

ENTHONIAN

STAFES



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ΕΠΙΘΕΩΡΙΑΝ STARS



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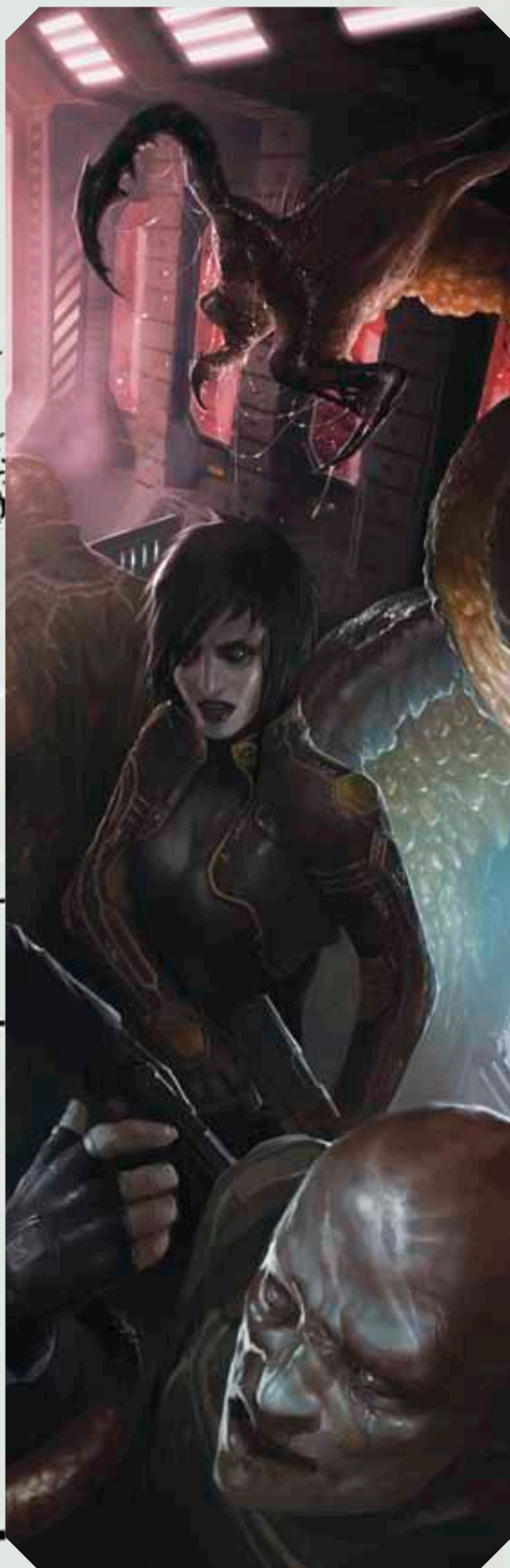
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WildFire
Management

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Table of Contents



Kinetofayetophobia	4
Introduction (I)	12
The Hulk	14
Setting (2)	18
Training's Over	34
Characters (3)	38
Rules (4)	74
Spin Control	80
Technology (5)	84
Spaceships (6)	102
Far Strider	126
Worlds (7)	130
Bad Salvage	152
Monsters (8)	156
Level 23	174
Referee (9)	178
Secrets (10)	186
Adventures (II)	198
Appendices	218



KINETOFAYETOPHOBIA

That's all there was to it. The solar system was going to hell in a hand-basket.

It's funny the thoughts that occur to one when being chased by dozens of tentacles that kept bursting out of the walls and floor, one by one. Each lashed out at Anastasia, trying to gain purchase to do only god knows what.

The wriggling, sour-smelling, slimy, boneless limbs brought out a primal fear in her, the kind that makes the back of your legs go numb and your knees go rubbery. The kind Anastasia had to choke back with every last shred of her will if she wanted to live.

Right, left, right – it didn't matter anymore. In her panic, she'd totally forgotten the layout of this tragic little building stuck deep in the Martian outback. She hoped desperately to find another door back out, so that the thing might get caught up in the building long enough for her to clear.

Charging through the only door she could see, her only way forward, it was marked storage. Looking around, this was probably the last door she wanted. There was no other way out. The room was only filled with storage lockers, but that wasn't the worst of it. The doors to the lockers weren't solid – they had holes in them.

No time to lose, Anastasia did the one thing she could. She grabbed the biggest locker she could find, way towards the back, and dove into it. Fortunately, she could lock the door by putting her hand through one of the holes. She didn't figure the thing was smart enough to work a digital lock.

Her Bandit pistol wasn't going to do much when the time came, but it was all she had. The thing had already claimed her Blizzard submachine gun back outside. She looked frantically around the container for anything that might help, but there was nothing. Then, she froze.

The first slender tentacle gently wormed its way through one of the holes, about hip height. It probed its way through, cautiously but deliberately. The

second wasn't far behind, this one much thicker than the first. It could barely push its way through, but barely was enough. The fear gripped Anastasia again, much worse this time. She grabbed hold of a cargo strap, just to help keep her from collapsing.

More followed, backlit by the lights of the storage room which poured through the holes. She hoped they weren't going to notice her, hoped against all hope, but she knew better. In a few seconds the probing monstrosities would zero in and rip her limb from limb.

One of the larger tentacles inched its way towards her. The tip touched her uniform and slowly slithered its way up. If terror hadn't already paralyzed her, the smell would have made Anastasia vomit. Another came from the other side, closer every moment. The command came from her brain to fire the gun, but something short-circuited the thought en route.

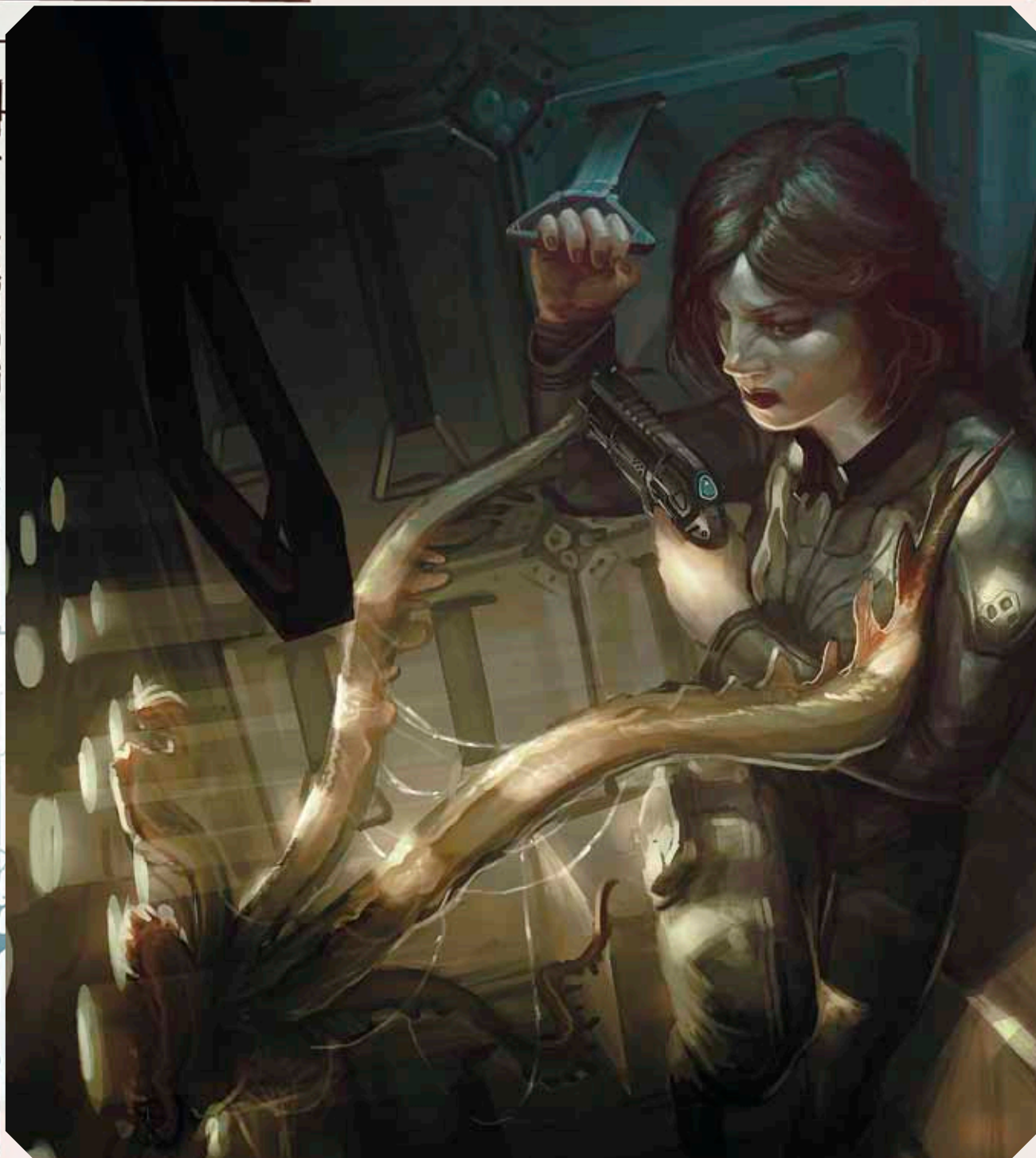
This was a hell of a way to die.

Suddenly, the storage room exploded with a bright orange light and she could smell burning flesh. The tentacles spasmed and began to yank their way out of the locker. The room lit up again, this time some of the flames shot through the holes in the locker, singeing Anastasia's eyebrows and bangs. The last of the tentacles slithered out and she was thankfully alone.

Anastasia kicked the hot metal door as hard as she could. Her combat boot took the worst of it, but the door shot open. The wriggling things were withdrawing into the ground as a figure shot another burst of fiery death at them. It took a minute for Anastasia to overcome her shock to figure out who it was.

It was Felius, who looked downright funny. Great, a bookworm with a flamethrower. What the hell. It wasn't the weirdest thing that she'd seen today. He just sat there, grinning like an idiot.

No time to waste, Anastasia kicked her legs to get the numb out of them.



"Look what I found," said Felius.

Anastasia pointed at the hole in the ground. "Look what found us. Let's get back to the rover so we can call in an airstrike. I'm not taking any more chances."

.....

It was good to be back on Ganymede. She was born in Troy, under the bright lights of the casinos. Its mayhem felt like home.

Coming back from the restroom, she practically melted into the chair. "Finally," she said. "A hot meal in a civilized place."

Marcus looked carefully around the room, taking in each person in turn, something he did everywhere. "I ordered for you while you were gone."

"Thanks," she replied. "I didn't want to wait. I've missed Asian food so much. What did you order?"

Marcus smiled. "It's a surprise."

"So I've been correlating the data and this isn't good." Felius had his nose in his computer again.

Anastasia took a sip of her water. Nice, properly recycled water. "When is it ever good?"

"The reports show that bodies have been going missing from the morgues with regularity. There's almost a pattern to the body-snatching. It appears that two cadavers are stolen from different parts of the colony every week and have been for a little less than three months now."

Marcus frowned, his eyes on other things. "Necrophiliacs wouldn't need bodies with that kind of frequency. That leaves cults and..."

"Ghouls," finished Anastasia.

Just then, the food arrived. Felius had ordered what many had come to call "white people chicken," while Marcus' tastes tended more towards the exotic – Echizen jellyfish, which can be toxic if not prepared properly. Which is something Anastasia had forgotten when she asked him to order for her.

There it was – san nak ji. A live octopus on a bed of vegetables. Anastasia knocked the chair over jumping out of it and away from her "dish."

"Take it away!" she shouted at the waiter, who promptly fell all over himself to remove the offending delicacy. He bowed and disappeared.

Anastasia composed herself and sat back down. Marcus looked at her, shocked. "What's wrong with you?"

"Kinetofayetophobia."

Even Felius was stumped. "Kinetofayetophobia? What the hell is that?"

"Fear of moving food. It's the closest phobia that translates to tentacles. Remember the thing on Mars?"

Marcus picked up a chunk of jellyfish with his chopsticks. "They've got phobias for everything, don't they?"

"Everybody's scared of something."

• • • • •

The locals had already tried setting a trap, but had no luck. That meant the body snatchings were either an inside job or that the perpetrators were using the access tunnels in the city to get around. Either way, Anastasia and her team still didn't know what they were up against.

While Marcus positioned the local authorities to keep surveillance on any of the two dozen people who might possibly be insiders, Anastasia was stuck with the fun job of crawling through the access tunnels. Fortunately, Felius was sitting at a remote terminal with the city plans at his fingertips.

"At the next intersection, turn left," he said.

Whoever built Troy at least had the sense to make it easy to get around, even for the maintenance staff. The hidden corridors were big enough for a person with gear to stand up in – as well as being big enough to transport dead bodies through. They also had softly glowing lights throughout the tunnels. They may not illuminate everything, but they were enough to get around.

Anastasia reached the intersection and turned left, only to be greeted by darkness. "Is there any reason the lights should be out in this part of the grid?"

"Hold, please," She could hear Felius typing. "Okay, I don't see any complaints or repair requests. According to the system, no one knows the lights are out. The other utilities are working just fine. Is the rest of the electricity on?"

"I'm not going to lick my fingers to find out, but I can hear the lines humming. Can you turn them back on?"

More typing. "Huh. Looks like someone has taken that system completely off-line."

Anastasia pulled out her pistol and snapped a glow-stick to life. The corridor ahead glowed a sickly green, a color that always reminded her of either Halloween or radioactive waste. Neither was particularly comforting right now. "Well, if someone's taken it off-line, then someone's up to something. Call Marcus and let him know what we've found. But Felius, don't go anywhere."

Fortunately, she knew from experience that Felius had no problem multi-tasking.

• • • • •

"Wait. This isn't on my schematics."

Those were not the words Anastasia wanted to hear. "Then where am I?" She thought she smelled something funky.

Felius stammered. "Uh... uh... you... you're off the grid. I don't know why there would be tunnels that aren't on the schematics. These are supposed to be the map for the entire city. I got them from the city mainframe!"

Anastasia stepped into what looked like a spacious junction room, but paused when the smell hit her. The sickly sweet smell of rotting flesh. The green light of her glow-stick slowly revealed something she did not want to see. "Oh no."

"What? What is it?" She could hear Felius pulling out his sidearm.

Though she covered her mouth, Anastasia said, "Don't go anywhere. Stay put."

This room was much larger than it first appeared. Whoever had stolen the corpses had brought them here. Over a dozen dead bodies in various states of decay were arranged in an almost reverent fashion. Some were hung on the walls in carefully considered poses. Some were placed in compromising positions that suggested things that made Anastasia sick.

Stepping further in, she eventually found something that made it all clear, or at least as clear as it was going to become. There, on the opposite wall, was an altar, made of bone and other unidentifiable things.

"Felius," Anastasia finally spat out after a couple tries. "It's not ghouls. I'm sending you images of the altar."

"Oh no," she heard him respond. "We need to get the locals mobilized."

"I'll stay here, just in case whatever sick bastards did this come back."

From behind her, Anastasia heard a voice that made her skin crawl. "Too late. We're here."

She whipped around in one practiced motion and squeezed the trigger, aimed right in the face of the portly, sweaty man licking the curved blade. The gun didn't fire. She pulled the trigger three more times. Nothing.

The man snarled. "Must be magic."

Without missing a beat, Anastasia jabbed a knife hand into his trachea. The man stumbled backwards into another, choking violently.

She didn't need a firearm to make sure these low-lives paid for their crimes. This was not Anastasia's first barbecue.

• • • • •

There was a satisfying thunk as the Knight's Errant corvette formed hard seal with the dock. Welcome to Warden Prime, also known as the Eye. The gigantic space station hovered over Earth and was the primary center of Warden operations for the entire solar system.



Anastasia cued the comm. "Ladies and gentlemen, please stay seated until the captain has turned off the fasten seatbelt sign. Also, be careful when opening the overhead compartments as things may have shifted during flight. Thank you for flying Warden airlines. Welcome to the Eye."

Powering everything down, Anastasia zipped up her suit and headed for the airlock. Marcus and Felius were already waiting for her.

"Man, is it good to be back in civilization!" said Marcus, smiling. "If the Captain's feeling generous, maybe we can get a vacation day to go planetside. It's the perfect time of the year for the beaches in Ibiza."

"Hanging out and getting burned by the sun while having smelly salt water sprayed on you sounds like a blast," added a particularly sarcastic Anastasia. "I'm sure the Captain will see that as an important use of our time."

"I don't even know how you call yourself human. What do you think, Felius?"

As usual, it took Felius a few minutes to realize someone was talking to him. "I'm sorry. What?"

"Figures," replied Marcus.

And with that, they walked out of the docking area and into the busy halls of the most notorious space station in the solar system.

.....

Captain Calado was waiting for them in a debriefing room. The heavily scarred man stood staring out the window at the Earth below. He was the kind of man that made people wonder whether or not he was boiling with anger on the inside. The patchwork color of his hair, which couldn't decide if it was black or gray, didn't help.

Marcus made a happy sound as he grabbed a seat at the conference table. As the only one of the three that was from Earth, it made him nostalgic – homesick even.

"I never tire of the sight. Do you, Agent St. Croix?"

"Absolutely not, sir," replied Marcus.

Calado turned and assessed his underlings. "The report got here weeks ago, so we can skip most of the BS. Any new thoughts?"

"Always, sir," began Felius. "We put our heads together on the trip and came up with several hypothesis. However, given the facts, it seems like it was Primoris Nox. Not many other cults would be that organized and want to play with that many dead bodies."

The Captain poured himself a glass of water, but didn't bother to sit down. "Cults, huh? Monsters I get. I like monsters. They're ugly and nasty and you know you should shoot them. Cults are full of people and people are devious. They're hard to root out. Too bad we can't just hook everyone up to a lie detector and flush them out."

"We believe we broke the back of that particular cell. The morgues on Troy should be safe again. Until the next time," said Anastasia.

"Well, the locals will be keeping an eye on things in the meantime. On to new things for you. So, which do you want first – the good news or the bad news?"

Anastasia almost laughed. "Let's hear the bad news first."

Calado turned to look back out over the beautiful blue planet. "I know I promised you a rotation on the inner planets, but something's come up. I need you to go right back out again."

Anastasia saw Marcus twitch. Too much time on the outer planets made him unhappy. She never really understood why.

"Something's up on Callisto," continued Captain Calado. "Local scientists thought they read something strange in the atmosphere. They thought the epicenter was in one of the impact craters. Naturally, they went out to see what they could find and never came back. The readings look real. The data has already been uploaded to your ship."

Marcus put down his glass. "Sir, why us? I mean, isn't there someone closer?"

"Believe it or not, Agent St. Croix, this is a busy agency. We don't always have the luxury of sending

who is closest. You're between cases and Agent Kiss is Jovian. Any other questions?"

"What about the good news?" asked Anastasia.

Calado snorted. "Since when has there been good news?"

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As they approached the Jovian moon, Felius read statistics off his comp, like he always did. "Callisto is the outermost of the Galilean Moons, with low enough radiation to make it ideal for colonization. The surface is covered with giant impact craters. Ursa, the only colony on the planet, has been constructed in one of them."

"Ana, this is your neck of the woods. What do we need to know?" asked Marcus.

The moon loomed larger every minute and they were about to break atmosphere – though the thin layer of carbon dioxide and molecular oxygen didn't really mean anything in terms of entry. Anastasia kept her hands on the controls. "It's a bedroom community mostly. People do tours elsewhere in Jupiter space and then come back to homes here. It's quiet. If you don't live there, there isn't much of a reason to go there."

The former cop in Marcus started to show through. "Okay, so I'm assuming that means low crime. Any racial tensions to worry about?"

"No. Callisto has about eighty thousand residents who do whatever they need to keep Ursa a nice place to live. Most of the crime is drug smuggling, domestic disputes, or minor property crime, with the occasional drunken assault. Honestly, it's some of the biggest bang for your buck property-wise anywhere in the outer planets."

"Thanks," replied Marcus. "I'll remember that for when I retire."

"Get yourself geared up, smart Alec. The locals don't like disturbances and they'll view us as exactly that. You'll have to do some fancy talking to keep them happy."

Oblivious to the rest of the conversation, Felius chimed in. "Wow. There's a subsurface ocean

more than 100 km down. Is anyone researching that? Could that have anything to do with these readings?"

Anastasia brought the Knight's Errant into Callisto's airspace, slowly descending over the frost-capped peaks surrounding the massive craters. "There's a small outpost that's been digging and taking samples, but it is really radioactive down there. I'm no scientist, but it seems like it wouldn't have anything to do with what we're looking at."

Up ahead, she could see the giant dome of Ursa. She cued her comm. "Ursa Spaceport, this is Warden vessel Edge of Dawn requesting docking clearance."

"Edge of Dawn, you are cleared for docking on pad five. Welcome to Callisto."

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They hadn't even gotten out of the docks before Ursa Security met them. Just to make a point, there were five of them. Another warm Warden welcome.

The one that was clearly in charge led the pack. He had a round face and the kind of eyes that lied. In the past, he looked like the kind of guy who would have suffered from male pattern baldness, if such a thing hadn't been cured. He approached and held out his hand. "Welcome. I am Lieutenant Ismo Jarvi, Head of Ursa Security. Governor Amarnath asked me to greet you."

Marcus stepped up to shake his hand, smiling disarmingly. "Pleasure. I'm Lieutenant Marcus St. Croix. This is Lieutenant Felius Fickerwith and Lieutenant Anastasia Kiss."

Jarvi turned and ran his eyes up and down Anastasia. "Kiss? Is that intentional?"

Though she wanted to immediately bathe herself, Anastasia knew that you caught more flies with honey than vinegar. So, she gave him one of her best smiles, the kind that typically got men to do what she wanted. "It should be, but it's actually Hungarian."

Jarvi looked pleased, so Marcus took the opportunity. "So, Lt. Jarvi. We have no intention of mak-

ing your life difficult. We'll make our way to the site and get out of here as soon as we can."

Jarvi tore his eyes away from Anastasia long enough to relax. "That is wonderful news. We'd like to minimize your exposure to the population. Our citizens prefer a quiet life, one unhampered by the kind of concerns Council agents like yourself most often represent. We've prepared the gear you'll need on our end, so gather up the rest of what you'll need and we'll escort you there."

There wasn't much choice, so the three Wardens went back into their Knight's Errant and headed to the armory. Marcus snorted. "For once, I wish these colonies weren't so worried about whatever crap they're worried about and start worrying about what's really going on."

"Right. Except for the fact that it's our job to make sure they don't know what's going on," responded Felius.

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The place in question was several hours journey from the colony. The rover took them as far up the side of the crater as possible, but it was on foot from there. The extremely low gravity of Callisto made it both harder and easier for them to get up the slope. They each wore heavy weights on their ankles to maintain some traction, and grapple guns and ropes allowed them to reach the lip of the crater with only some small fuss. Fortunately, it was the middle of the day or the whole thing would have been nearly impossible.

Anastasia was the first to the rim and what she saw there made her gasp. This only served to make the other two scramble to join her as quickly as possible. What they saw was not lost on them either.

It didn't take a genius to recognize that something very strange was happening. A thick, swirling mist filled the crater about halfway to the top. They could see the shadows of something growing up out of the ground – maybe stalagmites or even trees? Either would be way out of place. Even worse, there were sounds. Nothing lived on the surface of Callisto, so there should be no sounds other than the ones they were making. Something also seemed to be glowing down there.

They stood in awed silence for a moment. Finally, Anastasia was the first one to speak. "We're going to have to go down in there, aren't we?"

Without waiting for an answer, she took her first steps down towards the bottom of the crater.

.....

It felt a little like diving underwater. Going under the mist layer was more than any of them could have expected.

Felius stepped up to the gray trunk-like thing before him, with delicate tendrils splayed out from the nearly eight-foot top.

"Don't touch it!" cautioned Marcus.

Felius turned and frowned. "Do I look new?" He took out a scanner and nudged the thing. The tendrils swayed as if caught in a breeze. "Whatever it is, it's alive. Wait, that could mean..."

Anastasia and Marcus stood back while Felius did something that looked very technical. He then waited patiently, until his comp beeped. "The mist layer is actually an atmosphere."

"What? How is that even possible?" asked Anastasia.

Marcus wasn't far behind. "What kind of atmosphere? Can we breathe it?"

Felius held his hand up and closed his eyes, the way he does when he gets asked too many questions at once – not something that happened infrequently. "One answer at a time. How is this possible? I don't know and it will take a lot more research to get even close to an educated guess. What kind of atmosphere? The kind that can support life, just not ours. Open your helmet now and you'll asphyxiate. Better than explosive decompression, I suppose."

"Great. Let's review. Life and an atmosphere." Marcus was getting agitated. "Don't we have enough to leave and call in a better equipped team?"

Felius answered his question by ignoring him and walking deeper into the crater.

He walked about another ten feet and stopped. The others joined him, before realizing what Felius was looking at. That plant was only the first. They were entering what appeared to be a forest. An alien and foreboding forest, but a forest nonetheless.

"Should we be taking samples or something?" inquired Anastasia.

Felius shook his head. "I'm not touching anything until we're on our way out."

Anastasia lifted one of her feet and noticed something she'd missed in her shock. Things felt heavier. "Uhh, guys? Why does it feel like I don't need the leg weights anymore?"

The other two finally noticed as well. Felius took off his weights and tried to walk. It wasn't bad. "The gravity is definitely higher in here. I'd guess about half a G. And before you ask, I have no idea how that can happen."

Anastasia and Marcus followed suit and shed their weights. The increased gravity made it much easier to press forward.

There appeared to be many smaller plants, if one could call them that, growing amongst the bigger ones. It was as if what they were seeing were only the first shades of much larger things to come.

Not much further in, they came to what appeared to be a stream, though the liquid flowing down it seemed to have a silvery sheen on the surface. There was some thick growth near the bank of this stream, with blue and pink speckled fronds, perhaps a little like ferns. However, the texture was wrong – more leathery.

Felius was the first to the stream. He knelt carefully down near the edge, sticking some kind of device in. The surface tension of the liquid was much greater than that of water and he had to push a little harder than normal.

Meanwhile, Anastasia walked over to investigate the speckled growth. Again, it felt like she should be underwater someplace like Europa to be seeing things like this. However, something caught her eye behind the fronds – several somethings, in fact. Gently nudging the plants aside with her as-



sault rifle, she saw a patch of football-like objects, set upright in the ground. Each was white and rough, with an almost vein-like texture.

"Tell me these don't look like eggs," she said.

Felius was up like a shot. "Oh no. Of all..."

Before he could finish his sentence, something large charged through the alien forest near them. Anastasia took a defensive stance and looked every which way, trying to find the thing that was most likely mom. The others drew their firearms, too, preparing for what they knew was the inevitable.

From out of the mist, something wriggled. Several meaty, green tentacles, tipped with black talons, moving with sinister purpose. Anastasia could feel the chill creeping up the back of her legs.

"Not this again," was all she said before opening up with her assault rifle, its blaze lighting up the alien forest with flash after flash.

Yup. The solar system was going to hell in a hand-basket.



Chtho•ni•an [thoh-nee-uhn] – adjective:

1. concerning, belonging to, or inhabiting the underworld.
2. of or pertaining to the deities, spirits, and other beings dwelling under the earth.

2159 AD. It is a good time to be alive. The nations of the world still exist, but they have become more civilized. Countries resolve their disputes through the forum of the Unified World Council. Colonies of mutual cooperation exist throughout the solar system. We have stretched to the edge of our known world.

But, alas, it is not to be our time.

Something approaches, a thing on an orbit from far away. Seemingly a large shard of dark matter, this object is known in obscure prophecy as the Chthonian Star. It is a thing that has been traveling through the universe on its oblique trajectory for millions, if not billions, of years. It is a part of the natural cycle of things, on its eon-long orbit. Now, again, it is awakening things long thought lost or dead, things that have slumbered awaiting its return.

It begins slowly. Colonists begin to notice unusual things throughout the solar system. Then people begin to disappear. Then entire settlements. Ships go missing. However, it isn't long before the unspeakable horrors that have awakened can no longer contain themselves. Moons thought dead such as Callisto come to life, producing alien ecosystems never before seen by man. Things stir in the distant Kuiper Belt. It is something that cannot be denied and people change their lives knowing that there are dangerous and terrifying things in the dark.

Such phenomena naturally become something of intense interest to the powers that be. Mighty corporations marshal their resources to send teams to figure out how such things might be harnessed for profit. The Unified World Council sends out special teams of sanctioned Wardens, whose job it is to ascertain the new threats to human life, to learn everything they can about them, and fight them wherever they are found. They are discovering that they are found with greater and greater frequency.

There are also those who believe the murmurs of madmen, who have listened to the occultists who point to forbidden books and forgotten prophecy. They are the ones who believe that humanity is a young race and there are much older and darker things in the universe, so-called deities and their minions who care nothing for the children of men. They confront the horror that is looming, looking to the past, trying desperately to make the world understand in the present.

It is true. These are the end times. The Old Ones are waking up and what we thought was our solar system is making itself home for its returning masters. The monstrous races that serve them are coming back out to help prepare the way. Humanity is as many always thought – temporary stewards of this part of the galaxy at best, parasites at worst.

All this from the influence of a body that is still millions of miles away. As the Chthonian Star marches ever onward, things are only going to get worse. Who knows what will happen when it is finally here?

The Game

The scope of *Chthonian Stars* is contained to a fantastical purview that is still familiar to us – our solar system, from Mercury out to the frontier of the Kuiper Belt. Earth is still the center of the universe, home to all mankind, but millions of people dwell in colonies and space stations spread throughout the solar system. Spaceships travel between the worlds, using technology that propels them from world to world in a matter of months, instead of years.

Despite the fact that the nations of the solar system are united in a way never before thought possible, the vast distances that separate the colonies of humanity create a sense of isolation. The journeys through the black are long and lonely. There are many who find this isolation difficult to deal with, especially given the things that now roam in the dark.

Chthonian Stars supports playing pretty much any kind of character, but steers players towards playing as Wardens, agents of the Unified World Council special commission. That way, your characters al-

ready have reason to travel around the solar system and the resources that allow them to do so.

For Use With Traveller

Chthonian Stars is a new and unique setting designed to be used with the *Traveller* roleplaying game. As such, it requires that you have access to the *Traveller Main Rulebook*. In addition, you may also find it useful to have a copy of the *Central Supply Catalogue* on hand, to expand your selection of weapons and gear.

There are a few notable exceptions to baseline *Traveller*. All characters in *Chthonian Stars* are human, and there is no psionic ability. Also, *Chthonian Stars* also introduces several new options for characters, including a point-based character generation system, a system of advantages and disadvantages, shorter and more varied half-terms, and a point advancement system.

The Cthulhu Saga

You may have seen the *Cthulhu Saga* logo on the cover and wondered what it was. The *Chthonian Stars* line is but one in an overall saga that is designed to take place through multiple points in time. *Chthonian Stars* is but the first of a series of games that take place in the same universe and the same time-line, each highlighting an exciting era. In the end, you will be able to play multiple characters that have all shaped the way of things in their own age.

Influences

Nothing is created in a vacuum. There have been several excellent movies that the creative team would like to site as influences in developing *Chthonian Stars*.

Alien

This movie needs no introduction. It's the story of a corporate crew instructed to touch down on an uninhabited rock to investigate the crash of an alien ship. They bring back a creature who must kill a host to be born. Just one such alien was enough to kill nearly every member of the *Nostromo's* crew. H. R. Giger's alien design scared the heck out of most of us as kids.

Event Horizon

A ghost story in space, the story follows a crew sent out to Neptune to discover the fate of the *Event Horizon*, a ship that's been missing for years. It was equipped with an experimental gravity drive that

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So if you're one of the people who has downloaded this book illegally off the internet, let's talk. We want to stay in business. We don't get to stay in business if you don't buy our products but you use them anyway. In more personal terms, if you like *Chthonian Stars*, please go out and buy the books, because if you don't we go out of business or we kill the line because sales suck and boom – no more *Chthonian Stars*. You lose, we lose, everybody loses. Everybody loves something for nothing, but this sort of thing comes with a price whether it's money or not.

was supposed to allow it to fold space-time in an effort to cross vast interstellar distances in an instant. It didn't work as planned and the ship comes back alive from a place that can only be described as hell.

Outland

An old-school Sean Connery film, this movie shows a more realistic picture of colonization. It follows a marshal assigned to a corporate mining outpost on the Jovian Moon of Io. Drugs have become a part of the productivity cycle and they are beginning to cause miners to go mad and die. Naturally, the corporate masters don't want such a thing coming to light, so they hire hit-men to take care of the law.

Pandorum

A couple crewmen wake up from hibernation aboard a giant spacecraft with little recollection of who they are or what they're supposed to be doing. It seems that the ship has been overrun by horrifying creatures who hunt the survivors for food. Worse yet, the reactor core is about to overload and blow everything to smithereens. On top of that, there are surprises for which not even the crew is ready.

The Pronoun Game

In this book we use he, him, and his when we're talking about people playing the game. It seems weird to alternate pronoun genders within the same book – it makes it feel like the book is written for two different audiences. The masculine pronoun is the standard and – right or wrong – we're used to seeing it. It may not be politically correct, but you can't please everybody.

THE HULK

The Squire's Penance slid silently through the mist-enshrouded rock and ice that made up the Fog Bank, an aptly named region of the Kuiper Belt. It got such a name from a convergence of especially strong, relatively speaking, solar winds. These winds scoured the surfaces of the hundreds of iceroids that dominated the region. The frozen gases that were torn away gave the appearance of mist rising off the icy rocks. The especially dense nature of the stellar bodies in this part of the Kuiper Belt also meant that there were just enough gravitic forces that the icy dust tended to stick around. While it's true that one could see a couple hundred clicks into the field, it was downright soupy compared to the rest of the solar system.

In the distance, the target of the Squire was visible through the icy mist. A massive Forge-class mining barge, supposedly operating in the region for almost three months, was parked above an especially large asteroid. Three weeks ago, communications from the vessel had stopped altogether. Less than a week prior to that, the refueling barge Welcome Relief had topped off the larger ship and reported to its corporate owners that everything was normal. Now, strangely, a smaller ship floated nearby the derelict drifting barge. As the Squire closed in, it became obvious that all the external hatches were wide open – the smaller ship had been vented to the cold void of open space.

Standing, arms clasped behind her, Warden Captain Aiko Hayata studied the smaller ship. She glanced to her right where Lt. John Stanse was scanning a display. On the flex panel, schematics hovered in the middle of a myriad of text and charts. Without glancing up, John reported, "The smaller ship looks like it's the one 4G sent to figure out why their mining barge had gone silent. There are no heat or power readings. By all appearances it's completely open to the vacuum. Comms and transponder are likewise not transmitting."

"What about the Mammoth?" Aiko inquired.

"Its comms and transponder are also both dead. However, I'm getting heat and power readings off her. Honestly Hayata, I suspect that if anyone's alive

on that ship, they have no idea we are here," responded John.

Aiko tried to stifle a grin when John referred to her by her surname. He knew it was more the custom in her native Japan to refer to someone by their surname. While she didn't mind when others called her Aiko, she did appreciate her friend's efforts. Truth be told, it was those little things that attracted her, but that was a secret she'd keep to herself. To do otherwise would be inappropriate – not to mention improper.

"I think it's better they don't know we're here." She paused a moment, then said, "Everyone get suited up. Let's assume that at least part of the Mammoth is open to the vacuum as well, or could easily become that way. Marco, get us docked as close to the ring as you can." Aiko directed this last order towards Marco Bianchi, the wiry pilot.

The smaller Knight's Errant slid up next to the giant mining barge. A docking tunnel extended out from the ship, connecting the two as automated systems on the barge locked the tunnel in place. The team donned the lightly armored vacc suits that were unique to their agency. Each colored in the traditional black and red of the Warden uniform, these suits were the most advanced available in the solar system. They provided them a modicum of protection from bullets, knives, and the unfortunately not-so-occasional claw, while not compromising their agility like many of the more traditional armored vacuum suits did.

With a whoosh of pressurized air, the airlock leading into the Mammoth cycled open. Automated lights flickered to life in the cramped confines of the tunnel. The lock of the large ship was too small as far as Aiko was concerned and it took two cycles for the entire team to make it inside the ship. This was not a tactical situation the senior Warden would have chosen. One never knew what was going to be encountered on missions like this and splitting the team up right off the bat was never a sound move.

While there were those who believed that the Wardens were just another extension of the Unified



World Council's influence in the solar system, the truth was much more significant than that. Not everything that happened in the domain of humanity, especially in the more remote regions, was easily explained – these were the things that the Wardens were tasked with investigating. Also, unfortunately, in many cases, they had to hide the truth from the masses. Aiko herself knew that much of what she had seen in her years as a Warden was not something the general public was ready to accept. It was difficult enough explaining the things that could not be hidden away, like the bizarre behavior of Pluto or the strange changes occurring on some moons. Tell-

ing them that an explosive decompression tragedy was caused by a delusion-inducing tentacle-armed creature would cause unwanted panic.

Looking at her team, Aiko said, "John, take Marco to the bridge and see what you can find out. I'll take Jenny and Rashim to check out the crew quarters. Keep in contact, reports every five minutes."

The atmosphere in the ship read as safe, if somewhat stuffy. It was likely the CO2 scrubbers had not been properly cleaned in over a week. As they split, the Wardens snapped back the faceplates of their

vacc suits to better sense their environment. John and Marco moved forward towards the bow of the barge, while Aiko and the others made their way back towards the access ports that would lead them to the crew quarters. Such accommodations were situated in the rotating ring that provided the crew some form of genuine gravity.

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"At least the deck's energized," Marco commented, as the pair moved cautiously forward, assault rifles at the ready. Despite the zero-g environment, the decks created a field which interacted with special plates in the soles of their boots and with threads that were integrated into their clothing and gear. The effect pulled them towards the deck – it wasn't true artificial gravity, but it did make things a lot easier.

John ignored him as the team reached the ladder that led to the bridge. Motioning with his gun, he crouched to keep an eye on the corridor while Marco slung his rifle over his shoulder and climbed up the ladder. Thus far, the entire situation was giving them both the willies. Neither had seen any sign of the crew, which didn't speak well for what they were going to eventually find.

At the top of the ladder, Marco punched the security override codes into the hatch's keypad. The click of the magnetic lock releasing echoed loudly through the quiet corridors behind him. He fired off a quick whistle and moments later he could feel John climbing up the ladder below.

Using the nose of his rifle, Marco cautiously pushed the hatch open a crack for him to peek through. Nothing on the other side reacted and he could see no movement. Pushing the hatch all the way open, he quickly moved out to take a defensive kneeling stance so that his companion could safely join him. Scanning the bridge as John made his way, what Marco saw caused even his battle-hardened resolve to waver for a moment as bile crept up the back of his throat.

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The others rode an elevator that traveled the length of one of the gravity ring's spokes, traversing from the zero-g environment of the main body of the ship to the centrifugally-induced gravity of the rotating ring. These trips were designed to

ease the transition between functional weightlessness and artificial gravity. Specially designed chairs would automatically adjust their angles to minimize the discomfort one tended to feel when making such a change, and the deck plates would energize slowly as 'down' changed relative to the outer edge of the ring. Aiko's team, however, were used to this, and moved with practiced ease, adjusting their positions as their relative up and down changed.

A soft chime warned the group that they had arrived at their destination and the elevator doors opened. Their senses were instantly flooded with the horrid sickly-sweet stench of rotting meat. Most would have been overcome, forced gagging to the floor, but Aiko's team had been forced to smell worse in training. Jenny took point, exiting first and scanning left and right down the main corridor of the ring. Finding their first evidence of the crew, she pointed and then the gagging began.

Aiko cautiously crept out of the elevator, steeling herself for what she knew would be an awful sight. She had seen so much in her time as a Warden, but there were always new and more terrible surprises – like this one. Four bodies hung upside-down from the ceiling, split open like specimens on an autopsy table. Grotesque ropy intestines dangled in coils from the corpses, and their eyes and parts of their faces had been gouged – or gnawed – away, leaving slick white bone exposed. Their twisted expressions led Aiko to believe they may have been alive when this started. That thought turned her stomach, but she swallowed it back.

Taking stock of the rest of her team, Rashim had gone from olive to ash, but kept a keen eye on the corridor behind them. Jenny wiped her mouth on the sleeve of her vacc suit. Aiko stepped over to help the rookie up. "This won't be the worst thing you'll see," she said. "Don't focus on this. Focus on who else might be alive. This doesn't tell us much. We need to move."

Jenny nodded and got to her feet, shaking. The grisly scene had rattled her, but she was a tough girl. Aiko knew that, regardless of her fortitude, moments like these would leave lasting scars. Such things were an unfortunate consequence of the job.

In motion, Aiko barked an order at the rookies. "Close your helmets. It'll keep the stench out." She heard the hiss of their suits pressurizing as her ra-

dio came to life. It was John's voice. "Hayata, there's no one here. At least, no one alive. From what I'm looking at, whatever did this isn't human."

"Affirmative," answered Aiko. "See if you can recover any data or logs that can help. If it isn't human, we need to know what it is."

An image of the ship's deck plans came to life on her faceplate, showing Aiko that the mess hall was a short way straight ahead. That would be a good place to start a methodical search of the ring. They quickly reached the door, which fortunately had not been locked down. Aiko took a deep breathe before she hit the sensor button. "On your toes, people. This could get messy."

The door slid open and the horror continued. The mess hall was a slaughter house. Dozens of dead crew slumped dead among spilled trays of blood-soaked food. However, something else moved in here. The things that had done this were not yet gone.

The rookies both spun around, weapons tracking a sound not unlike fingernails on an old-style chalk board, along with an eerie buzz. Jenny saw it first and, to her credit, her jitters did not return. Diaphanous wings and segmented limbs made it seem like an insect, but the hard, spiky, wine-colored shell spoke of a crustacean. However, a budding mess covered what should be the thing's head, furry and cancerous like a fungus, though protruding in places like cilia. Each of the segmented legs ended in prehensile claws, with razor-sharp tips. It rubbed these claws together, which – if intel was accurate – was a sure sign of aggression. Holding back for a moment, it seemed to twist as it assessed the team, while its wings whirled into motion, producing a buzzing that began to sound like a voice...

Jenny didn't wait. She raised up her rifle and opened fire on the thing. As she pulled the trigger, it leaped into the air, claws bearing down on her. But it wasn't fast enough, and a hail of bullets ripped through the thing's steaming innards. It slammed into the floor, rolled and nearly knocked Rashim over. It slammed into a nearby wall, a flailing mass of unsettling alien limbs.

With barely a pause, more clicking from behind them let Aiko know this creature wasn't, as she suspected, alone. Bad move. They'd been lured into a trap.

"Back to the elevator," she shouted, though the rookies were already on their way. At least until they realized that they were surrounded, that more of the creatures were pouring out of the elevator shaft in front of them. Turning, Aiko heard the buzzing of more wings from the mess hall. There was no way out.

Even as she raised her rifle to fire, she issued John one final order.

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John heard the gunfire over the radio as Aiko ordered him to evacuate. He and Marco each grabbed a couple memory cubes and dropped back down through the hatch. As they ran, John imagined that he could hear Aiko fighting for her life through the hull of the ship. Fighting the urge to run to save her, John led the retreat back to the Squire's Penance. As they boarded, he tried to raise Aiko on the hope they had somehow managed to escape, but all he heard was static – and the shrill sound of claws scraping on metal. Gritting his teeth, he sealed the airlock and the Knight's Errant pushed off.

Drifting away, John locked the ship's weapons onto the hulk's drive section. Aiko had said only one thing besides her order to evacuate – Mi-Go. Insect-like aliens of which he'd only seen pictures. "Where did they come from?" he muttered.

"What?" asked Marco.

John shook his head. "Nothing."

The pair paused in silence for a moment, the only sound the targeting computer confirming the weapons lock. John waited as long as he dared, his finger hovering over the fire button, hoping for something to come through the radio. Nothing came.

Explosions tore across the hull of the massive mining ship as rail gun rounds and guided missiles ripped it apart, detonating the drive core. John watched through a film of tears, quietly praying for his fallen friends. However, something new blossomed in his heart, growing in the void where Aiko used to be. Something that would carry him through, something that would bring meaning to these deaths.

Vengeance.

History – Then Until Now

A Dying World (2010 – 2019)

Many people saw the beginning of the 21st Century as the final chapter in mankind's relentless march toward self-destruction. Intense social, economic, and political pressures wore heavily on the fabric of international relations. By 2010, the world had suffered the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. The United States, seen by many nations as the cause of this economic crash, began to decline in its position of global dominance. Regional wars, international terrorism, and the threat of emerging nuclear powers further exacerbated economic strain and political tensions that led to the growing belief that the United States was no longer the global superpower of yesterday.



Growing public attitudes toward isolation caused nations to begin looking toward their own self-interests, thus causing a general withdrawal from international relations. 2013 saw the end of a feeble United Nations, as country after country withdrew membership. Rising tensions around federal deficit, government control, and social issues polarized the American population so severely that forward progress ceased. The United States collapsed in 2014 leaving individual States to deal with civil riots, starvation, and an overall system breakdown. China's rapid rise into the world of capitalism eventually imploded due to a weak economic infrastructure and the sudden loss of one of its largest export markets – the United States. The European Union, already strained economically and, fearing the same kind of chaos as experienced in America, dissolved itself. Nothing seemed to be able to stop this global downward spiral. The possibility of war loomed ever closer on the horizon.

War finally erupted in the Middle East in 2015, sparked by a conflict between Israel and Iran. European nations and a handful of Arab allies attempted to aid Israel. However, many other Arab nations flocked to Iran's banner. Russia, seeing this as an opportunity to establish dominance over the weakened West, quickly threw in with Iran and launched an attack on Eastern Europe. Some American combat units still stationed in Europe joined to fight the war, but the United States itself could no longer be counted on as an ally. China, seeing an opportunity for territorial growth and a chance to resolve the Taiwan dilemma once and for all, launched an attack on the small island nation, the Korean Peninsula, and parts of Southeast Asia. The remainder of US forces in the Philippines joined forces with Australia and Japan to oppose these actions. Thus, a new global war erupted.

The fighting raged for three years and the brutal devastation unleashed against the civilian population dwarfed anything ever seen before. The possibility of total nuclear holocaust seemed to creep ever near-

er, as failing Western powers began to look at their last military options. Millions of people worldwide prayed desperately for salvation. Then the inevitable finally happened – the first and only nuclear detonation of the war exploded in 2018. Radical Islamic terrorists, still bent on carrying out their Jihad against a crippled United States, manage to load a crude atomic bomb on a cargo ship headed for Los Angeles. Something went terribly wrong, however, when the bomb detonated prematurely while the ship was in layover at the Malaysian port of Port Klang. Over a million Malaysian Muslims died within minutes that day, while many more died later from the painfully slow decay of radiation poisoning.

The resulting dramatic shock that rippled around the world caused an immediate ceasefire among warring parties. The point of view of nations suddenly shifted. The possibility of a world teetering on the brink of death became all too real. Many historians would later regard the sacrifice of Port Klang as the one event that saved the human race from extinction. Religious radicalism and old hatreds seemed to wane in light of a new urgency to find common ground. In 2019, the Treaty of Jerusalem was signed, officially ending the war and ushering in a new age for mankind.

A New Age Begins (2020 - 2030)

The time for war had ended by 2020 and the time for rebuilding had begun. It was the common belief that humanity had passed its final test and that the march toward armageddon had ceased. Consumerism gave way to contribution, selfishness gave way to generosity, and distrust gave way to acceptance. It was a time when education, not social standing, elevated men to greater things. The nations of the world pulled together in a new spirit of cooperation. Canadians flocked to the United States to bring aid and hope. Russian emergency relief flooded into cities that had only recently been targeted by missiles. Israel found a new peace with Arab nations. The strength of Chinese industry set to work to rebuild much of America's damaged infrastructure. A giant global network emerged to manage the distribution of food and supplies to those areas that had been devastated by war.

Reconstruction was well underway by 2022. Leaders of the world considered ways to avoid slipping back into the old ways of distrust and international conflict. They devised a plan to create a new global

organization with a strengthened authority to govern the affairs of individual states. This new organization was to be designed on the principles of the old United Nations, but with greater legislative and executive power. The Unified World Council was born in 2028, after years of considerations, proposals, and debates.

In the meantime, world religious institutions came together in partnership after the Muslim Reformation of 2026. The First Council of Jerusalem created a common body where individual religious institutions could work together in the spirit of mutual cooperation and sharing. This new Unified Ministry of God suddenly made the promise of a new spiritual enlightenment all the more real.

