valley 13
- Yānjīng 56
- Yinfeng Archipleago 17, 31
- Yingxian 11-12
- Yinquan 11-12, 42, 47, 49
- Yu-Jing 5, 7-8, 10-17, 28-32, 34-37, 41-44, 46-48, 54-56, 70, 78, 81-83, 93, 102
- Zaimah 41-42
- Zenda 17
- Zhang Platform, "Elena" 37
- Zhi Shan Centre 36
- Zhongchong 42, 44-45
- Zhu Rong Research Station 36
- Zhurong 15-16
- Zone Creation 57
- ZuluPoint 9, 28-29, 77, 79-82
- Zummo's Table 20-21, 24

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