

C O N V E N T I O N B O O K :

Void Engineers



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THE FEW, THE PROUD,
THE ENLIGHTENED

The Void Engineers are hiding something. They've traded many of their ideals for guns, turned vessels of peaceful exploration into mobile defense platforms, and — most frightening to the Union — forged themselves into an organized military. They've kept the rest of the Technocracy grounded as they fight a mysterious war beyond the boundaries of Earth against adversaries too heinous to name.

As much as that's tearing the Technocratic Union apart, that's the only way it can be: only the Void Engineers can defend Consensual Reality from horrors beyond. For only they can stand before what lurks out there, hungry to return to Earth.

A WORLD UNDER SIEGE

The world beyond Earth has changed much in fifteen years, and not just from the Dimensional Anomaly. The Engineers have been forced to adapt to a Void growing ever darker. Convention Book: Void Engineers updates Mage: the Ascension with fresh 21st century ideas of the starfaring Convention — once filled with hopeful explorers and rebellious dreamers, now scarred by their secret war.

MAGE
THE ASCENSION



Void Engineers

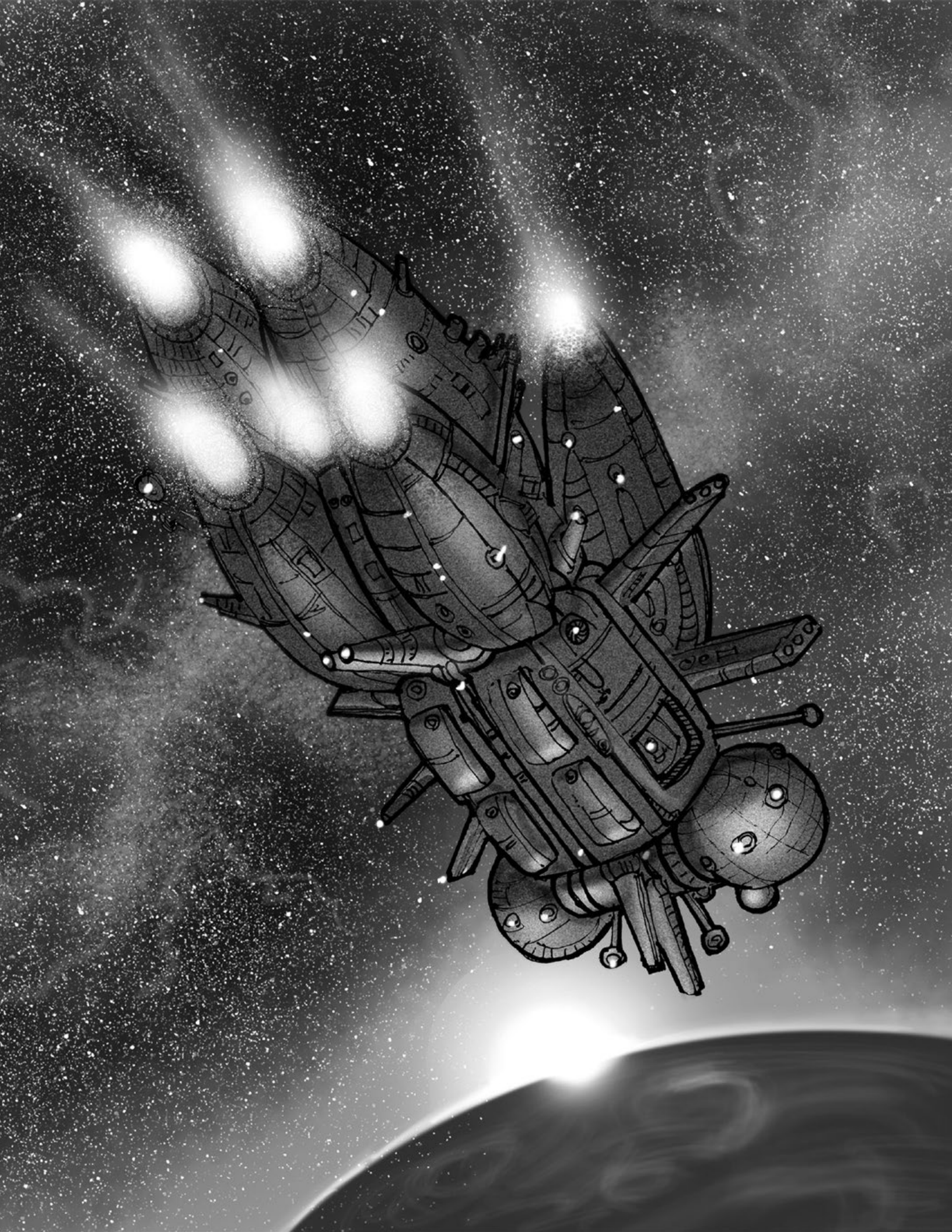


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Void Engineers

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PROLOGUE: BLAST OFF!

T MINUS SEVENTY-SIX MINUTES



For a city with no residents, Ordos boasts some fantastically smelly sewers, a complex perfume of latex, tar, and ozone. Mostly this is because the government is still building the city at a frantic pace, so there's all manner construction run-off in here; I try not to think about the toxicity of the stuff I'm trudging through. Or think about the non-terrestrial entities infesting the sewers, who every few days slough off

their skins in a bath of their own acidic vomit — that adds its own sort of terror.

Exploring fantastic new aromas is just one of the many perks of opening up a new launch facility in this empty city right on the border of Outer Mongolia. Another is running firefights with aliens when all you had to do was hike a bit to get some parallax telemetry. But this is what happens when you build a vast warren of underground tunnels away from human habitation: other things take up residence. Like Void Engineers.



Three alien creatures charge up the wide cylindrical tunnel of the main sewer line at my team like bullets up a smoothbore barrel. They gallop at us on innumerable pseudopods and whipping barbed appendages as they come. Their sharp, beak-like mouths let out god-awful shrieks that echo in this

tunnel. The thunder of submachine gun fire on either side of me is a welcome respite.

When these things go down, it's a messy affair, all ectoplasm spatter and incoherent cacophony. In the end, they pop like water balloons. Pavel, Anselm, and I move forward; Tina hangs back, bathing the corpses in



fire courtesy of her plasma flamethrower. Otherwise they spawn more of their kind once half-decomposed, which is why we've had so much trouble eradicating them.

Echoes of more gunfire clatter down a concrete tributary to our right, along with the occasional *whump* of more exotic weaponry. At my raised fist, the team comes

to a stop. Pavel looks down the tunnel and then back to me. "Who's that, do you think?"

I shake my head. "Dunno. By the sound of things, maybe some of ours." With nothing more than a nod from me, the team rushes through the ankle-high goop towards the sound.

"Launch Command," I say into my headset. "This is Captain Xiao; we're returning with our telemetry readings, but we hear gunfire in the sewers — sector seven. Do we have people out here?"

The voice that comes back crackles with static. "This is Launch Command. The only thing I see on the roster is a team of hardsuits inbound to supplement our security."

"Aw, that was so thoughtful of Iteration X," I smirk as we run towards the fighting. "How many hints did they drop about providing marines for a mission to Autochthonia?"

"Only half a dozen," Command's amusement is even drier than mine. "They're learning tact, which is its own breed of unsettling. Xiao, you've only got an hour left on your launch window."

"Copy that. Won't take too long to lend a hand."

They don't even suggest leaving compatriots behind. "Understood. Launch Command out."

Our tunnel runs into to a collection junction, the large chamber's walls studded with a dozen or more three-meter pipes spewing filthy rainwater. Perhaps half a dozen hardsuits with Iteration X blazons on their shoulders lie crumpled in the shallow tide of sewage; one hardsuit is still standing, emptying a clip into the middle of the room.

When we hop down out of our tunnel and into knee-deep filth, we see the target: a great shuddering pile of flesh bearing dermal plating and waving a plethora of writhing tentacles. Its barbed tentacles, dripping with green venom, eat through ceramic armor — I found that out the hard way three months ago. Some of the tentacles bear beaks at their ends, which I suppose actually makes them necks. This is what happens when ten or more of these aliens coalesce, but the sum total is the same: kill it with fire.

I direct my team to circle the monstrosity toward the last remaining hardsuit. We open up with our paltry submachine guns, and the bullets clatter across the dermal plating like a demented xylophone. All we succeed in doing is attracting its attention.

Tentacles and eyeless heads scream down at us; it's only footwork and a hasty temporal Procedure that gets out from under them. Instead, the pseudopods crash into the ground, sending up a spray of fetid sewage.

Pavel thinks quick enough to shift his firearm to stake-thrower and skewers two tentacles to the ground with iron-shod stakes. Border Corps: prepared and creative.

The hardsuit gives us a nod of acknowledgement. Her voice comes over our headsets, speaking English. Eastern Canadian accent, I think. "Glad to find you lot! Lieutenant Colonel Jessica Silver. I heard Ordos was exciting, but I didn't expect this!" She looses a volley at a descending beak, which takes enough bullets to rear back in screaming agony.

"Captain Chris Xiao, PDC." I point at the alien's quivering trunk draped in thick armor plating. "That's your target, Colonel. Every appendage you shred, it replaces with three more. Meanwhile the brains are all in there, safe and sound."

"Better idea?"

I pull a concussion grenade off my belt and thumb the miniature touchscreen to adjust its settings. "Always know what you're fighting," I tell her, and do my best softball pitch, hurling the device under the creature's undulating belly. "Get ready to open fire," I advise, hefting my own gun.

When the concussive charge goes off, there's a split second when the surface membrane of the beast ripples like a disturbed pond. But then, a host of wet tearing sounds herald the creature's disassembly. The component beings of the conglomerate monster fly in every direction, their shared organs dangling outside their skins and nervous systems flailing wildly for their lost connections.

Some of them hit the walls with a splat; others splash down in the water. There are thirteen of them, and between the five of us we mow them all down before they can get back up again.

Silver diddles with the console set into her hardsuit's arm. "We'll need to clear the area before the suits' self-

destructs go off," she warns, and starts heading for the tunnel we came out of. "This way?"

"Hold off on that." I direct one of my guys towards the nearest body. "Anselm might be able to do something."

"I'm a xenobiologist, not a medic, Jim," Anselm mutters, mostly pro forma, as he looks over the fallen Iterator. He taps at the suit's arm, squints at the readout, then taps some more buttons. "Life signs are faint. These guys aren't long for the world."

"Then let's put them out of their misery," Silver urges from the tunnel mouth. "I saw the hits my guys took; they've got to be in agony."

"We don't leave people behind." The words come out of me almost automatically as I stride over to Anselm's side. If she responds, I don't hear it.

He gives me a glance and then continues tapping at the hardsuit's display. "She's right. They're hurt worse than I can fix. But I can trigger the suits' crash mode, which will cocoon them in foam as if they were taking a hard fall. Onboard medical system can pump them full of pain suppressants, and then I can drop them into temporal stasis. Getting them back to the medbay, though..."

"I might be able help you with that," Silver steps forward. "Will they be okay in there with a little jostling?"

Anselm taps a few more glowing buttons and all of the suits make a sudden sighing sound. He gives her a short nod.

"Well then," the Iterator taps at her own display. "Ten hut!" The suits jerkily leap to attention. "Form up behind me, single file formation. Weapons cold. The last time I trusted an expert system with a gun, it cost me a boyfriend." She throws me a wink through her visor at that. "Company, move out!"

T MINUS FOUR MINUTES



I shrug on my flight suit even as I lurch onto the bridge. Technically speaking, launching out of uniform violates half a dozen containment policies, but no one is spouting regs at me. Launch Command is even cheering me on: "Xiao, you need to launch in the next hundred and eighty seconds or you'll miss the window." At least I'm choosing to interpret that as cheering on.

"Fire the primary booster," I order Tina as I clamber into the captain's seat and struggle with my crash harness.

"Captain, you don't even have a helmet on!" she chides, but she hits the proper buttons with a smirk, anyway. The ship shudders. Lights flash. Klaxons wail.

Through the viewport and high above us, the silo's retractable roof begins to slowly swim closer. "Now's the time to tell me if any of our systems aren't green." I put on my helmet. "Well, before we ignited the booster was the right time."

"We are sitting atop a total-conversion drive that is tearing apart matter and turning it directly into a pillar of

fire,” Pavel reports, tapping buttons and flipping switches. “We are headed directly for a planet-wide subspace interference field that will tear our minds and souls apart if we miss the 0.02% variance gap in the field, which is itself closing as we speak. All systems operating as expected.”

It always astounds me how slowly the ship moves at first as it struggles against gravity to inch into the sky. We clear the mammoth doors of the roof going no more than twenty miles an hour, straight up. Sixty seconds later, Ordos is nothing more than a blot of grey grid in the middle of the broad brown Mongolian plain.

“ETA to variance gaps six minutes,” comes Tina report. “Gap closure in six minutes, forty-five seconds.”

“And I thought this was going to be close,” I say, mostly for the benefit of the crew. The humor gets light chuckles.

But then Tina makes an uncertain, strangled noise. “Wait. Our velocity is diverging from the flight plan. One percent. Two. We aren’t accelerating as quickly as we’re supposed to.”

“Booster operating in the green.” Pavel’s frantically wiping through displays on his screen. “Wait, we’re two hundred kilograms overburdened.”

“The hell?” I can hear incredulous echoes from Launch Command through the headset. “Brace for acceleration; I’m going to punch the booster and see if we can make up for the extra mass. Pavel, scan the ship.”

“On it.”

The ship leaps forward as I pour more Primal Energy into the engine. Everyone on the bridge struggles for breath under the crushing G-forces. A constellation of warning lights twinkle across the instrumentation board.

“Acceleration exceeds projection,” comes Tina’s pinched report. “We’re going to make the gap but... we’ll be at a pretty good clip for maneuvering, Captain.”

I grab hold of the manual stick between my knees. “That just makes the roller coaster more entertaining.”

“Captain, the unaccounted mass is in the rover bay,” Pavel grunts under the acceleration. “Preliminary spectroscopy suggests... ceramic and tungsten steel. Two hundred kilograms of that is what, an extra rover battery?”

“No,” I flick on the internal cameras in the rover bay. “Two hundred kilograms of ceramic and tungsten steel... and a little bit of flesh inside... is an Iteration X stowaway in a hardsuit.” I thumb the intercom to broadcast. “How you doing back there, Silver?”

Behind the strapped-down rover, Corporal Silver lies sprawled across the wall, pasted there by the ship’s boosters. “It’s a little late,” she groans, “but... permission to come aboard, Captain?” Her visor snaps open, and despite the grimace pressed into her face from the acceleration, she manages to wink.

Anselm leans forward as best he can under his restraints to make worried eye contact with me. He mutes his headset, but doesn’t say anything. He’s waiting for me to give the order. Instead, I return the look, placing one hand on my sidearm. He nods.

“Welcome aboard, Corporal.” I switch the main display to show the subspace fields up ahead. The tableau blossoms before us as we careen up into the Dimensional Anomaly, complete with the miniscule hole that twists and slides along the lines of dimensional force. Our launch window. “Hold on to something if you can. This ride is about to get bumpy.”



INTRODUCTION: TO BOLDLY FIGHT



The Technocracy is wrong.

We're not talking "wrong" as in "holy shit we're all being real assholes," though sometimes we are being real assholes. That's just human nature. No, the Technocratic Union is wrong in one core fear: that the Void Engineers are looking to jump ship.

Only the shittiest of people cut and run when the going gets tough. And believe, friends — the going's beyond *tough* right now.

Certain other Conventions would have you believe that we've won some sort of war against the Traditionalists. What, because people use smartphones and like watching

people talk about science on YouTube, it's time to kick back with a few cold ones and pat ourselves on the back? This is not the time for that. We're at war, and not a petty, one-sided beating on a bunch of hippies, anachronistic throwbacks, and pseudoscientists.

We're at a real goddamned war with otherworldly entities. We're at vicious war with Marauders and Nephandi, both from our Conventions and the Traditions. And we're at war with ourselves. This isn't a time for narcissistic masturbation.

There's more to the Void Engineers than endless war (though you wouldn't know it to hear some of the Border Corpsmen bitching in a bar). We fight to keep the flame of exploration alive in the hearts and

minds of the Masses. Because if they don't dream of the stars, we'll lose everything. Every Void Engineer beyond the Biospheric Horizon is there because he or she dreamed of being there.

And we lose good people every day. If we don't keep inspiring, we'll lose everything we've worked for since the Order of Reason formed. If we don't keep inspiring, there is no future for humanity, whether up among the stars or down on the mudball.

We're right there as China pushes a new generation of dreamers. We watch as privatized space travel is just starting to be real. We watch as millions of people tune in to a certain Martian robot's Twitter account. And we'd love to say that we had something to do with that, but we didn't — while we were off fighting horrors beyond space and time, the Masses dreamt all that on their own.

That alone gives us the sliver of hope we need to believe we aren't fighting a futile war.

THEME: HARDENING UNDER PRESSURE



The Dimensional Anomaly was one hell of a game changer. We lost good men and women that day, and the number of deaths (and worse) from threats in the Void continues to rise. Everyone in the Union had to adjust during the Reorganization, and each Convention changed when the old leadership was ripped away. For the others, that meant rebuilding themselves in the dark. For us, when we lost DSETAC, we knew why.

The Void Engineers is no longer a civilian operation that happens to have a military wing. It may have always been at war (such is the nature of the Technocracy, born from struggle and defense), but until the bastard Anomaly hit, it kept looking for escape. Hell, many of them were even actively thinking about leaving the Union and going their own way. Not as a Tradition, not as an enemy of humanity, just as people who were going to let the mudball folks sort themselves out and join the Space Convention when they were good and ready to.



Today, anyone talking about abandoning the Union will be court-marshaled.

These Void Engineers reflect the way the Masses view science fiction, ones where the world is hard on its people. These are your *Battlestar Galactica*-esque dimension-hopping Technocrats. They're *The Terminator*'s Tech-Com. They're *Aliens* Colonial Marines, *Old Man's War*'s Colonial Defense Force, *Mass Effect*'s Systems Alliance. Each and every Engineer struggles to serve with distinction just as the rigors of war break them down into people unable to go back to the very world they're saving.

Every fight takes its toll. Each person who comes back in a body bag gets her name put on The Wall, to be grieved over by friends and whose sacrifice commands respect. And sadly, the Enlightened are far from immune to PTSD — those who come back don't come back the same, alien even to other Technocrats. Therein lies the greatest tragedy in the Union, which no one is seeing: the most hopeful and optimistic of the Conventions is, inch by inch, trading that hope and optimism for pure survival.

MOOD: SECRETS AND PAIN



If you polled the entire Border Corps Division and asked them how many fellow Technocrats they've had to put down in the line of duty, none would raise a hand. If you asked Pan-Dimensional Corpsmen how many names on The Wall are of Unionists they've killed, they'd all say none.

This lie is what keeps the Union whole, or at least as whole as it ever is.

Every Convention has secrets they hide from each other — that's inherent to the nature of vast conspiracies, and there's no conspiracy as vast as the Technocratic Union. But the secrets the Void Engineers keep about what's beyond Earth could destroy everything the Union's worked hard for.

This means keeping secrets from each other, as well. As the old saying goes, "loose lips sink the whole of Consensual Reality." This drive caused ideals of the past to give way to paranoid pragmatism. You can't let slip what you don't know, so today's Void Engineers has many layers of clearance — not unlike the New World Order. Discovering something you shouldn't could mean two bullets to the back of your head, if they think wiping your mind won't take.

That hurts to do. The Void Engineers don't want to be conspiratorial executioners. They're tired of lying to everyone every damned day. They're tired of fighting an endless war without appreciation. And they're just plain tired.

DIFFERENTIAL CAUSALITY

Equipped with his five senses, man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure Science.

— Edwin Hubble



You're not going to find the Void Engineers of yesteryear in this book. These aren't the same folks who, fifteen years ago, had one foot out the door. At the same time, they aren't quite the carefree and cavalier badasses wandering the great beyond. They're still trekking around the Universe, and they're still cavalier badasses, but they see the world in a very different light since the Dimensional Anomaly hit. That moment wounded them, but also gave them new purpose.

Convention Book: Void Engineers finishes out the Revised Technocracy line that started with *Iteration X* in

1999 and was reborn in 2012 with the New World Order. This book — this entire line — is a love letter to Mage: the Ascension fans who kept the torch alive these many years, and for the Unionists out there who always saw a story in the Technocracy beyond pure villainy.

This book brings to a close what **Convention Book: N.W.O.**, **Convention Book: Progenitors**, and **Convention Book: Syndicate** have built on. Many of the ideas and new terms in this book refer back to those three volumes. But by no means does the story end here; indeed, this era of uncertainty and schism is just beginning.

What does that mean for your chronicle? Will you play Void Engineers fighting wars against vile threats in

space? Will you play other Technocrats trying to discover what they're hiding? Will the Dimensional Convention

succeed in their endeavors to protect the Union and humanity overall, or will their schemes doom us all?

CONTENTS



Continuing the Convention Book trend, this book is about the Void Engineers as heroes, and told from their perspective. Even with their shift toward militarism, they're still idealists. They still seek to explore the Void and discover the wonders of the cosmos, not to rule it with an iron fist.

Chapter 1: A Brief History of Prime catches you up on the last decade of the world, from the Void Engineer's Enlightened perspective. It goes into the history of the Convention, not as anti-Unionist propaganda but as a lesson for those bold enough to call themselves heroes of reality. It ends with a field guide to dealing with everyone else in the World of Darkness.

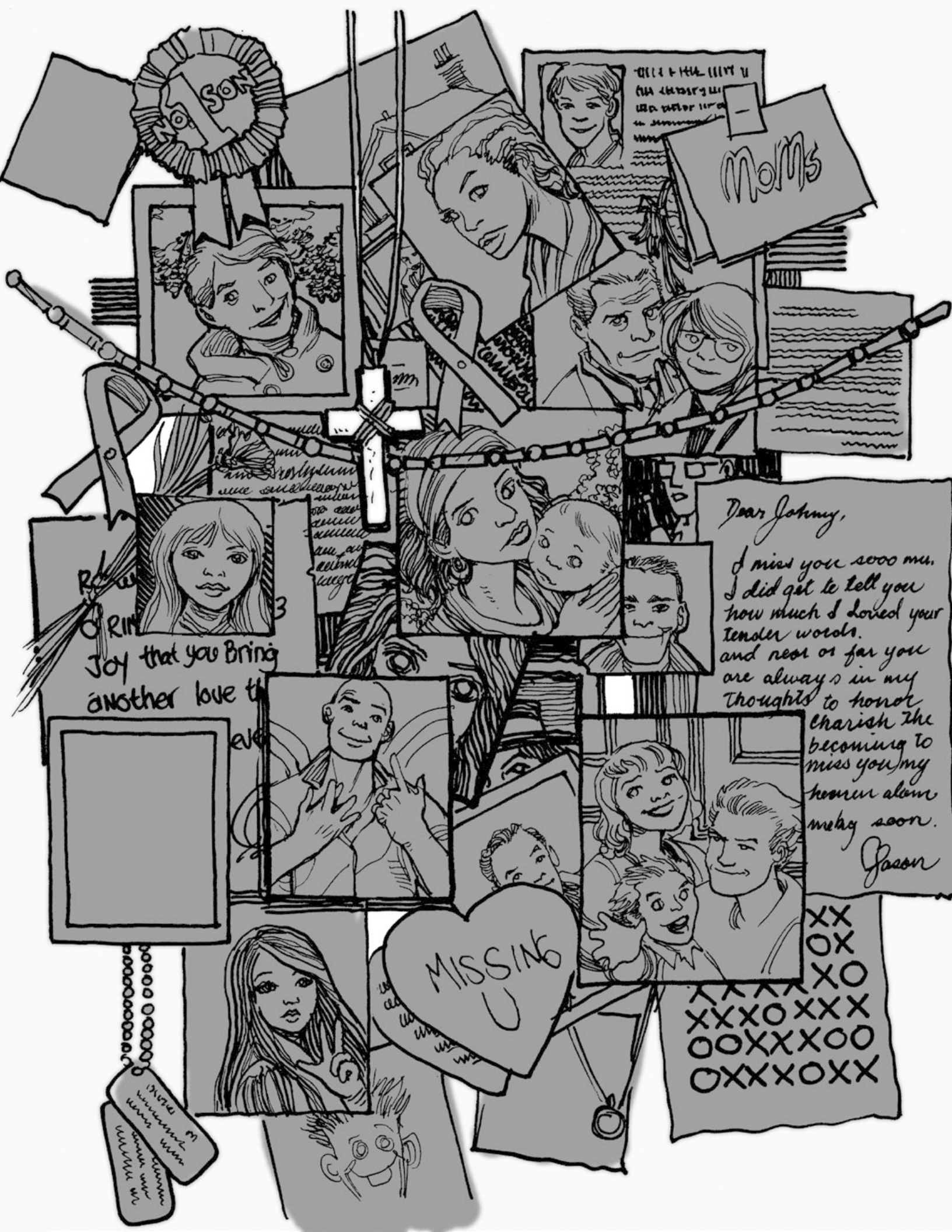
Chapter 2: For All Mankind offers insight into the Convention's structure, notably its dual nature as a civilian

and a military organization compressed together. Each of the Methodologies has changed, from the rise in Border Corps Division prominence to Research & Execution's shift to military experimentation.

Chapter 3: Forged in Smoldering Stars gives insight into the world beyond. This includes a detailed breakdown of Dimensional Science theory, places of particular interest in the known universe, and details on the newest threat facing all humankind. Warning: some of the information contained within is classified.

Chapter 4: The Hangar Bay has what you need to support a chronicle involving the Void Engineers: notable members of the Convention, legends they speak of (including the rather revered Wall), further understanding of Dimensional Science, and details on creating and using Voidships. Advice for running a Void Engineer amalgam and various character templates rounds out this chapter.





CHAPTER ⊕ ONE: A BRIEF HISTORY ⊕ OF PRITIE

STATE ⊕ OF THE C⊕SM⊕S



In 1999, the Dimensional Anomaly fucked us. Hard. No one was spared – it fucked each and every one of us, on all sides of the Ascension Squabble. On that day, what it meant to be a Void Engineer changed.

Woe to those who fuck with us, for we didn't exactly change for the better.

⊕ OUR DAY ⊕ OF INFANTY

The other Conventions talk up how much they lost when the Dimensional Anomaly hit. Try being out in Void when that happened. Those who made it out tell strange stories: of watching comrades ripped apart as

though with invisible claws, hulls melting like crayons on a stove, micro-singularities causing people to collapse in on themselves, marines falling over as though dead but hearts still beating – and those are the saner stories.

We lost good people. We lost ships. We lost constructs, notably the Copernicus Research Center – the very symbol of our pride and dominion over the Void. But we lost something more: we lost *space*. Much of the work we put into formatting Conventional Space was undone. The Void became much like the stories you'd find in the Celestial Masters' archives.

It took months to settle on the death toll. By mid-2000, we were less than half the number we were before the damned Anomaly. And that's just the beginning.



NEW RECRUITS

When you're fighting a war at half strength, you scour the planet high and low for any and all recruits you can find. Given how the Masses have changed in the last few years, our recruits don't primarily come from Europe and North American anymore. Today, 37% of us are Chinese (and projected to be over 50% by the end of the decade). Another 10% are from other Asian nations, 16% are Arabic, and 9% are South American. Only 3% of us are African, but not for lack of trying — the Syndicate seems to be pretty damned good at snapping up all the Enlightened Africans it can.

Not that any of it matters when you're out in the Void. There, your nationality is Technocracy and your race is human. After all, our enemies don't give a shit about the color of your skin.

EXISTENTIAL THREATS DIRECTORATE

We lost our old leadership — the Dimensional Science Evaluation, Administration, and Training Committee (DSEATC) — when we lost Copernicus. Given the situation we were handed, we shifted ad hoc from exploring the Void into rebuilding it. As other entities (some long-time foes, some new threats) moved in to capitalize on the chaos, we went from rebuilding the Void to policing it. Then from policing it to full-on military action. Of the few groups formed to give us direction, including an attempt at restarting DSEATC, one finally won out as our new leadership: the military-focused Existential Threats Directorate. The Void Engineers were no longer a civilian agency that happened to have a military, but a military force that happens to have civilian wings.

This wasn't a coup; every Enlightened Void Engineer alive got to vote on this — we aren't barbarians, after all — and 78% of us decided in 2002 that this was a good idea. (And 83% in 2006, and 91% in 2010.)

All of the high-level planning for our Convention happens through a lens of combat theaters and strategic goals. We're one massive machine, geared toward the preservation of humanity from everything that threatens us.

THERE BE DRAGONS

The Void is filled with derelicts — Technocratic Constructs, Traditionalist Chantries, broken pocket dimensions, temporal bubbles, Nephandic strongholds, Voidships and Etherships—all up for grabs and all contested. Centuries of investment are floating out there.

And we have threats a-plenty out there. Some fight us for a hulk of space garbage that might happen to hold Primal Energy or a piece of Enlightened lore. Others (too many others) fight to cross through the Gauntlet and rip Earth a new asshole. The only bright side to the Anomaly is that it's made the Gauntlet much, much harder to punch through. Of course, that goes for us as well.

Everyone's familiar with most of the players: Nephandi, Marauders, non-human entities like "demons" and "ghosts," and so on. But there's a new one on the horizon, which we call Threat Null. Sometimes they seem human, or possibly post-human. Other times, completely alien. They attack with a sense of coordination and force that's almost Borg-like. And they want only one thing: to get to Earth.

For those wondering why we keep a military leadership in power, that's why.

THE WAR BACK HOME

While we're focused on the war beyond Horizon, our fellow Conventions are fucking it up on Earth. The New World Order and the Syndicate are looking at each other with daggers (which isn't new), and everyone's certain they're going to finally start stabbing each other (which also isn't new). What is new is that they think

the Ascension War is over, that the Union has won all of its major battles and can now safely turn on each other.

They're turning those daggers toward us as well. They demand answers we can't give. They demand accountability for what happened over ten years ago that we can't give. They demand to go back into the Void, which we *won't* give. The last thing we need is a bunch of clueless Technocrats out in space being co-opted by Threat Null.

(Oh, did we forget to mention that? Threat Null's greatest weapon lies in taking control of us and using us as sleeper agents. Not like the Nephandi do — Nephandi indoctrinate; Threat Null plays puppeteer.)

Distrust and ambition make for one hell of an explosive cocktail, and the rest of the Union is drinking that down.

THE RAY OF HOPE

One of the most important aspects we've always embodied is humanity's sense of optimism. It's not always easy, but that's what sets us apart from the spooks, bean counters, and cloistered lab geeks in the rest of the Union.

The Masses still believe in the wonder of the stars, even if governments that used to pour massive funds into space programs don't anymore. The rise of the Enlightened Citizen is a signal that maybe, just maybe, we're on the right track to humanity accepting a destiny beyond Earth. And even in our own Technocratic Union, we see little changes that warm our hearts, like the Progenitors beginning to venture out into the world.

These are damned interesting times, but they aren't all bad.

VOID ENGINEER JARGON



Void Engineers love the hell out of their alphabet soup and odd mix of engineer and military shorthand for everything imaginable. This is the most common of what you'll hear in the halls of Station Yemaja, the Cop, etc., notably from the younger generation.

Absolutely sure: An educated conjecture, one not considered typically reliable. "I'm absolutely sure it's dead. Go collect it."

Anchor: Someone (often from another Convention) trying to prevent your ship from taking off.

BCD: Border Corps Division, the Methodology that keeps horrible things from reaching the Mudball.

BDO: Big Dumb Object. A large, impressive, and mysterious artificial Void object. Examples include Traditionalist Chantries, the old Cop, and Arch-Scientist built Dimensional Anomaly engines.

Bulkheading: To talk shit about a fellow officer in front of others, usually loudly.

Cargo: Voidship passengers who can't assist with vessel operations — typically Technocrats from other Conventions. Alternately, dead Technocrats from other Conventions. (Many Void Engineers prefer burial in the Void, and don't need to be transported back.)

Colonists: Humans who have spent most of their life in the Void, particularly if they were born there. Few colonists remain, and many are refugees struggling to adapt to Earth.

The Cop: Copernicus Station (a.k.a. “the new Cop”); “the old Cop” refers to the former Copernicus Research Center.

DAI: Dimensional Anomaly Incursion, a.k.a. what keeps the EFD in business.

Dangerous: Bog standard. Expected to be dealt with as part of one’s normal workday. Younger Engineers sarcastically use it to mean “boring” or “routine.”

DIMH: Descartes Institute of Mental Health, NSC’s medical division and our tether to sanity.

DSEATC: Dimensional Science Evaluation, Administration, and Training Committee; the former head honchos before the Anomaly.

EDE: Extra-Dimensional Entity, what foolish people call an “alien.”

EFD: Earth Frontier Division, the Methodology that handles the Mudball’s defense.

ETD: Existential Threats Directorate, the new bosses (also called the Admiralty).

Everett Volume: An alternate dimension, with a reality either alike or very different from ours.

Front Lines: What we’re fighting for. What we’re dying for.

Gateway: Portals of relatively easy access through the Gauntlet.

Gun: Marine or other Void Engineer ground combatant. (“Grunt” and similar are considered too unEnlightened to use regarding a fellow Conventioneer.)

IAW (pronounce “yaw”): Inexplicable Alien Weirdness. Applied as a casual label to anything that can’t be readily explained in the moment.

Jacket: A pilot, navigator, or other bridge crewmember; named for the PCD fashion trend of wearing old-style bomber jackets.

Jefferying: Crawling around ducts and other enclosed spaces, typically said when you feel stupid doing so.

Loadout: A complement of personal survival equipment, operation-specific gear and weapons, especially those of the BCD.

Mudball: An affectionate (and not so affectionate) term for Earth.

NSC: Neutralization Specialization Corps, the Methodology that takes on the really weird stuff, like PLEs.

PDC: Pan Dimension Corps, the Methodology that flies around in style.

Pet: A live sample, usually of something non-human.

PLE: Post-Life Entity, what the less-Enlightened call a “ghost.”

Pretty: Extremely dangerous. Exercise extreme caution.

Pudge: Vitamin-enriched protein slurry often used as food on Voidships.

Quantum Voyager: Enlightened individual capable of piloting through the Anomaly.

Qui la Machina: Primary Voidship class, workhorse of the Convention.

R&E: Research & Execution, the Methodology that makes the cool toys.

Reasonably sure: A well-tested conclusion based on empirical data, something you’ll willing to rely on. “I’m reasonably sure it’s dead. I’ll go collect it.”

Rich: Exposed to lethal levels of radiation or similar phenomena.

Schrödinger’s [something]: Being unsure of something, such as “I don’t know if I’ve got the commission yet. Right now I’m Schrödinger’s captain.”

Scuttlebutt: Gossip.

“Second star to the right:” “I have no idea where we are/going.”

SPAM: “Servings of Pulpy Anthropic Matter.” Corpses reduced to an unidentifiable mush by intense pressure changes, acceleration, or energetic phenomena.

Starbuck (or just “a buck”): A Paradox magnet, an albatross.

Taikonaut: A Chinese word for cosmonauts or astronauts; a term now commonly used throughout the Convention.

Tegmark Lensing: The phenomenon that prevents unEnlightened scientists from viewing the Deep Universe.

Terrie: British-born euphemism for Threat Null. Considered the most polite term for them.

“That’s full of stars:” Used when something said is obvious or otherwise a waste of breath.

Threat Null: The recent threat to Consensual Reality. Briefly called “Emerging Threats Capable of Nullifying Enlightened Procedures.”

The Void: Everything that isn’t the Earth, more or less.

Voidies, space-cases, and worse: What haters call us.

Voidship: Ship we use to travel around the Void, from little shuttles to massive battle cruisers.

The Wall: The ad-hoc shrine in Station Yemaja, dedicated to those lost.

Ad Astra: To the Stars

To all Copernicus Station academy instructors:

Something truly inspiring has come across my desk. PDC Admiral Fu-han Cheng gave one hell of a guest lecture in Convention history. I didn't find out about this from the instructor or the esteemed admiral, but from my assistant linking me to a video that the students are passing around to each other.

Watch this video. Learn from it. If your lectures are half as inspiring, this batch of cadets might grow to being worth a damn.

— Headmaster Joanna Bell

You all have a unique privilege today. In this classroom, you can choose to no longer be children. To embrace your future responsibilities, you will learn the history of the brave people who came before you. If you live up to our expectations, your names will join theirs in history. If you fail to meet those expectations, you will dishonor us all, and we will damn your name to the deepest Void.

To know how the taikonauts came to be, we turn back to the beginning of human history. The first humans to look up at the night sky would be the seed from which we grew. The ones who kept their curiosity alive would encounter strange entities and natural dangers. Through both perils, they became survivors. The first to learn the code: survive at all costs.

These early Void Seekers — one faction of our predecessors — mapped the world. In the ritual of cartography, the landscape of our reality began to form. Many of the same hands drafted the maps of

oceans and the heavens. No matter how simple, they formed the cornerstones of early Correspondence. Other Conventions speak of the Egyptians and their Pyramids. I speak to you instead, of China. The Sacred Artisans that rose from the Zhou Dynasty were the first Artificers. The philosophy and society of the Zhou Dynasty allowed reason to flourish. The Enlightened of China worked within a society suited to them. The Zhou Dynasty passed, and the Chin Empire rose; by that time, the Enlightened of China had made footholds across all of the Empire. Even now, their texts are still studied. Lao Tzu proposed a path of moderation and balance. Confucius wrote of loyalty and purity. Sun Tzu's *Art of War* gave us Inspiration for military tactics.

We were of course, in other places — Egypt, Rome, Greece, the halls of the Maya and Inca, the homes of the Vikings. Every continent contained us, but no continent could truly hold us.

THE RISE OF REASON



Though our predecessors here flourished, our counterparts in other countries faced a time of great danger and uncertainty. Traditionalists would have you believe that secret wars ended the once admirable empires of Rome and Greece. But no hand, supernatural or Enlightened, was required to end those empires.

Of the Enlightened minds of that era, China — my homeland — fared best. Our country did not turn against us. We were not forced into a dangerous exile. Though our earlier accords with the European Artisans fractured in trade disputes, we observed their plight from afar, and sent aid when circumstances were dire.

This is a time spoken of in hushed tones at other academies. They would tell you that empires fell,

and the Dark Ages began. But we know Reason was not truly banished, merely dispersed.

What the earliest Seekers of the Void (who would become known as Void Seekers, and later Void Engineers) knew best was a curiosity that overpowered loneliness. Months of exploration would be broken by the encounter of another. Stories traded, campfire shared, the Seekers would continue on. They held their fellowship above origin, or creed. They were slowly changed by their journey. The Seekers encountered strange beasts and powerful spirits. What would one day become legends, were the lives lived by the Seekers of the Void. They were transformed by these encounters. They learned that in the farthest reaches of the Earth lived things not of this world. Knowing this in no way dissuaded their exploration.

Those who stayed behind explored from their small settlements. With time, those dwellings blossomed into cities. There, the Celestial Masters — the other half of our lineage — grew upward. They reached toward the sky with eyes and apparatuses. They charted the skies and told the futures of rules. They were voices of reason in the ears of those in

power. But an unfortunate fact of life is that men of power love power. The warnings of these early scientists against the use of magi went unheeded.

In the Celestial Masters, the Void Seekers would find kindred souls, and vice versa. The alliances of astronomers and astrologers with early explorers are ones that have never ended. Entities not of our world helped both. Not all beings not of our world had our harm in mind.

Elsewhere in history, there exists a dizzying array of civilizations, some past, all touched by the Celestial Masters among them. The Inca, Maya, the great structures of the Nazca — Reason is not a product of a select few cultures. Passionate Reason was everywhere. It still is, no matter what others may tell you.

In 1325, those who loved reason and labored to protect humanity gathered together. We were not the most adept politicians among them. But we were there at the beginning, as were our siblings. Each Convention stood as one that day. It is a sad truth that it often takes war to unite us as one. To make our love of humanity shine as one.

A JOURNEY INTO THE ENDLESS



Once the Celestial Masters and the Void Seekers stood side by side in The Ivory Tower, their labors began in earnest. They sponsored each other at the Convention of The Ivory Tower, and their partnership was there cemented. The Celestial Masters would map new routes, on Earth and elsewhere. They called it by many names: the Ruined Road, the Long

Road, the Straight Road. The Void Seekers along with the Celestial Masters' Houses would investigate many of the Road's less known paths. The Celestial Masters' House of Prometheus explored the sky's gateways to the Void, while those of House of Helios explored and mapped the ocean and the skies of humankind. Both had men and women in their ranks, a commonality they shared with the Cosians (the forerunners to our brothers in the Progenitors).

All of them were, of the Order, the most willing to have women in their ranks — thus more Enlightened

minds among our kind. The Void Seekers also had numerous Brethren among their ranks, survivors of explorations that bore no Enlightenment. This has never changed. It was the Celestial Masters who tempered the Seekers' appetite for adventure. The House of Selene did things the Order never discovered. Their secret wars against the monsters of the Heavens were the foundation for the military units of our present Convention.

The Enlightened of the Middle East, unburdened by the church, found a safe haven in those years. Arabic countries held brilliant mathematicians, dedicated scientists, and visionary engineers. The Enlightened were at home among them, and their work improved that of the Enlightened. Outside of Europe, numerous Procedures came with ease to the hands of the Enlightened. Yet the same Procedures could not be duplicated in Europe. This was a lesson we did not ignore: consensual reality varied wildly because of cultures.