International cooperation had reached new levels in terms of industry and trade, yet overall economic recovery still varied from country to country. One of the first tasks taken on by the Unified World Council was to devise a way to provide for fair distribution of goods and services and manage international trade over a solid financial system. Global banking had to be regulated with a new reserve currency. The Commonwealth Treasury was established by the United World Council in 2029 to issue and manage such a currency. The resulting Commonwealth Credit



would quickly evolve into the standard currency for all trade.

The darker aspects of human nature could never truly be eliminated. However, for the time being, the nations of world were allowed to enjoy a universal level of peace, harmony, stability, and prosperity that had not been experienced since the times of ancient Greece. The values of learning, philosophy, and industry propelled civilizations forward at an amazing rate. By 2030, it was a New Golden Age.

A Promising Frontier (2031 - 2062)

With this new age came an increased focus toward conservation, clean energy, and the rebuilding of infrastructures. The wholesale stripping of the planet's natural resources was no longer to be tolerated. Some industries expanded toward advancements in renewable energy and other technological achievements, while others began to look toward space as a new frontier filled with infinite promise. It was in 2032 that a private company known as the Venture Corporation first launched its own Moon mission, which is credited for sparking the New Space Race – one waged not by nations, but by private corporations. A half dozen major international business conglomerates soon began launching their own plans for expansions into space. Everyone knew that the earliest opportunities to stake territorial claims would ultimately yield the greatest potential for massive profits.

Humans began to venture off-world in large numbers. 2042 saw the establishment of Tranquility as a holiday destination spot for the rich. Manned scouting missions swept into the solar system to seek out new opportunities and mark territories for their parent companies. The abundant availability of ore deposits, natural resources, and the promise of growing wealth spurred more businesses to expand toward other planets. A kind of frenzy arose by 2053, similar to that of the 1800s Gold Rush in America. Waves of corporate scouting and colonization spacecraft trekked in search of new wealth and opportunity.

The impact of this rapid expansion was certainly felt back on Earth. National governments that had previously focused on post-war rebuilding and societal affairs were stunned by this new wave of frontierism. After all, no existing law accounted for possible tax revenue gained in space trade. Individual nations hungered for a cut of the pie and

soon banded together to join in on the space boom. Key members of the Unified World Council found themselves concerned at the chaos that might ensue over unregulated territorial rights. Thus, the UWC established the Pendleton Act of 2062, to partner private industry with national government patronage. This act allowed for the regulation of taxes and it established UWC authority to grant official territorial ownership to individual colonies. A new phase of Unified World Council influence had evolved beyond the boundaries of Earth.

A System Conquered (2063 - 2100)

The Alliance of American States, once the territories of the United States and Canada, recognized the need to provide a reliable communications network in space. After all, the establishment of a reliable interplanetary communications network would certainly present a new and profitable business opportunity. Project Caduceus was launched in partnership with private industry to provide an expandable orbital satellite communications relay system. The initial phase of the Caduceus Network went live in 2063, causing a sense of unity among worlds for the first time in history. It was designed to support voice and data communications as well as to provide navigational beacons to assist in major interplanetary transit routes.

The Caduceus Network may have created the connection among colonies, but it wouldn't be until 2080 that large-scale interplanetary trade would weave the individual worlds into a strong interdependent system. In that year, the transit drive was developed. The resulting impact of this new opportunity for rapid space travel suddenly drove a skyrocketing level of trade similar in effect to America's first transcontinental railroads. Free trade ran rampant by 2086 and a new commercial boom infected the solar system.

2087 saw the creation of the first non-Earth sovereign nation, when the Republic of Saturn declared independence from its founding sponsors. Now Unified World Council representation consisted of off-worlders for the first time since its inception. The hand of mankind had finally touched every world by 2100, as the time of frontierism was coming to an end. New colonial identities and a sense of individual rights started to germinate among some off-worlders. Civilization had not known war for almost 80 years. The stories of Earth's wars seemed like fic-

tional tales to the new generations born in space. The solar system was conquered and colonists felt less a part of their mother planet than ever before.

A Shadow Descending (2101 – 2159 "Present")

The New Golden Age of Humanity had stood for 80 years by the turn of the century. The brilliant achievements of civilization had reached farther and faster than ever before, yet it was hard for some not to notice cracks emerging in the foundation of this new society. Though the Unified Ministry of God was intended as a common meeting point among world religions, by 2101 it had taken on a religious identity of its own – one that combined elements of Judaism, Christianity, and Reformist Islam. Global religious intolerance had finally declined, but so had spiritual passion and the moral compass that it provided. The global church had become stale and routine.

With advancements in business and technology came great wealth. Increased trade and expansion seemed to benefit everyone, except the working class. A rift formed again between those who had and those who had not. With deregulation of industry and the breakdown of a common moral compass, wealth began to flow to the select few. While the rich spent fortunes on extravagant excess, the working class fell farther and farther behind. Global and national government bureaucracy made the enactment of civil laws to protect the working class difficult to achieve. Jonathan Wade, a professor at Cassini University, wrote in his 2108 thesis that "the disillusionment that was driving the lower class to emigrate from mother Earth... could erupt like a powder keg in the cynicism that faced man's new Utopia."

Wade might have been right. The unhappy sentiment generated by the working class had permeated throughout the colonies. Mixed with the general sense of separation felt by many of the space-born, a new attitude of independent liberty began to circulate throughout the solar system. While most still believed in the guidance of the UWC, many began to see Earth's hand as manipulative if not vaguely tyrannical. A spirit of defiance arose. By 2116 that defiance had evolved into open piracy and illegal smuggling. Rampant pirate activity along the outer ridges of the solar system was blamed for the disappearances of several research and scouting missions that had been launched in 2124, though never proven. The once safe transit routes of trade were now becoming predatory hunting grounds.

Meanwhile further tensions arose on Earth. Those nations who could not participate in the space market grew increasingly resentful of those that could. African and South American nations began to fuel a sense of solidarity with the working class of the Americas, Europe, and Asia. 2132 saw the eruption of global strikes, defying openly the will of the Unified World Council. Some nations, such as China and Russia, took hard action against the insurgents. Others, such as the Alliance of American States, sought reconciliation and compromise. As the Unified World Council worked feverishly to stem the tide of resentment and unrest on Earth, so did it begin to lose touch with the social movements of the Outer Worlds. The rift between earth and its colonial children had begun to widen.

A line was drawn among nations with some championing the status quo and some standing for the rights and liberties of all men. By 2140 the conflicts, riots, and skirmishes on Earth had turned into a struggle of differing ideologies – the balance between centralized control and individual freedom. Even the Martian Riots of 2142 seemed to reflect mankind's general distaste at creating a universal world order. The "Manifesto of Independent Colonies" began to circulate in 2145 citing human rights violations and lack of commitment by the Unified World Council to protect the interests of the Outer Worlds. It called for a general banding of Neptune, Uranus, and Jupiter under the banner of the Republic of Saturn. However, the Saturnine government refused to acknowledge the Manifesto's call, choosing instead to honor its agreement with the Unified World Council to remain a neutral party, causing relations with the Outer Worlds further strain.

Today the Unified World Council struggles to maintain a sense of unity and universal justice among the nations of Earth and the colonies of the solar system. Meanwhile, the colonies themselves seem to drift further away from the social and political roots of their home world. Piracy remains a constant interplanetary threat, even within the shadow of an increased naval presence. Rising taxes eat into profitability and many merchants now turn to shadier, but cheaper freelance traders to sustain their business. Violent crime statistics continue to climb and rumors of darker things whisper from the shadows. Many wonder if the New Golden Age of Humanity has finally come to an end.

Colonizing the Solar System

The Early Days

Since the earliest people walked the Earth, they looked up at the dark sky wondering what it was that lay so far out of reach. Mankind continued this fascination with the stars from that early period through to the present. As humanity's understanding of the stars improved, this interest has only intensified. The realization that Earth was not the center of the universe, but just one of a number of planets rotating around the sun, spawned stories of other civilizations, vast treasures, and anything else one could imagine. With the ever-present fascination and wonder, many have been at a loss to explain why it actually took so long to finally take that leap and move out into the solar system – even after the technological base was created to make it happen.

In the early days of space exploration, nearly all the efforts were undertaken by various governments across the globe. It was a natural fit initially, as the costs involved were so extreme that only a governmental entity could justify the expenditures. In addition, it was these same governments who could

benefit the most in the early efforts. Communication and spy satellites were the lion's share of man-made objects placed in orbit. In some cases, even weapons were placed above humanity's heads, though generally kept highly classified by the governments.

Corporate concerns soon began to understand the potential benefits of entering space industries. The initial entrance by corporations into space was limited to satellites that they paid the relevant government entity to place into orbit. In time, private and public corporations overtook governmental efforts, shifting the costs of research away from the public and into more private efforts.

Escaping the Bonds of Mother Earth

After the former United States stood on the moon in 1969, many believed it would be the beginning of what would become vast colonies beyond the atmosphere of Earth. However, the opposite was actually true. While the United States continued on with several moon landings in the decade that followed, it would be nearly 70 years before humanity really began to make true strides in conquering the solar system. After the last Apollo mission, the moon would not feel the touch of human feet again until 2032 and it would not be a government or country who would do so, but the Venture Corporation.

The first colony, Tranquility, was established on the moon in 2042. It was a cooperative effort of four corporations, with Venture Corp the senior partner. The colony served several functions. Outwardly it was a destination for the super-rich for a literal out-of-this-world vacation. However, it also became a hub for the four companies for their next big initiative – the asteroid belt. In time, the four corporations merged into one large company that is still one of the most successful corporations in the solar system – 4G Enterprises.

For years, Venture and their partners sank deep into the red and many believed their efforts would drive them into bankruptcy. However, in 2053 the first Venture-flagged mining vessel returned from its maiden voyage to the asteroid belt and brought with it a cargo hold filled with proof that Venture Corp was right.



The Sky isn't the Limit

Many liken the initial rush into space to be similar to the Gold Rush of the 1800's in the old state of California. When Venture, now known as 4G Enterprises, turned decades of bleeding red ink into massive profits overnight, dozens of other firms and individuals who had the resources rushed to play catch up. This explosion into space was initially limited to efforts centered around the Moon and asteroid belt. However, it was obvious to all that those who were willing to take the risks to push this boundary further and further out were the ones most likely to be able to cash in on the discoveries that were made. While the newly christened 4G Enterprises had a leg up, they had to fight to keep it.

As humanity forged deeper and deeper into the solar system, new industries were created to support them. Heavy Hull Inc. and Quantum Propulsion are two that are still strong today. Heavy Hull is considered by many to be the first true spaceship architectural and construction firm. The costs of designing a spacecraft are huge and most corporations, even those as successful as 4G Enterprises, simply cannot shoulder those costs easily. Heavy Hull, however, found that by marketing their craft to everyone, both corporations and national governments, they were able to offset the costs with bulk orders. Transit drives were first introduced under the banner of Quantum Propulsion and overnight trips that used to take six months to make now only required three.

The Solar System Today

Today humankind can be found in nearly every recess of the solar system. From Mercury to the Kuiper Belt, humans have spread wherever resources are, or in some cases, scientific knowledge can be found. The one notable exception is the dwarf planet Pluto. Thus far, every effort to even establish a presence in orbit around Pluto has met with disaster, and its peculiar activities in the last two decades has led to a ban against any further efforts to exploit either it or any of its three moons.

While various corporations and private concerns make up the lion's share of those who operate within the solar system, the Unified World Council has gone to great lengths to ensure they have at least

a modicum of representation. In some places, such as Neptune, this is limited to a liaison/ambassador who tries to keep the UWC's interests represented. Closer to Earth, this presence can be felt more heavily, with the military working to keep trade lanes safe and to keep aggression between rival corporations to an acceptable level.

Life across the solar system varies in levels of danger and comfort. The colonies of Mars and Venus offer colonists relative luxury with most, if not all, of the amenities one would get living on Earth itself. On the other hand, life further out gets progressively less grand, more spartan, and more dangerous. All the way out in the Kuiper Belt, the type of people you find are hardy and self-reliant. While there are large space stations where they can relax in relative comfort, these people spend most of their time isolated, performing dangerous work. Accidents are not uncommon and help is often too far out to be useful. However, it is also where a person has the greatest chance of making a mark on the universe, which is why those who brave these regions are so willing to risk it all.



The Chthonian Star

Humanity has always believed that we are the most important thing in the universe. That sort of attitude is evidence that we are a young species, that we haven't been down from the trees long enough to look up at the night sky and realize that there is more in time and space than we can ever understand.

Human beings are, for the most part, split into two camps. One camp believes that there was an all-powerful deity who created the universe and placed human beings as the most important creature in it. The other believes that human beings are the first evolution of life on this planet to achieve sentience, the first to rise up out of the dirt to question why. The problem with either of these views is that they are both humanocentric (or egocentric), making human beings somehow special and important.

The truth is, we are not special or important. We are an accident of life that has infested this solar system while its true masters have been away. Those seekers of lost knowledge have always pointed to it, to the fact that we were neither created by a benevolent god nor the first species to evolve here. And something is coming to test our place in the universe, to see if humanity actually has a right to exist at all.

Those with a thirst for the unknown were the first to notice, scientists who looked far beyond the edge of the solar system. Something is coming. It is a celestial body of unknown origin and composition, perhaps an asteroid or a rogue chunk of dark matter. It was first discovered only a few years ago and dubbed Fong's Body, but occultists know it by another name – the Chthonian Star.

The Chthonian Star is moving at an amazing speed, in a trajectory that will take it directly past the edge of our solar system. Scientists theorize that it will arrive in perhaps a decade. The authorities breathed a sigh of relief when they discovered the body wouldn't come close enough to directly affect any of the colonies, much less crash into one of them. Study of the celestial body continued, though attempting to gain valuable data from such a distance was extremely difficult. However, the team studying it lucked out, stumbling across a band showing that the Chthonian Star was emanating an unknown kind of energy. Furthermore, this energy was so powerful that it ra-

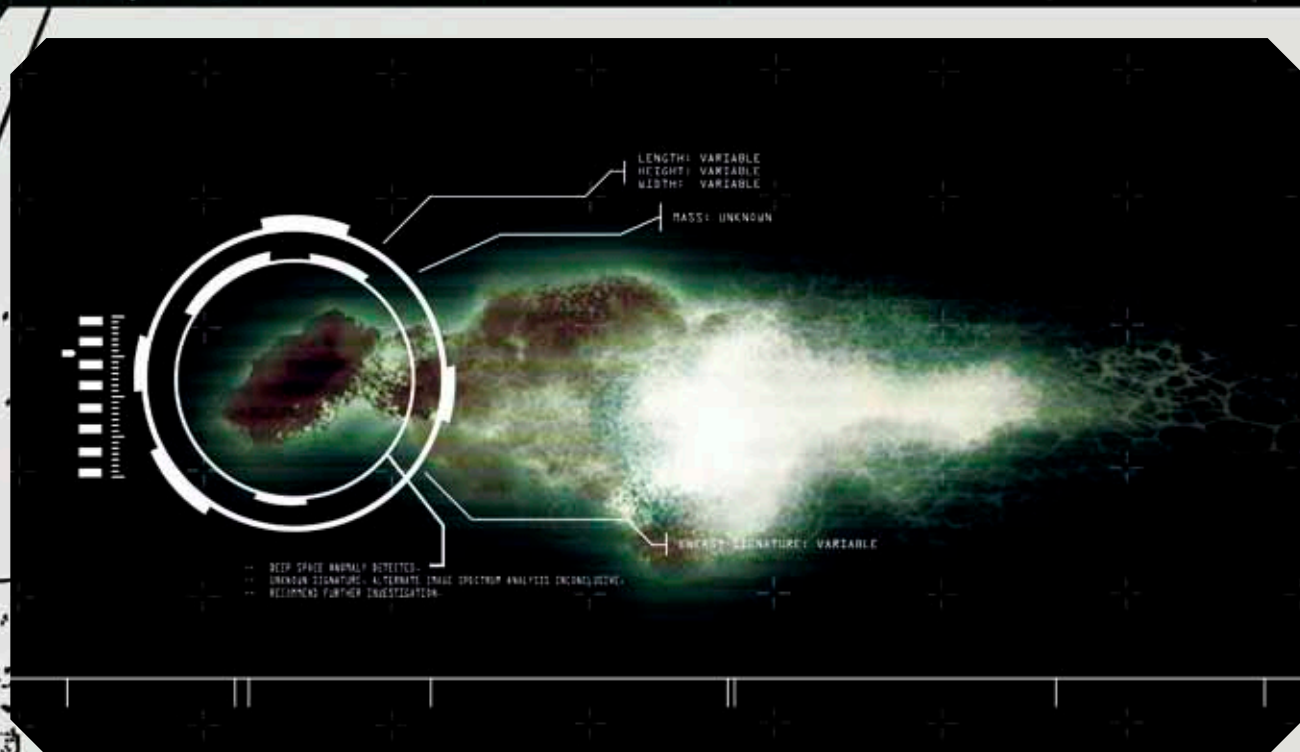
diated light years out from the celestial body – so far that this unknown energy has been affecting the solar system for the last several decades. While the Chthonian Star may not arrive for a decade, its full power will be felt within the next several years.

The authorities began to look at the period when the energies of the celestial body first began to affect the solar system. They did not like what they found. Occurrences that could only be classified as the supernatural, the kind of things governments covered up, had increased dramatically during that period. Dangerous cults, horrific things that defied explanation and more, had been on the rise. It seemed obvious the reason why.

It was then the government began to look outside the box for answers. For the first time in history, the powers that be began to consult with learned scholars of the hidden, those who had made the mystical world of the occult their own. Ancient books were consulted and new archaeological digs were financed to bring lost things to light. Their explorations all pointed to one thing – the Chthonian Star had been here before and it may very well be a source of power for frightening beings with no love for humanity.

While they searched for a solution, the Unified World Council needed agents who could keep this problem in hand. Combining occult knowledge with intense government training, the UWC Wardens were formed. They are charged with keeping things quiet and cleaning up the first harbingers of the Chthonian Star in the solar system as best they can. Though quiet and secretive, they are currently the single most important government agency in the solar system.

Very few know the Chthonian Star even exists, mostly the top levels of governments across the Earth. The public most certainly has no idea the peril that is coming and the powers that be are working very hard to keep all of this a secret. However, absolute information control in a digital age is impossible. The existence of both the Star and of the horrific creatures coming back out into the light have leaked their way onto the internet, and there are many conspiracy buffs who are talking about some version of the truth. Fortunately, they are prone to wild speculation, making their stories seem ridiculous.



The reactions from world leaders have varied and just what to do about the Chthonian Star is the topic of heated debate. The European Federation wants it destroyed and is in favor of sending powerful nuclear warheads to blow it up the minute it is within range. The Sino-China Union wants to find a way to harness the mysterious energy of the Star for its own purposes. The Alliance of American States wants to rip open the annals of occult history and embrace the changes, hoping to enslave all the unnatural creatures that are coming into existence to remain at what they see as the top of the food chain. However, all such positions are simply conversation, as none of these powers is in the position to truly execute on such plans.

So far, the European Federation's position has met with many allies on all sides. They favor approving a budget now, so the Unified World Council can build an expeditionary force that is capable of flying out to meet the Star, in order to get explosives to it before it comes too much closer. Such a force would have to leave very soon in order to reach the Chthonian Star before it is too late and the slow-moving world of politics so far does not look like it is up to the challenge. There are many who caution against messing with such a wild card. After all, who knows if the Star is even vulnerable to explosives – or worse yet, is somehow made of explosive material or powered by such energy. It isn't much of a stretch to think that we could very easily make matters worse, but now is a time of desperation.

The effects of the Chthonians Star are being felt more and more each day. 30 years ago, when the Star's energy first reached our solar system, the effects were minor in effect. The first wheels began to turn and the dark creatures of the occult began to truly come out into the world. However, that was then. Growing steadily stronger, there are more unwholesome horrors at play than ever before, to a point where the Unified World Council is beginning to worry whether or not they can properly censor related news stories. The solar system itself seems to be changing as well. The extra-terrestrial fish under the surface of Europa are behaving very strangely. Things move in the storms of Neptune, their alien songs drifting on the raging winds. Pockets of Calisto are changing, as if the moon were beginning to terraform itself...

There are those experts who believe that, if things keep progressing at the exponential rate they currently are, the solar system may soon be unrecognizable to us.

Perhaps the biggest question on the minds of the collected powers that be is one that is almost unthinkable to comprehend. What will we do if the Chthonian Star arrives unhindered and there is absolutely nothing we can do about the horrors and the changes it continues to unleash?

That's a very good question indeed.

Politics & The UWC

Unified World Council

The Unified World Council is separated from national governments by a universally agreed upon division of political power. While individual nations continue to focus on internal concerns, such as infrastructure, education, taxation, law enforcement, and other local issues, the Unified World Council concentrates on global concerns such as a monetary policy, trade regulation, colonial policy, international dispute reconciliation, and global security. Whereas individual nations are free to operate within the government structure of choice, the Unified World Council itself is constituted under the concept of a Federal Parliamentary Republic. The advantage is that all nations, despite their size or strength, get to have a fair and equal voice on the global stage.

The arrangement of Legislative Houses is such that, like other bicameral systems, one House provides stability and a kind of check and balance over the other. The upper House is known as the State Council. It is to here that national governments appoint their representation. By comparison, the Unified Assembly embodies the lower House, and its Council Representatives are chosen in a general election through an Electoral College system. Thus, the general population can directly select their representation for the highest legislative body on Earth.

The Chancellor of the Unified World Council exercises supreme executive power. This Chancellor is selected by the ruling party of the Unified Assembly and serves a term equal to that of the Assembly's election cycle, namely four years. Once elected, the Chancellor appoints his own Cabinet Ministers to execute the policies of his administration. Two Ministries of note are the Ministries of Defense and Security. The Unified World Council's standing military force, held in reserve to support nations in the case of an unsanctioned attack, falls under the administration of the Ministry of Defense. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Security is responsible for the direction of intelligence and security efforts, as well as the Warden organization. Chancellor Nikolai Alekseev, who is in turn supported by Defense Minister Helmut Wagner and Security Minister Stacy Johansson, heads the current administration. This regime has seen a marked increase in budget for the Ministry of Security, most especially for the UWC Wardens.

Funding for the Unified World Council is accomplished by an international taxation system. Each individual country is responsible for contributing to global government at a tax level defined by that country's annual Net National Income. Therefore, as a nation's wealth increases, so does its fiscal obligation to the Unified World Council. Some see this as a just and fair system that minimizes the financial impact to poorer countries, yet there are those who fear that greater input into Unified World Council coffers could also mean greater political influence in the legislative arena.

Political Parties

The modern political landscape is somewhat different than that of the previous age. Certainly the inclusion of a global governing body existing in concert with the wide array of varying national systems has added a new level of complexity. National parties continue to wrestle for political control within the halls of their respective governments. However, the existence of a trans-national political arena has given rise to a new layer of politics. Global political parties now exist, with support from various national parties. For example, the British Labor Party, the German Free Democratic Party, and the Alliance of American States Democratic Party all back the global Democratic Coalition Party with funding and resources. Though some national parties maintain unbreakable ties with their favored global party, others can be quite fickle. Trying to maintain a strong support base for a global political party can be a dramatic challenge in and of itself.

The Democratic Coalition is certainly one of the larger political parties of the Unified World Council. Democratic Coalitionists often stand center-left in their point of view and favor a broad spectrum of liberal ideas – especially those that favor labor, unions, and minorities. To them, the health and well-being of all human citizens is a global responsibility. Their measures seek to strengthen Unified World Council laws that standardize certain rights and benefits within individual nations. On the other hand, the Federal Conservative Party takes a bit more of a right-wing view. They see the Unified World Council as a finite tool to foster international cooperation, but that the rights of self-government for the individual nation still stand as paramount. They oppose

measures that grow the Unified World Council outside the boundaries of its original conception.

Other smaller parties exist as well, often swaying support between the two larger parties as leverage for their own agendas. The Unification party, for instance, seeks the abolishment of national governments. The World Labor party focuses squarely on labor unions and the rights of workers. The Colonial Independence League tries to limit the Unified World Council's influence on other planetary settlements, arguing such governance bears too much weight on Earth's ability to effectively govern itself.

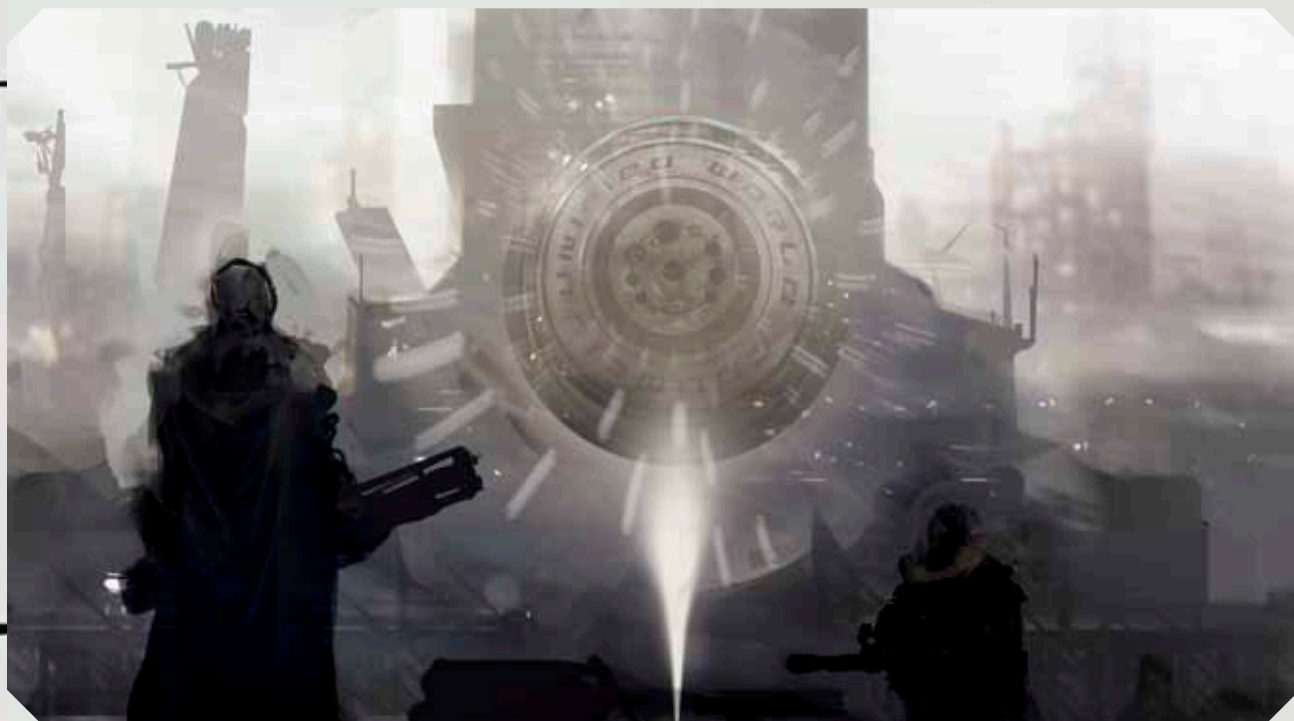
Hot Topics of Debate

Pirate attacks on interplanetary trade have become an increasingly difficult issue. The UWC has increased the naval presence among many of the higher trafficked trade routes, but results have been limited. In addition, this military build-up has created a much greater strain on the defense budget. Several politicians on Earth are calling for greater financial support from the colonies in the form of higher taxes. This, of course, has outraged many citizens of the other worlds and has further served to create a greater rift between Earth and its colonies. Even those largely dependent upon resources from the UWC to survive are beginning to take umbrage, feel-

ing that the significant population of Earth should help out the few who have braved the void.

Social issues, such as standardized health care, educational policies, and environmental issues, have become increasingly present within the halls of the UWC. Some nations see others as lacking, especially among the poorer nations of the world. Arguments have arisen around pressures to meet these standards and the possibility of adding additional taxes to wealthier countries to assist in this effort. This proposal has not landed well with richer countries.

The age-old debate about freedom of religion has once again reared its head. A strange new breed of religion seems to be causing strains in this spiritual détente provided by the Unified Ministry of God. Many disillusioned people, especially in poor countries, have begun to cast off the tenants of traditional religion to embrace teachings of a different sort. The grass-roots rise of what some refer to as cults has caused certain legislators within the Unified World Council to seek a remedy to what they see as a threat. The idea of state-sponsored religion would give legality to established churches, but ban under law the spread of these new cultist groups. Of course, such proposals have also caused heated debate from those who prefer to champion the individual religious rights.



Business in the New Era

With the creation of the Unified World Council after the economic and political collapse of the 2010's, one of its first orders of business was to establish a strong financial plan that would allow for the rebuilding of the ailing world economy. It created a global banking system with a single world currency. The Commonwealth Credit became the only acceptable form of legal tender. Then, a series of wide-ranging social service programs were introduced to improve the quality of life of regular citizens. The UWC was careful to slowly introduce these programs, so as to not overburden the already financially drained nations of the world with new programs for which they had no money.

Resistance to UWC plans for a global economy ranged from countries that simply didn't have the capital to enact the new requirements to larger nations that were still too stubborn to change their ways for the betterment of all mankind. To solve this issue, the UWC turned to businesses instead of politicians. Both large and small businesses were given large incentives to follow the guidelines presented. Fair pay, health benefits, and other business-related programs allowed the UWC to step into the private sector, and it gave them great influence over the financial sector as well. From that position of power, they were able to bend political will to support not only adopting the proposals of the UWC in their own countries, but also to extend the aid necessary to get those programs started in nations less fortunate than their own.

It has been written in subsequent years that the UWC strong-armed its ideals onto the nations of the world. This is something that the UWC will not deny. *"The world is falling apart and we must make a stand or humanity is lost. We must not, we will not fail, them!"* This was the statement made by Chancellor Andrew Fleming to the general assembly, as the Council met to begin talks on how to build up the foundation for a true united Earth. These words are now engraved above the entryway into the Council's main meeting hall.

The plan began to show results when it became obvious that the Unified World Council was able to keep the peace. Nations previously at war with each other, while never truly forgiving their rivals, could

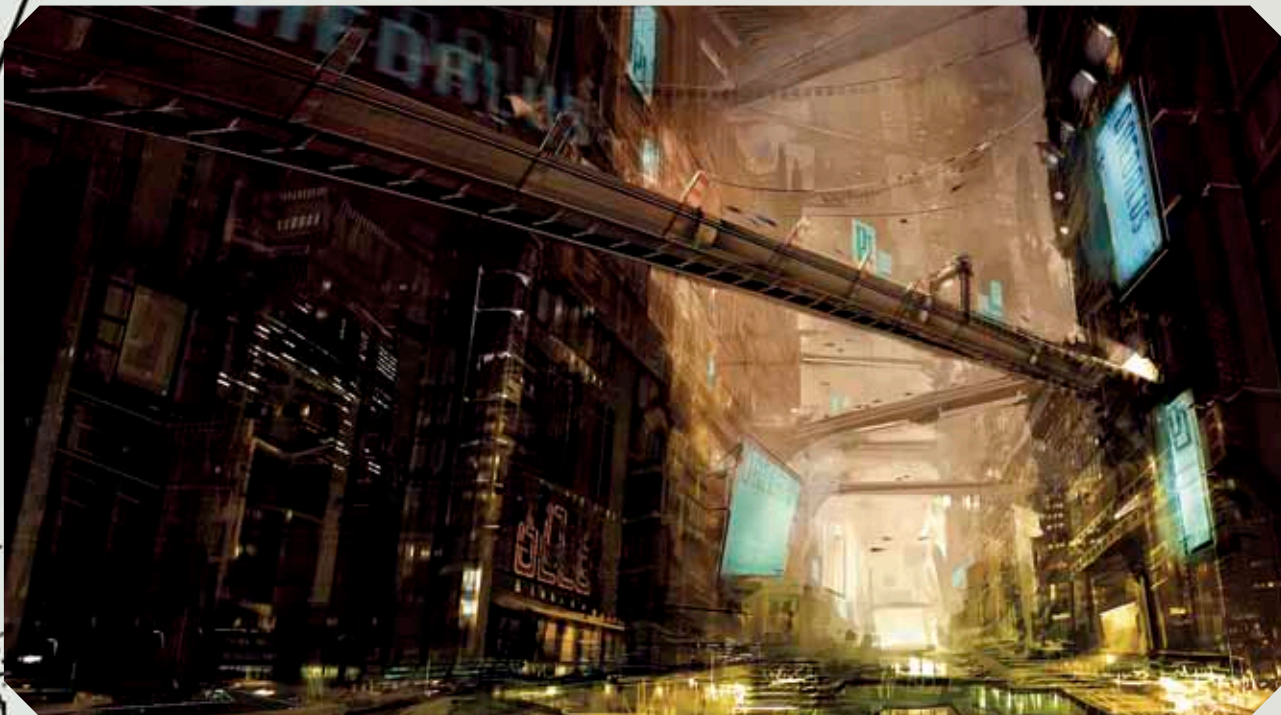
see that there would never be a return of the saberrattling and terrorist attacks of the past. The UWC was fast, and at times brutal, with reprisals for attacks of any kind. In many regions of the world, the Council established police states where there was no local controlling government present. Soon attacks ceased altogether. With peace maintained by the Council, businesses were free to explore new areas of opportunity that were never dreamed of before, with exciting new revenue streams.

While the large corporations had the capital to take advantage of these new frontiers, it was the small to medium-sized businesses that were able to flourish the most during these early stages. Being smaller, they were more agile and were able to modify their business models more easily than the larger companies. This was an attractive feature for nations that previously had little or no outside commerce. Of course, the larger companies were able to make their own kind of fortunes as well, because they were able to do things on a larger scale.

As the decades passed, the outlook of business looked better and better. With the creation of a permanent settlement on Mars, and colonies being created on many of the planets and moons of the solar system, opportunities appeared to be endless. Shipping to these far-flung outposts required not only the ships to make the journey, but the technology to make that trip safe and affordable. While there is a diverse group of businesses and corporations from all sectors that support these efforts, there are companies that arose to stand at the forefront of industry.

Thorn Pharmaceuticals

Gabriel Thorn, original founder of Thorn Pharmaceuticals, is the inventor of the muscle and bone enhancer that allowed for humans to exist in less-than-Earth gravity without suffering from deterioration. Thorn Pharmaceuticals has made a fortune selling just this one drug. The drug must be modified for each environment the user is living in, so unique dosages are created for each colony, and users of this drug must also continue to take it for as long as they live in environments less than 1G. Interestingly, all production of the drug is done on Earth in a single high security lab.



AQX

When the term mega-corp is thrown around, it is AQX that comes to mind. AQX has existed since the time of the formation of the Unified World Council, formed out of a weapons manufacturing company, Anderson Munitions. With the cessation of hostilities, Anderson Munitions was quietly shut down – the munitions division was repurposed for construction machinery fabrication. The company was re-branded AQX. Years of diversification later, if you ask what the company does, it's easier to say what it doesn't do. In fact, it has just reopened its munitions division – under contract from the Council that forced its closure in the first place.

Wesley Corp.

Founded back in the late 1800's, this British company was first involved in shipping and created quite a financial empire in that business. Kept as a private company throughout the years, the Wesley family has amassed an immense fortune, while developing some strange quirks along the way. The family head of each generation uses his money to educate and provide for all the comforts his children require to be successful and comfortable. Once all the children come of age, each of them is given a position in the Wesley Corp. Their ability is tested and evaluated by the head of the family and one young Wesley, male or female, is chosen to lead the company in the next generation. The other children are well cared for, but they are never allowed to have any dealing with the family business from then on. One of Wesley Corp's

largest current business ventures is the mining operation in orbit around Uranus.

Svobodová Aerospace Industries

A Slovakian company, SAI focuses on spaceship design and construction. Although not the only ship builder, SAI vessels are becoming the favored ships of the UWC fleet. Although the company maintains a minimal presence on Earth, its real base of operations is the orbital docks of the Moon. While ships currently require spinning sections to maintain gravity, Svobodová has hinted that they are close to a discovery that could change how space travel is done.

Recovery Earth

Originally started as a political organization meant to bring pressure on the governments of the world to stop environmental devastation, Recovery Earth was mandated by the UWC with the task of fixing the damage to Earth. The original leaders of Recovery Earth found that complaining about the problem and actually having to fix it were two different things. Most left the organization. Since its creation, Recovery has made great steps curbing pollution and monitoring industry. The company has also manufactured an enzyme to help with the breakdown of trash and waste dumps to a more useful material. It is from the production and sale of this enzyme, called Darsonix, that Recovery can fund itself without requiring a constant need for government money.

The UWC Wardens

Once the Unified World Council started to discover that there was more going on in the solar system than meets the eye, they discovered they needed someone to investigate and ultimately deal with such threats. There was no international agency, such as Interpol, that was in a position to be retooled to meet the current situation's needs, so the Unified World Council chose to create a new one that was fully suited for the task. This new agency was named simply the UWC Wardens.

The Wardens have been given three primary duties. First, they are charged with investigating all reports and manifestations of the unknown throughout the solar system. It is their job to find out what is going on for real, regardless of origin, and to gather the intelligence necessary to arm the UWC to marshal the forces of Earth to stop it once and for all. Second, it is their responsibility to eliminate unknown or occult threats to the people of the solar system. Wherever people are in danger, from whatever endangers them, it is the Wardens who must be there to save them. Their third, last, and perhaps the most distasteful duty, is to keep the unknown and occult a secret from the population at large. Wardens must censor and silence those who would expose the true happenings of the solar system to the masses, in an effort to prevent the widespread panic that would most assuredly occur should the truth be told. The only information that can be released to the people of the solar system is that approved by the Unified World Council – though that doesn't mean accurate reports don't leak out for short periods of time, before being forever deleted by Warden technicians.

Not just anyone can become a Warden. Training is intense, similar to that given to top-notch specialized federal police or intelligence agencies, such as the former United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Israel's Mossad, or the former Soviet Union's Committee for State Security (KGB). Application requires that a person be of sound mind, in decent physical shape, and have some form of college degree, formal technical training, or military service. Once a person has passed the rigid psychological screening and physical readiness tests, he begins an intense six month training program – about 60% of trainees wash out during this period. The trainees are given combat training and a basic knowledge of the occult and the inhuman enemies they must face,

along with a basic education in cults. In addition, they are heavily trained according to their specialty, as specialists are required for the situation at hand.

There are three primary specialties in which Warden field agents are trained – Enforcer, Investigator, and Researcher. Enforcers focus on combat, trained in many different kinds of weapons in order to most effectively eliminate resistance. Investigators are the detectives of the Wardens, focused on processing information and evidence in order to draw conclusions. They are also trained to extract useful information out of people. Researchers are the book worms, educated in the occult and other disciplines which allow them to draw conclusions and sift through data for that which is useful.

Wardens are typically sent out into the field in teams of three to six. A small team is composed of one of each specialty, while a larger team typically has three Enforcers, two Investigators, and one Researcher. In areas of severe danger, Researchers are often relegated to remote stations where they can do their job in relative safety, while the other, more combat capable agents deal with the immediate threats. However, teams are inherently interdependent, so the loss of one always threatens the whole.

To no surprise, Warden have quite an array of resources at their disposal. They are given their own spaceships as transport, which usually house a team, support crew, and shuttles, as well as mobile labs and arsenals. They are allowed to carry sidearms and even submachine guns in their everyday investigations, and usually have access to assault rifles, explosives, and combat armor. However, it is part of their duty to keep things quiet and hidden, so it is rare that Wardens appear with anything that isn't readily concealable – unless the situation is already dire.

Since Wardens are not a widely advertised governmental agency, they maintain quiet offices in all civilized corners of the solar system. Some of these offices aren't much more than basic research facilities, labs, armories, and holding centers, while others boast more robust facilities. They are typically received with some level of open arms by the colonies they visit and it is expected that the authorities in all parts of the solar system will cooperate, though this is not always the case. The solar system is a big place

and those far enough out don't always feel that the law strictly applies in their case. The Wardens, however, are afforded nearly absolute authority by Unified World Council charter, though they rarely have need to use it. In some cases, Wardens must also have the strength to enforce their authority, because some of the powers that be, far out there, won't afford them the respect and latitude they deserve.

The Wardens maintain a network of space stations throughout the solar system, from which they stage their operations. Warden Prime, also known as the Eye, sits above the Earth. A monolith in the sky, this labyrinthine structure is the primary headquarters of the Wardens. Many rumors exist regarding the goings on there – everything from vaults of horrible creatures to archives of forbidden and maddening lore to horrifying experiments that could not be performed under the watchful eye of any government. While it is the subject of much speculation, there are few that know the truth – all of these things, and more, are so. It is the madhouse that is the one beacon of hope between humanity and the things that stir under the influence of the Chthonian Star.

Beyond the Eye, Warden I, also known as the Umbrella, floats in orbit around Saturn to service the outer planets and protect the precious agriculture of Titan. It is of similar size to the Eye, but designed as

a gateway and emergency station for those missions going further out. However, given the way places like Callisto are changing, it is rapidly becoming retrofitted with advanced science technology for research and capture of specimens. To service the inner planets, Warden 2, unfortunately known as the Nugget, hovers in geosynchronous orbit above Mercury. It is a small station, hastily deployed to provide some kind of support to Mercury and Venus. The Lighthouse, more formally known as Warden 4, sits far out in the Kuiper Belt, exploring, watching, and listening for anything that might be at the edges of the solar system. Those who are stationed here are a resilient sort, as they must be to endure that kind of isolation. The Lighthouse has become one of the primary stations for monitoring the approaching Chthonian Star and resources are regularly shipped out to it in order to study that celestial body better.

Work as a Warden is perilous, to say the least. Wardens must travel from one side of the solar system to the other, while facing threats of which man was not meant to know. It can be a very dark job. They must undergo regular psychological screening, for the dangers they face readily erode one's grip on reality. Insanity is a price with which many agents must contend, and one many are resigned to as their eventual fate. That or death, for many a Warden has met an unspeakable and violent end.



A Day in the Life

Things certainly have been on an upswing for humanity, at least until the last couple of decades. We have developed technology that will take us out beyond our home planet, as well as that which allows us to live longer. The Unified World Council has brought a new age of peace and prosperity. However, the Golden Age of Humanity is showing its first real cracks.

Some of these cracks are felt by nearly every person in society. The growing rift between the working class and the elite is most certainly one of them. While the riots of the last two decades have pushed the issue forward, the middle-class is once again disappearing. The humanitarian issues pushed forward by the the Unified World Council gave many a taste of what being taken care of by the government was supposed to feel like. However, as has happened in nearly every era of human history, the wealth is consolidating in the hands of the few, while more and more people find themselves wage slaves.

If one lives somewhere besides the Earth, the growing resentment among the colonies is another

crack one might see regularly. Many of those that live beyond the confines of humanity's home believe that they should no longer be governed by that distant body. The increasing taxes levied so that trade routes can be better protected from piracy have only served to fuel this flame. All the riches of Earth and they have to try to milk more money out of people already living hard lives instead. This attitude is not necessarily pervasive, but there are many places in the solar system where one can find people who want the colonies to become self-governed.

Religious tensions are once again on the rise, as new ideologies enter the arena. The Unified Ministry of God has done an excellent job of keeping religious debates non-violent, but there are new radical sects that seem intent on going back to a time when religion equalled violence. These new sects are being branded cults by the Unified World Council and many governments are worried. The cults are odd in their worship and their gods are non-traditional, to say the least. Many have strange and unwholesome practices. While most countries of the Earth are intent on allowing religious freedom, there is much discussion on what to do with the cults.

Despite growing tensions in some parts of society, most people live decent lives at a base level never before seen. The reconstruction of the global economy and the influence of the Unified World Council has all but eliminated poverty. Though it is up to individual nations as to how they provide for their citizens, there have been many global initiatives that assure that almost everyone has a clean dwelling in good repair, access to healthy food and clean water, and access to a profession that will provide for their needs. Most people find their basic needs met, even in countries with totalitarian regimes.

People also live in a society where many of the old prejudices have disappeared. Where once women played second-fiddle to men, equality of the sexes worldwide has become the norm. There's no more delineation of man's job versus woman's job and no more preferential hiring for either. Furthermore, people have gotten over their hang-ups regarding sexuality. People are allowed to love who they want to love, as long as no one's getting hurt, without concern for whether that person is of the opposite or



same sex. People have also transcended the “sex is dirty” attitude ingrained into much of the world by religion, creating a more free culture in that regard.

Technology has made significant changes to the way people live. People live longer than ever before – the average person lives a little more than 150 years. Whereas once people retired at 65 and expected to live somewhere near 80, people don’t need to retire until they are a century old, leaving them another half century to enjoy life without the responsibilities of a daily job. Women can stay fertile well into their fifties, making it so that people don’t often marry until their forties. Furthermore, many diseases have been wiped out and modern medicine can tackle nearly any malady, reducing suffering throughout the world.

Naturally, with the evolution of technology, the media has continued to grow out of control. People are wildly distracted by the massive amount of entertainment that is available at the touch of a button. The internet has grown to be the central clearing house for all such distraction, and people spend lots of time connected to each other through social networks, video chat, and instant messaging.

As one might expect, the continued march of technology has brought out a movement of those who call for tighter restrictions. These people believe that humanity should stay put and stop tempting fate. After all, if we were supposed to live on other planets, would we have to go through so much trouble to do so? When is nanotech or biotech or any of that other stuff going to end in disaster? While some of their cautions are valid, such people are, for the most part, laughed at by the status quo.

From a broad view, the way of life for your average person hasn’t changed much in the last century and a half. People still grow up, raised by their families (though often mixed), they get an education or vocational training, they get a job to produce something or serve a role for society, many get married and have their own families, most eventually retire, and all eventually die – usually of old age.

Life on the colonies is a different pace, however, though it is not all that different from those settlers that lived in the frontier towns of yesteryear. People

still want the same things, but those in the colonies have a more independent and self-reliant mind-set. They’re the kind of people that do for themselves, take care of their own, and don’t take kindly to outsiders telling them their business. To many, the colonies also represent new opportunities and there’s a general feeling of hope among colonists.

Unfortunately, ghost stories are becoming increasingly popular. Even on Earth, people can sense there are things moving in the darkness. There has been an increase in the popularity of horror movies on Earth, and it isn’t unusual to hear “real-life” ghost stories in a colonial bar. Most people are quick to dismiss such tales, as the alternative is believing that such horrors are real. There is, however, a growing community on the internet dedicated to plumbing the depths of what are classified as urban legends. Despite the growing darkness, most people on Earth regard such things as entertainment. However, those out on the colonies can feel something closing in and those that visit such places most certainly can feel that as well.



TRAINING'S OVER

I stood at the embarkation bay waiting for the shuttle that would take me to meet up with my platoon. It's a little embarrassing that I initially had to be held back from this training op when I came down with a case of the measles. The measles of all things – it had been cleared up centuries ago in nearly everyone, but there were a few people like me that had a recessive trait that left us susceptible. It took me three weeks to get out of quarantine, but now I could finally join my unit on the training run. It was meant to be a two month deployment to test out the unit's survival skills on an airless moon. I hoped that missing almost half the exercise didn't set me back too far.

I checked my gear while I waited for the shuttle and I noticed something odd. The ammunition I was issued for the training op was live ammo. The embarkation room was different than the last time I was here as well. There were other troops gathering to head out for their own training missions. But most didn't look like the raw recruit I knew I was. Quite a few looked to be veterans mixed in with the recruits. There was also a seriousness about them that I had not seen in my own unit.

I was about to go over to them to ask if everything was alright when a shadow passed over me. I looked up and there was a man from out of the history books – Captain Zack Bradigan, the hero of countless battles and the inspiration of more than a few of the soldiers in my platoon. We all wanted to be just like him and here he was standing next to me.

"Private Jeremy Gibson, are you ready to deploy?"

I was shaking inside, but my training held true and I responded in a steady voice, "Yes, sir!"

He stood there surveying everything while he checked his gear. I could tell that he was able to assess the status of all the men on the departure deck just by looking. Square jawed, broad-shouldered, with a stare that got soldiers to jump at his orders without question – all these traits made the Captain the leader you wanted to follow anywhere. And apparently he was leading some portion of the training operation.

"All right then, get your gear and get on the shuttle."

On cue, the shuttle appeared as if the lieutenant had personally called it into being, and the ramp dropped for us to load. I got up the ramp a second after the Captain and found my seat at the head of the shuttle. I secured my pack and my weapon and strapped in to my drop seat. The Captain dropped his pack on the bench across from me and went up to the cockpit to speak with the pilot. After a brief discussion, he came out and said, "Strap in, no time to wait for the others. We're needed at the drop site."

I held no illusions – it was really him that was needed. I was just along for the ride, but the man gave me a boost to my courage. Captain Bradigan was the man who defused the Ganymede hostage crisis last year, had handled the Neptune Bandit Fleet, and was rumored to have worked closely with the Wardens on missions too secretive to mention.

The shuttle door closed and the cabin sealed. Then we took off and began the journey to the moon's surface. The Captain found his way back to the seat across from me and sat down. There was an interesting look on his face as he looked me over once more from head to toe.

"You ready for this, Private?"

"Yes, sir! Ready and able, sir!"

I could see he was going to say something else, but a sudden jolt shook the shuttle and he left to go up to talk to the pilot. Moments later, shouting from the cockpit made me jump. There appeared to be something very wrong, as the Captain started shouting orders to the pilot to maintain course and speed.

The drop to the moon below was rougher than I expected. It took a while before I heard the scraping along the hull – what it was, I didn't know. I unbuckled myself and unsteadily got up to join the Captain at the door. When I looked, the view port only showed a sea of what looked like black bodies slamming against the shuttle as it hurtled to the surface below. I looked to the Captain, who casually



waved me back to my seat. He nodded to his suit helmet and I saw that he had sealed his combat suit. I quickly followed suit.

The shuttle landed roughly and I was thrown to the deck as it skidded to a halt. The Captain had taken the landing in stride and reached down to pick me up.

"Up and at 'em, son."

"But this is a training mission! The unit said so before they shipped out. What the hell is going on?"

The Captain's reply was lost as my suit's intercom was filled with a screeching static that drowned out all sound. I looked to the Captain and it appeared that he couldn't hear it. He didn't notice my pain as he moved to the rear of the shuttle to open the egress ramp. When it opened, I looked and what I saw was a scene out of a nightmare. The sky was filled with hundreds of flying creatures with slick jet black skin like wet leather, with thick tails trailing out behind them. There was no air for them to be flying in, but they soared just the same as they swept in on what looked like my unit in the distance. They were bunkered in front of a large

cave opening and firing blindly as they were assaulted from all angles.

My unit had dug in and established a defensive position and, although the attack was coming from the air, the main focus of my entrenched friends appeared to be the cave mouth itself. Grenade launchers and heavy machine guns were arrayed in fox holes on the cave side. While a portion of my unit maintained a hail of covering fire, the majority maintained watch on the cave entrance.

While the creatures in the air were horrible in their own right, with their claws and eyeless faces, the real terror came from within the cave. At first, it was hard to see what was there; it looked to be a dark void, except something moved within. Thick tendrils snaked out from deep within the cave, towards the opening. The mass of evil – that's what it felt like – looked as if it was trying to crawl its way out. As the tendrils reached the entrance, I heard the screech again. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that some of the others also reeled in pain. I suddenly realized that the sound was not coming over the intercom, but from inside my head.

I'm not sure how my brain processed all of this, as I stood there frozen in terror. Unfazed, the Captain let loose with three volleys from his grenade launcher, straight into the heart of the cave beast. I was the useless grunt to his hero, the muzzle flash from his launcher lighting up the stone set features within his helmet. There was even a hint of a smile on his face as he turned and shook me.

"Get it together, kid! Training's over. This is the real deal. Stay on my six and watch my back."

Somehow, that got through and I shook my head to clear it. The Captain dumped the empty grenade launcher, shouldered his rifle, and charged into the battle. I stayed right by his side, firing at anything that came close as we cleared the 200 meters between us and my unit. The flying nightmares swept down to harass us, coming in waves. I fired my weapon as best I could and kept them off the Captain. From that close, I could see that they indeed had no face – no mouth, no nose, no eyes or ears. They had long thin arms and legs, and from their backs, pairs of alien wings swept out, giving them the strange ability to fly in an airless atmosphere. There was a thick tail as well, ended in a sharp stinger, like some kind of sick bug.

I saw the tail striking at my compatriots in the distance. Streaking down from the skies, the creatures came up short and swung their tail to have the stinger impact. The thing was so sharp and hard that it penetrated their armored suits, and decompression wasn't far behind.

We nearly didn't make it to the bunker as a large swarm of creatures suddenly headed toward us. I emptied clip after clip into the oncoming mass, but even this was not enough to hold back the monsters. Without warning, tracer rounds from the bunker lit up the skies, saving our hides. The creatures fell back and we were able to make it to the safety of the bunker.

We met up with my platoon leader, who was rallying my friends and trying to hold the line until reinforcements could land. Beyond the wall of flying madness above me, I could see them – the drop shuttles I had seen at the embarkation bay. They were all here, landing in a rain of steel and off-loading their payloads of soldiers. Some shuttles didn't safely make it to the ground. The creatures sensed that there was danger and began to focus on the landing vehicles. They swarmed them and tore at the shuttles to bring them down.

Luckily, we got most of them to the ground. As the soldiers met at the bunker, they rallied around the Captain while we took a respite from the aerial assault. The Captain organized the men and started to plan an attack to take down the creature from the cave. The plan was to seal the cave and keep the creature inside until the military could come with bigger weapons to finish it off, whatever the hell it was. The Captain and my platoon were to approach the right side of the cave, while another unit was assigned to approach from the left. Each of the teams carried enough det packs to bring the whole thing to the ground. The Captain ordered us to move out, and for some reason he kept me with him. When I asked him why, he replied, "Because you did your job on the way here. Keep doing that and we'll all make it out of here."

We began to make our approach, with the rest of the support platoons provided covering fire to the skies above, as well as the cave mouth. Even with the hail of rounds surrounding us, the nightmares found openings in our defenses. They seemed to concentrate their attacks on the other team, so by the time we reached the side of the cave they'd

lost nearly three quarters of their troops. We'd only lost four.

The Captain signaled what was left of both teams to advance into the cave. We didn't notice it from the outside, but the flying things never crossed the threshold of the cave mouth, and when I moved inside I wished I hadn't either. If the existence of the things in the sky weren't already proof enough of the horror of this place, the feeling of being in the cave was indescribable. The place felt wrong – like a place that just should not be. The sensors on my combat suit were going crazy; apparently there was some kind of atmosphere in the cave. Gravity felt different here as well, like we suddenly lost 50 pounds. Everyone lurched a bit as we crossed the threshold.

We took position just on the other side of the entrance. When I looked up to cover the Captain's six, I saw that the place didn't look like a natural formation. Instead, the entrance opened up immediately into a larger cavern. The horror we saw from the outside sat within a circle of what looked like glowing runes that were nearly 200 meters across. In places, we could see the circle had been damaged – it was from these wrecked areas that the thing was able to extend those horrible tendrils of terrifying blackness to attack us. Somehow maintaining my sanity enough to tear my eyes away from the creature, I looked back toward the cave mouth. Similar runes were carved into the walls. Whenever a tendril came close, what could only be called a flash would cause the cave to dip into darkness for a millisecond. The creature would then let loose the screech I heard before – but here the sound was different, more the wailing of something that had been hurt.

The Captain ordered everyone to set their explosives and get ready to fall back. Just then, it appeared that the monstrosity had finally realized we were a threat and attacked. The thing flailed wildly, striking everything within reach without mercy. The tendrils crushed everything in their path. Soldier after soldier fell to the beast, until miraculously only the Captain and I were left from our team. We could see that there were a few other soldiers heading back to retreat to the bunker, so the Captain grabbed my shoulder and ordered me out as well. Not one to leave people behind, the Captain needed to be sure on the way out that the horror that resided here had crushed all the soldiers un-

der his command. I provided covering fire for him, honoring those who had died. My rounds did little to the creature beyond irritating it, but I was apparently safe beyond the unseen barrier of the cave mouth. My distraction gave the Captain enough time to finish his duty and make his way away from the impending explosion.

"I believe I ordered you to get back to the bunker, Priv..."

Suddenly, just as when we had first met, a shadow came over me. This was different. The shadow was cast by the Captain, but the light was no longer the light of an embarkation deck – it was the light of the exploding det packs.

I later learned that the other survivors made it back to the bunker and reported that they saw no one else coming after them. Somehow, they dug me out of the rubble about an hour later. I was unconscious, badly bruised, and oxygen deprived – I wouldn't wake for another two days. The medics said that it was a miracle that I had survived at all. If the Captain hadn't thrown himself on top of me when he did, I would most likely be dead. The reports said that once the cave was destroyed, the flying creatures lost coherency and scattered. The relentless fire from the ground forces eventually either brought them down or drove them off.

As I said, I stood by his side the entire battle. I saw that day what a hero really was. The thing in the circle was crushed by rubble and the flying nightmares were scattered or destroyed, all because of the Captain. I still stand by his side today as well. I don't think I'm worthy to be here, but my commander said that actions have earned me this place. We laid him in the ground with full honors – gun salute and all. Personally, I think he would have hated it, but a lot of soldiers wouldn't have been here today if it wasn't for him, myself included. I gave him the only honor I could – my salute – as the trumpeter sounded another soldier home to rest.

If things really are like they were on that damned moon, someday I'll join him. Soon.

CHARACTERS

The standard method of character creation in *Chthonian Stars* is a modified version of the point allocation method, as presented on p. 40 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Instead of rolling randomly on the career tables, you purchase a character's characteristics and skills using a certain number of points. The number of points you are allowed to spend depends on the number of terms you want your character to have under his belt.

Since the intention behind using the point allocation method is to create characters that are not only designed from a concept, but also exist on a level playing field with each other, the recommended standard number of terms for a *Chthonian Stars* characters is three (or any combination of terms and half-terms that equal twelve years) – making characters 30 years old. It is not recommended that you have characters of different experiences, unless you are using the random method.

Step 1: Choose Terms

Characters in *Chthonian Stars*, like all *Traveller* characters, are generated according to the number of terms they have served in various professions. This simulates your character's training and education, as well as providing several interesting snippets of his background and life experience. Each term is equal to four years, which represents full training and experience in said profession. However, if you choose to use the optional half-term rules, your character may dabble in several professions, learning only the basics.

Characters begin generation at 18 years old, the average legal age of adulthood throughout the solar system. The recommended standard number of terms for a *Chthonian Stars* characters is three (or any combination of terms and half-terms that equal twelve years) – making characters 30 years old.

Step 2: Choose Background

Where a character grows up is often as influential as what he would like to do with his life. A character's homeworld and, if applicable, colony not only provide important background information that will

Character Generation Checklist

The recommended form of character generation for *Chthonian Stars* uses the following steps:

1. Choose the number of terms you want your character to have served. The recommended standard number of terms is three (or any combination of terms and half-terms that equal twelve years).
2.
 - a. Choose homeworld and/or colony.
 - b. Gain background skills.
3. Purchase Characteristics, using the number of points granted by the number of terms you have chosen.
4.
 - a. Choose a starting career.
 - b. Check to make sure that you qualify for that career.
5. If this is your first time in this career, take your basic training skills.
6. Choose a specialty for this career.
7. Purchase skills from the Personal Development, Service Skills, Advanced Education (if you meet the Education requirement), and the appropriate Specialist tables. You cannot purchase Characteristic bonuses – these are for the traditional random generation method.
8.
 - a. Purchase increase in rank.
 - b. Purchase commission, if in military career.
9. Purchase Qualities.
10.
 - a. Roll for Life Events.
 - b. Optionally, establish a Connection with another player character.
11. Collect money for this term.
12. Increase your character's age by 4 years, or 2 for a half-term. If your character is 34 or older, roll for Aging.
13. For each subsequent term, go back to Step 5 and repeat. If your character is done serving terms, then go on to the next step.
14. Choose a Campaign Skill Pack and allocate skills from that pack among the characters of your group.
15. Purchase starting possessions.

influence his personality, it also provides him with some level of related skill.

Once you have determined where you want your character to have grown up, choose one of the skills associated with his place of birth. This is your character's first skill at level 0.

Background Skills

Colony	Benefit
Mercury	Admin 0 or Vacc Suit 0
Venus	Admin 0 or Survival 0
Earth	Computers 0 or Streetwise 0
Mars	Computers 0 or Survival 0
Callisto	Vacc Suit 0 or Zero-G 0
Europa	Computers 0 or Science (life or space) 0
Ganymede	Carouse 0 or Streetwise 0
Enceladus	Science (life or space) 0 or Steward 0
Titan	Computers 0 or Streetwise 0
Uranus	Admin 0 or Vacc Suit 0
Neptune	Recon 0 or Vacc Suit 0
Kuiper Belt	Recon 0 or Vacc Suit 0

Your character also starts with his native Language at 2. All the standard languages of Earth are options, though English and Chinese are the most dominant.

Step 3: Purchase Characteristics

Each character in *Chthonian Stars* is defined by six characteristics – Strength, Dexterity, Endurance, Intelligence, Education, and Social Standing. These are fully described on p. 5 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

Strength (Str) is a character's physical strength, fitness, and forcefulness.

Dexterity (Dex) is a character's physical co-ordination, agility, and reflexes.

Endurance (End) is a character's ability to sustain damage, as well as his stamina and determination.

Intelligence (Int) is a character's intellect and quickness of mind.

Education (Edu) is a measure of a character's learning and experience.

Social Standing (Soc) is a measure of a character's place in society.

Each characteristic is rated on a scale of 1 to 15, with scores of 5 and below suffering penalties and 9 and above providing bonuses to checks associated

with that characteristic. You can find these modifiers on p. 6 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

The number of points you have to assign to your characteristics is determined by the number of terms you want your character to have served:

Terms	Points
One Term	12 points
Two Terms	16 points
Three Terms	20 points
Four Terms	24 points
Per Term Thereafter	+4 points

The cost of characteristics are found on p. 40 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Remember, however, that older characters will lose characteristic points due to Aging.

Steps 4-12: Career

Now that you have determined your character's characteristics, it's time to build his life experience. This is done through the use of terms in career paths. In the following pages, you'll find a variety of different careers in which your character can train.

There are two ways to be trained in a career – full-terms and half-terms. Full terms take four years and provide full competency in the career. Half-terms allow characters to dabble in careers, providing less than complete training in that career, but taking up only two years of their lives.

Step Four: Choose a Career

Now it's time to choose a career in which you want your character to be trained. Acceptance into a career is not automatic. Each career lists a few requirements which your character must meet in order to be eligible. If your character does not meet the qualifications, he cannot learn that career.

As you develop your character during the character generation process, you may choose to take multiple turns in the same career for further benefit.

Step Five: Basic Training

If this is your first career, you get all the skills listed on the Service Skills table at level 0. If you already have one of the skills as part of your background, increase that skill to level 1. If this is a half-term for you, choose only the three skills listed as part of the half-term Service Skills table.

For your first term in any subsequent careers, choose one of the skills on the appropriate Service Skills table to acquire. If you do not have the skill, you get it at level 0; if you do, increase your skill level by 1.

Step Six: Choose Specialty

Each career has several specialties associated with them, in order to help focus what type of training your character is receiving. For example, your character may be a Scholar, but he might specifically be studying to be a scientist or a medical doctor, or an Agent who is corporate or a Warden.

Choose one specialty for your character's career during each term, for each career into which your character enters.

Step Seven: Purchase Skills

Now that you have chosen your career and specialty, it's time to purchase skills. You get a number of points each term (or half-term) to spend on the skills listed on the Personal Development, Service Skills, Advanced Education, and Specialist tables. Please note that in order to purchase skills from the Advanced Education table, you must meet a certain level of Education, and you may only purchase skills from the specialist table that corresponds with your specialty. However, during any term, whether or not the skill is listed, you may choose to purchase the Language skill. Furthermore, you cannot purchase the characteristic bonuses listed on the Personal Development table – these bonuses are for the random method of character generation only.

If this term is a full term, you get to spend 15 points on skills. If this is a half term, you get to spend 7 points on skills. The cost of skill levels is found on p. 40 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Please note that you may not take half-terms in military careers. Remember, the first time you purchase a skill, it is purchased at level 0. To increase a skill you already have costs the difference between your desired new level and your existing level. For example, if you already have a skill at level 1 and you wish to increase it to level 3, it costs 4 of your points.

However, you may want to save a few points (either two or four) to spend to increase your character's Rank or receive a Commission in military careers – this is explained in the next step.

Skills gained through Life Events are free, but they do increase your overall skill level so that further

purchased increases are more expensive. They also do not allow you to increase a skill above level 4 – any extra is simply wasted. This will be explained more in Step Ten.

Step Eight: Advancement

Each time you go through a career, you have the opportunity to increase your character's level of recognized authority. This is reflected in his rank.

Characters start at Rank 0 in any new career. If you'd like to spend two points from your skill pool, you may move up one rank, receiving any listed benefits for the new rank. You may only increase your rank one level each term, though some Events may change that. You cannot increase in rank during half-terms.

You may also choose to purchase a commission if you are part of a military career, moving your character from his rank as a non-commissioned officer to a Rank 1 officer. This costs two points from your skill pool.

Step Nine: Purchase Qualities

Qualities are those things about your character that cannot easily be summed up by characteristics, skills, or career. Perhaps your character is ambidextrous or has a bad habit. These are covered by what are known as qualities. Those qualities that provide benefit to your character are called advantages, while those that hinder your character in some way are called disadvantages.

Each term, your character receives two points to spend on advantages. He may also take up to three points worth of disadvantages, giving him up to three more points for advantages. Each half-term is about half that – one point for advantages, with the option to purchase two points worth of disadvantages. Because some advantages cost more than two points, you may have to choose a disadvantage to purchase an advantage you desire.

The acquisition of qualities is an excellent opportunity to create part of your character's background story for this term. How did he discover that he was ambidextrous during his training as an agent? What made him take up his bad habit during his tour with the marines?

Qualities gained through Events do not cost or provide points and do not count against these limits.

Step Ten: Events & Connections

Obviously, the majority of the details of your character's background and life experience are up to you. However, to help provide some kind of landmark experience for these periods, each character must roll on the Events table once per term. Some of these events are good, some are not so good. It doesn't matter whether the term is full or half – a term equals events.

You may also choose to have an event involve another suitable player character from your group. Only one of the characters in question needs to have rolled the event, but then it's up to you to create a compelling story of how the characters were involved. If you do this, you both gain an additional two points for skills for this term (only one point for a half-term). During character generation, you may gain a maximum of four extra points for skills using connections.

Events may provide your character with skills or qualities. Such skill increases typically give your character one additional level in the listed skill, but cannot increase the skill level above 4. These skill increases are free and do not count against your character's skill points for the term – though they do make the skill more expensive to increase in the future, due to its higher level. Likewise, your character may receive a free quality because of an Event. These qualities do not cost or provide any points and do not count against this term's limits on qualities. Disadvantages acquired through Events are not optional.

Step Eleven: Choose Benefits

Your character is paid a certain amount of money for each term or half-term, which is listed on the benefits table. Record this amount of money so that you can spend it later to purchase material goods for your character.

If you're using the random generation method, then you have the choice to either take the appropriate amount of money for the term or to roll once on the benefits table for a material benefit. If this is a half-term for your character, roll one die and cut it in half, rounding down – those in half-terms are only eligible for the first three given benefits.

The material benefits are:

Ally: You gain an Ally, equivalent to spending two points on the Ally advantage.

Armor: You may select any type of armor of your choice, no matter the cost, providing that it is of Tech Level 8 or lower. Your Referee may provide additional limitations to this benefit.

Combat Gear: You may select up to three items of survival or field equipment, no matter the cost, providing that it is of Tech Level 8 or lower. Your Referee may provide additional limitations to this benefit.

Concealed Armor: You may select any type of concealable armor of your choice, no matter the cost, providing that it is of Tech Level 8 or lower. Your Referee may provide additional limitations to this benefit.

Contact: Your contact web gets wider, equivalent to spending one point on the Contact advantage. You can have a maximum Contact rating of 3.

Expensive Vehicle: You may choose one civilian vehicle valued at 50,000 Cr or lower.

Professional Gear: You may select up to three items of equipment that apply directly to your profession, such as communications, computer or other electronic gear, medical supplies, or toolkits, no matter the cost – providing that it is of Tech Level 8 or lower. Your Referee may provide additional limitations to this benefit.

Scientific Equipment: This benefit is presented on p. 35 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

Ship Shares: This benefit is fully explained on p. 36 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

Using Random Generation

The traditional method of character generation in *Traveller* is almost entirely random. For some, that is part of the fun of the game – in fact, *Traveller* character generation is a mini-game unto itself. As *Chthonian Stars* is a dangerous and horrific setting, we recommend using the character design rules presented here, which assure that characters emerge at a certain level of competence and survivability. However, if you prefer to use the traditional random generation method, feel free. The new rules we've provided here are designed to accommodate it.

Technical Library: Your character has a large database of information that applies to his profession and specialty, which he can use as reference with a Computer check.

Valuable Item: You have acquired some sort of valuable object or antiquity that is worth 20,000 Cr, should you be able to find a buyer and sell it.

Vehicle: You may choose one civilian vehicle valued at 20,000 Cr or lower.

Weapon: You may select any weapon of your choice, no matter the cost, providing that it is of Tech Level 8 or lower. Your Referee may provide additional limitations to this benefit.

Step Twelve: Increase Age

If this was a full term, increase your character's age by four years; if it was a half-term, increase his age by two years. Once your character reaches 34 years of age, he must check to see if aging is taking a toll on his body.

At the end of any term in which the character's age is increased to 34 or older, you must roll 2d6 and consult the aging table found on p. 36 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. If you are taking half-terms, you only need to check for aging every four years – 34, 38, 42, etc. The number of terms (or four-year increments) you have served is applied as a negative Dice Modifier.

Furthermore, while people stay healthy into substantially old ages, there are no widely available anti-aging therapies in *Chthonian Stars*. There is no way for your characters to avoid aging or the penalties that can accrue from old age.

Step Thirteen: Continuing Career

Complete steps four through twelve for each subsequent term of your character's career. When your character is done serving terms, go on to the next step.

However, there is something to note about the focus of *Chthonian Stars*. While character generation fully supports creating any kind of character, as does the setting, the characters that will see the most wide-spread use are Wardens. They are authorized by the government to go anywhere in the solar system and are charged with investigating all of the horrific things that are beginning to appear. They are

naturally an excellent choice to be anywhere the action is on any planet, with the resources to both get there and deal with the situation – more so than any other type of character.

We will be supporting Wardens as the primary character type in *Chthonian Stars* and much of the line will focus in that direction. All it takes to be a Warden is to choose a Warden specialty from the Agent career as your character's last term.

However, don't let that dissuade you from playing any kind of character you want and setting your own creativity free in the setting.

Step Fourteen: Distribute Campaign Skill Pack

To make sure that all the characters in your group are properly set up for the game ahead, pick a skill package that represents the kind of game you will be playing. Once you have chosen a skill package, distribute the skills among the characters in the group. Each skill that is a part of the package gives a character the skill at a level of 1, or increases an existing skill by one level.

Warden Skill Package: Comms 1, Gun Combat (any) 1, Gunner (any) 1, Medic 1, Persuade 1, Pilot (any) 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 1.

Criminal Skill Package: Broker 1, Deception 1, Medic 1, Persuade 1, Pilot (any) 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1.

Diplomat Skill Package: Advocate 1, Comms 1, Computers 1, Deception 1, Diplomat 1, Persuade 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1.

Explorer Skills Package: Astrogation 1, Gun Combat (any) 1, Medic 1, Pilot (any) 1, Recon 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1.

Investigator Skill Package: Admin 1, Advocate 1, Computers 1, Gun Combat (any) 1, Investigate 1, Persuade 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1.

Mercenary Skill Package: Comms 1, Gun Combat (any) 1, Gun Combat (any) 1, Heavy Weapons (any) 1, Leadership 1, Medic 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 1.

Starship Skills Package: Pilot (any) 1, Gunner (any) 1, Engineer (any) 1, Mechanic 1, Sensors 1, Medic 1, Comms 1, Astrogation 1.

Trader Skill Package: Advocate I, Astrogation I, Broker I, Diplomat I, Medic I, Pilot (any) I, Sensors I, Streetwise I.

Step Fifteen: Purchase Starting Gear

As the final step, it's time to purchase material goods for your character. Throughout his terms, he has acquired a sum of money that he can now spend on an item listed in this book, or approved by your Referee from the *Traveller Core Rulebook* or the *Central Supply Catalogue*. However, any such gear must be of Tech Level 8 or lower. You may also purchase ship shares at this time, as presented on p. 36 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

Modified Skills

There are some skills that are modified or eliminated in *Chthonian Stars*:

- *Astrogation* is changed, because there are no jump drives. Instead, *Astrogation* is used to plot courses of spaceships inside the solar system.
- *Engineer* is modified. There are no M-Drive and J-Drive specialties. Instead, use the Maneuvering Drive and Transit Drive specialties.
- *Flyer* is modified. There is no Grav specialty.
- *Gunner* is modified. Use only the Turrets and Ortilery specialties.
- *Gun Combat* is modified. Do not use either the Energy Rifle or Energy Pistol specialties.
- *Heavy Weapons* is modified. Do not use the Man Portable Artillery specialty.

- *Language* is modified, instead reflecting the native Earth languages that are spoken throughout the solar system.
- *Pilot* may be modified. Do not use the Capital Ships specialty.
- *Science* is modified. Do not use the Cybernetics, Psionics, Sophontology, or Xenology specialties.
- *Steward* is modified. There are very few nobles in the setting, so use of this skill applies to society's elite.
- *Battle Dress* is not used.

New Skill

There is one new skill that is used in *Chthonian Stars*: the Occult skill.

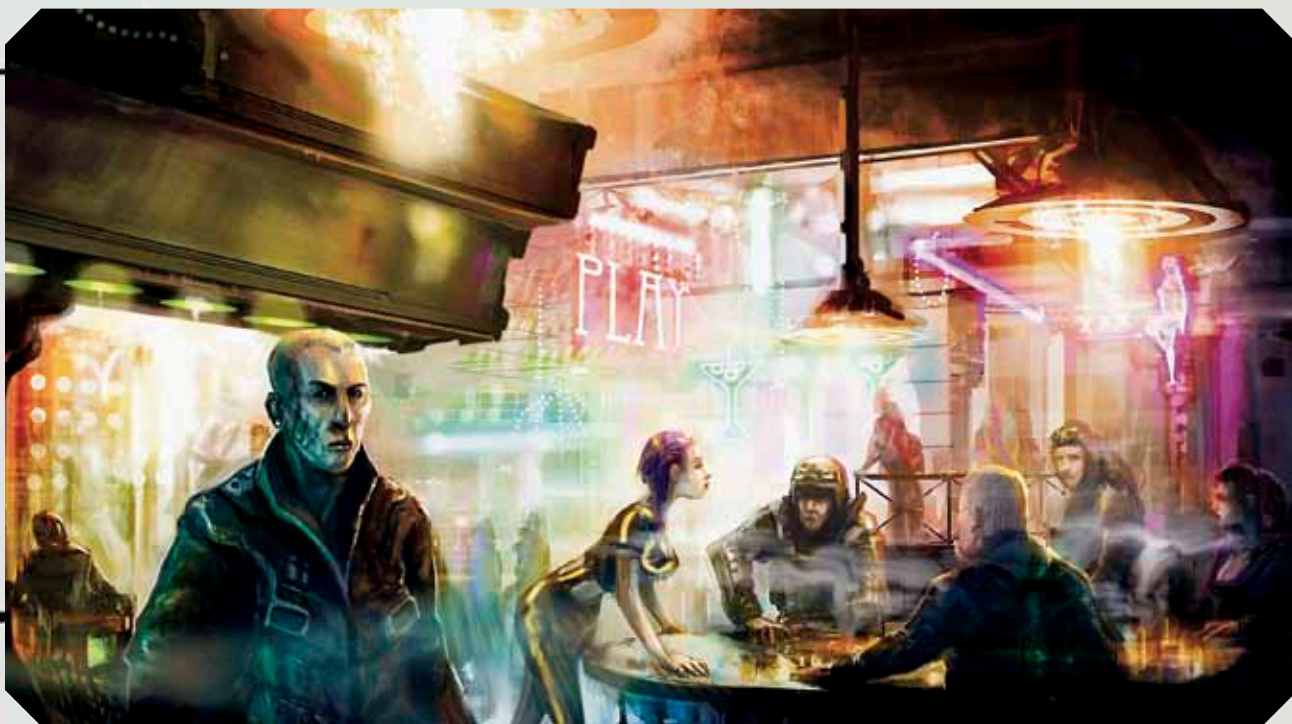
Occult

Occult represents the study of the hidden and esoteric, the kinds of things science denies exists. It can cover everything from magical traditions, to folklore, to the secret history of the world, to cults, to creatures spoken of only in forbidden tomes.

Remembering common or prevalent occult facts: Education, 1-6 minutes, Routine (+2).

Researching an unknown occult phenomena: Intelligence, 1-6 hours, Average (0).

Researching lost or forgotten lore: Intelligence, 1-6 days, Very Difficult (-4).



Career: Agent

The Agent career is found on p. 10-11 of the *Traveler Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Law Enforcement, Intelligence, and Corporate.

However, *Chthonian Stars* also adds three new Warden specialties to this career – the Warden Investigator, the Warden Enforcer, and the Warden Researcher.

Skills and Training: Full-Terms

Roll	Specialist: Warden Enforcer	Specialist: Warden Investigator	Specialist: Warden Researcher
1	Advocate	Investigate	Occult
2	Melee (any)	Recon	Investigate
3	Gun Combat (any)	Occult	Computers
4	Recon	Stealth	Science (any)
5	Stealth	Persuade	Jack of All Trades
6	Occult	Deception	Language (any)

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 8)
1-2	Melee (any)	Streetwise	Advocate
3-4	+1 End	Recon	Computers
5-6	Athletics (any)	Gun Combat (any)	Medic

Roll	Specialist: Law Enforcement	Specialist: Intelligence	Specialist: Corporate
1-2	Investigate	Investigate	Investigate
3-4	Streetwise	Comms	Computers
5-6	Advocate	Deception	Deception

Roll	Specialist: Warden Enforcer	Specialist: Warden Investigator	Specialist: Warden Researcher
1-2	Investigate	Advocate	Occult
3-4	Occult	Gun Combat (any)	Science (any)
5-6	Stealth	Occult	Language (any)

Ranks and Benefits

Rank	Warden	Skill or Benefit
0	Agent	
1	Corporal	Occult I
2	Sergeant	
3	Lieutenant	Investigate I
4	Captain	
5	Major	Leadership I
6	Colonel	+1 Social

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Weapon
2	Concealed Armor
3	Contact
4	Scientific Equipment
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 7500 Cr
Money (Half-Term): 3750 Cr

Career Progress

	Survival	Advancement
Warden Enforcer	End 6+	Int 5+
Warden Investigator	Int 7+	Int 6+
Warden Researcher	Int 7+	Int 5+

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	You are severely injured in action – this is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively, you can roll twice on the Injury table and take the lower (worse) result.
2	You have angered a powerful cultist. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
3	You manage to somehow run afoul of the law, though it does not result in incarceration. Make an Advocate 8+ check. If you fail, you get no Benefit from this term.
4	A politician or executive tries to have you fired and fails. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage) and Persuade 1.
5	Your activities have exposed your loved ones to dangerous things that have come for them. Choose one of your Allies, Contacts, or family members – roll twice on the Injury table for them, taking the lower result.
6	You are injured in the line of duty – roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table. If you are using the random method, you are not ejected from this career.
12/13	The things you have seen shatter your mind and you spend time in an asylum. Start at Level 1 on the Madness Scale.
14	A very close friend or lover dies tragically, claimed by the unknown. You gain the Fanatical/1 disadvantage.
15	You are trained in advanced investigative techniques. Gain Investigate 1, Science (any) 1, or Computers 1.
16	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events table.
21/22	You stare into the void, but the void stares back at you. Start at Level 1 on the Madness Scale.
23	In a pinch, one of your senior officers backs you despite the odds. Gain him as an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage).
24	Your superior questions your judgment in an incident. Despite misgivings, you carry on and fail miserably, so much so as to be memorable. Gain him as an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
25	As part of your duty, you are trained to operate vehicles. Gain Drive (any) 1, Flyer (any) 1, or Navigation 1.
26	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events table.
31/32	A senior agent takes you under his wing for a while. Gain Gun Combat (any) 1, Investigate 1, or Research 1.
33	For a time, you become a media figure as part of a successful operation or investigation. Gain +1 Soc.
34	You study books containing things man wasn't meant to know. Gain Occult 1 and start at Level 1 on the Madness Scale.
35	Due to a minor injury, you spend a couple months working at a desk. Gain Admin 1, Computers 1, or Comms 1.
36	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events table.
41	Your inner demons threaten to consume you and you become an addict. With the proper help, you recover, but gain the Tormented disadvantage or -1 End.
42	You are injured in the line of duty – roll on the Injury table. However, during the time it takes you to recover, you take the chance to study something useful. Gain Computers 1, Research 1, or Science (any) 1.
43	You uncover a traitor in your midst. You are automatically promoted (or gain promotion for free).
44	As part of your duties, you have spent time in the criminal underworld. Gain Streetwise 1.
45	You have spent a lot of time in space and on space stations as a part of your duties. Gain Vacc Suit 1.
46	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events table.
51	You are the sole survivor of an horrific mission. Gain either the Tormented or Depressed disadvantage.
52	As a part of your duty, you are specially trained in weapons. Gain Gun Combat (any) 1, Heavy Weapons (any) 1, or Recon (1).
53	During this term, a lot of your comrades die in the line of duty. You spend a lot of time at funerals and wakes. Gain Carouse 1.
54	Something now stalks you, and it can travel across the solar system after you. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
55	You manage to miraculously save the life of a peer. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/1 Quality).
56	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events table.
61	You have seen things no one should and now suffer mind-wrenching nightmares. Gain the Nightmares disadvantage.
62	You learn something terrible about someone close to you, something that will forever change things. What is it?
63	As part of your duties, you are trained in emergency medical techniques. Gain Medic 1.
64	One of your team is horribly murdered by a cultist, who escapes justice. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/1 Quality).
65	Psychological strain causes a part of you to die. Gain the Fearless disadvantage, but suffer -2 DM on all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing.
66	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events table.

Career: Aristocrat

This career is based on the Noble career, as found on p. 26-27 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Administrator, Diplomat, and Dilettante.

As titled nobility is not a large or important part of the *Chthonian Stars* setting, the term aristocrat fits better – referring instead to society's rich and elite.

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Contact
2	Ally
3	Vehicle
4	Weapon
5	Expensive Vehicle
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 50,000 Cr

Money (Half-Term): 25,000 Cr

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 8)
1-2	Carouse	Admin	Advocate
3-4	Deception	Diplomat	Language (any)
5-6	+1 Soc	Persuade	Leader

Roll	Specialist: Administrator	Specialist: Diplomat	Specialist: Dilettante
1-2	Admin	Carouse	Carouse
3-4	Broker	Diplomat	Deception
5-6	Leader	Deception	Jack of All Trades

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	Your family has squandered its wealth and the debt has fallen on you. Leave this profession and lose all Benefits from this term.
2	Pictures of you and your low class significant other are released in the tabloids. Gain a -2 DM on all skill checks involving Social Standing.
3	Your escapades have brought with them an unexpected surprise – a child. You can give the child up (gain a -1 DM on all skill checks involving Social Standing) or you can be a parent.
4	A business deal turned ugly when an investor that you were working with overextended himself. When the deal fell through, he was ruined and blamed you for not protecting him. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 Disadvantage).
5	The government is investigating your holdings and is interested in why your tax payments have been so small over the years. Gain Admin 1 and Diplomat 1, but gain no Benefit from this term.
6	You fall from your horse at the polo match. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12-13	You venture into politics and use your family name to gain a seat in the local government. Gain Admin 1, Advocate 1, Diplomacy 1 or Persuade 1, but also gain a Rival (or the Rival/1 disadvantage).
14	Bored with your life of privilege you decide to head for adventure. During the trip you discover there are things out there you would rather not know about. Gain the Nightmares/3 disadvantage, but also gain Occult 1.
15	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events Table.
16	A fancy ball turns into a brawl because of your actions and you embarrass your family in the process. Lose -1 Soc and you cannot be Promoted this term.
21	Your wealth has made you a celebrity. Gain one level of Carouse and gain a Rival (or the Rival/2 disadvantage).
22-23	You are offered the opportunity to smuggle illegal goods. If you accept, make an 8+ Deception or Persuade check. If successful, gain Streetwise 1 and 5000 credits (or one extra benefit roll, if using the random method). If you refuse you gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
24	You inherit a gift from a rich relative. Gain 10,000 credits (or an extra roll on the Benefits table if using the Random method).
25	You use your wealth to better yourself. Gain Advocate 1, Engineering (any) 1, or Science (any) 1.
26	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events Table.
31	You meet your soul mate. Make an Soc 8+ check. If successful, your proposal of marriage is accepted. Gain his or her father as an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage).
32	You take a prominent roll in your family's business. Gain Admin 1.
33	Your flamboyant lifestyle has made people jealous of the things you have. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
34-35	A secret organization attempts to recruit you. If you refuse, gain this organization as an Enemy (or the Enemy/1 disadvantage). If you agree, make an 8+ Deception or Persuade check. If you fail, roll on the Mishap table. If you succeed, gain Deception 1, Persuade 1, or Tactics (any) 1, and gain an Ally (or the Ally/1 advantage).
36	You suffer a major accident on the way to an awards banquet. Roll on the Mishap table. You cannot be ejected from this career as a result of the roll.
41-42	You make an alliance with a rich and powerful aristocrat. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage) and Leadership 1, or gain a +4 DM to your next Advancement roll (if using the random method).
43	Rumors of unusual things happening in the outer regions of the solar system grab your attention. Through your research, you gain Occult 1. You also gain a Warden Contact (or the Contact/1 advantage).
44	A rival comes to you for help. If you help him, turn one Rival into an Ally (or the Ally/1 advantage). If you do not help, this Rival turns into an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage). If you do not already have a Rival, gain an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage).
45	You have decided to become a patron of the arts. The artist you sponsor quickly rises to the top. Gain +1 Soc.
46	With privilege comes responsibility. Gain Edu +1 or Admin 1.
51	During a routine medical procedure something goes wrong. Make an Endurance 8+ check. If you succeed, nothing happens. If you fail, you suffer End -1, but gain 10,000 credits from the lawsuit.
52	Your father forces you to serve some time on a merchant freighter to help expand your horizons. Gain Astrogation 1, Broker 1, or Pilot (spacecraft) 1.
53	While vacationing at one of the pleasure resorts outside of the normal shipping routes, you are accosted by some thugs. Make a Melee (any) 8+ check. If successful, you gain Streetwise 1.
54	On a routine trip, something indescribable finds its way onto your ship, killing many passengers before it is brought down. The entire event is covered up, but you know what really happened. Gain the Dark Secret/2 disadvantage.
55	The movers and shakers of the world have taken notice of your good work. You are automatically Promoted and you gain an Ally (or the Ally/3 advantage).
56	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events Table.
61	You take the fall for a family scandal. Suffer Soc -1, but gain an additional 5,000 credits from your family's hidden support.
62	You have a natural head for business. Gain Admin 1 and Broker 1.
63	You charm your way through high society. Gain Carouse 1, Diplomat 1, or Persuade 1. Also, gain an Ally (or the Ally/1 advantage) and a Rival (or the Rival/1 advantage).
64	Your family extols the virtues of responsibility and the expectations for one of your stature. As a result, you understand your place in society and have gained the Common Sense advantage.
65	A thief makes off with a piece of artwork that your family obtained via not so legal means decades ago. Your personal investigation takes you into the criminal underworld. Gain Investigate 1, Recon 1, or Streetwise 1.
66	A family member pulls some strings in support of your goals. Gain an automatic Promotion and a Rival (or the Rival/1 disadvantage).

Career: Army

The Army career is found on p. 12-13 of the *Traveler Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Support, Infantry, and Cavalry.

Also included here are ranks for several of the world's major armies, including the United States, China, Germany, and Russia.

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Weapon
2	Armor
3	Combat Gear
4	Vehicle
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 10,000 Cr

Ranks and Benefits: Enlisted

Rank	United States	China	Germany	Russia	Skill or Benefit
0	Private	Lie Bing	Soldat	Ryadovoy	Gun Combat (slug rifle) I
1	Private, 1st Class	Shang Den Bing	Obergefreiter	Ryadovoy	Recon I
2	Corporal	Yi Ji Shi Guan	Unteroffizier	Gefreiter	
3	Sergeant	Er Ji Shi Guan	Feldwebel	Mladshiy Serzhant	Leadership I
4	Staff Sergeant	San Ji Shi Guan	Oberfeldwebel	Serzhant	
5	Master Sergeant	Wu Ji Shi Guan	Hauptfeldwebel	Starshiy-Serzhant	
6	Sergeant Major	Liu Ji Shi Guan	Oberstabsfeldwebel	Starshina	

Ranks and Benefits: Officer

Rank	United States	China	Germany	Russia	Skill or Benefit
0					
1	Lieutenant	Shao Wie	Leutnant	Mladshiy Leytenant	Leadership I
2	Captain	Shang Wie	Hauptmann	Kapitan	
3	Major	Shao Xiao	Major	Mayor	Tactics (military) I
4	Lt. Colonel	Zhong Xiao	Oberstleutnant	Podpolkovnik	
5	Colonel	Shang Xiao	Oberst	Polkovnik	
6	General	Shang Jiang	Generalleutnant	General-Polkovnik	Social Standing 10 or +1 Soc, whichever is higher

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	You are severely injured in action. This is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively, roll twice on the Injury table and take the lower result.
2	You encounter something alien and malevolent in your travels and the experience left its mark. Gain the Nightmares disadvantage.
3	You are taken prisoner by an enemy faction and held for a year. Gain Survival I, as well as the Chronic Pain/I disadvantage (or roll on the Injury table, if using the random method).
4	You are overwhelmed with a feeling of helplessness. Take the Depressed disadvantage.
5	You accidentally run afoul of a superior officer and mess up one of his plans. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
6	You are injured. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	A mission goes bizarre as you encounter something that could not possibly exist. Gain Occult 1 as you begin to learn the true nature of the universe.
13	Your unit is assigned to hazardous duty on one of the outer worlds. Gain Vacc Suit 1.
14	Raiders attack a small mining station you are protecting. Make a Gun Combat 8+ check. If you succeed, gain Gun Combat (any slug) 1 or Melee (any) 1. If you fail, roll on the Injury table.
15	Your unit gets involved in a deadly firefight. Gain either Explosives 1, Heavy Weapons 1, or Tactics 1.
16	You are separated from your unit during maneuvers. Make a Survival 8+ check. If you succeed, gain Survival 1.
21	You are sent on a particularly grueling and dangerous mission. Make an End 8+ check. If you fail roll, on the Injury table. If you succeed, you are automatically Promoted.
22	You are hand-picked for a special tour of duty. Gain a Contact (or the Contact/1 advantage) and one of the following: Gun Combat (any slug) 1, Heavy Weapons 1, or Melee (blade) 1.
23	You've attracted a patron among the officer corp. You gain a Commission (if you don't already have one) and an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage). However, you also gain an enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
24	A major event happens in your life! Roll on the Life Events Table.
25	The things you have seen have left an impression on you. Gain the Nightmares disadvantage.
26	You participate in combat war games. Roll randomly for one skill on any skill table you qualify for, or gain End +1 or Str +1.
31	You have a dull term. Nothing good or bad happens, but you gain Gambler 1 in your ample down time.
32	A friend from the past sends you a package with a mysterious object. You can investigate it if you wish. If you do so, make an Investigate 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain Occult 1. If you fail, your investigation attracts the negative attention of your commanders – roll on the Mishap Table. In either case, you gain a cult Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
33	You serve time in the motor pool. Gain Mechanic 1.
34	You run a gambling ring in your squadron, but get caught. Gain Gambler 1, but you cannot be Promoted this term and lose all Benefits.
35	You are sent for special training. Gain Drive (tracked) 1, Flyer (rotor) 1, or Pilot (small craft) 1.
36	While on duty at the furthest reaches of the solar system, you see things that you should not have seen. You begin at Level 1 on the Madness scale.
41	You gain special training in reconnaissance. Gain Recon 1.
42	Assigned to an HQ, things are quiet. Gain Admin 1 as you learn the less glamorous side of the military.
43	You do a stint as a drill instructor. Gain Leadership 1.
44	You are dispatched on a covert special forces mission. Make a Recon 8+ check. If you fail, roll on the Injury table. If you succeed, gain Str +1 and an automatic Promotion.
45	You carry a fallen comrade from the battlefield, saving his life. The army uses your bravery as an example to others, gaining you some fame. Gain Soc +1.
46	You serve time in the JAG Corp. Gain Advocate 1.
51	An accidental weapons discharge injures a fellow soldier. You were found guilty of negligence and kicked out of the service. You gain normal Benefits, but must select a new, non-military career for any remaining terms.
52	A major event happens in your life! Roll on the Life Events table.
53	You are given advanced training. Gain Edu +1 and select Engineer (any) 1 or Science (any) 1.
54	Your ability to take command is extraordinary. You gain either Leadership 1 or Tactics (military) 1.
55	You are part of a cross-training program with the marines. Gain either Vacc Suit 1 or Zero-G 1.
56	You are involved in an off-duty accident. Roll on the Injury table.
61	You are assigned to a military intelligence unit. Gain Deception 1, Investigate 1, or Recon 1.
62	Your unit is called in to quell a riot. Make a Leadership 8+ check. If you succeed, gain Persuade 1. If you fail, roll on the Injury table.
63	You are kidnapped by a cult while on leave, but you escape. Make an End 8+ check. If you succeed, gain Survival 1. If you fail, roll on the Injury Table. In either case, you gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
64	A fellow soldier is killed in a freak accident while on patrol with you. You blame yourself. Gain the Depressed disadvantage.
65	You leave the army to deal with a family crisis. You get normal benefits this term, but must select a different career next term. In your effort to deal with the issue you gain Advocate 1 or Persuade 1.
66	A major event happens in your life! Roll on the Life Events table.

Career: Citizen

The Citizen career is found on p. 14-15 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Corporate, Worker, Colonist.

Terms in the Colonist career, however, apply to planets that are not readily civilized, such as those colonies found on Mercury, Europa, Uranus, Neptune, or the stations of the Kuiper Belt.