PARADOX AND THE UNION

If you want to understand how up their own asses the other Conventions are, just ask them what they call the Paradox Effect. Iteration X and NWO call it “Statistical Inevitability” — how depressing. The Syndicate says “Market Corrections,” as if the whole of Reality was some economic joyride. At least the Progenitors have it a bit right with “Rejection,” but none of them really get the point of Paradox.

And that fundamental misunderstanding is one more reason why the Union is in trouble.

The Celestial Masters raised political power by performing astrology for the wealthy. We could denigrate this decision, or choose to see it for it was. That money funded our study of the Heavens, and it gave the Celestial Masters political power, which they used as a lever to improve the world. They spread scientific knowledge throughout every court they could seed with the Enlightened, but the 13th century was not ready for their rigorous push. We were advancing the nature of reality too swiftly, constantly refining it. And into this drama, the Scourge came for us — what we today understand as Paradox. Enlightened minds had sought a way to make the world safer. Yet we only made it more hostile to ourselves. The conundrum is humorous.

Seeing the political turbulence around them, the Celestial Masters and Void Seekers vouched for one another at the Convention of the Ivory Tower. That day, they became the siblings of other like-minded groups. The Order of Reason was born. And in the centuries after, politics and treachery would cloud the purpose of us all. Soon, we would begin to commit our own great sins. We went on explorations of the New World, and lead the Reconquista to the doorstep of other cultures. Our wish to distance ourselves from politics led us to instead play a role in slaughter. Some of these cultures live on — the Maya have descendents, something modern man so often forgets. Everywhere our curiosity took us, violence and tragedy followed.

In 1452, Copernicus proved the heliocentric theory of the Universe was true. We didn't expect him to prove what seemed to be an insane idea. The fallout against science was immense in that time, but

we endured. The Inquisition was a menace. At the Halley Academy, they did not tell us they took some of our brethren to their cells. The Inquisition was not a simple purge of mages; it was a widespread and vicious animal that hunted all of humanity.

But its terrors did end. And after the ashes settled, the 15th and 16th Centuries came and went. Paradox remained, still painful. We continued to ply the sea, sky, and beyond. Science began to build hope in humankind. Kepler's work set mathematical creases into the folds of reality. Newton helped refine reality. And in this age of scientific wonder, we gave up a man to leadership — much as we today sometimes give up good scientists to instead be managers and military leaders.

One of the Celestial Masters, known to all as Tychoides, became an Old Master. He devoted his life to the study of disbelief. He researched belief and Paradox, reality, near space. He mapped continents and documented what he encountered in the Void. He would eventually retreat from the world, as do all who reach the apex of their Enlightenment.

NWO's Ivory Tower “historians” may have told you that we declared war when Mistridge was destroyed. They also lied. Mistridge was a blood-spattered skirmish. It was not until the Traditions said we defiled Mistridge, in 1704, that the pretense of peace was destroyed. We can credit Reginold Proctor with that renewal of war. One of the scions of the High Guild, the Syndicate forerunner, Proctor built a banking house where Mistridge had stood. That was what truly started the War — that sundered us all from each other.

The heart of the Order, those who stayed “at home,” had been moved from the Ivory Tower. All of our Conventions had people at the White Tower of Languedoc. We all lost friends when the Traditions destroyed it in 1745. The Order of Reason had killed the creator of the legendary Ivory Tower, the Hermetic Yoassmy, and seized the Tower after her destruction in combat. The Traditions waited before destroying our White Tower, killing dozens in the process. It's a tragic cycle without origin, a perpetual motion device of suffering. From there, the world marched on throughout the seasons. Charles Babbage invented his difference engine, medical science advanced, the Industrial Revolution began. And somewhere, sometime, we all begun to cease... caring.



We were not the Order of Reason. We were disparate, angry, squabbling politicians who in our unique ways, all exploited the Masses. We'd abandoned the words spoken at the Convention of the Ivory Tower. Our internal politics were brutally cleaned by the hands of Basil Rathbone. Instrument of Queen Victoria, he enacted an efficient Grand Housekeeping. Tychoides merged the Celestial Masters and the Seekers, and the result is our Convention. The Void Engineers. We became the Technocratic Union. Enlightenment for all and a grand unified government seemed possible.

Again, we wished to see the world and stars. Again, others were punished by our curiosity. The Queen wanted an empire, and as you learned earlier, empires decay. As we took part in her explorations and dominations, we became torn. We had politics to play. Yet a new controversy awaited us — one that would change our present and our future.

The Etheric Controversy

It was the scientists Albert Michelson and Edward Morley that disproved the etheric theories of the

Victorians. This declaration is why Dimensional Science exists as it does. By disproving the etheric theories, the Masses' vision of the Universe changed. Tychoides, one of our most illustrious minds, risked the wrath of the Union by supporting this shift of reality. He also placed himself in great political danger, by having the Convention build the first enclosed Void ships in secret. Lord Craven, of the Ivory Tower, was the one to cover for us with the Masses and the rest of the Union during these activities. It was sadly not the last time the New World Order would have to keep our secrets safe.

We explored the twinkling sky between Earth and the Great Void. Tychoides, with Kepler's help, helmed our great race to the modern stars. Kepler trod upon the surface of the moon in 1892. Tychoides began a voyage around the Sun in 1893. He found Autochthonia on that journey.

While the Masses dealt with the lingering mystery of the heavens, we watched as our colleagues in the Electrodynic Engineers defected from the Union — rejecting that space was a vacuum, rejecting Enlightened Science, rejecting Reason, rejecting us. Tales of Autochthonia would frighten others, sending

them from our fold. Our clashes with them among the stars were not a war, not that they would say such. To this day, the Sons of Ether — the rechristened Electrodyne Engineers — hold us in contempt.

As the 20th Century dawned, Kepler was our compass. And his true north pointed to space. We established small stations in orbit, and from there, we pushed out. As the Masses saw assembly lines manufacture cars, ours manufactured ships capable of crossing from the Earth to a far stranger place. Our journey into the heavens would find, as we had in the past, terrible dangers to humanity. When war came for the world, so too, did the darkness come for us.

The Ghosts of Flanders

World War I was the first full-blown war in space experienced by the Void Engineers. In space and back on the Front Lines, the Void Engineers would fight specters, Nephandi, and the dead. Jupiter, a base for Nephandic forces, would become the focus of numerous bloody conflicts fought by the PDC against the invading forces. The military force of the PDC was cemented, the Jovian Veterans Unit — those who fought on the Jupiter front — was forged, and the world mourned for unthinkable numbers of dead men and women. We placed the Sentinel Satellites before World War I to monitor threats against Earth, and they were one of the reasons the

Void Engineers saw the invading Nephandi ships in time. Humanity was close to its darkest hour in every dimension of existence during that time, and the famed Flanders in France is haunted by the lingering ghosts of the Great War's dead.

World War II showed us things we had never dreamed of, even in the worst of our nightmares. It is without lie or hyperbole to say the world could have ended. The Union is supposed to remain neutral. To take no sides in war, save that of the world as a whole. Some of us took sides. Not all of them were with human governments. The Statisticians of Iteration X claim we're 11.6% more likely than any other Technocrat to turn to the Nephandi. Some of us did. The Jovian Veterans were reactivated during WWII. Above the Earth, we fought a war like no other, one fueled by the greatest of desperation. Walls between our dimension and others were being torn apart. The spirits of the dead possessed bodies and rose from foxholes. Unimaginable entities crawled forth from Entropic Space, stalking battlefields.

Gateways to places we still don't understand were opening across the globe. The world had gone mad. We were the last, best hope for humanity's survival. And we tried all we could to ensure it. We allied with Traditionalists to hunt entities not of this world. We built ships to fight encroaching darkness.

And we turned to Science to help us win.

THE CHRONONAUTS INITIATIVE



The mysteries of Time itself have attracted generations of Void Engineers. Our curiosity has caused many of us to never be seen again. What you know as the Chrononauts Initiative was originally called the Temporal Concord, established to monitor interference with the timestream. Based in England after the Grand Housecleaning, the Concord began to spread across the globe, monitoring the evolution of time as a concept and global adherence to the time stream.

The Chrononauts branch of our Pan Dimensional Corps had its roots in the work of the House of Selene, the chroniclers and prophets of the Celestial Masters. Members of that House were quietly absorbed into

other Methodologies, but their intellectual descendents brought their interest in prophecy with them. Once the Temporal Concord published papers that established their methods for temporal monitoring, they petitioned to begin work on a Procedure to exchange points in time.

The cost of the research was too great, for few Chrononauts survived experiments. This research and the Temporal Concord was dismantled in 1912, as we evaluated the losses of personnel to the work of the Temporal Concord.

During WWII, the Dimensional Science Evaluation, Administration and Training Committee reactivated the Temporal Concord. As we faced an imminent threat to reality — the Nephandi invasion — DSEATC authorized

the Initiative to use “all mathematical and Enlightened resources available” to develop temporal projections, weighing the odds of a win against the Nephandi.

Outside the Void Engineers, such work was denigrated as scientifically unverifiable. Only the Statisticians of Iteration X stood by the Initiative, loaning its expertise to the Chrononauts who peered forward in time. Though scientific theorems have yet to prove their long-range predictions were indeed the fruit of time travel, internal records credit the Chrononauts as a vital division in the routing of Nephandic invasion. Laboring in the listening posts built to monitor the extra-dimensional invasion, the bond between Iteration X and the Void Engineers deepened to a degree not seen again until the Dimensional Anomaly.

Of the 20 men and women recruited by the Initiative, only seven survived to the end of WWII. Five remained on active duty; two became academy instructors. Doctor Margaret Zimmerman and Doctor Vanessa Yardley published a joint paper after the end of the war, which DSEATC immediately censored.

Zimmerman and Yardley’s findings, published in *On the Observance of Everett Volumes in Wartime*, presented a portion of their collected data during the war. Everett Volumes cut across all dimensions and perceived time. Zimmerman and Yardley attempted to make a case for a multi-Convention expansion of the Chrononauts Initiative, to protect the time stream by any means. Their recommendation was paired with a theory: that the Nephandi invasion force contained Nephandic forces from beyond currently observed time and space. The Nephandi, they claimed, somehow used Everett Volumes to amass their invasion fleet across time streams. Though incapable of proving so with Enlightened Science, they argued that by the use of mathematical democracy, that such an anomalous Procedure could be possible. Zimmerman and Yardley were both declared MIA in 1989, while engaging in a TEF project set to exchange with a point in time during 1999 — what would be the same year as the birth of the Dimensional Anomaly.

The Initiative quickly downgraded to a sub-Methodology of the PDC after the disappearance of the two original remaining program survivors. After eight years of producing no results, the Syndicate fully defunded it in 1997, claiming it as a “fiscal drain from other, viable programs.”

In the wake of the Dimensional Anomaly, censored papers and projects have come to light, including the work of the Chrononauts Initiative, whose activities DSEATC thoroughly buried. While we’ve toiled to rebuild our defenses, we have turned to the past for new answers to our problems. In the countless projects in our history, we may find the key to bring the lost home.

So, we have cooperated with Traditionalists, bent time to win a war, and saved the Earth twice from a statistically guaranteed annihilation. What we didn’t see coming next may be a bit comical.

The Space Race

For the Masses, the space race appeared simple: the USA versus the USSR, astronauts versus cosmonauts. We didn’t expect the Space Race because it wasn’t born of curiosity. It was started by the Cold War, to establish a foothold in space, a path to security and military intelligence. We wanted to go to space to find what was in the Void. The American and Soviet governments wanted to go to protect their people — and prove who had better scientists.

The race for the stars was rewriting what the Masses saw as possible. When these changes occur, we see fluctuations in our Procedures. What was once impossible to perform on Earth, was suddenly inconsequential in the Masses’ minds. It wasn’t a miracle, but by the barest margins, Paradox eased. The Masses looked up.

The Cold War complicated things for us. Void Engineers are born everywhere, and trying to move them out of the Soviet Union became progressively difficult. It was one of the only times in history that we and the NWO sympathized with each other. Every Convention had people caught on the other side of the Iron Curtain. But they felt the pressure as keenly as we did. We have not bonded with them at any other time in history. When the Cold War was over, the NWO retreated back into their Tower. We had much more than the loss of their companionship to face.

Spaceflight began to look viable to the Masses. When Neil Armstrong walked on the pale jewel we call the Moon, they felt a spark of wonder, of possibility. Even the Syndicate was hopeful. We could take humanity to the stars. They already wanted to go. They’d made it to the stars. They only needed the smallest gestures of help.

But after the Iron Curtain fell, so did the sky.

Challenge of the Mind

NASA's *Challenger* shuttle exploded within seconds of leaving the ground. In the massive number of parts it takes to leave this earth, a defective O-ring led to a series of mechanical failures. This was no conspiracy, or work of outside forces. Space travel is fraught with peril and equipment failure, and the Masses would learn this in the most tragic way possible.

The seven-person crew of *Challenger* perished in the explosion. The news traveled faster than anyone had ever seen, and the world over was full of smoke trails on flickering news screens. The Masses belief in space travel was shaken. For some, even broken. Paradox for us in the ensuing months was brutal. The Syndicate swore off its dreams of low orbit tourism, and took sweet satisfaction in saying we were on notice. If the Masses lost their faith entirely, Paradox alone would ground us. The Syndicate would merely have to wait.

Dr. Catherine Nichols left us when *Challenger* exploded. She'd served for nearly 40 years, one of the bravest women of her generation. Her defection was, at first, let lie. It would be considered unorthodox and dangerous by other Conventions, but we believed it was the right thing to do. It is easy to become embittered and disillusioned. We let her go because we thought, with time, she would heal and return. In 1995, Dr. Nichols published details about the Cop and Darkside Moonbase. We have no idea if she survived the Anomaly.

It was the end of the last millennium that brought everything to a head. BCD and NSC had been steadily overworked since the first war. With the end of WWII, the problem was no longer threats on a single front. The Nephandi were out among the stars and on Earth, as were the Marauders and the Traditions. The fires of the pogrom burned strong, and yet there were other threats to deal with. Things we would have called monsters as children were walking among us.

The Statisticians of Iteration X spoke of increasing entropic matter. Syndicate representatives confessed to murky futures, the NWO felt the world slipping away. Progenitors had their own distinct internal issues to wrestle. And then a star unlike any other appeared in the sky. Incursions from other dimensions were increasing, and the War with the Traditions raged on. The chance of the world ending

was at its strongest, and there was nothing we could do but brace for impact.

Beyond the Call

The world as we knew it went up in flames in June of 1999. To the Masses, it was a terrible summer. One more terrible summer, with many lost lives. For us, it was when the world ended. An entity out of legend rose up from the Earth. The strife of the Traditions boiled over in their very halls. We dropped bombs and turned orbital mirrors from their place in the firmament to set their eyes upon the world. Cataclysm after cataclysm. The deaths of Traditionalists and Enlightened have never been so many.

Your generation hears about the Dimensional Anomaly, and you think of it like a blackout: all at once. But it was a storm, roiling across everything we knew. Little warning, and then it began to form. As the calls flooded in, we realized — before the rest of the Union — that life as we knew it ended. And then there wasn't time for realizations. Ships crashed from the sky. Constructs fell. The Anomaly draped itself like nightfall across liminal spaces between our world and other dimensions. What you know, the Union knows too. It was a terrible event, one none of them truly understand. But they trust us to solve the mystery of the Anomaly, and save them from it.

We reached out to personnel the world over, to replenish the ranks and rebuild. I was one of the first taikonauts to be trained decades ago, but now I am the teacher of your generation, and those to come through your sacrifices. Where there were once few taikonauts, there are now an overwhelming number of us. We are scattered like stars through the heavens, and we have been strewn across the world to save it.

Our fellow Technocrats want everyone to come home. They want the world to be whole again. They're not ready to admit that we've left that world behind. What we have left is our most essential duty: survive at all costs.

I ask of you what I have asked of myself every morning since we learned of the existence of the Dimensional Anomaly. To continue with the task at hand. To keep Earth safe. To provide the hope that will sustain our sister Conventions. By doing this, we will have done what we can for those we lost.

We must live, or all that we have ever done means nothing.

FIELD GUIDE TO ⊕ EXTERNAL RELATIONS



Whether you're out in the Void, wandering around Earthside, or anywhere in between, you're going to run into all sorts of people (and not-people). Use this as a guide when you come into contact with someone you aren't already familiar with.

THE ⊕ CONVENTIONS

Regardless of personal opinions, the Void Engineers need the Technocracy. Not for our own sake, but because a disintegrated Union means we suddenly live in a shitstorm with enemies on all sides and few ports of safe harbor. Of course, we're complicating matters by keeping a lid on dimensional travel and information from beyond, but it would all be a hell of a lot worse if we didn't.

From their perspective, we're a "problem." Hell, many even worry that we'll defect. Your friend today might be a thorn in your side tomorrow. So keep on your guard when dealing with any Unionist outside our ranks... even friends and family.

ITERATION ×

Iteration X frightens us. Its obsession with the past — with Autochthonia and the Computer (and their Computer 2.0 project) — is borderline unhealthy. For the last decade, they've pressured us to go on trips to the Horizon derelicts and elsewhere. At first, we humored them, unaware of the greater threats since the Anomaly. When mission after mission didn't return from Autochthonia, we banned travel there.

As you might imagine, that didn't leave them happy.

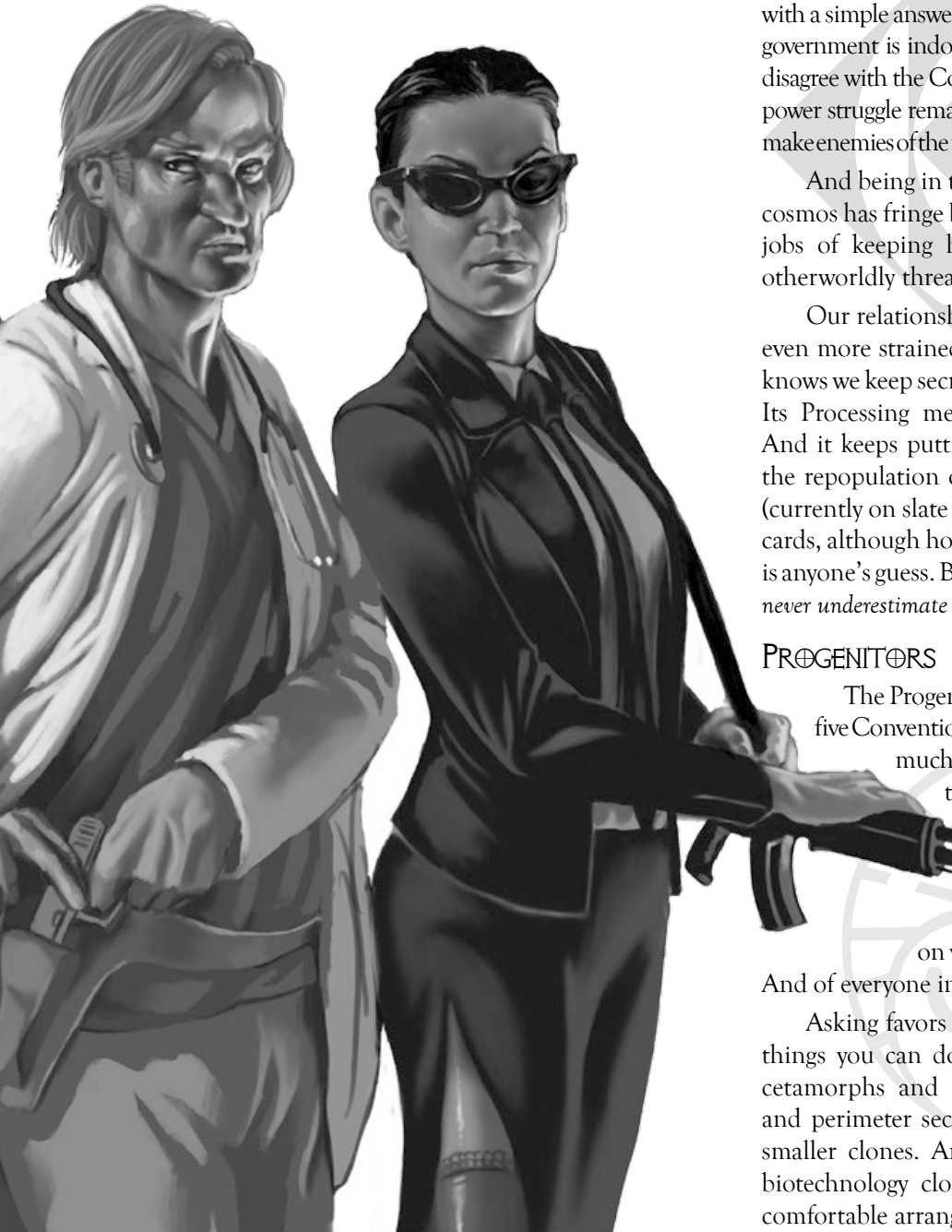
We're able to get some assistance from the Machine Convention in exchange for giving them

space in Station Yemaja and other distant holdings. Notably from the Macrotechnicians, who have taught us a thing or three about Voidship design and construction. But Iterators are constantly reminding us of what they'd be able to do for us if only we would fully cooperate.



Sometimes, when they think we aren't listening, they talk about how the rest of the Union is too chaotic for its own good. And the Statisticians seem the most suspicious about us; their analysis is likely getting too close to the truth.

That Iteration X is closer to NWO these days — even to the point of letting NWO take over the HIT Mark program and turning it into, well, an abomination — tells us a lot about the Union's new political makeup. If shit does go down, anyone up against NWO will have to deal with Iteration X.



NEW WORLD ORDER

If we have a genuine foe in the Technocracy, it's the New World Order. This isn't new — it lives to distrust others, and that's especially dangerous in these troubling times. Its agenda of controlling everything is quite at odds with ours of exploring everything. It conditions new Technocrats with Processing; we fix ours with Deprocessing. There are dozens of places we can point to where we're polar opposites.

Because of this, many Traditionalists keep asking us why we're *with* the Union. That's a damned good question, with a simple answer: NWO is in control of the world. Every government is indoctrinated and co-opted. We vehemently disagree with the Conspiracy Convention, but as long as the power struggle remains civil, there's no cause to leave it and make enemies of the most powerful organization in the cosmos.

And being in the most powerful organization in the cosmos has fringe benefits like letting us do our damned jobs of keeping humanity from being consumed by otherworldly threats.

Our relationship over the last few years has become even more strained, as if that was even possible. NWO knows we keep secrets, and it continues to sniff for them. Its Processing methods have grown more aggressive. And it keeps putting us in a hard place by mandating the repopulation of Horizon coded in the Time Table (currently on slate for 2015). It's pushing us to show our cards, although how that plays into the possible civil war is anyone's guess. But if there's one thing to keep in mind, *never underestimate the New World Order.*

PROGENITORS

The Progenitors is the most visibly changed of the five Conventions since the Dimensional Anomaly, and much for the better. Not only did they lose their leadership, they abandoned their entire command structure. Naturally, we had a part in this, as we've been in continual contact with Progenitors from across all the Methodologies and on various rungs of their academic ladder. And of everyone in the Union, they're our closest allies.

Asking favors of the Progenitors is one of the safer things you can do. We make use of its sea uplifts — cetamorphs and cephalomorphs — for maintenance and perimeter security around Station Yemaja and its smaller clones. And with its advanced medicine and biotechnology close to home, this has grown into a comfortable arrangement.

Some of the younger Progenitors have taken a page from us, for good and ill. These are the people in “Applied Science,” which is another way of saying “scientists with guns.” Kids saw us going out into the world and trying to make things right, and took some initiative. Good for them. Hell, their Biosphere Explorers are practically Void Engineers. (Some even know a bit of Dimensional Science!)

It’s not all roses, though. We know the Convention has its own agenda, and if shit goes down in the Union, it’s probably got Plans B, C, D, and E up its sleeve. So accept its help, and even ask for it — we should treat it like an ally if we want to keep it as one. But keep your guard up, especially when it comes to Applied Sciences. Their hatred for the Traditions is the main reason we can’t bring them on board.

SYNDICATE

If civil war were to break out among the Conventions tomorrow, we’d probably side with the Syndicate. Reluctantly, but there you go.

From our perspective, there isn’t a lot of difference between the NWO and the Cash-or-Credit Convention, at least from a practical standpoint. They’re both people Conventions, focused on the mudball to the exclusion of other vistas. And they both fear us. But where NWO wants to control what it fears, the Syndicate wants to co-opt it through bribery and resource management.

Frankly, that makes the Syndicate easier to work with. They’re trying to sell us a future; it’s not hard to see the Enlightened puppet strings around the birth of commercial space flight. Granted, they don’t get what we’re trying to do, so they’re fucking it up a bit by seeing everything in their paradigm of “profits” rather than of exploration. But you gotta give credit where it’s due — they aren’t throwing around the antagonism toward us as NWO does.

Remember though that we don’t want a civil war. Clearly Iteration X would side with NWO, so we would have a massive battle on hand — and then be consumed by the Union’s enemies from all sides. But since the Syndicate & NWO think in mudball terms, they don’t see the threats outside. So if the Syndicate ever finds out where we’d land and decides to use that to start some shit, we’re all fucked. That’s why we would reluctantly side with them, and hope we could make such a war quick and decisive enough to get back to the real problems at hand.

THE TRADITIONS

We have allies among the Traditions — many see us as acceptable or even cohabitable, because we actively fight to keep the planet free from scary space assholes. Many

Traditionalists understand that we aren’t Iteration X, NWO, Progenitors, or Syndicate — we don’t have a “co-opt or murder” policy. A lot of these friendlies got their first introduction to us when we were the cavalry coming over the hill to beat down something otherworldly... and we’re not about to disabuse them of that first impression.

We have enemies among the Traditions, as well. Plenty of them see us and just see the people who killed their friends and captured their loved ones. This is why meetings get tense. And some just plain hate us specifically, for past crimes real and imagined or because friends didn’t make it back from joint operations. Resentment breeds hatred; remember that when you’re running ops.

As always, watch your six around them, friend or not.

AKASHIC BROTHERHOOD

To say there’s peaceful coexistence between us and the Akashics would be a misnomer — we don’t really coexist with them. They do their thing in the corners of the world the Technocracy has little hold in. Not that our paths don’t cross; it’s just uncommon. And as long as you aren’t trying to sterilize one of their holy sites or hunting them to put them into brainwashed bipedal tanks, they aren’t likely to get hostile. (Sometimes the young ones do — that’s youth for you.)

Some in their order have commented on the increased number of Asian Void Engineers. Sometimes that’s stated with hope, that cultural understanding will bear fruit. Other times that comes with distaste at our Western trappings.

CELESTIAL CHORUS

There are two types of Choristers: useless ones and dangerous ones. Guess which you’re likely to run into.

The dangerous ones treat hunting down Nephandi and similar threats as a goddamned religious calling. You don’t want to be in their way — either they’ll decide you look a little Dark Side and lash out, or they’ll just punch through you to get to their target. And they’ll sleep well at night, too, because you’re “just some heathen Technocrat.” (Plus, since they’re going after mutual threats, it’s pays for us to let them do their thing.)

Funny thing is that this attitude sort of makes them NSC’s “frenemies.” NSC operatives routinely (and anonymously) slip known inquisitors information on the whereabouts of some batshit evil, and then get out of the way.

CULT OF ECSTASY

While some of the more desperate in our ranks argue that their flawed understanding of Time is almost as functional as Inspired Science’s understanding, the fact remains that as potential military assets, Ecstasies aren’t

especially useful. Some are handy in firefights, to be sure, due to their chemical cocktails that speed up the body's rate of sensory processing and muscle reaction; that's not enough to warrant active combat cooperation. A ship needs discipline, and these free-love raver kids don't know the meaning of the word.

That said, there's one place where these Traditionalists come in useful: shore leave. It's almost a rite of passage among the enlisted — when a ship docks Earthside (or anywhere else where shore leave is an option), the younger guns “sneak off” to party with Ecstasies. And as long as no one winds up in a stretcher or worse, the brass turns a blind eye to it.

DREAMISPEAKERS

For every Dreamspeaker with a live-and-let-live attitude, three others want you personally eradicated. (Thankfully, most of these types aren't actively militant.) If you run into one and she starts spouting about how you're an “Umbra-murderer” or how you're “keeping the Avatar Storm alive,” walk away. That's part of an overall goal to avoid firefights in the Void whenever you can — you never know which will be the one to cost you.

If you do find one willing to cooperate and can deal with the cognitive dissonance of their Dimensional Nonsense, such temporary partnerships prove valuable. Don't turn down assets just because they look and talk funny.

EUTHANATOS

Of our allies among the Traditions, we've spent more and more time with Euthanatoi. We have a common enemy: we need to eliminate Threat Null for the sake of the Union, and they want to give Threat Null their “Good Death.” And for a bunch of people painted as psychotic murder-junkies, they're well disciplined.

This relationship isn't just of shared enemies; the Euthanatos control the most stable launch window on Earth: Ravana's Navel in India. Which makes this partnership dangerous, as in that regard we need them more than they need us. So we keep a limit on how often we ask favors from the Assassin Tradition, in order to minimize our exposure to them.

Many Euthanatoi have experience navigating (and more importantly, returning from) Entropic Space. Even though it's stupid hard to translate their Superstitionist lingo into scientific terms, the rare Necronaut mission usually has a Euthanatos guide.

When dealing with Euthanatoi, don't forget that their idea of a fun Saturday night is to find people who need to die “in order to be free,” and fulfill that. That

could mean you, a teammate, a civilian, etc. (Sure, that's an exaggeration... most of the time.)

HOLLOW ONES

These guys can generally be relied on for local intelligence and area knowledge, but don't consider them useful in a fight. Certainly some are capable of it, and their hearts are in the right place, but the trouble with disaffected counterculture kids is that they have shit for combat training and aversion to military discipline.

A few have asked to join up as recruits, after seeing some real NSC and BCD badasses handle themselves. Sometimes it just takes a glimpse of seeing something beyond moping around in a nightclub, something more meaningful and heroic, to sort these kids out. If they ask, take them in; after all, the Council of Nine doesn't consider these guys theirs.

ORDER OF HERMITES

On the plus side, these Traditionalists understand process, structure, chain of command, and so on — their ways mean discipline. On the down side, they're nutjobs for thinking that playing Harry Potter will somehow make the world a better place. Joint operations are risky, as their presence is as likely to foul things up for us as ours is for them.

So when it comes to using Hermetics willing to cooperate, treat as In Case of Emergency, Break Glass. And then if you have to break the glass, coordinate them as you would a nuke strike — from afar.

In the last two years, we've had multiple incidents involving a lone Hermetic or a small group strike against operatives in the field, both Earthside and beyond. These incidents appear to be operating off of intelligence that the Hermetics really shouldn't have. So when considering a Hermetic's help, make sure the source is trustworthy and the need is great enough to take the risk.

SONS OF ETHER

The Etherites suffered greatly when the Dimensional Anomaly sundered Victoria Station. We used to hear reports of Ether missions to reclaim Victoria and other holdings, but just like us and the Cop, Horizon, Autochthonia, and so on, the silence from such mission reports is telling.

We do team up from time to time, when a threat emerges that targets us both. In fact, they've turned the tide on more than one battle against Threat Null — combined assaults involving Etheric pseudoscience are somehow more effective against Null than either of fighting us alone. If not for the fact that they don't have the manpower or

ships needed for large-scale operations, our buddy-movie team-up might have licked this Threat Null issue in the early years. (Not to mention their disinterest in being under any Convention's military command, but that's Traditionalist stubbornness for you.)

VERBENA

The Verbena are a pain in the ass. Take everything said about the Celestial Chorus, cut out all the useful parts, and you have these assholes. Their hatred of the Technocracy burns brightly, so the best reception you'll get is a bunch of profanity-laden posturing.

All said, it's no big loss. They'd just bleed all over your floor in order to do their little rituals. And that's just disgusting, not to mention unsanitary.

VIRTUAL ADEPTS

That the rest of the Union has such a hate-on for the Adepts means cooperation with them is problematic at best – both because they can't trust us and because we're too often watched Earthside by our "peers." But some recognize that we aren't like the rest of the Union, and continue to court us into joining the other side.

Sometimes our Cybernauts work with them to neutralize threats attempting to breach through using the Digital Web (or perhaps even *born* in the Digital Web). For the most part, though, that's where Adepts and Iterators fight for control of that domain, so we keep our presence in the Digital Web at a commando level. We can't afford to take sides in that front, but neither can we afford to ignore the threats that look to exploit this region.

⊕ OTHER ENTITIES

Here's a brief primer on what other entities you'll encounter on the mudball and in the Void.

NEPHANDI

You remember what your parents and teachers told you about not getting into cars with strangers, no matter what they say or offer? Nephandi are the strangest motherfuckers around. They'll say anything and grant all sorts of favors, if only so you'll tolerate their presence. But don't get into that car; you yell for an adult like you're supposed to.

Even if you're stranded on an airless rock and one is literally offering you a lift, don't get in. Time and time again, we see good people who accept such help in a time of crisis, thinking that they'll get away or that maybe they'll get close enough to the Nephandus to put two in the back of her head. But Nephandi always see it coming. *Always.*

The Nephandi cancer has grown worse over the years, as we've been forced to devote more and more resources to the Threat Null war. Sometimes Nephandi will sit on the sidelines, hidden, and wait for us to need help or perish. When that happens, well, there's a reason each PDC vessel has a self-destruct system. Take as many of those bastards out with you as possible.

MARAUDERS

Dealing with Marauders is complicated, almost as much as dealing with teenagers. But "complicated" doesn't mean "shoot it until it stops moving," as others both Technocrat and Traditionalist would spout. The thing about Marauders is that they aren't always a threat, and sometimes they want the same... well, something similar to what you want.

We have some contact with Marauders with whom we share a common cause of eradicating other threats in the Void, notably the Umbral Underground. Let's keep those relationships as stable as, well, as humanly possible.

Conventional wisdom is that we're the most likely of the Technocracy to turn Marauder. Some even call us "the Mad Convention" behind our backs. For once, the wisdom is true, but the numbers are exaggerated. War is hell and it takes its toll. NSC psychologists do what they can to prevent Enlightened Madness.

When that fails, those who maintain a thread of lucidity are invited to join Captain Phillip Broughton's "Sidereal Strike Force." (Practice this phrase: "An all-Marauder strike force? What? That would be crazy! We'd never do that!")

VAMPIRES

Jesus fucking Christ, won't these assholes die already? (You know what I mean.) We used orbital mirrors to exterminate the ancient vampire Zapathasura in Bangladesh. We unleashed Enlightened-enhanced nuclear warheads on that site. To say we loathe vampires might just be a wee bit of an understatement.

Of course, with war resources being what they are, the front against vampires isn't a priority. That's what slipping information to Progenitor "action scientists" is for.

WEREWOLVES

These guys hate our guts. Lycanthrope attacks against us have increased over 200% since the Dimensional Anomaly hit. Think of them as the scariest of Dreamspeakers, and then add really big teeth. Use of Enlightened-enhanced napalm is authorized.

The sometimes-exceptions lie in the two city-oriented werewolf tribes: the Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers. But do not assume that such affiliation inherently means

a peaceful meeting, and by no means allow them entry into any Technocratic facility.

POST-LIFE ENTITIES

PLEs are extremely dangerous. If you must approach, do so with caution and an exit strategy. Note that they wreak havoc on Inspired Science apparatuses and Devices, especially those with foundations in Dimensional Science. (Which includes the tech you need to get back to base.)

Our friends in the Euthanatos seem to have a more comfortable understanding of PLEs (for which they use the common term “ghosts” or “spirits”), but their explanations are unintelligible mysticism.

FAERIE

These extradimensional entities tend to avoid us. Thank fuck — like we need another headache. *At worst*, you might meet one that’s annoying. Do not engage; ammo isn’t free.

HUNTERS

Standard operating procedure: feed these preternaturally enhanced humans intel on minor threats and let them go to town. At the end of the day, these guys are on our side, whether they know it or not, so try not to point them at something that’ll get them killed.

STRANGER SHIT

Other entities exist, but are even less common, including those known as “demons” and “mummies.” Standard operating procedure: report and move off if benign. Flag to someone else (NWO Operatives, Progenitor Applies Sciences, Syndicate Enforcers, Traditionalists, “hunters,” etc.) if a minor threat. If a major threat, your superiors will draft a task force to handle the situation.

THREAT NULL

Nuke them from orbit. It’s the only way to be sure.



THIS SCIENTIST IS
DOING HIS PART. ARE YOU?



ENLIST TODAY!

CHAPTER TWO: FOR ALL MANKIND



We're pretty fucking awesome.

Sure, everyone in the Union feels that way about their tribes. But they're wrong. Capital-W Wrong. We're awesome because we're *dreamers*. Everyone else has forgotten how. (Well, maybe not Iteration X, but that's another story.) Remember when you were a kid, and you'd look up at the stars and marvel at them? Wonder what it's like out there? If someone is looking back?

Of course you did. Everyone does. We Void Engineers not only remember that dream, we *live* it. We're out there, exploring, inventing, and doing what we do so very well: *discovering what's out there*.

However, the days when that was the only thing that mattered to us are long gone. We rarely explore purely for its own reward. Nearly all our energy is spent on defending the human race from the nightmares that surround it. Maybe one day we'll come back to the dream, but for now, it's a luxury we cannot afford.

PATTERNS OF FORCE



When we were wrenched awake, we realized that the loose federation that engendered so much scientific freedom and discovery was getting people killed. In the early days of the Anomaly, co-ops (what we call amalgams), vessels, and entire constructs were being annihilated at a terrifying rate. The only rational response was to expand the role of our security divisions and militarize as many co-ops as possible. We will never completely change – not being scientists isn’t an option. But everyone in the Convention receives comprehensive combat training, from the members of the ETD to the Technicians with mops and rubber gloves.

MILITARY RANKS

Our military keeps us safe from the nastier parts of the job. Nephandi and Marauders, aliens, mutant sharktopi, the inconveniently not-so-dead... the list goes on and on. We call our troops **Marines**. Before the Anomaly, they cultivated a Terminator-like image on the job, but they’d hang a lampshade on it when it was just Void Engineers around. Today, it’s no longer an act. Our Marines are the leading edge in the hostilities against the chaos wrought by the Anomaly. They are the first in and last out; they lead boarding actions on cavernous space hulks, storm enemy strongholds, and guard us while we sleep.

Our Universal vehicles act as mobile platforms for war operations for the Marines. The **Fleet** crews these ships, and engages in hostile actions on a large scale. At first, the Fleet was a ragtag collection of scientific and cargo ships built around the few remaining *Qui La Machinæ* – the mainstay of our fleet (see p. 94). In the last decade, most of those smaller support vessels have been militarized, scrapped, or mothballed. New classes of warships replaced them, and the Fleet runs them with a deadly precision. Their main operations include assaults on large enemy Constructs, escort and convoy duty, and defensive pickets around Earth and our remaining holdings in the Near and Deep Universe.

Before the Anomaly, our leaders were called the Dimensional Science Evaluation, Administration, and Training Committee (DSEATC), and they served more as arbiters and trendsetters than commanders. Lead by the legendary Tychoides, DSEATC would dole out funding and recognition to co-ops doing interesting and

important work, and get involved in internal clashes as well as external inquiries, mostly from the NWO and Syndicate. Since the DSEATC was lost to the Anomaly, we’ve had to change our leadership style. Its replacement, the **Existential Threats Directorate** (ETD), leads with a firmer hand; it frequently alters funding and resource flow to wartime projects. The fact that almost no one protests this egregious affront to our carefully wrought culture of scientific discipline and independence is a testament to how prepared we are, as a Convention, to win this war.

Our military has well-defined lines of authority and command. The idea of the co-op, once universal to the Void Engineers, is too dangerous for the Marines and Fleet. In the heat of battle, you just can’t stop for a vote; decisiveness tempered with experience is the best formula for minimizing casualties and getting out alive. Everyone has to be able to trust everyone else to do their jobs. Each facility and large vessel has a **Commandant**, the military counterpart of a Coordinator and the commander of their demesnes. Underneath them is rigid hierarchy that mimics naval ranks.

This radical change in structure, from loose co-ops to a single chain of authority, is necessary because of the nature of the military’s duty. Before the Anomaly, the Fleet’s predecessors (mostly BCD and PDC units) were often the subject of ridicule and derision. This caused quite a few drunken brawls at the many “illegal” stills in the Cop. Since everything went to hell, almost everyone’s changed their tunes.

It’s funny how the deaths of thousands of friends and colleagues can change your worldview.

CIVILIAN ROLES

We still perform empirical research and exploration, even if that’s taken a backseat to war over the last fifteen years. With the proliferation of the Anomaly, dozens of new threats come to light every day. Our comprehensive network of scientific professionals keeps us ahead of the curve.

Explorers are hands-on. They go to new places and come back with maps, data, and fascinating stories. You’ll find them in Deep Universe exploration vessels, and DSVs poking around the darkest corners of the oceans. If you see an Explorer at dock, they’re there for training, equipment, or downtime. The call of the unknown wilderness is too strong for them to stay put for very long.

DISPLAYS OF HONOR AND VALOR

Our military has a colorful array of commendations and medals that it awards to its personnel. The majority of them are for relatively mundane achievements. A small group of them garner instant respect and admiration from the entire Convention. They are bestowed for acts of selfless bravery, significant and life-saving contributions to the war effort, and for the highest sacrifice a soldier can give; their own lives in exchange for those of their peers.