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Weapon
2	Professional Gear
3	Contact
4	Vehicle
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 10,000 Cr

Money (Half-Term): 5000 Cr

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 10)
1-2	+1 Edu	Drive (any)	Art (any)
3-4	Carouse	Streetwise	Language (any)
5-6	Jack of All Trades	Trade (any)	Computers

Roll	Specialist: Corporate	Specialist: Worker	Specialist: Colonist
1-2	Admin	Drive (any)	Athletics (any)
3-4	Broker	Engineer (any)	Jack of All Trades
5-6	Computers	Trade (any)	Survival

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	Your interest in the odd things that seem to be occurring more regularly has drawn the attention of a low level cultist that wants to recruit you, very much against your wishes. This has brought you under suspicion by the local police as being an active member of the cult. Gain a -2 DM on all skill checks involving Social Standing.
2	A heated discussion that got out of hand has gained you an enemy within the mayor's office. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 Disadvantage).
3	On a vacation to the Jupiter system, you brought back a virus that left you hospitalized for months. Reduce your End by 1.
4	Ever since you purchased that strange item at a local sale, you have been having strange and disturbing dreams. Gain the Nightmares disadvantage.
5	You are convicted of a crime and sent to prison for the rest of this term. A technicality gets you released in time for your next term to start. Gain a -2 DM on all skill checks involving Social Standing. Your criminal past will limit your next career path – you cannot enlist in the military or as an agent.
6	You slip and fall on the entryway to your home as you return from a particularly bad day at the office. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	You spend time maintaining and using heavy machinery. Gain Drive(any) 1, Flyer(any) 1, or Mechanic 1.
13-14	You are given advanced training in a specialist field. Make an Education 8+ check. If you succeed, gain any Skill at 1.
15	You learn something you shouldn't have, from which you can profit illegally. If you choose to do so, then you gain 5000 credits and Criminal 1, Streetwise 1, or an Ally (or the Ally/1 advantage). This Ally has contacts in the criminal underworld. However, you will also gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
*16	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events Table.
21	You gain experience in a technical field. Gain Comms 1, Computers 1, or Engineer (any) 1.
22	Your efforts bring wide-ranging benefits to your field. Gain 5000 credits or a +2 DM to your next Benefit roll (if using the random method), and Soc +1 as a result.
23	You take part in a marathon. Gain End +1 or Str +1, and Athletics (Endurance) 1.
24	Your friend hosts a weekly poker night. Gain Gambler 1.
25	The local bartender knows your favorite drinks by heart. Gain Carouse 1.
26	You spend time participating in the local theater. Gain Art (Acting) 1.
31	You are mugged in an alleyway on your way home from the office. Make a Melee (any), Gun Combat (any) or Stealth 8+ check to avoid a roll on the Injury Table.
32	Your job calls for an eclectic set of skills. Gain Jack of All Trades 1.
33	You are offered the opportunity to smuggle illegal goods. If you accept, succeed at a Deception or Persuade 8+ check to gain Streetwise 1 and 5000 credits. If this roll fails, you gain a criminal record and lose any Benefits for this term. If you refuse, you gain a criminal Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
34-35	In your professional life, you gain many contacts as a result of your work. Gain d3 Contacts (or two Contact/1 advantages).
36	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events table.
41	You are put in the lead position on an important project for your employer. Make an Admin, Computer, Engineer (any), or Mechanic or 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain 10,000 credits as a bonus. If you fail, you are fired and lose any Benefits from this term.
42	Horrific nightmares begin to plague you. Gain the Nightmares disadvantage.
43	You win the lottery. Gain the Wealth/1 advantage.
44	You take a job welding the hulls of spacecraft. Gain the Mechanic 1 and Vacc Suit 1 skills.
45	You are sued. Gain Advocate 1 and then make an Advocate 8+ check. If you succeed, you beat the suit. If you fail, you lose all Benefits for this term.
46	Your job requires a lot of driving. Gain Drive (wheeled) 1.
51	A person close to you has become bedridden and requires full-time medical attention. You spend a significant amount of time helping as best you can. Gain Medical 1.
52	You have a chance to risk your fortune on a potentially lucrative deal. Make a Broker or Gambler 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain 10,000 credits. If you fail, you not only lose all Benefits from this term, but from your next term as well, as you work hard to pay off the debts you gained.
53	You don't understand why disturbing things seem to happen around you with alarming regularity. Gain the Darkness Magnet disadvantage, but also gain Occult 1.
54	For some reason, following a routine operation you find that you no longer dream. Gain the Dream Void advantage.
55	You rise to a position of power in your field of work. You are automatically promoted.
56	You have become convinced that your job revolves wholly around paperwork. Gain Admin 1.
61	Your family comes from a long line of gun enthusiasts. Gain Gun Combat (Shotgun, Slug Pistol, or Slug Rifle only) 1.
62	You lose your job and offer to help out a local shady businessman. His contacts expose you to the underworld of crime, gaining you Streetwise 1. However, you also suffer Soc -1.
63	You inherit a gift from a rich relative. Gain a 5000 credits or +1 to your next Benefit roll (if using the random method).
64	You really like food. Make an Athletics 8+ check. If you fail, gain the Fat disadvantage.
65	Someone you met at a local coffee shop turns out to be a VIP. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage).
66	It has been an especially busy period of your life. Roll 2 times on the Life Events table.

Career: Drifter

The Drifter career is found on p. 16-17 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Only two of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Wanderer and Scavenger.

The Barbarian specialty is not appropriate for the *Chthonian Stars* setting.

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills
1-2	+1 End	Melee (unarmed)
3-4	+1 Int	Streetwise
5-6	Jack of All Trades	Survival

Roll	Specialist: Wanderer	Specialist: Scavenger
1-2	Deception	Pilot (small craft)
3-4	Recon	Vacc Suit
5-6	Stealth	Zero-G

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Contact
2	Weapon
3	Ally
4	Professional Gear
5	Scientific Equipment
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 3000 Cr
Money (Half-Term): 1500 Cr

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	You are severely injured in action. This is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively you can roll twice and take the lower (worse) result.
2	You make friends with the wrong people and get yourself in some trouble. Make a Streetwise 8+ check. If you are successful, you are merely injured. If you fail, you are injured and you gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
3	You annoy a corporate executive or politician in some manner. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage). In addition, this enemy arranges for you to spend some time cooling your heels in prison. You gain no Benefit roll for this term.
4	You thought you had a line on a great job, but it turns out someone decided to set you up for a crime you didn't commit. Make a Recon 8+ check. If you succeed, then you manage to realize you've been setup and get out before things go badly. If you fail make a Gun Combat or Melee 8+ check. If you fail, you are captured by authorities and convicted of a crime, giving you a permanent criminal record (you cannot enlist in the military or be an agent). If you succeed, you escape but are injured in the process.
5	You get extremely sick. Lose 1 End.
6	Who are you? You wake up among strangers with no knowledge of who you are – your past is a mystery (to anyone besides your Referee).

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	You manage to scavenge some useful bits. Take a +1 DM on any one Benefit roll, or gain 150% of your money.
13	You've done something to piss someone off. You gain an Enemy in the process (or the Enemy/I disadvantage). Make a Gun Combat or Melee 8+ check. If you fail, you are injured – roll on the Injury table.
14	You learn to keep even the most hopeless equipment running. You gain Mechanic I.
15	The streets are your friend. Gain Streetwise I.
16	Make a Streetwise 8+ check. If successful, you gain d3 Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages).
21	Your experiences have made you wiser and smarter. Gain +1 Edu.
22	Someone tries to take advantage of you. Make a Streetwise or Survival 8+ check. If successful, you beat them at their own game and gain a +1 to any Benefit roll (or 150% of your money). If you fail, you are suckered and lose one Benefit roll, or gain only 50% of your money.
23	You experience a major life event! Roll on the Life Events table.
24	You are given the opportunity to take part in a risky but potentially rewarding adventure. Roll 2d6 to see what happens. A result of 2-3 means that you are injured – roll on the Injury table. A result of 4-10 means that you gained nothing. A result of 11-12 means you may increase any two skills you have by 1.
25	You take a job. Gain one additional Benefit roll, or 200% of your money.
26	Someone is watching out for you. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/3 advantage).
31/32	A Rival calls you out. Make a Melee or Gun Combat 8+ check. If you succeed, word of your victory over him spreads throughout the community. You are automatically Promoted.
33	Times grow tough and survival grows less certain. Make a Survival 8+ check. If you fail, you suffer -1 End due to sickness.
34	For some reason, the media has grown attached to tales of your life. A short-lived reality program airs, following you around. Gain +1 Soc.
35	You witness a crime and you may report it. If you do, you gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage), but you also gain an Ally (or the Ally/3 advantage).
36	Your life is boring. Nothing good or bad happens.
41	You immerse yourself in a group that seems to be edgy, but soon discover they are just nuts. Even so, they open your eyes to things you didn't believe existed. Gain Occult I.
42	With all your travels, you learn to keep an eye out for information that can turn a profit. You gain either Recon I or Streetwise I. You also gain d3 Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages).
43	With a life on the road, it is easy to stay in shape. Gain +1 Str, Dex, or End.
44	A major event happens in your life! Roll on the Life Events table.
45	You find work aboard a spaceship. You gain either Engineering I or Mechanic I.
46	While on an outpost, you hear tales of a creature that preys on your fears. Unfortunately, you discover the creature is real. Its image has been burned into your mind and, since that time, you seem to have developed an innate sense of danger. You gain the Sixth Sense advantage.
51	While entering a corporate colony you are flagged by customs. Make a Deception 8+ check. If successful, you convince the customs agent the computer is making a mistake. If you fail, you are taken into custody. Eventually you are released, but told that you may not enter the colony in the future.
52	You run across someone being mugged and you can help if you wish. If you do, make a Gun Combat or Melee 8+ check. If you are successful, you save the victim and discover he is a high ranking corporate or political operative and gain an Ally (or the Ally/3 advantage). If you fail, you are injured – roll on the Injury table.
53	A disaster of some type strikes where you are. Make a Survival 8+ check. If successful, you escape unscathed. If you fail, you are injured – roll on the Injury table.
54	You join with a mercenary group for a short time. Gain Gun Combat I and Melee I and d3 Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages).
55	A malfunction in a grav couch nearly kills you. You lose 1 End and gain a Phobia of grav couches.
56	Life is boring but safe. Nothing happens this term.
61	You witness a bizarre creature killing a couple somewhere. If it is unlike anything you have seen before and leaves a lasting impression. You begin at Level I on the Madness scale.
62	Sometimes games of chance pay off and you may attempt to make some quick cash. If you do, make a Gambling 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain one additional Benefit roll. If you fail, you lose one benefit roll.
63	You have learned how to survive on your wits and seem to have picked up a little of everything. You gain Jack-of-all-Trades I.
64	Sometimes you have to do things you'd rather others not know about. You gain the Dark Secret /2 disadvantage.
65	Someone is watching out for you. Gain an Ally (or the Ally /1 advantage).
66	Your life seems to unravel. Roll on the Mishap table.

Career: Entertainer

The Entertainer career is found on p. 18-19 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Artist, Journalist, and Performer.

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Contact
2	Contact
3	Professional Gear
4	Vehicle
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 3000 Cr

Money (Half-Term): 1500 Cr

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 10)
1-2	+1 Dex	Art (any)	Advocate
3-4	+1 Soc	Carouse	Deception
5-6	Carouse	Persuade	Diplomat

Roll	Specialist: Artist	Specialist: Journalist	Specialist: Performer
1-2	Art (any)	Art (Writing or Holography)	Art (Acting, Dancing, or Instrument)
3-4	Computers	Investigate	Athletics (Coordination or Endurance)
5-6	Trade (any)	Streetwise	Deception

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	You are severely injured in action. Treat this as the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively, roll twice on the Injury table and take the lower result.
2	You are caught in a lip-syncing (or other appropriate) scandal. Make a Social Standing 8+ check. If you fail, your PR is for naught and you are forced out of the career with no Benefits for this term.
3	An accident during a tour cuts the tour short. You gain no Benefits from the term, but may continue in the career.
4	A rival snags a major contract out from under you. There is a very public battle between the two of you, deepening the rift. You gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 Disadvantage).
5	The fans are fickle. Make a Soc 8+ check as you try to coax them back. Failure means you suffer -1 Soc.
6	You are injured. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66 Events

- 11 Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
- 12 You have a successful tour. Gain Art (any) 1.
- 13 Through your contacts you meet a valuable ally. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage).
- 14 You party too hard. Gain Carouse 1 but suffer End -1 as you push your body too far.
- 15 You decide to expand beyond your current horizons. Gain Mechanic 1, Medic 1, or Science 1.
- 16 A contract goes south, stalling your career. You cannot be Promoted this term.
- 21 A close call with a deranged fan causes you to learn to defend yourself. Gain Melee 1.
- 22 You gain some street cred. Gain Streetwise 1.
- 23 You're learning the business side of things. Gain Admin 1
- 24 Your tour is uneventful.
- 25 Your recordings have gone beyond platinum. You are automatically Promoted this term and gain 10,000 credits.
- 26 A watchdog group protests your work as unsuitable for society. Gain Streetwise 1 and an Enemy (or the Enemy/1 disadvantage).
- 31-32 Practice makes perfect. Gain Art (any) 1.
- 33 Gun Control? No way. Gain Gun Combat (Shotgun, Slug Pistol, or Slug Rifle) 1.
- 34 With hit after hit, the wealth begins to build. Gain the Wealthy/1 advantage.
- 35 The pace of your life begins to take its toll. Gain the Manic disadvantage.
- 36 You get it in your head you are getting too fat for your fans, so you go on a crash diet. Gain the Skinny disadvantage as you take it too far.
- 41 You experience a major life event! Roll on the Life Event table.
- 42 Your success exposes you to the elite of society. Gain Diplomat 1.
- 43 You decide to take a break from your hectic career. Nothing eventful happens, but you also cannot be Promoted.
- 44 You meet a great many influential people. Gain 1d3 contacts (or two Contact/1 advantages).
- 45 Your recording company (or other suitable company) gives you a bonus. Gain 5000 credits or +1 on your roll on the Benefits table (if using the random method).
- 46 A scandal costs you several key sponsors. You gain no Benefits this term and cannot be Promoted.
- 51 You release an especially scandalous recording (or whatever is appropriate). Make a Social Standing 8+ check. If successful, gain Soc +1. If you fail, suffer Soc -1.
- 52 You become politically active. Make an Art or Persuade 8+ check. If successful, you gain one level in any skill. Regardless, you gain an enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
- 53-54 You experience a major life event! Roll of the Life Event table.
- 55 A fan you are nice to turns out to be someone very important. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/3 advantage).
- 56 While on tour, your crew teaches you a whole host of skills. Gain Jack-of-all-Trades 1.
- 61 You gain an unpopular sponsor. Make a Social Standing 8+ check. If successful, you manage to improve the sponsor's image and gain Soc +1. If you fail, your fans consider you a sell-out and you suffer Soc -1.
- 62 You take online courses while on tour. Make an Education 8+ check. If successful, you gain Edu +1.
- 63 Your tour is canceled. Nothing happens this term.
- 64 An unauthorized biography is released about you, exposing sides of your life you'd rather people didn't know. You gain the Dark Secret/1 disadvantage.
- 65 It's party time. Gain Carouse 1, Persuade 1, Steward 1, or a Contact (or the Contact/1 advantage).
- 66 You experience a major event in your life! Roll on the Life Events table.

Career: Explorer

This career is based off the Scouts career, as found on p. 32-33 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Only two of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Survey and Exploration.

However, Explorers are different from Scouts in that they are bound to our solar system. They are

those who dare to travel to the border worlds of the solar system, and who explore the outer edge of known space.

Furthermore, the Courier specialty is not appropriate for the *Chthonian Stars* setting.

Ranks and Benefits

Explorer	Skill or Benefit
0	
1 Explorer	Vacc Suit 1
2	
3 Senior Explorer	Pilot (any) 1
4	
5	
6	

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Contact
2	Professional Gear
3	Weapon
4	Vehicle
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 30,000 Cr

Money (Half-Term): 15,000 Cr

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 8)
1-2	+1 End	Pilot (spacecraft or small craft)	Medic
3-4	+1 Int	Survival	Navigation
5-6	Jack of All Trades	Astrogation	Computer

Roll	Specialist: Survey	Specialist: Exploration
1-2	Sensors	Sensors
3-4	Pilot (small craft)	Pilot (spacecraft)
5-6	Navigation	Recon

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	You are severely injured in action. This is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively, roll twice on the Injury table and take the lower result.
2	You encounter something alien and malevolent in your travels. The Experience left its mark. Gain the Nightmares disadvantage.
3	Your ship is boarded by pirates and you are taken prisoner for a year. Take Survival 1, and the Chronic Pain/1 disadvantage (or roll on the Injury table, if using the random method).
4	Something dark begins to crawl into your unconscious mind. Take the A/D Stasis Visions disadvantage and Occult 1.
5	You accidentally cross a person of power and mess up one of his plans. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
6	You are injured. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	In your explorations, you come across strange glyphs that almost seem to whisper to you while you look at them. Gain Occult I.
13	Your crew escorts a research team on a mission to the outer planets. Gain a Contact (or the Contact/I advantage).
14	Your ship is crippled due to an internal explosion. Make a Mechanic 8+ check. If you succeed, you prevent disaster. If you fail, cascading explosions leave you injured. Gain the Persistent Injury/I disadvantage (or roll on the Injury table).
15	You discover a potential new transit route that could greatly benefit interplanetary trade. You are automatically Promoted.
16	A terrible accident causes your ship to go way off course and drift in a remote area of space. Not all of your crew survives for reasons that haunt you to this day. Take the Dark Secret/I disadvantage.
21	You are sent on a particularly dangerous mission. Make an End 8+ check. If you fail, roll on the Injury table. If you succeed, gain Survival I.
22	You are hand picked to escort a UWC diplomat on an important political mission to one of the outer colonies. Gain Diplomacy I.
23	You discover a strange and ancient place that is obviously not of human origins. You may choose to explore it. If you do, make a Recon 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain Occult I. If you fail, you see many strange things but gain nothing from the experience.
24	Your ship encounters another vessel in distress. Make a Mechanic or Medic 8+ check. If you succeed, you save an important family. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage).
25	You wake up from A/D stasis with frightening nightmares! Make an Int 8+ check. If you succeed, you learn to control the nightmares and gain the Dream Void advantage. If you fail, you gain the Nightmares disadvantage.
26	You are invited to participate in a space race. Gain Pilot (any) I.
31	You experience a major life event! Roll on the Life Event table.
32	A corporate heavyweight crosses paths with you. Make an Admin 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain him as an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage). If you fail, you gain him as an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
33	The computers on your ship crash unexpectedly. Make a Computer 8+ check. If you succeed, gain Computer I.
34	Strange and bizarre things seem to happen around you. Gain the Darkness Magnet disadvantage.
35	You apprentice on your ship with the pilot. Gain Pilot (any) I.
36	You witness a crime. You can report it. If you do, gain Soc +1 and an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage). If you do not report it, nothing happens.
41	Pirates ambush your ship. Make a Gunner or Pilot 8+ check. If you succeed, you fight them off and gain an automatic promotion. If you fail, your employer blames you for the attack and you cannot be Promoted this term.
42	You are dispatched on a covert mission to uncover a suspected smuggling ring. Make a Recon 8+ check. If you fail, make a Survival 8+ check. If you fail this roll, you must roll on the Injury table. If you succeed, you gain 10,000 credits.
43	A structural collapse leaves several people trapped inside. You are part of the rescue team. Make a Recon 8+ check. If you succeed, you manage to save the trapped people and become a media hero. Gain Soc +1.
44	You are assigned to guide a scientific research team on a mission to investigate a strange phenomenon. Gain Edu +1 or Science (any physical) I.
45	You are dispatched on extended assignment to assist a Warden team. Gain a Warden Contact (or the Contact/2 advantage).
46	Your superiors know real talent when they see it. You are automatically promoted.
51	An accident is pinned on you. You cannot be Promoted and gain no Benefits for this term.
52	You experience a major life event! Roll on the Life Event table.
53	You finally land yourself a plush duty assignment! Gain Carouse I and either Flyer (any) I or Seafarer I.
54	You have a natural ability to lead others. Gain Leadership I.
55	You are sent on temporary duty to train with a squad of marines. Make a Str 8+ check. If you succeed, gain Str +1 or End +1. You also gain either Gun Combat (any slug) I or Melee (blade) I.
56	You discover a strange occult artifact during your travels. Work the details out with your Referee.
61	You are called in to mitigate a dispute between two large colonial factions. Choose Advocate I, Diplomat I, Leadership I, or Persuade I.
62	Your ship is tasked to deliver much needed medical supplies to a remote colony. Gain Leadership I or Medic I.
63	You stumble upon a strange cult. Make a Investigate 8+ check. If you succeed, you break the cults back and gain an automatic Promotion and Occult I. If you fail, you are injured – roll on the Injury Table.
64	A team member is killed while you watch. You blame yourself and his death haunts you. Gain the Tormented disadvantage.
65	You spend a great deal of time plying the space between worlds. Gain Astrogation I or Pilot I.
66	You experience a major life event! Roll on the Life Events table.

Career: Marines

The Marines career is found on p. 20-21 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Support, Star Marines, and Ground Assault.

However, to fit better with the setting, we will refer to the Star Marine specialty as simply the Marine specialty.

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Weapon
2	Armor
3	Combat Gear
4	Vehicle
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 10,000 Cr

Ranks and Benefits

Rank	Enlisted	Skill or Benefit	Officer	Skill or Benefit
0	Private	Melee (blade) I or Gun Combat (any) I		
1	Lance Corporal	Gun Combat (any) I	Lieutenant	Leadership I
2	Corporal		Captain	
3	Sergeant	Leadership I	Major	Tactics (any) I
4	Staff Sergeant		Lt. Colonel	
5	Master Sergeant	+1 End	Colonel	Social Standing 10 or +1 Soc, whichever is higher
6	Sergeant Major		General	

Skills and Training: Full Terms

Roll	Service Skills	Officer Skills (Commission Only)	Specialist: Marine	Specialist: Ground Assault
1	Athletics (any)	Leadership	Vacc Suit	Flyer (any)
2	Drive (any)	Tactics (any)	Zero-G	Hand Weapons (any)
3	Tactics (any)	Admin	Gunnery (any)	Recon
4	Heavy Weapons (any)	Advocate	Melee (blade)	Melee (blade)
5	Gun Combat (any)	Flyer (any)	Sensors	Tactics (military)
6	Stealth	Leadership	Gun Combat (any)	Gun Combat (any)

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	You are severely injured in action. This is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively, roll twice on the Injury table and take the lower result.
2	Your post comes under attack by bizarre creatures. Make a Gun Combat or Melee 8+ check. If you fail, you lose -1 End due to a severe injury suffered in the fight. Regardless of the roll, you begin the game at Level 1 on the Madness scale.
3	You become the scapegoat in a navy versus marines scandal. Make a Soc 8+ check. If successful, you cannot be promoted this term. If you fail, you are ejected from the service.
4	You begin having terrifying visions during A/D Stasis. You gain the A/D Stasis Visions disadvantage. In addition make an End 8+ check. If you fail, you are medically discharged from the service, but gain a +1 on the Benefits table (or 150% of your money) as compensation granted to you by the service.
5	A new senior officer takes an instant dislike to you. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage) and you cannot be promoted this term.
6	You are injured. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	Trapped and alone on an isolated moon you survive. Gain Survival I and Vac Suit I.
13	You are assigned to protect a corporate outpost. Gain Admin I as you learn about the corporate world.
14	You help your commander cover up a major error in judgment. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage).
15	You save the lives of several squad mates. You are automatically promoted this term.
16	You get a cushy assignment and party hard every weekend. Gain Carouse I, but you are not promoted this term due to the trouble your social activities seem to land you in.
21	You have a major life event! Roll on the Life Events table.
22	While probing a mine where a large number of people have disappeared, your squad encounters something that makes you aware that there is more to the universe than you have been led to believe. Gain Occult I.
23/24	You receive special training. Gain Gun Combat (any) I or Melee (any) I.
25	A key politician takes an active interest in your career. Gain an Ally (or the Ally/3 advantage).
26	You testify at a hearing and upset a key politician. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
31	You join the cavalry and are trained as a pilot. Gain Drive (tracked) I.
32	You receive training as a scout. Gain Recon I.
33	It is a boring term – nothing happens. A Promotion will cost one point more than normal, or you suffer a -1 DM to your next Promotion roll (if using the random method).
34	After a heroic rescue in your off-duty hours, you find yourself in the limelight. Gain +1 Soc and an automatic Promotion.
35	You are sent to gain an advanced degree. Gain +1 Edu or +1 Int.
36	While serving at a supply post, you learn who can get you what. Gain d3 Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages).
41	You have a major life event. Roll on the Life Events table.
42-43	In accident injures you. Make a End 8+ check. If you fail, you suffer -1 End. However, your actions get you an automatic Promotion.
44	You are sent on an extended covert mission. Make a Recon or Survival 8+ check. If successful, you gain Gun Combat (any) I, Melee I, Recon I, or Survival I. You also gain d3 Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages).
45	You are assigned to the special tactics school. Gain Tactics (military) I.
46	Due to outstanding service you are automatically Promoted, given a Commission (if you don't yet have one), and gain Leadership I.
51	You serve as a weapons crew on marine landing craft. Gain Gunner (turrets) I.
52	While attached to an HQ unit, you gain d3 Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages). and either Admin I or Diplomacy I.
53	While on patrol you cross paths with a Warden investigative team. Make a Soc 8+ check. If successful, you become friends with the Wardens and gain a key ally. You gain an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage). If you should ever become a Warden, you gain an automatic Promotion your first term.
54	You go through zero-g training. Gain Zero-G I.
55	To increase your usefulness to your squad, you train as a combat medic. Gain Medic I.
56	You participate in a inter-squadron competition. Make an Athletics or End 8+ check. If successful, you gain +1 Soc for winning. Regardless, you gain Athletics I.
61-62	A major event happens in your life. Roll on the Life Events table.
63	A vehicle you are piloting has a mechanical failure. Make a Drive or Pilot 8+ check. If successful, you managed to bring the vehicle to a stop safely. If you fail, you are wounded, gaining the Persistent Injury/2 Disadvantage or roll on the Injury table (if using the random method).
64	You get accused of a crime you did not commit. While you are exonerated in the court martial, it causes you to be passed over for promotion. You cannot get a Promotion this term.
65	It is a boring and uneventful term. Nothing happens.
66	Your life seems to unravel. Roll on the Mishap table.

Career: Merchants

The Merchants career is found on p. 22-23 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Merchant Marine, Free Trader, and Broker.

However, to fit better with the setting, we will refer to the Free Trader specialty as the Freelance Trader specialty.

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Contact
2	Ally
3	Vehicle
4	Valuable Item
5	Expensive Vehicle
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 20,000 Cr

Money (Half-Term): 10,00 Cr

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 8)
1-2	+1 End	Drive (any)	Social Science (any)
3-4	+1 Int	Broker	Admin
5-6	Streetwise	Persuade	Advocate

Roll	Specialist: Merchant Marine	Specialist: Free Trader	Specialist: Broker
1-2	Pilot (spacecraft or capital ship)	Pilot (spacecraft)	Broker
3-4	Vacc Suit	Vacc Suit	Streetwise
5-6	Zero-G	Zero-G	Persuade

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	You are severely injured in action. This is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively, roll twice on the Injury table and take the lower result.
2	You encounter something alien and malevolent in your travels. The Experience left its mark. Take the Nightmares disadvantage.
3	Disaster strikes! You lose all your Wealth and half of your cash Benefits to an elaborate and well-organized Ponzi scheme.
4	You are arrested for tax evasion and imprisoned for the rest of your service term. You receive no Benefit and must choose a new career when you get out (cannot be a military or agent career).
5	You accidentally run afoul of a powerful rival merchant and thwart one of his plans. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy 1 disadvantage).
6	You are injured. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	You come across a once in a lifetime investment opportunity. Make a Broker 8+ check. If you fail, you gain no benefits this term. If you succeed, you gain the Wealthy/I advantage.
13	You are offered the opportunity to smuggle illegal items into a colony. If you accept make a Deception or Persuade 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain Streetwise I. If you fail, you lose any Benefits from this term and now have a criminal record.
14	Pirates attack and steal your shipment. Make a Streetwise 8+ check. If you succeed, you track down the pirates and regain your possessions, but gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage). If you fail, you lose Benefits this term.
15	You become the lead negotiator for your firm. Gain Broker I, Deception I, or Diplomat I.
16	You are asked to smuggle a rare occult artifact for an unknown client. If you accept, you gain an additional 5,000 credits with your Benefits. If you refuse, you gain a cult Enemy (or the Enemy/I disadvantage).
21	You find yourself involved in a high-stakes card game. Make a Gambler 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain an extra Benefits roll (or double the money). If you fail, you lose your Benefits this term.
22	Times are dangerous, so you take some combat training. Gain Gun Combat (any slug) I or Melee (any) I.
23	The pilot of a ship you work on teaches you the basics of piloting a spacecraft. Gain Pilot (spacecraft) I.
24	You spend some time working with smugglers learning a key skill. You gain Astrogation I, Deception I, or Trade I.
25	You gain the upper hand in a business partnership. You are automatically Promoted and gain Leadership I.
26	You engage in additional business training. Select any skill on any Merchant skill table for which you qualify at I (or roll, if you are using the random method).
31	You experience a major life event! Roll on the Life Event table.
32	You discover an uncanny ability to remember the smallest details. Gain the Eidetic Memory advantage.
33	You spend the term dealing with the most mundane elements of your career. Gain the Admin I skill and a Contact (or the Contact/I advantage).
34	You take on the more legal aspects of your business. Gain the Advocate I skill.
35	You begin working out on a regular basis to distract you from the boring nature of your career. Gain End +I or Str +I.
36	Your job is sedentary in nature. Gain the Fat disadvantage.
41	Pirates ambush your ship. Make a Pilot 8+ check. If you succeed, you manage to outrun the pirates. If you fail, the you suffer an injury in the attack – roll on the Injury table.
42	You experience a major life event! Roll on the Life Event table.
43	You are accused of embezzling from your company by your creditors and taken to court. Suffer Soc -I and gain no Benefit from this term.
44	A successful business mentor agrees to take you under his wing. Make an Edu 8+ check. If you succeed, you are automatically Promoted and gain Admin I.
45	You make a beneficial and profitable business connection. Gain a Contact (or the Contact/I advantage).
46	You get caught up in legal trouble. Make an Advocate 8+ check. If you succeed, gain Advocate I. If you fail, gain the Wanted I disadvantage.
51	There are some things you are better off not knowing. Make an Int 8+ check. If you fail, you begin at Level I on the Madness scale. Regardless, you gain Occult I.
52	Fortune smiles upon you. You are automatically Promoted.
53	You are asked to speak at a business seminar. Gain Soc +I and an automatic Promotion.
54	You take a long needed vacation. Gain Carouse I or Gambler I.
55	You have a zen-like ability to make deals. Gain the Common Sense advantage and Broker I.
56	A close call with a mugger prompts you to learn to defend yourself. Gain Melee (any) I.
61	Your ship breaks down during a time-sensitive shipment run. Make a Mechanic 8+ check to get the systems operational in time. If you succeed, gain Jack-of-all-Trades I. If you fail, you lose your Benefits this term.
62	You branch off your business opportunities into providing services. Gain the Broker I or Trade (any) I skill.
63	You are kidnapped by a cult while on leave, but the authorities negotiate a release. During the ordeal, you learn that not everything is as it seems. Gain Occult I and a cult Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
64	Everything is running smoothly. Nothing of note happens this term.
65	You cash out your life as a merchant. You get an extra Benefit roll this term (or double the money), but must enlist in a new career next term.
66	You experience a major life event! Roll on the Life Events table.

Career: Navy

The Navy career is found on p. 24-25 of the *Traveler Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Line/Crew, Engineering/Gunner, and Flight.

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Weapon
2	Armor
3	Combat Gear
4	Vehicle
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 10,000 Cr

Ranks and Benefits: Enlisted

Rank	United States	China	Germany	Russia	Skill or Benefit
0	Crewman Recruit	Shui Bing	Matrose	Matros	
1	Crewman	Shang Den Bing	Matrose	Matros	Mechanic I
2	Petty Officer, 3rd Class	Hai Jun Yi Jui Shi Guan	Gefreiter	Starshiy Matros	Vacc Suit I
3	Petty Officer, 2nd Class	Hai Jun Er Ji Shi Guan	Hauptgefreiter	Starshina 2 Stat'i	
4	Petty Officer, 1st Class	Hai Jun San Ji Shi Guan	Bootsman	Starshina 1 Stat'i	+1 End
5	Chief Petty Officer	Hai Jun Si Ji Shi Guan	Hauptbootsman	Glavniy Starshina	
6	Master Chief	Hai Jun Liu Ji Shi Guan	Oberstabsbootsman	Glavniy Korabyel'niy Starshina	

Ranks and Benefits: Officer

Rank	United States	China	Germany	Russia	Skill or Benefit
0					
1	Ensign	Hai Jun Shao Wie	Leutnant zur See	Leytenant	Melee (blade) I
2	Lieutenant	Hai Jun Shang Wie	Kapitanleutnant	Kapitan-Leytenant	Leadership I
3	Lt. Commander	Hai Jun Shao Xiao	Korvettenkapitan	Kapitan Tret'yego Ranga	
4	Commander	Hai Jun Zhong Xiao	Fregattenkapitan	Kapitan Vtorogo Ranga	Tactics (naval) I
5	Captain	Hai Jun Shang Xiao	Kapitan zur See	Kapitan Pervogo Ranga	Social Standing 10 or +1 Soc, whichever is higher
6	Admiral	Hai Jun Shang Jiang	Admiral	Admiral	Social Standing 12 or +1 Soc, whichever is higher

Mishaps

1d6 Mishap

- You are severely injured in action. This is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively, roll twice on the Injury table and take the lower result.
- You make a mistake that causes several crewmates serious injury. You are demoted one rank after the court martial. If you are at the lowest rank, you are ejected from the navy.
- A rival sets you up for a fall. Make an Advocate 8+ check. If you fail, you gain no Benefit this term. Either way, you gain and Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage).
- An explosion rips out a bulkhead, exposing the corridor of the ship you are in to space. Make a Vacc Suit 8+ check. Failure means you suffer -1 End as a result of your short exposure to vacuum.
- A glut of officers means that promotions are few and far between. Make an Admin 8+ check or you can gain no Promotion this term.
- You are injured. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	You spend time as a shuttle pilot. Gain Pilot (small craft) 1.
13	After a power plant accident on your ship, you rescue several crewmates from certain death, but are hurt in the process. You are automatically promoted (for free), but suffer -1 End.
14	Life in deep space gnaws at your core. Leave this career after this term or gain the Depressed disadvantage. If using the random method, you must leave this career.
*15	You have a major life event! Roll on the Life Events table.
16	You score big in a game of chance. Gain 5000 credits, but also gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
21	You win an inter-squadron boxing match. Gain +1 Str or +1 End.
22	You lie for a crewmate, only to discover he was guilty. You cannot be promoted this term, but gain an Ally (or Ally/1 advantage).
23/24	Deep in space, a strange creature kills several crew before being destroyed. The Navy tries to hush it up, but you know the truth. Gain the Dark Secret/1 disadvantage.
25	You're assigned to special academic training. Gain +1 Int.
26	You befriend an engineer and he shows you some of the ropes. Gain Mechanic 1.
31/32	While inspecting an abandoned vessel, you see things that shake you to your very core. You start at Level 1 on the Madness scale.
33	A severe injury causes you to spend most of the term in the hospital. Gain normal benefits, but you may only spend half the normal number of skill points when buying skills. If using the random method, roll on the Injury table instead.
34	You are assigned as a liaison to a team of Wardens, who open your eyes to reality. Gain Occult 1.
35	It's a dull and routine term. Nothing special happens.
36	You receive special pilot training. Gain Pilot (any) 1.
41	You receive intense weapons training. Gain Gun Combat (slug pistol, slug rifle, or shotgun) 1.
42	A member of the brass takes notice of you. Gain Ally (or the Ally/3 advantage) and an automatic Commission.
43	You spend time working with the JAG Corp. Gain Advocate 1.
44	You have a major life event! Roll on the Life Events table.
45	You spend the term stuck in a desk job on a space station. Gain Admin 1.
46	A bar-room brawl lands you in the brig. You cannot be promoted this term, but you gain an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage) as a result of the fight.
51	You inherit a weapon from a friend who is killed in the line of duty. You get the Weapon Benefit as though you had rolled it on the Benefit table.
52	You are sent to leadership training. Gain Leadership 1.
53	Your department fails an inspection. You cannot be promoted this term.
54/55	You are selected to appear in a recruitment video. Gain +1 Soc.
56	It's a dull and routine term. Nothing special happens.
61	With nothing else to do, you while the time away in games of chance. Gain Gambler 1.
62	You spend time learning how to operate the sensors. Gain Sensor 1.
63	A micro-meteorite punches through the hull, into your cabin, piercing your leg. Suffer -1 Dex.
64	You begin dreaming of horrid things. Gain the Nightmares disadvantage.
65	A friend puts in a recommendation for you with the Wardens. If you become a Warden in your next term, you are automatically Promoted.
66	You have a major life event! Roll on the Life Events table.

Career: Rogue

The Rogue career is found on p. 28-29 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Thief, Enforcer, and Pirate.

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Contact
2	Weapon
3	Professional Gear
4	Vehicle
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 10,000 Cr

Money (Half-Term): 5000 Cr

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 10)
1-2	Carouse	Deception	Computers
3-4	+1 End	Recon	Investigation
5-6	Gun Combat (any)	Streetwise	Persuade

Roll	Specialist: Thief	Specialist: Enforcer	Specialist: Pirate
1-2	Stealth	Gun Combat (any)	Pilot (any)
3-4	Deception	Melee (any)	Astrogation
5-6	Athletics (co-ordination)	Drive (any)	Gunner (any)

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	You are severely injured in action. This is the same as a result of 2 on the Injury table. Alternatively, you can roll twice and take the lower (worse) result.
2	A job goes wrong and you are arrested. Make an Advocate or Streetwise 8+ check. If you fail, you are sent to jail. You gain no benefits, suffer -1 Soc due to your new criminal record, and cannot be Promoted. Either way, you are forced out of this career.
3	You and another are hired independently for the same job. Make a Deception or Streetwise 8+ check. If you fail, he beats you to it and you suffer -1 Soc as a result of your failure. In addition, you gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
4	You are identified as a suspect in a job with which you had nothing to do. Make a Deception 8+ check. If you fail, you get arrested before you can get out of the area. You gain no Benefits from this term.
5	A detective makes it his life's work to put you away. As a result, you cannot safely operate in this career and must leave it after this term. You gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
6	You are injured. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	The organization you belong to goes head-to-head with a rival organization. Make a Gun Combat 8+ check. If you succeed, you get an additional Benefit roll or 150% of the money for this term.
13	You find yourself on the run. Gain Deception I, as you learn to disappear into the woodwork.
14	A crime boss takes you under his wing and shows you the ropes. Gain Streetwise I and an Ally (or the Ally/2 advantage).
15	Your exploits become media fodder, gaining you notoriety. Gain +1 Soc.
16	A corporation hires you to do a job for them. Gain d3 corporate Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages).
21	You're the wheel man. Gain Drive (wheeled) I or Pilot (small craft) I.
22	A job goes wrong and you wind up in a firefight. Make a Gun Combat 8+ check. If successful, you escape unscathed. If you fail, roll on the Injury table.
23	A major event happens in your life! Roll on the Life Events table.
24	You gain a following in the underworld. Gain Streetwise I and Leadership I.
25	Your endeavors have led you into a dark underground you wished you did not know existed. It is discovered that you are less than enthusiastic about what you have learned. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage) and gain Occult I.
26	Law enforcement cracks down hard. Make a Deception 8+ check, as you try to avoid the nets they have thrown out. If you fail, you lose one Benefit roll this term, or half your money.
31	You have scored big. Make a Streetwise 8+ check. If successful, your next Benefit roll gets a +3 bonus or 200% of your money. If you fail, you get one extra Benefit roll, or 150% of your money.
32	You spend time learning to defend yourself better. Gain Melee (any) I.
33-34	A law enforcement agency contracts you to help take down an especially vile organization. Gain Investigate I.
35	You have a dry spell. Nothing happens this term.
36	Make a Streetwise 8+ check. If successful, you gain d3 Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages) and one Ally (or the Ally/I advantage).
41	You become involved in a gambling ring. Gain Gambling I.
42-43	A major event happens in your life! Roll on the Life Events table.
44	You gain a great deal of notoriety in your profession. Gain a +2 DM to your next Promotion roll, or pay half to be Promoted.
45	In your career, you have gotten to know a great many people. Gain d3 Contacts (or two Contact/I advantages).
46	Defeating security systems has become your focus. Gain Computers I and Sensors I.
51	You are injured in a heist. Roll on the Injury table.
52	You are sent to steal an ancient tome from a collector. You make the mistake of looking in it and have heard voices in your head ever since. You begin at Level I on the Madness scale.
53	You have learned to lean hard on contacts to get the information you need. Gain Persuade I.
54	Life on the run has helped keep you in shape. Gain +1 End.
55	It's a boring couple of years. Nothing happens this term.
56	You serve for a time on a corporate privateer. You gain Engineering I.
61-62	A daring heist nets you a nice haul. Gain +3 to one Benefit roll, or 200% of your money. However, the person you stole from knows who you are. Gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage).
63	Some vaults are more mobile and offensive-minded than others. You gain Gunner (turrets) I.
64	You spend considerable time casing a potential mark with remote drones. Gain Remote Operations I.
65	A rival tries to kill you with a bomb. You survive, but are injured. Roll on the Injury table and gain an Enemy (or the Enemy/3 disadvantage). If you had a Rival, he becomes the Enemy.
66	Your life seems to unravel. Roll on the Mishap table.

Career: Scholar

The Scholar career is found on p. 30-31 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. All three of the specialties provided there apply to *Chthonian Stars*: Field Researcher, Scientist, and Physician.

However, we have added a new specialty for the setting – the Occultist.

Skills and Training: Full Terms

Roll Specialist: Occultist

1	Investigate
2	Occult
3	Science (any)
4	Computers
5	Language (any)
6	Occult

Benefits

Roll	Benefit
1	Contact
2	Professional Gear
3	Technical Library
4	Vehicle
5	Ally
6	Ship Shares

Money (Full-Term): 30,000 Cr

Money (Half-Term): 15,000 Cr

Career Progress

	Survival	Advancement
Occultist	Int 6+	Edu 8+

Skills and Training: Half-Terms

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum Edu 8)
1-2	+1 Int	Computers	Advocate
3-4	+1 Edu	Diplomat	Engineer (any)
5-6	Computers	Investigate	Science (any)

Roll	Specialist: Field Researcher	Specialist: Scientist	Specialist: Physician	Specialist: Occultist
1-2	Sensors	Admin	Medic	Investigate
3-4	Survival	Engineer (any)	Persuade	Occult
5-6	Investigate	Science (any)	Science (any)	Language (any)

Mishaps

1d6	Mishap
1	A book left in your classroom by some unknown student contains knowledge that no one should know. Start at Level 1 on the Madness scale. If you are already there, you can ignore this roll because you have already started down the slippery path to insanity.
2	Your research is stolen in an important breakthrough discovery you have not had time to reveal. The next day, a rival university/research firm declares the results of your research as their own. No one believes that the research was yours. You can quit (leave the career, but keep the Benefit roll) or start over and try to prove your case (lose all Benefit rolls from this career, but you do not have to leave).
3	Your research has led to a disaster that killed many people. Although the fault was in the improper handling of the material and nothing you did, your radical creation is blamed. You are forced to leave the career and you gain a Rival (or the Rival/2 disadvantage).
4	Your research has exposed new information about the Chthonian Star and its dangers. However, the government has claimed your research in the name of planetary security and blackballed you within your profession. Leave the profession, but increase a single Science skill by 2.
5	Your colleagues are jealous of your successes and have vowed to see you fail. Gain a Rival (or the Rival/2 disadvantage).
6	You fall from the top shelf of the library stacks as you searched for a particularly interesting book. Roll on the Injury table.

Events

d66	Events
11	Disaster strikes! Roll on the Mishap table, but you are not ejected from this career (if using the random method).
12	The university/research firm supporting you is in the middle of budget cuts. You work feverishly to save your project. Gain 1 level of Diplomat or Persuade.
13-14	The life of academia is more than just teaching or researching. Gain Admin 1.
15	You gain a prize for your work. Gain 5000 credits or +1 to your Benefits roll (if using the random method).
16	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events Table
21	You're drawn into the bureaucratic nightmare of public funding research grants. Lose one Benefit roll from this term, but gain Admin 1 and Diplomat 1.
22-23	You are given advanced training in a specialist field. Make an Edu 8+ check to gain Any Skill 1 (though you may not take Jack of All Trades).
24	Your research takes you into an area you had never imagined existed. Gain Occult 1, but also begin at Level 1 on the Madness scale.
25	Your knowledge is needed for a special project by a covert organization. If you accept, gain Science (any) 1. Also, gain a Contact (or the Contact/1 advantage). However, you also gain an Enemy or the (Enemy/3 disadvantage).
26	A colleague asks for help on a project. Make an Engineering or Science 8+ check. If you are successful, you share the wealth and gain 10,000 credits or a +2 DM on your next Benefits roll (if using the random method).
31	You are published. Gain +1 Soc.
32	You gain a grant to work on a pet project. Gain Engineering (any) 1 or Science (any) 1.
33	Your research is considered ground-breaking. You are automatically Promoted.
34	You are caught in an improper relationship with a student or junior researcher. Lose -1 Soc and you are forced out of this career. You also gain only half the normal Benefits from this term or suffer a -1 DM to your next Benefits roll (if using the random method).
35	An explosion in the lab causes you injury. Roll of the Injury table.
36	You experience an important Life Event! Roll on the Life Events Table
41	Your private funding is lost. Lose one Benefit roll for this term, or gain only a quarter the money.
42	You discover you have a naturally enhanced sense. Gain the Enhanced Senses advantage for any one sense.
43	You participate in a faculty sports league. Gain +1 Str and Athletics (any) 1.
44-45	A colleague works behind your back to tank your career. Roll on the Mishap table.
46	The world of academia is sometimes boring. Nothing good or bad happens this term.
51	You have an opportunity to cheat and claim someone else's work as your own. Nothing happens if you decline. If you accept, make a Deception or Persuade 8+ check. If you succeed, you gain 10,000 credits and an Enemy (or the Enemy/2 disadvantage). If you fail, you just gain the Enemy.
52	Your successes in academia have gained you many colleagues. Gain d3 Contacts (or two Contacts/1 advantages).
53	A paper comes out that is clearly a derivative of your work, without giving you proper credit. You call out the author and gain 10,000 credits in compensation, or leave it be, gaining +1 Soc as a result of playing it cool.
54	You pursue additional degrees. Gain +1 Edu.
55	You discover you are a poet and not a fighter. Gain Art (any) 1 and the Coward disadvantage.
56	You experience an important life event! Roll on the Life Events Table.
61	Research falls into your hands from a colleague who has been missing for a while. His discoveries could change the way we see the universe, but the knowledge is dangerous. Ignore it and nothing happens. Attempt to find your colleague and gain Investigate 1 and Occult 1 while digging into the sources of this data, but also start at Level 1 on the Madness scale.
62	You pick up some useful skills just puttering around the house. Gain Mechanic 1.
63-64	Your facilities are upgraded by the university or research firm, giving you better tools to do your job. Gain 5000 credits or a +1 to your next Benefit roll (if using the random method) as a result of your increased productivity.
65	You are asked to violate your ethics and beliefs while working on a strange project. If you refuse, you gain an Enemy or the (Enemy/1 disadvantage). If you agree, you gain Investigate 1 and Occult 1. Make an Int 8+ check. If you fail, you also start at Level 1 on the Madness scale.
66	A discovery in your field has gained you great fame. Gain an automatic Promotion and roll on the Life Event table.

Final Details

Life Events Table

The Life Events table, as found on p. 34 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, can be used mostly as is. There are just a few changes, presented here.

- For a result of 7, the Contact gained is a Contact/2 advantage, which does not count against the character's quality restrictions for the term.
- For a result of 8, trade a Contact or Ally advantage for an equal level Rival or Enemy disadvantage. If you are simply gaining one of the two, they are Rival/2 or Enemy/2.
- For a result of 9, gain a free Promotion instead, if you are not using the random generation method.
- For a result of 10, gain twice the amount of money for this term, if you are not using the random generation method.
- For a result of 11, lose the money your character earned this term or suffer -1 Soc, if you are not using the random generation method.
- For a result of 12, use this table. Roll 1d6:

- 1 Magic. Your character has an experience involving powerful magic. Gain Occult 1.
- 2 Monsters. You have a very real and extended experience with something that was most definitely not human. Gain Occult 1.
- 3 Occult artifact. You have a strange and unusual object that is of some kind of occult importance, not available to just anyone.
- 4 Amnesia. Something happened to you, but you don't know what it was.
- 5 Contact with the beyond. You briefly come into contact with the Eternal Ones. Go up one level on the Madness Scale.
- 6 Alien technology. You have something that was not designed by human beings in your possession.

Injuries

Characters in *Chthonian Stars* are injured according to the Injury Table on p. 37 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. All of the standard rules for relying on medical care to help your character overcome an injury do apply, as this setting includes regenerative technologies and other forms of advanced medicine (except for anti-aging therapies). See the Technology chapter for details.

Qualities

Qualities represent special things about characters that cannot easily be described as characteristics or skills. Each term, you get a certain number of points with which to purchase advantages. Likewise, you also may acquire up to a certain amount of points worth of disadvantages to use to acquire more or more expensive advantages. Thus, a character who has served the equivalent of three full terms will have from six to twelve points worth of advantages and up to six points worth of disadvantages.

Any quality marked * may be taken multiple times for multiple effects, which are listed in the quality descriptions. Additionally, bonuses or penalties from different qualities that affect the same things are additive and do stack on one another.

Advantages

Acute Senses (1)*

One of your character's senses (sight, hearing, touch, or smell/taste) is extra-sharp. You receive a +2 DM for checks that rely on this sense. You may purchase this advantage once for each of your character's senses.

Ally (1-3)*

Your character has developed a relationship with someone who will go out of his way to help. The relationship with this ally goes both ways, however – he may occasionally also ask for help. Your character should be careful not to abuse this relationship, because allies will stop being so if not treated properly. An Ally/1 has some measure of influence and/or skill, while an Ally/2 is moderately influential and/or skilled, and an Ally/3 is very influential and/or skilled.

Ambidextrous (1)

Your character is capable of using either hand effectively and functionally has no preference. He can continue to function normally if one of his hands or arms is wounded.

Contact (1-2)*

Your character knows someone who can provide limited help or pass on important information. Unlike an Ally, this person doesn't ask for much in return other than the occasional favor. Contact/1 is either two contacts of low-ranking position or one contact of mid-level position, while Contact/2 is either two contacts of mid-level position or one contact of high-level position.

Common Sense (2)

Your character has a sense when a course of action or inaction is foolish. Whenever your character is about to participate in something that is foolhardy, your referee will make a secret Intelligence check – if successful, he will warn you about your potential mistake.

Disease Resistant (1)

Your character doesn't get sick easily and doesn't typically stay sick as long as other people. He gains a +2 DM to resist the effects of disease or illness, and stays sick only half as long.

Double-Jointed (1)

Your character's joints bend extra far. He gets a +2 DM to any skill check in which his double-jointedness might give him an advantage.

Dream Void (2)

Your character, given what is now in the universe, is fortunate – he is one of those rare people who doesn't dream. He cannot be plagued by nightmares, nor is he susceptible to the influence of the Old Ones in his sleep.

Eidetic Memory (3)

Your character commits things he sees and hears to memory, and it sticks. He has a nearly photographic recall, giving him a +4 DM to checks involving remembering things he has read or experienced firsthand.

Empath (3)

Your character has an intuitive sense of what other people are feeling. He gains a +2 DM for interpersonal skill checks based on Intellect or Social Standing, as well as to detect lies or deception.

Fast (2)

Your character is faster than he looks. He gets a +2 DM to Initiative checks, and can move up to 8 meters/9 yards in a Combat Round. He also gains a +2 DM on any check of the Athletics (co-ordination) skill that applies to physical speed.

Fearless (3)

Your character appears to others as fearless and doesn't get spooked easily. He is immune to the kinds of normal everyday human fears that plague people, such as those related to stress or anxiety, and receives a +4 DM to Horror Checks.

Gifted Metabolism (1)

Your character's body processes foods, drugs, and poisons better than other people. He gains a +2 DM to resist the effects of poisons, toxins, or drugs.

Hard to Kill (1-3)

Your character is the kind of person that fights to stay alive, even when others would pass on. At Hard to Kill/1, your character will stay alive and unconscious after reaching 0 in all his physical characteristics, but only until he has suffered an additional amount of damage equal to half his Endurance. At Hard to Kill/2, this buffer increases to equal his Endurance, and at Hard to Kill/3, this buffer increases to double his Endurance.

Internal Clock (1)

Your character has an intuitive sense of the passage of time, even when unconscious. He always knows what time it is, usually within about 10 minutes. However, this internal clock is set to his time, not necessary the clock time of the planet or colony he is visiting.

Internal Map (1)

Your character has an intuitive sense of direction and bearing. Once he establishes where he is, he remembers places he's been and how to get between them. He never gets lost in cities or colonies he's been to before. This also gives him a +4 DM to Astrogration checks.

Luck (1-3)

Fortune smiles on your character. At Luck/1, you can re-roll one check per session and take the higher result. At Luck/2, you can re-roll two checks per session and take the higher results. At Luck/3, you can re-roll two checks per session and take the higher result – but you can roll three times for one of those checks, taking the highest result of the three.

Nightvision (2)

Your character can see better in dim lighting than other people, and halves any environmental penalties due to darkness.

Occult Sensitive (3)

Your character has an intuitive sense for the presence of the otherworldly. Whenever otherworldly influence is present, your referee will make a secret Intelligence check. If your character is successful, your Referee will let you know he senses such influence – though not the source or direction of it.



Peripheral Vision (2)

Your character can see things in more detail throughout his field of vision, and is capable of making checks to notice things on the periphery of his vision that other people would miss.

Rapid Recovery (2)

Your character heals twice as fast as normal, regardless of mode of treatment. This only applies to physical wounds only.

Sexy (2)

Your character is especially attractive to the opposite sex (or those who would be attracted to his gender). He gains a +2 DM to all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing with anyone who might be attracted to him, opposite or same sex.

Sixth Sense (3)

Your character has an intuitive sense for danger. Whenever dangerous situations arise, your referee will make a secret Recon or Intelligence check. If your character is successful, your Referee will let you know he senses danger – though not the source or direction of it.

Tough (1-3)

Your character can take more punishment than others. Each level of Tough adds that many points to the amount of damage a character can take, to each of his physical characteristics. For example, a character with Tough/2 is treated as being able to take

an extra two points of damage each to his Strength, Dexterity, and Endurance (6 extra damage total).

Wealthy (1-3)

Your character has amassed a fortune. Perhaps he understands finances and investment the way others don't, perhaps his family is wealthy, or perhaps he just got lucky. At Wealthy/1, his starting wealth is increased 200%. At Wealthy/2, his starting wealth is increased 300%. At Wealthy/5, his starting wealth is increased 500%.

Disadvantages

A/D Stasis Visions (3)

Your character suffers terrible visions while suspended in a gravity couch. There is something in that state of suspended animation that opens him up to dark influence. Each time he emerges from a gravity couch, make an Endurance check; failure means he suffers a -2 DM to all checks for the first day he is out.

Annoying Traits (2)

There is something about your character that really bugs other people. He suffers a -2 DM to all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing.

Arrogant (1)

Your character thinks he's great, but others don't necessarily agree. He suffers a -1 DM to all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing.

Bigoted (1)

Your character doesn't like people (or cultures) that aren't like him. He doesn't care much for people from other countries, colonies, or planets, or for those with other skin colors or native languages. He suffers a -2 DM to all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing when dealing with people who aren't closely related to his native racial stock.

Chronic Pain (2)

Your character has an old injury or condition that still interferes with his comfort or mobility. He may have migraines, joint pain, inflammatory digestive issues, or anything of that nature. At the beginning of each session, make an Endurance check; failure means he suffers a -1 DM to all checks for the first half of his day, as well as 75% movement. Some conditions may call for a re-check, at your referee's discretion.

Coward (3)

Your character is easily frightened and he does not deal well with danger. Even normal things can freak him out, and he suffers a -4 DM to Horror Checks.

Dark Secret (1-3)

Your character has done or knows about something that others would freak out about. At Dark Secret/1, this is something that makes him the target of ridicule or causes him to be lightly ostracized. Dark Secret/2 means he would gain a powerful enemy, and Dark Secret/3 means incarceration or death would follow. At all levels, the characters' chances of promotion or advancement would be adversely affected.

Darkness Magnet (3)

The dark things of the universe are drawn to your character. It is almost as if he is a cosmic beacon for horrible things. Even if he tries to avoid the things in the shadows, they will somehow find him. It is difficult for him to live in civilized areas and he most often finds himself on the fringes. Unless he is resourceful and combat trained, it is likely his lifespan will be short.

Depressed (1)

Your character feels down and mopey most of the time. He sleeps a lot, has little motivation, is constantly pessimistic, and has nothing good to say about himself or life. In addition to all the ways this can cause him problems, he suffers a -1 DM to all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing.

Enemy (1-3)*

Your character has angered someone and they are out to get him. This person will go out of their way to cause your character problems and at least wishes to ruin, if not outright physically harm, him. An Enemy/1 has some measure of influence and/or skill, while an Enemy/2 is moderately influential and/or skilled, and an Enemy/3 is very influential and/or skilled.

Fanatic (1-3)

There's something in life your character holds too dear, most likely an ideal. At Fanatic/1, he is willing to risk social consequences for his fanaticism, at Fanatic/2, he is willing to risk danger, and at Fanatic/3, he is willing to sacrifice his life for it.

Fat (2)

Your character isn't heavy or big boned – he's some shade of obese. He suffers a -1 DM to Initiative Checks, as well as a -2 DM to any checks involving speed or agility, especially uses of the Athletics (co-ordination or endurance) skill. He also can only move 4 meters/4.5 yards during a Combat Round.

Manic (1)

Your character is upbeat and energetic most of the time, in an exaggerated way that is unnerving to those around him. He can't sit still, talks too fast, and has an over-inflated sense of self-esteem. In addition to all the ways this will get him into trouble, he suffers a -1 DM to all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing.

Nightmares (3)

Your character suffers from nightmares, often brought on by the darkness that is once again coming into the world. Each morning, make an Endurance check; failure means he suffers a -1 DM to all checks for the first half of his day.

Persistent Injury (1-3)

Something happened to your character that impairs normal physical function. Perhaps there's something complicated that has prevented physicians from operating or replacing organs or limbs, or maybe he lost a body part and something happened to prevent regenerative therapy. At Persistent Injury/1, this means he suffers a -1 DM to any checks that would be influenced by the injury (such as to Recon when missing an eye). At Persistent Injury/2, this increases to a -2 DM, and to a -3 DM at Persistent Injury/3.

Phobia (1)*

There's something that scares the daylights out of your character. Most times, phobias are of simple and natural things, some of the most common being acrophobia (fear of heights), arachnophobia (fear of spiders), entymophobia (fear of insects), or scotophobia (fear of the dark). Whenever a character is confronted with the object of his fear, he suffers a -1 DM to all checks until a couple of minutes after the object is no longer an issue.

Poor (1-3)

Your character is not financially solvent. Something has happened to ruin his financial standing, whether it be malfeasance, personal flaw, or addiction. At Poor/1, his starting wealth is reduced to 75% of normal. At Poor/2, his starting wealth is reduced to 50% of normal. At Poor/3, his starting wealth is reduced to 25% of normal.

Rival (1-3)*

Your character has someone who feels he is in competition with your character for something, be it an object or objective, or accomplishment in a particular field. He will harass your character, and generally attempt to out-do or humiliate him. A Rival/1 has some measure of influence and/or skill, while a Rival/2 is moderately influential and/or skilled, and a Rival/3 is very influential and/or skilled.

Sensory Impaired (1)*

One of your character's senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell/taste) doesn't work the way it should. You receive a -2 DM for checks that rely on this sense. You may acquire this disadvantage once for each of your character's senses.

Skinny (2)

Your character is not trim or wiry, he's downright sickly. He suffers a -1 DM to Initiative Checks, as well as a -2 DM to any checks involving strength or agility, especially uses of the Athletics skill.

Slow (2)

For some reason, your character moves much slower than most would expect. He suffers a -2 DM to Initiative checks, and can move up to 4 meters/4.5 yards in a Combat Round. He also suffers a -2 DM on any check of the Athletics (co-ordination) skill that applies to physical speed.

Tormented (1)

Your character is the kind of person that wrestles with inner demons. He may suffer from tragic self-doubt or have psychological scars from some sort of abuse. In any event, what is normal for him may not be normal for other, well-adjusted people. Though being Tormented does not have an immediate effect on social interactions, it is difficult for such people to maintain long-lasting romantic relationships. Those who've known Tormented characters for any length of time will regard them as strange or damaged as well.

Ugly (2)

Your character is, in no way, an attractive person. He suffers a -2 DM to all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing that in some way involve physical appearance, though not for any skill checks to intimidate or frighten.

Vengeful (1)

Your character doesn't take losing or being wronged very well. He doesn't even have to have actually lost or been wronged, he only has to perceive he has. He suffers a -1 DM to all interpersonal skill checks involving Intelligence or Social Standing when dealing with the person upon which he wishes vengeance. Furthermore, he must make an Endurance check not to take action against the person, whether through verbal abuse, attempted humiliation, pranks, legal action, or even physical violence – each time he is confronted with them.

Wanted (1-3)

Your character has done something and now the law wants to have a word. At Wanted/1, he has committed a misdemeanor and the search for him is not intense – though there will be a warrant for his arrest on file. At Wanted/2, he has committed a non-violent felony, which has brought on a warrant and mild alert for his arrest. However, at Wanted/3, he has committed a violent felony and authorities everywhere are on the look-out for him. In any event, he'll need a false identity to move around, unless smuggled.

Character Advancement

The normal method of character advancement in *Traveller*, as presented on p. 59, may be used if you so choose. It is a more realistic method of character development, where characters take longer periods of time in study and training in order to increase any of their skills.

However, many games today rely on more dramatic, less realistic forms of character advancement. Presented here is a set of alternate rules that we recommend using in *Chthonian Stars*. Characters are awarded Experience at the end of every play session, which they can bank and eventually spend to increase characteristics, skills, and acquire or dissolve qualities.

Increase Characteristics

It is possibly through training and a certain amount of blessing and luck to increase one's characteristics. You must increase your characteristics incrementally, going through each level in order. For example, you can't skip from an 8 to a 10. You would instead have to increase from an 8 to a 9, and then later to a 10, spending a total of 70 Experience.

It is up to your referee when you can increase your characteristics. Make sure you get his approval before logging the advancement.

Increase	Experience Cost
To a 2	40 Experience
To a 3, 4, or 5	30 Experience each point
To a 6, 7, or 8	30 Experience each point
To a 9, 10, or 11	40 Experience each point
To a 12, 13, or 14	60 Experience each point
To a 15	80 Experience

Learn a New Skill

It is, of course, possible to learn new skills – it is unlikely your character has all the skills you want at the start. This requires that you either spend a certain amount of time in personal study or training, or that you find a qualified teacher (anyone with the skill at level 2 or greater). The amount of time required will be determined by your referee, based on the skill in question. Obviously, technical or scientific skills are going to take longer than many others – it takes longer to understand physics than it does to learn how to perform basic administrative tasks, for example.

Once you have met the study or training requirements, spend 20 Experience to gain a new skill at level 0.

The Jack of All Trades skill is a special case. It takes a significant amount of time to study the basics required to be proficient across such a wide array of fields. In fact, your referee may rule that it is impossible to develop Jack of All Trades as a new skill. If he does allow it, it costs 100 Experience to gain Jack of All Trades at level 0. This is a skill best acquired during character generation.

Increase an Existing Skill

In order to increase a skill your character already knows, you must spend a number of Experience called for by the level to which you are increasing. Your character must have recently and regularly used the skill in question in order to increase it, and skills may only be increased by one level per session. You must also advance through all skill levels – you cannot jump from a two to a four, for example. The maximum level you can achieve in any skill is 4.

Increase	Experience Cost
To a 1	10 Experience
To a 2	20 Experience each point
To a 3	30 Experience each point
To a 4	40 Experience each point

Again, the Jack of All Trades skill is a special case, since it applies across the board. It costs five times the listed Experience cost to increase Jack of All Trades.

Developing New Advantages & Disadvantages; Losing Disadvantages

Sometimes your story will dictate that your character can now acquire a new advantage or finally lose a disadvantage. Your referee will let you know when this is appropriate. Please note that you never receive additional benefit from new disadvantages that your character may acquire through play, though your referee may dictate that your character now suffers from them.

Cost of Quality	Experience Cost
1 Point	20 Experience
2 Points	40 Experience
3 Points	60 Experience

Most of the basic game rules you'll need to play *Chthonian Stars* are found from p. 48-85 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. However *Chthonian Stars* introduces several new rules frameworks, which will be detailed in this chapter.

For ease of reference, we have included the basic rules for making checks.

Die Roll Conventions

You will need only six-sided dice to play this game. Here are the basic die rolling conventions used in *Traveller*.

Check (or Throw)

To determine if a character succeeds or fails at a particular task, the player must make a check. To make a check, the player rolls 2d6 and adds any appropriate Dice Modifiers (such as a skill his character possesses, or a bonus from a piece of equipment). If the total is equal to or greater than the target number for that check, he succeeds. A check will usually have a skill or characteristic associated with it. For example, a check of 'Dex 8+' means 'roll 2d6, add your Dexterity Characteristic Modifier, and you succeed if you have a total result of 8 or more'.

Target Numbers

In many checks, the player needs to roll equal to or above a specific number (usually, eight or more). This is denoted by a number followed by a plus, such as 8+ or 10+.

Dice Modifier (abbreviated to DM)

A number to be applied to a die roll before it is used. Dice Modifiers are preceded by a sign, which indicates if the number is to be added to or subtracted from the roll. For example, a Dice Modifier of -2 indicates that two is to be subtracted from the roll; a Dice Modifier of +4 indicates that four is to be added to the roll.

Task Checks

To make a check, the player rolls 2d6 and any appropriate Dice Modifiers. If the total is 8 or more, the character succeeds. The most common forms of task checks are characteristic checks and skill checks.

Characteristic Check

These checks are used when the task is one not covered by an obvious skill, or where the character's innate abilities are the most important influence on the result. To make a Characteristic check, roll 2d6 and add the appropriate characteristic Dice Modifier.

Skill Check

For a skill check, the character adds both his skill level and an appropriate characteristic DM.

When making a skill check, if a character does not have any levels in that skill, then he suffers a -3 unskilled Dice Modifier.

Task Difficulties

Different kinds of tasks utilize different levels of Dice Modifiers, as shown here.

Task Difficulty	DM
Simple	+6
Easy	+4
Routine	+2
Average	+0
Difficult	-2
Very Difficult	-4
Formidable	-6

When To Check

Now, you're not going to have to roll dice every time you want to try something. The Referee should only call for checks:

- when the characters are in danger.
- when the task is especially difficult or hazardous.
- when the characters are under the pressure of time.
- when success or failure is especially important or interesting.

Horror Checks

Characters in *Chthonian Stars* run into some very scary things. Sometimes it's situations that are frightening and sometimes it's the things that go bump in the night. Your character's reaction to such things are simulated by Horror Checks.

Whenever your character has a chance of getting scared or runs into a frightening creature, he must succeed at a Horror Check to prevent his fight or flight (mostly flight) instinct from being triggered. All Horror Checks are End 8+, often modified by the intensity of the situation or otherworldliness of the creature involved.

Terrifying creatures have a Horror Factor, which represents the DM applied to all Horror Checks associated with them. Situations, on the other hand, utilize DM's as appropriate, as determined by your referee.

Horror Difficulty	DM
Disturbing	+2
Scary	+0
Horrific	-2
Truly Terrifying	-4
Nightmarish	-6

If your character succeeds at his Horror Check, then he processes the fear without adverse effect. He will not need to make another Horror Check for this particular stimulus at this time, whether it be situational or creature-induced. However, if he fails, he suffers a Horror Effect – to determine how he reacts, roll 2d6 and consult the Horror Effects table.

2d6	Horror Effect
2-3	Mess Your Pants
4-6	Run Away Screaming
7-8	Shriek Like A Little Kid
9-10	Faint Dead Away
11-12	Fight Instincts Kick In (Foolishly)

Explanation of Effects

There are four primary effects someone in the throes of fear can suffer, and none of them are pretty.

Mess Your Pants

Your character is so scared he loses control of his bodily functions. He has urinated or defecated in his pants (possibly both). In addition to discomfort and the potential for later embarrassment, he cannot take action for two rounds.

Run Away Screaming

Your character is so freaked out that he wants to get as far away from this thing as possible. He can take no other action than to run in the opposite

direction away from the thing that scared him, and he will scream at least briefly unless stifled. He will keep running until he either feels relatively safe or that he has a reasonable chance of hiding from the thing. Then, after being still for a minute, he can begin to take conscious action again.

Shriek Like A Little Kid

Your character is so scared he starts to scream. These aren't the screams of someone who is in control, but rather the panicked shrieks of the terrified. He cannot stop shrieking for six rounds, though he can begin to take other action again after three rounds.

Faint Dead Away

Your character is so freaked out he can't take it anymore. He blacks out and crumples in a heap on the floor. Unless someone hits him with smelling salts or a stimulant of some kind, he's out for the next 1d6 x 10 minutes.

Fight Instinct Kick In (Foolishly)

The fight or flight instincts are closely related and most fearful things trigger flight. However, whatever scared your character forced his primal fight instinct to kick in instead, and now he must attack the thing that scared him with a terrible rage. If it is a situation that triggered this reaction, he must flip out into a fit of rage that is partly directed against the situation and partly just insanity. He regains control of himself after the stimulus is either dead or gone – or until 1d6 minutes have passed or he has taken at least 5 points of damage, if it must remain.

Becoming Accustomed

It is possible to face a situation or a creature so many times that it loses its fearful barbs. If such a thing is something characters must face with any regularity, referees should only call for Horror Checks the first half a dozen or so times. After that, the only way the situation or creature should inspire fear again is if it is presented in some way that is out of the ordinary.

Madness

The world of *Chthonian Stars* is as such that the fragile world that people have crafted for themselves can come tumbling down around their ears – psychologically speaking. Whenever a character is exposed to something that puts pressure on his psyche or forces him to face something that is outside his understanding of things, he risks madness.



Situations that can instill madness are rated in two ways. Madness Checks are End 8+, and the first rating is the DM for that check. Naturally, some situations are easier to process than others. The second is Madness Intensity, which is the number of Madness Levels a character will gain should he fail the Madness Check.

For example, being captured and tortured for days might carry a Madness Rating of +0/1, meaning there is no DM for the Madness Check and failure would mean the character would gain one Madness Level. On the other hand, reading a true and intact version of the Necronomicon could have a Madness Rating of -4/2, meaning that there is -4 DM to the Madness Check (meaning it is likely such an action will induce madness) and failure would mean the character would gain two Madness Levels.

All characters begin at Lucid and work their way up the Madness Scale from there.

The Madness Scale

There are four levels of madness, as well as one level of sanity. All characters begin at Level 0: Lucid, unless an event during character generation forced them to increase in madness.

Level 0: Lucid

Your character's psychic defenses are intact and a psychologist would brand him well-adjusted – or at least as well-adjusted as people get. He seems perfectly normal to pretty much everyone.

Level I: Cracked

Your character has some of what people might politely refer to as “quirks.” Of course, these quirks are merely the cracks in your character's psyche that are the first hint of his eroding sanity.

Level II: Bonkers

Your character can masquerade as normal for brief periods of social interaction, but anything longer – as well as in instances of people visiting his personal space – will clearly point to his oncoming madness. A mental health professional will strongly recommend care, and your character runs the risk of being committed if he sits still long enough.

Level III: Raving

Your character can no longer keep his madness to himself, nor can he sit quietly with it. He may still have good phases that allow him to interact with society, but anyone spending time in even casual conversation will know he is not right. Mental health professionals will commit him to care without question.

Level IV: Starkers

It is impossible to hide how utterly gone your character is. He is completely divorced from conventional sanity and can in no way function in society or with other reasonably sane people. The authorities, if they aren't already, will be looking to intervene and carry him off to in-patient therapy.

Mental Disorders

Based on your level of madness, you may choose how this manifests in your character. There will be eccentricities that will begin to show in the way your character behaves around other people. The more mad he becomes, the more radical and pronounced these will be.

To make it easy, choose one mental disorder for your character for each level of madness (except for Lucid). All of your character's disorders should intensify and become more pronounced with each Madness Level. Rather than give you an exhaustive list of all the ways a human psyche can break, here are a few of those disorders that will be the most interesting for this kind of game.

- *Dependent Disorder* – your character no longer takes responsibility for his life, and now relies on others to make decisions and take care of him.
- *Eating Disorder* – your character develops an unhealthy relationship with food.
- *Hypochondriasis* – your character is always afraid of being sick and constantly thinks that something is wrong with him health-wise.
- *Major Depression* – your character experiences episodes of deep sadness and despair.
- *Manic-Depression* – your character alternates between depression and mania, sadness and despair alternates with exaggerated elation, recklessness, and distractibility.
- *Multiple Personality Disorder* – your character develops a whole other unique personality to deal with the horrors he has faced. Work out the details with your referee as to when this other personality surfaces and whether or not you have control over it.
- *Narcissistic Disorder* – your character suffers from an over-inflated view of his own self-importance and needs to be the center of attention.
- *Panic Disorder* – your character now suffers from panic attacks.
- *Paranoid Schizophrenia* – your character suffers from delusions of persecution or grandeur or both.
- *Phobia* – your character is now irrationally fearful of something common.
- *Rage Disorder* – your character has virtually no patience and loses his temper when anything bothers him. He is likely to break things and physically harm people when it is inappropriate.
- *Schizoid Disorder* – your character withdraws from social interaction and no longer engages in emotional relationship with others.
- *Sleeping Disorder* – your character has a problem sleeping through the night or getting to sleep at all. Nightmares may or may not be a factor.
- *Sociopathy* – your character no longer views other people as such, but rather as objects or tools. He no longer has any regard for life and has difficulty faking normal human emotions.

Coming Back

It is far easier to slip into the depths of madness than it is to come back from it. The human psyche may be a marvelously resilient thing, but once damaged it tends to stay that way.

There are two types of care that can help a character return to sanity. The first is therapy, which can

involve counseling and drugs, and the second is inpatient therapy, also known as being committed or being thrown in the bin. The first is far more preferable, but is quite limited.

Therapy involves working things through in counseling and may or may not be accompanied by medication. This kind of treatment works for those at Levels I or II Madness. Characters must generally go once or twice a week in order to gain any benefit, over a period of time. Generally, the first month is a wash, as patient and therapist develop a relationship and work through any barriers to the process that might exist. As a simplification, characters will lose one Madness Level every four months after that. However, some mental disorders may take longer than that, such as multiple personalities. Your referee will determine how long it takes.

In-patient therapy means the character has been committed to a lock-and-key institution and cannot get out without his physician's approval. He is under constant supervision and is most likely heavily medicated. This type of therapy is the only kind that will help those who have reached Levels III or IV Madness. As a simplification, it takes a year of game time to come back from Level IV to Level III, then another six months from Level III to Level II. Then, a character can be released to regular therapy and into the world.

That may seem like a long time, but it's a small price to pay. These guidelines are for characters only, so that you can bring your character back from the very edge. Others in the setting may not be so lucky. Your referee will rule as to how long it takes for other NPCs to recover – those who have reached Level IV Madness may not recover at all.

Beyond the Pale

Characters who reach Level IV Madness are about as far gone as you can get. They no longer are capable of appearing normal and they're at the point where they might lock themselves in a room and write on the wall in their own excrement. In short, such characters are no longer playable as is.

Does this mean that your character who has had one too many bad days is now going to be taken away from you forever? Not at all. It does mean he'll be out of play for a while, however. You have two options that will work – both involve having your character committed to an institution for a period

of time (usually 18 months), so that he can recover with the proper help and guidance.

The first option is that your character spends time in an institution and you choose to sit that time out. You can choose not to attend play sessions, or you can come and provide moral support and participate in whatever way you are capable. Perhaps you can help the referee out by portraying NPCs. Regardless, your character is on hiatus while the rest of the group plays on. However, you shouldn't be punished for that. It is recommended that referees give characters in such predicaments half of what the rest of the group earns.

The second option is similar to the first, except that you either generate a temporary character to play (perhaps with a grisly fate in mind) or that you take on the role of one of the regular secondary NPCs in your game. That way, you are fully participating – and, as such, it is recommended that your referee award you full experience for your primary character, even if he is in the bin.

Eventually, the magic day will come when you're character is free again, and you're back to normal – or at least normal enough to go out in public.

Survivability

Combat in *Traveller* can be quite deadly. Add to that the realities of the *Chthonian Stars* setting and you may find characters in danger of dying more often than you'd like. *Chthonian Stars* has two optional rules that will allow your characters to survive longer in the face of imminent danger.

However, either of these are optional rules that you may either use or ignore – whatever works best for you and your group.

Extended Consciousness

Normally, characters fall unconscious once their Endurance has been reduced to 0 and either their Strength or Dexterity has also been reduced to 0. To keep your character up and moving longer, have them stay conscious through having both their Endurance and either their Strength or Dexterity reduced to 0, falling unconscious only after half of their remaining characteristic is lost.

Fate Points

To help keep characters alive even longer, give them Fate Points. Each character gets one Fate Point,

which allows him to cheat death. At any point in which a character would be knocked unconscious or die, he can spend his Fate Point to completely avoid all damage from that attack. Furthermore, his other wounds weren't as bad as he thought, and he immediately heals 2d6 points. The rate at which Fate Points return is up to your Referee, but having one point per session is not unreasonable.

Exotic Atmospheres and Environments

Across the solar system, there are a wide variety of atmospheres and levels of gravity. These highly variable environments can have a distinct affect on the way characters function. Operating in the almost livable atmosphere of the partially terra-formed Mars is a far cry from taking a stroll across the desert plains of Venus. The following rules can be used to help simulate some of the difficulties when operating in these dangerous and exotic environments.

Exotic Atmosphere

There are a whole host of different atmospheres across the solar system. Some are relatively benign and forgiving, while others will kill a man in a matter of seconds. To simplify things to an extent, all atmospheres are split into one of several categories, each of which is discussed below.

Earth-like: This is the standard atmosphere one would find on Earth or within a colony or station with a properly functioning environmental processor. There is no special gear necessary in this sort of environment.

Near-Earth: Mars has been in the process of being terraformed for decades. As a result, the atmosphere has started to approach a point that it is habitable. However, note that it is only approaching that point – it still has several decades to go before it will truly be a habitable planet. A person can survive unprotected on the surface of Mars for several hours, so long as he does not exert himself. With a simple breathing mask, this period can be extended indefinitely. Space stations and colonies with severely damaged environmental systems can also fall under this category of atmosphere.

If exerting oneself in a Near-Earth type of atmosphere, a character must make a 8+ End check each turn. Failure results in the character being unable to do anything more than move half his normal distance, as he tries to catch his breath. If this check is failed

three turns in a row, the character falls unconscious and can only be revived once a sufficient supply of oxygen has been provided.

Non-Toxic Exotic Atmospheres: This sort of atmosphere lacks a sufficient supply of oxygen for a human to survive. However, it is not immediately toxic either. An oxygen supply is absolutely vital for any character to operate in this sort of environment.

A character without an independent supply of oxygen will fall unconscious in a number of turns equal his Endurance. If attempting to exert himself, a character must make a 10+ End check. Failure means the character has fallen unconscious. Once unconscious, the character can survive another number of turns equal to his Endurance. After this point, he will have suffocated to death.

Toxic Exotic Atmospheres: These atmospheres are poisonous. Merely catching a whiff will send one into a coughing fit, as the body tries to purge itself. No character should ever even consider trying to operate without an independent source of oxygen.

If a character has no source of oxygen, he must make a 8+ End check each turn or outright die. A character can hold his breath for a number of turns equal to double his Endurance if he is doing nothing more strenuous than walking. Doing anything more strenuous than this will limit the number of turns he can hold his breath to half his Endurance.

Vacuum: This is a complete lack of atmosphere. A character can survive in a vacuum for no more than a number of turns equal to half his Endurance. In addition, each turn he will suffer 2d6 damage that cannot be mitigated in any manner.

Exotic Environments

Beyond the composition of the atmosphere, the overall environment can also have a significant effect on the way characters operate. In many cases, the environment itself will require more than just a breathing mask.

Temperate: This is considered normal for humans and they can operate without anything fancier than some winter gear or sun screen (if even that is necessary).

Arctic: Arctic environments are those which average less than 0-degrees Fahrenheit. A character will need to wear an environmental suit or risk freezing to

death. Each turn a character is exposed to an arctic environment, he must make an End 8+ check. Failure causes a -1 DM to all activities, physical or mental, until the character can get warmed up. This DM is cumulative with each failure. When the total number of failures equals the Endurance of the character, he will lose consciousness and freeze to death in a number of rounds equal to twice his Endurance.

Super-Cold: This environment is so cold (-100 degrees Fahrenheit or less) that merely being exposed to it for a few moments can result in severe frostbite. A character cannot operate in a super-cold situation at all without wearing an environmental suit. If exposed to a super-cold clime, the character cannot do anything more than stagger forward at half his normal speed and will freeze to death in a number of rounds equal to half his Endurance.

Super-Heated: These are hot, super-heated atmospheres that are oven-like. Stepping into this sort of environment will result in severe and debilitating burns within seconds. Each turn exposed to these temperatures, the character will suffer 2d6 damage. This damage cannot be mitigated by armor or other conventional means. In addition, the character will suffer long-term burns that will impose a -2 DM to all actions until they are healed.



Captain Percy Aniston blinked his eyes several times, trying to get them to focus. It was always this way when he woke up from A/D stasis – that period of time when you're put under and locked away in a protective gel that keeps your body from being crushed by the massive forces generated when the Transit Drives kick in. Anyone outside a grav couch wouldn't survive; his friends would find a pulpy mess left behind. Percy had seen the effects before – usually on rats that managed to stow away on a ship.

Holding his arm up, Percy tried to focus. Slowly, he started to see the blur resolve into a hand. Admittedly, it was kind of gross-looking, covered in the remnants of the blue-green gel he'd been cocooned in for the last week. His skin was now temporarily stained a nasty color and matching chunks still dripped off him. He closed his hand into a fist several times, then started on the ritual he had practiced dozens of times since he'd first started deep-system runs. Test the left arm, then the right. Make sure your legs are working. Curl your toes. Blink. Everything seemed to be fine. It wasn't like there was any real danger of losing function, but Percy was superstitious and habits can be hard to break.

Reaching out in front of him, he touched the frosted glass. Lights inside the couch slowly brightened, giving his disused eyes enough time to adjust. Once the light inside of the couch was normalized with the room outside, the door hissed and popped open, sliding back into a recess in the couch. Designers seem to put these couches upright for reasons Captain Aniston could never really understand, but at least it made for an easy exit. No pulling yourself up using tired and weakened limbs – you just walked right out. He stepped out and onto the deck, but ended up dancing back and forth, trying to keep them off the cold plating.

"Mother... the least you could do is warm the floor up for me, Doc," complained Percy. He looked over at Doctor Curtis Spence, who was scanning read-outs on the flex panel that was suspended from the ceiling between the two. Glowing characters slowly scrolled up the screen as the Doctor's eyes flicked back and forth, taking in the information. He was an older man with the slightly portly body that tend-

ed to come upon one as the decades pass one by. Percy and he had been making the Neptune run for almost ten years together now. Enough time with enough stuff in the past to make their relationship a little more than just a friendship.

Curtis looked up and smiled, "What, and miss your cute dance? You'd think after ten years you'd man-up and deal with it instead of prancing around like a school-girl princess."

Percy shot him a sour look as he padded over to the showers. It was the same routine every time he woke up – a private way the two reaffirmed their bond before the rest of the crew stirred.

As he stepped into the shower, Percy said, "I feel a bit heavy. I think I'm getting old."

"You are getting old, but that's not what your feeling. Seems the ring is spinning about 2% faster than it should," the Doctor reported, as the water started washing the gel off Percy.

"I'll get Anya to take a look at it when she wakes up," replied Percy. Anya Galperin was the ship's chief engineer. She had only been on this run three times, but thus far Percy had nothing bad to say about the woman. She kept his ship running in top shape, which is all one could reasonably want when traveling this deep into the solar system. Emergencies in deep space often meant death for those involved.

"Wake the crew Doc. I'm heading to the bridge. Get Anya up first," said Captain Aniston as he finally pulled on some warm socks.

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About twenty minutes later, Anya ducked under the lip of the bridge hatch, thankful for being able to walk in zero-gravity. Special magnetic plates in her shoes and special fibers that ran through her clothing were attracted to others that were built into the deck of the ship, which pulled her towards the deck. Everything on the ship that wasn't bolted down was the same. Drop a pen and it will fall to the deck –



albeit a little slower than it would in 1G. However, it meant that one didn't have to worry much about tools and gear floating away, which was important in her line of work.

'Heya Cap. Doc tells me your dance this time was especially amusing.' Anya smiled.

Percy frowned. Curtis had a habit of recording his first steps out of the grav couch and showing it to new crew members. He said it kept Percy human in the eyes of his people. The Captain shot

Anya a look, but was greeted by her gleeful imitation of what she'd seen on the tape. It was actually funny, so Percy couldn't help but smile – but just a little.

"If you are quite done, I need you to take a look at the rotational settings on ring one," said the Captain.

Anya stopped her dancing almost immediately. As the engineer, this was the kind of thing she took very seriously.

"Doc said something and I thought I could feel it. Seems the deck plates in the zero-G regions are fine though," she said, as she sat down at the engineering station and brought the flex panel to life. A schematic of the Costello filled the screen with a variety of readouts, showing the status of several key areas of the ship. Percy could see that a small area glowed red near the power plant for ring two. Before he could ask about it, Anya touched the area on the screen and the schematic zoomed in.

"Looks like we took a micrometeorite hit during acceleration. Nothing to worry about though. It doesn't look like it was near anything critical. I'll get it patched up later today," Anya reported, as she zoomed back out. Moments later, she had focused in on the rotational motors for ring one and frowned at what she saw. Percy could see nothing out of the ordinary – no tell-tale red or yellow glowing lines that usually indicated a problem spot.

"I'm not seeing any problems with the ring one drives, Captain." Anya tapped a few keys on the board in front of her, opening several more windows appeared on the flex screen. "You said the rings were running 2% too fast right?"

"No, Curtis said that, but he's a doctor not an engineer. He could have had the number wrong."

"Not likely. You don't need to be an engineer to read a number on the screen. It shows it's 3% above nominal now. Just a sec..." She hit more keys and looked at some new information. "This is weird. The ring started accelerating minutes after the ship exited the A-Curve." A few more key presses and her frown deepened. "Twenty minutes later, ring two started the same acceleration. Both rings are still speeding up."

"Can't you just reset them?" the Captain asked. His worry was starting to show in his voice.

"Already tried. The reset doesn't seem to be doing anything. I'm going to need to go down there. I need Jackson awake – I may need another hand."

Percy started to open a comm channel to the med bay when an alarm from the engineering panel stopped him.

"What the hell? Both rings just jumped to six percent. I can't wait. I need to get down there now."

Anya shot up from the chair just as Curtis' voice came over the intercom.

"Hey Captain, I just felt a weird vibration through the floor and I can definitely feel the gravity here increasing." Now Curtis sounded worried, too – if not a bit frightened.

"Anya's on it. Get Jackson awake and tell him to meet her in the ring drive room. She needs his help." Percy sat down at the engineering station to keep an eye on the screen.

"He's showering now. Is this a serious problem?" Curt's asked.

"Don't worry, Anya's on it," Percy replied, putting more confidence in his voice than he felt. Even the smallest emergencies in deep space were bad and he prayed this was not going to become one.

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Anya stopped by her quarters long enough to grab her gear, a portable comp, some tools – everything she might need. Her mind was going over the programs and electronics that controlled the ring's rotational speeds, but she could not figure out why they would be accelerating. It just wasn't something that should happen. She would understand it if they were stopping altogether. That would be normal mechanical failure, but not likely on her ship. For them to increase in speed someone would need...

Just as the thought was going through her mind, a flash of movement ahead caught her eye. At first, she thought she had imagined it, but then she saw it again. A man peered around the open hatch ahead – the hatch that led to the drive room for ring one. Before she could really process the thought, he brought up a pistol and aimed it right at her. Her rusty naval instincts kicked in, but not soon enough. Anya cried out as the bullet ripped through her shoulder. She fell backwards and rolled behind a support. For some reason, it occurred to her that this was the first time she had ever been shot. It hurt like hell and she was leaking.

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On the bridge, Percy felt an unpleasant vibration through the deck. He knew his ship inside and out,

including all the sounds and vibrations. This was not normal. Looking at the readout, he saw that the rings had just jumped to 10% above optimal. They were still accelerating and the rate at which they were doing so was still increasing. Soon it was going to get a lot harder to move. Just as he was about to buzz Anya, the comm beeped.

"We have a really big problem, Captain!" Percy recognized the panic rising in her voice.

"I know. The rings just jumped in velocity again," Percy responded.

"That's not the problem! Somebody down here just shot me!"

That was the last thing Percy expected to hear. How could anyone besides his crew even be awake? All the passengers were kept asleep on this long of a voyage – it was easier and cheaper that way.

"I'm betting this guy and the problem with the rings have something in common. Hold on... I think I hear him. I've got to get moving again." Percy heard Anya groan in pain.

"Are you okay? How bad is it?"

"It's just my shoulder, but it really hurts. Be..."

Her response was cut short by the sound of gunfire.

"Anya! Anya! Are you okay?" shouted the Captain.

"Yeah, he was shooting out one of the control panels." The deck of the ship suddenly shuddered. "Uh, how fast are the rings turning now?"

The Captain glanced at the readout on the flex screen. It read 14%.

He relayed the data. "How fast can they go before we have a problem?"

"Not much more," she said. "I've got to do something."

Percy was about to tell her not to take foolish risks, but Curtis interrupted. "Jackson is heading out now. Gravity in here is still increasing. Percy, we're in real trouble, aren't we?"

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The man with the gun had apparently moved on, so Anya made a run for it. Ducking through the nearest hatch, she found him there, ready to shoot out the last of the intact control panels. He looked like one of the passengers. He saw her and smiled.

"I'm sure this all comes as a surprise to you, no?" He turned to level the gun at her, again.

Anya could only nod.

"I am sorry about your shoulder. I didn't mean to make you suffer."

And then he fired into the panel, blowing it to smithereens. Anya could hear the machinery strain even harder.

"Why? Why are you doing this?" she shouted, panicked.

The man laughed. "Little girl, I am but a harbinger of the truth. Humanity is nothing more than a pestilence that will soon be purged by the true gods. They will purify existence and right all that is wrong. Only those of us who understand our place will be...."

His words were cut short by a loud pop. Anya knew what that sound meant. She closed her eyes and prayed.

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From the outside, if anyone had been there to see it, the first gravity ring of the Costello seemed to have lost its center. It wobbled in a way the ship was not designed to handle. The stresses of the uneven spin snapped structural supports throughout the ship, tearing them out and ripping holes in the hull. Atmosphere vented to space as the rotating ring broke free. As it spun off into the void, one of the ring's spokes caught on the second ring, and the whole thing started over again. Within moments, the remnants of the Costello were scattered, tumbling through empty space, leaving nothing behind.

The crew's fate would not even be a memory.

The technological advances of the last 150 years have enabled humanity an unprecedented level of comfort, security, and convenience. Every field has seen major leaps forward, with each leap providing the seeds needed for the next leap. In some cases, advances in one field have necessitated the need for advances in others. As medical technology has improved and life spans have increased, the Earth became ever more crowded, leading to the need to expand beyond the boundaries of our home planet. This led to necessary advances in thermal dynamics, astrophysics, and materials sciences needed to make the exploitation of the solar system truly commercially viable. Food sciences had to create breakthrough methods of growing food far from Earth. It is a cycle that has only increased in intensity as humanity seeks more ways to go beyond the normal limits Mother Nature originally imposed upon the race.

Medicinal Sciences

In the last century, the average life expectancy has radically increased, with an average person now living for a little over 150 years. This has largely been a result of a number of major medical advances that have led to an ever-increasing understanding of the way the human body works, and how to best combat the natural ravages that time inflicts upon it. While many in the medical field would like to point to their own specialty as the leading factor in the improvement of the human experience, in truth it is a combination of disciplines that have worked together to make this possible.

Smart Vaccines

Viruses and bacteria will forever be a threat. As fast as a vaccine can be found, the virus or bacteria in question mutates and begins the cycle anew. For centuries, this was the way it was and there was no end in sight – at least not until the advent of smart vaccines.

Smart vaccines have the ability to follow the mutation of the virus they have been tailored to combat. As the cause of the disease mutates, the smart vaccine adapts itself to the mutation, extending its capability to fight off infection. Someone immunized

with a smart vaccine is largely immune for several decades, regardless of any mutation the disease may undergo.

Smart vaccines are not perfect, however. While they can adapt to mutations, they generally can only do so if the vaccine is no more than two generations behind the mutation of the infection. Anything more of a gap often means the vaccine will not recognize the virus or bacteria and will not be able to provide the body the protection it needs. Boosters can minimize this limitation and hospital stores are regularly updated anytime a new mutation is discovered.

A second weakness of these vaccines lies in their vulnerability to previous generations of the disease. While they can keep up with the ever-changing nature of the infection, they eventually lose the ability to counter early generations of the same infection. However, this limitation is generally not a problem as it is rare for an old generation of the infection to reappear in the general population.

Custom Organs

In days of old, if a person's organ failed, either from disease or simply due to age, there were only two options: install an artificial version or find a donor with a compatible spare. Unfortunately, there was no guarantee that the body would accept either and, in the case of a donor organ, one often had to wait until the donor had died. Today, a third and infinitely superior option exists.

Using technology derived from rapid-prototyping, organs that are exact duplicates of a patient's own can literally be printed in biological 3D. The technology works in two steps. First, a biopsy of the organ in question is taken from the patient. The genetic structure of the organ is then inserted into a special organic liquid called bioreplicant gel. This gel absorbs and takes on the same genetic building blocks as the patient, ensuring that it is completely compatible and reduces the chance of the organ being rejected to zero. The organ in question is then scanned by highly sensitive and precise scanners, building a three-dimensional model. Doctors can then look for any imperfections in the organ and correct them. Once this

is complete, the model is fed into a highly specialized rapid prototype printer. The printer builds the organ using the bioreplicant gel, one layer at a time. When complete, an organ that is an exact duplicate of the patient's own is ready to be surgically inserted. The entire process, sans the surgery itself, takes less than 72 hours. The only organ that is unable to be recreated in this manner is the brain, which is far too complex for such a procedure to work.

Regenerative Therapies

The capability of a lizard to grow a new tail after his old one has been severed or for a crab to replace a missing limb that was torn off by another predator has long fascinated medical researchers. However, it took decades of research before a true understanding of the workings behind those capabilities was obtained. The long hard work has paid off, however, and today it is possible, with significant help, for a victim of an accident or other trauma to replace a lost limb.

Regenerative therapy, as the discipline of regrowing lost limbs has come to be known, is not a perfect science and there are some for whom the therapy simply is not effective. Even for those on whom it does work, the process is long and can require dozens of visits to the hospital. The raw severed stub is submerged in a special bath that stimulates the cells to slowly start to replace those that are missing. In time, the missing limb is slowly regenerated.

Early versions of this therapy required the patient to stay in the hospital throughout the process – something that can take upwards of a year to complete. For many, it was simply not a realistic option, as not many can afford to stay out of work for that kind of time. Today, the end of the stub is sealed in a small portable container, generally referred to as a tub, that contains the regenerative bath, as well as the circulation and filtration systems necessary for the procedure to be successful. Every week, this tub is checked and adjusted by the supervising doctor to ensure the process is proceeding correctly.

As with all biomedical technology, regenerative therapy has its limits. The candidate limb cannot have been allowed to begin its own healing process. The human body is not programmed to regenerate its limbs, and once the stub begins to heal the cells needed for the process are replaced and the cellular memory required is lost. The stub also cannot have been cauterized by any means – the severed end must be raw.

For the patient, the regenerative process is always accompanied by some level of constant pain as the nerves are live. The regenerative bath does reduce this to a manageable level but, due to limitations in the process, cannot completely negate it. Live active nerves are a necessary part of the regeneration if the new limb is to be fully functional.

Medical Tools

The tools used by medical professionals have come a long way from decades gone by. From high-tech medical scanners to laser scalpels and sub-dermal monitors, the tools and aides available make doctors from previous times seem primitive and almost cruel in comparison. Even the smallest clinics and med-bays have an impressive array of tools to help doctors and med-techs diagnose and treat patients.

Diagnostic Beds (2000 Cr)

These are the standard beds used in most hospitals and medical bays. Much more comfortable than hospital beds of the past, they utilize a medical-grade memory foam that molds itself to the patient's body for maximum comfort and rest. The foam is impregnated with a sterilizing agent that prevents pathogens and other pests from taking root – it also passes this feature on to any bedsheets. Sensors in the bed can also monitor a whole host of patient statistics, including temperature, heart rate, breathing rate, and so on. These are displayed on a monitor that is generally mounted above the patient, though some models transmit the information to mobile units. Finally, it also integrates a fluid and drug dispensing station that can automatically monitor and dispense both IVs and drugs that may have been prescribed to the patient. Treating a patient in a diagnostic bed provides a +2 DM to all related skill checks.

Surgical Suite (5000 Cr)

A surgical suite combines a diagnostic bed with a surgical assist robot, high intensity sterilization field, and zoom-capable holographic display system. In modern medicine, it is rare for a surgeon to put his hands in the body of the patient. Instead, he controls highly precise robotic arms that have all the tools he may need to perform the surgery. In an especially tricky surgery, two or more of the surgical assist robots may be used by different surgeons. The holographic display shows a three-dimensional representation of the body, which the surgeon uses to monitor his process. He can even limit what parts of the body are displayed and zoom in to a specific region in order to get a better look at what he is

doing. Video cameras on the robots also afford the surgeon close-in views of what he is doing. Treating trauma victims and performing surgery in a surgical suite afford a +2 DM to all related skill checks.