ORDER OF THE RESPLENDENT GATE

This award is given for either significant contribution to the safety, integrity or operational capacity of the Convention, or for exceptional performance of duty that contributes to the success of a major military command or project. It is the oldest Void Engineer award, dating back to the Han Dynasty of China. The first recipient was an anonymous Chinese Explorer in 110 BCE. The Void Engineers formalized it into its own heraldry at its inception.

The award has taken many physical forms over time. Its current form is that of a four-pointed metal star with the Chinese pictogram for “Gate” etched in the center. Any member of the Technocratic Union is eligible for this award.

FLEET CROSS

This award is given for conspicuous acts of bravery in the field of battle, but that fall short of the high standard for the Order of Copernicus medal (see below). The first recipients of this award were Engineer veterans of World War I. It has been awarded 178 times since 1917, 86 times posthumously.

The Fleet Cross medal is a Premium disc with a pair of crossed torches emblazoned in the center, over a seven-pointed titanium starburst. Only members of the Void Engineer military are eligible for this award.

ORDER OF COPERNICUS

This is the highest honor accorded by the Void Engineers. It is bestowed by a unanimous vote of the leading body of the Convention, for supreme acts of valor, above and beyond the call of duty. It has been awarded 47 times since the foundation of the Convention, 31 times posthumously. Twenty recipients (nineteen posthumous) have been honored since the Dimensional Anomaly. Their portraits hang in a dedicated alcove at the Wall called Heroes’ Corner.

The medal is a circular transparent steel oval plaque emblazoned on a titanium triangle. Etched into the plaque is a holographic map of the traditional Copernican model of the solar system. The triangle symbolizes the Greek letter delta, the traditional symbol for acceleration. Any Void Engineer is eligible for this medal.

JOVIAN SIGIL

This medal is the rarest award given. DSEATC created it after the Jovian campaign of World War II. It only has one criterion: conspicuous bravery in the face of an enemy with the capacity to destroy the human race. Its first recipient was Martin St. Christopher of the *Ptolemy*. He was honored posthumously.

The medal is a hologram of Jupiter that rotates at the same speed as the planet it depicts; every 9.92 hours. Originally the DSEATC was responsible for awarding it, but now that is done by a unanimous vote of all the recipients of the award, the Jovian Veterans. Between 1944 and 2001, it was awarded 39 times, 26 posthumously. In 2001, the Jovian Veterans decided to include Void Engineers who face Threat Null. They have awarded it eleven more times since then. With one exception, all of those particular awards were posthumous.

Investigators are Void Engineers that have clearly defined lines of inquiry. It's not a lifetime thing; Investigators drift in and out of their areas of study during their careers. The term only applies if they say they it does, or accept it when enough of their peers insist. **Technicians** don't have labs or projects of their own, and act as assistants. They're fully fledged Void Engineers who contribute according to their strengths, like anyone else. **Coordinators** are administrators of co-ops. With the widespread militarization of the Convention, they now assume leadership roles, in stark opposition to the cat herding duty of the past.

Those of us who stay home and provide these essential services are called **Researchers**. They don't just sit in a lab or in front of a computer, despite what the name suggests;

they wield welding torches, build firing ranges and wind tunnels, and do what it takes to make the tools we need to do our jobs. They also build and maintain Constructs in hazardous environments for use by other Conventions.

These roles aren't binding. Void Engineers move back and forth between them. For example, our military troops are scientists in their own right. They've contributed plenty of innovations and cool new ideas. Explorers commonly put on their Researcher hats to build and test new equipment and technologies all the time, as demanded by their environment. Remember when the crew of *Apollo 13* had to use a wristwatch to time their orbital reinsertion because the flight computers went offline? Shit like that goes down all the time in the Deep Universe.

GETTING YOUR FEET WET



The Void Engineers finds new blood in a lot of the same places as Iteration X or the Progenitors. This means academic settings at all levels, scientific research facilities, and government agencies like NASA, NOAA, CNSA, and ROSCOSMOS. We've poached (and placed) people in the private sector, from SpaceX and Orbital Sciences Corporation, along with dozens of sister organizations around the world dedicated to space exploration. We also look for talent in entities interested in deep-sea operations. Oil corporations and private oceanographic societies produce a handful of Cadets every year. We also look in places you might not expect. Anyone with a desire to explore the unknown is interesting and worthy of consideration. Our field recruiters, usually scientists on loan from our academic institutions, regularly poll yacht and boat clubs, amateur rocketry enthusiasts, and cartography and astronomical societies. We look for anyone with remarkable interests or abilities.

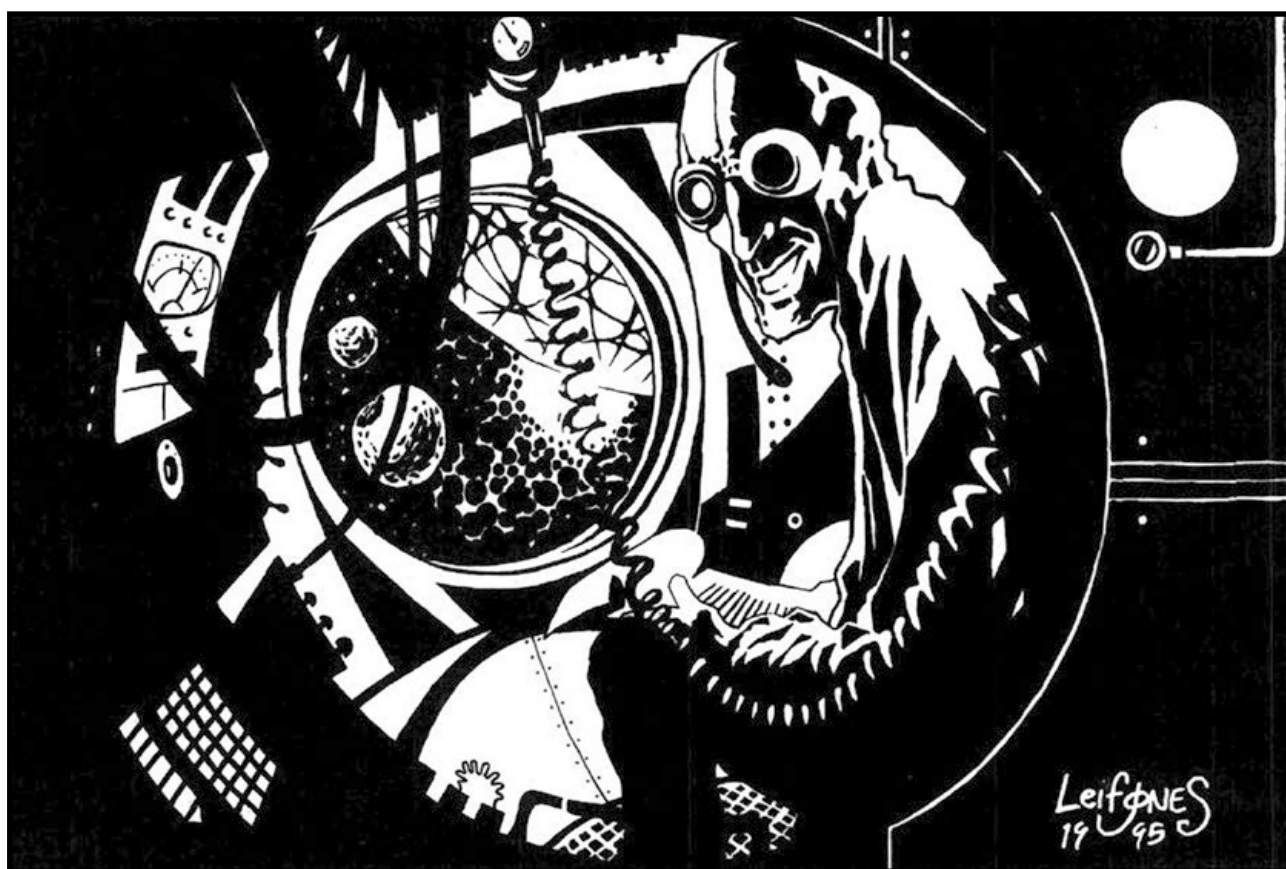
Marine Cadets come from many places. The primary source of enlisted personnel is from Engineer academies; many scholastic washouts still show some glimmer of wider understanding. We also regularly scout military academies and bases for candidates that demonstrate our key virtues. We have standing agreements with their commanders, allowing us to tempt away a few of them every year in exchange for technical or financial assistance. Some candidates come to us out of a sense of wonder and a desire to see the big picture, and sometimes they've already seen a glimpse of it and seek us out for answers.

Marine and Fleet officers are promoted from within. Because of the dire nature of the war, merit is the only way to get promoted. All promotions go through an ETD subcommittee, who exhaustively search for evidence of corruption or favoritism. Brevet promotions are also vetted, once the Fleet's central command is made aware of them.

TAKING INITIATIVE

The interesting part of recruitment isn't where we look or whom we pick. It's the people who pick *us*. Over a third of our recruits over the last five years have somehow stumbled across Void Engineer fronts, and displayed the requisite skill and attitude for recruitment. Sometimes they're random temps off the street, sometimes they're interested observers who strike up conversations, and some just show up on the front porch like stray cats. Naturally, all of these unsolicited applicants are put through our standard Mind Procedure scans, looking for nasty surprises like NWO or Syndicate moles; 49 out of 50 come back clean. (Which is a better return than a few decades ago.)

What's *really* surprising is that the number of these recruits has been slowly increasing since the Anomaly started. No one knows why this trend is expanding. A co-op at the University of Dar es Salaam floated a white paper on the subject, postulating that our inquisitive natures draw like-minded people to us in some sort of resonant Primal harmonic, and that same openness makes us easy for them to find. Whatever the cause, it certainly flies in the face of the rest of the Union's secretive nature. All the other Conventions bend over backwards to keep themselves unobserved and distinct from the Masses they're ostensibly sworn to protect.



Not so with us; we welcome anyone with the desire to explore and wherewithal to find us. Our doors are always open.

AND A STAR TO STEER HER BY

Regardless of where our Cadets come from, they must embody our guiding principles. These are the stars by which we navigate. Our ethics, our identity, our reason for being all stem from these ideals.

Curiosity. We're all here because deep down in our hearts we all have the burning desire to see what's over the next hill. We just simply *have to know*. You won't have to explain that to anyone you work within our Convention. Every sacrifice of safety and personal space, every long journey into the darkness, every privation and brush with mortality is worth it when yours are the first set of eyes to see a new and beautiful place. To decipher the Universe's mysteries and be the first to revel in the knowledge we gain. To *know*.

Fortitude. Stones. Ovaries. Guts. Chutzpah. Whatever you call it, you need a kind of bravery that

goes above and beyond. We routinely deal with threats that would turn the majority of people inside out with terror. When you come face to face with those things, you've got no choice but to keep it together. Dropping your sidearm when facing a slaver's nightmare with your college roommate's face will get your whole team killed. This is more than mere stoicism; to understand the strange and nightmarish, we must first be open to it, and even be changed a little by it. The perspective this allows us to see the Universe for what it truly is.

Know-how. We need something more than intelligence. Pure abstract reasoning is incredibly useful, but you've also got to be able to put the pieces together in the right way. This is "big picture thinking," just not in the sense you might expect. You're not trying to *see* the big picture; you're helping to *make* it. We need scientists who can take existing technology and science, and build something new and useful out of it. It's like the scene in *Apollo 13*, where a group of desperate cowboy geniuses rebuilt a CO₂ scrubber out of plastic bags, rubber bands, and spit. Out there in the wilds of the Void, nothing less cuts it.

SPACE MADNESS



Life in the Void Engineers doesn't always go as planned. And I'm not talking about busted machines or getting marooned, either. Occasionally, an Engineer's sanity can veer far off course. Sometimes we catch it early, like during the aforementioned deprogramming phase. Sometimes they snap during the PE and risk blowing up a lab or six. In either of these cases, the offender is sent to the Descartes Institute of Mental Health (DIMH) to get sorted out before returning to duty. We deal with even more serious infractions this way. In the rare cases of intentional acts – like sabotage, leaking sensitive information, and even murder – we send the violator to DIMH for analysis

and advice. We have one hard, standing rule: never send violators to the NWO for Processing.

The worst losses are when dark forces steal an Engineer from us. We deal with them every day; Marauders tear across the Near and Deep Universe alike, sowing insanity and horror. The Nephandi and Entropic EDEs bubble up out of the Underworld, seducing and maddening in equal measure. Threat Null lulls and cajoles with familiar faces. You just don't come back from that kind of corruption. When one of us falls to it, the only reasonable and humane course of action is to kill the poor bastard before he can do more damage and take more people from us. We still do this, even after losing so many in the Anomaly. Everyone knows what comes next when you fail to contain and eradicate that kind of chaos.

METHODOLOGIES



We Void Engineers arrange our Methodologies along lines of scientific inquiry and exploration. This configuration, which we've tweaked and optimized over the last century, allows us to efficiently pursue our goals with a minimum of crossover and wasted effort. The Methodologies aren't strict hierarchies like in other Conventions, but rather loosely aligned groups of amalgams with similar goals and methods. There are exceptions to this arrangement, most notably the Border Corps Division, which requires a structure of command and responsibility that other Methodologies don't.

There are five Methodologies in the Convention, each with a particular area of specialty. The aforementioned **Border Corps Division** maintains a fragile security cordon around the Gauntlet and Anomaly, patrols the Near Universe, and provides security for the rest of the Convention. The **Earth Frontier Division** explores the numerous remaining uncharted regions on and inside the Earth. The **Neutralization Specialist Corps** maintains a vigil over the Earth, guarding it from invaders. The **Pan-Dimensional Corps** pushes the boundaries of human knowledge out in the Deep Universe. **Research & Execution** keeps the home fires burning, and builds and tests new equipment and vessels for the rest of the Convention.

BORDER CORPS DIVISION

The Border Corps Division (BCD) specializes in patrolling the Near Universe for threats and neutralizing them before they can pass through the Gauntlet. It fights and destroys the most frightening entities out there. Nephandi, Marauders, alien intelligences, “spirits” and “gods” maddened by the Anomaly, even Threat Null; anything that can hack its way into our homeworld and threaten lives is in its crosshairs.

Don’t be so foolish as to dismiss these marines as mere dumb grunts, however. To be sure, they know their way around armored environmental suits and phased plasma assault rifles, and are skilled and experienced tacticians and fighters. But they’re also scientists. Almost all of them attended a Void Engineer college, and have years of scientific training and expertise on par with their martial abilities. The Marines are well known throughout the Union. They serve as a model and inspiration for many post-Anomaly Technocrats, in particular the Progenitors’ Applied Sciences. Both groups share twin masteries of scientific thought and martial action.

HISTORY

The Border Corps Division’s history began long ago. The ancient Seekers rarely traveled alone; the spaces between human civilizations were vast, untamed, and filled of danger. That danger was part of why the Seekers ventured out in the first place, but there was little point to exploring if you didn’t survive to tell what you’d discovered. Seekers struck out with retinues of various sizes, and always included folks good in a fight. By the time of the Convention of the Ivory Tower, these soldiers and bodyguards organized themselves into several autonomous guilds. They determined which Seeker expedition or Celestial Master enclave would get which group of stalwart defenders.

Over time, the guilds evolved into rigid models based along military lines. Sometimes they took their *nom de guerre* from a decorated and charismatic leader, such as Hawking’s Rifles (a legendary mercenary group during the Napoleonic wars). Other times, they were descended from renowned military groups, like the vaunted Burmese and Nepalese Ghurkas. These units had rivalries, friendly and otherwise—stiff competition has always been a hallmark of militant groups in closely overlapping fields of operation. The Grand Housecleaning of Queen Victoria put an end to all that, in theory. The newly formed Technocratic

Union ordered the guilds to organize into one larger unit, branded the Border Corps Division.

The BCD has an unenviable and nigh-impossible mission: to patrol the Near Universe and keep threats from penetrating the Gauntlet. Before the Anomaly, its *modus operandi* was straightforward compared to the work of other Methodologies. It sent staggered patrols throughout the space bounded by the Gauntlet, occasionally checking in on Constructs and holdings in the various realms spread around the Near Universe. It also kept (and still keeps) close tabs on weak spots in the Gauntlet, looking for any unauthorized crossings. BCD agents Earthside watch local openings, and infiltrate any Traditional groups that try to pass back and forth with impunity.

In those days, the BCD was mostly Marines. The dangerous and hostile nature of their work made that necessary. The few non-military Engineers they had were small contingents of Researchers and Technicians assigned to work on their Constructs. They didn’t need a lot of Explorers and Investigators, as the majority of the places they went (the Near Universe, and directly to and from Constructs in the Deep Universe) had already been explored. Star charts and other maps were sufficient for their needs.

Of course, things are quite different today; more scientific personnel work in this Methodology than any other point in its history. The BCD’s primary theater of operations, the Near Universe, has gotten exponentially more dangerous and *weird* in the last ten years. Having seasoned science officers onboard every vessel can make the difference between life and death. The command structure is still military, however; even the folks in the lab coats have uniforms and side arms, and they all carry rank.

OPERATIONS

The BCD’s mission has always been important, but these days they get a much larger slice of the budget than in decades past. They reason they place themselves directly between the nightmares and the Earth is simple and honest: they do it to save lives. *Every goddamned life*. The mission statement in the BCD’s annual budget proposal states their primary objective is “to combat the deleterious impact on Consensual Reality posed by exterior threats,” but most Marines couldn’t give 0.02% of one fuck about that. They do the job because if they don’t, people die.

People in BCD are often called “space marines” for good reason; they’re the first ones in and the last ones out

of any offensive engagement. Those operations include harrowing patrols into and around the hottest spots in the war against Threat Null, and all the other dangers in the chaotic mess that is the Anomaly.

The region of Conventional Space around Earth now requires more involvement from the Void Engineers than in the past few centuries. The **Near Orbit Picket** deals with fragments of the Dimensional Anomaly that “leak through” space above the atmosphere, and with

the harder specimens
of life that can
survive reentry.

The Research
& Execution
retro-adapts

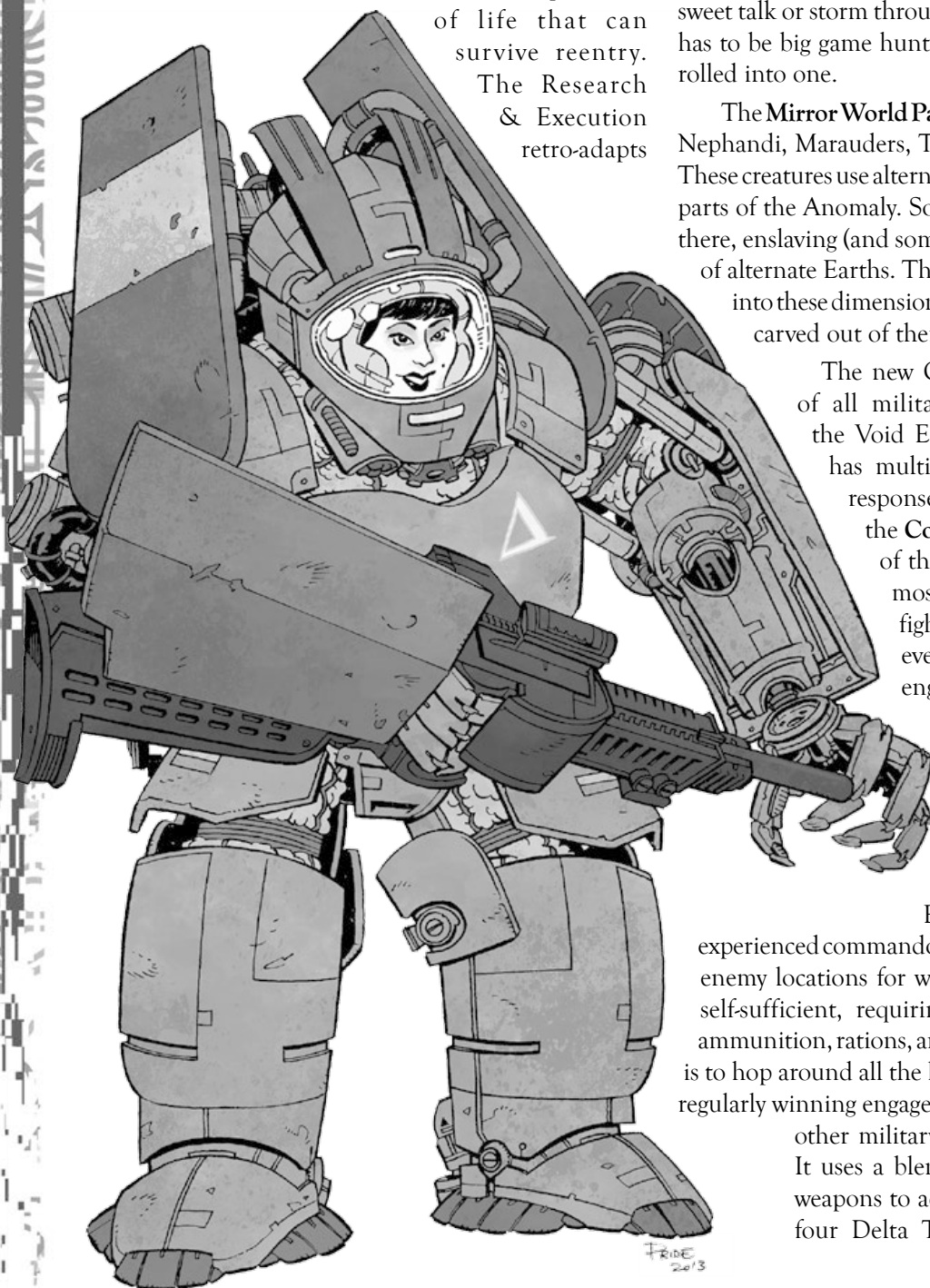
its equipment to exceed NASA standards for operations in vacuum and cosmic radiation.

Six of the nine surviving facilities we built for the Progenitors in Biospheric Space have been militarized and repurposed by the **Biospheric Space Garrison**. The insanity in the Near Umbra has its reflections in this portion of the Universe; the native fauna either goes berserk or tries to slip through the Gauntlet into Conventional Space on a semi-regular basis. Additionally, sentient denizens from Umbral dimensions try to either sweet talk or storm through the gates to Earth. The BSG has to be big game hunters, diplomats, and soldiers all rolled into one.

The **Mirror World Patrol** polices Everett Volumes for Nephandi, Marauders, Threat Null, and other horrors. These creatures use alternate realities to sidestep the worst parts of the Anomaly. Sometimes they make a home in there, enslaving (and sometimes eating) the populations of alternate Earths. The MWP deters active incursion into these dimensions, and annihilates any footholds carved out of them.

The new Copernicus Station is the hub of all military operations conducted by the Void Engineers. Naturally, the NCO has multiple defensive layers. The fast response branch of those defenses is the **Combat Space Patrol**, comprised of the best hotshot pilots flying the most advanced single-person space fighters the Technocratic Union has ever produced. The CSP regularly engages the deadliest and fastest foes in the Post-Anomaly Near Universe; only the best and brightest need apply.

Delta Teams are the most feared and respected group of Marines in the Void Engineers. Its highly trained and experienced commandos regularly operate in hazardous enemy locations for weeks on end. A Delta Team is self-sufficient, requiring only regular restocking of ammunition, rations, and new orders. Its *modus operandi* is to hop around all the hot spots in the Near Universe, regularly winning engagements with the enemy that any other military unit would consider suicide. It uses a blend of hypertechnology and primitive weapons to achieve its goals. There are only four Delta Teams in existence. They are



referred to as Delta-One through Delta-Four. Delta-Five went MIA in 2009, disappearing in a stealthed incursion into a Threat Null enclave near Autochthonia.

CONVENTION

The BCD's primary role within the Methodology is security for scientific co-ops and their operations. This includes escorting convoys in the Near Universe and garrison duty at most Void Engineer holdings. In any given construct, if they don't run the security operations, they train the security forces already embedded there. Their sphere of operations includes Earth and most of the remaining holdings beyond the Gauntlet.

Their critics rail against this near hegemonic control of security operations. While it's true they're actively militarizing the Convention, everyone is painfully aware of the fact that there's a goddamn war on. Most of us view it as a necessary evil that will be addressed once we figure

out just what to hell to do with this mess we've created. In response, the most vocal of critics wonder if the security situation will ever be downgraded, and if this isn't just a naked power grab on the part of the BCD.

As far as the rest of the Union is concerned, the BCD is our only Methodology that has its head screwed on right. NWO's Operations and the more jingoistic wire-heads in Iteration X eat up stories of the BCD's exploits. And the Syndicate likes the fact that they get (what they consider) tangible results from the BCD in exchange for all the money they give every quarter. This used to cause some resentment in the other Methodologies; not towards the BCD, but the Syndicate. After all, whose fault was it that the bean counters weren't educated enough to grasp the importance of Void Engineer research, and would rather reward flashy space opera in the form of BCD mission reports? Nowadays, any stream of operational budget is considered too useful to bitch about, at least openly.



EARTH FRONTIER DIVISION

Not every unexplored frontier is somewhere off in space. (That's the final frontier, not the *only* one.) Inside the safety of the Gauntlet's cocoon, the Earth Frontier Division (EFD) explores the remaining terrestrial mysteries — deep ocean trenches, the fields of Antarctica, deep jungles in South America and Asia, parts of the Australian outback, and the Sahara.

You also find it in more mundane locales, embedded in the most well known urban landscapes in the world, such as abandoned sewer systems or structures buried under ice floes and sand dunes. It even explores more esoteric and semiotic places like the legendary Fiddler's Green, Brittany's Ker-Ys, and the lost continent of Mu (and its many pretenders). It's driven to explore, map, and understand every last corner of the Earth.

HISTORY

The EFD's lineage begins with the Seekers. That's what we call them *now*, anyway; every culture produced them, and gave them different names. Unbound by common origin, community, or even knowledge of each other, the earliest Seekers were simply men and women who were not content to live out their lives in one place, never knowing what lay beyond the bounds of their little worlds. Over time, and with bitterly won experience, the Seekers began to accrue both scientific knowledge and Inspired individuals into their ranks. From this crucible sprang the earliest instances of mapping, navigation, and codified survival training.

By combining forces with the Enlightened Celestial Masters — who would eventually become Research & Execution — the Seekers were able to refine their maps and technology. This forged an early alliance between the two groups that, centuries later, paved the way to the founding of the Void Engineers during the Grand Housecleaning. With these improvements, the Seekers pushed out further and further into the unknown, taking the seeds of Western civilization with them. Sadly, they viewed this as the greatest possible philanthropic work humans could engage in, and acquired an air of purpose bordering on the monomaniacal.

You see this behavior over and over again in our history; the political powers that be — kings, sultans, presidents, the New World Order, whatever title they wield — fund explorers and their expeditions with all the right ideas in mind. Then something horrible happens, and almost always for the same reason; because some Void Engineers lose respect for the world, and start treating it like a personal plaything. Sometimes we forget ourselves and poke the Universe with a stick just to see what happens next. We have to remember it's not our place to change or somehow perfect the Universe, only to understand it. When we forget that, people die.

The EFD's history isn't *all* bad, though. It's



comprised of scientists, who learn more from mistakes than from successes. The atrocities and excesses of its early history taught us all the value of restraint and humility. It wields tremendous power; when it explores a new place, it has the ability to destroy it or to nurture it. With a few notable (and *spectacular*) exceptions, it also possesses technology and knowledge that exceeds that of any native life it encounters. The failings of the more militant in its past (or the masters they served) have demonstrate exactly what happens when that power is misused, even with the best intentions. None one wants to go down in the history books as a modern day Conquistador.

⊕ERATIONS

The EFD is divided into groups based on scientific specialty and area of operation. Each has developed Devices and Procedures unique to their preferred flavor of hazardous environment.

The **Aquatic Exploration Teams** (called “Aquanauts” or “Squids”) make the deep sea its home. It isn’t exaggeration to say its mastery of submersible environment blister technology has almost single-handedly allowed the Technocratic Union to continue operations as they stand. Now that the vast majority of the Union’s Near Universe Constructs are destroyed, the AET is building undersea Constructs to replace them. The sudden influx of funds to support this construction effort keeps them the largest and most flush group in the EFD.

The Arctic and Antarctic are where the **Cryogenic Specialists** (or “Snowdogs”) calls home. Despite the clear need for *increased* funding for researching a potential solution to the shrinking of the polar ice caps, the Syndicate has infuriatingly *reduced* their budget every year since 1998. Animal habitats and species aren’t the only things disappearing from the world; dozens of tiny pocket realms and interesting dimensional phenomena have vanished from the Polar Regions.

The **Hydrothermal Botanical Mosaic Analysts** (puzzlingly referred to as “Weedwhackers”) works side-by-side with its Progenitor cousins in the jungles, rainforests, and swamps scattered around the globe. These rich biospheres are teeming with secrets. Whole areas can rearrange themselves, vanishing in and out of static reality like flickering fireflies. Topologies shift like quicksand. Rivers... oh, you get it. It gets *strange* in those environments, and that’s where Explorers really shine.

The **Inaccessible High Elevation Exploration Teams** (“Hangdogs,” for some reason) explores the mountaintops. Every culture near mountains has tales of mythic figures

and creatures who call them home. Ancient cultures in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa all placed their gods in the mountains, and their spiritual beliefs opened gates to their sacred realms, many of which still exist. The IHEET catalogs and researches these phenomena, along with the gorgeous countryside.

Caverns and caves have always held a deep fascination for the human race. The **Subterranean Exploration Corps** (“Groundhogs”) has been mapping them for much, much longer than they’ve had that name. It has an unbroken tradition and history that stretches back to the earliest Explorers on record, and a few mythical ones as well. Over the centuries it has constructed entire libraries to house the volumes of information it’s compiled on the Earth’s buried secrets. Its members are happy to share those secrets over drinks.

The EFD maintains all the Void Engineer-created constructs on Earth, including all deep-sea installations. This herculean task falls to the **Maintenance and Custodial Division** (“Scruffies”). Its unsung heroes in grey jumpsuits somehow keep 16.52 million square feet of Consensus-defying real estate from being devoured by the oceans of the world. Given the incredible importance of these facilities—including Station Yemaja, and its delicate cargo of Paradox-vulnerable personnel and experiments. The Syndicate devotes an awe-inspiring amount of funding to its operations.

The newest group of the EFD is the **Incursion Quantitative Analysis Teams** (“Fringers”). It’s a response to a troubling development in the last three years; fingers and pockets of the Dimensional Anomaly, and all the chaos it wreaks, have been leaking through the Gauntlet and onto Earth. At first, this only happened in remote areas; but in 2013, a Dimensional Anomaly Incursion (DAI) in Mexico City killed 30 people. The effects of a DAI are catastrophic; architecture and landmass twist into unrecognizable shapes, animals and humans become monstrosities (when they survive at all), and the entire region of the incursion bears a semiotic residue that inspires fear and madness for months after the fact. The IQAT responds to these events, gathering data and exploring any remaining overlap with the Anomaly.

Despite the yard-long names, these groups are the organically derived product of decades of research and adaption to the needs of the Methodology. All of them are comprised of co-ops that determined what was interesting and warranted investigation, without any direct intervention from ETD (or its predecessor, the DSTEAC). Of course, it did sign off on all of their proposals, but it

didn't like to use its authority to interfere with what experts in the field deem the proper course of scientific inquiry. And, of course, the ETD doesn't really have the time to ask too many questions, and instead relies on those same experts to guide research and exploration on their own.

CONVENTION

The EFD is our *de facto* ambassadorial corps to the rest of the Union, because its members are the Void Engineers that most other Technocrats are most likely to meet. Its operations in the far corners of the world allow its members to interact closely with the other Conventions. Its people are always present in underground and undersea Constructs, notably Station Yemaja. After all, the EFD built them for the rest of the Union — a fact that generates a lot of good will for the Convention as a whole.

This familiarity is a double-edged sword. Our Convention's methods are somewhat... unorthodox, compared to the rest of the Union. Even casual

conversation with people from other Conventions illustrates this; frequently we get strange looks when some innocuous comment or gesture indicates that we're not as dedicated the Union's plans as everyone else. This is a natural consequence of our broken conditioning, which we go to great lengths to conceal, for obvious reasons.

The EFD's relationship with the rest of the Convention is tense. With the exception of the IQAT — who are a minority — there is a lot of resentment that the Mudball Explorers (as they are derisively named) have it easy, since they don't have to directly face the nightmares past the Gauntlet. These accusations have led to many heated arguments, and even a few fistfights when alcohol is involved. Further fueling the tension, the EFD categorically refuses to cede any operational authority to the Marines. Its leadership claims 44% of them display signs of psychosis stemming from exposure to the Anomaly, and require psychiatric treatment. Hardliners in the BCD and PDC retort with accusations of the EFD of going soft inside the Gauntlet. As hostilities with Threat Null deepen, this divide grows.



NEUTRALIZATION⊕ SPECIALIST C⊕RPS

The Neutralization Specialist Corps comes into play when we fail in our mission to protect the Earth. This is inevitable; our defenses are far too fragmented to provide the comprehensive protection the world enjoyed before the Anomaly. When the enemy breaches the gates, that's when the NSC comes in, making a second line of defense right in our own back yard.

HIST⊕RY

There have always been those among us ready and willing to fight back against Threats from Beyond. This wasn't just one of the core missions of the original Order of Reason, it was one of the main problems the Order was created to resolve. Imagine how it must have been — mages in stone towers, leather yurts, and bloodstained ziggurats around the world were cutting deals with external forces they barely comprehended and had no hope to control, in exchange for a little bit of power and knowledge. By taking a shortcut to wisdom (folly in itself, as it shows none), they opened thousands of doors for entities with immense power and no regard for human life. The Order of Reason (and those who came before them) stepped in put a stop to this mad pursuit for power, because someone had to. While the NSC doesn't enjoy a direct historical link to these forward thinking early Scientists, it certainly has a philosophical link to them and strives to continue their mission.

As a formalized entity, the NSC is a relatively new organization. For the first 22 years of its existence, it was a small division of the BCD called the Office of Entropic Space Affairs. After World War I, the sheer volume of Entropic incursions threw the need for a dedicated response team into sharp contrast. The horrors and privations of the war engendered a thousand-fold increase in Entropic EDE attacks, terrorizing a world left spiritually, economically, and culturally devastated by the war. Nephandic assaults increased at the same time, exploiting the burgeoning chaos on Earth. It was the perfect shitstorm of bad times.

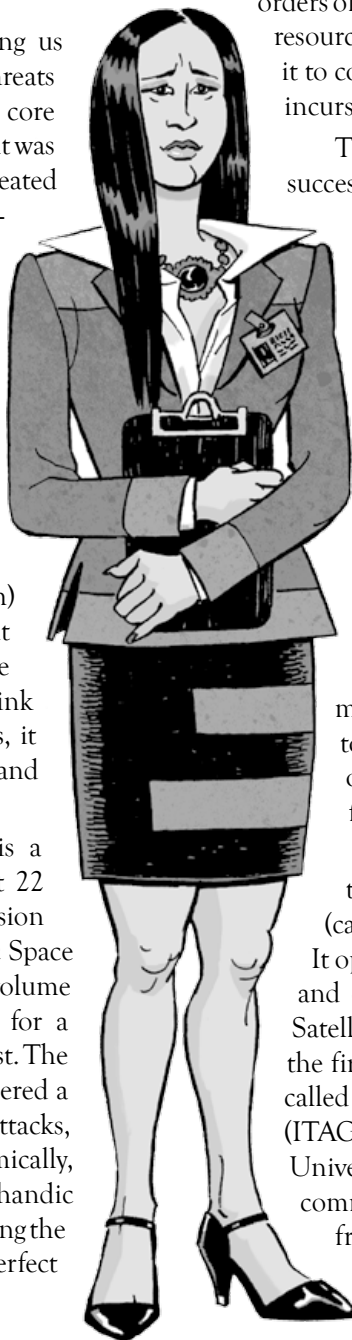
Possibly for the first time since the Convention of the Ivory Tower, the Inner Circle feared that the human race might be destroyed. In an emergency session in September of 1916, it rolled all of the smaller, more specialized ad-hoc EDE hunting groups into the OESA and christened the new organization the Neutralization Specialist Corps. Next, the Inner Circle ordered the Syndicate to increase the discretionary budget of the newly minted NSC by three orders of magnitude. Centralizing its authority and resources made it much more effective, allowing it to comprehensively address hundreds of EDE incursions simultaneously.

This new model proved much more successful. The NSC rolled back the onslaught of EDE attacks within two years. This gave it time to build stronger unified defenses, which were put to the test under similar conditions during World War II. With the lessons learned from those two conflicts, Earth's defenses were ironclad. Between 1949 and 1999, the Earth enjoyed a period of relative peace, with unauthorized crossings at a level never before seen in human history.

⊕PERATIONS

Since its foundation, the NSC's mission has expanded to encompass multiple areas of responsibility. In addition to defending the human race from attackers on two fronts, they also provide a defense from the psychic scars our duties leave on us.

When dangerous entities slip past the BCD, the **Interface Defense Corps** (called the "Moonwatchers") goes to work. It operates a global network of sensor stations and orbital platforms (replacing the Sentinel Satellite network, which was nigh-annihilated in the first minute of the Dimensional Anomaly), called the Incursion Threat Assessment Grid (ITAG). Utilizing the same gear found in Deep Universal Excursion Vessels' navigation and comm suites, the ITAG can detect incursions from the Near Universe with a 79.2% accuracy rate. Considering the size of the planet and the constant shifting



flux interference from the natural Primal flow networks that wrap around and through it, that is a phenomenal success rate. The IDC also employs the ITAG to aid in finding and monitoring Traditional and Deviant gateways through the Gauntlet, as too often external threats use these to compromise the planet's security.

The **Spectral Neutralization Division** (or "Ghostbusters") is NSC's the primary line of defense against threats from Entropic Space. This is a substantially different flavor of operation from the IDC. The only source of first-hand information available is human intelligence gathered by Necronauts, which is spotty at best, given the traumatic and subjective nature of their experiences. All other information must be inferred from Entropic EDE activity. From its four permanent Constructs (in São Paulo, Marrakesh, Düsseldorf, and Saigon), the SND monitors known and emerging atrocity sites, dispatches neutralization co-ops to destroy or contain threats, and minimizes damage to any people in the area. This is incredibly dangerous work. Entropic EDEs (EEDE) possess a frightening array of weaponry and defenses that are nearly impossible to catalog, as each individual appears to be unique in their threat profile. Plus, the buggers are durable. A single EEDE detected in 2004 near the primary atrocity site at Bhopal, India destroyed six SND co-ops over the span of four days, abandoning the site only when it got *bored*.

Regular exposure to the horrors wrought by EDEs (and the Dimensional Anomaly) takes its toll on the human mind and body. The damage inflicted upon all divisions of our Convention is harrowing enough, without the notion that Enlightened individuals risk becoming Marauders if left untreated. That's where the NSC's medical division, the **Descartes Institute of Mental Health** (DIMH) comes in. They heal the minds of not only Void Engineers, but any member of the Union wounded by the nightmares in the Anomaly.

CONVENTION

The main criticism of the NSC's field operatives by other Void Engineers is that they resemble the New World Order's Operations Methodology too much. This isn't far off the mark; the IDC and SND frequently work in lockstep with the Black Suits. 68% of their missions are mutually embedded with each other. The Black Suits address the

political and philosophical impact (and the damage to the Consensus), and the NSC collects and analyzes evidence left at the physical sites. They implement similar tactics and Procedures, resort to violence in equal measure, and hell, they even dress the same way. Superficially, the NSC's response to the criticism makes sense; the Black Suits, IDC, and SND naturally synergize, since their (fundamentally dangerous) missions intertwine so frequently. But there's just something *off* about the whole thing. Perhaps their collaboration with the NWO makes them seem much more likely to use brute force instead of scientific finesse.

Where the Methodology makes up some good will is psychiatric and medical care. The life of a Void Engineer is... well to call it merely stressful doesn't even come close to doing it justice. People just break out there, after the Anomaly more than ever. When we need psychiatric help, the DIMH's Department of Psychological Evaluation and Maintenance (DPEM) ministers to us. Before the Anomaly, they were located in a large, sprawling facility in the Cop tailored to their needs; simulated warm, dappled sunlight, calm ocean and forest environments, the works. Now, patients sent to the DIMH are split up amongst its Earthside hospitals, the biggest being a division of the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris.

A division of the DIMH called the Enforcement Training and Conditioning Agency (ECTA) oversees deprogramming Cadets in our colleges. This further cements their professional disdain for the NWO; they constantly have to dig damaging mental conditioning out of the minds of young people, whose only crime is possessing a desire to learn and a temperament given to wandering. Once conditioning has been broken, the ECTA then proceeds to implant safety training into the Cadet's minds. This includes buffering their psyches against the shock and trauma of encountering dangerous alien entities. Too often, green Cadets (including many Marines) make fatal errors in judgment in early contacts with the enemy. Our Procedures give them a psychological buffer, suitable for duty in the more dangerous parts of the Universe. This is not another form of social and mental control. It allows Void Engineers to make the best possible decisions with a clear mind, while mainstream Technocratic conditioning seeks to control those decisions. We wouldn't presume to do that for them; we trust them to decide for themselves.

PAN-DIMENSIONAL CORPS

The Void Engineers have delved further into the Universe than any other human beings. On the forefront of that effort is the Pan-Dimensional Corps. Its operations take it well past the Spatial Horizon and out into the Deep Universe, establishing beachheads of varying sizes in locales around our galactic volume. Closer to home, the PDC assists the other Conventions, particularly the EFD, in surveillance and security operations in the Near Universe.

HISTORY

The PDC and the EFD share common early roots. This isn't that surprising; both share a desire to explore the unknown. The PDC's prehistory began when the Seeker Tychoides began making forays through the Gauntlet, leaving the continued exploration of Earth to other Explorers. One of the first things he and his fellow Seekers learned is that the Universe is harsh and unforgiving. Doing the job requires a combination of toughness, know-how, and curiosity. Only brains and brawn together (and tempering each other) make returning alive possible. This tradition has continued unabated even to the present day.

The early days of the PDC were relatively peaceful. After its inception at the Grand Housecleaning, it set upon its twin missions of exploring outside the Horizon (which at that time hadn't expanded very far past the Moon), and building Constructs around the Near Universe for itself and the other Conventions. About the only action it saw was pacifying uppity Tradition Mages with early generation *Qui La Machinæ*, or the occasional brush with hostile aliens out past the Gauntlet.

All of that changed during the World Wars. In protracted, bloody conflicts with the Nephandi, the PDC took staggering losses in countless skirmishes and battles near the Infernalists' base of operations on Jupiter. The nature of the PDC was fundamentally altered by that struggle. The Jovian Veterans (as they're now called) took on a hard edge, refusing to abandon their militarism after the war was over and the Nephandi were defeated. Many of them are still alive, and in positions of leadership in the war against Threat Null. They wear a special patch on their clothing that resembles Jupiter, as a point of pride, mutual recognition, and remembrance of the dead. Many of their number serve on the ETD and in high-ranking positions in the military.

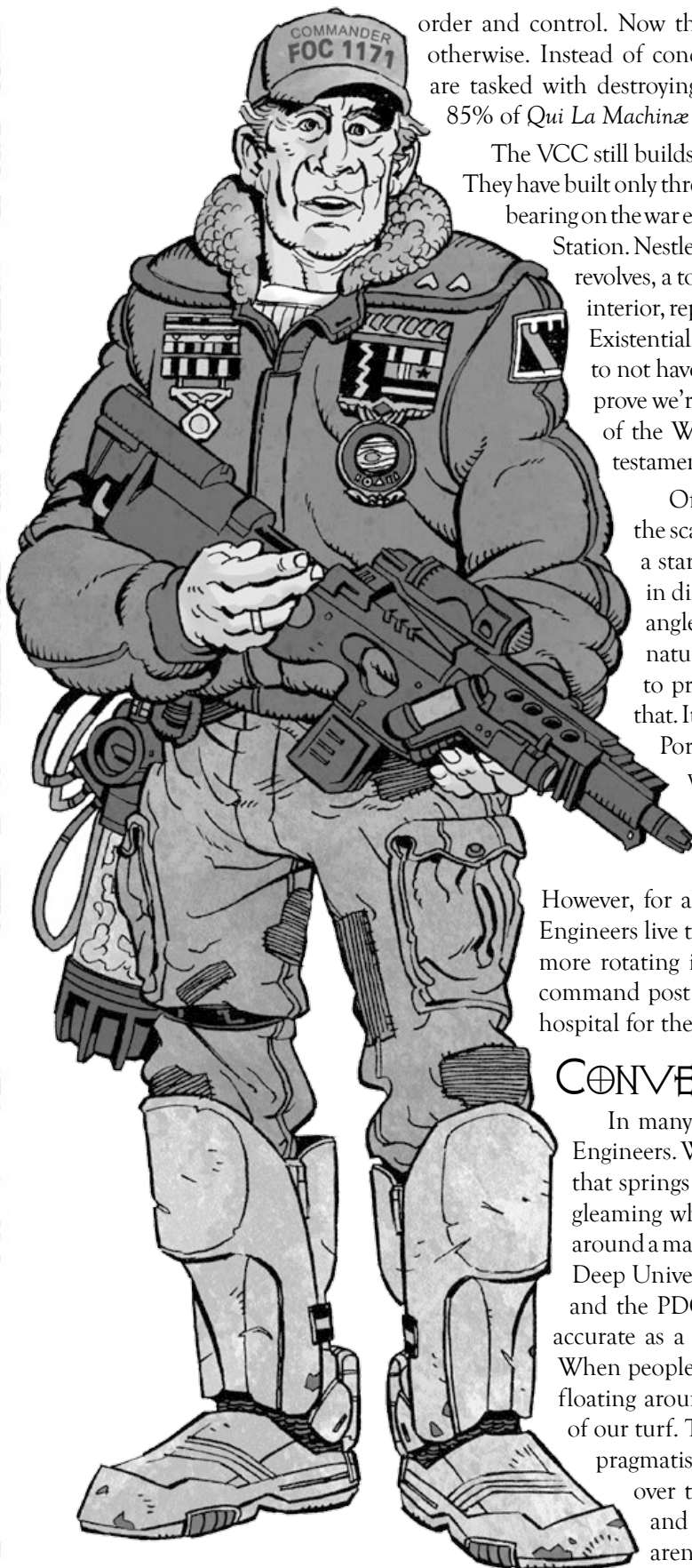
The decades between World War II and the Dimensional Anomaly marked the greatest expansion of humanity's influence over the Universe, spearheaded by the PDC. It established 92 Deep Universal outposts in the local Galactic volume near Earth, discovering dozens of alien life forms with varying levels of sentience. They pushed sideways as well as outward; fourteen Everett Volumes have permanent, well-hidden Constructs placed within them, for the purpose of monitoring, and sometimes even diplomatic relations.

OPERATIONS

Like every other Methodology, the PDC's core mission has been fundamentally altered by the Anomaly. The ETD reallocated almost 70% of their personnel and funding away from exploration and scientific missions and into development of the Fleet, requiring a top-down restructuring of the Methodology. Dozens of line ships and scores of support vessels have been militarized, retraining their crews as Fleet officers and enlisted personnel. Most Engineers in the PDC don't resist this sea of change; they've suffered appalling losses because of the Anomaly, and all the hell that came with it. Nearly everyone in the Methodology lost someone they knew. Entire vessels and Constructs were swallowed whole, screaming and in flames. Pain, grief, and defiance have galvanized the survivors, pushing them to reinvent themselves as a military force capable of restoring order to the Universe.

The largest group of militarized co-ops is the **Fleet Operations Command (FOC)**. It actively engages in hostilities in the various hot zones in the Anomaly. Closer to home, the **Void Construction Corps (VCC)** spends its efforts on rebuilding the portions of the Fleet that were destroyed in the last decade, and on making much-needed repairs to the Near Universe Constructs still in operation. With the destruction of the Sentinel network around the Near Horizon and the construction of the ITAG, the **Intelligence Directorate (ID)** now focuses its energies on monitoring the Deep and Near Universe. It shares that intelligence with the rest of the Convention, frequently clashing with R&E's FIS.

The few remaining *Qui La Machinæ* have been remade into mobile assault platforms. This isn't too different from their former mission, of course. The distinction is subtle but important; previously their raids into Horizon Realms were police actions, designed to maintain Technocratic



order and control. Now they bring war to our enemies, Threat Null and otherwise. Instead of conquering and controlling volumes of space, they are tasked with destroying enemy personnel and infrastructure outright. 85% of *Qui La Machinæ* directly support the FOC's wartime operations.

The VCC still builds Constructs, albeit at a significantly reduced pace. They have built only three in that time, all of which have some sort of direct bearing on the war effort. The most notable of those bases is Copernicus Station. Nestled into Beta Proxima's L3 point, the new Cop slowly revolves, a tough metal ring with a gleaming emerald and azure interior, representing the hopes of the entire Convention. The Existential Threats Directorate decided it was unacceptable to not have a Copernicus — it's essential to morale, if only to prove we're not giving up. The spirit-crushingly huge section of the Wall with photos of friends lost at the old Cop is testament enough to the grief we share.

Of course, the new Cop isn't built anywhere near to the scale of the old one. Instead of a sphere built around a star, it is a much smaller ring shape, 170 kilometers in diameter and a kilometer wide. It is tilted at a slight angle off of Beta Proxima's ecliptic plane to produce a natural day and night cycle. Its rotation isn't sufficient to produce 1 g; batteries of gravitic diffusers provide that. Its structure belies its hurried construction schedule.

Ports and booms stick off of it at odd angles, providing whatever facilities and docks were needed when any given section was being produced. One side is slightly thicker than the other, due to wildly fluctuating availability of construction material.

However, for all its flaws, it's home. Over two thousand Void Engineers live there on a permanent basis, with over a thousand more rotating in and out at any given moment. It serves as a command post for the PDC and the BCD alike, and as a field hospital for the DIMH.

CONVENTION

In many ways, the PDC is the poster child for the Void Engineers. Whenever other Technocrats think of us, the image that springs to mind is that of a stereotypical astronaut, in a gleaming white environmental suit, drifting in microgravity around a massive metal-hulled Construct somewhere off in the Deep Universe. Even now, that romantic image still persists, and the PDC does nothing to correct it. Sure, it's about as accurate as a child's refrigerator drawing, but it has its uses. When people think of the Engineers as being old Uncle Buzz floating around there, their confidence in us keeps them off of our turf. This is not for ludicrous territorialism, but rather pragmatism. If the NWO got spooked and tried to take over the war, they would last about a day and a half, and doom the human race to extinction. They simply aren't equipped to handle it.

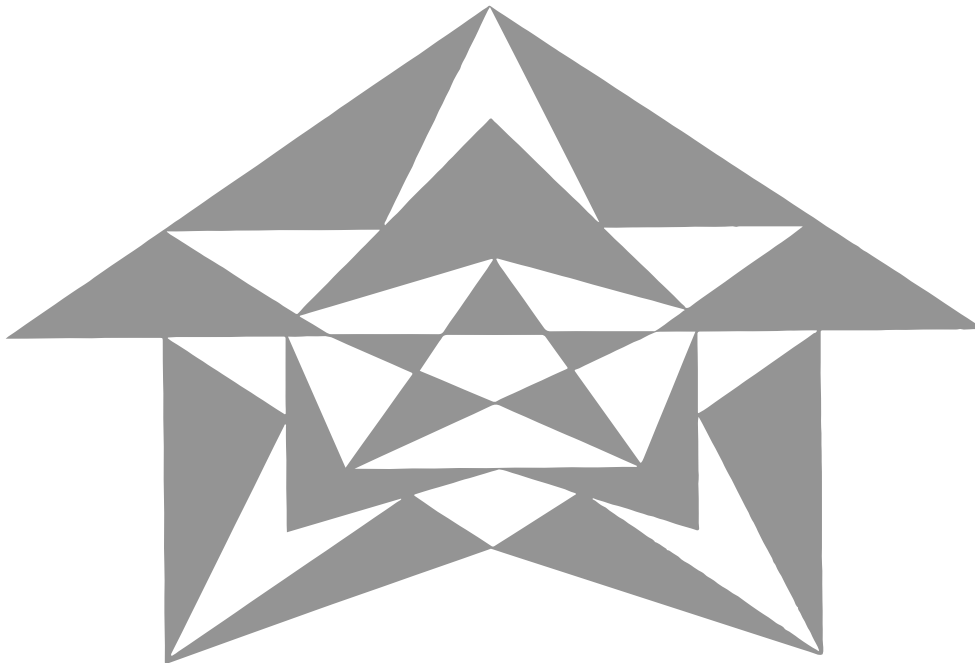
CYBERNAUTS AND CHRONONAUTS

Two smaller divisions of the PDC bear breaking out for scrutiny, because they go to some really strange places. Cybnernauts specialize in deep dives into the Digital Web, a highly reactive form of space shaped by events and currents in the collective psyches of humanity. As a result, the Web constantly shifts and reformats, requiring Cybnernauts to have a highly specialized skillset. (Especially as the Web has drastically changed since the rise of the Extraordinary Citizen.)

The Chrononauts are a small but dedicated cadre of Explorers who attempt to push themselves through time instead of space. The survival rate of Chrononauts who attempt to jump in time is so low that very few of us even think of attempting it. The (half-joke) rumor is that in order to be considered for Chrononaut duty, you have to fail a DIMH psych eval.

The other Methodologies look to the PDC for inspiration. They're a symbol to us as much as they are to the rest of the Union. They were the first ones to step beyond the cradle of the Earth and make a concerted, successful effort to push mankind out into the Universe. That goes a long way with the rest of the Convention, as it confirms our dreams of exploration are worthy of our efforts.

The EFD isn't quite as onboard with this notion, however. Many of its members feel that there are just as many important frontiers and discoveries to explore on Earth as there are in space. This rarely takes the form of anything more serious than sibling rivalry – there's simply too much for everyone involved to do to allow it to go past that point.



RESEARCH & EXECUTION

Not all of our colleagues have the calling to explore. Someone has to remain behind, to fix and augment equipment and vessels, run the research labs and analysis gear, and generally keep the home fires burning. In the Void Engineers, most of the people in that role belong to the Research & Execution (R&E) Methodology. It has the largest share (32.7%) of personnel who don't volunteer for excursion, and are content to stay behind in Constructs or on Earth to do their work. (That number used to hover around the 55th percentile before 1999, but the complexion of our mission has radically changed since then.) The remainder goes into the field to do technical work as shipboard engineers, Device specialists, and researchers.

HISTORY

R&E's roots as an organization extend back to the Celestial Masters. Well before the Order of Reason's inception, they sat in their towers and chantries, mapping the stars and their movements. They composed the first star charts (and ironically, astrological readings), either for their own edification or for king and country. Eventually, the Celestial Masters began trading information with early Seekers. Their mutual interests formed a natural synergy that evolved in a few short centuries into a fruitful partnership, the ultimate product of which is our Convention. When Tychoides and his partners started making traveling into the Near Universe and other semiotic spaces, the Celestial Masters adapted his techniques for bridging the Gauntlet, so they could peer into those alternate skies.

As their sphere of exploration expanded, the Seekers required increasingly powerful and sophisticated equipment. What they couldn't fabricate themselves, they passed to the Celestial Masters for advice and assistance. Over time, the Masters began to make this gear for the Seekers themselves, as their Inspiration dovetailed with the task. As Celestial Master Luis Alvares y Sylva commented in a journal entry c. 1760, "Señora Estevanico [a Moroccan Seeker and contemporary of Alvares y Sylva] seeks a new batch of toys for her expedition to Horizon.... I find her requests a refreshing breeze in the musty library, for I never even once thought that a boar spear would need to have galvanic currents pass through it! Now, to find how to make it not lethal to the wielder."

By the time the Technocratic Union folded them into the Void Engineers, the Celestial Masters had expanded to constructing and operating multiple Universal vessel

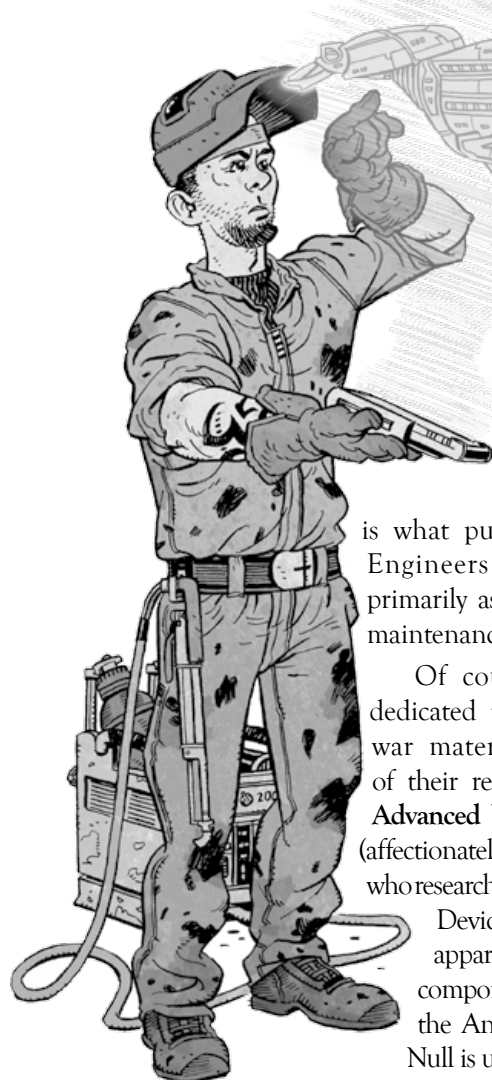
shipyards, complete with drydocks and retrofitting facilities. During the Nephandi attacks in the 1940s, their shipyards were put to their ultimate test. R&E went back to formula on *Qui La Machinæ*, rethinking every aspect of their design and purpose. The end result was the venerable Torchbearer class, officially designated Mark Y122. (In those days, ship class names were less prosaic. Some of them even had racy nose art.) It's flexible and powerful design made it central to the ultimate defeat of the Nephandi. It set the bar for the next seventy years; there are still a handful of Y122s in service today. This was the first of many breakthroughs for R&E, and cemented its reputation for boundless creativity and effectiveness.

OPERATIONS

Today, like everyone else in the Convention, R&E is on a war footing. Their foundries and labs produce and refine weapons, armored environmental suits, field rations, and other war materiel. The undersea shipyards of the **Vessel Construction Corps** (called the "Shipwrights") produce far more *Qui La Machinæ* and other warships than scientific vessels. Only six of the latter have been produced since 1999,

DEVELOPMENT VS. EXECUTION

R&E went through a few names during the Grand Housecleaning period. At first, the NWO earmarked them as the Office of Technological Research, until they opened up the books and saw just how large their infrastructure was, and how essential their work was to the Convention. The findings committee turned around a draft resolution for making them a full-blown Methodology, with all the budgetary priorities that entails, naming it Research & Development. In the Ivory Tower's defense, this seemed a perfectly natural and appropriate name. After all, they weren't scientists, and they certainly weren't Void Engineers. When Tychoides saw the proposal, his response was a hastily scrawled note delivered to the committee chamber by one of his lab technicians. It read, "Development' is a luxury for putterers and politicians; Scientists execute ideas." In the final minutes before recess, the committee gave the Methodology its current name.



while 41 of the former have flown out of dry dock. This increase in production of military hardware is what pushes more R&E Engineers into the field, primarily as engineering and maintenance crews.

Of course, R&E isn't dedicated to *just* producing war materiel. Nearly 17% of their resources go to the **Advanced Research Division** (affectionately called "Lab Rats"), who research and test of scientific

Devices and associated apparatuses. An essential component to dealing with the Anomaly and Threat Null is understanding their

natures. Such comprehension doesn't come cheap; the ARD pays for with months of sweat in the laboratory and testing range, and constant tweaking and refinement in the field.

The **Field Engineering Corps** (or "Scotties") forms the engineering crews on ships and Constructs. It frequently works alongside the science crews of BCD and PDC vessels. Its Engineers receive plenty of cross training from the Marines, alongside scientists from all other Methodologies. They're expected to pick up a rifle and don a vacuum suit if things go sideways, just like everyone else. Given that many enemies know our vessels' designs and operational parameters, they almost always strike at Engineering right away. Out in the Universe, having scientists who know how to shoot straight, and who are conditioned against paralytic xenophobia, is essential to an effective defense.

The **Fleet Intelligence Service** (predictably referred to as "Spooks") is the Fleet's central analysis platform for information coming in from all our operational fronts. Its members are

found in their primary offices on Station Yemaja and Copernicus Station. Roughly 10% of its personnel do field analysis in co-ops and Constructs throughout the Universe. In the field, they wear black issue uniforms with no decoration outside of rank and name. These operatives have access to every aspect and section of their assigned environments, and don't talk about their missions unless absolutely necessary. This breeds an equal measure of resentment and curiosity in the Engineers they work with.

CONVENTION

To say that the Void Engineers are utterly dependent on R&E's work is like saying water is wet. Everyone in the Convention uses the technology and Devices it produces on a daily (if not hourly) basis. When a situation in the field goes to hell, and somehow you manage to scrape and claw your way out of it using something it made, the sigh of relief almost always shapes the same words: "Thank you, R&E." It's not just a truism, a reflex, or a ritual. (Or all of these things.) It's a statement of *fact*.

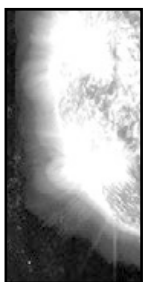
This aphorism is a tradition with a long history. The earliest known instance comes from a 12th Century manuscript penned by an anonymous Explorer. The text describes an encounter with a Marauder that killed five of her crew and nearly destroyed their airship. They were saved by their star charts, which allowed them to navigate out of a Kern-space structured fractal gas cloud. She wrote, "God bless the Celestial Masters," but her sentiment is identical to her descendants'. R&E not only makes what we do possible, they also take great pains to insure our safety in the field. Many R&E Engineers see the Wall every day, reminding them that there are far too few of us left to allow any equipment out the door that isn't as reliable as they can possibly make it.

As far as the rest of the Union is concerned, R&E might as well be invisible. Technocrats are drawn to the stories we tell in bars and other social settings. Everybody loves hearing about the brave Marines in battle-torn space suits, or dashing explorers finding life among the stars. But you know what no one wants to hear about? The Engineers who built the ships, or the scientists at mission control. (Even if they wear an awesome Gene Krantz vest.) It's sad, really — they're the ones who make all the stories possible. Every time a Marine recounts mowing down a Nephandus with a phased particle Gatling cannon, or a Fleet pilot boasts about using a matter/energy remodulator to turn an enemy ship hull to antimatter, no one ever buys a drink for the Engineers who put those tools in their hands in the first place.



CHAPTER THREE: FØRGED IN SMØLDERING STARS

ENLIGHTENED CØSMIØLOGY



Void Engineer Enlightenment begins with fundamental questions, burned into the spins of atoms and cores of dying stars: How was the universe born? How did it generate manifold dimensions? How will it die?

Like all Conventions, we borrow the forces that move planets and spark suns; but unlike the others, we never forget this fundamental truth. Power is a code written into the Void, awaiting scientists bold enough to translate it.

Across generations, we built an ever-evolving cosmology upon the foundations laid by our early philosophers. As explorers, we encounter challenges to our beliefs – unbelievable landscapes and beings that call themselves “gods” – that would crush the resolve of lesser scientists. But instead of breaking our Enlightened forebears, it inspired them to draft the modern Tychoidian cosmos: a comprehensive theory of the universe that explains the error of Deviant subjectivism and hews to our understanding of Inspired Science.

TYCHOIDIAN COSITOLOGY

In 1701, Tychoides proposed the forerunner of the Void Engineers's current cosmology with his theorem: *Any perfect description of an object is the object itself, relegated to the order of things by divine providence.* The modern Convention believes he predicted a form of digital physics that describes the universe as an ensemble of mathematical objects. So the modern form of Tychoides Theorem states: *The universe instantiates all computable models to the extent of their completeness.*

Founded in Platonism, Tychoides's ideas were refined by cross-research with Iteration X and before their defection, the Electrodyne Engineers. Modern Tychoidian cosmology treats the cosmos as a "hypercomputer:" a phenomenon able to exceed the limits of Turing machines and generate infinite, continuous processing. Physical laws behave like cellular automata and generate further "input" (for lack of a better word in English) for cosmological processing. These functions are handled by the smallest possible unit of physical information, which we call the Prime Element.

THE ENLIGHTENED ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

Once these processes produce sentient beings capable of generating their own reality models, the universe instantiates the results just like any other computable input. Non-intelligent sentient beings merely model their own sense data, and cannot model what passes for their imaginations with enough fidelity to generate physical manifestations. But sapient beings, like humans, can instinctually produce perfect mathematical models of imagined objects—as physicist Roger Penrose postulated, such brains are natural quantum computers, capable of more processing power than anatomical studies suggest.

This forms the foundation of the Enlightened Anthropic Principle. The conventional Anthropic Principle says that the universe looks like it's been fine-tuned for human life because if it was any different, humans wouldn't be around to observe it. But any Enlightened scientist knows that humans *create* these conditions by collectively generating the physics that allow them to survive. Adapted as they are to this local reality, individual humans mutate or die when taken away from its framework. Only the highly trained, Enlightened mind of a Master of Dimensional Science can generate an Anthropic Principle by itself. Other human beings need the processing power of the Masses.

Most humans cannot produce models as complete as those spontaneously generated by the laws of nature—these ideas are usually relegated to other dimensions that are

less "real" in the hierarchy of cosmological information. We Enlightened are the exception—or, rather, among the exceptions—able to create perfect models which instantiate in the conventional universe. Other minds reproduce these experiences, altering the general makeup of the universe.

DIMENSIONS IN THE VOID

The cosmos instantiates all mathematically coherent phenomena, including contradictions, in a manner determined by its sophistication and viability—natural laws, objects, and energies compete, much as living things do. The winners remain in the conventional universe; losers fall into other dimensions. This solves a problem we refer to as "Umbral exceptionalism:" a possible challenge to the Cosmological Principle. The Principle claims that Earth occupies no special place in the universe, but if this is true, why do strange phenomena, even entire sub-universes, radiate from it? Tychoidian theory solves the problem by noting how sentient beings generate data in tremendous volumes. When contradictory models clash, the winner stays in Conventional Space, and the losers populate other dimensions, as well as what Traditionalists call "spirit worlds."

THE HORIZONS

Horizons arise due to the limits of sentient reality computation. The **Biospheric Horizon** at the upper edges of Earth's atmosphere represents the extent of non-intelligent life's influence. The **Spatial Horizon** marks the edge of the Masses' computational reach, and the end of Conventional Space. At one point, it extended no further than the Asteroid Belt, but deep space probes have expanded it to other regions, including the Jovian moons that used to host Ascension War battles. Beyond that, explorers must dare the chaotic Deep Universe.

The Spatial Horizon once anchored **Horizon Constructs**: artificial subdimensions that took advantage of the region's unique status as a place where physical laws break down, but can still be stabilized with Primal Energy. The Dimensional Anomaly eradicated most of them, warped a few more, and pushed the rest into the Deep Universe. These lost stations include Traditionalist redoubts and Threat Null hubs. Thus, locating them and neutralizing the dangers within is a major part of the PDC's agenda.

The Spatial Horizon contains a phenomenon called Tegmark Lensing that "censors" any evidence that would contradict unEnlightened physicists' consensus about how the universe operates. The most bizarre phenomena can still be witnessed in other dimensions. From the Umbral dimensions or Subspace, observers see stars that are invisible

in normal space. We don't know how effective Tegmark Lensing is, however. Earthbound scientists have detected dark matter, which the Convention believes at least partly measures these hidden objects' mass. Fifteen years ago, 28978 Ixion puzzled astronomers by exhibiting the characteristics of a red-shifted microstar. NSC agents have spent a decade eliminating evidence of this "Red Star event" for a number of reasons, the most important of which is that we still have no goddamn idea what it was.

CONVENTIONAL SPACE

The mundane world is the best-known example of **Conventional Space**, where the laws of nature function largely as the Masses expect. A strong dimensional Gauntlet separates incompatible instances of reality. Conventional spacecraft contend with vacuum and radiation. In this dimension, Yuri Gagarin looked down from his capsule, and Neil Armstrong took his small step on the Moon.

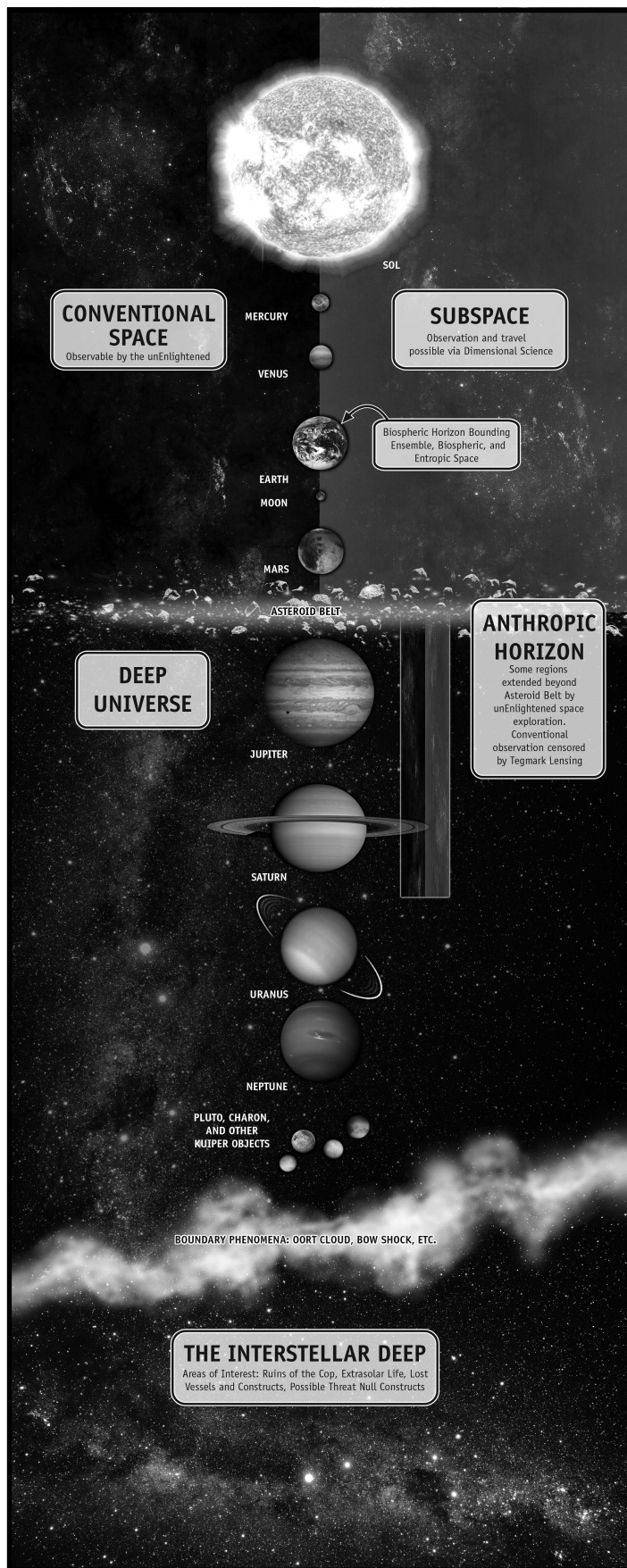
Conventional Space extends past the Biospheric Horizon and ends at the Spatial Horizon. We work to extend the Spatial Horizon further with unmanned probes, followed by human explorers — formatting more and more of the area into stark vacuum, not a riot of extradimensional horrors. (Due to this, some Void Engineers refer to this region as Formatted Space, notably those who spend a great deal of time with Iterators who use this term.)

UMBRAEAL DIMENSIONS

Despite resistance to using a popular Traditionalists term, Void Engineers call the strange dimensions attached to Earth **Umbrae** because they're "mathematical shadows" of Conventional Space. In modern Tychoidian cosmology, these dimensions consist of phenomena that could not be fully instantiated within the conventional universe because they lacked completeness or contradicted "fitter" aspects of reality.

Umbraeal dimensions include the following:

Biospheric Space: Extending to the Biospheric Horizon, this dimension contains reality models instantiated by non-sapient thought, including certain human instinctual responses. The naive notion that objects are alive generates intelligences here, which in turn create a class of extradimensional entities Superstitionists call "spirits." These consciousnesses sometimes



GETTING THERE: DIMENSIONAL TRAVEL

Here's a basic understanding for those seeking to travel across dimensions. Note that this does not include certain natural Gateways, complex conjunctions to shorten distances, or other advanced methods. (Frankly, that's where things get *really wonky*.)

Conventional Space: This is the dimension that includes standard, material reality extending to the Spatial Horizon. Beyond Earth, normal spacecraft and Enlightened equivalents travel through Conventional Space. Correspondence 3/Life 3 or Correspondence 4 Procedures can be used to travel through this region.

Biospheric Space: This dimension, which Traditionalists call the "Middle Umbra," requires Dimensional Science 3 to enter, but Technocratic travelers must also possess Cosmology 2 or higher to target it instead of Ensemble Space. Note that the Umbral "sky" reported by Reality Deviants cannot be reached through Dimensional Science. Attempts to leave the Biospheric Space take Void Engineers to Subspace instead. Warning: entry crosses the Dimensional Anomaly.

Ensemble Space: Travel using Dimensional Science 3 shunts Void Engineers to these "Astral" regions by default. Mind 4 or 5 allows for remote projection while the Void Engineer's unconscious body remains behind. Physical entry crosses the Dimensional Anomaly.

Entropic Space: So-called "necronauts" use Dimensional Science 3/Life 2/Entropy 4 to project a degraded model of themselves into the Entropic Space ancients identified with the underworld.

The traveler's body enters suspended animation, and his artificial ghost explores its subdimensions. Using Life 4 instead of Life 2 allows bodily travel, translating the traveler into the semi-disordered information compatible with Entropic Space. Physical entry crosses the Dimensional Anomaly.

The Digital Web: Cutting edge but mundane virtual reality rigs provide limited access to this "information space." Correspondence 2 allows full sensory access, but not physical entry. Correspondence 2/Forces 2/Life 4 translates the traveler's body into an electronic waveform capable of fully entering (and exiting) the Digital Web.

Subspace: Using Dimensional Science 3 beyond the Biospheric Horizon or leaving Biospheric or Ensemble Space's alternate Earths takes travelers to Subspace. Any travel from conventional reality crosses the Dimensional Anomaly at its point of entry.

Deep Universe: Travelers must travel across Conventional Space or Subspace to the Spatial Horizon and then employ Dimensional Science 5.

Everett Volumes: Correspondence 3/Entropy 4/Time 3 transports one person to an alternate present. Using Correspondence 4 instead creates a tunnel multiple people can use. Substituting Time 5 can transport individuals to alternate pasts and futures. These methods allow an Enlightened scientist to change physical location as well — an essential trait, given that alternate universes possess different buildings and geographical features.

attain sufficient complexity to cross the Gauntlet, necessitating regular Border Corps and Neutralization Specialist interventions.

Ensemble Space: Called the "Astral Plane" by Reality Deviants, Ensemble Spaces contain objects generated by human minds that lack the characteristics required to instantiate in material reality. This dimension includes fundamental mathematical objects: the Platonic "ultimate ensemble" predicted by mathematician Max Tegmark. The prevalence of "unreal" mathematical constructs gives rise to spatial distortions and subdimensions containing similar data sets, superstitiously referred to "conceptual realms," "Epiphamies," and "kingdoms of the gods."

Entropic Space: Human minds continue to generate models of objects and people ("ghosts") even after they've been destroyed. These phenomena continue to break down after being shunted here. This is a dangerous region, especially since it's been subject to certain *unwise* experiments.

THE DIGITAL WEB

The **Digital Web** spontaneously arises around dense artificial data structures. Computer-augmented reality modeling has produced a new dimension of electronic data structures. The Web doesn't adhere to some of the basic principles of cosmological fitness. This prevents it from manifesting in physical reality, but that's a blessing

in disguise. Freed from the requirement to conform to Conventional Space, explorers can generate domains with novel physical laws, asserting godlike control over the environment.

In the '90s, Void Engineers and Virtual Adepts battled for control of the Digital Web. We assumed that the winner would become gatekeepers to a new reality, but while we were posturing with our sensory rigs and games-made-real, the Syndicate and NWO instead followed the Masses' lead, creating social networks to extend traditional video, audio, and text interactions. Nowadays, the Digital Web isn't virgin territory, but cluttered with representations of billions of banal lives. Living selfies turn their insipid gazes at hackneyed pornography and farming simulators. Many Void Engineers still feel the Digital Web could be reborn, even merged with Conventional Space through augmented reality technology, but we need to sneak past the cultural gatekeepers in our fellow Conventions.

Well, except for Iteration X. They act like they don't care, but we've seen the enormous flows of encrypted data, and fractal edifices they've put on the Digital Web. We don't understand them, and when pressed, our contacts among them seem awfully eager to change the subject — motivated by fear, even.

SUBSPACE

By crossing the Biospheric Horizon, travelers from Ensemble or Biospheric Space enter **Subspace**: a dimension that extends to the Spatial Horizon. Subspace used to teem with Enlightened-run colonies. It's an emptier place now, ravaged by Dimensional Anomaly "storms" capable of killing travelers outright, or overwhelming them with Void Adaptation (see p. 63).

Our predecessors extensively explored Subspace. The Ether-based physics were more forgiving, permitting the use of vessels that could never survive in the normal universe, like sailing ships lashed to balloons and wooden ornithopters. These properties remain in defiance of almost a century of more sensible physics. Emboldened Sons of Ether colonized the region and named it "etherspace."

Travelers can survive direct exposure to open Subspace, but some Engineers experience it as vacuum. The Convention believes that what others call "ether" is actually a very potent manifestation of the Anthropic Principle — humans demand a survivable cosmos within the bounds of what they can influence.

DEEP UNIVERSE

Beyond the Spatial Horizon lies the **Deep Universe**, a realm that lacks even the physical laws unEnlightened

KNOWN UNKNOWNNS

The Void Engineers have applied mind-bending theories to explain much of the cosmos, including things that at first glance, would appear to destroy the legitimacy of the entire Technocratic project. Nevertheless, the Convention's understanding is far from complete. Explorers have found gateways to other times that don't burn them with Paradox, and regions of space that obey the whims of godlike intelligences.

The Convention has a duty to eliminate dangerous phenomena and protect the Masses, but it also wants to understand them, and in doing so, increase its command of Enlightened Science. The universe is full of unsolved mysteries, such as the nature of the Ka Luon (see p. 160 of **Ascension**). But even though the Void Engineers have holes in their knowledge, they know that foes like Threat Null aren't performing miracles, but are just on the other side of some sinister technological singularity.

Despite the framework presented in the section, Storytellers should feel free to introduce new dimensions, artifacts and extradimensional beings that "break the rules," as long as these further the story, and it's understood that the Void Engineers will want to harness these phenomena as part of their mission to protect the Masses and understand the cosmos. Decide whether you want these situations to point the way to a cosmic secret, or remain an enigma. Both options can move your stories forward.

citizens believe exist. Far from the Masses' Anthropic Principle, humans require advanced Dimensional Science to survive. No Dimensional Gauntlet separates regions in the true Void.

The Deep Universe falls outside the reach of the Dimensional Anomaly, but didn't escape it unscathed. The Void Engineers left connections to the Anomaly with every dimensional portal, artificial gateway and transdimensional technology. Tendrils of the "storm" followed the Quantum Resonance left by Enlightened travelers. The Anomaly is gone, but its effects remain. The Cop fell, and other facilities and ships vanished into the haunted dark. One of the strongest remaining

outposts belongs to the Old Man of the Euthanatos, where he receives their elite assassins and, occasionally, Void Engineer envoys.

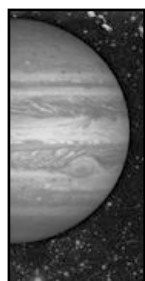
EVERETT VOLUMES

Named for the founder of the Many Worlds hypothesis, **Everett Volumes** cut across multiple dimensions. In them, explorers can discover alternate Conventional Spaces, Umbral Dimensions and Deep Universes. They include timelines where the Technocratic Conventions fight a Traditions-ruled tyranny from bases in the Deep Universe, and histories where humanity colonizes the solar system, moving the Spatial Horizon beyond the Oort Cloud.

In some Everett Volumes, time passes faster or slower than the main timeline. Void Engineers might use them for a less risky form of time travel, albeit one with fewer practical benefits. Changing history in an Everett Volume doesn't affect the main timeline, but it won't invoke disastrous temporal paradoxes either. Bringing objects or people back to the main timeline invokes extreme Paradoxes, however, crushing Void Engineer schemes to bolster their strength with the help of better-equipped counterparts in other timelines.

Although the main timeline is theoretically an Everett Volume itself, no known traveler has ever crossed into here from another timeline.

THE DIMENSIONAL ANOMALY



The Dimensional Anomaly arrived at the end of June 1999. When it erupted across sections of the spatial horizon it could be likened to the destructive forces of a hurricane. Reality was its eye. By New Years Day 2000, the Dimensional Anomaly had started to wind down to the level of intensity we see today.

By Autumn 2000 the initial intensity had become reduced, but the Anomaly continued. While things are no longer business as usual, years of navigating Conventional Space has shown us what it's like to live in a post-Anomaly world.

HELL'S HAND BASKET

In the course of a week, we thought the Apocalypse had started, yet on the seventh day most of us woke up alive. On our side, we knew Hell was breaking loose. The Traditionalists and their problems went home to roost in one of their Umbral holdings, and whatever happened in there contributed heavily to the formation of the Dimensional Anomaly. The massive shockwave that left that area ripped across several Subspace bands, leaving death and destruction in its wake. Deep in Entropic Space, something happened – so massive and deadly that we still don't fully understand. What we do know? All Post-Life Entities (PLEs) we've made contact with since '99 won't talk about it.

WHAT WE'RE LEFT WITH

Looking back, it's amazing that we survived the past few decades, with all we've gone through. The Dimensional Anomaly came. Contact was lost, then spotty. Then lost

for good, as the Old Masters and their installations winked out, one by one. Darkside Moonbase was destroyed during the first few weeks of the Dimensional Anomaly. Due to the highly reduced number of crew and marines, casualties were comparatively small in contrast to the Cop.

It was for some a relief when reports of the Cop turning into a black hole surfaced by 2000, though that relief turned into horror after further reports trickled back about things coming from inside the black hole and exiting into the Deep Universe. It's likely that somewhere on the other side of that hole are the Void Adapted remnants of the Cop. Heaven help us, if that's true.