Mobile Patient Monitoring Sensors (500 Cr)

Oftentimes referred to as MIMS, these small sensors are placed at various locations on the body and monitor all of the patient's vital statistics. They can be programmed to transmit this data to any medical terminal or diagnostic bed within 100 yards. In addition, if an unusual reading occurs, an auditory alarm sounds alerting the patient and any others nearby. These provide a doctor a +1 DM when treating a patient. These are used when the patient must be mobile and do not stack with the benefits of a diagnostic bed or surgical suite.

Portable Medical Kit (1000 Cr/150 Cr for refill package)

The modern day first aid kit, the portable medical kit has all the tools needed to treat a patient in the field. Pain and other medications, pressure bandages, basic surgical supplies, and other basic medical gear are contained within. Trying to treat a patient in the field without one of these kits confers a -2 DM. Once used to treat a patient, the kit will need to be replenished. Each patient treated out of the

kit requires one refill package, unless the wounds treated are mostly superficial. Such refills only need to be purchased when someone with a real injury is treated – anyone who has taken more than six points of damage.

Drugs

Any drug listed in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* that are of Tech Level 10 or lower is available in the *Chthonian Stars* setting at the listed costs.

Gravity Couch (3500 Cr)

Found on all interplanetary spaceships, a gravity couch is used while the ship is in either its acceleration or deceleration phase. They protect anyone inside from the crushing forces the ship undergoes during these stages of a journey between planets. Each couch is designed to support a single person. To be fully functional, the couches must also be filled with gravity gel, as described below.

Gravity Gel (350 Cr per use)

Used in conjunction with a gravity couch, this gel cushions the body while a spaceship is experiencing the tremendous forces encountered during its acceleration and deceleration phases. The gel is actually a two-part polymer. One part is a greenish-colored water-like liquid that fills the couch once a subject is in it. This liquid makes the body naturally buoyant and the subject will tend to float in the middle of the couch. Once this is achieved, a powder is injected into the water that turns the liquid into a thick gel. At the end of the journey, a third liquid is injected into the gel that slowly turns it back into a water-like liquid that is then drained out of the couch, freeing the person inside. More than a few people find the experience of floating in a tube of thick gel to be claustrophobic and unpleasant.

Computer Technology

Since the late 20th century, computers have been a common part of both work and home life. They have also seen some of the most frenzied development when compared to other technologies. For decades, the power of computers was limited by the technology behind them. Silicon wafers imprinted with the circuitry grew ever smaller, until the point was reached that they simply could not be made any smaller. Limitations of the materials, as well as heat problems, plagued these early computers and such systems required significant cooling fans and, in some cases, actual liquid cooling systems. In addition, with electricity providing the primary means of



transporting data, resistance in the conducting materials limited the speeds at which the processors could ultimately function. For a time, this caused a stall in the advancement of computer. Multi-processor systems came into being which helped to overcome this limitation, but this was more of a stop-gap while engineers puzzled over how to overcome the barrier they had seemingly hit. Two distinct technologies emerged out of this effort: optical and organic processors.

Optical Computer Systems

Optical computers replaced electricity as the transporting medium with light. It took time to perfect the technology, but when that had been achieved computers that were easily four times as powerful as the current leading edge systems quickly emerged. These systems not only ran much faster than their older counterparts, they nearly completely negated the heat problem from which the traditional processors suffered.

Optical computer chip circuitry is made of a light transmitting compound. In the modern optical chip, each circuit is only a single molecule in width. Each circuit is separated from its neighbor by a two molecule thick insulating material. This allows for some incredibly dense circuitry and powerful processors. With light being the data conducting medium, it also makes these chips incredibly fast. However, most engineers agree that optical computers have reached the zenith of their development, as there hasn't been a new major breakthrough in almost two decades. Even so, there is no sign that optical computers are going to be vanishing anytime soon.

Organic Computer Systems

Organic computers have been a dream of engineers and scientists for many decades. Efforts into this technology can be found as far back as the early 21st century, but only in the past decade have they become a reality. Even so, they are still a relatively rare computer and most agree that it will be another decade before they begin replacing optical systems in day-to-day use.

An organic computer operates using an organic equivalent of the transistor that is used in optical computers. In organic computers, these have come to be known as B-Nodes, though they are much more complex and able to do a great deal more than a standard transistor. A standard optical transistor has two basic states – on or off. It is basically a single



bit of data. A B-Node is made of a single organic molecule that is surrounded, in a spherical pattern, by twelve other identical molecules. Each molecule can be switched on or off individually. This means that each B-Node can be in many million different states, each of which can be assigned specific meaning within the computer's operating system. The overall effect is to increase the power of computers over a thousand-fold.

Only a few organic computers are in operation today. Given the current cost of these systems, they are generally limited to use by governmental and large corporate entities. However, over the coming years, it is expected that the process of manufacturing these systems will become more refined and the costs and time involved will significantly reduce, making them a more commercially viable product.

Modern Storage Media

Modern computer systems can store and process massive amounts of data. When data needs to be moved from one system to another, it is most often done wirelessly – but sometimes this is either not possible or not advisable, most often due to security concerns. When this is the case, memory cubes are used instead.

A memory cube is a small synthetic crystal cube roughly two cubic centimeters in size. Data is stored by making slight alterations in the alignments of the crystal matrix inside the cube. Cubes are re-writable, though the matrix eventually becomes unstable. When this occurs, the cubes are designed to change from their normally bluish color to a red color. Cubes can be encrypted to a variety of keys, from basic entry codes to biometric data keyed to a specific individual, group of specific users, or even specific cube readers. Each cube can store up to 1,000 terabytes of data.

Wrist Comps

Wrist comp has become the universal name used for the small personal computers that nearly every person carries around with him today. These micro computers serve a wide variety of functions, ranging from things as simple as data organizers to gateways to the internet, or to games. This functionality is only dwarfed by the wide variety of styles and looks in which they are available. For most people, they are a natural part of life and have, for many, become the modern equivalent of a 21st century personal assistant. So ubiquitous are wrist comps that things like appointments, work schedules, and meetings are generally automatically uploaded into the owner's scheduling software.

Each wrist comp has a unique identifier created by the owner, that is also linked to a biometric signature. The pair exist not to simply lock out the wrist comp from unauthorized access, but also to provide authorization for automatic uploads from outside sources. Owners can also provide limited access to their wrist comps by authorizing guest accounts.

Most wrist comps have a small screen integrated into them that a user can use. However, in general, they transmit their data either to a nearby flex screen or to a set of eye bands that have been linked to the comp, either of which affords a larger view area.

Flex Screen

Gone are the days when monitors were large monstrosities that took up a significant portion of a person's desk. Today, monitors are made of a flexible, normally transparent plastic that is stored in a small tube. When one needs to utilize the monitor, the plastic is pulled out of the tube, much like one pulls paper off a roll. When fully extended, a small electrical charge stiffens the plastic into a rigid sheet

suitable for viewing anything on. Flex monitors come in a variety of sizes, from small portables to massive wall-mounted screens. They can maintain their rigid state for indefinite periods without compromising their flexible nature when powered down. Images displayed on these monitors can either be transparent enough to allow one to gaze through them to whatever lies on the other side, or can be rendered fully opaque. When transparent, anyone on the opposite side of the monitor will also see the images – though any text will appear reversed from their point of view. When opaque, the back of the monitor is black.

Work stations tend to have more permanent versions of flex screens. They are generally made of a thicker, more robust material and are permanently rigid. However, they also tend to be large – sometimes they will stretch the length of a room.

All flex screens and related monitors are touch sensitive, meaning that the user simply need touch an icon or piece of data to manipulate or access it in some way. Special gloves can also be worn to further enhance the ability to interact with the screen, allowing one to virtually hold 3D representations of items or data, rotate them, move them, and so on. This technology has created a more natural work environment and reduced injuries caused by repetitive actions that haunted computer users in decades past.

Eye Bands

Eye bands are a newer and popular form of the computer monitor. These narrow bands are worn much like reading glasses of old. A small transparent band made of the same material as flex screens – though in a permanently rigid form – is used to view the data and images from the computer. Directional speakers built into the bands sit over the ears, providing any necessary sound to the user while preventing any observers from hearing. As eye bands are most often used by people on the move, they can only be used in transparent mode so as not to block the vision of the user. Much like wrist comps, eye bands have become something of a fashion accessory, especially among the younger generation, and are available in a wide variety of styles.

The Internet

The internet is a virtual representation of the electronic network that is so prevalent in colonized regions. Its roots can be traced back to the

20th century, though, at that time, the internet was severely limited when compared to today – upload and download speeds are now lightning fast. A whole host of devices, ranging from wrist comps to alarm systems and powerful super computers, exist on the internet. All internet capable devices can not only access other similarly capable devices, but can also act as a sort of repeater beacon, automatically passing data back and forth to other devices. This function is generally separated from the device itself, so as not to compromise its security or burden its primary processor.

Nearly everywhere man has established himself has some version of the internet. On Earth, it is a pervasive virtual world that is taken for granted by most everyone. Mars also has an extensive internet. People can send e-mail from planet to planet. Space-ships tend to have their own micro internets, with the spaceship's computer acting as the hub. These smaller iterations of the internet are more about ease of communications than data storage and access, though they do generally support the latter - especially when it comes to the entertainment libraries available to the crew.

Power Generation

Over the ages, the technology behind power generation has always been the subject of intense research, as well as intense controversy. Many times, new power generation technologies bring with them some level of fear and distrust in segments of the population. In the late 20th century, nuclear power was a source of great promise but, due to accidents early in its development, gained a reputation for being far too dangerous in some minds. As a result, it took several decades before it finally replaced the much less efficient, and much more polluting, traditional coal power plants. Power generation today comes in a variety of flavors, depending on the application calling for it.

Microwave Transmission Stations

Microwave transmission stations are the most common planetary power generation system in use on the inner planets of the solar system. These systems are made up of three basic components. Stationed in high geosynchronous orbit, solar energy collection satellites absorb energy from the sun using vast arrays of solar panels. This energy is converted by the satellite into a tightly focused microwave beam which is fired to the second part of the system – the power distribution center that is located on

the planet below. The center converts the microwave energy into electrical energy and transmits the power through subsurface lines to the final element of the system – energy storage stations. These stations store and distribute the power to the homes and businesses that need it.

Microwave transmission energy is highly efficient, creates virtually no pollution and originates from a source that is nearly inexhaustible. However, it is not without its dangers. The microwave beam, while focused, does occasionally bleed energy unexpectedly. For this reason, the airspace around the beam is restricted to all air traffic, within a 50 mile radius of the beam. The beam also has the potential to be turned into a devastation weapon, which is why all satellites are rigged with self destruct devices that trigger automatically if the satellites target point varies more than 15 meters from its nominal point. The distribution centers are always built at least 100 miles from the nearest population center to help further reduce any incidents, whether accidental or nefarious in nature.

Fusion Power Plants

Fusion power, for many decades, was the holy grail of power. It also seemed to be always out of reach. Maintaining a controlled and steady fusion reaction proved to be much more tricky than maintaining the fission reaction that was the basis of nuclear power plants. However, in 2094, a Chinese scientist named Kong Rui-Bin, a rather unremarkable physicist at the time, stumbled upon the key discovery while researching an unrelated project that makes fusion power a reality. The discovery not only put Kong at the forefront of the physics community, is also revolutionized the power industry. The ripple effects of his work can still be felt and his insights still serve as a basis for research into power generation today.

While fusion power has proven to be a great boon to human civilization, it is not without its own set of dangers and problems. The process for maintaining control over a stable fusion reaction is complex and the reactors must be constantly monitored for signs of even the most minute variance in a whole host of variables. The reactors are also complex to build and even the smallest imperfection in the construction of the reaction chamber can lead to the entire reactor failing to start properly. Finally, disposal of waste materials is always a factor, though today is much less of an issue that it was when the first fusion reactor came online.

Modern fusion reactors vary in size and scope a great deal. They are used as a primary power source on colonies that are too far from the sun for microwave transmission to be possible. They are also the primary source used in most interplanetary spacecraft and even some smaller intersystem spacecraft.

Fission Power Plants

While many might expect the use of nuclear power plants to vanish since the fusion plant has become so widely used, the opposite is actually true. Fission reactors are still in common use due to their relative inexpensiveness and reliability. Many times, they are used as backups for other power plants. They are also commonly used at remote research outposts, as power systems for satellites, and as auxiliary power plants on spaceships. Disposal of the waste materials and expended fuel rods these plants generate is always an issue, but in general the same procedures are followed that fusion plants utilize – mainly launching the material into the sun where it is atomized by the heat and pressure.

Fuel Cells

When something calls for a relatively easy to maintain, low cost power system, fuel cells are generally employed. Nearly all ground and air vehicles use fuel

cells as their chief source of power. Using distilled water as the primary fuel source with no resulting pollution, fuel cells are the cleanest source of energy in modern use. However, the power output of these systems is limited so they are not suitable for use where large amounts of power are needed.

Planetary Transportation

Whether on Earth, Mars, or some distant moon, there is always the need to be able to get around. In the modern age, this is a relatively effortless affair, though the exact method of transport depends upon the location and environment.

Personal Transport

Ever since man started riding on horseback, owning a personal transport of some sort was not just a status symbol, but for many a point of pride. Today is no different. Unlike years past, personal transport come in both the ground and air varieties.

Despite what many old science fiction stories postulated, most planet-based personal transport is still the tried and true automobile. There are nearly as many automobile models as there are types of people. The modern auto is similar in many ways to its ancestors. They have two to four wheels, a steering wheel, lights, and so on. Modern autos do, however, have many amenities that were not available in earlier years. The classic instrument panel has been replaced with a heads-up system that projects all the relevant data on the windshield or helmet faceplate as appropriate. Sensors provide the operator constant updates on what is around him, reducing the chances of accidents. Automated systems take control when necessary to avoid collisions. The heads-up display can also provide thermal vision at night and in low-light conditions. In well developed areas and along major arteries, auto-pilot systems can free up the driver for other tasks or simple conversation.

Personal air transport has also become a relatively common sight. These vehicles tend to be highly automated in order to reduce the chances of operator error. In areas where these systems are not available, pilots must be licensed, with renewals occurring on a regular basis. Generally, air transport is used between cities. Any that are used within a city's airspace must have the appropriate permits and the pilot must be properly licensed for operation in the region. All personal air transports are vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) craft.



Mass Transit

Mass transit systems have become integral to most people's everyday life. Those who live in the same cities in which they work generally use the mass transit system in lieu of their car to get to and from work. Many use the systems when travelling between cities. On colonies, especially on Mars and Luna, maglev trains are about the only way to travel between settlements.

The most common form of mass transit is the maglev train. These trains do not run on a traditional track, but rather float over them. A series of magnets built into the trains and the track cause the train to actually float roughly twelve inches above the track. Additional magnets along the sides of the track and train keep it centered as well, removing the need for a guide rail of any kind – though an emergency guide wheel can be lowered should there be a malfunction of the normal magnetic system. This system enables the train to achieve speeds of almost 400 miles per hour, allowing it to cross entire continents quickly and efficiently. Within cities, smaller versions of these trains run under the streets in a manner similar to the old subway systems found in earlier decades.

When travelling long distances in which time is a factor, air travel is still the preferred method of most. Modern airlines have undergone remarkably little change over the years and still operate in the same manner they did in the early 21st century. Intercontinental flights are now suborbital flights that take less than half the time they once did. Most moderately-sized towns support small VTOL airports that can accommodate most commercial VTOL aircraft used in local routes. Most cities have larger airports built to support larger long-range aircraft, many of which still utilize runways for take-off and landing. The largest of these can also accommodate the specialized needs of suborbital aircraft, with each continent generally having half a dozen or more scattered across it.

Space Technologies

As Earth became ever more crowded, the need to expand beyond Mother Earth grew in importance. For a time, the development of space was firmly the purview of the governments of the world. However, these bodies proved to have neither the will nor the foresight necessary to truly develop the technologies needed to overcome the hurdles to long term survival in space, as well as on the planets of the solar system. Initial commercial interest in space was limited to lifting of payloads into orbit and the use of



orbit for commercial satellites tasked primarily with enhancing communications across the globe. However, with the efforts of a number of individuals and groups who had the foresight and courage necessary, commercial enterprise firmly took control over the development and exploitation of space in just two decades.

Maneuvering Systems

There are two distinct types of maneuvering systems used by spaceships: maneuvering drives and transit drives. Maneuvering drives are used for exactly what they sound like, to provide the craft its maneuvering capability. They are used for standard orbital and deep space maneuvering needs. Most maneuvering drives are a highly advanced ion drive. These drives work by firing ionized xenon atoms through a charging grid that both accelerates and neutralizes the atoms. The resulting plasma energy released is guided down a magnetic tunnel and provides the thrust necessary to maneuver the spaceship. The size and shape of this magnetic tunnel can be manipulated, resulting in an increase or decrease in the amount of thrust generated, without requiring higher fuel expenditures. This makes the drives very efficient and reduces the amount of fuel they need to carry, compared to older drive designs. In addi-

tion, xenon is a very stable element, which means that there is no fear of an explosive detonation, even if the fuel system takes some sort of direct damage. The charging grids of these systems tend to glow, giving ship thrusters a glow effect. The thrust itself, however, is actually invisible to the naked eye.

Transit drives are used by spaceships when they are travelling between planets. These drives have a single purpose in mind – to make the ship go really fast. These drives can push a spaceship to a speed of 0.005% the speed of light – a feat that was impossible using traditional ion drive technologies. They also do this without requiring the ship to expend massive amounts of fuel, though the drives do require vast amounts of energy to operate compared to the more mundane maneuvering drives. As a result, during operations, most other systems on a spaceship are unavailable and these drives provide a craft no maneuvering capabilities. In order to stop, these ships must literally turn around and fire the transit drives again.

Transit drives are an evolution of what used to be known as the magnetoplasmadynamic (or MPD) drive. These drives operate in a manner similar to an ion drive, in that they push an atomized plasma medium down a magnetic tunnel. However, unlike their smaller cousins that rely on a separate system to generate the magnetic field, transit drives work at such high energy levels that they generate their own magnetic tunnel. The reactant used for these systems comes in the form of specially designed teflon bundles. A super-high current is run through this bundle, which boils off the surface molecules, which are then directed down the magnetic tunnel created via the same current. The constriction of this field accelerates the resulting plasma gasses to speeds in excess of 500,000 meters per second, enough to rapidly propel the craft to incredibly high speeds. Unlike maneuvering drive exhaust, the exhaust from a plasma drive is both highly visible and incredibly dangerous. In general, spaceships are not allowed to engage a transit drive within 5,000 kilometers of any other craft or station for safety purposes.

Spaceports

With a look and feel similar to large international airports, spaceports are the link between planetary surfaces and orbit. Earth supports six such facilities: two in North America, one in South America, one in Europe, one in Australia and one on the Chinese mainland. Spaceports are generally located far from

any large population centers, though most do have a small town that has developed around the facility. Most spaceports have an integrated airport and mag-lev train station. Spaceports on other planets are generally much smaller. The two that Mars supports are the largest off-planet and are the size of the smallest Earth-based facility. The other colonized planets each have a single spaceport that is generally located near the first colony founded on the planet (or moon). In some cases, the colony is a part of the spaceport.

Orbital Transfer Vehicles

Generally referred to by the simpler moniker shuttles, OTVs ferry passengers and cargo from the surface of planets to orbital stations or waiting spaceships. Shuttles come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, from small personal transports to massive cargo haulers that can lift almost 200 tons of cargo to orbit. Most shuttles have a relatively limited endurance, as they are designed to go from the surface to orbit and back – though some models have the endurance to travel to the moons within the planetary system. Shuttles, however, do not have the transit drives or fuel to make the trip between the planets themselves. Most OTVs utilize a vertical take-off and landing system, though a few older designs still need a large runway to get aloft.

Spaceships

Spaceships, like everything else in modern society, vary in size, function, and cost a great deal. In general, there are two distinct types of spacecraft.

The first are inner-system spaceships. These ships are designed to operate strictly within the inner portion of the solar system, or within a single planetary system such as around Jupiter. Those designed to work within a single planetary system generally lack the transit drives necessary to make the journey between planets in any sort of reasonable amount of time, even if their maneuvering drives allowed for it. They also generally do not utilize a rotational ring for generating artificial gravity, as the crews are not in space long enough to warrant the extra cost these systems entail, and they have a smaller fuel reserve. Also, ships that are limited to a single planetary system lack the gravity couches needed in an interplanetary journey. Jupiter and Saturn are the most common places these types of ships are found, though they are found anywhere that travel between a planet and moon or high orbit space station is necessary – such as Uranus or Neptune.

Inter-system ships that are designed to go between planets never travel beyond the orbit of Mars, as they lack the fuel and supplies necessary for the extended journeys that push out into the outer portion of the solar system. They have both transit and maneuvering drives, but only the larger designs have a rotational section to provide artificial gravity. Most designers feel the times involved in travel in the inner system are too short to warrant the expense.

The second common type of spaceship is the inter-planetary spaceship. These ships are designed to travel anywhere within the solar system and, to a lesser extent, beyond the solar system itself. These ships are large, with extensive hydroponic gardens, recreational facilities, and other amenities not present on smaller inner-system ships. All inter-planetary ships have at least one, and oftentimes two or three, rotational sections to provide the crews gravity during the long journeys these ships commonly undertake. They also have extensive machine shops and spare stores so that they can do any repairs underway that may be necessary.

Orbital and Deep Space Stations

It is said that space stations are like snowflakes – there are no two that are identical. While this is not exactly true, there is a staggering variety of stations, both in layout and function, across the solar system. Some stations are not much more than warehouses in space. These basic stations are used by corporations and governments to store or stage goods, machinery, and just about anything else of which you can think. Many of these stations are little more than open skeletal structures with docking clamps that hold cargo containers waiting for pickup. At the other end of the spectrum are the massive luxury resort stations that have become popular vacation spots. Some of these stations are located literally in the middle of nowhere, in order to stay out of the jurisdiction of any government or corporate entity, which enables them to offer services that would be frowned upon at best, and outright illegal at worst. Such stations are, naturally, secretive.

Orbital and deep space stations follow two very distinct design philosophies. Orbital stations, which refer to stations that are built around colonized planets, moons, and asteroids, tend to rely on resupply from the planet or colony they orbit. This comes either in the form of direct shipments from the planet or colony, or through logistic ships that supply the colony itself. As a result, orbital stations gener-

ally do not have space dedicated to hydroponics and maintain a smaller reserve of fuel for powering their reactors. These stations also tend to rely on the native defenses of the planet or colony and, with the exception of military stations, are generally unarmed or have a very light suite of defensive weaponry and systems. They also tend to maintain smaller support staffs since the station can easily call upon personnel from the planet or colony should the need arise.

Deep space stations generally refer to stations that are built in the deep black between the orbital paths of planets. As a result, these stations need to be much more self-reliant. Deep space stations support large hydroponic gardens to provide both a native food source and a natural carbon dioxide recycling system. Many times, these gardens are designed to be as natural-looking as possible in order to provide crew and guests a more natural environment to relax in from time to time. In many cases, small animals, birds, and insects are an integral part of the garden; though when this is the case, their populations are tightly controlled and special measures are taken to ensure they do not escape the garden area. Deep space stations also maintain a much higher reserve of fuel and other supplies should an event mean the station is going to be isolated for longer than normal. The crews on these stations are also large since, again, they must be as self-reliant as they possibly can be. Finally, deep space stations tend to be well-armed in order to protect themselves from would-be pirates or raiders that may see it as a target of opportunity.

Colonial Technologies

With nearly every planet in the solar system colonized in some way, it is obvious that a constantly evolving tech base needs to be in place to support the colonies. Early colonies were primitive affairs that not only cost a great deal to support, but were quite dangerous compared to modern efforts. In addition, the environments that could be colonized were much more limited than what is possible today.

Types of Colonies

There are three distinct types of colonies commonly used across the solar system. The most common of these is the dome colony. Built on the surface of planets, dome colonies are the easiest type of colony to start, though they tend to have a higher long-term maintenance cost than sub-surface colonies. To support an environment that is suitable for humans, a massive geodesic dome is constructed on the sur-

face of the planet. All the buildings, utilities, gardens, and other assets of the colony are built under these domes. Many domed colonies actually consist of a series of domes linked together by transit tunnels. From a distance these colonies take on the appearance of a massive dew-coated spider web. Mars, Titan, Ganymede, and similar places support a number of domed colonies.

The second type of colony is the sub-surface colony. Built on planets and moons that make domed colonies impractical for one reason or another, these colonies are built with 90% of their assets deep under the surface. Subsurface colonies can be expensive to build, as it takes a great deal of time and manpower to carve out the tunnels and caverns needed. Factor in the especially harsh conditions that must be endured by both the people and equipment that dig these tunnels, and it is easy to see how the cost and inherent dangers can rise exponentially when compared to a domed colony. However, once these colonies are operational, they tend to have lower overall maintenance costs since there is no massive dome to upkeep. Venus and Mercury are the most common locations to find subsurface colonies though others are scattered about the solar system.



The final and rarest type of colony is the aquatic colony. Designed to exist in the highly exotic liquid seas and oceans that exist on some moons, aquatic colonies are considered by many to be the most dangerous and captivating colonies in the system. Like subsurface colonies, aquatic colonies are very dangerous to build and as much of the work as possible is done by robots. Many of the primary components of these colonies are actually built either in orbit or on the surface, when possible, then lowered as completed pieces and assembled much like a puzzle beneath the surface of the ocean or sea. Colonists who populate these colonies are made of some truly hardy stuff, as life in these underwater boxes and tubes is incredibly isolated. An example of an aquatic colony is the part of Sarpedon that extends deep under the surface of Europa, into the ocean that actually exists beneath the surface of the planet.

Terraforming

In recent decades, there has been a concerted effort to develop the technologies needed to terraform Mars, as well as possibly other worlds. Terraforming has been a staple of science fiction for almost as long as the idea has been around. While practical theories on the process needed to successfully terraform a planet have existed for more than a century, they generally depended on some fairly radical efforts to jump start the process – such as slamming comets into the surface. Forty years ago, Anthony Ressler, a theoretical engineer, overcame these barriers through the creation of the Ressler Atmospheric Processor (or RAP for short).

RAPs are massive structures that resemble a large pinecone. Each of the 'leaves' that give the RAP its unique appearance contain a series of atmospheric scrubbers and converters that take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen. Filters work to scrub other aspects of the atmosphere until those elements have been reduced to a point that is safe for humans to breathe. Pumps deep inside drive the cleaned and scrubbed atmosphere up through a series of cables to a distribution node that flies two miles up.

The process of terraforming requires decades to complete. As the atmosphere is scrubbed, basic forms of algae are introduced that help convert the atmosphere. Dozens of RAPs are positioned evenly across the surface of the world to accelerate the conversion. Finally millions of tons of water vapor are introduced in order to thicken the atmosphere and ensure there is enough water to support the

developing ecosystem. This water vapor is generally mined from comets by specially designed mining barges.

The current effort to convert the Martian environment into something compatible with human existence is well underway, though it will be several decades before the process is complete. As things stand, a human can survive outside without aid for limited periods, though any strenuous activity limits this even further. The Amazonis Planitia is covered in various species of algae, giving it the appearance of a vast grassy field from space. Other vast patches of algae can also be found spread across the surface. It is expected that within the next decade, more complex forms of plant life capable of surviving in cold regions will be introduced into the system.

Research into the possibility of terraforming Venus is currently in progress. However, the highly acidic nature of the atmosphere is so damaging to the sensitive equipment used in this process that some believe the efforts will be futile.

Space Suits

The modern space suit is a true example of how far space technologies have come over the decades. As little as thirty years ago, space suits were massive, cumbersome affairs that one person could not hope to put on alone. This bulkiness limited what the suited person could easily accomplish. Modern space suits are much lighter and far more effective.

Most space suits are made up of three parts. First, a person wears a body glove, which contains sensors for monitoring his vitals, thermal cells that maintain his body temperature, and micro bladders which pull sweat away and convert it into drinkable water. It also acts as temporary protection from the hard vacuum of space should the outer suit be breached, though it is only effective in this role for less than an hour – generally long enough for someone to return to the safety of a ship or station.

The outer shell of the space suit is made of a highly flexible kevlar-carbon composite weave that acts as a shell against the cold vacuum and deflects the radiation that bombards anyone outside the protection of a spacecraft hull. This outer shell has no hard joints, save for the attachment ring for the helmet, and is nearly as flexible as the inner body glove. Utility belts worn outside this provide places for tools to be attached. Micro thrusters built into the feet, hips,

shoulders and palms of the suit provide the wearer a great deal of mobility.

The final part of a space suit is the helmet. Available in a whole host of models, such helmets are highly sophisticated, containing the computer systems that operate the entire suit. On the inside of the face shield, the user can customize a variety of displays to assist him in his task, provide navigational data, or coordinate communications, depending on what is needed. Many spacers spend a great deal of time customizing their displays.

Equipment

The solar system can be a challenging and dangerous place. However, the proper equipment can go a long way towards overcoming any potential obstacles that may be encountered. What follows is a list of some of the most common equipment one might come across in the *Chthonian Stars* setting.

Note that the equipment listed here is just some of the more commonly used gear. With your Referee's approval, most equipment found in other Traveller products, such as the *Central Supply Catalogue*, is also appropriate, so long as that equipment is Tech Level 8 or less. Depending, your Referee may allow non-weapons tech of Level 9.

Weapons

Melee Weapons

While many conflicts occur at range, sometimes a battle is fought up close and personal. When this happens, it is always good to have a good blade or club nearby to give you an edge. Most modern blades are honed to a near mono-edge, allowing them to cut through armor and flesh alike. Some, known as vibro-weapons, have small power packs that energize the blade so that it vibrates at extremely high frequencies, allowing it to be even more effective in combat. Most club weapon are also energized, so that they deliver a shock to the target with each successful hit. This can oftentimes incapacitate an opponent long before killing him.

Boarding Axe

Used mainly in boarding actions, these axes can be used either as weapons or as tools to hack through obstructions. Boarding axes are always vibro-weapons, as the extra cutting ability enhances their ability to cut through the thinner walls found on the interior of many spaceships and stations, or to cut through cabling or other potential obstructions. Boarding axes are also balanced for throwing.

Boarding Pike

Another popular weapon used by marines and other boarding parties, boarding pikes are used to help clear defenders from around hatches or from the other side of obstacles. Like boarding axes, these weapons are always vibro-weapons enhancing their ability to punch through obstacles and armor alike.

Chain Sword

Chain swords are truly fearsome weapons that can hack through the heaviest armor with ease. Similar to the classic chainsaw used for so long to fell trees, chain swords use finer teeth and are balanced for fighting. The hardened spinning teeth also tend to knock aside any weapons being used to parry attacks. The wounds left by these weapons are ragged with chunks of flesh and bone literally ripped from the victim. Because many consider these weapons to be unusually cruel, most organizations restrict or ban their usage.

Combat Knife

Combat knives are long-bladed knives measuring almost 12 inches in length. They come in a variety of designs, with smooth and serrated edges, straight and curved. While effective in combat, they are generally used for a variety of more mundane tasks.

Cutlass

Cutlasses have been in use on ships since the earliest days of wet navies. Larger and more dangerous than a combat knife, they are still small enough to be used in the close confines found in the corridors of a spaceship or station – and carry no danger of puncturing the hull.

Electro Whip

Electro whips are rare weapons that require a great deal of practice to master so that a user does not hurt himself when using them. If the wielder succeeds at an Agility 8+ Check after striking a target, he has entangled his target. Damage is then applied every round thereafter, until the wielder stops or the victim makes a successful Strength 8+ Check to break free of the whip.

Mono-Strand

Mono-strands are thin wires only a few molecules wide, with a weight on one end. The micro-thin wire can easily cut through armor, flesh, and just about anything else with frightening ease. Most mono-strands are no more than two feet in length and they are wielded much like a small whip. When they strike,

the weighted end tends to wrap around the target, cutting into him as it unwraps. A variant of this type of weapon is the mono-garrote, which has handles on both ends. They are generally used in surprise attacks, enabling the user to quickly cut through a victim's neck.

Sap

Another melee weapon that has been around for as long as humans have been fighting one another, the sap is a weapon designed to incapacitate a victim instead of killing him outright. Popular with law enforcements organizations, as well as those in less savory occupations, saps are easy to obtain and can come in virtually any size and shape one could wish. When attacking, if the target is not wearing a helmet, he must make an Endurance 8+ check. If this fails, he is rendered unconscious for 1d6 minutes.

Shock Mace

Heavier, with a more potent shock attack than its little brother, shock maces are truly deadly weapons. Their weight alone can crush a skull or shatter bones, but the deadly shock the weapon unleashes on impact can finish any job the mace alone fails to accomplish.

Stun Baton

Used when the goal is to apprehend rather than kill, the stun baton nevertheless can be a deadly weapon in the hands of a trained combatant. These blunt hand weapons release a charge when they impact a target, potentially stunning him into submission.

Throwing Knife

Smaller than a combat knife, the throwing knife is balanced for accurate throwing, giving it an enhanced flexibility the standard combat knife does not enjoy. Throwing knives do not have a vibro equivalent, as the power cell tends to throw the balance of the blade off.

Handguns

Handguns, often referred to more simply as pistols, are common firearms used in military, government, and civilian circles. While lacking the range of a rifle, they are more easily employed at short range and are also more practical within the closed confines of a spaceship. Handguns are also the easiest weapon to be licensed by common civilians, as anything more serious tends to raise red flags with the authorities. Handguns use caseless ammunition, removing the

need for an ejection port and reducing the number of moving parts – and the chances of a jam. Different types of ammo can be used, if desired.

ACC-44 Holdout

The ACC-44 is a tiny handgun that can easily be concealed in a pocket or purse. They are commonly used for self-defense and are more of a deterrent than a real threat, since most people will think twice about accosting someone with a gun no matter how small. The simple, single-action operation of this weapon means it is easy for even an amateur to master and it rarely suffers any mechanical problems.

ACC-62 Bandit Semi-Automatic Pistol

This 9 mm semi-automatic pistol, and similar models by other companies, is perhaps the most common handgun used in civilian circles, and also sees common use by police forces across the solar system. With noticeably more stopping power than the ACC-44, it is preferred over its smaller cousin by serious gun enthusiasts and professionals alike. The ACC-44 utilizes an integrated laser scope, making it accurate even in the hands of an amateur.

AP-445 Scimitar Machine Pistol

The AP-445 is a popular ship-board weapon commonly employed by a variety of marine corps. Its large clip size and high-rate of fire allows a marine to suppress any advancement in the confined space of a ship corridor, but still maintains the agility needed in the close actions that are common when boarding an enemy ship. An integrated blade in the grip of the

weapon provides a quick melee weapon, though one not properly trained can find it a bit awkward to use.

HCC-90 Anvil Heavy Pistol

The HCC-90 Anvil is a large caliber pistol that can take down heavily armored opponents or punch through decking and walls to get at an opponent. However, this hitting power comes at the cost of a very limited magazine capacity. Many Anvil's are equipped with a penetration scope to allow the user to see through a limited amount of cover and maximize their efficiency with what shots they do have.

HCS-4 Blaster Hand Cannon

For all intents and purposes, the HCS-4 Blaster is a shotgun built into a pistol frame. It is a single shot weapon that, at point blank range, is absolutely deadly. Highly effective at skewing the odds of a fight in your favor, especially in the opening volley, these weapons rarely see a second use during a given encounter. Instead, most owners discard them in favor of a weapon with a better endurance, hoping that the initial blast makes the enemy think twice about continuing the engagement.

Rifles

Rifles are the big brothers of handguns. Designed for use at moderate and long ranges, rifles give the user a long reach in an engagement. Rifles come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, with some being simple semi-automatic affairs used for hunting and precision shooting, while others are fully automatic with the ability to engage and pin down multiple tar-



gets in protracted firefights. Most rifles have two or more option rails that can be used to expand the weapon's capabilities.

AFL-4 Assault Rifle

This light assault rifle is based on the semi-automatic RFL model, but altered for military use. While it may have a relatively low rate of fire when compared to a dedicated assault rifle, it is inexpensive and completely reliable. When fitted with a scope, the AFL-4 makes a good medium-range sniper rifle. Many police forces issue these weapons as part of the standard set of gear for their personnel.

AFL-16 Mach Assault Rifle

Built by Advanced Firearms, the same company responsible for the RFL-4 and AFL-4 models, the Mach assault rifle is one of the most commonly used assault rifles in the solar system. Known for its accuracy and reliability, many police and military forces use this weapon – or one of the many derivatives that exist. A whole host of peripherals for the AFL-16 can be found, ranging from high-end digital thermographic scopes to under-slung micro-missile launchers.

RFL-4 Long Rifle

The RFL-4 is a common civilian rifle that sportsmen use for hunting. It is also popular with ranchers and farmers for protecting their crops and fields from pests and predators. With a respectable range and stopping power, it also sees use by pirates and other underworld elements due to its easy accessibility and inexpensive price tag. With a number of options available, the rifle can easily be specialized for specific functions.

RFR-44M Paxton Assault Rifle

Designed with maximum suppression of the enemy in mind, the RFR-44M Paxton is known for its rate of fire, but not for its accuracy. Using a larger than normal clip, a user can send a veritable torrent of fire into a region that only the more insane person would dare stick his head into. Unfortunately, this weapon is prone to jams during extended use. Because this weapon is designed for volume rather than accuracy, it lacks the normal scope rail most assault rifles have, so users must rely on built in illuminated iron sights.

SX-90 Splinter Sniper Rifle

The Splinter is a top-of-the-line sniper rifle with the ability to engage targets accurately as far as 3300 yards/3000 meters away. With a standard digital

telescope, integrated targeting assist computer, and stabilizing bipod, the weapon has everything a professional sniper could want. The SX-90 can also be fitted with a remote firing system, allowing a sniper to set it up at one location and fire it from a completely separate location.

Submachine Guns

Submachine guns attempt to merge the best aspects of an assault rifle and a handgun into one do-all form. Unfortunately, they don't exactly succeed in this endeavor, though they still maintain their popularity with a great many organizations. Their small size makes them ideal in confined and cramped conditions and their high rate-of-fire allows for sufficient suppressive fire.

SM-3 Blizzard Submachine Gun

The SM-3 is large for a submachine gun due to the larger caliber ammo it uses, affording it a higher damage potential than most SMGs. Most users are more than happy with this trade-off. An optional extendable stock enables the weapon to be fired in the same manner as an assault rifle and affords it a bit more accuracy when used in burst rather than full automatic mode. The SM-3 can also be fitted with a scope, an unusual feature for an SMG, giving the weapon a fairly respectable accuracy when used in short bursts. When fired fully automatic, however, a scope is all but useless.

SM-112 Hornet Sub-Machinegun

There are few in the solar system who are not familiar with the SM-112 Hornet. It has seen extensive use in nearly every action movie produced today. Small with a high rate of fire, the SM-112 is, in truth, only a mediocre weapon. It is a small caliber firearm, which affords it a larger magazine capacity with the trade-off of a barely acceptable damage capacity. The weapon is cheap, however, and has no bells or whistles available. Seen in use by some police forces, it is most popular with the less savory elements of the solar system.

XSM-90 Blindeye Sub-Machinegun

Equipped with a swivel stock and an integrated VTA (video targeting assist) system, the XSM-90 gives the user the ability fire the weapon from behind the safety of cover, without exposing anything more than the weapon itself. The VTA feeds into a special monocle that allows the user to see targets from behind cover or around a corner. This makes it a popular weapon when fighting in close confines,

such as an urban environment or a spaceship. Blind-eyes do take some training to learn to use properly, since they are often held at odd angles which enhance the effects of recoil, especially when fired in a fully automatic mode.

Defensive Equipment

Light Armors

Light armor refers to any type of body armor that is light enough not to reduce the wearer's mobility. Light armor tends to be made up of ballistic vests, padded pants, and helmets. They are rarely sealed against the environment. While they can provide respectable protection, they are not nearly as effective as the bulkier heavy armors that most militaries and mercenary outfits use.

Flak Jacket

Flak jackets have been around for more than a century and have been standard equipment for most law enforcement agencies for almost as long. Basically a heavy vest with ballistic plates on the front and back which protect the vital organs, many police officers have survived hits by perpetrators that would have killed them without the jacket. Openly available and inexpensive to purchase, even the lowest end security force generally issue their people flak jackets.

Flak Body Suit

Similar to a flak jacket in nature, the flak body suit extends protection to the entire body rather than just the torso. Armored pads above and below the knees provide the legs protection and armored kneepads are worn over the outside. Sleeves provide similar protection for the arms. These suits can be somewhat cumbersome to wear, but most believe the trade-off of extended protection is more than worth it.

Heavy Armors

Heavy armors encompass full body suits which generally enjoy sealed environmental systems that can protect the wearer from gas and chemical attacks. Bulkier than their lighter cousins, heavy armor is generally worn for as short a period as possible in order to reduce fatigue, though someone trained in their use has generally built up the endurance for protracted use when necessary.

Combat Body Armor

When entering a known combat situation, especially one in which heavy weapons are likely to be

employed, it is a good idea to don a suit of combat body armor. A fully sealed suit, combat body armor is stout enough to offer excellent protection from most small arms fire and can even keep one alive after a hit from a heavier weapon. Shrapnel also tends to be easily repelled, unless the wearer is especially close to the source that created the shrapnel.

Vacuum Combat Armor

Similar in nature to combat body armor, this armor also offers full protection from the harsh vacuum of space. The endurance of these suits tends to be somewhat limited, however, with a safe operating window of less than two hours – less if the suit is breached by weapons' fire.

Travel Expenses

Not everyone in the solar system has a spaceship they can use to get around. These poor souls have to rely on booking passage on the most convenient transport they can find. There are generally four types of transport that are most commonly available to a potential traveler.

Planetary Transport

Planetary transport gets people from point 'A' to point 'B' on a given planet. In many cases, publicly funded overland trains will suffice, but they are on a fixed schedule so they are not always convenient. For faster travel, there are generally easily accessible forms of air travel that can get one anywhere on a planet in just a few hours. The table on the next page shows the general costs involved in booking this type of transport, which is common and easy.

Orbital Transport

Anyone wishing to travel to a different planet or moon must most often make their way to an orbital transfer station. Some ships capable of transit speeds can land on planets, but these tend to be the exception rather than the rule. Some inter-planetary ships offer shuttle services from the planetary surface, but others are not so generous. Orbital transports are also often chartered when one wishes to go between moons within the same planetary system, which is especially common in the Saturnine and Jovian systems.

Inner-System Travel

Inner-system travel refers to any interplanetary travel that lies within the orbit of Mars. This is the most common type of traffic in the solar system and the easiest to book in a timely manner. Even so,



it sometimes can require the potential travelers to wait in an orbital transfer station for a couple days while outbound ships load cargo, refuel, and perform general maintenance. In addition, some ships give passengers the option to either stay in their grav couches the entire trip (in which case they will be unconscious as well) or be roused once the acceleration curve has been completed. Doing the latter means a more costly fare, but some travelers, especially those that travel between planets a great deal, cannot stay under for extended periods for a variety of reasons.

Outer-System Travel

When travelling beyond the orbit of Mars, travelers must book passage on one of the more specialized long-range transports. These trips can get expensive and generally require more planning, as ships travelling to the outer system are not as common as those travelling between the inner planets. It is also possible to be woken for the journey, but this is even more expensive due to the extra costs incurred by the ship. On some ships, the option will not even be offered unless there are documented medical reasons.

Planetary Transport Costs

Transport Type	Average Travel Times	Cost	Range
Public Transit	Few minutes to as much as a day or more	Free	Continental
Air Taxi	Few minutes to a few hours	½ credit per mile	Regional, usually covering neighboring cities
Airliner	Several hours	1 credit per 100 miles	Intercontinental
Chartered Airline	Several hours	1 credit per 10 miles	Intercontinental

Orbital Transport Costs

Transport type	Cost	Range
Surface to Orbit (Orbit to Surface)	125 credits/person	Orbit
Inter-orbital (ie: planet to moon)	350 credits/person	Single Planetary System
Station to station	75 credits/person	Between orbital objects

Inner & Outer System Transport Costs

Transport Type	Cost	Travel Delay
Inner System (sleeper)	1000 to 2500 credits	1 to 4 days
Inner System (awake)	2500 to 5000 credits	1 to 4 days
Outer System (sleeper)	250 per week	1 week to 3 weeks
Outer System (awake)	750 per week	1 week to 3 weeks

Weapon	Range	Required Skill	Damage	Magazine	Auto	Recoil	Cost (Cr)	Mass (kg)	Ammo Cost
Handguns									
ACC-44 Holdout	Pistol	Gun Combat (Slug Pistol)	2d6-2	4	No	0	200	0.2	5
ACC-62 'Bandit' Semi-Auto Pistol	Pistol	Gun Combat (Slug Pistol)	3d6-2	9	No	0	250	0.4	7
AP-445 'Scimitar' Machine Pistol	Pistol	Gun Combat (Slug Carbine)	3d6-2	15	5	2	350	0.5	7
HCC-90 'Anvil' Heavy Pistol	Pistol	Gun Combat (Slug Pistol)	2d6+2	9	No	0	300	0.5	10
HCS-4 'Blaster' Hand Cannon	Pistol	Gun Combat (Slug Pistol)	3d6+1	1	No	0	275	0.4	3
Rifles									
RFL-4 Long Rifle	Rifle	Gun Combat (Slug Rifle)	3d6-2	6	No	0	650	1.75	5
AFL-4 Assault Rifle	Assault Rifle	Gun Combat (Slug Rifle)	3d6-2	15	5	1	825	2	10
SX-90 'Splinter' Sniper Rifle	1 Km	Gun Combat (Slug Rifle)	3d6-1	6	No	0	1850	3	20
RFR-44M Paxton Assault Rifle	Assault Rifle	Gun Combat (Slug Rifle)	3d6	24	8	3	1000	2.25	10
AFL-16 Assault Rifle	Assault Rifle	Gun Combat (Slug Rifle)	3d6	15	5	1	1150	2.25	10
SMGs									
SM-3 'Blizzard' SMG	Pistol	Gun Combat (Slug Carbine)	3d6-3	15	5	2	550	1	7
SM-12 'Hornet' SMG	Shotgun	Gun Combat (Slug Carbine)	3d6-1	15	5	2	625	1.25	7
XSM-90 'Blindeye' SMG	Shotgun	Gun Combat (Slug Carbine)	3d6-2	15	5	3	900	2	7

Melee Weapons	Required Skill	Damage	Heft	Cost	Mass	Special
Boarding Axe	Melee (Axe)	2d6+6	1	120	2	-2 Armor
Boarding Pike	Melee (Spear)	3d6+3	0	200	2.6	-3 Armor
Combat Knife	Melee (Small Blade)	1d6+4	-1	50	0.5	
Chain Sword	Melee (Sword)	4d6+3	2	400	3.75	Half Armor
Cutlass	Melee (Large Blade)	2d6+4	0	75	1	
Electo-Whip	Melee (Whip)	1d6+3 Stun	—	225	0.2	
Mono-Strand	Melee (Unarmed)	2d6+3	—	300	0	Surprised Victim Only
Sap	Melee (Bludgeon)	1d6/1d6+1 Stun	-1	50	0.75	See Text
Shock Mace	Melee (Bludgeon)	2d6/1d6+4 Stun	1	175	2	Stun
Stun Baton	Melee (Bludgeon)	1d6+2/1d6 Stun	0	100	1.25	Stun
Throwing Knife	Melee (Small Blade)	1d6+3	-1	65	0.5	Range: Thrown

Armor	Protection	Required Skill	Cost	Mass
Light Armors				
Flak Jacket	4	None	300	2
Flak Body Suit	6	None	600	4
Heavy Armors				
Combat Armor	10	None	2100	8
Vacuum Armor	8	Vacc Suit 1	4800	12

To service the needs of human expansion into the far reaches of the solar system, a vast array of spaceships have been designed by architects and built in one of the many shipyards that exists across the system. Some of these vessels are as simple of orbital transfer vehicles that ferry people and materials between orbital ships or stations and spaceports on the ground. Others are large military cruisers that patrol in the space around planets as well as the major trading routes in the solar system, ensuring that each of the various governments' and corporate entities' interests are protected. On the following pages, a number of common ships seen throughout the solar system are presented, including their statistics, deck layouts, and a short summary of the ship's function and use. Due to space limitations, the ships presented here have been selected as they are found in common use across the solar system, and are not the dedicated designs of one entity or another – with the exception of the UWC Warden's Knight's Errant.