Tychoides, the father of Dimensional Science, was at the Cop when the Anomaly came. Of any of us, it was our leadership who knew with utmost certainty that Void Adaptation was in their future. We have no confirmation if Tychoides has survived the past decade. If he survived but adapted to the Void—the father of the very science we practice to safeguard mankind may be our enemy. Until it's proven otherwise, Tychoides must be considered a hostile entity to be destroyed. Of those ship crews who turned to the Nephandi for help, became Marauders, or adapted to the Void... we don't know who is and isn't out there.

It's the not knowing if he's alive – or has access to the ships that were stationed at Cop – that complicates things. Re-establishing contact with the Cop was in the top of our priorities after the Anomaly, but conditions made it almost impossible to send or receive transmissions beyond Subspace. Those conditions still deeply hamper our efforts.

The destruction of the Sentinel Satellites within the first hour of the Dimensional Anomaly made it that much harder to deal with communications going

deeper into space in the early months. Our next best option was creating a daisy chain of ships and boosters, refracting messages throughout bands of space. It was risky, dangerous, and nearly impossible to secure or encrypt. Trying to encapsulate messages in TEF fields for others was out of the question. The Dimensional Anomaly kicked up an obscene amount of chronotonic radiation, adding Time storms to the mix. Some of those storms are still active. More worrisome is that some of those Time storms made it to Earth. We have yet to disclose to the Progenitors that Botanical-Research Expedition 215 is in fact alive. The Progenitors don't know how much time has passed, and the Void Engineers with them are running interference for us — their communicators reactivated when they crossed back over recently.

If they depart the mountainous region in Tibet, they'll become subject to possible Paradox. Maybe even pollute the local time stream, or spread chronotonic radiation. We're still running the numbers, but we can't accurately predict what could happen next. A number of phenomena continue to cross over. The Border's still busy, and BCD and NSC have seen more action in the past 15 years than they have since the Jovian War. BCD recruits are smart, but they get chewed up and thrown out as fast as BCD can induct new personnel. The academy at Shanghai's either going to turn out the next memorial wall, or provide us with the next Martin St. Christopher.

BREAK ⊕N THROUGH

The Euthanatos have helped us confirm something we've yet to reveal to the other Conventions. The Old Masters will be unable to return home. For now, that is the root of a cautious hope: Threat Null might be unable to cross into reality via a full-on invasion. Reality rejects their existence, and for once, I'll say I am damn happy we have Paradox in this world.

Thankfully, some of the methods for dealing with extradimensional threats still work. Passage off-world leaves detectable particle traces, which can be found using Dimensional Science. Returning to Earth from off-world also leaves a detectible particle trail. Those trails expire at sunrise and sunset — whichever happens first — at the local time for those launch and reentry points. This gives, at best, 24 hours to track those transits before the trail is gone. The stronger reality is, the stronger the particle trail in those areas. Good for us when we're hunting them. Bad when they're hunting us. Since the Sentinels were wiped out over a decade ago, our global warning network isn't equipped to constantly monitor all of known space. This is why NSC still has a career path: our eyes and ears

EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURAL FAILURE

In a post-Anomaly world, the incidence of equipment and Procedural failure is at its most intense while passing through the Dimensional Anomaly. The more advanced your understanding of Enlightened Science, the worse the passage will be for you personally. Mentally, emotionally and physically, the passage across the Anomaly is one of the most harrowing experiences the Enlightened can endure. The constant long-term stress has begun to exceed the "trauma load" of most Void Engineers, contributing to the alarming number of Void Engineers with PTSD symptoms. Books helpful to dealing with the rules for damage, and trips through the ravaged Umbra, include *Infinite Tapestry*, *Bitter Road*, and pages 187-189 in **Mage: the Ascension Revised**, which detail the Spirit sphere in a post-Anomaly world.

are still operating largely in the dark. Can we pick up an invasion fleet? Sure. Can we pick out an individual crossing? The numbers aren't so good on the small stuff, and that's what we have to sweat.

What we do know about these particle trails, outside their time sensitivity, is their relation to launch and reentry. If you cross at the most porous points possible, you might not even *leave* a trail. In the most extreme cases, where the barrier between the world we know and nearby Dimensions is one-ply toilet paper: you and your equipment stand a chance of taking no damage from the Anomaly.

But if you try and land a ship in Central Park's back forty, you will light up regional detection monitors like a damn Christmas tree. The kids in New Jersey might not see it, but Manhattan will be on your ass in ten. The stronger reality is, the stronger the particle trail left in those areas. Good for us when we're hunting them. Bad when they're hunting us.

In other, more horrible news, we still have other invasive entities and events to keep us busy. Extra-Dimensional Entities — Post-Life or otherwise — are still able to cross the Anomaly. But it seems to have given some of them pause, which means what *can* cross is in a bigger weight-class. More common than particular EDE types are Dimensional Anomaly Incursions. There's been an uptick in DAI's in the past three years, and the one that hit Mexico City this



spring killed 30 people. DAI's are evidence the Anomaly is finding new ways into reality. Holding the line is going to get progressively harder.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

The Anomaly screams. It's the only way to truthfully describe the winds out there. Even in the vacuum of space, you may continue to hear it. It's the most beautiful storm of light you will ever see. It rivals any celestial light humankind has ever set eyes on. It is as beautiful as the first breath of your newborn baby and as perfect as your first Enlightened Procedure.

It will also fill you with nausea, terror, and hate. Though crossing the Dimensional Anomaly affects everyone in roughly the same way, many Engineers have described enacting Procedures during the crossing – or simply crossing at all – as “being hunted by hellhounds.” Filled with a distinct sensation of countless, hateful, hungry entities, pilots are still the most frequently the personnel requiring the most downtime with the Department of Psychological Evaluation and Maintenance.

This is why we're lucky to have a record high of Extraordinary Citizens in the Union right now. They can walk out of Consensus-defined reality without taking the

same brutal beating the Enlightened do. There's obviously dozens of competing theories, but out on patrol, it doesn't matter why they can do it. It just matters that they can. If you have to lay some cover fire to let an Extraordinary Citizen retreat to bring us vital intelligence, you do it. The loss of any personnel isn't one we can afford, but sometimes you have to make sacrifices in order to know what gate to blow to Hell. It's equally likely they'll have to do the same for you someday.

OFF THE MAP

The geographic picture we had of space has changed in the past decade. Entire sub-dimensions have been relocated or completely vanished. Our programmed Gate connections from here to Deep Space, and nearer locations, often go nowhere. When we're lucky, the eye of a gate doesn't open. When we're unlucky, previously known jump points are replaced with unmentionable horrors or eerie scenes no one can properly recall. We've known that different dimensions can relocate at random intervals throughout different sections of space, but the Dimensional Anomaly has destabilized numerous Umbral locations. While you can get to them, you might not ever be able to get home.

THE QUANTUM VOYAGER MERIT

The Quantum Voyager merit is similar to the Stormwarden merit listed on page 215 of **Mage: the Ascension Revised**, however it interacts with the infrastructure in Voidships (p.88) as though everything within the Voidship was connected via a Correspondence Procedure. Those with the five-point Quantum Voyager merit can spend one point of Primal Energy (from herself or any Device connected to the vessel) to protect everything and everyone within it.

QUANTUM VOYAGERS

There are Void Engineers in the ranks that exhibit a form of quantum interphasal displacement in relation to the Dimensional Anomaly. The Euthanatos call them “Stormwardens,” we call them Quantum Voyagers. They don’t perceive the existence of the Anomaly, and simply cross the Gauntlet without encountering it. In the strongest Voyagers, those physically contacting with them when crossing are immune for the duration of passage. They only encounter the normal difficulties of crossing the Gauntlet. There’re various theories

regarding this, including certain Enlightened individuals possessing exotic matter bodies or somehow altered due to new forms of Anomaly-caused radiation, but none of those have been accepted by the Convention as an official explanation.

Quantum Voyagers don’t wear a special patch or have an official addition to their title. But their units will – and have – fought to the death to keep them alive. The Voyagers’ identities are guarded closely by their own amalgams. As long as a single one lives within our ranks, it’s a source of hope for the rest of us.

POINTS OF LIGHT IN THE VOID

THE OLD COPERNICUS RESEARCH CENTER



Before the Anomaly, the Copernicus Research Center was the political and technological heart of the Void Engineers. For the Engineers who joined up after the Anomaly, words alone cannot truly capture the majesty of the old Cop. The translucent Dyson sphere was so massive that it would fill the distance from the sun to the Earth. The entire, massive exterior was covered in a laser defense grid, powered by the star’s electromagnetic radiation. This defensive measure wouldn’t be put into place till the mid-1970s.

Gravity diffusers encapsulated the pitch-black nexus surrounding the decades-deformed star. Immense energy storms erupted at the poles of the defense grid, caused by the complex electromagnetic attraction of the energy at work near the gravity lensing.

The only consistent gravity was in the strip along the equator, where we put most of the administrative facilities and laboratories.

In 1971, the Nephandi arrived, and there was no defense to slow them down. They were able to destroy two of the six Stellar Tass Augmentation Refinery (STAR)

engines that bore the brunt of the Station’s power needs, followed by severely damaging the Planck engine. Gravity shorted, and atmospheric storms wreaked havoc throughout the sphere. In that moment, Copernicus was nearly destroyed by the star at its center.

What marines were still alive scrambled, and engaged the Nephandi on board. The engagement was as brutal as it was brief. The Nephandi retreated, and the battered survivors in the Engineers assembled in the emergency control room in the main laboratory nexus of the DSEATC. Two brave scientist of the Committee would sacrifice their lives, along with their equipment, using the remaining engines to correct the dangerous gravitational path of the Cop, saving it from falling into the star at its center, or perhaps its own sun.

In the aftermath, the Engineers rebuilt, with R&E proposing the gravitational lenses to replace the destroyed engines. The laser defense grid went up, and life went on.

After rebuilding and up to its final destruction, the Cop contained a number of scientific marvels.

THE CENTRUS COMPLEX

This complex was a sphere deep in the heart of the Cop, which required advanced Dimensional Science Procedures to reach. The prototype Quintessence Furnace, which collected and distilled Tass from the star,

formed a slender ring of energy around Centrus. The prototype proved to be a stable source of power for the Cop, and the remaining STAR engines were taken offline in 1998. No record of the STAR schematics exist, though the next generation versions are still in use — the ship-adapted STAR-TPU units on the majority of Voidships. STAR technology is one of the most closely guarded secrets of the Convention, more so now than ever before. Protecting knowledge of their function from the rest of the Union keeps Threat Null from exploiting them.

THE VIVO

In the early 1900s, a PDC crew investigated what they thought was a random asteroid in the Deep Universe. This turned out to be a very curious alien ship floating all alone, which they dubbed “the Vivo.” Engineers penetrated its outer crust—their research suggested the Vivo itself allowed this — and they attempted to slap together a control center to tap into the ship. Instead, they accidentally fired its main weapon, resulting in a diminutive black hole being “dropped” on Tunguska. After that, DSEATC ordered the Vivo towed to Cop orbit, where it could be away from dangers (and curious) hands, and close enough to the defense grid to be destroyed if anyone attempted to board it.

One of the stranger parts of this tale: there’re numerous Void Engineer testimonies of the craft appearing to be self-aware. The recovery of the Vivo is still a priority, though finding it has proved immensely difficult.

THE FALL OF THE COP

In June of 1999, the Cop’s path to its troubling, mysterious fate began. Contacting the Deep Universe had always been difficult, but the excess radiation and unstable energies surrounding Earth during the Anomaly’s arrival made it almost impossible to use surviving communications relays near Earth. The Convention was able to only send and receive a handful of garbled messages from the Cop, before radio silence began in September of 1999. Footage of what the Cop has become would find its way back to Earth with refugee crews lucky enough to survive deployment to the Deep Universe during the Anomaly’s arrival.

What was Copernicus Research Center is now a black hole. In the decade since, a limited number of reconnaissance missions have been sent to the site of the Cop to sweep the area and passively observe the black hole. The data they collect is conflicting and bewildering, with fluxing Everett Volumes and overpowering Resonances that threaten to overload sensors. On a handful of these missions, crews have witnessed vessels exit the hole.

THE NEW COPERNICUS STATION

The old Copernicus Research Center is long gone. But we continued on, and built the new Cop to replace it. Copernicus Station (no “Research” in the title anymore) is a functional, sleek green cylinder out in the dark, and more importantly it’s a symbol of hope for better days to come. It’s not the heart and soul of Convention operations as the old one was, and we’re happy to keep it that way — it means we can’t be crippled the same away again.

Plans for the station were drawn up at the close of 1999. Construction started in spring of 2000. Copernicus was operational by 2004, though it’s perpetually under construction. Nearly 28,000 feet long, it’s the base camp for Void Engineer operations in space. It serves as refueling station, pilot training facility, administrative office, orbital shipyard, and last line of defense in space. Copernicus also holds a prestigious academy where cadets focus solely on their Umbral training. Due to space constraints and to limit casualties in any one given location, there’s always one group of cadets departing and another arriving.

There’s very little research space on Copernicus that isn’t devoted to the Anomaly — there simply isn’t room ETD’s willing to dedicate toward much else. Administrative details handled on the station are devoted to the comings and goings of ships, crews, shipyard progress, and data collected from various orbital arrays. A front in Portugal handles much of the bureaucracy related to its funding and supply shipments. (The front, currently functioning as a salvage and reclamation business, is the remnants of the historic Portus Crucis, the original secret shipyard of the Celestial Masters, founded in 1461.)

DARKSIDE MOONBASE

Darkside Moonbase was never the utopia that Copernicus Research Center was. Darkside was built in the crater Daedalus, on the unobservable side of the Earth’s moon. The monstrous gray dome housed some of the Void Engineers’s worst chapters of history. Built in the 1870s, when the Convention began to explore space in enclosed ships, their construction crew was made of slave labor stolen from various slums on Earth. This enslaved labor force rebelled in 1900, using a drill for penetrating lunar crust as their vehicle of destruction. They programmed it to head for the life support engines. The ensuing moonquake shattered the integrity of the base half in the crater Icarus. After sorting through the bodies and counting the missing, Darkside Moonbase stood with half its crew gone, scientist and slave alike.

In 1999, Darkside was finally destroyed. The communications arrays were crippled to nearly useless, something that played a role in the eventual loss of contact with all that beyond Horizon. The ensuing energy storms and ill-timed Nephandi would wipe out the rest of the base within a year, including the standing contingent of 50 BCD marine cadets and their trainers. Once we pushed the Nephandi, a barebones rebuild could commence. The dark side of the moon plays host for a number of relays, most of them for the purposes of communication, and booster relays to make the most of the once-vast communications network. The loss of Darkside's capabilities for sensing incoming extradimensional threats, as well as the destruction of the Sentinel Satellite Network when the Anomaly appeared, have had a grave effect on the Convention. Border patrols are dependent strictly on the capabilities of their ships and crew, flying blind for over a decade.

QUANTUM DIMENSIONS

What Traditionalists misunderstand as "Shard Realms" and "Shade Realms," we properly know as Quantum Dimensions and Quantum Dimensional Shadows. Such dimensions tied to the planets are each unique, many of them requiring mastery of a given Sphere to survive it. The entrances to some of the remaining open Quantum Dimensions can be found in the Deep Universe, as well as on their corresponding planets. Since the Anomaly, the location of their Deep Universe entrances is more unpredictable.

The areas surrounding these locations and entrances play host to many battles with Nephandi, Threat Null, hostile Traditionalists, and so on.

THE SUN

The Sun appears to have no connections to other dimensions, Quantum or otherwise. In addition, Voidships are not immune to its extreme temperatures and intense gravitational pull; for both of those reasons, the Sun has been permanently moved to the bottom of the list for exploration. Theorists continue to debate what Quantum Dimensions the Sun was or is connected to, and the potential ramifications on our cosmological understanding of the Universe, should the question ever be answered.

MERCURY

The Quantum Dimensions of Correspondence were entangled with Mercury. The historical sources supplied by the Euthantos state they were sealed by Traditionalists

VOID ADAPTATION

Those who spend too long across the Dimensional Anomaly risk suffering from a syndrome where their minds and bodies adapt to conditions there. Apparent symptoms vary, but include the attenuation of limbs, severe weight loss or gain, animalistic or atavistic facial features, monomania, severe sweating, obsession, and amnesia. However, all afflicted share one characteristic: they can no longer cross the Gauntlet and return home. Their minds and bodies have adapted too well to the rigors of space, and any attempt to phase-shift back to Earth leaves the Void Adapted behind.

The earliest symptoms appear after 2126 hours (about 88 days) of cross-dimensional travel. Some have held out against Adaptation for days or even weeks beyond that threshold, but no Engineer has reached the hundred-day mark. Engineers are expected to wear a wristband or ankle band that times their exposure; standard procedure calls for returning to Earth after the one-thousand-hour mark has been reached.

(For more on Void Adaptation, see pages 31-33, 117, and 124 of **Infinite Tapestry**.)

in 1847, when an attack of unknown origin destroyed the Traditionalist stronghold on the planet. Exploration of the surface is approved on a case-by-case basis. Mercury has remained difficult to see by observers in Conventional Space, which makes it practical for use by Void Engineers when training pilots on how to maneuver while avoiding detection by observers, on Earth or otherwise. Mus, one of Mercury's moons, was the site of a Traditionalist college until 1995, when it was destroyed by the Void Engineers. Today, Mus is a hotly contested battleground.

VENUS

Venus's Quantum Shadow possesses a corrosive atmosphere, which exempts it from further exploration. Its other connected dimension, the supposed Quantum Dimension we would perceive as the embodiment of the Life Sphere, was extremely difficult to enter pre-Anomaly. This dimension is currently off-limits to all personnel. While lush, it's tectonically unstable, and likely impossible to return from in post-Anomaly conditions.

The extradimensional aspects of Venus have historically been host to Marauders.

MOON

The Moon's extradimensional points of connections are at best, difficult to categorize. Various Reality Deviant populations have reported vastly different Umbral locations accessible from the Moon, but none of them appear to exist on the same plane. The quantum shadows at work there still defy explanation, and research into these discrepancies continues to be funded and closely followed.

MARS

Once host to a large Traditionalist population, the Union destroyed that installation in 1999 (as well as the Traditionalist populations on the moons Phobos and Deimos). The Quantum Dimension connected to Mars is an unending storm of energy, clearly demonstrating its sphere of energy as governed by Forces. Since the Anomaly, it's only become more violent and unstable. The Quantum Shadow of Forces has no known entrance from this planet. There's renewed interest raised in sending a ship there to cultivate a new power source.

JUPITER

In all its forms, Jupiter requires adept navigators and heavy shielding to approach. Its Quantum Dimensions closely resemble the conventional Jupiter. Briefly the home to an experimental gas-mining project, the project was abandoned when the planet came under attack by Marauders and Nephandi. Once the Dimensional Anomaly arrived, experiments and contact with Jupiter were discontinued. Its Dimensions are tied closely to Matter, though the access of its secondary Dimension has been difficult at the best of times. Exploration is approved on a case-by-case basis, with the aim to restart the gas-mining project if at all possible.

SATURN

No one is cleared for Saturn, the host of an Umbral dimension composed of Time. The moons around it hold interesting, if equally dangerous locales. The moons Hyperion and Phoebe were once the home to Traditionalists colonies, while Mimas was the base camp of suicidally adventurous Traditionalists. Tethys and Rhea were once shipyards of the Void Engineers,

and were destroyed in the Dimensional Anomaly. Titan is guarded by an entity capable of annihilating anything deployed to fight it, and has been classified off-limits since that discovery. (We don't need yet another enemy in this war, though some occasionally propose negotiating an alliance with it.)

URANUS AND NEPTUNE

The moons of Uranus and Neptune hosted a number of small Traditionalist colonies, and were located so far into the Deep Universe that they posed no threat to the Consensus. The Convention refueling station at Uranus's moon Ariel went dark during the Anomaly.

These two planets are likely home to what the Euthanatos claim are the Shade Realms of Spirit and Mind. No one has been able to confirm which is connected to which planet, and Enlightened technology has yet to sort the truth from Traditionalist legend.

Both sets of Dimensions change its contents dependent on the visitor. This is likely rooted in humanity's neurology, attempting to embody and quantify massively abstract information. These Realms share another commonality; entrance to either is often in the form of a brutal emotional and mental test.

PLUTO AND OTHER KUIPER BELT OBJECTS

Senex, the current leader of the Euthanatos, allows no traffic into Pluto or its moons, Cerberus and Charon. The chantry on Cerberus has been dug in for long enough that extracting them wouldn't be an option, even if the current relationship between the Void Engineers and the Euthanatos was not in play. Because of this quarantine, attempts to enter the Quantum Dimensions of Pluto cannot be done while physically on the planet. These Dimensions are not a priority to explore due to the psychological impact on crews that have attempted to survey it. Reports have included descriptions congruent with Entropic Space.

Other Kuiper Belt objects host a variety of interesting and potentially dangerous phenomena. Several of them play host to installations and objects that were ejected from other Dimensions during the Anomaly event. None of them appear to provide the same Quantum Dimension access as Pluto, though this might change as the Masses internalize Pluto's newfound status as a Kuiper Belt object, not a full-fledged planet.

THREAT NULL

As if dealing with Reality Deviants in the Void wasn't bad enough, a new threat has emerged, one we've codenamed Threat Null.

WHAT WE TELL OTHERS

Threat Null is a new breed of Reality Deviant born from the Dimensional Anomaly. Unlike Marauders, Nephandi, and stranger entities, Threat Null isn't a quantifiable foe. It's a catchall term for a new enemy to Consensual Reality, a network of powerful EDEs that are adept at working against Enlightened Science.

Put simply, Threat Null has unkind designs on Earth and humanity, and we're the only ones capable of preventing Threat Null from enacting the total conquest of humankind.

The term "Threat Null" was coined in 2000 when the proto-ETD worked to make sense of three starkly different incidents involving ships beyond the Spatial Horizon. The only similarity was an adaptability against Enlightened Science, so we began collecting data under the auspice of "Emerging Threats Capable of Nullifying Enlightened Procedures."

And while we Void Engineers love to make things into acronyms, ETCNEP wasn't as catchy as its unofficial abbreviation, "Threat Null." The name became its official designation in 2004.

WHAT THREAT NULL REALLY IS

With the stakes this high, you might think we'd call in help from our sister Conventions, but we can't. The rest of the Technocratic Union must remain ignorant of the nature of Threat Null. They don't understand Dimensional Science. They don't understand how things work out here. They don't understand what can happen. In short, they would do something stupid. Not to mention, most of the Union's terrestrial operatives still have Conditioning straightjacketing their minds to make them loyal to Control, and that would be a liability.

Because Threat Null doesn't call itself by that name. Threat Null calls itself the Technocratic Union.

Remember the NWO's Inner Circle? The Progenitors's Administration? All of our old masters and the greatest of Enlightened minds that were lost to the Anomaly, but not all of them

were killed. Some found refuge in temporal anomalies, where they lived for months when mere hours passed for us. Others were subjected to raw forces that twisted their Inspired Sciences into something unnatural. The end result is something that is no longer human: they've all been twisted and perverted by Void Adaptation. They pursue exaggerated and abhorrent versions of Technocratic Empowerment, and seek to force these terrible visions on the whole of humanity.

Threat Null consists of four groups that roughly correspond to our sister Conventions. Each group has its own bailiwick, but they all work together to expand their collective power and reach. While their agendas are seemingly incompatible with each other, their Conditioning still allows them — in fact compels them — to cooperate. (The irony isn't lost on us.)

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AUTOCHTHONIA

Intelligence on Autochthonia is sparse. Hell, we couldn't even find the damn place again until 2004. When we did manage to finally peel back the transdimensional snarl surrounding it, we found a place radically different from the one we knew. The dimensional fabric of space in its vicinity is particularly chaotic, increasing on approach. At 53,000 kilometers out, spatial perturbation drops to near zero, suggesting localized mastery of the Anomaly effect.

The Autopolitans are cannibalizing the planet; in places it's just a framework of material, with open space extending down into its core. Violent blue Cherenkov radiation leaks out of the fissures, suggesting a large nuclear power source immersed in an ocean of water. Thousands of Autopolitan collectives arch off the surface and into space, creating macrostructures visible to the naked eye from orbit.

The artificial flora and fauna of the machine planet are still there, albeit in forms we didn't even think possible. Most of the robotic lifeforms that evolved there are gone. Only seven original forms have been discovered to still be in existence. The planet isn't sterile, however; machine life there has advanced to a staggering point of diversity. There are probably over a thousand species of nanoscale life, comprised mainly of silicon and chromium atoms in lattices of varying complexity.

There are also staggeringly massive macroassemblies of non-sentient artificial lifeforms, some of which that are large enough to reach outside the atmosphere. One of the larger tectonic fissures, the Rachman-Suhendra rift, houses a colony of symbiotically linked metallic oxide crystals that form giant tentacle clusters, ranging between ten and two hundred meters. They act as power mains, drawing energy out of the core of the planet. The crystal assemblies snake off in all directions for thousands of kilometers.

AUTOPOLITANS

Autopolitans transcend the Iteration X ideal of "more machine than man." Circuits and nerves, muscles and actuators, logic constructs and thoughts; they all exist together, weaving together to form their being. This perfect synthesis of artificial and natural materials allows them a stunning freedom in their morphology. Some Autopolitans choose to take a semi-human form, some choose abstract physical shells, and some fuse into massive macrostructures that are massive enough to have their own gravity. The only limit seems to be their awesomely accelerated intellects, and the nature of whatever purpose they give themselves.

These exotic and flexible beings collectively comprise Iteration X's central Computer.

Individual Autopolitans, and the gestalts they form, simultaneously possess both distinct personalities and meta-processes that constitute the Computer. No pre-Anomaly armature or amalgam has ever been identified. Postmortems of their remains reveals a evidence of extreme time dilation, indicating that the old Iteration X leadership on Autochthonia may have forced Paradoxical Time Procedures to speed up development. This is likely, given the disruptive entropic effect the Anomaly has on physical laws, and the value they placed on Autochthonia's ability to host near-perfect machines.

Encounters with Autopolitans tend to be violent and brief. They give no warning, fight to the death, and give absolutely no quarter. The craniums of their victims are pitted and scored by invasive positron tunneling scans. This technique records neural patterns, destroying the subject's



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brain in the process. Perhaps the most revealing insight to their motives is that they take seemingly random personal effects from encounter sites: a toothbrush here, a pocket watch there. Captain Alejandra Burton of the Voidship *Fenris* described this phenomenon as "...almost like a child taking souvenirs from field trip."

AGENTS

In dimensional travel, generally speaking, what you see is what you get. Sure, the "trickster" archetype gives rise to many instances of shady or duplicitous characters out there, but they're the rare exception, and with enough experience you get to recognize that knowing smirk regardless if it's on the face of a coyote or an arachnid. In recent years, however, something new is lurking out there.

They're referred to as Agents, mostly because they have made passing mention of an Agency that they work for. Specifics of said Agency, or any other details of where they come from or who is pulling their puppet strings, are elided or

simply ignored. But these operatives seem to crop up everywhere, under all manner of disguises, pursuing incomprehensible missions. Unlike the generally open and easy-to-interpret nature of memes-made-flesh we usually encounter, the nature of Agents is inscrutable.

Which of course leads us to speculate that the Agency is the smoking ruin of the New World Order. Those in Control and its operatives left behind fell prey to a Void Adaptation that expatriated paranoid, and made them more secretive and delusional, seeing patterns of intent in even the most prosaic circumstances.

From what data we've been able to gather, Agents occasionally work in tandem with other elements of Threat Null, but not in ways that indicate communicative cooperation. Agents regularly deliver reports, contraband, even hostages to other Threat Null units; in our observations, the recipients are genuinely confused and don't appear to have made any such request. However, more than once such deliveries have been exactly what our adversaries needed.

CONTROL

The current status of the Progenitor's Administration, the Inner Circle of the New World Order, and the pre-Anomaly Syndicate Board is unknown, but they and the Computer must exist in some form somewhere, because Control continues to issue orders to Threat Null units.

It's most likely that all these individuals have become Void-Adapted, which might put them on par with powerful Umbrood or even Incarnae. However, with the chaos that ripped apart the Universe fifteen years ago, it's as likely that many (if not most) of their number are dead. Either way, this prompts the question: where are the orders coming from?

Anyone and anything that you interact with on the other side of the Anomaly might be an Agent. Last year, we lost a Voidship battle cruiser, the *Yue Fei*, with its full compliment of crew on board. According to intelligence later gained from (of all sources) a Resident, this was due to an Agent on board masquerading as a technician.

TRANSHUMANITY

Stunningly beautiful, frighteningly strong, and utterly brilliant, the agents of Transhumanity are formidable adversaries made all the more threatening by their simple and tempting offer. Whenever encountered, their first message is always the same: "Surrender now, and be made perfect." Of course, they don't mention the catch.

Through a course of drug therapies, reconstructive surgeries, forced exercise and diet regimes, and a retroviral cocktail, any human can become a transhuman: beautiful, forever healthy, and one small speck in their hive mind. That's right: once "uplifted," Transhumans have no individual will. There is also only one model: the same perfect androgynous face and genderless

physique calculated as the apogee of human beauty. While the agents of Transhumanity present as individuals, they are more like appendages of a single organism with a single purpose: consume and convert all life everywhere.

Transhumanity is what remains of the Progenitors marooned on the other side of the Dimensional Anomaly. Early on, these Progenitors found it easier and easier to modify their own bodies and minds. Mostly unfamiliar with Dimensional Science, they did not recognize the aggressive symptoms of Void Adaptation. The Administration clued in first, but their attempts to maintain control roughly corresponded with the eighty-eight day threshold. This left them holding the bag, which in this case psychic control of the new hive mind. Not only can the Administration not relinquish control, but their own Void Adaptation seems to prevent them from even conceiving of the possibility, let alone understanding why they might want to.

NULL CONDITIONING

While the basic humanity of Threat Null has been stripped away, many echoes and shadows of what they were still remain. Their ideologies and scientific methods are obvious, but the most powerful remnant of what they once were is Technocratic Conditioning.

In fact, the only thing that binds Threat Null together may be their common bond of Conditioning. All Null agents harbor a loyalty to the Union and to Control that's beyond obsessive; the Conditioning has become an essential element of their very beings (and a powerful weapon against anyone in our Union who has not been Deprocessed).

Perhaps the most frightening aspect of Threat Null is that they still consider themselves the true Technocratic Union. "Technocrats" from Earth are, in their estimation, nothing but rogue agents.

WHAT ABOUT OUR ANALOGUES?

We haven't encountered any twisted incarnations of DSEATC or other Void Engineers caught in the Dimensional Anomaly's early days, and no one has a clear answer as to why. Are they out there, waiting? Maybe even pulling strings, since they would understand the Universe and us better than the other Conventions? Or are they rogue — still Void-Adapted fiends but fully embracing our old separatist notions?

The optimists think that since we haven't seen any in the dozen years that Threat Null's existed, there aren't any corrupted versions of us. That our masters have solved Void Adaptation, but can't get back to us. But this is no time for blind optimism. Most realists in the Convention hope they're all dead, because that's the kindest fate we could ask for.

Transhumans serve as an essential component of Threat Null, as its agents can operate nearly anywhere, including areas where the local paradigm makes Autopolitans unreliable. Their only difficulties arise near Neptune (where the hive mind gets lost in dreamscapes) and Mercury (where the hive mind disconnects entirely, leaving a drooling husk behind). While its loyalty is assured through the power of extant Conditioning, Transhumanity's agenda of subsuming all life always lurks behind every interaction with their colleagues.

RESIDENTS

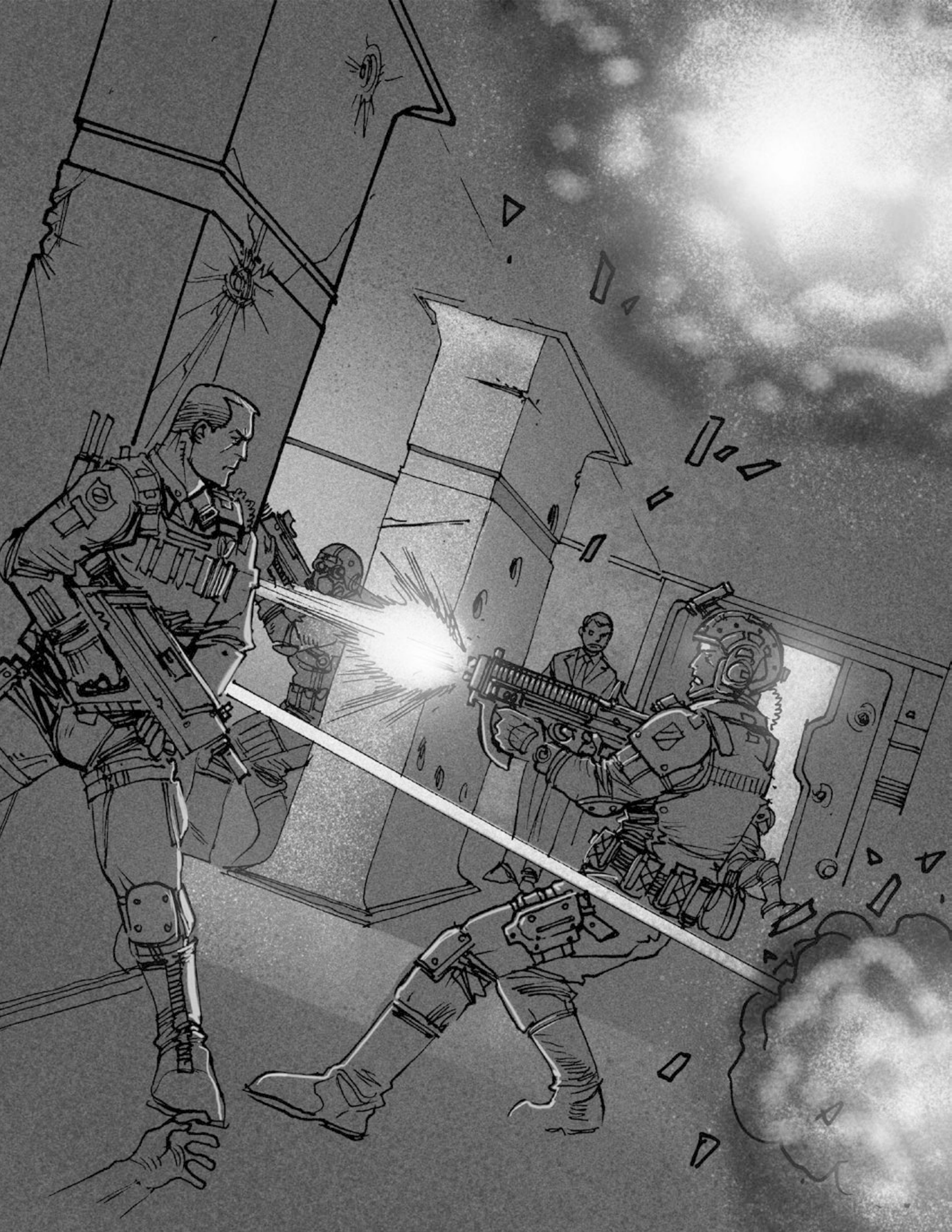
The most insidious threat is the best received by the various EDEs in the Void: the rotund figures in impeccable suits that increasingly sit at the right hand of Incarnae and "spirit lord" alike. These are the Residents, and they have come to help.

Residents are advisors, negotiators, schemers, and fixers who ply their trade throughout Ensemble Space, Biospheric Space, and especially those rogue domains floating around Subspace. Wherever a status quo or a hierarchy of power exists, a Resident will make himself at home. At first, he'll offer the local lords favors, material, and raw power at first; as the relationship develops, he'll offer advice and guidance as well. In this way, Residents slowly enmesh themselves in more places of power than we can count.

The Residents are, of course, the upper echelons of the Syndicate, making do with what resources they have access to. Void Adaptation has made them a special flavor of insane where they see no boundary to acceptable behavior and no limit to who (or what) they will deal with. We suspect they even call some Nephandi hives "clients."

For the first few years of our return and re-exploration of the Void, we enjoyed a warm welcome from Residents, who gladly acted as our guides, interpreters, and even hosts. We dealt with them, and that was a mistake we didn't see until too late. Every deal that a Resident makes has one goal: to further enmesh you into their network of obligations and debts. Before we even knew what we were dealing with, we were shuttling them around in our ships and delivering Primal Energy to their allies. When we lost three ships' crews to Transhumanity conversion, though, the wheels came off the cart. The Resident didn't understand why we were upset, since we had agreed to deliver manpower to their friends. ETD has issued a stern "hands off" policy. Those who deviate reap their own punishment.

To hear the Dreamspeakers talk about them, the Residents' "bush wars" are shredding the delicate tapestry of the spirit world. The Residents' uncanny ability to insinuate themselves everywhere makes it hard for us to operate without Threat Null seeing us coming.



CHAPTER FOUR: THE HANGAR BAY

NOTABLE ENGINEERS



ADMIRAL FU-HAN CHENG PAN-DIMENSIONAL CORPS, 1960-PRESENT

Admiral Fu-han Cheng is a living legend. When the sky fell in the summer of 1999, Cheng was one of a handful of PDC captains who made it out of the Dimensional Anomaly alive. When his astronavigator was killed in a hull breach as the Anomaly unfolded, Cheng was the one to plot the path home through the brutal

onslaught. He and his crew then witnessed the collapse of the Tian'Men Gateway in China. The survival of his ship, the *Qui La Machinæ*-class *Valiant*, would be yet another detail to his already larger than life role in the Convention.

Cheng's path to the Pan-Dimensional Corps began in 1980, as an undergraduate at Hong Kong University. Torn between military history and physics, Cheng sought to understand humankind through the struggles of its past, and the future it could find among the stars. Cheng's moment of Enlightenment was particularly powerful. The chronometric singularity that occurred during his Enlightenment lasted



for an estimated one minute and forty seconds, during which Hong Kong was displaced in spacetime. The sobering strength of his Enlightenment has been the basis for many a research paper — and a potent reminder about the raw capabilities of Eidolons during first contact.

The first Engineer able to respond to the situation, Dr. Jeannie Bell, became one of Cheng's first mentors. Bell lengthened her stay in Hong Kong to get him on his feet, while the Convention arranged for Cheng's removal from Earth to report for training at the Cop. Cheng proved to be skilled at Dimensional Science, as expected, and also had a particularly strong affinity for Correspondence and Time Procedures. These combined forces provided his foundation in space combat, able to perform dangerous spacetime "micro-jumps" and escaping death by mere centimeters in battles against the Nephandi.

Cheng has only lost one ship as a commanding officer; the Hypatia was effectively destroyed in 1998, defending a launch window over Greece. Wreckage that crossed over was salvaged from the bottom of the Ionian Sea, much of it from the Calypso Deep. The resulting damage to Greece caused the Earth Frontier Division to scramble resources, using the explanation of an earthquake for their cover-up.

In the years since the advent of the Dimensional Anomaly, a new Void Engineer academy has risen to prominence in Shanghai, once the home of the Tian'Men Gateway. Cheng teaches only a handful of courses there. His assistant and most trusted student, Song Li, is one of the rare Quantum Voyagers (p. 61). Li has recently reached out to visiting Void Engineers from the West in concern for her mentor. Cheng has focused much of his recent research on reopening the Tian'Men Gateway, now a celestial body that resembles a black hole. It emits energy unlike any encountered before the Anomaly, a wide-band mix of unstable Everett Volumes implicated in "time storms" at other closed or unstable Near Universe gates.

ERNESTO ⊕ SANCHEZ RESEARCH & EXECUTION, 1970-PRESENT

Ernesto Sanchez is a man Void Engineers name their children after. When the Dimensional Anomaly turned life for the Union upside-down, Sanchez's first duty was the rescue of Void Engineers inside the installations operated by Earth Frontier Division. It was the first time members of Research & Execution would be responsible for a

global operation of this sort, and Sanchez led the charge, coordinating teams across (and off) the world.

Architectural damage wasn't the only challenge rescue missions faced. Collapsed Gateways, unstable nexus points and Anomaly-related energy made every installation affected a potentially lethal environment to rescue missions. Sanchez personally led more than fifteen of these missions, and orchestrated countless others. His journey from unEnlightened student to Chief Architect started in childhood.

Born and raised in Mexico City, Sanchez grew up in a Jewish family devoted to the welfare and culture of the city. His father Mario was an architect, and his mother Julia an anthropologist. He filled countless afternoons with them on visits to the *Museo Nacional de Antropología*, Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology. Culture and architecture met in its construction, capturing the young man's attention and imagination.

Sanchez's time at university sparked an interest in developing once-poorly utilized areas of metropolises. His undergraduate work caught the eye of Doctor Pedro Alvarez, one of the Void Engineer Deputy Regional Coordinators for Mexico. Alvarez knew of inhospitable places that needed good architects. Alvarez marked him as a prospect to watch, personally arranging for Sanchez to be involved in construction efforts underway by the Void Engineers.

Ernesto Sanchez attained Enlightenment in 1996, at a construction site for a Void Engineer front in Utah. Sanchez's grasp of Dimensional Science and Correspondence synched simultaneously, leading to a brief but tense encounter with the guard post of the NSC Construct on the other side of the facility he was building part of on Earth. With his architectural talents and savvy to build anything required regardless of conditions, Sanchez was placed inside Research & Execution. Neither an inventor nor a ship designer, Sanchez was still welcomed by R&E. Sanchez had a useful but quiet career there, until the Anomaly.

Saving the lives of as many EFD Engineers as he could, Sanchez's work turned to the salvage and rebuilding of constructs — a labor that has never truly ceased. Triaging constructs for repair by assessing their potential assets versus scale, Sanchez led teams through repair on the least of the damaged constructs first, forced to wait on repairing more damaged constructs due to manpower and safety concerns. In the past year, high-value derelict constructs have moved to the top of the list. These installations, if revived, could feasibly provide Quintessence, ship building equipment, and an influx of Enlightened technology — if there's anything left to salvage after years of neglect.

Sanchez's recent upgrade in clearance, after years of loyal service, has brought him onboard the most dangerous project of his career. He's been entrusted with the role of Chief Architect for a highly classified Convention project. The secret rebuilding of the Ibis listening stations used by the Convention during WWII have been Sanchez's most dangerous labor to date, as the posts have been updated and transformed. No longer monitoring the movements of war orchestrated by the Masses — and deprived the eyes in the sky of the Sentinel Satellites — the Ibis stations have become hubs for Void Engineer intelligence, classified research and a home to projects that would tear the Union apart if ever discovered.

CATHERINE NICHOLS EX-BORDER CORPS DIVISION, 1918-PRESENT

Catherine Nichols is praised by some as a secret savior to the Masses, and wildly distrusted by others in the Convention. That's because most astounding, controversial, and (according to some) greatest accomplishment is one of the Void Engineer's deepest secrets: the preservation of the Dimensional Anomaly.

Born at the height of the Spanish Flu epidemic in Philadelphia, Nichols's working class roots (and gender, in that era) would have consigned her to an ordinary life. Fate had other plans. In her late teens, a mysterious benefactor contacted Nichols, offering to provide her with the funds to attend school at Oxford University. Without hesitation, she accepted.

Her academic qualifications are unusual for a BCD marine. Nichols graduated with a bachelor's degree in physics in 1938, not an easy time to be a woman pursuing academia. Her graduate studies were interrupted by WWII, during which she was recruited by the Void Engineers, and assigned to the Chrononauts Initiative. After the war, she went on to earn her masters and doctorate in physics from Oxford, as well as a doctorate in astrophysics from U.C. Berkeley.

Nichols was one of the scientists integral to Void Engineer advances in space exploration during the 1960s and '70s. After the Space Shuttle *Challenger* explosion in 1986, she went AWOL. DSEATC treated this "defection" as a minor inconvenience by, until 1995 when she published Convention secrets to the Council of Nine — detailed information on the Cop and the unfortunate history of Darkside Moonbase. Nichols time from 1985 onward is unaccounted for, but the fruits of her labors are known to Void Engineers with the highest clearance.

NICHOLS RELAYS

The Nichols Relays are unlike anything the Convention has seen before, and serve the singular purpose of boosting the Dimensional Anomaly's effect. With the ever-present danger of Threat Null, and crippled global defenses, the Convention chose to leave the Devices on. They've placed the Relays across the known limits of the Void because they have no other choice. Without the Anomaly's barrier, the Void Engineers won't be ready to fight an attempted global incursion. Nichols's precious gift is the darkest burden her Convention has ever had to bear alone. But the good of the many must come before the good of the few.

Fourteen months after the Dimensional Anomaly occurred, Nichols initiated contact with the Convention. Broadcasted on a Void Engineer frequency unused for over a decade, she sent two coordinates: one for a warehouse in Ohio, and one deep within Subspace. Packaged with her name and UID, she ended the message with three words. "You'll need this." The package in Ohio contained schematics for an unusual series of orbital devices, and the one in Subspace contained specialized components those devices required — ones that we haven't successfully duplicated yet.

R&E verified that it was in fact Nichols's handiwork. Advanced beyond anyone's understanding

and humming with strange resonances, they formed a number of relays that boost the effects of the Dimensional Anomaly (see above). Had Threat Null not existed, the use of the Nichols Relays would have never been a choice to make. But without them, Earth itself is in terrible danger — and the moral question of their use remains unanswered.

The whereabouts of Nichols is also a mystery, though Void Engineers pursue her whereabouts to this day. She only appears when a relay malfunctions to fix it, and uses some non-Enlightened means to disappear or teleport away.

LEGENDS AMONG DARK STARS



ANASTASIA XI56-B68

In Void Engineer history, few ships have become as renowned as the *Anastasia*. One of the most resilient ships to come out of the XI56 class *Qui La Machinæ*, the *Anastasia* survived near annihilation in the early 1990s in clashes around tainted Nodes. The recent confirmed sighting of the *Anastasia* on the other side of Horizon has provoked hope and concern. The ship appears to be untouched and without life signs, making it a priority to strip for Union technology and Premium. But its lifeless presence on the other side of Horizon, in space it wasn't built to reach, has sent a deep unease through the PDC.

Eighty-five-feet long and built for weeks-long missions, the ship is full of salvageable Devices. The last recorded specs for the *Anastasia* showed multiple boosters installed to bolster its four large AFC cannons, with an additional three, smaller AFCs. The hull is spotted with additional several guns, allowing the *Anastasia* to defend itself against the perils of the Void as it drains Quintessence from the phantasmagorical Nodes in the Penumbra and the starlit

reaches of territory outside Horizon. The *Anastasia* was used on- and off-world, dealing with everything from the sanitizing of the Liberty Bell during a Traditionalist-fueled protest, to assisting larger ships in fighting off Marauder and Nephandi ships in the shadow of Earth.

Under the command of Captain Carey Bassette, the *Anastasia* vanished while on a routine deployment near that glimmering border of Horizon a year before the Dimensional Anomaly, all hands on board. But the reclamation of materials and recovery of survivors remain a priority to the Void Engineers, over a decade later.

Still unsolved is the question: who or what brought the ship across the Horizon? The hull of the once proud ship may hold more within it than any reclamation party would have bargained for. ETD's fear is that if this wasn't caused by a temporal Anomaly effect (which is in and of itself frightening), then this could be evidence of possible Threat Null temporal tampering.

DANA GARDENER

Originally an Army-trained psychologist, Void Engineer Dana Gardener has become a fixture on the

BCD Most Wanted list. Declared KIA over a decade ago, she's been tied to the deaths of several Deep Universe exploration teams, and has been encountered by more than a dozen amalgams on Earth. Throughout all registered encounters, she's seen wearing a mid-'90s Universal Suit. Constructs have also been subject to encounters with Gardener — many of their surveillance networks suffered catastrophic failure after recording her presence.

In 1996, Gardener was the counselor for the *Archimedes*, a Mark VII Cassini deployed by the Pan-Dimensional Corps on a Deep Universe expedition. An unknown hostile force destroyed the *Archimedes* while on mission, with Gardener as the only survivor. It's still unknown how she survived the attack that destroyed her ship and fellow crewmembers. In fact, she was assumed dead; we discovered otherwise due to word from some Reality Deviants — they encountered her while stranded on a small planet in the very sector the *Archimedes* surveyed. Gardener, they claimed, was retrieved from the planet by a group of Nephandi.

In encounters since, she rarely uses direct violence. The Nephandi traveling with her have also eschewed violent confrontation; her companions, who continue to remain unidentified, appear to be two NWO Black Suits, both male, and an Iteration X cyborg of unknown year and gender. Both Suits have a strong Entropic energy signature, and one consistently appears to be a corpse — pallid skin and no discernible life signs. Gardener often tells witnesses that she's "waiting for friends," taking the time to inform those interacting with her about the existence of creatures "from beyond the Outer Rim," and what describes the inevitable end of humanity. To patient listeners, she offers unsolicited advice — those who've followed have survived everything from freak accidents to deliberate attacks by Marauders and other Deviant threats.

ETD considers her too risky to engage with, after several attempts to apprehend her have all resulted in marines either dead (if lucky) or suffering permanent psychological trauma and requiring constant supervision at DIMH (if not).

Since the Dimensional Anomaly, sightings of Gardener have grown frequent. Often predicating clashes in the immediate or near future with Nephandi, her presence has become a calling card for her Nephandic amalgam. Recent reports have placed her near four Void Engineer facilities, in Dusseldorf, Marrakesh, Saigon, and São Paulo.

The only time Gardener was successfully recorded on camera was her visit to São Paulo construct in June 2013. For ten minutes and forty-nine seconds, she stood at the

freight entrance of the Construct's front business, staring up into the lens of a security camera. She then backed away slowly, until out of the camera's view. The security team at São Paulo has no recollection of this encounter, and has requested assistance in the ongoing investigation of Gardener's visitation.

STATION YEMAJA AND THE WALL

Deep in the Kuril-Kamchatka Trench, Station Yemaja is home to the heart and soul of the Void Engineers. One of the earliest underwater labs of the Earth Frontier Division, Station Yemaja was built in 1964 to host Aquatic Exploration Teams and a small permanent staff. When the Syndicate cut the budgets to fund a number of remote EFD labs in the 1980s, Station Yemaja became the one underwater lab the Void Engineers refused to let the Syndicate close.

That foresight saved thousands of lives in the summer of 1999. When the Dimensional Anomaly exploded across local space, the Void Engineers were the first to react. The EFD's stations were some of the first to scramble rescue teams. As Void Engineer ships dropped from the Umbral skies to Earth, they became streaks of rubble across dozens of low-population areas across the globe. Other ships would crash into the sea. Though Yemaja possessed no Gateway to the Umbral Dimensions, but it's location in the Trench made it possible to become the hub of rescue and recovery operations in the Pacific Ocean and landfall sites in Russia and Japan. Yemaja was built as a testament to hope and exploration of the depths — and if it hadn't existed, the lives of thousands more Void Engineers and other Technocrats would have been lost in the initial hours.

The Wall began within hours. AET team members who perished in rescue operations were the first to go up, alongside the loved ones of the Station's staff. Missing friends and crew began to join them. In the weeks after the Anomaly began, visitors brought photos, compelled to take part in the massive public grieving. Progenitors and Iterators brought to the station also posted photographs and notes, and word spread of The Wall's existence. Weeping visitors clutching photos were guided to an open spot without comment.

The Wall started in one of Yemaja docking bays. When the bay is empty, the photos of The Wall reflect in the docking bay tanks. The effect is a rippling and imperfect reflection across the water and walls, a repeating fragmentary vision of photographs of the Anomaly's lost

and dead. The Wall has spread since then, in both size and purpose. If there's someone left behind to remember a fallen member of the Technocracy, they'll make sure a photo finds its way to The Wall. The hallways have filled with countless long-lost faces that still refuse to fade. In the station's temperature-controlled environment, their photos never will.

In the fourteen years the first pictures were posted, the Department of Psychological Evaluation and Maintenance watched its impact on the Void Engineers closely. Station Yemaja has undergone a fundamental change in the Resonance of the installation, as have its long-term crew. The station itself has developed a *Trophonian* Resonance. The emotional energy invested in The Wall there has made it a site of Technocratic pilgrimage, one that some Void Engineers describe as "holy." The majority of long-term

crew assigned to Yemaja longer than fourteen months have developed a *Unity* Resonance. These Technocrats have also begun showing an affinity for Mind Procedures, including Extraordinary Citizens.

Even more, Station Yemaja's Dimensional Science measurements have morphed over time. The Construct was never harshly difficult to access, but contained no signs of a stable Gateway. The Wall changed that. The Department has requested members of the BCD and PDC explore and confirm EFD findings. If true, Yemaja will be the site of a spontaneous Gateway formation, likely caused by the intense, sustained emotional energy centered on it. EFD has also requested that the Construct's location in local space be explored as well. If Yemaja really is slowly slipping through the cracks of reality, there's no guarantee of what we'll see on the other side.

VOID ENGINEER TROUPES



One of the most natural and obvious options for using this book is a chronicle featuring an amalgam (sometimes called a "co-op") made up entirely of Void Engineers. Because Void Engineers rove all over the Universe, it's best to start planning such a chronicle by asking players what kind of Void Engineer activities they're most interested in seeing. Some might be in for hunting down threats; others might want to explore the strangest corners of the Universe. Some might even want to play politics by working alongside the other Conventions, funding and supplying the war effort while trying to keep the details under wraps.

Once you have a rough sketch of the characters you want to play, figure if you want a civilian or military chronicle. The differences are around freedom and focus. A civilian chronicle involves crews or teams free to make their own decisions about how they handle their business. Even if there's some taskmaster giving orders, usually they're about results: go to such-and-such construct, investigate this strange matter, deliver this cargo to a secret outpost, etc. The "how" is left up to the group.

In a military chronicle, the focus is tighter, the orders are more specific (though with player characters, usually some room for flexibility in the name of a good game),

and there are expectations of chain-of-command and the following of protocol. These chronicles are likely to be more about reconnaissance, infiltration, sabotage, and of course straight-up combat.

The world will react differently to civilian and military amalgams, for good and ill. Civilians are rewarded differently than military characters; the former get prestige and material goods, the latter further privilege and rank. Civilians can say "no" to things that soldiers can't. On the other hand, military amalgams can count on their fellows in dire times.

Both directions can be fun, and creative people will find ways to blend the two modes together. Just make sure everyone is on the same page.

Differentiation between Engineers in an amalgam is relatively simple. Every member of the amalgam is there for a certain reason and to perform a certain role. One Engineer needs to be in a leadership position, usually with a title like Captain, Captain-Scientist, Team Leader, and so on. Other roles may include marine sergeants, intrusion specialists, diplomats, and all manner of scientists ranging from cross-dimensional engineers to xenobiologists. Depending on your chronicle, amalgam members may be drawn from a single Methodology like the Pan-Dimensional Corps, or hail from a variety of backgrounds within the Convention.

CREW ⊕ THE GUANSHIYIN



The crew of the *Guanshiyin* is a joint PDC-BCD hunter-killer amalgam, dedicated to neutralizing extraterrestrial incursions where they crop up and then tracking them back to their source. The threats that they face are manifold and constantly shifting; increasingly they find themselves addressing the schemes of high-priority threats, notably Nephandi and Threat Null. Their ship is an extensively modified Voidcraft capable of pursuing their quarry over vast distances and on lengthy missions. It's also a storied ship with a long history, one that the current crew seeks to honor and embellish with its own exploits.

CPT. ZHANG XIANG CAPTAIN ⊕ THE *GUANSHIYIN*

In 2003, televisions across China showed Yang Liwei, curled up inside his tiny Shenzhou capsule, holding up the flags of the People's Republic of China and the United Nations. At 14 years old, Zhang Xiang stood transfixed at that image, whenever the footage aired... which was quite often. From that point on, Zhang knew what he wanted to be when he grew up. He threw himself into his studies, pushing himself in math, engineering, and various sciences. At 16, he took the tests to qualify for further training with the China National Space Administration... and washed out.

The next week, however, he was approached by a man who introduced himself as a CNSA bureaucrat. He'd seen Zhang's application and tests, and he believed that the boy had more potential than the standard tests showed. He offered to get Zhang into the CNSA program... at the price of his unquestioning loyalty. The boy didn't hesitate in agreeing. With accelerated study techniques provided by his benefactor, including sleep training and hypnotic memorization, Zhang flew through the CNSA training and qualified for flight status at the tender age of 20. He attained Enlightenment while floating in zero-g on a Void Engineer training mission; in that moment, as his mind filled with a new understanding of the nature of dimensions and outer space, his world changed.

While he maintained his status as a CNSA pilot, this was almost entirely a fiction; Zhang flew on Void



Engineer ships on missions that appeared nowhere in CNSA briefings. He was thrown feet-first into the churning mess that was the Engineers's war against Threat Null, earning his fair share of battle scars in the process.

He was first posted to the *Guanshiyin* in 2011 as its science officer, and served with some distinction, quickly earning a reputation for bravado and luck. He also studied under (then) Captain Liu Yang, who discovered in him a shared talent for traversing the twisting hellscape of the Dimensional Anomaly. When Liu and the *Guanshiyin* fell prey to a Threat Null assault, Zhang thought his career was over. He was transferred to front-line dirtside service pending an investigation of what had gone wrong.

The *Guanshiyin* spent a year in the hangar for repairs, but Captain Yang was not so lucky. She was returned to the CNSA duty roster, effectively grounded from Void Engineer missions. Her file is closed and sealed; what she did, failed to do, or ran afoul of is a classified mystery. So it was with some surprise that Zhang received his own commission to captain the refurbished *Guanshiyin*. Whatever had happened to Liu didn't seem to drag Zhang's reputation down along with her.

Zhang has brought together his own crew to pursue the *Guanshiyin*'s mission. Tina Hu, Research & Execution, is a colleague from Zhang's CNSA training days. He met Anselm, a Neutralization Specialist, during his first tour on the *Guanshiyin*. Sascha Leonov, Border Corps, is the only operative that was assigned to Zhang; the brash Russian is sometimes more than Zhang's patience can bear, but the new captain reminds himself that two years ago he was also taking the wild risks and reaping the glory and accolades.

Image: Young for a captain, Zhang is still made up of hard edges and a ready air of command. He nearly lives in his ionic cloth jumpsuit, and prefers to keep dangling attachments to a minimum. When performing any EVA, he slings a harness over his shoulders that provides him with all the pockets and holsters he can bear.

Roleplaying Hints: You're an unproven captain and you've been given a serious ship with a serious mission. Even with your facility dodging the Anomaly, it can all be taken away from you, so don't fuck it up. You hand-picked your crew and hope that they'll mesh together into an ersatz family, but until they're all watching each other's backs it's up to you to keep them all alive.

Methodology: Pan-Dimensional Corps

Eidolon: Questing

Nature: Thrill-Seeker

Demeanor: Director

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Leadership 3; Firearms 4, Pilot 4, Survival 3, Technology 2; Computer 1, Cosmology 4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Genius 3

Enlightenment: 4

Inspired Sciences: Correspondence 2, Dimensional Science 4

Willpower: 8

Primal Energy: 3

Paradox: 0

CPL. SASCHA LENOV SECURITY AND TACTICAL

From an early age Ekaterina Leonova knew that something was wrong with her. The world didn't add up, according to the notebooks of mathematical formulas the nine-year-old obsessively filled. Perhaps that would explain why the adults of her world assured her that everything would be all right, even while the Soviet system crumbled around their ears. Perhaps that would explain why Ekaterina was a girl when she knew she was supposed to be a boy.

Luckily for Ekaterina, she lived outside Shchyolkovo-14, Russia's famous "Star City." When she was 13, cosmonauts from the Yuri Gagarin Training Center came to her school to see the mathematical prodigy. Knowing an Enlightened mind when they saw it, the Void Engineers quickly arranged for the young Genius to attend accelerated classes at the Training Center. Finally, the math — or rather, the hypermath — and everything else began to make sense. Three years later, the newly inducted Engineer underwent gender reassignment procedures performed by Progenitors doctor Dannika Cruz, and he chose Sascha Leonov as his new name.

He joined the Border Corps Division, a move that many of his tutors decried as a waste of his incredible mind. To Sascha, all the hypermath in the world was irrelevant next to the horrific existential threats that lurk in the shadows or hang in hungry orbit above Earth. However, the BCD left him increasingly frustrated with chasing extradimensional threats off of the planet but rarely finishing them off and "solving" the problem. When he heard of the *Guanshiyin*'s mission, he requested a transfer.

There is only one wrinkle. While Sascha is loyal to the Void Engineers, he retains a deep gratitude to the Progenitors for his reassignment — a debt that Cruz is all too aware of. Sascha's new posting to the *Guanshiyin* and deep involvement in the Threat Null struggle could make him a security liability, if his divided loyalties are challenged.

Image: A bear of a man with broad, muscled shoulders and a barrel chest, Sascha has a ready smile buried under his thick beard. Off duty and whenever else he can get away with it, he wears jeans and microfiber workout shirts, over which he throws a battered Soviet flight jacket. On duty he wears his ionic jumpsuit, with the same jacket over top.

Roleplaying Tips: Caution is for peacetime. There is too much on the line, too many threats, and too many weaknesses that can cripple humanity if they're discovered. The only reasonable course of action is to throw yourself into the fray, keep moving, and push hard to get to the current mission objective. When things calm down, there might be time for things like math and leisure. But certainly not now.

Methodology: Border Corps Division

Eidolon: Primordial

Nature: Perfectionist

Demeanor: Bravo

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4; Charisma 4, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2; Perception 2, Intelligence 5, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2; Firearms 4, Melee 3, Stealth 2; Computer 1, Cosmology 1, Hypermath 5

Backgrounds: Genius 4, Hypercram 3

Enlightenment: 2

Inspired Sciences: Correspondence 2, Dimensional Science 1, Forces 2, Prime 1

Willpower: 5

Primal Energy: 4

Paradox: 0

THE GUANSHIYIN

Named for the merciful bodhisattva who sends the dead to the Land of Bliss, the *Guanshiyin* is a war-capable Voidcraft originally focused on maneuverability and a “big gun” philosophy. Since its construction, however, its crew has shifted its core functionality to provide speed and travel range. In short, this ship does not need to see dock very often, and can indulge in extended pursuits of several months — whether or not the crew can so indulge is another matter.

HISTORY

Originally constructed in 1992 when its ship class was only intended as an escort to *Qui La Machinae* dreadnoughts, the *Guanshiyin* began service as a sleek, dedicated gunboat. She was lucky enough to be docked in Yemaja when the Dimensional Anomaly came crashing down; the rest of her battle group was not so lucky. During the few years as the Engineers tried to puzzle out the realities of the Dimensional Anomaly, the *Guanshiyin*'s overspecialized load-out was passed over in favor of more “survivable” craft. Few of these missions returned, although some of the ships have since been recovered. By that time, *Guanshiyin* was pressed into service.

Without a submersible hull, the *Guanshiyin* was not particularly useful around Yemaja; therefore she was reassigned to Darkside and outfitted for patrol duty. She defended against a dozen assaults on the far side of the moon before Darkside defense shifted to wings of shuttle-fighters. The *Guanshiyin* passed from PDC to BCD hands and began working primarily in Conventional Space, running down reality deviants and rogue extraterrestrials.

The *Guanshiyin*'s duties slowly developed in the following years, mostly as a result of its capable crew and captain of the time. The ship became renown for tirelessly hunting its quarry and “always getting its man.” It was during this period that the singularity drive was hauled aboard and plugged into the ship's systems in a last-ditch attempt to catch a pack of lycanthropes (which worked). In 2010, the crew's increasingly wide latitude was finally enshrined in a new set of mission parameters, giving it the hunter-killer directives it still operates under today.

LAYOUT

The main hull is an attenuated teardrop shape a little under 20 meters long, the tail end of which spreads into a sweeping airfoil some 25 meters across. Two engine pods rise out of the airfoil's far edges, with cramped crawlspaces connecting them to the main hull. These pods house only the “business end” of the total-conversion atmospheric boosters and the STAR-TPU; the inner workings of both systems are housed in the core of the ship.

The ship technically contains three decks. The Top Deck bears the bridge, a well-stocked galley, and the telepresence suite. The Mid Deck is mostly taken up by the engine room, which runs down the longest stretch of the ship, around which are arranged the crew cabins, computer core, and medical suite. The Under Deck is comprised almost entirely of cargo space along with the weapons bays and the housing for the retractable landing gear; this deck

CUSTOM COMPONENTS

The *Guanshiyin* has a few elements of note built in.

TELEPRESENCE DRONES (20 BACKGROUND POINTS EACH)

Folding into miniature docking bays on the exterior of the *Guanshiyin*, the ship's complement of six drones can launch independently or en masse, piloted by an expert system (roll a dice pool of 4 for most tasks) when not directly controlled via the telepresence rig in the ship. The drones are primarily intended for use as reconnaissance tools, but each is equipped with a low-grade "Mu" Particle Beam (5 lethal damage; often directed using the Coordinated Fire Procedure on p.85). Each also bears a three-fingered manipulator arm, which can perform simple physical tasks with an effective Strength of 2. The drones are only lightly armored: three health levels of damage will ground a drone (although it will continue broadcasting); six health levels will destroy it.

SHORT RANGE TELEPORT MODULE (20 BACKGROUND POINTS)

By using an attached, shipboard Extraordinary Device to modify its Singularity Drive, the *Guanshiyin* can relocate its entire structure up to 5 kilometers (just under 3 miles) in local space. This isn't a great deal

of travel in terms of the vast reaches of space, but an instantaneous jump can be very useful in a combat situation. The Device has two flaws. First, it cannot exploit Quantum Field Resonance to travel further than 5 kilometers. Second, once the module performs a jump, it's unusable for three turns as its spatial drive spins up again.

THE SALVAGED SINGULARITY DRIVE (2 POINT FLAW)

The *Guanshiyin*'s Singularity Drive is miscalibrated, throwing off its target destination by 10 to 100 miles in a random direction. This has been known to foul orbits and lead to near-collisions with other craft. Occasionally, the target is also off by a few hours or days into the future (or rarely, the past). The crew salvaged the engine from scrap they found crashed on the surface of Venus; while they were able to install it, no one's quite sure how to fine-tune it back into perfect working order. Since the Singularity Drive was salvaged and the *Guanshiyin* isn't officially cleared to operate it, the crew is reluctant to ask for help with its repairs, fearing that it (and the rest of the ship) will be confiscated. As it is, the crew uses the Singularity Drive as an option of last resort.

is cramped, poorly lit, and unshielded, leading the crew to generally avoid having anything to do down here.

As typical for Voidcraft, corridors are tight to conserve space and the hatches are heavy: they have to be to maintain an airtight seal against vacuum. Still, the ship has a distinct personality as the home of a band of compatriots dedicated to a common cause, and who spend inordinate amounts of time cooped up together. Anselm takes pains to keep a few orchids alive, usually tucked away in the ceilings' corners, and Sascha has rigged the intership communication system with high-fidelity speakers. At any given time, the strains of Wagnerian opera, Spanish guitar, or the latest bubblegum pop fill the entire ship.

SYSTEMS

Cost: 25 Background Points.

Structural Capacity: Eight crew life support pods, four officers' quarters, 240 cubic meters cargo capacity, + 20 Health Levels of reinforced structure. Life support is rated for Deep Universe travel. 54 Health Levels. *Successes:* 55.

Propulsion: STARTPU with escape velocity capacity, Deep Universe rated Voidcast drive, and Singularity Drive (Flawed; see above). *Successes:* 163 (165-2 point Singularity Drive Flaw).

Hull: 20 dice of standard armor; 10 dice of Primum countermeasures. *Successes:* 75.

Armament: Twin Gamma class particle beam cannons, three HEX missile volleys, four hardpoints presently bearing Dimension Phase Disruptor Emitters (see p. 84 for Device traits). *Successes:* 78, plus 16 for DPDE weapons.

Additional Features: AI (drone control; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Alertness 2, Helmsman 2, Energy Weapons 2), active camouflage, atmospheric flight, six telepresence drones (see above), short range teleport module (see above). *Successes:* 112.

Combined Construction Spheres: Correspondence 4, Dimensional Science 5, Forces 5, Mind 5, Prime 4, Time 3.

Total Construction Successes: 499.

APPLIED DIMENSIONAL SCIENCE



Through Dimensional Science, the Void Engineers have developed a scientific framework for a cosmos suffused with the apparent myth. Tychoidian theory explains such phenomena, but implies that belief shapes reality more than the Technocracy can be admitted to Front Line members of other Conventions. Void Engineers are still the only Convention to routinely use Dimensional Science, and until recently, discouraged other Technocrats from studying it. The Convention leaves it to individual personnel to decide.

• EDE SCAN, EVALUATE GAUNTLET, MAP DIMENSIONAL REGION

The Void Engineer learns to evaluate the characteristics of other dimensions, including nearby extradimensional entities (EDEs). Most use hypertechnology scanning equipment, but the most skilled can see signs of “bleed-through” between Conventional Space and other dimensions through careful naked eye observations.

EDE Scan: An EDE’s consciousness subtly manipulates the environment around them, and they generate phenomena analogous to biological life signs. The Technocrat can detect these signs on either side of the Gauntlet.

Evaluate Gauntlet: The Void Engineer can detect the strength of the local Gauntlet according to both Technocratic and Reality Deviant standards. He can also sense whether or not the Gauntlet has become stronger or weaker, and whether beings or objects passed through it, across a time frame determined by Procedure Duration (as set by the Procedure’s description or **Mage: The Ascension Revised**, p. 209). This includes the ability to detect Resonance from travelers and events, matching them to perpetrators after the fact.

Map Dimensional Region: The Void Engineer maps nearby regions in other dimensions. This includes concentrations of active EDE’s, “pocket regions” within a dimension, para-geographical features (hills, asteroids, floating Reality Deviant fortresses) that don’t exist in Conventional Space, and heavily trafficked routes.

•• DIMENSIONAL VIBRATION, MODIFY DIMENSIONAL GAUNTLET, TRANSDIMENSIONAL FIELD

Radiation pulses, hypermathematics, and small amounts of exotic matter allow the Void Engineer to manipulate other dimensions, including the degree to which they overlap with normal space.

Dimensional Vibration: Void Engineers can generate artificial “ripples” in the fabric of other dimensions. These do not resemble natural dimensional phenomena, and can attract EDEs for study and ambush. Engineers can also embed a digital signal in these vibrations to communicate with anyone utilizing the first rank of Dimensional Science.

Modify Dimensional Gauntlet: Unlike Traditionalist “Spirit,” Dimensional Science studies hypermathematical structure of other dimensions, making Gauntlet manipulation a simpler matter for Void Engineers. They can raise or lower the Gauntlet, but can’t drop it to 0 outside the immediate vicinity of a Node rated 3 or higher. A 0 rating eliminates the hazards of the Dimensional Anomaly for one scene, but the duration can’t be extended, dashing the hopes of Engineers who wish to use it for large scale, safe transport. Furthermore, the Dimensional Anomaly sends feedback during Gauntlet modification Procedures, so even if the Procedure helps others travel safely, the Procedure’s operator suffers for them.

Note that a Gauntlet rating of 0 does not unite dimensions. While these regions might manifest intermittent cross-dimensional phenomena, including disappearances and EDE manifestations, the only reliable way to cross is through an Enlightened Procedure.

Transdimensional Field: Void Engineers can give an object transdimensional properties, allowing it to simultaneously occupy the same space in multiple dimensions. By surrounding herself with a transdimensional field, the Void Engineer can physically interact with other dimensions. She can strike EDEs or climb natural features on the other side of the Gauntlet (in normal, Conventional Space, it looks like she’s climbing thin air). Transdimensional fields do not trigger the Dimensional Anomaly.



●●● DIMENSIONAL SHIFT, MANIPULATE PARAPHYSICAL PHENOMENA, PHASE DISRUPTION FIELD

As a Void Engineer's understanding grows, she learns how to travel between dimensions and perform powerful alterations to their space-like substrates.

Dimensional Shift: The Technocrat can travel "sideways" to the Umbral Dimensions and Subspace. This does not create a freestanding Gateway, but translates individuals or objects one at a time. Shifting across dimensions within the Spatial Horizon provokes the Dimensional Anomaly unless the local area possesses a Gauntlet rating of 0.

Manipulate Paraphysical Phenomena: The Void Engineer can manipulate the paraphysical matter and energy in other dimensions as if she possessed rank 3 in the Forces and Matter Spheres.

Phase Disruption Field: Expanding on his ability to manipulate the sub-dimensional medium, the Void Engineer can now generate destructive vibrations that disorient, injure or disintegrate targets. The Technocrat must aim the pulse. This usually requires a Dexterity + Energy weapons roll, difficulty 6 (higher if he can't see his target). The Void Engineer can choose whether to inflict bashing, lethal, or aggravated damage.

●●●● ALTER DIMENSIONAL TOPOLOGY, DIMENSIONAL GATEWAY, STABILIZE DIMENSIONAL FIELD

At this rank, the Technocrat can make powerful, long standing alterations to the fabric of other dimensions.

Alter Dimensional Topology: By altering the paraphysical constants of a region, the Void Engineer can create temporary pocket domains that ensnare travelers, particularly EDEs. These can be generated from the other side of the Gauntlet without invoking the Dimensional Anomaly. Border Corps Marines often use this to block an extradimensional threat's escape. Dimensional topology can also be used to create "rapid transit" paths in the Umbral Dimensions or Subspace; divide travel time by Procedure successes +1.

Dimensional Gateway: The Void Engineer can open Gateways to Umbral Dimensions or Subspace

from a corresponding physical locale. Anyone may pass through during the Procedure's duration. Unless the area possesses a Gauntlet rating of 0, passage exposes the traveler to Dimensional Anomaly effects.

Stabilize Dimensional Field: The Void Engineer strengthens the Enlightened Anthropic Principle (p. 54) to prevent Void Adaptation and other aberrant phenomena. She does so by transferring the information state of standard reality to the immediate area through the Resonance of Earthly Primal Energy, channeled from a Node or Tass containing terrestrial Primal Energy. One point of Primal Energy delays Void Adaptation (p. 63) for one human for one week.

●●●●● ANTHROPIC FIELD, BREACH SPATIAL HORIZON, COSMOGENESIS

Master Dimensional Scientists know how to breach the Spatial; Horizon, to explore the realms there or go

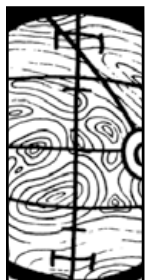
beyond, to the Deep Universe. Other Procedures can create subdimensions or even extradimensional life.

Anthropic Field: The Technocrat creates a hypermathematical "reality bubble" in which humans are capable of surviving; an independent iteration of the Anthropic Principle that doesn't rely on terrestrial Primal Energy. This can be used within the Spatial Horizon as a more energy efficient way to preserve travelers, or it can keep people alive in the Deep Universe.

Breach Spatial Horizon: The Void Engineer can pass directly through the Spatial Horizon. With effort, she grant passage to a group or vessel.

Cosmogenesis: Using hypermathematical principles, the Void Engineer can perform "cosmic computation." She can create Horizon Constructs and extradimensional entities (such as those that once inhabited cloned LERMU bodies) out of the raw energies of other dimensions. Without Primal Energy, these eventually dissolve, but a steady supply will fuel them indefinitely.

V⊕ID C⊕RRESPONDENCE



Most Void Engineers treat Correspondence as the study of space, and use the range chart below instead of the one in **Mage: The Ascension Revised** p. 209. This chart uses two factors: distance and the degree to which a Void Engineer has established a Quantum Field Resonance (QFR) with the target. Engineers create

QFRs with locations by measuring their characteristics. Measurement entangles the target and origin point, allowing information, matter, and energy to travel between the origin point and its target. The more precise and comprehensive the measurements, the stronger the QFR and consequently, the fewer successes required. (In some ways, this resembles Traditionalist "sympathy," but even the most broadminded Engineer would, at best, mention this sarcastically.)

| Successes | Literal Distance | Quantum Field Resonance* |
|-----------|--|--|
| 1 | 1 kilometer | Technocratic Construct Lab or Voidship |
| 2 | 5 kilometers (Earth's horizon) | Temporary Void Engineer Installation |
| 3 | 200 kilometers (low Earth orbit) | Void Engineer Survey |
| 4 | 1000 kilometers (high Earth orbit) | Non-Enlightened Telemetry |
| 5 | 500,000 kilometers (near translunar space) | Direct Detection (by telescope, etc.) |
| 6 | 150 million kilometers (1 AU)** | Indirect Detection (gravitational wobble or spectral analysis) |

* If no precise target location can be defined by measurement, the Storyteller places the Procedure's target nearby, anywhere she thinks would be *interesting*.

**Each success past 6 doubles this distance.

To use the chart, use the literal distance to the target unless the Void Engineer has established a shorter effective range via Quantum Field Resonance. The target's nature determines the maximum QFR. Permanent Technocratic facilities and Voidships are exhaustively measured controlled environments. Temporary habitats support weaker QFRs, and mundane scientific measurement, especially indirect measurement, provides the weakest of all. If the Engineer is

using someone else's data instead of personal measurements, add 1 to the number of successes required. Furthermore, if the Void Engineer can't nail down a precise location, her Procedure links to a random location in the vicinity of her target – and not necessarily in a safe place.

Note that regardless of QFR, Technocrats require conjunctional Dimensional Science to cross the Gauntlet or either the Biospheric or Spatial Horizon.

VOID ENGINEER DEVICES



CREATION ENGINE (6 BACKGROUND POINTS; ENLIGHTENMENT 4, 10 PRIMAL ENERGY)

The creation engine is a Primal-powered nanotech/femtotech micro-factory. This yard long steel cylinder comes with a single strap for easy transport. It looks like an uncomfortable messenger bag, but carries a potent mix of nanobot assemblers and electromagnetic actuators. This Extraordinary Device can generate any form of non-exotic, non-radioactive matter in any shape, as long as it can fit into an output chamber about six inches wide and about a foot long.

Each creation requires one point of Primal Energy. Void Engineers enter specifications through a network-connected computer of their choice (some have preloaded applications on smartphones or ionic cloth wearable computers). They're ultimately limited by their own knowledge. A poor gunsmith will produce a terrible gun; an excellent chemist can produce diamonds or hydrochloric acid with ease. Certain creations tend to fall apart quickly, or react badly to the environment as manifestations of Paradox.

DIENSIONAL PHASE DISRUPTION EMITTER (4 BACKGROUND POINTS)

In the post-Dimensional Anomaly environment, the DPDE has grown from an exotic weapon into a badge of office. BCD and PDC officers wear them at their hips, drawing them to eliminate serious extradimensional threats.

A DPDE's streamlined shape makes it impossible to mistake for a normal firearm. When activated, a single LED indicates whether it's set to stun (green), kill (yellow) or disintegrate (red). A slight glow on the top faceplate gives way to a projector that places a targeting reticule on the user's retina.

The weapon uses two Dimensional Science Procedures in tandem. First, it generates a transdimensional field around designated targets, allowing it to strike them in Conventional Space. Roll the user's Enlightenment to breach the local Gauntlet, +1 success per additional target beyond the first. The DPDE can hit targets in other dimensions as well.

Second, it emits a Dimensional Phase Disruption beam that inflicts bashing (green), lethal (yellow), or aggravated (red) damage, as the user chooses. Roll the operator's Enlightenment and her Dexterity + Energy Weapons dice pool. If either roll fails, the DPDE beam misses. If it succeeds, the weapon inflicts two Health Levels of damage of the user's choice, per Enlightenment success, plus additional damage dice for extra successes on the targeting roll. If the Device inflicts enough aggravated damage to kill the target, it reduces her to elemental vapor. DPDE disintegration affects living targets first – excess damage vaporizes whatever a living target might be wearing or carrying, with the exception of Primum (which shields against DPDE beams) and other materials augmented with counter-Procedures.

The operator can spend successes to attack multiple adjacent targets with a wide beam, but all targets must first be tagged with a transdimensional field.

IONIC CLOTH (0 BACKGROUND POINTS)

Ionic cloth is a multi-function "genius material." It generates a static charge that repels dirt, water and oil. Its internal circuits can conduct electricity or insulate the user, depending on how she configures it. It contains a "dumb" wearable computer that's about as sophisticated as a normal smartphone, but can accept Enlightened input in case the user wants to alter the suit's rigidity, color, shape or other physical properties, or connect it to a more sophisticated Extraordinary Device. Optional hood, glove and boot attachments can turn it into an impromptu environment

suit. Void Engineers often customize their suits with extra features or adjustments for style (including the recent retro-fashion trend of WWII-era bomber jackets).

The Void Engineers assign an ionic cloth suit to any member they expect to serve in an off-world post. The suit is a core Convention apparatus; officers use it to support a variety of Procedures—anything from armor to an improvised electroshock weapon that can reach across the Gauntlet.

Despite these being standard issue, the Void Engineers lack the industrial capacity to manufacture them at a whim. Wreck your suit, and you'll have to find a new

one. It is however possible to patch them up with parts of other ionic cloth suits — often those recovered from dead comrades. Thus, patching a suit has become a memorial custom; Engineers write names the names of former owners on each piece of ionic cloth.

Ionic cloth acts as Class Two armor (see **Mage: The Ascension Revised**, p. 244) but otherwise possesses no special systems—it can do a number of extraordinary things, but only for Void Engineers with the appropriate Spheres. Its chief value lies in the fact that creative players can use it to justify Procedures.

VOID ENGINEER PROCEDURES



Void Engineers's "personally fueled technologies" range from ordinary actions honed to Enlightened precision, to mighty manipulations of time, space and other dimensions. Void Engineers prefer Extraordinary Devices for survival-critical functions, but the Convention can no longer afford to provide comprehensive material support for its co-ops, forcing members to improvise their own solutions.

CHECKLIST (ENTROPY •• OR PRIME •••••)

To a Void Engineer, engineering failures are mortal threats, and human error is negligent homicide. That's the reality of Void survival, and it compels them to distrust informal routines or intuition. They develop standard procedures for everything from EVAs to food processing to minimize risk. VE slang calls these procedural systems "checklists," though most of them are actually elaborate electronic project management systems that update in response to real time diagnostic information. To use the Checklist Procedure, the Void Engineer uses computerized assistance to break any task down into logical steps and failsafe actions. She follows these steps, eliminating the chance of catastrophic failure.

When she works up a Checklist for a non-Enlightened action or technology using Entropy 2, one success eliminates the chance of botching. Additional successes extend the duration of this protection, as long as the Technocrat continues to perform the action.

Prime 5 allows a VE to counteract the Paradox generated by Enlightened Procedures and Extraordinary Devices. Each success removes one point of Paradox at the cost of one point of Primal Energy.

COORDINATED FIRE (CORRESPONDENCE •, MIND ••, TIME •)

Led by Enlightened officers, BCD fire teams train to take down the toughest EDEs with expertly timed, concentrated firepower. A fire team leader equips her marines with communicators capable of transmitting audiovisual data, position and weapon status. She uses this information to time her instructions; on command, her troops let loose a devastating combined burst that leaves to opening for escape.