Travelling the Solar System

The travel times chart below lists the maximum and minimum times it can take to get from one planet to the other, depending upon their position in the solar system. Your referee will determine how long

a trip will take, based on these numbers and what is required for your game.

For nearly any trip, except when the inner planets are very close together, anyone on a spaceship must enter a gravity couch to survive the firing of the transit drive. This suspended animation is referred to as A/D stasis. For trips to the outer planets, this is for seven days each for both acceleration and deceleration. However, many passengers will stay in their grav couches for the entire trip – it saves on life support and resources. Within the inner system, this can be between 1.5 and 3 days each.

While in A/D stasis, the only thing monitoring a ship is the computer.

Gravity in the Ship

While most ships utilize rotating sections to create simulated gravity for a crew's quarters, mess halls and other areas a great many locations on a ship simply cannot benefit from this. For example, the engineering section of a spaceship is simply not feasible in a rotating section. As a result much of the ship operates in a micro-gravity environment. This can sometimes make even basic tasks trickier to complete than they would otherwise be. Since the technology to create true artificial gravity is beyond the current knowledge of humans, a crutch of sorts has

Travel Times: Adjusted for Acceleration/Deceleration (Days: Min/Max)

	Mercury	Venus	Earth	Mars	Jupiter	Saturn	Uranus	Neptune	Pluto
Mercury	–	14/14	14/14	14/14	28/32	53/57	109/113	171/176	226/230
Venus	14/14	–	14/14	14/14	26/34	51/59	107/115	169/178	224/232
Earth	14/14	14/14	–	14/15	24/36	49/61	105/117	168/179	222/234
Mars	14/14	14/14	14/15	–	21/39	46/64	102/120	165/182	219/237
Jupiter	28/32	26/34	24/36	21/39	–	25/85	81/141	144/204	198/258
Saturn	53/57	51/59	49/61	46/64	25/85	–	56/166	119/229	173/283
Uranus	109/113	107/115	105/117	102/120	81/141	56/166	–	63/284	117/339
Neptune	171/176	169/178	168/179	165/182	144/204	119/229	63/284	–	54/401
Pluto	226/230	224/232	222/234	219/237	198/258	173/283	173/339	54/401	–

Notes

- Standard acceleration/deceleration envelope is seven days from normal cruise to transit speed.
- Inner system travel doesn't allow for maximum transit speeds. Thus, trips take longer than one might expect.
- Inner system travel tends to be roughly equal, no matter where you are heading, due to the fact that the longer trips allow for bigger acceleration/deceleration envelopes.

been created instead. That crutch is known as the Energized Deck Plate.

EDPs, as they are more commonly referred to, generate a specially tuned magnetic field. This field only interacts with a specially engineered composite material known as EDP Micro-fibers. The energized plates attract this fiber to them in much the same way a traditional magnetic field attracts iron and other ferrous materials. The field created by the plates is tuned to pull at the micro-fibers with a force similar to what one would experience if walking on the surface of Earth. These micro-fibers are integrated into nearly every tool, piece of clothing, and other objects commonly found on a spaceship. However it does not create true artificial gravity, so any object such as a piece of fruit or naked body that does not have these fibers integrated into them will float in mid-air as is normal in a micro-gravity environment.

Designing Your Own Spaceships

While more ships will be presented in future products, players and referees may feel the desire or need to use a ship not represented within these pages. Your first option is to find an appropriate ship within one of the many *Traveller* products that present a large variety of spaceships. When using this option, keep in mind that the spaceships in the *Chthonian Stars* setting do not have jump engines, since mankind has not yet expanded beyond the confines of our solar system. For simplicity's sake, just assume the Jump engines are actually Transit Drives.

If you would like to design spaceships of your own, use the rules presented in *Traveller Book 2: High Guard* and the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for now, with just a couple of minor changes.

In general, equipment should be limited to Tech Level 8, though some higher tech equipment may be acceptable depending on the situation.

For purposes of fuel, only concern yourself with the operational endurance of the ship while it is not in transit between planets. While in transit, the transit drives are designed to provide the bulk of the power needed by the ship. They do this by storing some of the energy they generate in high-efficiency capacitors. To ensure that this provides the ship enough power to operate systems such as the maneuvering drives, weapons and anything more than minimal sensors are locked and powered down during a transit.

Small Craft

Small craft that fall between 75 and 100 tons of displacement can have a transit drive installed. These vessels are generally specialized courier ships whose job is to get critical data from Point A to Point B as fast as possible. Most governments and corporate entities maintain a small fleet of these vessels.

When installing a Transit Drive on a small craft, use the following table to determine how much tonnage the system requires to be installed in the vessel.

Small Craft Displacement	Tonnage	MCr
75	7.5	4.5
80	8	4.5
85	8.5	4.5
90	9	4.5
95	9.5	4.5
100	10	4.5

Large Craft

When designing a larger craft, use the standard rules presented in *Traveller Book 2: High Guard*. To install Transit Drives, use the following table and remember that you cannot install a Jump drive. A large craft is any spacecraft that is between 100 and 2000 tons.

Large Craft Displacement	Tonnage	MCr
101	12	5.0
200	24	10
300	36	15
400	48	20
500	60	25
600	72	30
700	84	35
800	96	40
900	108	45
1000	120	50
1100	132	55
1200	144	60
1300	156	65
1400	168	70
1500	180	75
1600	192	80
1700	204	85
1800	216	90
1900	228	95
2000	240	100

Arduous Class Frigate

One of the most common ships of war fielded by the Unified World Council, Arduous frigates act to protect many of the inner-system trade routes from the various pirates and privateers that prey upon ships in mid-cruise. They also sometimes take on the role of orbital security and act as escorts for some of the larger naval ships the UWC fields. It is on this class of vessel that most naval officers begin

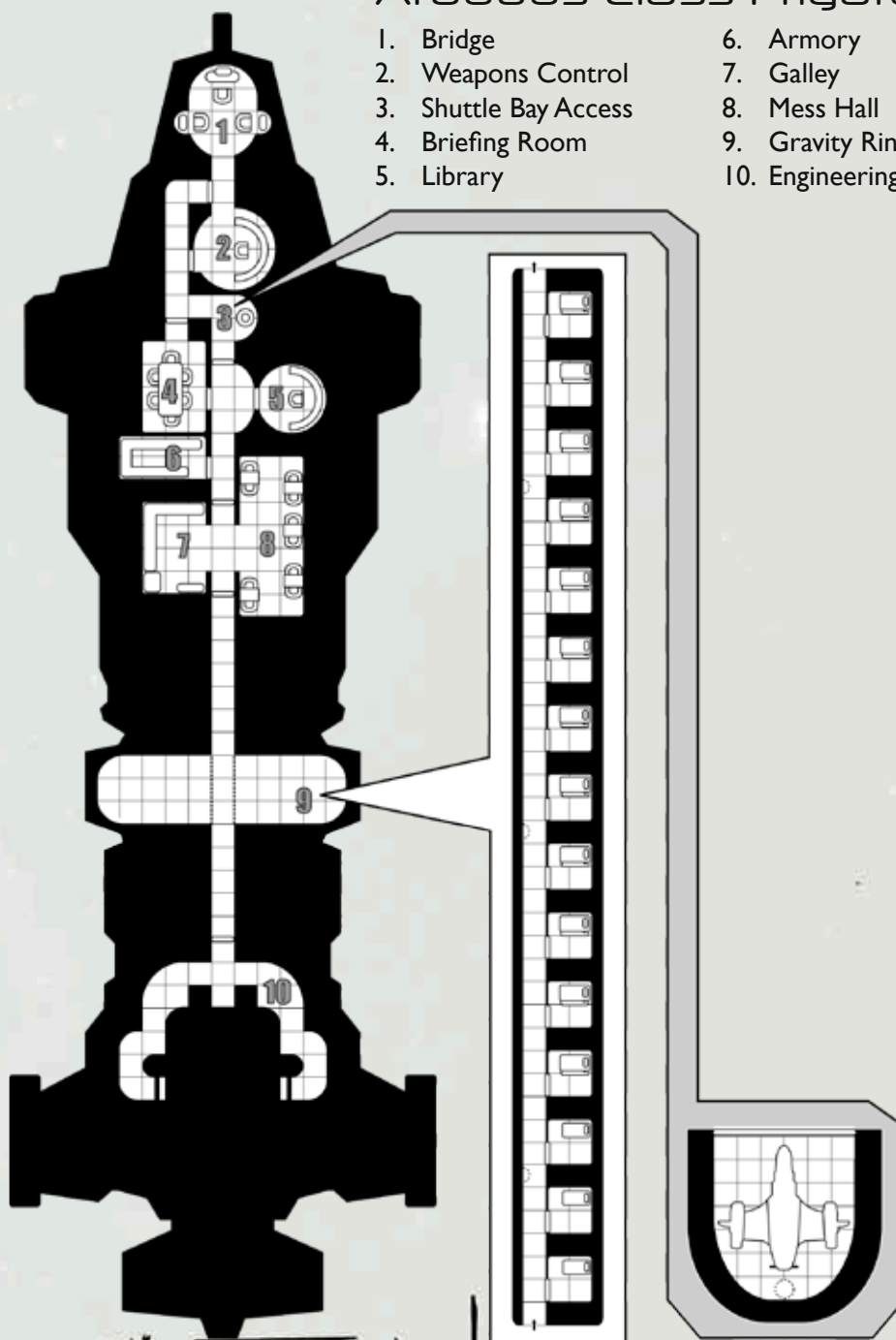
their careers. The Arduous is known for its cramped accommodations and relatively sparse recreational facilities. Naval architects figured that since the ship was primarily designed for inner-system duty, the crews could do with fewer creature comforts as they would make port calls more often than outer-system ships.

Arduous Frigate			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	500 Tons Distributed Self-Sealing	Hull 10 Structure 10		37
Armor	Titanium Steel	Protection 3	37.5	2.4
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction N	Thrust 5	25	52
Maneuvering Fuel	10G Thrust Hours		125	
Power Plant	Fusion N		40	104
Power Plant Fuel	4 Weeks of Operations		52	
Transit Drive			60	25
Bridge			20	2.5
Computer	Model-2	Rating 10		0.16
	Hardened Systems			.08
Electronics	Basic Military	DM 0	2	1
Weapons	Hard Point #1	Triple Missile Rack	1	3.25
		Missile Storage (96 missiles)	8	.02
	Hard Point #2	Triple Missile Rack	1	3.25
		Missile Storage (96 missiles)	8	.15
	Hard Point #3	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo storage (30 shots)	1.5	.002
	Hard Point #4	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo storage (30 shots)	1.5	.002
	Hard Point #5	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo storage (30 shots)	1.5	.002
Cargo	1 ton		1	
Staterooms	15 Staterooms	3 Single, 12 Doubles	60	7.5
Extras	Armory		2	.05
	Ship's Locker			
	Library		4	4
	Briefing Room		4	.5
	Sprint Shuttle		30	17.13
Software	Maneuver - 0	Transit Drive Control-I		8.2
	Library - 0	Fire Control-I		
	Evade - I	Auto-Repair-I		
Total Tonnage & Cost			500	291.722



Arduous Class Frigate

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Bridge | 6. Armory |
| 2. Weapons Control | 7. Galley |
| 3. Shuttle Bay Access | 8. Mess Hall |
| 4. Briefing Room | 9. Gravity Ring (Staterooms) |
| 5. Library | 10. Engineering |



Where there is money to be made, there will always be those that have more of it than common sense. This is the type of person the Aristocracy, and similar designs, are marketed towards. While, at their core, these ships are essentially just people movers, it is the style in which they do this that make them stand apart. With its displacement, one would expect a ship like this to have berths for over 100 passengers. However, it actually is designed to accommodate only 14, plus crew. Every inch of these ships oozes luxury and privilege. The large cargo hold is

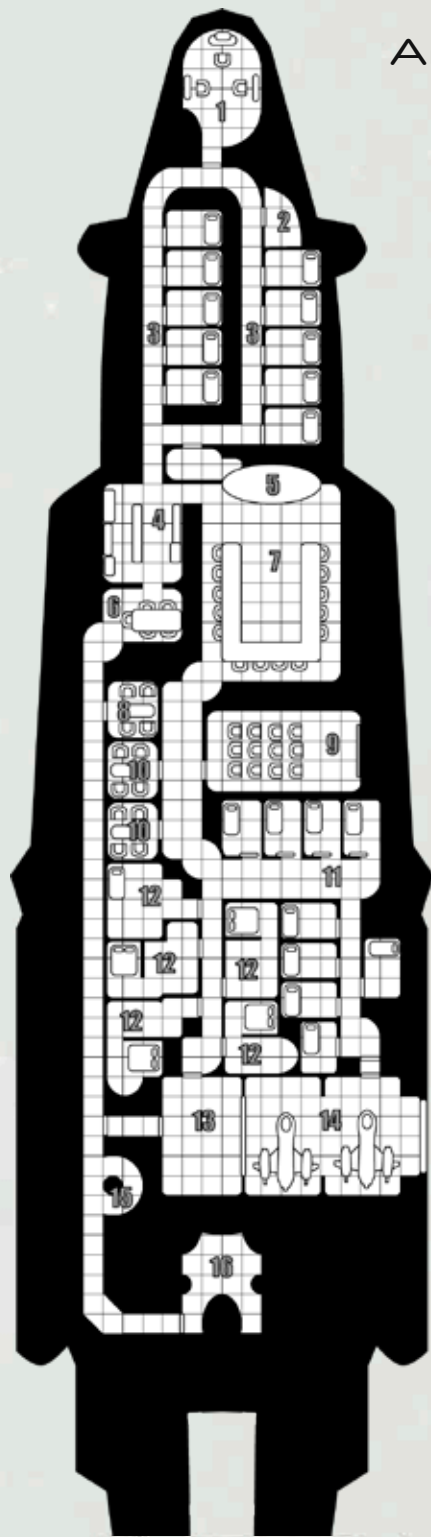
Aristocracy Class Yacht

pressurized and modular, and it is often converted into large ball rooms, shooting ranges, or whatever the owner wishes. With large suites for each passenger, sculpted hydroponic gardens, recreation centers with the latest technology available, and more, these ships are the envy of nearly every spacer in the system. However, one must truly be connected or have serious money to even consider setting foot on one. It is said that some even serve as permanent residences for their owners.

Aristocracy Yacht			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	600 Tons Streamlined Self Sealing Heat Shielding	Hull 12 Structure 12		118.8
Armor	None			
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction F	Thrust 2	11	24
Maneuvering Fuel	4G Thrust Hours		60	
Power Plant	Fusion F		19	48
Power Plant Fuel	6 Weeks of Operations		36	
Transit Drive			108	45
Bridge			20	3
Computer	Model-I	Rating 5		.16
Electronics	Basic Civilian	DM -2	2	1
Weapons	None			
Cargo	111 tons	Pressurized Modular	111	5
Staterooms	5 Luxury Suites 10 Crew Rooms	9 High Class Rooms	176	24
Extras	Ship's Locker			
	Library		4	4
	2x Sprint Shuttles		60	34.26
	Fuel Processor		20	1
	Luxury		10	1
Software	Maneuver - 0 Library - 0	Transit Drive Control-I		0.2
Total Tonnage & Cost			600	293.3



Aristocracy Class Yacht



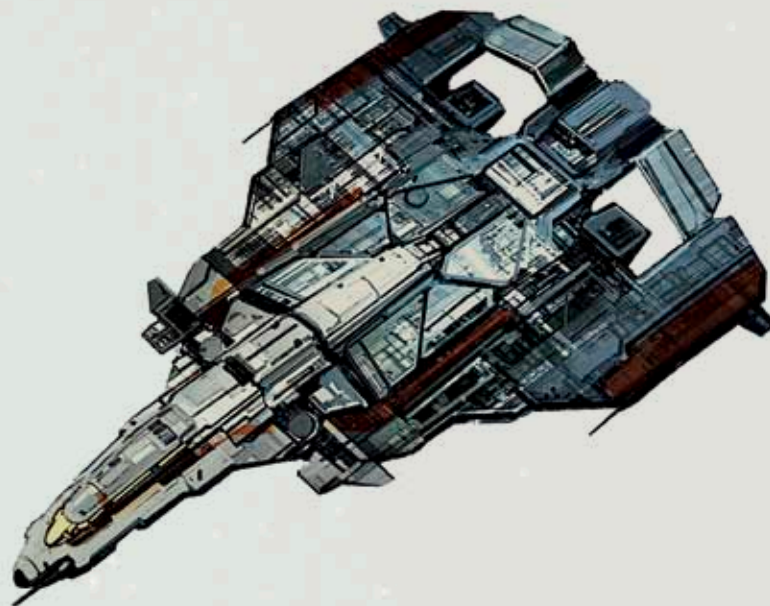
1. Bridge
2. Storage
3. Crew Rooms
4. Galley
5. Stage
6. Crew Mess Hall
7. Dining Hall
8. Crew Lounge
9. Theater
10. Passenger Lounge
11. High Class Rooms
12. Luxury Suites
13. Cargo Hold
14. Shuttle Bay
15. Fuel Processor Station
16. Engineering

Camel Class Orbital Transfer Cargo Shuttle

Perhaps the single most common spacecraft in use, the OTV shuttle has one purpose – to get people and goods from the surface of a planet to a waiting station or ship in orbit. The Camel class OTV is similar to many others. Designed to move both cargo and passengers, it has a smaller capacity than those dedicated to one or the other. Like most OTVs, the

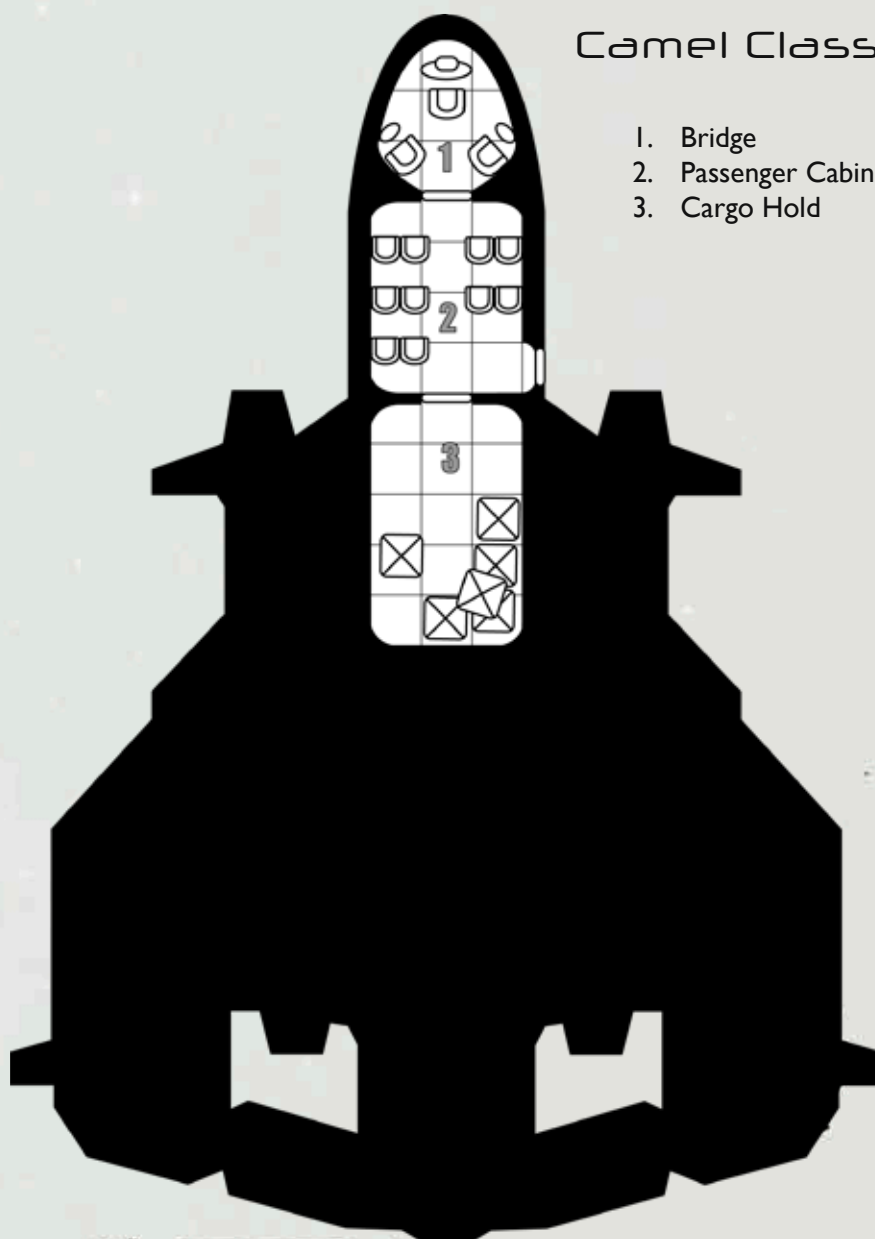
Camel is designed for short operational windows and never operates outside the orbital space of a planet – it simply does not have the endurance to do so. The Camel has a crew of three and can carry up to ten passengers and a little more than 19 tons of cargo.

Camel OTV			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	50 Tons Streamlined Heatshielding	Hull I Structure I		6.65
Armor	None			
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction sH	Thrust 3	2	4
Maneuvering Fuel	6G Thrust Hours	1 Day of Operations	0.75	
Power Plant	Fusion		3.3	6.5
Power Plant Fuel	1 Day of Operations		0.15	
Bridge	Crew Cabin for 3	Compact	6.75	0.25
Computer	Model-I	Rating 5		0.03
Electronics	Standard	DM -4		
Weapons	None			
Cargo	19.05 tons		19.05	
Extras	1 Airlock		1	0.2
	Passenger Cabin for 10		15	0.2
	Grappling Arm		2	1
Software	Maneuver - 0			
	Library - 0			
Total Tonnage & Cost			50	19.13



Camel Class OTV

1. Bridge
2. Passenger Cabin
3. Cargo Hold

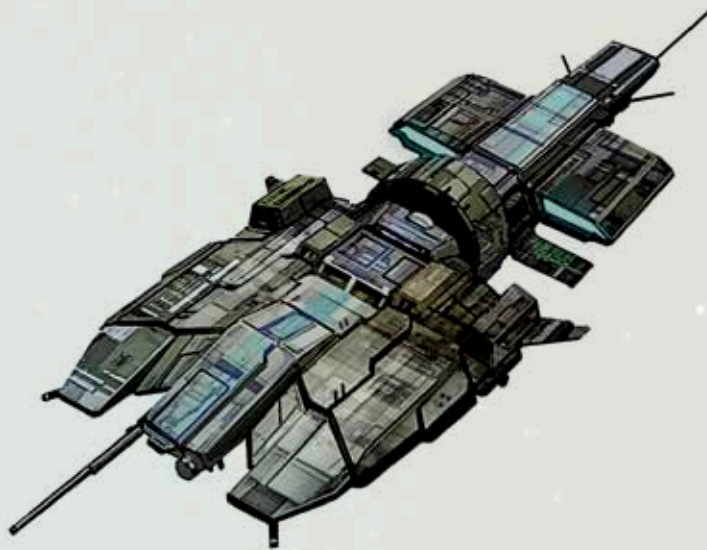


Equinox Class Interplanetary Transport

The Equinox is one of the more common inner-system transports in use. Designed to operate exclusively within the Martian orbit the Equinox carries both passengers and cargo. An in-line rotational section provides crew and passengers a near 1-G gravity during the cruise portion of the trip. Cargo

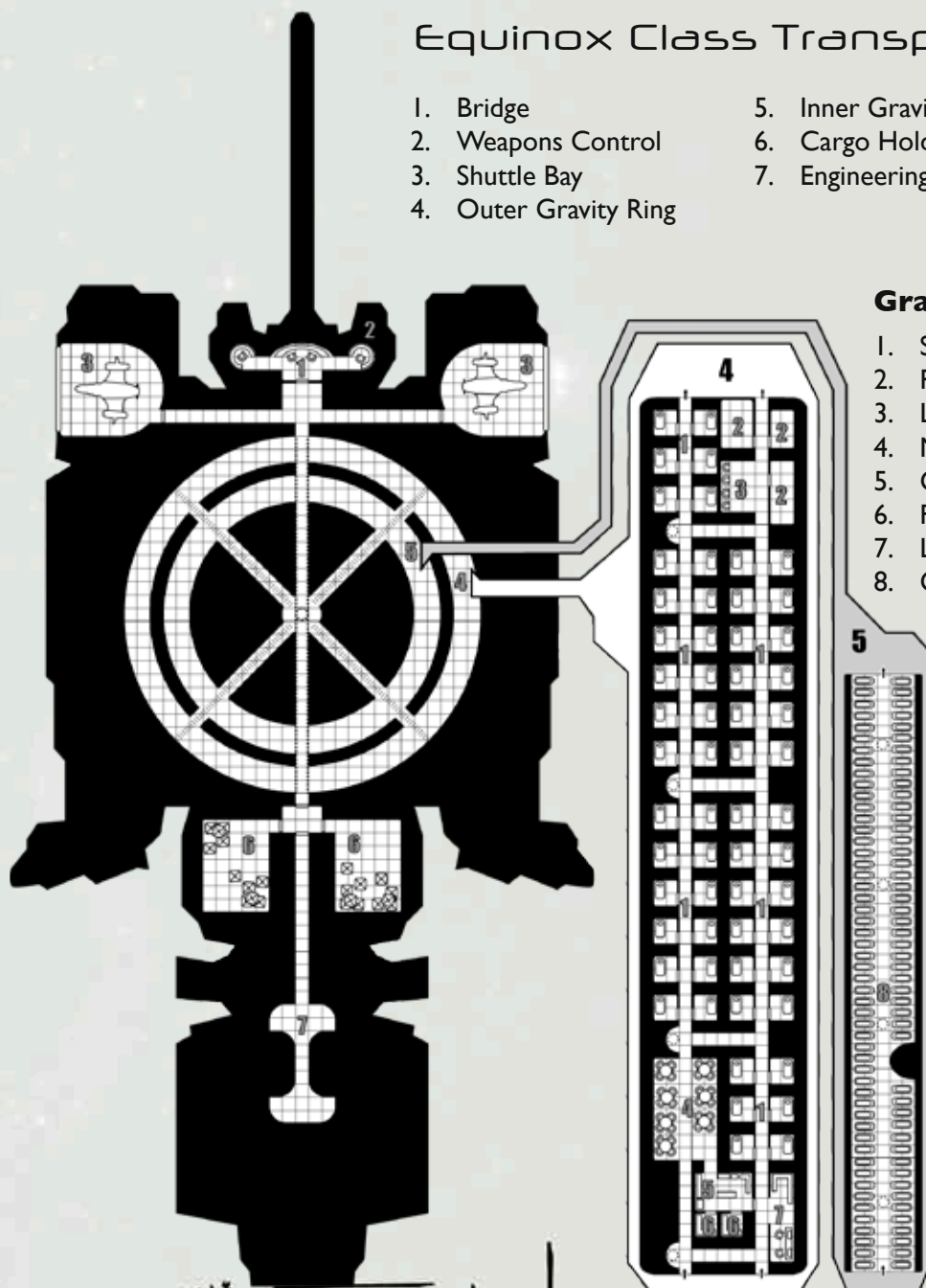
is stored in both pressurized and vacuum exposed pods aft of the rotational section. Because the ship sometimes makes trips to the innermost parts of the solar system all of this is hidden behind a large solar shield mounted both forward and aft of the ship.

Equinox Class Transport			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	800 Tons Distributed Self-Sealing	Hull 16 Structure 16		80
Armor	Titanium Steel	Protection 2	40	4
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction K	Thrust 3	19	16.5
Maneuvering Fuel	6G Thrust Hours		120	
Power Plant	Fusion K		31	80
Power Plant Fuel	4 Weeks of Operations		40	
Transit Drive			96	40
Bridge			20	4
Computer	Model-2	Rating 10		.16
Electronics	Basic Civilian	DM -2	1	.05
Weapons	Hard Point #1	Dual Missile Launchers	1	1.25
		Missile Storage (40 missiles)	4	.675
Cargo	68 tons		68	
Staterooms	60 Staterooms	100 Long-Term Grav Couches	290	20
Extras	Ship's Locker			
	Library			
	2x Sprint Shuttles		60	34.26
	Recreation Facilities		4	0.075
	Luxuries	Steward-2	2	.2
Software	Maneuver - 0	Transit Drive Control-1		2.1
	Library - 0			
Total Tonnage & Cost			800	293.27



Equinox Class Transport

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Bridge | 5. Inner Gravity Ring |
| 2. Weapons Control | 6. Cargo Hold |
| 3. Shuttle Bay | 7. Engineering |
| 4. Outer Gravity Ring | |



Gravity Rings

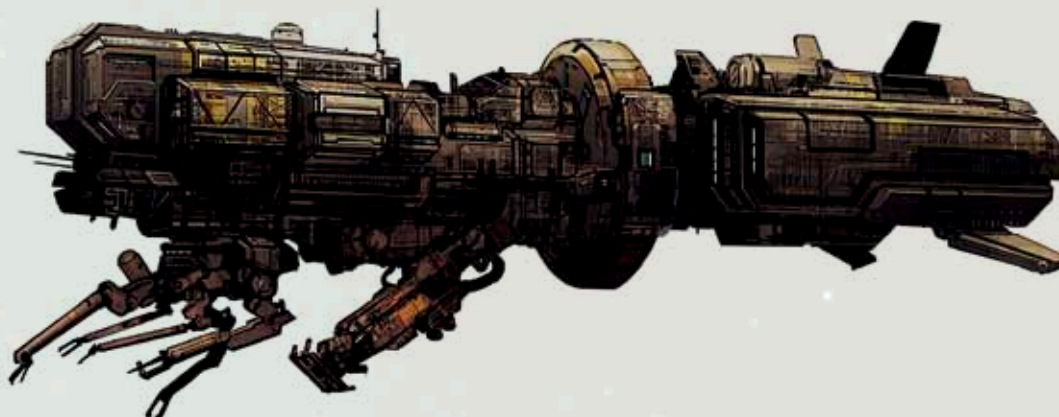
- | |
|-----------------|
| 1. Staterooms |
| 2. Rec Rooms |
| 3. Lounge |
| 4. Mess Hall |
| 5. Galley |
| 6. Food Stores |
| 7. Library |
| 8. Grav Couches |

Forge Class Mining Barge

The Forge is designed for long term mining missions in some of the most isolated parts of the solar system. These massive ships are some of the largest in the solar system. Onboard are massive cargo bays for storing raw materials, refining arrays, mining pods and more. Most often these vessels are found in the Kuiper Belt but some also a maintain station

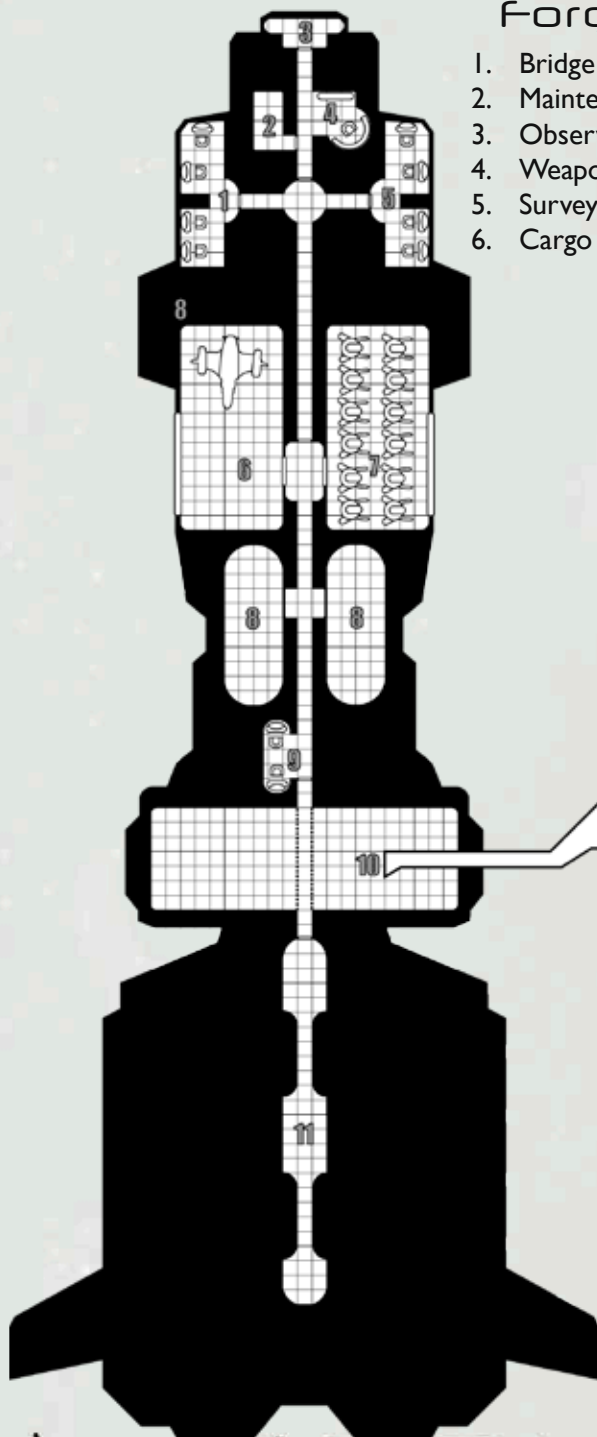
around especially rich comets or other orbital bodies. Mining pods swarm about the ship and nearby asteroids bringing raw materials from asteroids and small moons to the barge to be stored or processed. Once a barge has mined to its capacity it returns to its home base to off-load and then heads back out again.

Forge Class Mining Barge			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	2000 Tons Distributed Self Sealing	Hull 40 Structure 40		180
				20
Armor	Titanium Steel	Protection 4	200	27
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction L	Thrust I	21	33
Maneuvering Fuel	4G Thrust Hours		200	
Power Plant	Fusion L		34	88
Power Plant Fuel	8 Weeks of Operations		88	
Transit Drive			240	100
Bridge			40	10
Computer	Model-I	Rating 5		.03
Electronics	Standard	DM -4		
Weapons	Hard Point #1	Dual Missile Launchers	1	1.25
		Missile Storage (40 missiles)	4	.675
	Hard Point #2	Dual Missile Launchers	1	1.25
		Missile Storage (40 missiles)	4	.675
	Hard Point #3	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo Storage (40 shots)	2	.001
	Hard Point #4	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo Storage (40 shots)	2	.001
	Hard Point #5	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo Storage (40 shots)	2	.001
	Hard Point #6	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo Storage (40 shots)	2	.001
Cargo	861 tons		861	
	Ore Processing Equipment	250 tons of ore/day	50	2.5
Staterooms	30 Staterooms		120	15
Extras	Ship's Locker			
	Library			
	1x Sprint Shuttles		30	17.13
	2x Mining Pods		40	35.5
	Recreation Facilities		4	0.075
Software	Maneuver - 0	Transit Drive Control-I		2.1
	Library - 0			
Total Tonnage & Cost			2000	552.189



Forge Class Mining Barge

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Bridge | 7. Cargo Hold & Mining Pods |
| 2. Maintenance Access | 8. Haz Mat Cargo Hold |
| 3. Observation Deck | 9. Haz Mat Monitoring Station |
| 4. Weapons Control | 10. Gravity Ring |
| 5. Surveying Deck | 11. Engineering |
| 6. Cargo Hold & Shuttle Bay | |



Gravity Ring

- | |
|----------------|
| 1. Rec Area |
| 2. Staterooms |
| 3. Library |
| 4. Lounge |
| 5. Mess Hall |
| 6. Galley |
| 7. Food Stores |

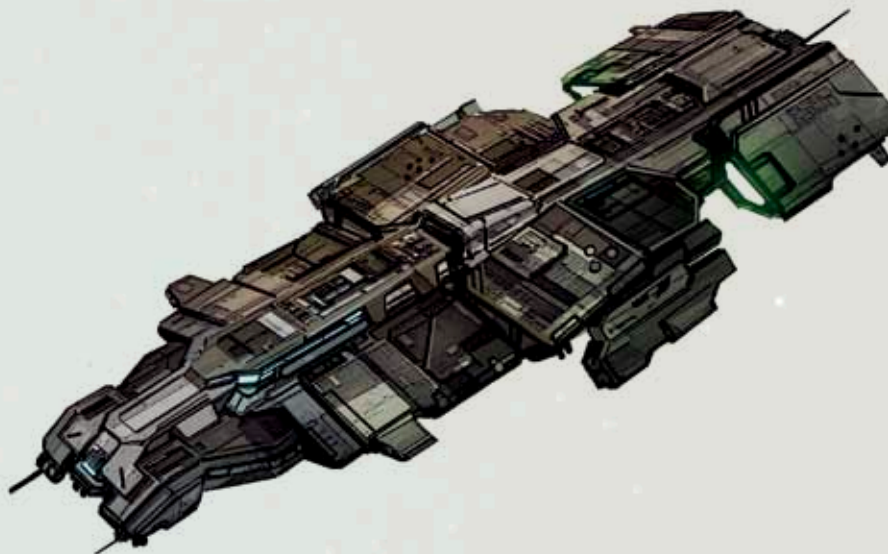


Guardian Class Customs Cutter

Every planet, colony, or station has their own rules and regulations on what can be imported, exported, orbital and docking procedures, and so on. It is up to each customs officer to enforce these rules and regulations. Most of this work is done inside the stations and on the tarmacs of spaceports, but some of them have to enforce the law with a firmer hand. The Guardian cutters are a common tool of this author-

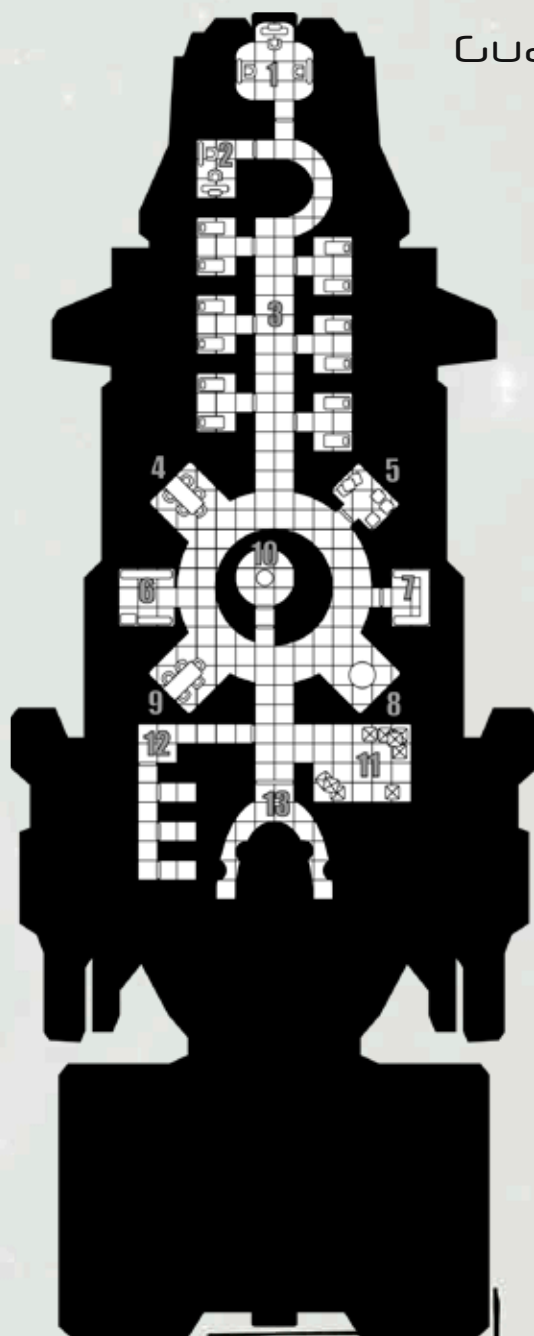
ity and duty. Lightly armed and fast, it is equipped with an external docking collar so that the Guardian can quickly overtake freighters or civilian ships and forcibly dock and board the ship in question. Most often, they do not need to resort to such drastic actions and they often simply transport customs officials from ship to ship as they conduct random inspections.

Guardian Class Customs Cutter			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	200 Tons	Hull 4 Structure 4		8
Armor	Titanium Steel	Protection 4	20	2.4
	Self-Sealing			
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction F	Thrust 6	11	12
Maneuvering Fuel	6G Thrust Hours		30	
Power Plant	Fusion F		19	48
Power Plant Fuel	1 Week of Operations		6	
Transit Drive			24	10
Bridge			10	1
Computer	Model-I	Rating 5		.03
Electronics	Basic Military	DM 0	2	1
Weapons	Hard Point #1	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo (80)	4	.04
	Hard Point #2	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo (80)	4	.04
Cargo	9 tons		9	
Staterooms	12 Staterooms	1 Standard, 9 Doublebunk	48	6
		2 Brig/Secured		
Extras	Ship's Locker		1	.05
	Breaching Tube		3	3
Software	Maneuver - 0	Transit Drive Control-I		2.1
	Library - 0	Fire Control-I		
Total Tonnage & Cost			200	102.61



Guardian Class Cutter

1. Bridge
2. Weapons Control
3. Staterooms
4. Mess Hall
5. Storage
6. Galley
7. Armory
8. Mess Hall
9. Airlock/Breaching Tube
10. Cargo
11. Brig
12. Engineering

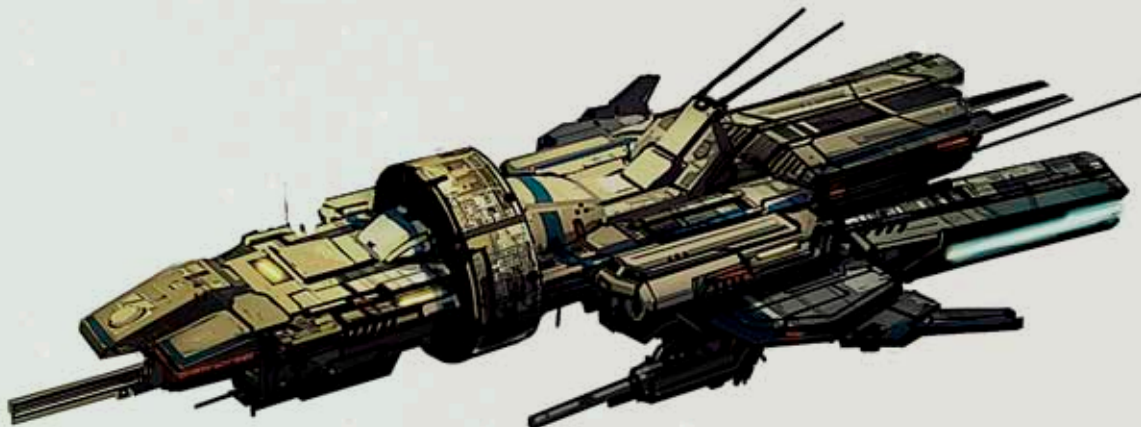


Knight's Errant Class Corvette

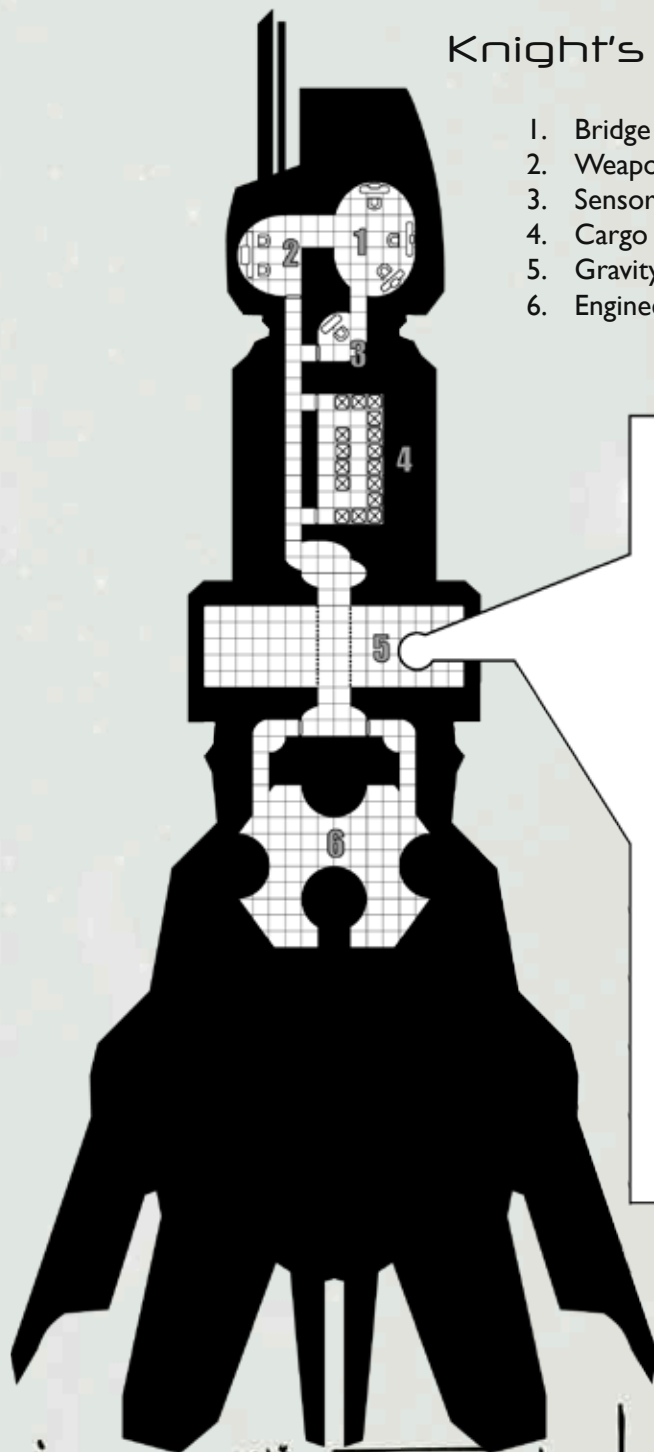
The Knight's Errant is a ship unique to the Wardens. Officially designated as a corvette, the truth is it really doesn't fit easily into any traditional designation. Designed to assist Warden teams who have been deployed on missions, these ships have a menagerie of systems that all contribute to this end.

Science stations, medical bays, high end sensors, and more are available to the team. These ships are also armed well enough that they can generally fight off anyone foolish enough to actually take an aggressive stance towards the ship.