Roll the fire team leader's Enlightenment; each success allows one team member to join in. Roll the team's combined Dexterity + Firearms or Energy Weapons as one massive dice pool. Similarly, roll each weapon's damage together, in another huge dice pool, but only add burst and fully automatic fire bonuses once, not once per applicable weapon. If the target can soak this damage, roll soak dice once per weapon used.

DEPROCESSING (MIND •••• [PRIME ••])

Void Engineer psychiatrists make every effort to remove standard Technocratic Conditioning, but even as threats from the Void make it more necessary than ever, staffing shortages and the general state of emergency have changed the Deprocessing Procedure from a gradual, gentle reintroduction to autonomy to a full-on attempt to break and rebuild the Enlightened mind. Medics administer hallucinogens and other drugs that interfere with neurological executive function. An Enlightened therapist guides the subject through several "disloyal" scenarios using a mix of verbal tactics and virtual reality. Bouts of catatonia and rage are positive signs that indicate the subject is pushing against the boundaries of her Conditioning-mediated identity. The therapist offers alternatives to these stopping points, and gradually recovers the person beneath

the Conditioning—or someone close enough, free-minded but a bit bent by her recent psychodrama.

To succeed at Deprocessing, a Void Engineer must accumulate twice as many successes as the subject's Willpower + Conditioning rating (see the **Guide to the Technocracy**, pp. 89-90). This is a coincidental Procedure if the therapist takes it slow, and his player makes one Procedure roll per day. It turns vulgar if the character tries to quickly burn out the Conditioning, but her player can then make one Procedure roll her hour. By adding Prime 2 to this Mind 4 Procedure, the therapist adds a margin of safety; each success acts as one die of a counter-Procedure that affects any Procedure her subject attempts, as long as it was motivated by her Conditioning. This includes counter-Procedures intended to directly interfere with the Deprocessing Procedure itself.

FORMAT SPACE (CORRESPONDENCE ●●●●, DIMENSIONAL SCIENCE ●●●●)

Void Engineers prefer to regulate extraterrestrial space the easy way: by creating safe models of its phenomena for ordinary citizens to absorb, internalize and impose on the target region. Human minds collapse a region's dangerous possibilities into manageable Conventional Space. But sometimes, the Convention doesn't have time to wait for the Masses to send crude probes, and PDC scientists step in with brute force and mathematics. Void Engineers deploy quantum-entangled virtual particle emitters linked to an AI array that models the target area as it *should be*: obedient to the Anthropic Principle and the Technocratic laws of physics.

Due to the prodigious scientific knowledge required, Format Space is normally undertaken by two PDC experts directing a team of assistants. Their players must define at least four reference points where virtual particle generators have been deployed—this is enough to affect a tetrahedral volume. The players must score enough successes to make Correspondence contact with each of them (see p. 83 for revised Correspondence ranges.) The team's players must then score Duration successes, as per p. 209 of **Mage: The Ascension Revised**. After that, successes generated by their efforts may impose the following effects:

- Each success raises the Gauntlet by 1 for Reality Deviants, and decreases it by 1 for Technocrats, to a maximum rating of 10 and minimum rating of 0, respectively. In a region outside of Earth, this Gauntlet is called a *pericarp*, and erects itself even if it didn't exist before. Pericarps do not manifest the Dimensional Anomaly.
- Five successes render all Reality Deviant Procedures vulgar, even if they would normally be coincidental,

while all Technocratic Procedures become coincidental. The only exceptions to this consist of certain Procedures that are vulgar throughout the Tellurian—including "Format Space." If this feature is chosen, material, living organisms that cannot be accepted by Technocratic science becomes what Traditionalists call "thaumivores." Without one point of Primal Energy per day, they will sicken and die, or fade across dimensional boundaries to become para-material EDEs.

- Five successes force the mundane physics of the region to conform to the Consensus. Hyperspatial "ether" turns into hard vacuum, for example.

Due to this Procedure's extreme difficulty, Extraordinary Devices capable of performing some or all of its functions are highly sought after. As mentioned earlier, Formatting Space is always vulgar.

SINGULARITY (CORRESPONDENCE ●●●●, TIME ●●●)

Void Engineers can produce true, traversable singularities within shells of exotic matter. Engineers use this to perform a variety of experimental and practical tasks. Singularities should not be confused with the quantum teleportation the Convention uses for straightforward Correspondence Procedures. Unlike these, singularities produce relativistic effects, slowing time for anyone passing through. Thus, they are often used to travel in time *and* space. Short causality-bending jaunts are possible, but not recommended due to intense Paradox.

Devote successes to the area of effect (one success per person or equivalent area), distance (based on Correspondence distances on p. 83), and duration. After that, spend successes on slowing time within the singularity to a fraction of 1 + successes (spending two successes would slow time to one-third of its standard rate). Optionally, additional successes allow travel back in time for one turn *before* the singularity's appearance, per success. The latter option invokes the Paradox effects of Time Warp on p. 193 of **Mage: The Ascension Revised**. During the Procedure's duration, targets inside the singularity experience time distortion, and can't be affected by outside forces. Once the duration ends, targets arrive at the specified time and location.

SURVIVAL PROCEDURES (VARIES)

Void Engineers use several Procedures to deal with hostile environments (some thanks in part to friends we've cultivated among the Progenitors). To use these Procedures, devote successes to duration and the number of protected targets.

Aquatic (Life ●, Matter ●●●● or Life ●●●): The first version of this Procedure creates a protective suit and air supply using anything from nanobot capsules to jury-rigged wetsuit. If the Engineer has the necessary gear, this Procedure is unnecessary. The second version creates synthetic gills, reinforced muscle and bone, and nitrogen-processing organs to allow survival even at crushing depths.

Deep Universe (Dimensional Science ●●●●●): Computers and enhanced brains continuously recalculate Earth's fundamental physics to generate a survivable reality around the user, protecting her from the Deep Universe. This Procedure is often applied to spaces and vehicles instead of individuals.

VAR (Life ●, Forces ●●, Matter ●●●●): Short for Vacuum, Atmosphere and Radiation, this Procedure protects Void Engineers from Conventional Space hazards. Pan-Dimensional Corps members usually seal ionic cloth jumpsuits or combine personal force fields with an oxygen supply.

LERMUization (Dimensional Science ●●●●●, Life ●●●●●): Void Engineers deliver the Living Entity Reality Modulator Unit (LERMU) adaptation package via a tailored retrovirus. Based on genetic studies of the human-like Ka Luon, LERMU adaptations protect recipients from Deep Universe environmental hazards, Void Adaptation, vacuum, and cosmic radiation. LERMUs also no longer need to eat or breathe, as they receive nourishment from a photosynthetic subcutaneous layer. LERMU feet possess opposable thumbs, long toes, and neural pathways allowing them to grasp objects like hands. Their eyes can see for long distances, and can register infrared and ultraviolet radiation.

Void Engineers used to administer LERMUization to Progenitor-supplied clones during gestation, but the modern Technocracy lacks the capability to ensure a steady supply. Most of these inhabited the old Cop, and sadly were lost along with it. A smaller number of LERMUs were Enlightened Cop staff, and other Deep Universe explorers who took LERMU treatments to help them survive extended missions.

Unlike other survival Procedures, LERMUization requires five successes before devoting successes to Effect duration. It can be made permanent for 10 successes. LERMUization is an unstable Procedure in Near Conventional Space; subjects carry three points of permanent Paradox while the Procedure remains in effect.

TELEOPERATE

(CORRESPONDENCE ●●, FORCES ●●)

The Convention doesn't always have the time or funding to build drones from scratch, so it developed

SUITING UP

We haven't detailed survival suits as Extraordinary Devices because, as you can see, Void Engineers have a lot of options to choose from. Survival suits cost two Background points per dot of the highest Sphere used. Some suits also store Primal Energy; one Background point provides the ability to store 5 points of Primal Energy.

methods to remotely pilot most electrically controlled vehicles by either hacking into their onboard computers, or using wireless electricity transmission to directly activate their systems. Satellite and local mapping allows for a pilot's eye view even when the vehicle isn't equipped with a camera.

Spend successes on remote control duration, Correspondence range, and the number of vehicles affected. (Note that operating each vehicle is a separate action.) Complex vehicles like robots and jet fighters may require additional successes. Unlike many other Void Engineer Procedures, this often utilizes Correspondence as Data, as detailed on page 74 of **Convention Book: NWO**.

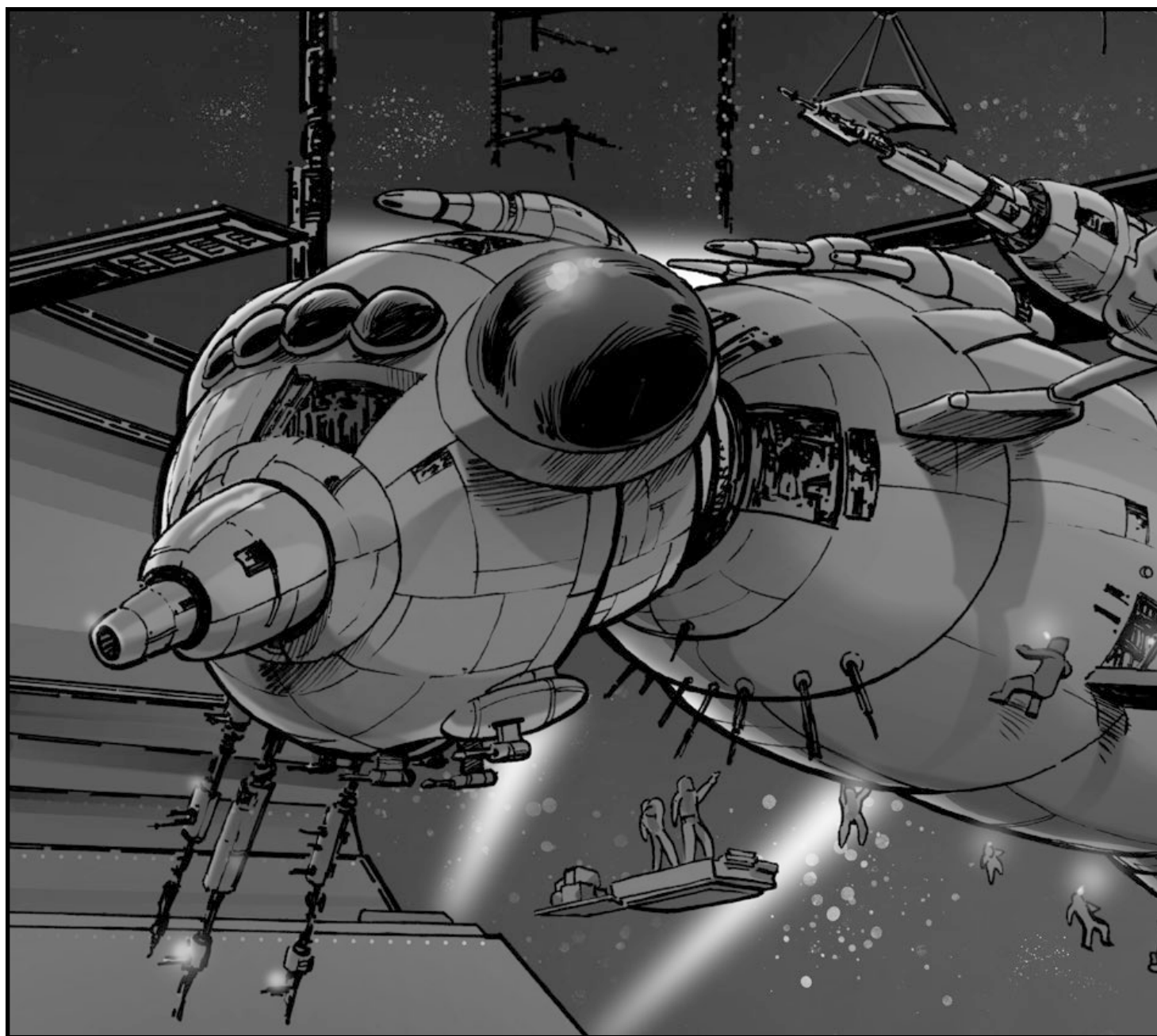
Void Engineers used to routinely apply a variant of this Procedure that also required Dimensional Science 2 to operate drones on the other side of the Gauntlet, but the Dimensional Anomaly has made this impossible outside of the rare regions where the Anomaly is weak.

VOIDCAST

(CORRESPONDENCE ●●●●,
DIMENSIONAL SCIENCE ●●● ⊕
CORRESPONDENCE ●●●●,
DIMENSIONAL SCIENCE ●●●●●)

Voidcasting is the current preferred technology for interdimensional and Deep Universe travel, unifying prior advances in quantum field inversion and particle matrix fluctuation. Voidcasts are not only more energy efficient, but can be generated using improvised equipment. The Void Engineer builds a Faraday Cage around anything she wants to transport and generates a rotating magnetic field. Once the field's rotation approaches the speed of light, neutrino perturbation generates densely packed virtual particle exchanges, converting anything in the cage to a Primal matter stream that reintegrates at a selected destination.

At Correspondence 4/Dimensional Science 4 this teleports targets to any known location in Subspace or the Umbral Dimensions. At Correspondence 5/Dimensional Science 5, Voidcasting transports targets anywhere in the known universe—the Procedure can bypass the Spatial Horizon.



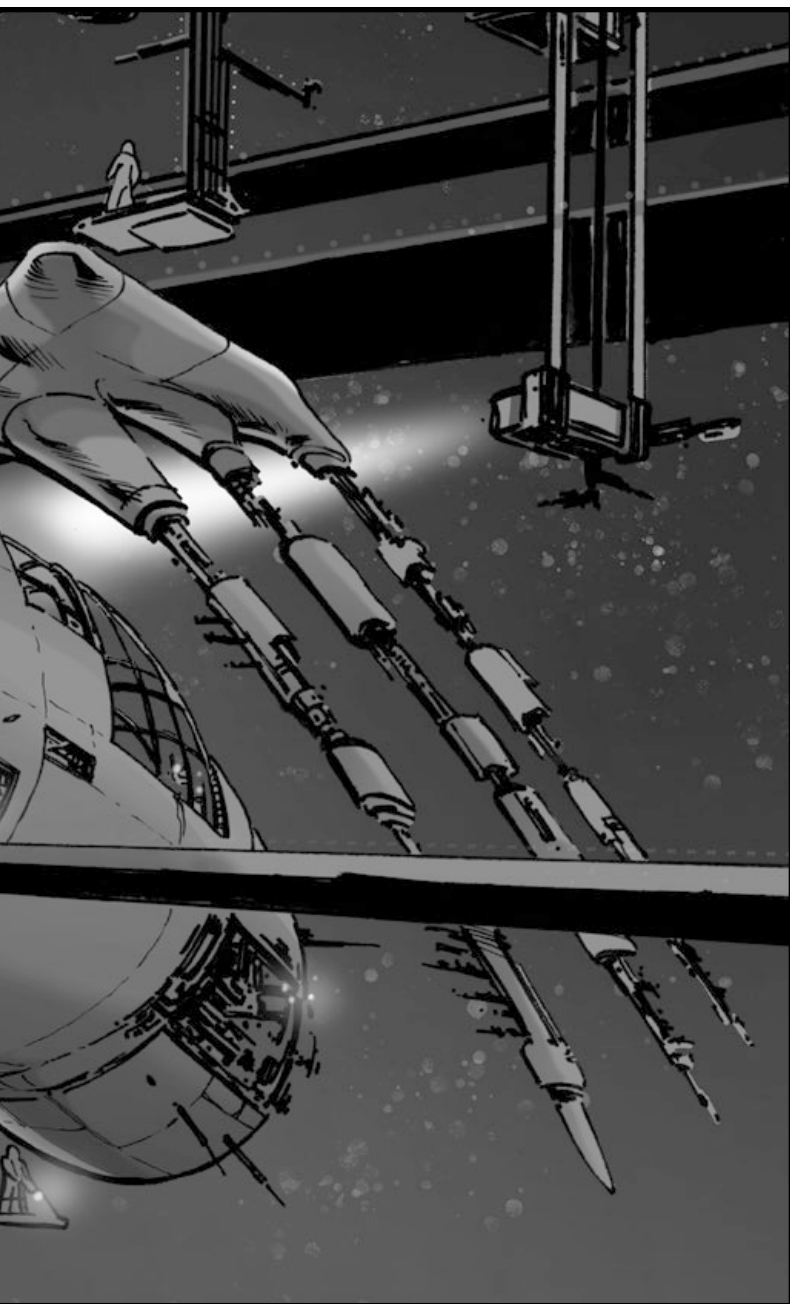
THE SHIPYARD: VOIDCRAFT CREATION



Fifteen years ago, the Void Engineers maintained an impressive fleet of specialized vessels. Guided by Master Engineers, legions of Citizen workers produced Void-worthy craft on an industrial scale. Benning Aircraft in Seattle, the VLA Building at Cape Canaveral, and other facilities followed a logical manufacturing process supported by Syndicate funding, Iteration X materials,

Progenitor-designed life support systems, and top-secret no-fly zones arranged by the New World Order.

The Dimensional Anomaly destroyed most of the fleet. There are too few Enlightened Masters of Dimensional Science and qualified Premium forge operators to waste on dedicated Voidcraft manufacturing. Political upheavals cut down the Convention's black budget. Today, Void Engineers who want to build a ship need to salvage wrecks,



find parts caches, and pick up plasma torches – there’s nobody left to build the fleet but them.

CONSTRUCTION FUNDAMENTALS

Voidships are the most complex Enlightened Inventions ever created, clusters of discrete hypertechnologies bound to a common platform. Construction begins by laying out a vessel’s basic internal structure and connections. This requires competence in Matter, Prime, and (optionally) Dimensional Science.

To translate this to game systems, participating Void Engineers use an extended Procedure to “lay the keel” of the new Voidcraft. This Structural Capacity determines the requirements for other systems, each of which require additional Extended Procedures with their own Sphere requirements (some require fewer Sphere ranks than they might for independent Devices, as they make use of the ship’s core systems). Each step of the process is laid out in the following sections.

When Void Engineers have access to specialized manufacturing facilities, they may make rolls for these extended manufacturing Procedures at one-hour intervals. In less than ideal circumstances, the interval between Enlightenment rolls increases to two, four, or even six hours. Unlike standard Extended Procedures, Voidcraft manufacturing doesn’t require a continuous work cycle. The manufacturing team can leave Procedures “on hold” for an indefinite period of time, if at least one Enlightened member succeeds at a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) to properly inspect and stabilize it in its current state. Furthermore, optional success ceilings for extended Procedures (**Mage: The Ascension Revised**, p. 150) don’t apply to Voidcraft manufacturing.

Ordinary Citizens often assist Void Engineers. Treat trained industrial assemblers as un-Awakened “acolytes” for the purposes of acting in concert, as listed on p. 154 of **Mage: The Ascension Revised**.

Besides labor intensive manufacturing, Voidcraft possess one other flaw: extreme expense, to the tune of approximately US\$10 million per success. By mundane spacecraft manufacturing standards, this is a bargain; however, they don’t have access to Enlightened industrial technologies to smooth things along. If they did, their costs would be a fraction of what they pay today.

A Void Engine costs over a quarter of a billion dollars to manufacture, and a *Qui La Machinæ* clocks in at over \$7.8 billion. The Technocracy’s internal economy absorbs most of the costs, and administers access through the Requisitions and Device Backgrounds. They require a combined rating equal to one Background point, plus a number of additional points equal to 5% of the total required construction successes (round fractions up). Thus, a resourceful co-op could throw its combined clout into acquiring a Tranquility Raptor corvette or equivalent vessel. The drawback to using the Union discount is that their vessel is on file with the Syndicate, and may be used to political leverage, especially in cases where characters used Requisitions to secure it.

SALVAGE

Between the extreme difficulty involved in manufacturing Voidcraft, and damage from combat, Paradox, Dimensional Anomaly phenomena, funding issues, etc., Engineers actively seek out wrecks to salvage. Dozens float in the Void, but are tricky to find and trickier to recover. They've drifted into unknown regions or are infested with EDEs.

Treat their components as either fully or partially built systems that take roughly one hour per component success to integrate with a new vessel. Propulsion and hull systems fit vessels with the same number of Structural Capacity successes. In some cases, Void Engineers will have to expand or cut back on a vessel's Structural Capacity, but it's still far less labor intensive than building systems from scratch.

STEP ⊕ ONE: STRUCTURAL CAPACITY

Spheres: Prime ●●●●, Matter ●●●● (optional Dimensional Science ●●●●●).

Construction Successes: As follows:

- *Crew:* 2 successes per life support pod space, 4 per berth space, 6 per officer's quarters, 8 per stateroom.
- *Cargo:* 1 success for 15 cubic meters of capacity (a cube roughly eight feet long on each side, or permutations leading to the same volume). Each additional success doubles cargo capacity, to a maximum of 240 cubic meters, after which every success adds another 240 cubic meters.
- *Reinforced Structure:* 1 per 2 additional Health Levels of structure.

Void Engineers begin by building the vessel's structural skeleton, internal spaces, and core hyper-engineered systems. All Voidships contain a control room ranging in size from a cockpit to a large bridge, a medical station that can treat ten percent of the crew at any given time, and galley appropriate to the total crew capacity—all folded into the cost of crew quarters.

Crew spaces range in size from coffin-like life support pods to large bunks in a dormitory berth, dedicated officer's quarters, and the relatively luxurious staterooms

used to transport VIPs. Crew capacity includes life support. Standard life support (rated for Conventional Space, Umbral Dimensions and Subspace) requires no additional Spheres. Deep Universe travel requires Dimensional Science 5, but no additional successes.

Engineers also build cargo spaces at this stage. Unlike crew quarters, these do not possess life support systems. Crew can enter these spaces for brief periods (a scene or hour) without special equipment, but these areas lack proper life support systems and shielding – if they do, they should be treated as crew spaces.

These characteristics allow players to calculate the vessel's structural Health Levels. The vessel possesses a base of two Health Levels per person of crew capacity, plus a number of Health Levels equal to double the number of successes devoted to cargo capacity. A Void Engineer can devote extra successes to reinforcing this internal structure, adding two Health levels per additional success spent.

STEP TWO: ⊕ PROPULSION SYSTEMS

Spheres: Prime ●●, Forces ●●● or ●●●●●, plus Voidcast Engine or Singularity Drive requirements.

Construction Successes: Equal to Structural Capacity successes, plus an equal number of successes for Voidcast or Singularity Drives.

Using STAR-TPU (Stellar Tass Augmentation Refinery-Tass Propulsion Unit) systems, Voidships amplify the weak nuclear force to collect stellar antineutrinos. These trigger deuterium fusion, providing plasma thrust and shipboard power. These systems require Forces 3 for typical travel within a vacuum, or Forces 5 to achieve escape velocity. Unless the vessel only uses Forces 5 to go straight to orbit, travel in an atmosphere requires the Atmospheric Flight feature on p. 92.

Voidcast Drives permit transdimensional travel. Without them, the ship can only travel in Conventional Space. Consult the Voidcast Procedure's requirements (p. 87) to determine the required Spheres. To install the Voidcast Drive, devote additional successes equal to those required for standard STAR-TPU thrust.

A few experimental ships also possess Singularity Drives to allow wormhole travel through spacetime. The Singularity Procedure (p. 86) lists Sphere requirements. Like Voidcast Drives, Singularity Drives can be installed when Void Engineers devote a number of successes equal to those required for standard propulsion.

STEP THREE: HULL AND ARMOR

Spheres: Matter ●●●● or (●●●●● for Primium)

Construction Successes: Equal to Structural Capacity successes, plus additional successes for armor and/or Primium countermeasures.

A basic hull shields the vessel from atmosphere leaks, micrometeor and minor debris strikes, radiation hazards, and atmospheric reentry stress. To add armor, Engineers must devote additional successes. Each success spent beyond the minimum required to cover the ship's cargo capacity adds two soak dice to the vessel's profile.

With Matter 5, an Engineer can add Primium plating to the ship's hull. Each success spent beyond the minimum required to cover the ship's cargo capacity adds one die of counter-Procedural capability.

STEP FOUR: ARMAMENT

Spheres: Correspondence ●● plus by weapon.

Construction Successes: Per weapon; see below.

Most Voidships possess onboard weapons systems, but not every vessel is a *Qui La Machinæ* — small survey ships might carry a single KKV or particle beam weapon. Each weapon system has a discrete cost and Sphere requirements. In addition, all systems require Correspondence 2 for sensors and guidance systems.

Roll the listed dice pool to fire the weapon. Successes in excess of the minimum needed to strike add dice to the weapon's damage.

ASSAULT RAM (MATTER ●●●, PRIMIE ●●)

Void Engineers use diamond and carbon fiber blades on strong robotic armatures to strike vessels or more likely, large extradimensional entities that approach within close range. These used to be standard *Qui La Machinæ* weapons, but modern designs often omit them — Voidships don't do much dragon-slaying these days.

Construction Successes: 8.

Attack Dice Pool: Wits + Melee (difficulty 6).

Damage/Effects: 16 dice of aggravated damage. These are essentially giant melee weapons operated by remote control.

HARDPOINT (NONE)

A hardpoint allows the Void Engineer to mount mundane weapons on a vessel's exterior, operating them while remaining protected by shipboard armor and life

support. Most conventional weapons systems don't function in vacuum environments, or at the vast ranges that characterize off-world combat.

Hardpoints don't need Enlightened Science. An Intelligence + Hypertech roll determines whether they've been successfully designed and constructed.

Construction Successes: 2 or more.

Attack Dice Pool: By weapon.

Damage/Effects: 2 successes create a mount for an antipersonnel weapon such as a heavy machine gun or mortar. Additional successes permit the installation of larger weapons systems, limited to weapon availability and the Storyteller's discretion. Avenger and Vulcan Gatling-type canons, air to air missiles, and other military arms are not necessarily easy even for Technocrats to acquire, though they can be reproduced by Enlightened gunsmiths.

HEX MISSILES

(FORCES ●●●, MATTER ●●●●, PRIMIE ●●)

Deployed singly, or in pods of mini-missiles, HEX missiles, employ laser-detonated deuterium pellets to reach the speeds needed to strike targets in the Void.

Construction Successes: 10 per single missile, or five micro-missiles.

Attack Dice Pool: 10 per volley (difficulty 6).

Damage/Effects: As these weapons are self-guided, Void Engineers may launch as many as they like as a reflexive action. Standard explosive warheads inflict 9 points of lethal damage, plus dice from excess successes on the hit. Micro-missiles inflict 3 points of lethal damage (and dice from extra successes, as for standard missiles) each, and are usually deployed against unarmored targets. Missiles are self-guided, with a dice pool of 10 for attack purposes. They attempt to strike once per turn until they hit something, the target gets destroyed, or the scene ends.

KKV (FORCES ●●, MATTER ●●)

Standard Kinetic Kill Vehicles (KKVs) use electromagnetic acceleration or laser propellant excitation to fire tungsten bolts at hypersonic to relativistic speeds. Voidships fire KKV's in rapid volleys similar to terrestrial machine guns, though their physical characteristics prevent them from being implemented on moveable turrets — operators must point the Voidship at anything they want to obliterate.

Construction Successes: 5, plus 4 per volley.

Attack Dice Pool: Perception + Helmsman + 10 dice (difficulty 8).

Damage/Effects: 9 lethal damage. After calculating total damage after attack successes, the operator may divide the damage among multiple targets as if strafing (see **Mage: The Ascension Revised**, p. 242).

NEUTRON PATTERN DISRUPTOR (LIFE ●●●; 1 PRIMAL ENERGY PER SHOT)

This weapon fires a beam of neutron radiation that has been given transdimensional properties to bypass traditional radiation shielding and better target organic matter. It's a brutal anti-personnel weapon, pure and simple.

Construction Successes: 10 successes.

Attack Dice Pool: Perception + Energy Weapons (difficulty 6).

Damage/Effects: This weapon inflicts 5 aggravated damage (+ dice equal to attack successes) on up to five Life Patterns. Neutron Pattern Disruptors bypass non-Primium armor.

PARTICLE BEAM (FORCES ●●●)

Particle beams force plasma from the ship's propulsion systems through electrostatic lenses. This is the standard shipboard energy weapon. It comes in three standard classes: Alpha, Beta and Gamma. A vessel's propulsion systems must have been built with at least as many successes as the sum successes of all installed particle beams to power them, limiting more larger weapons and arrays classes to bigger Voidships.

Construction Successes: Alpha – 8 successes; Beta – 14 successes; Gamma – 20 successes.

Attack Dice Pool: Perception + Energy Weapons (difficulty 6).

Damage/Effects: Alpha – 9 lethal damage; Beta – 15 lethal damage; Gamma – 21 lethal damage.

STEP FIVE: ADDITIONAL FEATURES

All Voidships possess airlocks, mundane sensors, and the ability to detect Primal Energy signatures. Any Voidship can implement artificial gravity at no additional cost, but many don't – microgravity allows for more efficient storage. In addition, Voidships often possess additional capabilities. Use the selection below as a starting point; Engineers often develop other features to support specialized missions.

ACTIVE CAMOUFLAGE

Holographic microprojectors, radar-baffling materials and hidden exhaust ports hide the vessel from visual and

passive Forces-based detection methods. Against active scans Voidship's location (such as a Correspondence/Forces Procedure), roll the system operator's Enlightenment to reduce the scan's successes.

Spheres: Forces ●●

Construction Successes: Equal to half the vessel's Structural Capacity successes, rounded up.

AI UNIT

This enhancement adds a synthetic consciousness capable of operating the vessel with or without human help. Mind 5 AI units are true artificial intelligences. They're usually supplied by Iteration X, so Void Engineers limit their access to life support and other critical systems – a practice referred to as the “anti-HAL protocol.”

Spheres: Dimensional Science ●●●●●

Construction Successes: Spend 2 successes per dot of the unit's Intelligence, Wits and Perception – minimum one dot for each Attribute. AIs systems are normally programmed to be passive, failing all Social rolls. You may spend successes on Social Attribute dots (2 successes per dot) for units capable of asserting themselves. Spend 1 success per Ability dot you wish the unit to possess – typically Energy Weapons, Helmsman, and other Abilities suited to shipboard existence.

AQUATIC CAPABILITY

Hull modifications, ballast tanks and magnetohydrodynamic thrusters give the vessel the ability to act as a submarine capable of travelling at 30 knots (about 34.5 miles per hour) on or below the surface of the water. Aquatic vessels are capable of withstanding Earth's deepest ocean pressures.

Spheres: Matter ●●●●

Construction Successes: Equal to half the vessel's Structural Capacity successes. It is possible to create dedicated submersibles by adding this feature instead of a standard propulsion system.

ATMOSPHERIC FLIGHT

A combination of aerodynamics, thrust, and subtly applied antigravity allow the vessel to fly at Mach 2. If the vessel is capable of escape velocity, it can also fly along preplanned trajectories at high hypersonic speeds, but cannot maneuver without slowing down.

Spheres: Forces ●●●● (●●●●● for aircraft).

Construction Successes: Equal to half the vessel's Structural Capacity successes. Investing twice as many successes increases the craft's cruising speed to Mach 5.

It is possible to create dedicated aircraft by adding this feature instead of a standard propulsion system. If an aircraft-only system uses Forces 5, it becomes capable of suborbital trajectories that allow it to travel between any two points on the Earth's surface in about an hour.

Docking Bay✓

Reinforced Docking Umbilicus

Any Voidship can dock with any other, but docked ships interfere with piloting (+3 to Helmsman roll difficulties) and might separate under stress (such as a botched Helmsman roll to maneuver the ship). This modification makes it possible to store companion vessels in docking bays or keep them connected to the outside of a mother ship for extended periods with reinforced clamps, eliminating the disadvantages. The mother ship must possess at least twice the Structural Capacity of any ship it connects to in this fashion.

Spheres: Matter ●●●

Construction Successes: Equal to half the Structural Capacity successes of the largest vessel allowed to dock using this method (minimum 4 successes).

Optional System: Voidship Flaws

Forced to rely on legacy equipment, jury-rigged systems and salvaged gear, the Void Engineers must often deal with buggy, unreliable vessels. This system uses Flaws to represent them. Flaws reduce a Voidship's total Background Point cost by the specified amount.

The following Flaws from the **Mage** core and the **Guide to the Technocracy** are appropriate for Voidships, with certain adjustments listed below. Storytellers are free to invent new Flaws (see the *Guanshiyin's Salvaged Singularity Drive* on p. 80 for an example).

Crucial Component (2-5 Points; Mage: The Ascension Revised, pp. 299-300): Either the vessel's propulsion systems, or all weapons systems except for hardpoints, require an exotic component. Ignore the original table and instead use the following:

Flaw Crucial Component

| | |
|--------|---|
| 2 pts. | Jet fuel; a particular type of commercial circuit board that regularly shorts out |
| 3 pts. | Deuterium fuel; Osmium reflectors for navigational spectrometers |
| 4 pts. | Weapons grade uranium; genetically engineered cells used for biocomputation |
| 5 pts. | Antimatter; a "black box" component, functions unknown, that was created by an Arch-Scientist |

Crucial components must be replenished at least once per story (every few sessions; see **Mage: The Ascension Revised**, p. 131) or more often if the Storyteller determines that the systems in question have been heavily used.

Dark Fate (5 Points; Mage: The Ascension Revised, p. 300): The ship is cursed. Some day it's either going to be destroyed, or turn into a torture chamber for its crew. It entered a singularity and brought a malevolent presence back, or houses an expert system destined to go insane and detonate the reactor.

Subject to Paradox (5 Points; Guide to the Technocracy, p. 132): Built or repaired with little regard for safety parameters, your ship uses hacked together experimental systems that attract Paradox. Whenever any member of the crew botches a roll to operate or repair the ship, or botches Procedures used to enhance it (see "Punch it," p. 95), roll 5 Paradox dice and apply the results to the crewmembers responsible. If the botch came from a Procedure, add these dice to the backlash roll.

SAMPLE VOIDSHIPS

The following vessels represent a sample of what's available to Void Engineers. Many larger ships, including the Cassini transport and X200 *Qui La Machinæ*, were lost during the Dimensional Anomaly. The general trend in the Convention is to build tough, multi-purpose ships suited to single amalgams.

VOID ENGINE SHUTTLECRAFT (3 BACKGROUND POINTS)

These six-meter long ovoid shuttles used to be mass-produced in Horizon factories. They're still the most common Voidships, used for shipping and personnel transportation and helm training. Virtually every Void Engineer with the Helmsman Skill has operated a VES at some point in her career. With the rise of Threat Null, many of these have been pressed into service as fighters.

Structural Capacity: Two life support pods, 120 cubic meters cargo capacity. 12 Health Levels. *Successes:* 8.

Propulsion: Standard STAR-TPU. Void Engines cannot achieve escape velocity or undertake dimensional travel by themselves. *Successes:* 8.

Hull: 8 dice of standard armor. *Successes:* 12.

Armament: One Alpha Class particle beam cannon. *Successes:* 8.

Additional Features: None.

Combined Construction Spheres: Forces 3, Matter 4, Prime 4.

Total Construction Successes: 36.

TRANQUILITY RAPTOR CLASS CORVETTE (18 BACKGROUND POINTS)

Designed for a leaner Convention that assigns more autonomy to co-ops, Tranquility Raptor vessels supports a small crew with flexible mission objectives. The 35-meter long wedge-shaped primary hull can be customized with superstructures for additional weapons, sensor packages and even living spaces to compensate for cramped conditions. Thus, no two members of the class look alike.

Structural Capacity: Six crew berth spaces, two officers' quarters, 240 cubic meters cargo capacity, + 8 Health Levels of reinforced structure. Life support is rated for Deep Universe travel. 34 Health Levels. *Successes:* 45.

Propulsion: STAR-TPU with escape velocity capacity and Deep Universe rated Voidcast Drive. *Successes:* 135.

Hull: 20 dice of standard armor. *Successes:* 55.

Armament: Two Beta class particle beam cannons, One KKV with six volleys loaded, and two HEX missile volleys. *Successes:* 77.

Additional Features: Atmospheric Flight. *Successes:* 23.

Combined Construction Spheres: Dimensional Science 5, Forces 5, Matter 4, Prime 4.

Total Construction Successes: 326.

X160 QUI LA MACHINÆ (40 BACKGROUND POINTS)

The 70 meter long X160 *Qui La Machinæ* looks like its predecessors: an armored insect bristling with guns and blades. Entering production in 1998, the X160 was designed as a cost effective alternative to the X200 "Vader." PDC captains were eager to migrate from the disaster-prone X156 series, but those lucky enough to have secured "Vaders" refused to take an apparent downgrade. This was a blessing in disguise, because it left six X160s in Benning Aircraft's dry dock, abandoned by the officers assigned to them. They were all staffing their old X200s – and all of them were wrecked by the Anomaly. Four of the X160s are in operation. The Convention saves the other two for spare parts and tests.

Structural Capacity: 30 crew life support pods, four officers' quarters, and one stateroom, 480 cubic meters cargo capacity, + 20 Health Levels of reinforced structure. Life support is rated for Deep Universe travel. 102 Health Levels. *Successes:* 100.

Propulsion: STAR-TPU with escape velocity capacity and Deep Universe rated Voidcast Drive. *Successes:* 300.

Hull: 30 dice of standard armor; 10 dice of Primum countermeasures. *Successes:* 125.

Armament: Assault ram, six Alpha class and three Beta class particle beam cannons, three HEX missile volleys, eight hardpoints for general-purpose machine guns (damage 15, close range only). *Successes:* 144.

Additional Features: Active camouflage, atmospheric flight, docking bay (8 success hull capacity). *Successes:* 108.

Combined Construction Spheres: Dimensional Science 5, Forces 5, Matter 5, Prime 4.

Total Construction Successes: 777.

PUNCH IT

To even keep from crumpling into a radiation-soaked, Paradox-ridden wreck, Voidships are designed to follow rigid standards and specifications — more rigid, in fact, than the performance standards of their less cautious operators. Void Engineers routinely use personal Procedures to temporarily modify a vessel's capabilities. They need to fly a *bit* faster, or tune the particle wave motion on a beam to annihilate a target, even if it risks losing power for minutes after.

Void Engineer characters may adjust vessels with temporary Procedures. Because Voidships have already been optimized as much as possible within safety limits, it's a bit harder to add anything else. Procedures that enhance an existing capability (weapon damage, maneuverability) only count half the successes scored on the Enlightenment roll. Procedures that add entirely new capabilities (such as a "tractor beam") aren't restricted in this fashion. Use the guidelines for Procedure scale on pp. 208-209 of **Mage: The Ascension Revised** instead of the guidelines for Voidship construction. Unfortunately, both sorts of Procedures trash safety protocols as the Convention understands them, making them vulgar Procedures — even the Technocratic paradigm gets a metaphorical flop-sweat in the face of what the Engineer is trying to do.

VOIDSHIP COMBAT

Let's take a look at some streamlined rules for Voidship combat. There's room for expansion here — we haven't included anything about speed, maneuverability and the tricky aspects of calculating trajectories. Rest assured, however, that even if players don't know these things, characters with dots in Helmsman do. With this in mind, here's a starting point for your space battles.

Movement and Evasion: Roll Wits + Helmsman (difficulty 6) to dodge attacks. You may also roll Wits + Helmsman (difficulty 6) to improve your relative position, as a separate action. Each success on a contested Wits + Helmsman roll reduces attack difficulties by -1, or increases incoming attack difficulties by +1, to a maximum of -3/+3.

Attacks: Roll Perception + Helmsman or Energy Weapons to attack, as listed in each weapon's description. Conventional weapons cannot strike at the ranges employed in ship to ship combat.

Ship and Damage: Roll Armor (difficulty 6) to soak damage. Add Primium to the rating against any energy weapon or Enlightened Procedure.

Crew Damage: If a soak roll scores 0 successes, gather a number of dice equal to twice the damage scored on the vessel, and divide these among the crew. Roll each pool that results at difficulty 6, and inflict the successes as bashing damage.

Special Effects: If a vessel loses more than half of its Health Levels, Storytellers may take one weapons system or additional feature offline or destroy one crew space. Apply this penalty again for each additional damaging strike. When a Voidship loses all of its Health Levels its power goes offline, and it loses life support in one scene or hour.

These rules intentionally use lower values than you might expect for weapon damage and ship's toughness, so that players' characters can survive attacks, and perhaps get a few shots of their own in using personal Procedures.

ACE

Yes, I know that's the optimal orbital insertion point. No, we aren't using it. Every EDE motherfucker knows it too, so they'd expect that approach. I aim to whip around Phobos and light 'em before you can say "Doissetep."

Now strap in, bitches. I'm going to make the hull scream.

The sky made you a woman. Before that you were just a baby ape, gawking at the stars while you dragged ass across the dirt. But when you were six, your dad put you at the controls of his water plane, and you saw the backs of birds as they scattered away from the big machine. That's when you knew real humanity wasn't about whether you could beat nature's expectations — be an ape with metal wings

Dad made his living transporting goods and people to remote places in the wilderness, but before that, he flew sorties in the first Gulf War. He told you how he used to fly a jet in combat — how he got the drop on the enemy, and clenched against G-forces — but he couldn't really show you *how* to do it. His little plane wasn't up to the task. So you joined the Air Force when you turned 18.

You jumped on the fast track to combat pilot because you could already fly, but even that wasn't quick enough for you. They wanted you to get a degree before they'd let you log serious flight time. You knew that every day you spent studying gave some inferior pilot a chance to steal *your* spot. You watched them fuck up in training every day. Sometimes at the bar, you told them they were fuckups right to their face. Sometimes that lead to a brawl — and after a few of those, disciplinary

action put you even further back in line, behind that parade of clumsy assholes.

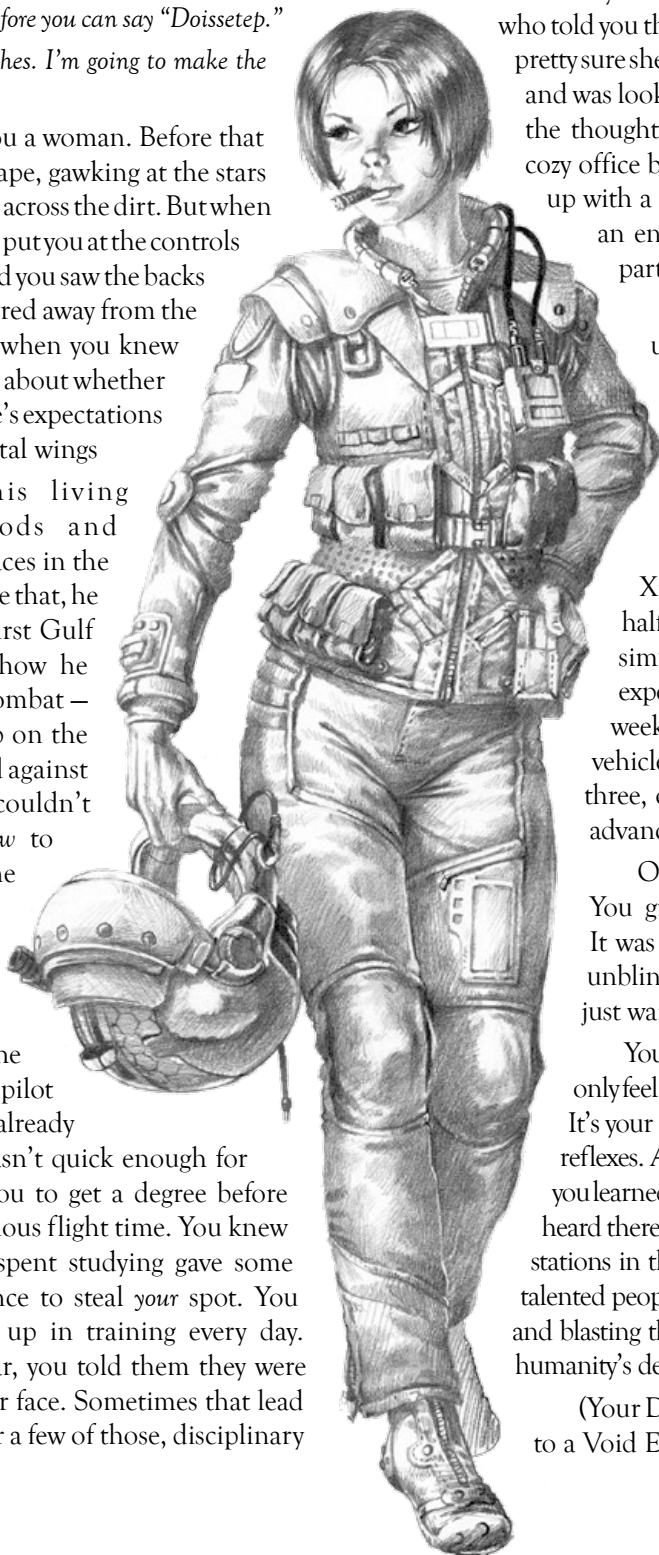
At least you earned one fan: a civilian consultant who told you that she could get you flying. You were pretty sure she worked for some intelligence agency and was looking for drone jockeys. You fumed at the thought of bombing foreigners from some cozy office building, until the night she showed up with a couple of big guys, hooded you like an enemy combatant and hauled you to parts unknown.

They took off your hood in an underground dorm. You met a dozen other ambitious pilots. There was nothing to do but eat, sleep, study, and train on the most advanced simulators you'd ever seen. At first, they replicated known aircraft, like the F-22 and Chinese FC-1 Xiaolong. After eight weeks, the bottom half of your class disappeared, and the simulators gave you a taste of secret, experimental aircraft. After another eight weeks, you six were three, flying simulated vehicles that defied known physics. Of the three, only you seemed to understand the advanced technologies at work.

One morning, you woke up in orbit. You graduated. It wasn't the Air Force. It was *better*. Out there, in the majesty of unblinking stars, you could see your shuttle, just waiting for you to take the controls.

You fly for the Void Engineers now, and only feel complete at the controls of a Voidcraft. It's your second body, with its own nerves and reflexes. As you joined the chain of command, you learned what kind of privilege that was. You've heard there used to be a huge fleet, colonists, and stations in the Void, but now there are just a few talented people like you, soaring through the dark, and blasting the shit out of anything that threatens humanity's destiny in the stars.

(Your Device Background represents access to a Void Engine Shuttle, see p. 94.)



Void Engineers

NAME:

PLAYER:

CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Perfectionist*

EIDOLON: *Questing*

DEITEANOR: *Perfectionist*

DIVISION:

CONCEPT:

ARTIALGATI:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ☒☒☐☐☐
Dexterity *Precise* ☒☒☒☒
Stamina ☒☒☐☐☐

SOCIAL

Charisma ☒☒☐☐☐
Manipulation ☒☒☐☐☐
Appearance ☒☒☐☐☐

MENTAL

Perception *Vision* ☒☒☒☐
Intelligence ☒☒☒☐
Wits *Tactical* ☒☒☒☐

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ☒☒☐☐☐
Athletics ☐☐☐☐☐
Awareness ☒☒☐☐☐
Brawl ☐☐☐☐☐
Dodge ☐☐☐☐☐
Expression ☐☐☐☐☐
Intimidation ☐☐☐☐☐
Leadership ☐☐☐☐☐
Streetwise ☐☐☐☐☐
Subterfuge ☐☐☐☐☐

SKILLS

Drive ☐☐☐☐☐
Energy Weapons ☒☒☒☒
Etiquette ☐☐☐☐☐
Firearms ☒☐☐☐☐
Hypertech ☒☒☐☐☐
Melee ☐☐☐☐☐
Research ☐☐☐☐☐
Stealth ☐☐☐☐☐
Survival ☐☐☐☐☐
Technology ☐☐☐☐☐

KNOWLEDGES

Academics ☒☒☐☐☐
Computer ☒☒☒☐
Enigmas ☐☐☐☐☐
Finance ☐☐☐☐☐
Investigation ☐☐☐☐☐
Law ☐☐☐☐☐
Linguistics ☐☐☐☐☐
Medicine ☒☒☐☐☐
Politics ☐☐☐☐☐
Science ☒☒☐☐☐

SPHERES

Correspondence ☒☒☐☐☐
Dimensional Science ☐☐☐☐☐
Entropy ☐☐☐☐☐

Forces ☒☒☐☐☐
Life ☐☐☐☐☐
Matter ☐☐☐☐☐

Mind ☐☐☐☐☐
Prime ☒☒☐☐☐
Time ☐☐☐☐☐

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Device ☒☒☒☒
Genius ☒☒☐☐
Hypercram ☒☒☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐
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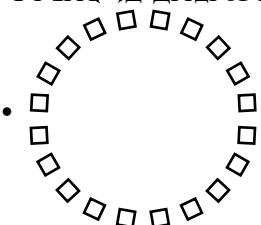
ENLIGHTENMENT

☒☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

WILLPOWER

☒☒☒☒☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐

PRITIAL ENERGY



PARADOX

HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

RESONANCE

Dynamic ☐☐☐☐☐
Entropic ☐☐☐☐☐
Static ☐☐☐☐☐

EXPERIENCE

OTHER TRAITS

Helmsman ☒☒☒☒
Pilot (Combat) ☒☒☒☒
☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐

GRIZZLED VETERAN

One Deviant told me that I could take his life, but I could never kill his dreams. This was incorrect. The standard protocol for killing an RD's dreams requires two sniper/spotter teams with Primium hypervelocity weapon loads, and an officer operating a hyperdimensional field generator. Let's practice now.

What is Earth? As a child, you thought of it as a jewel you could put in your pocket, like the hologram your parents showed you. They were from that tiny marble, cramped under a blue roof. You were born in the black vastness of the Void, and grew up in the old Cop. You swam through the moons of water that drifted through its microgravity regions. You walked on the stars that shone under the great sphere's transparent structural material. You played in a place that could contain a million Earths, so caring about the tiny planet circling Sol seemed narrow-minded.

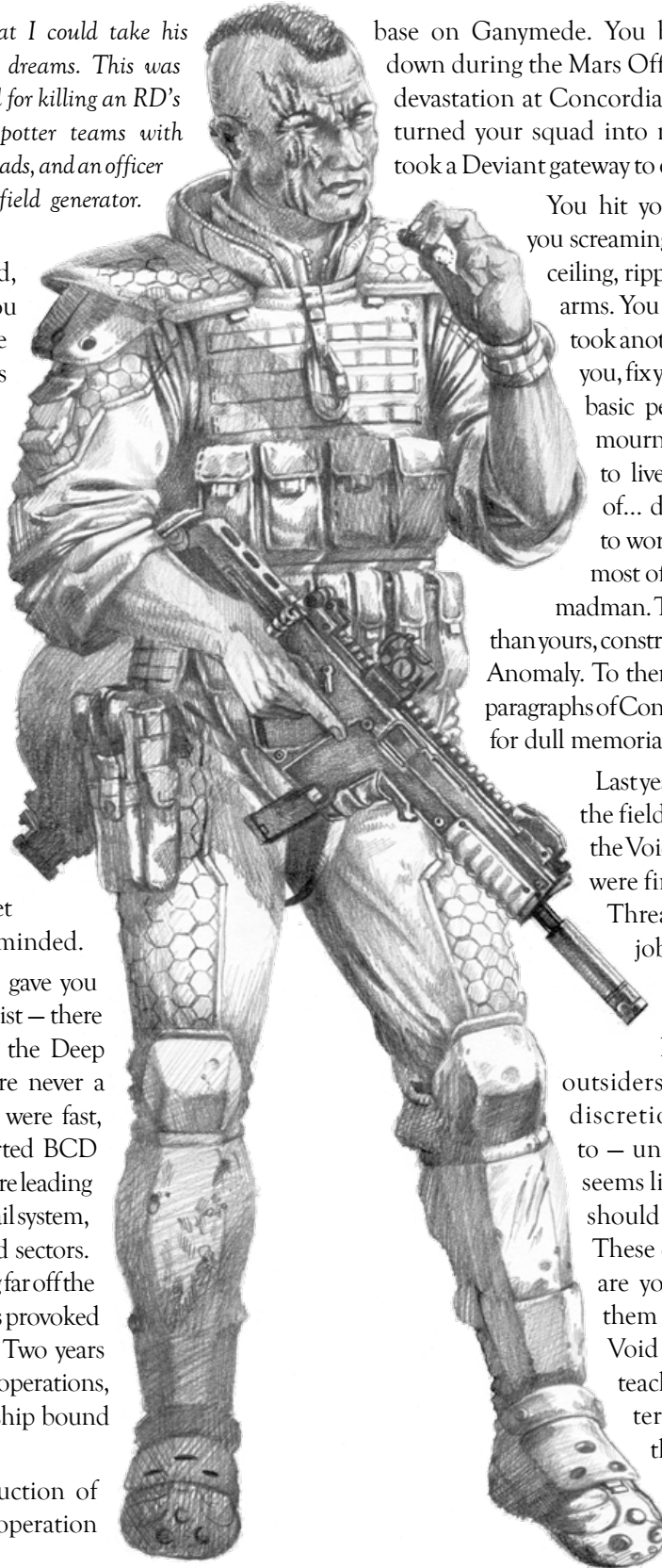
Growing up in the Cop gave you the responsibilities of a colonist — there was no room for laziness in the Deep Universe's embrace. You were never a talented technician, but you were fast, strong, and fearless. You started BCD pre-training at 12; by 15, you were leading patrols across the Cop's laser rail system, and even out into unexplored sectors. You noticed LERMUs working far off the beaten path, but if your reports provoked any action, you never saw it. Two years later, you qualified for combat operations, and they packed you onto a ship bound for the Jovian Front.

You survived the destruction of two Voidships and a forward operation

base on Ganymede. You brought a mad dragon down during the Mars Offensive. You escaped the devastation at Concordia, when the False Heylel turned your squad into molten gold — and you took a Deviant gateway to escape. You fell to Earth.

You hit your beacon. They found you screaming at the world's low, blue ceiling, ripping cooling gold off your arms. You were in stasis for a year. It took another six months to debrief you, fix your body, and bring some basic peace to your mind. You mourned the Cop and learned to live on this tiny world full of... dull people. They set you to work training BCD recruits, most of whom treated you like a madman. Their universe was smaller than yours, constrained by the Dimensional Anomaly. To them, the lost colonies were paragraphs of Convention history — a reason for dull memorials.

Last year, they called you back to the field. You were born privy to the Void Engineers's secrets, and were first in line to learn about Threat Null. Now it's your job to help Void Engineer teams investigate and neutralize it, all while hiding its nature from outsiders. This requires more discretion than you're used to — under the low blue sky, it seems like everything humanity should fear needs to stay secret. These cadets are scared and so are you, but you can inspire them with the fact that the Void was your home. You'll teach them that it's not the terrifying unknown, but their heritage and destiny — where humanity deserves to be.



Void Engineers

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Crusader*
EIDOLON: *Questing*
DEITEANOR: *Machine*

DIVISION:
CONCEPT:
ATTALGATI:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength _____ ●●●●○
Dexterity _____ ●●●●○
Stamina *Pain Tolerance* ●●●●○

SOCIAL

Charisma _____ ●●●●○
Manipulation _____ ●●●●○
Appearance _____ ●●●●○

MENTAL

Perception _____ ●●●●○
Intelligence _____ ●●●●○
Wits _____ ●●●●○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness _____ ●○○○○
Athletics _____ ●●○○○
Awareness _____ ●○○○○
Brawl _____ ●●○○○
Dodge *Gumfire* ●●●●○
Expression _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ●○○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

SKILLS

Drive _____ ●●○○○
Energy Weapons *Void Engineers* ●●●●○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms *Assault Weapons* ●●●●○
Hypertech _____ ●●○○○
Melee _____ ●●○○○
Research _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ○○○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Academics _____ ○○○○○
Computer _____ ●●○○○
Enigmas _____ ○○○○○
Finance _____ ○○○○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○
Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ●●●○○
Politics _____ ○○○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○

SPHERES

Correspondence _____ ●●○○○
Dimensional Science _____ ○○○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○

Forces _____ ●●○○○
Life _____ ○○○○○
Matter _____ ●●○○○

Mind _____ ○○○○○
Prime _____ ○○○○○
Time _____ ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Device _____ ●●●○○
Genius _____ ●●○○○
Hypercrim _____ ●●○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

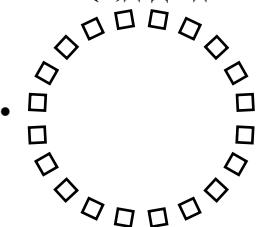
ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

PRITIAL ENERGY



PARADOX

HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

RESONANCE

Dynamic _____ ○○○○○
Entropic _____ ○○○○○
Static _____ ○○○○○

EXPERIENCE

OTHER TRAITS

_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

NSC FACE

UFOs are optical illusions and modern myths. We can't wait for alien spaceships to land. We've got to launch our own first, and see the real universe that exists beyond our fantasies.

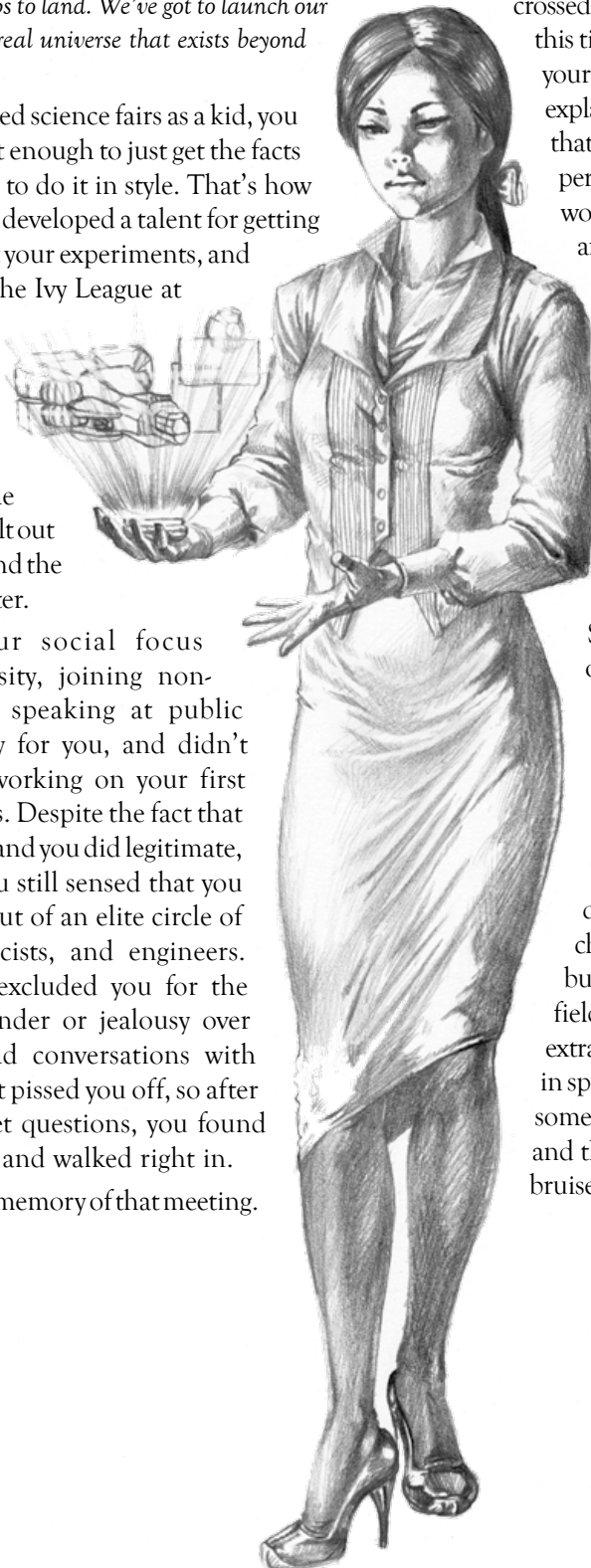
When you entered science fairs as a kid, you learned that it wasn't enough to just get the facts across — you needed to do it in style. That's how you got noticed. You developed a talent for getting people excited about your experiments, and got a free ride into the Ivy League at 14 not because you were the smartest (though you were) but because you knew your sponsors wanted a presentable protégé who could belt out articulate speeches and the drop of a laser pointer.

You kept your social focus throughout university, joining non-profit boards and speaking at public schools. It was easy for you, and didn't get in the way of working on your first doctorate, in physics. Despite the fact that everybody liked you and you did legitimate, important work, you still sensed that you were being locked out of an elite circle of cosmologists, physicists, and engineers. You thought they excluded you for the usual reasons — gender or jealousy over your ability to hold conversations with non-specialists. That pissed you off, so after asking a few discreet questions, you found out where they met and walked right in.

You left with no memory of that meeting.

Members of that elite circle nodded to you as you crossed campus on your way to a second doctorate, this time in psychology. Right after you defended your thesis, they invited you to join them and explained why they erased your memory, but that wasn't necessary. You'd recovered that lost period six months ago, using experiments that would earn you degrees in neurophysiology and psychiatry. You remembered that they explained the nature of the universe, that aliens existed, and that as you suspected during your own studies, natural laws were a lot more fragile than ordinary physicists suspected. To prepare itself, humanity needed to invest in the space program. When you were ready, and could remember, they'd need you to be their voice.

You're part of the Neutralization Specialist Corps now. You suppress rumors of extradimensional incursions with words, not guns — not that you don't *own* a gun — and act as a public advocate for space exploration and basic science. Despite your command of Enlightened psychology, you'd like to spend more time in pure research, learning new applications for topological quantum field theory. You jump at any chance to hack the structure of the cosmos, but these days that means you need to hit the field, where NSC colleagues do battle with extradimensional entities and close ragged holes in space. But even the new Void Engineers need someone to push the Time Table for the public, and that's you, even if you need to powder over bruises before webcasts now and again.



Void Engineers

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Architect*
EIDOLON: *Pattern*
DEITEANOR: *Entertainer*

DIVISION:
CONCEPT:
ATTALGAMI:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○
Stamina ●●○○○

SOCIAL

Charisma *Mass Appeal* ●●●●○
Manipulation ●●●●○
Appearance ●●●●○

MENTAL

Perception ●●○○○
Intelligence *Making Connections* ●●●●○
Wits ●●○○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ○○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○
Awareness ●●○○○
Brawl ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Expression ●●●○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Leadership *Groups* ●●●●○
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○

SKILLS

Drive ○○○○○
Energy Weapons ○○○○○
Etiquette ●●○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Hypertech ●○○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Research ●●○○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival ○○○○○
Technology ○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Academics ●●●○○
Computer ●●○○○
Enigmas ●●●○○
Finance ○○○○○
Investigation ○○○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Politics ●●●○○
Science *Physics* ●●●○○

SPHERES

Correspondence ●●●○○
Dimensional Science ○○○○○
Entropy ○○○○○

Forces ○○○○○
Life ○○○○○
Matter ○○○○○

Mind ●●●○○
Prime ○○○○○
Time ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Influence ●●●○○
Genius ●●●○○
Resources ●●●○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

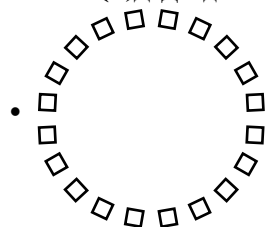
ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

PRITAL ENERGY



PARADOX

HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

RESONANCE

Dynamic ○○○○○
Entropic ○○○○○
Static ○○○○○

EXPERIENCE

OTHER TRAITS

○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

PARABIOLGIST

Don't think of life as a cosmic accident. Life is fundamental. The universe operates according to Darwinian principles. To truly appreciate this, you need to broaden your understanding of life, and look beyond terrestrial chauvinism. Doing so might save your life one day.

In high school, you penned papers on deep-sea extremophiles and Antarctic worms. Once you hit university, you signed on to study these creatures up close, daring inhospitable environments to see how these natives thrived in them. That took you to lonely places. Senior researchers warned you that isolation would play tricks on your mind, so even though you saw strange things in the emptiness, you wrote it off as stress. Honestly, though, you never felt disoriented by being alone in the wild. Where else could you see the stars without light pollution or the sounds of massed humanity?

You loved this kind of beauty more than you feared the dangers of isolation. That's why volunteered to survey the peaks of Antarctica's Gothic Mountains. Even though a single misstep could kill everyone in your expedition, you were confident in your abilities. You set out with two colleagues, specialized survival gear, and a satellite connection to civilization.

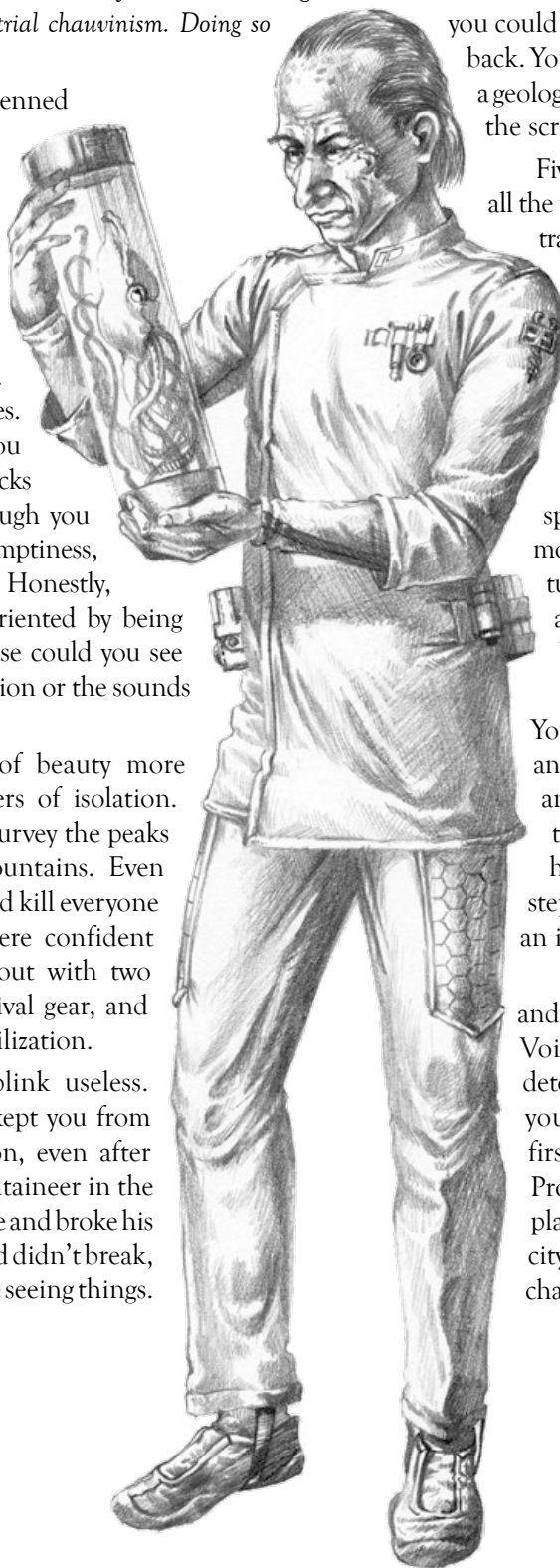
Storms made your uplink useless. Rock falls and avalanches kept you from going back. You trudged on, even after the most experienced mountaineer in the group tumbled into a crevasse and broke his femur. It looked like foothold didn't break, but rather *vanished*. You were seeing things.

He told the rest of you to go; you'd just die trying to save him. You knew the score from trips to Mount Everest and walked on, even after he lost his resolve, and you could hear him screaming for you to come back. You had to hold back the other survivor, a geologist, until the screaming stopped. Then the screaming stopped.

Five nights later she disappeared, taking all the food with her. When you followed her tracks, you found blood, spattered in concentric circles. That left you with no food and, after a sudden gale, no tent. You heard the wind *laughing at you*. You ignored the trained urge to discount your perceptions, and tracked the laughter to a cave. In that moment of weakness, you called the spiny, many-eyed thing you found there a monster, but as it hunted you through deep tunnels, you regained your composure, and started thinking like a biologist. What did it eat? What was its niche?

You guessed it was pain and fear. You conquered your fear with discipline, and the pain with morphine. You turned and tracked the thing down, and saw that it was smaller and weaker than it had been, because you starved it. You stepped forward and dispatched it with an ice ax.

You staggered out of the cave system and into the light — and the arms of a Void Engineer rescue team. They'd detected a flare of Primal Energy from your location: the residue of your first (and unintentional) Enlightened Procedure. Now you survey uninhabited places, secret moons and even the odd city sewer, looking for organisms that challenge the definition of life.



Void Engineers

NAME:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE: *Survivor*
EIDOLON: *Pattern*
DEITEANOR: *Investigator*

DIVISION:
CONCEPT:
ATTALGATH:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○
Stamina *Hardy* ●●●●○

SOCIAL

Charisma ●●○○○
Manipulation ●●○○○
Appearance ●●○○○

MENTAL

Perception *Hearing* ●●●●○
Intelligence ●●●●○
Wits ●●●●○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ●●○○○
Athletics ●●●○○
Awareness ●●○○○
Brawl ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○

SKILLS

Drive ●○○○○
Energy Weapons ○○○○○
Etiquette ○○○○○
Firearms ●●○○○
Hypertech ●●●○○
Melee ○○○○○
Research ●●●○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival *Arctic* ●●●●○
Technology ○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Academics ●○○○○
Computer ●○○○○
Enigmas ○○○○○
Finance ○○○○○
Investigation ○○○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ○○○○○
Medicine ●●●○○
Politics ○○○○○
Science *Biology* ●●●●○

SPHERES

Correspondence ●○○○○
Dimensional Science ●●●○○
Entropy ○○○○○

Forces ○○○○○
Life ●●○○○
Matter ○○○○○

Mind ○○○○○
Prime ○○○○○
Time ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Destiny ●●●○○
Genius ●●●○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
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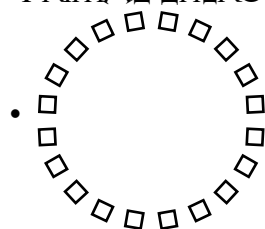
ENLIGHTENMENT

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

PRITAL ENERGY



PARADOX

HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

RESONANCE

Dynamic ○○○○○
Entropic ○○○○○
Static ○○○○○

EXPERIENCE

OTHER TRAITS

○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

EPILOGUE: ALWAYS KNOW WHAT YOU'RE FIGHTING



"Listen, if you won't take me to Autochthonia, I'm sure I can find my own way there," Corporal Silver is saying as we disembark. The ship sits steaming on the Mercurial plain behind us, its landing feet planted on the only scrap of exposed rock we could find.

"Silver, it is 129 million miles that away,"

I point her directly at the sun, bloated three times larger than it appears from Earth. "Except you probably want to skirt around the sun, what with all the nuclear fusion in the way, which increases your travel time a bit."

She sets her gun on her shoulder and steps back to allow Tina and Anselm to step down the boarding ramp

between us. "I'm led to believe that there are ways to shorten the trip. Wormholes and shit."

I roll my eyes and turn to follow the rest of the crew across the dunes. "There are ways. There are lots of ways. But you don't know any of them, and you're not going to pick up advanced Dimensional Science concepts on the fly. Better you stick with us. You can even sit in a proper seat for re-entry."

She falls into formation, but not without grumbling, "This won't be the last you hear of this."

I tamp down the impulse to put a bullet in the back of her brain, which the brass would chalk up as "regrettable but necessary." We don't need an Iterator on board, especially now, when we might cross paths with Threat Null on any

given mission. As it is, if I get her back down to Earth alive, we're going to have to wipe her memory. Can't have wild stowaway stories giving other Technocrats ideas.

Silver squints across the sand to the crumbling stone ruins up ahead. "So what's this?"

"That used to be Mus." I take up the rear, behind Silver, so I can keep my eye on her. Keeping her alive — that is, not having to shoot her myself — is going to be the hardest part of my day. "A Traditionalist chantry. We blew the shit out of it almost twenty years ago. It was up on a moonlet back then. Then the Nephandi moved into the ruins, and we had to come back here, oh, ten years ago now, to pry them out."

She gives it a dubious look. "So this is one of our installations?"

I laugh despite myself. "Corporal, if we had the manpower to occupy every scrap of space we kick the other guys out of, we'd have won this war a long time ago." The sand-scoured walls loom up before us, and at this range you can see the traces of soot in the corners and the charred ends of support beams. "We razed it. It's just a ruin."

We go through the main gate and into the first courtyard. It once boasted gardens and trees; now there are a few blackened trunks in shattered planters. The flagstones are all jumbled and off-kilter. Sad wrecks of buildings slump all around us. Silver surveys the area with a practiced tactical eye along with the rest of us. "So why are we here?"

"We have reports that something was sifting through the ashes." I point down a smashed thoroughfare, and we head in that direction in a tight formation. "We can't afford to occupy it, but we do patrol to make sure no one else does. Mercury's the gateway to the rest of the solar system. Most folks think of Mercury as being on one end of the solar system, but it's in fact in the center, which gives it huge strategic value. A fortress here can become unassailable."

Silver contemplates this while staring at a shattered building, once a mosque. "Looks like this fortress got assailed pretty good."

"Glory days," I mutter absently, but she probably doesn't hear me over the thunder that rolls through the sand around us, which is quickly followed by an inhuman roar of wounded rage. "That must be our guys."

We double-time it through the ruins, passing on our way a downed voidship steaming in the remains of a library. On the other side, we find the battle. A few BCD troopers are hunkered down behind some smashed masonry exchanging small arms fire for fireballs from nearly twenty black cloaks across the square. Looming over the firefight, though, is an insectile thing easily three stories tall, pincer

raised to smash down on our guys, with a laughing woman in leather and silk sitting astride it like a demented horse. And behind her is a hot air balloon, with three occupants in the gondola. One of these leaps into the air with practiced ease while the other two begin to light a brace of rockets hanging off the side of their basket.

"Oh good," I say without thinking. "Just Nephandi." Silver gives me an incredulous look, but then we're in the thick of it. We push forward into the square, providing the second half of a flank on the Nephandi with burning hands. The BCD boys haul ass under the shadow of the massive bug to rain plasma fire into the kill zone. A few targets go down; the others scramble into a half-collapsed building.

That's when the rockets streak across the square, trails of coiling smoke connecting the hot air balloon to the giant beetle's head. The behemoth loses its balance and begins to topple. Pincers and legs scramble across the dusty masonry of the square, smashing walls and sending bricks sailing. The BCD patrol dives into the building after the fleeing Nephandus with Pavel and Anselm hot on their heels, but as the giant bug collapses into the ground, I have to yank Silver back by her emblazoned pauldrons to avoid becoming splatter. The dead bug's carcass neatly bisects the square, cutting us off from the rest of my crew.

Silver and I reconnoiter left and right to see the best way around; that's when the balloon comes down, fast and hard, into the square behind us. The gondola hits the ground sideways and the occupants spill out onto the sand. The Iterator doesn't miss a beat; she advances on the two with her weapon hot.

"Silver! No!" I scramble to her side, then in front of her. "These are our guys."

The Iterator looks warily at me, then beyond me to where I assume the two Traditionalists are crouched or cowering. "These are not our guys."

I glance back to make sure the two of them are okay; they look dazed from the fall, but aware of what's happening. Their eyes are calculating if they have to run, and if that will save their skins. "Look, there's more than two sides to this, Silver. Our beef with these guys is an argument over administration of the mudball. Our problem with the other guys is they want to eat babies. So sometimes we call a truce on the policy disagreement to take down the assholes who want to rain death on all of humanity, all right?"

I can barely see her face through her visor, but she locks eyes with me anyway. "That's fraternization, Captain."

I put up a hand. "Silver. Jessica. No way the woman who stowed away on my ship never bent some rules before."

She starts twitching. "Not anymore. The last time... I got in trouble... they put me in a room..."

I inch forward until my hand is on her shoulder. "They did some interior decorating in your head, Jessica. But you can fight it. And once we get you out of here, we can pull it all down, get it all out of you. For good. All right? But you've got to buckle down and push through it on your own right now. And you can do that."

Silver's whole body is visibly shaking. "I don't think I can, Chris."

Her internal torment is interrupted by Nephandi spilling out of a nearby doorway, headed up by the woman in silk, apparently having survived the loss of her monstrous mount. She skids to a halt before us, and the mooks behind her begin to chant. Their hands start to vibrate and catch flame.

But her eyes thin to slits when she sees Silver. "Iterator," she hisses, and then her voice splits into a scream that could not have come solely from her throat. Everyone behind her joins in, and in an eye blink they wink out of existence. Sand and dust stir idly in their wake.

A few moments of silence later, Anselm reports over the headset. "Captain, the Nephandi must have bugged out. We were hot on their heels, but we can't find them anywhere."

Silver is not doing well. She pops her visor to get some fresh air, and I can see that she's hyperventilating and her face is slick with sweat. "What... what happened?"

I curse internally. "They pulled out right after they saw you."

She manages a shaky smile and puts her gun on her shoulder, which is better than aimed at the Traditionalists. "The reputation of Iteration X precedes me."

"Yeah. Not in the way you think." I backpedal to check our six, worried about our exit route back to the ship. "I need everybody on this channel to get back to the square, pronto."

The Iterator shakes her head, trying to claw past the cobwebs. "I don't understand. What's happening?" Over her head, streaks begin to paint themselves across the dust-brown sky. "What is that? Meteor shower?"

I point at the two Traditionalists and jerk a thumb behind me. "Sorry about your balloon, guys, but it's getting left behind." They don't so much as argue, and scramble to comply. "Corporal, we gotta get out of here."

But she's already stock-still, looking in wonder at the HUD framing her face, listening intently to what's

coming over her headset. "Captain, I have incoming, but they're all identifying as friendly."

I stride back to put a hand on her wrist. "They aren't. It's a trick. They—"

One of the meteors crashes down in a fiery splash no more than ten yards away, sending up a gout of sand and brick. All around us is the cacophony of similar impacts.

"I'm getting... why am I getting software upgrade notifications?" the Iterator asks, then her eyes widen as she tabs open the source code. I can see it all spooling past her astonished face. "It's... it's beautiful, Chris."

"Shut it down, Corporal!" I shout at her, grabbing at her arm and shaking her. "Cut your comms before they—"

The wall of insect carapace behind us shifts ominously, then boosts upwards, twenty feet into the air. Pools of halogen light flare underneath its shadow as the thing lifting it rolls forward. Massive waldoes hiss and whine as they hoist the dead bug, then swing it backwards, flattening more of the City of Brass. The machine underneath pounds its pneumatic arms forward, slamming into the ground and causing the old flagstones to shatter.

The walls on our other side crumble as a line of identical chromed androids push their way clear of their impact crater. As one they sprout barrels crackling with energy and stinking of plasma-scorched ozone. One of the Traditionalist fires on them with some sort of inky whip that slices them neatly across their bellies. The torsos topple into the sand, but another line of androids clammers out of the ruins behind them, inexorably marching to push their line forward.

I grab the lip of Silver's helmet and pull her face close to mine. "Jessica, cut off—"

But her eyes are wild with excitement and she has a giddy, disbelieving smile on her face. "They came for me, Chris. They came for me—"

She doesn't say anything more, nor does she slide any farther into madness, because I put two bullets in her head. I let her hardsuit crumple behind me as I chase after the two Traditionalists. The ground is blurry, but I throw one foot in front of the other, sending sand up behind me, until I'm out of the square, out of the ruins, out of the dust of Mercury.

As we lift off, we can see the machines circling a figure sprawled across the ground in the square. We don't catch details, just a mess of grease-streaked chrome and actinic light. Tina says something about machines at prayer, but I don't pay much attention. I am already composing my report, explaining that we just lost Mus, thanks to an Iterator stowaway that brought hell down on our heads.

Void Engineers

NAMIE:
PLAYER:
CHRONICLE:

NATURE:
EIDOLON:
DEITEANOR:

DIVISION:
CONCEPT:
ATTALGATI:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength _____ ●○○○○
Dexterity _____ ●○○○○
Stamina _____ ●○○○○

SOCIAL

Charisma _____ ●○○○○
Manipulation _____ ●○○○○
Appearance _____ ●○○○○

MENTAL

Perception _____ ●○○○○
Intelligence _____ ●○○○○
Wits _____ ●○○○○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness _____ ○○○○○
Athletics _____ ○○○○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○
Brawl _____ ○○○○○
Dodge _____ ○○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

SKILLS

Drive _____ ○○○○○
Energy Weapons _____ ○○○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms _____ ○○○○○
Hypertech _____ ○○○○○
Melee _____ ○○○○○
Research _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ○○○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○

KNOWLEDGES

Academics _____ ○○○○○
Computer _____ ○○○○○
Enigmas _____ ○○○○○
Finance _____ ○○○○○
Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○
Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ○○○○○
Politics _____ ○○○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○

SPHERES

Correspondence _____ ○○○○○
Dimensional Science _____ ○○○○○
Entropy _____ ○○○○○

Forces _____ ○○○○○
Life _____ ○○○○○
Matter _____ ○○○○○

Mind _____ ○○○○○
Prime _____ ○○○○○
Time _____ ○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
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_____ ○○○○○

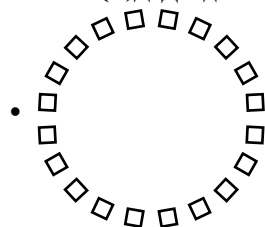
ENLIGHTENMENT

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

PRITIAL ENERGY



PARADOX

HEALTH

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

RESONANCE

Dynamic _____ ○○○○○
Entropic _____ ○○○○○
Static _____ ○○○○○

EXPERIENCE

OTHER TRAITS

_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○



MERITS & FLAWS

| MERIT | TYPE | COST | FLAW | TYPE | BONUS |
|-------|------|------|------|------|-------|
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PROCEDURES

PREFERRED EFFECTS

NOTES

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DEVICES

| Name | Level | Enlightenment | Primal Energy | Appearance |
|------|-------|---------------|---------------|------------|
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| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

COMBAT

| Weapon | Difficulty | Damage | Range | Rate | Clip | Conceal |
|--------|------------|--------|-------|------|------|---------|
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

ARTIST: _____



EXPANDED BACKGROUND

ALLIES

CONSTRUCT

ENHANCEMENTS

LABORATORY

MENTOR

PATRON

SECRET WEAPONS

BACKUP

COMPANION

INFLUENCE

LIBRARY

NOTE(S)

RESOURCES

SPIES

POSSESSIONS

GEAR (CARRIED)

FOCI

EQUIPMENT (OWNED)

STYLE



HISTORY

EMPLOYMENT

GOALS/DESTINY

SEEKINGS:

QUIETS:

DESCRIPTION

Age: _____

Apparent Age: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Age of Empowerment: _____

Hair: _____

Eyes: _____

Race: _____

Nationality: _____

Height: _____

Weight: _____

Sex: _____

VISUALS

ATTALGATTI CHART

CHARACTER SKETCH