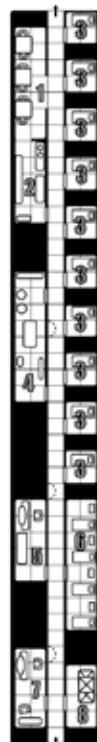
Knight's Errant Corvette			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	300 Tons Streamlined Heatshielding	Hull 6 Structure 6		43.2
Armor	Titanium Steel Self-Sealing	Protection 4	30	4.32
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction F	Thrust 4	11	12
Maneuvering Fuel	8G Thrust Hours		60	
Power Plant	Fusion F		19	48
Power Plant Fuel	4 Weeks of Operations		24	
Transit Drive			36	15
Bridge	Holographic Controls		20	1.875
Computer	Model-2	Rating 10		0.16
Electronics	Basic Military	DM 0	12	11
	Survey Sensors			
Weapons	Hard Point #1	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo (40)	2	.02
	Hard Point #2	Dual Missile Racks	1	2
		Smart Missile Ammo (60)	5	.15
Cargo	23 tons		23	
Staterooms	10 Staterooms	Single Occupancy	40	5
Extras	Fuel Processor		1	.05
	Staterooms for 10		40	5
	Ship's Locker			
	Laboratory		4	1
	Grappling Arm		2	1
	Probe Drones		1	0.075
Software	Maneuver - 0	Transit Drive Control-I		2.1
	Library - 0	Fire Control-I		
Total Tonnage & Cost			300	154.95



Knight's Errant Class Corvette



1. Bridge
2. Weapons Control
3. Sensor Control
4. Cargo
5. Gravity Ring
6. Engineering



Gravity Ring

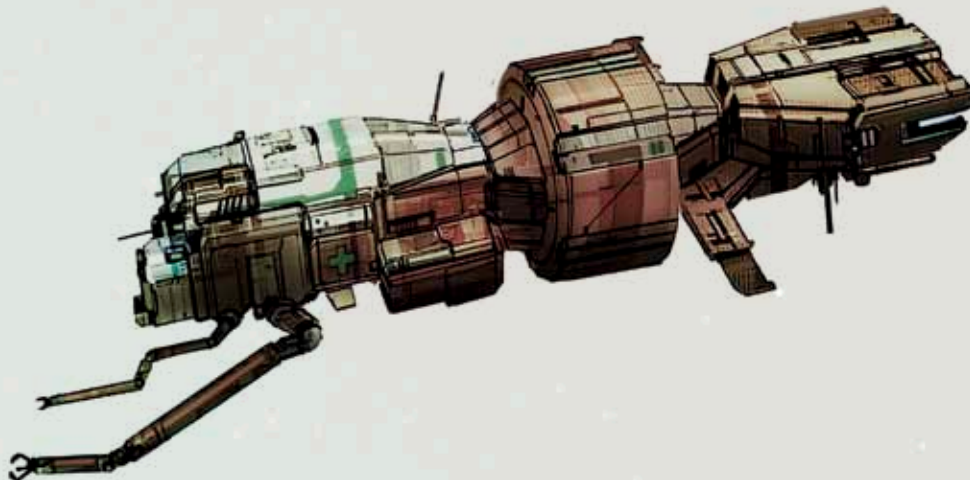
1. Mess Hall
2. Galley
3. Stateroom
4. ER
5. Science Lab
6. Infirmary
7. Science Lab
8. Ship's Locker

Mercy Class Search and Rescue Vessel

No matter what sort of precautions are taken, accidents do happen and, as mankind has expanded into the most remote parts of the solar system, a need arose for specialized search and rescue craft that could get experts to the scene rapidly. The vessels also needed to have trauma-rated medical facilities to treat wounded, machine shops for doing repairs when possible, and extra passenger capacity for returning crews home when their ships are unable

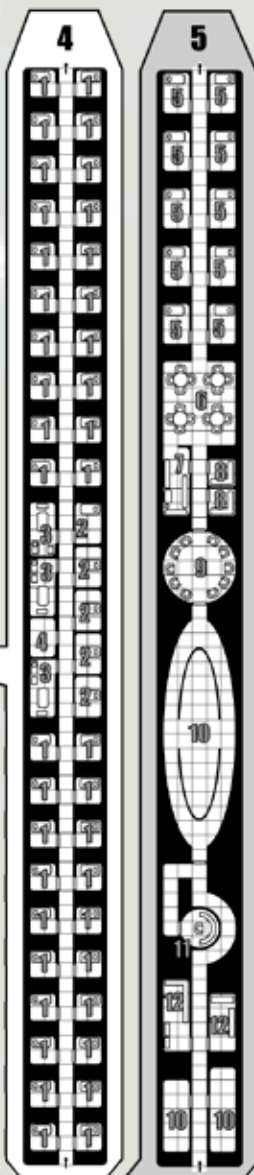
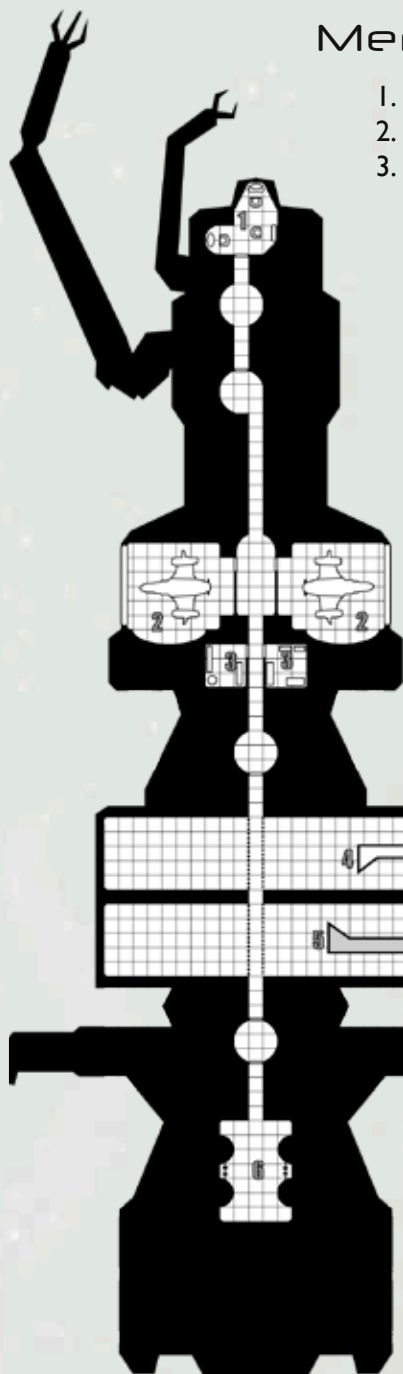
to be salvaged. The crews of these vessels are often viewed as some of the most expert and elite in the system. Their job is also seen as one of the deadliest, given the conditions they often must work under. All crews on these ships are volunteers that have undergone not just extensive and specialized training, but also psychological tests to ensure they can withstand the extreme stress they are often under.

Mercy Class S&R Vessel			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	800 Tons Distributed Self Sealing	Hull 18 Structure 18		180
Armor	None			9
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction P	Thrust 4	27	56
Maneuvering Fuel	12G Thrust Hours		270	
Power Plant	Fusion P		43	112
Power Plant Fuel	4 Weeks of Operations		56	
Transit Drive			108	45
Bridge			20	4.5
Computer	Model-2	Rating 10		.16
Electronics	Basic Military	DM 0	2	1
Weapons	None			
Cargo	28 tons		28	
Staterooms	5 Trauma Rooms	40 Patient Rooms	185	35
	10 Staff Rooms		40	2.5
Extras	Ship's Locker			
	Library		4	4
	3x Sprint Shuttles		90	51.39
	5 Machine Shops		25	5
	Grappling Arm		2	1
Software	Maneuver - 0	Transit Drive Control-I		0.2
	Library - 0	Medical - I		
Total Tonnage & Cost			900	416.75



Mercy Class Search & Rescue

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Bridge | 4. Gravity Ring 1 |
| 2. Shuttle Bay | 5. Gravity Ring 2 |
| 3. Machine Shop | 6. Engineering |



Gravity Rings

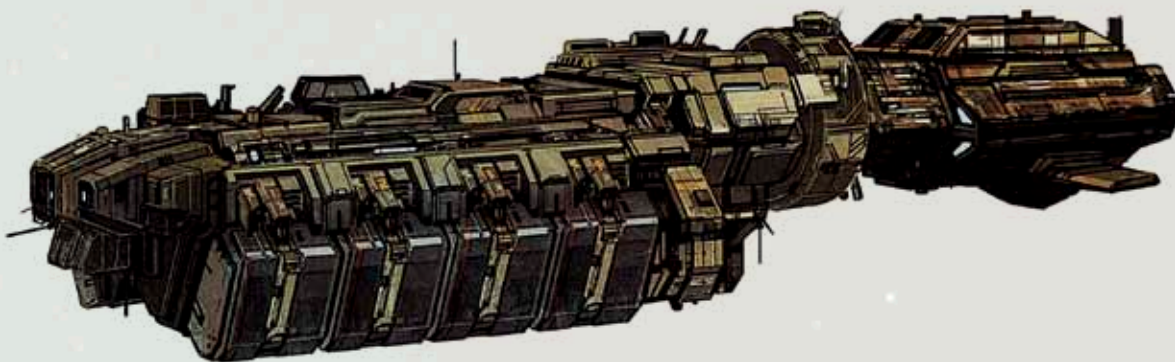
1. Patient Room
2. Trauma Room
3. O.R.
4. Storage
5. Staff Room
6. Mess Hall
7. Galley
8. Food Stores
9. Lounge
10. Rec Area
11. Library
12. Lab

Perth Class Bulk Freighter

A great deal of ore and other materials are generated in the outermost portions of the solar system, and that material must find its way to the factories and refineries that are located primarily in the inner system. This is where bulk freighters come in, and the Perth class is one of the most successful designs in common usage today. When empty, these vessels look like nothing more than an incomplete ship skeleton. However, when in action, that skeleton is cov-

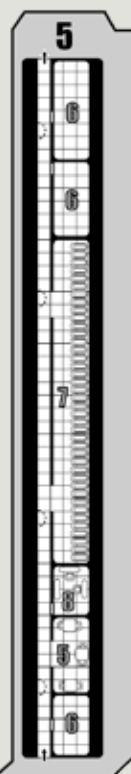
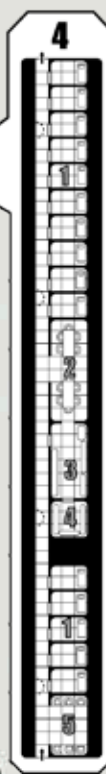
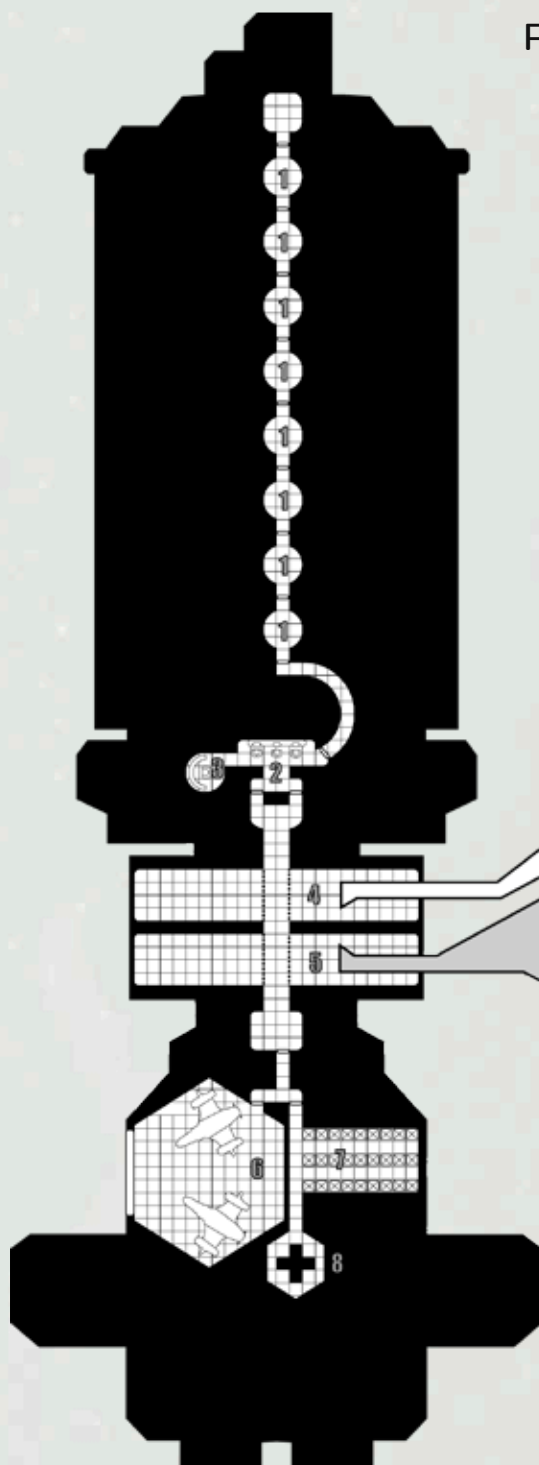
ered in cargo pallets filled with a variety of cargos. Most commonly these include ores, precious metals and other bulk materials, but the ship can also take on pallets designed to store more precious cargos, such as foodstuffs and delicate machinery. A pair of counter-rotating life sections sit at either end of the ship, providing the crew a gravity environment for the long trips between the inner and outer system.

Perth Class Bulk Freighter			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	2000 Tons Distributed	Hull 40 Structure 40		180
Armor	None			
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction L	Thrust 3	21	33
Maneuvering Fuel	6G Thrust Hours		300	
Power Plant	Fusion L		34	88
Power Plant Fuel	4 Weeks of Operations		44	
Transit Drive			240	100
Bridge			40	10
Computer	Model-I	Rating 5		.03
Electronics	Basic Civilian	DM -2	1	.05
Weapons	Hard Point #1	Dual Missile Launchers	1	1.25
		Missile Storage (40 missiles)	4	.675
	Hard Point #2	Dual Missile Launchers	1	1.25
		Missile Storage (40 missiles)	4	.675
Cargo	1162 tons	Modular Cargo	1162	
Staterooms	15 Staterooms	40 Long-Term Grav Couches	80	15.5
Extras	Ship's Locker			
	Library			
	2x Sprint Shuttles		60	34.26
	Recreation Facilities		4	0.075
Software	Maneuver - 0	Transit Drive Control-I		2.1
	Library - 0			
Total Tonnage & Cost			2000	468.865



Perth Class Freighter

1. Cargo Access Station
2. Bridge
3. Weapons Control
4. Gravity Ring 1
5. Gravity Ring 2
6. Shuttle Bay
7. Cargo Hold
8. Engineering



Gravity Rings

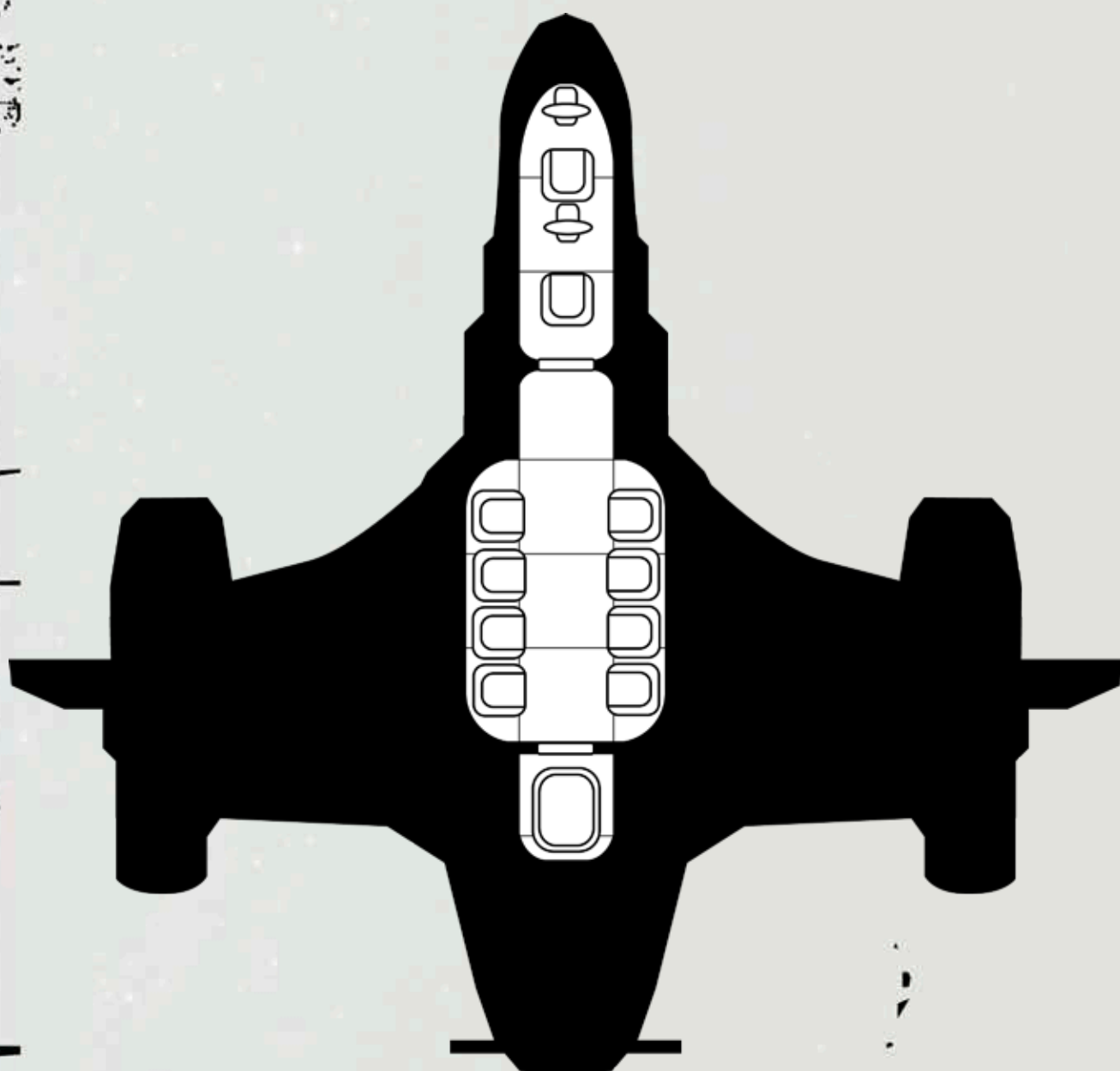
1. Staterooms
2. Mess Hall
3. Galley
4. Food Stores
5. Lounge
6. Rec Room
7. Grav Couches
8. Library

Designed to ferry people back and forth between ships and/or stations, or to travel between the moons of a planetary system, the Sprints are common sights in both stations and ship craft bays. Able to hold up to a dozen passengers plus the pilot, these craft have no capacity for moving cargo heavier than the baggage of its passengers. Sprints do not have

Sprint Class Shuttle

heat shielding, which limits their ability to land on planets or those moons that sport an atmosphere. They are also not streamlined for atmospheric maneuvering. However, these limitations also mean they are very inexpensive and make a good choice when selecting auxiliary craft for a ship or station.

Sprint Class Shuttle			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	30 Tons	Hull 1 Structure 1		1.3
Armor	Titanium Steel	2 Points	1.5	0.13
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction sM	Thrust 8	3	6
Maneuvering Fuel	8G Thrust Hours	1 Day of Operations	0.6	
Power Plant	Fusion		5.1	9
Power Plant Fuel	1 Day of Operations		0.25	
Bridge	Crew Cabin for 2	Compact	4.5	0.15
Computer	Model-I	Rating 5		0.03
Electronics	Standard	DM -4		
Weapons	None			
Cargo	2.05 tons		2.05	
Extras	1 Airlock		1	0.2
	Passenger Cabin for 8		12	0.4
Software	Maneuver - 0			
	Library - 0			
Total Tonnage & Cost			30	17.13

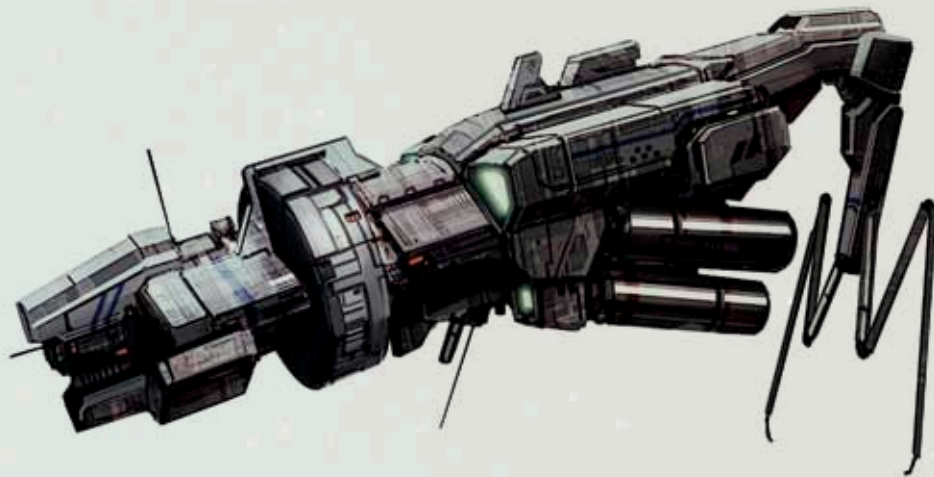


Turbulate Class Gas Giant Skimmer

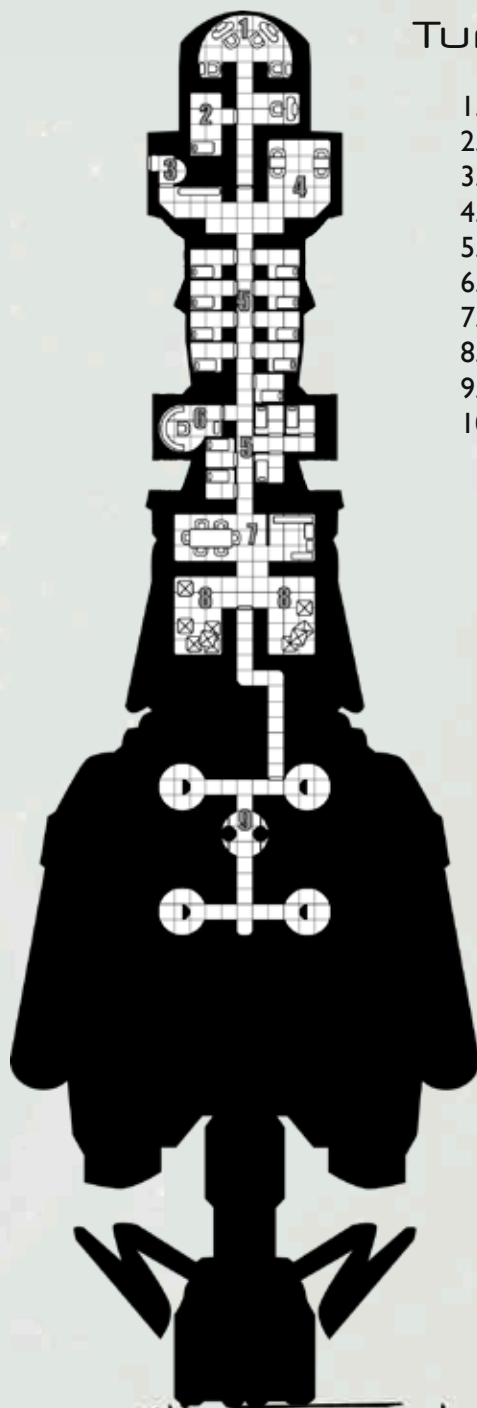
The Turbulate class is another mining vessel, but is vastly different from the larger and more industrial Forge class. While these spaceships are not designed to land, they have been designed to skim along the upper atmosphere of a gas giant while taking in vast quantities of the atmosphere of those planets. Internal processors then separate the various gases into

their constituent components and store them in vast storage tanks. Operation of these ships can be dangerous, as the atmosphere of these planets can be highly turbulent and unpredictable. As a result, the pilots of these craft are some of the best, and highest paid, in the solar system.

Turbulate Class Gas Giant Skimmer			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	1000 Tons Streamlined	Hull 20 Structure 20		110
Armor	Titanium Steel	Protection 2	50	15.5
	Self-Sealing			
Maneuvering Drive	Reaction L	Thrust 3	21	33
Maneuvering Fuel	9G Thrust Hours		225	
Power Plant	Fusion L		34	88
Power Plant Fuel	2 Weeks of Operations		22	
Transit Drive			120	50
Bridge			20	5
Staterooms	18 Staterooms		72	9
Computer	Model-I	Rating 5		.03
Electronics	Basic Civilian	DM -2	1	.05
Weapons	Hard Point #1	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo (40)	2	.02
	Hard Point #2	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo (40)	2	.04
	Hard Point #3	Railgun Barbette	5	4
		Railgun Ammo (40)	2	.04
	Hard Point #4	Dual Missile Launchers	1	1.25
		Missiles (48)	4	.675
Cargo	385 tons	350 Tons of Gas Cargo	385	
		35 Tons of Solid Cargo		
Extras	Ship's Locker			
	Fuel Processor		20	1
	Library		4	4
Software	Maneuver - 0	Transit Drive Control-I		2.1
	Library - 0	Fire Control-I		
Total Tonnage & Cost			1000	331.67



Turbulate Class Skimmer



1. Bridge
2. Captain's Quarters
3. Airlock
4. Rec Room
5. Staterooms
6. Library
7. Mess Hall & Galley
8. Rec Facilities
9. Engineering & Fuel Processor
10. Shuttle Bay

FAR STRIDER

TO: Patrick Van Buren, Director of Warden Operations, Warden Prime

FROM: Ayako Yamaguchi, Special Activities Division, Warden Operations Center

SUBJECT: Disposition of the Corvette, Far Strider

SECURITY LEVEL: TOP SECRET

Sir, it is my sad duty to inform you that the missing corvette, Far Strider, was recently discovered adrift in open space, beyond the Asteroid Belt. As you are aware, Far Strider was dispatched, under the command of Captain Jericho Vitalis, to investigate possible sightings of the species classified as X-13. Incoming reports from Captain Vitalis and the other Wardens of Far Strider's crew had been frequent and consistent, until six months ago when all transmissions suddenly and inexplicably ceased. We have filed reports of Far Strider's visits to Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, and Jupiter, and we believe that Captain Vitalis and his crew were indeed onto something that could constitute a clear and present threat. Unfortunately, it will be difficult to verify this, as it is believed that the entirety of Far Strider's crew is now dead.

Far Strider was discovered on the 3rd of February, near a passing freelance trader registered as Cardigan Bay while en route between Mars and Jupiter. Her course had taken Cardigan Bay outside of standard transit routes. Cardigan Bay's navigational computer was able to detect Far Strider's distress beacon in time to revive her crew and begin rescue operations. The results of those operations are contained in a transmitted audio-log received from Cardigan Bay's skipper, Captain Frank Beringer thirty-two hours ago. You will find an enclosed transcript of Captain Beringer's log for your review.

08:35 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159, CELESTIAL COORDINATES RA: 7h, 27m, 47s DEC: 2°, 8', 39". Ship's Log, Cardigan Bay, Captain Frank Beringer reporting.

We've picked up an emergency distress signal while en route to Ganymede. The source of the signal has yet to be identified. The emergency command protocol revived pilot Lisa Bell and I from A/D stasis about ten minutes ago. My initial reading of our current coordinates shows that we are approximately sixty percent along our planned transit route to Jupiter.

Life signs for the rest of the crew look stable. I've begun resuscitation. Lisa has plotted an intercept course toward the distress beacon. Our expected arrival will be in approximately thirty-seven minutes.

09:27 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

The Cardigan Bay arrived on scene about fifteen minutes ago. Sensors detected a ship seemingly lifeless and adrift as we approached. She appears to be some sort of corvette, though not like anything I've ever seen before. She may be a government ship by the looks of her markings. The name printed on her hull is Far Strider. I've directed my navigator, Jose Perez, to research the name on the master vessel database, but he has yet to find anything useful. Whatever she is, this ship is well armed.

We've attempted to raise her on standard communications channels, with no results. Our initial inspection of the outer hull indicates no rupture or any other sign of damage. Nevertheless, the ship seems lifeless. We'll need to board her as soon as we can to commence rescue or salvage operations. I've already ordered Lisa to bring us alongside. Chief Engineer Dante Williams is preparing a boarding party. We will begin operations as soon as we are securely moored to Far Strider's docking hatch.

10:22 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

The boarding party is now aboard Far Strider. Party members include Chief Williams, Assistant Engineer Sheila Watts, Pilot Lisa Bell, and our medic Lionel Heskey. Entry through the outer airlock was difficult due to Far Strider's advanced security system. Fortunately, Sheila is somewhat of a wiz at breaking security codes – even the toughest ones. I don't know what kind of work she did before this, but some of her more dubious skills often come in handy.

Perez located a listing for Far Strider under the master vessel database, but the entry was marked as classified. She must be a government ship – I'd bet a year's pay on it.

Initial reports from Williams' team are insubstantial. There's no sign of life whatsoever – no bodies, no living souls, nothing. Sheila is making her way toward the engine room while the others head toward



the bridge. Perhaps Far Strider's log is accessible from there.

10:36 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

My God, what happened over there? Williams has linked me into a live video feed. It looks like the hatch to the bridge is sealed and barricaded by welded bands of steel. The door, walls, and deck plates are all sprayed with splashes of what looks like blood. There's also quite a bit of damage to the door frame, as if something powerful had battered against it from the other side.

Williams is scanning for life signs, but I don't have a good feeling about survivors after seeing this mess. Nevertheless, we've got to make sure. On the other hand, Far Strider might fall under UWC regulations as free salvage if there are no survivors and clear ownership can't be verified. A ship like this could be worth a fortune. Whatever the case, we must get into that bridge. I'll make sure the cutting gear is ready – and I may just unlock the weapons locker as well. I hope to God that we don't find whatever made this bloody mess locked in on the other side.

11:02 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

No life signs have been detected, so Williams and the team have cut through the hatch and entered the bridge. The crew made a quick sweep, with pistols drawn, but there was no immediate threat. The bridge is in shambles, however. Most of the control consoles and equipment have been ravaged the same way as the door. Scorch marks indicate that there may have been a small electrical fire. The lighting in there is very dim. I can hardly make out details through the Chief's video feed. A computerized voice is coming from somewhere to the left near the navigation station. I can just make out the shape of a chair and the lights of the console as the Chief moves closer. There seems to be something on the floor as well. Oh dear God!

11:26 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

We've discovered the body of a woman. Something ripped her in half and dropped the fleshy pieces on the deck like discarded cigarette butts. Lisa had to leave the bridge to throw up. What the hell could have done this? I give Williams a lot of credit for having the stomach to deal with this mess, especially since he's the one examining what's left of the body. The tattered remains of her uniform still display a portion of her insignia, revealing what she was – this woman was a Warden.

11:52 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

Williams has patched me into Far Strider's navigation control. It took some doing, but I managed to retrieve her logs and discovered two things. First, Far Strider was set to the last stage of her self-destruct sequence. One more command and boom!

Second, Far Strider's captain, someone named Vitalis, seemed worried about the possible presence of a hostile alien life form on Neptune. Far Strider was dispatched to Salacia to dig up evidence of something they call X-13. There seems to be a profile record in Far Strider's database for this thing, but I can't seem to get past its security profile. According to Vitalis' log entry, the Warden's didn't believe that this X-13 was native to Neptune. But, some strange sightings and the sharp escalation of murders within the colony followed a bizarre event that eyewitnesses described as a shimmering wave in the air followed by an explosion of static electricity – very strange.

Whatever this thing was, it certainly looked like Vitalis and his crew were able to track it. He de-

scribed it as a "cunning and intelligent predator possessed of incredible strength and speed, with a will for violent bloodshed." Skimming ahead here, I can see that the Wardens were able to corner the creature somewhere within Salacia's spaceport. However, it got away in what may have been a cargo shipment to Uranus. Yes, I can see here where Vitalis mentions the discovery of a derelict freighter adrift near the moon Oberon. She must have been towed to Veronica Station, because the next thing that Vitalis notes is a series of random grizzly murders on the Saturnine moon of Enceladus soon after a passenger liner, recently arrived from Veronica Station, had landed there. Whatever this thing was, it seemed to be very deliberate in its journey toward the inner planets.

According to Vitalis' logs, the Wardens arrived on Enceladus only days after the creature's departure. The carnage and destruction it left behind had the local population in a paranoid uproar. Whatever this X-13 alien was, it was intelligent and apparently skilled. Local police reports on Enceladus included an apparent shuttle theft – the vessel in question being later found docked at Chronos Station above Titan. What I don't get is how this thing could possibly infiltrate busy population centers without discovery. Oh God, I remember hearing about the disappearance of an entire class of young school children while transferring onto a shuttle at Chronos Station, but no details had ever been released of the incident. According to Vitalis, a cruise liner heading toward Jupiter picked up the shuttle, apparently adrift in Saturn's orbit. All that was found was a gruesome collection of toddler heads and body parts piled in a fleshy stack of bloody meat inside the cabin.

Scanners had not picked up signs of life on that shuttle either. Yet, evidence of the creature's passing remained clear when some of the cruise liner's passengers began to disappear. Wait, if they couldn't detect any life on the shuttle, then...

I need to contact Williams now!

12:14 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

I've put Williams and the rest of the crew on alert. Whatever this thing is, I know now that it somehow got on the Warden ship. Vitalis believed that they had destroyed the creature after catching up with it on Ganymede. He was wrong! I read Vitalis' account of X-13's apparent abilities. Like a chameleon, it's able to blend itself into its surroundings to

avoid detection. It's somehow invisible to standard bio-scanners as well. What the hell did we just step into here?

The account of the Warden's discovery that they weren't alone onboard ship after Ganymede is quite clear in Vitalis' log. Two of the Wardens were violently eviscerated and half eaten while in A/D stasis. The remainder of the team was revived under the computer's emergency protocol. They tried their best, but couldn't stop this thing. They knew that they had no chance. One of the Wardens, Shelly Brice, tried to set Far Strider's auto-destruct. I guess that's one way to win a fight. Vitalis and his crew tried to barricade themselves up on the bridge, but the thing got in. Brice's death, being ripped in two, bought the time for the rest of the Wardens to slip out the hatch and weld it shut. Even so, there is no sign of this creature on the bridge now.

Oh no! There's a ventilation shaft in the overhead! According to the ship's schematics, the shaft leads to a junction that runs straight back toward the engine room. Sheila! She was back there and she hasn't checked in for almost an hour!

12:20 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

I've alerted Williams to collect the crew and abandon the Far Strider! We've got to get out of here now! Neither of us can raise Sheila on the comm link. Lisa is making her way back to the mooring hatch now. Perez is preparing the nav computer for departure. Williams and Heskey should not be far behind. I can see them moving through Far Strider's corridor from Williams' video cam. There's the airlock hatch at the T-juncture. But where's Lisa? I can tell that Williams is wondering the same thing as I watch his camera pan back in forth with such a blur that it's hard to make out details. Wait! That's a woman screaming! Oh no. I just saw a bloody body fly across the T-junction and slam against the far bulkhead! Heskey is making for the airlock hatch. I think that the Chief is trying to find the thing!

Something just lunged at them from the shadows. Whoa... it's big and really fast! I can't see anything! Everyone's cameras are bouncing all over the place! I hear yelling and screaming everywhere. No one seems to be able to hear me! And that screeching roar. That... that isn't right. It's like a cross between a howl and the scraping of metal on metal! It's horrible!

The Chief and Heskey are both down. The Chief's camera only points at the deck now. But I can see... oh god... that's Heskey's head. Where his body?! No... there... there the thing is. No... no... that shouldn't exist. Wai... I'm going to be sick.

No... that's the airlock! Perez, seal the door, now!

12:32 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

[heavy breathing] Just escaped the bridge in time! Perez is dead! Ship compromised! I'm... I'm the last. No sign of the creature. Doesn't seem to want to chase me, for some reason. Ship's computer is activating launch sequence! How can that be? Can't do anything from here. Got to get to Far Strider. Headed to vacc suit locker. With any luck...

12:53 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

I think my heart's going to explode. I'm on Far Strider's bridge now. I managed to space-walk from Cardigan Bay's outboard airlock to avoid detection. I've seen what's left of my crew. I don't have time to think about that now.

Cardigan Bay's mains are fired up and ready for maneuvering. Her docking tube is starting to retract. Whatever that thing is, it's smart enough to steal my ship! Where the hell is it going?! I've got to stop it! How do you activate the gun turrets on this thing?! All the consoles are smashed! Wait! That's it! The nav console!

The ship's self-destruct sequence is still active. I just need the final command. Oh hell... screw it. That's right, you freak! I'm not letting you out of here!

12:56 EST, 03 FEBRUARY 2159

This is Captain Frank Beringer of the freighter Cardigan Bay. I'm broadcasting this message to send my personal log as a warning. Anyone who doesn't believe in alien life out here in the cold void is dead wrong! I've seen it and it destroyed my ship and my entire crew.

But now it's time for payback! Auto destruct on the count of three.

Three...

Two...

One...

Mercury

UWP: C300416-8 Po Va

Conquering the Dead Planet

From a distance you'd think that the smallest planet in the solar system should belong in orbit around another world. After all, the surface of Mercury looks very similar to Luna and its equatorial diameter of 4879 kilometers is smaller than Jupiter's Ganymede and Saturn's Titan. However, upon closer inspection, you'd find that Mercury once possessed a geologically active life much like that of primordial Earth, with massive plate shifts and volcanic activity. Mercury is a terrestrial world formed of metals and silicate rock with a large iron core some 900 kilometers below the surface.

The volcanic life of Mercury has ceased. Millions of years have seen this tiny planet bake relentlessly like a spinning rotisserie under the punishing heat of the Sun's rays. Space debris, free from the protective barrier of an active atmosphere, relentlessly pummels Mercury's surface. The force of solar winds wears against the sharp edges of crater rims and craggy peaks. Even the vast differences in surface temperature make this world seem impossible to sustain life. What human engineering could produce a colony structure that could withstand temperature variations from between -315°F and +800°F? Mercury certainly seems to insist on remaining a dead planet.

Mercury's rotational cycle is one of the strangest in the Solar System. It actually takes longer for this planet to spin on its axis than it does for it to orbit the sun. A remarkably long 176 Earth days is required for Mercury to complete an entire rotation and yet only 88 Earth Days to complete a single solar orbit.

One of the most important physical features on Mercury is the Chao Meng-Fu crater, located at the planet's South Pole. This crater, with an approximate diameter of 167 kilometers/104 miles, is unique in that its polar position allows it to maintain a relatively constant temperature of -170° C/-275° F. 40% of Chao Meng-Fu's basin remains perpetually in shad-



Type: Terrestrial

Size: Approximately 0.055 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 0.38 g

Surface Pressure: Negligible

Surface Composition: Metallic Material (70%), Silicate Rock (30%)

Atmosphere: Trace – Molecular Oxygen (42%), Sodium (29%), Hydrogen (22%), Helium (6%), Potassium (0.5%)

Surface Temperature: Around 427° C/800° F

Day: 176 Days

Year: 88 Earth-Standard Days

Satellites: None

ow and thus offers a protected haven from the Sun's brutal assault. This creates an absolutely perfect condition from which to establish a colony on Mercury.

The Colony

Port Tian is Mercury's one and only colony, settled within the Chao Meng-Fu crater. Viewers from an approaching spacecraft would notice the expected landing terminals and multiple domes of the colony's spaceport. However, the majority of Port Tian would be undetectable by outside scrutiny as this settlement actually exists well below the surface of the planet. Sealed caverns have replaced the arcology domes of other worlds. Large external collector panels trap radiated energy from the Sun to provide power and regulated heat. Air supply units mix nitrogen, oxygen,

and recycled carbon dioxide to produce breathable air. Port Tian is spartan and functional in design, with overall utility being higher in priority than aesthetics. That suits its 16,000 residents just fine.

What would drive human endeavor and investment to such an inhospitable world? For some, it is a chance to take advantage of Mercury's growing mining industry. Spend a few years digging precious metals and save enough wealth to return home to Earth in style. For others, it is a chance to discover something new. Yet for others, it is that last chance to escape. Mercury is for many a promise, a penance, a purgatory, or a punishment entirely depending on their point of view.

So it was that a group of Chinese colonists, armed with all their own private purposes, set out to establish the first human settlement of Port Tian. It was here that the Chinese colony ship Shenzhou landed to establish the first Mercury colony ninety-three years ago. Original funding for the colony was granted by a new conglomeration of three major Chinese corporations called TRIAD Enterprises LLC, operating in cooperation with the Chinese government.

Today Terrestrial Research Infrastructure And Development (TRIAD) manages the daily routine of the colony under the watchful eye of both the Sino-China Alliance and the Unified World Council. One must be a TRIAD employee to work the mines of Mercury. However, independent business owners can operate within the colony if granted a contract. Free enterprise exists in Port Tian, but there is always a price when setting up on TRIAD-held land.

Even though TRIAD continues to turn a healthy profit each year in exported raw metals, the fact remains that Port Tian is not a self-sustaining colony. The residents of Port Tian rely heavily on outside trade for food, water, parts, and manufactured goods. Thus, a tidy profit can certainly be made by those freelance traders willing to make the Mercury run. Port Tian's heavy reliance on external trade is also the reason that the Unified World Council holds a certain amount of unofficial influence over this colony. Nothing would hurt business for TRIAD more than a UWC imposed trade embargo.

It's important to note that the UWC secured a treaty with TRIAD to allow for the establishment of an independent scientific research facility at Port Tian to study the Sun up close, as well as the im-

pact of intense and prolonged heat on the surface of Mercury. Many sensor stations have been set up around the southern hemisphere of Mercury to provide readings, as facings of the planet revolve from night into day.

Life on Mercury

People don't go to Mercury unless they have business there. Tourism, lavish entertainment venues, and plush lifestyles do not exist here. People work hard and often play hard, but the pleasures of life are only enjoyed in the simplest of terms. A local video broadcast network sponsored by TRIAD provides news, corporate updates, and on-demand movie selections, but the library is rarely updated. People come to Port Tian, make their money, and go home.

TRIAD does treat its employees well, with regards to pay and benefits. In fact, Port Tian is equipped with very good medical facilities that are free for employee use and offered at reasonable prices for visitors. The company also offers an attractive plan to help relocate workers from off-world. Cycling workers is essential to sustain Mercury's survivability, so recruitment campaigns are often seen on most of the inner worlds.

Leaving the frontier-like mix found at Port Tian's spaceport allows a visitor to experience an interesting cultural shift as they make their way to the colony levels below. Unlike the East/West ethnic soup of the upper level, the lower levels are very much East. Sino-China Alliance culture, custom, and tradition forges the very foundation of Port Tian society. A large Asian marketplace forms the social hub of the colony and adjacent neighborhoods are divided according to position in the company. A kind of social hierarchy exists similar to an ancient caste system. Fraternization between management and workers is very much frowned upon. Foreigners soon learn the language and to adapt to cultural differences.

One of the unusual stories hitting Port Tian's broadcast news lately is the recent collapse of a new mining tunnel artery located at the lowest levels. Six miners have died and company authorities have launched their investigation. Reports say that the mining collapse revealed an inner cavern previously undetected by scanners. Nobody knows what's really down there, because the authorities have closed off the mining shaft. Rumors are running rampant of a strange alien find in that cavern. Regardless, the company is keeping a lid on news and information.

Venus

UWP: B7B0416-8 De Na

The Earth that Wasn't

Venus is a planet that has held the imagination of humanity since it was first discovered by Pythagoras in the sixth century BC. Before that, many believed that Venus was actually two separate objects known as the Morning and Evening Stars. It seemed, from a distance, to be very much like the planet that gave birth to our own species. It was the same size, orbited at a distance that suggested it would not be too hot or cold to support life, and many believed it had a day and night cycle like Earth. In time this was all proven false.

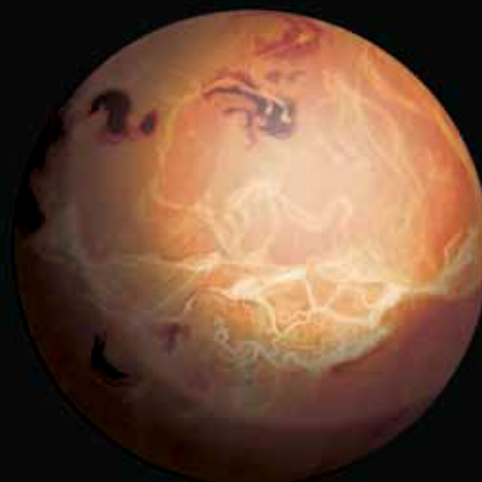
While Venus is roughly the same size as Earth, and has a gravity close to that of our birthplace, that is where the similarities end. Unlike Earth, Venus is in a virtual tidal lock with the Sun. It takes the planet slightly longer to rotate about its own axis than it does for the planet to orbit the Sun. Because of massive wind storms, the surface temperature of Venus is relatively stable across the planet, whether you are on the day or night side – it's always very hot.

A thick layer of sulfur dioxide clouds obscures the surface view. These highly corrosive clouds are one of the chief reasons for the extreme temperature on the surface. The only precipitation the planet receives is equally as corrosive, but evaporates roughly 25 kilometers/15 miles above the surface, leaving the plains of Venus even drier than the most arid deserts of Earth.

Closer to the surface of Venus, the atmosphere is somewhat less acidic, but no less inhospitable. Made up primarily of carbon dioxide with a small amount of nitrogen and sulfur dioxide, a single breath would not only completely burn the unfortunate's lungs, but would also lead to near instantaneous asphyxiation. An atmospheric pressure nearly 100 times greater than that of Earth also means that special hard suits must be worn by anyone who must brave the hellish conditions on the surface.

Life on Venus

Because of the harsh conditions, the colonies that have been built on Venus are sub-surface in nature. The original colonists found the easiest way to protect themselves from the high temperatures and



Type: Hothouse

Size: Approximately 0.815 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 0.904 g

Surface Pressure: 9.3 million Pascal (about 93 times Earth sea level)

Surface Composition: Basalt rocky surface dominated by volcanic plains with interspersed highlands. Iron, gold, silver, uranium and a variety of other valuable ores and minerals can be found.

Atmosphere: Mostly Carbon Dioxide (85%) with Nitrogen (3%) and other trace gases such as sulfur dioxide, argon, water vapor and carbon.

Cloud Layer Temperature: Around 460° C/860° F.

Day: 243 Days

Year: 224.7 Earth-Standard Days

Satellites: None

pressures was to use the rocky crust of the planet itself. When flying over the surface, the only signs of a colony are the surface airlocks and landing pads for incoming shuttles. As little as possible is left exposed to the Venusian atmosphere, both for safety and cost reasons.

Underground, the colonies on Venus are relatively comfortable in which to live. Though nearly completely underground, a great amount of effort has been made to ensure that residents do not feel closed in. Most public areas are well-lit, while exposed stone is worked smooth and painted in light colors to efficiently reflect light. Major arteries and corridors often have large flex screens that stretch the length of the tunnel, which display a variety of outdoor scenes, entertainment shows and corporate puff pieces. The overall effect works for most people.

Because Venus is largely run by the major mining corporations that sponsored its original colonization, life on the planet, no matter one's capacity, is steeped in corporate culture. Each of the six major colonies is run by a different corporation and has its own associated customs and traditions. The corporations do everything they can to ensure the loyalty of their citizens and employees, while immersing them in the corporate culture at almost every level – ranging from the name of the corporation appearing in almost every corridor and on every sign, to the logo being embossed on napkins found in restaurants and cafeterias.

An aspect of life on Venus that takes new arrivals a little adjustment is the unusually long day. For this reason, the corporations have opted to completely ignore the Venusian day when tracking time. Instead, all the colonies are set to operate in 24-hour cycles just as though one were on Earth. However, since this is a purely artificial convention and has no real bearing on the planet itself, all the colonies run on the exact same schedule – there are no time zones like one finds on Earth. 5 PM in Diamond Head is 5 PM in Daysin Colony, which is physically located on the opposite side of the planet.

The Major Colonies

There are six major colonies on Venus. Each of these is owned and run by one of the six mining corporations that paid for the initial colonization of the planet. Each colony is a separate entity under the authority of the owning corporation and, while within its confines, one is under the absolute authority of that corporation. It is always a good idea to review the laws of a colony the first time you arrive, as each colony has its own quirks that can get one in trouble if unprepared.

To deal with inter-colony disputes and administer to the systems that are shared between colonies, an advisory and administrative body made up of representatives from each corporation has been established. It is known as the Venusian Administrative Body. They oversee the planetary transport systems, maintain orbital security, and moderate disputes between colonies. The VAB has the final word on anything that occurs outside the confines of a colony.

McAlister City: Belonging to the McAlister Mining Concern, this is the smallest colony on Venus. As a result, the people here tend to be somewhat distrustful of outsiders and even new employees are

met with a distant indifference until they prove to others they are loyal to the corporation.

Daysin Colony: Named after the original founder of Rare Earths Incorporated, Daysin Colony is home to over 30,000 people. Many consider Daysin to be the friendliest colony to outsiders, as Rare Earths does not smother residents in corporate dogma or propaganda nearly to the extent of the other colonies.

Diamond Head: Run by Geo-Excavations, Diamond Head is unique in that it has residents that actually work for other Venusian corporations. This is because Geo-Excavations does a great deal of contract work when surface excavations are needed by the other colonies. Because of the mixture of corporate personnel and the risk of espionage or simple corporate rivalries getting out of hand, security at Diamond Head is very visible, keeping most visitors on edge.

Daedalus Complex: Home of 4G Enterprise's inner system corporate headquarters, this colony is famous for the 'in your face' corporate culture promoted here. From the moment you arrive, it is obvious who runs the show with corporate logos on every bulkhead and wall and corporate advertising running on every flex screen. Even so, the people who live here are friendly and outgoing to visitors and try to make newcomers feel welcome.

Flare City: Another system-wide mining conglomerate, Flare City is the largest colony on the planet. Home to the corporate headquarters of the Solar Mining Corporation, this colony bears a great many similarities to Daedalus Complex, in that the SMC culture is very much in evidence as soon as one arrives. Flare City has also become the tourist hub of the planet, with an entire segment of the colony devoted to housing and entertaining both tourists and ship crews winding down before getting underway again.

Oshuki Colony: Another relatively small operation, Oshuki Colony has less than 8,000 residents. Visitors, while tolerated, are not wanted and those who do arrive are encouraged to complete their business and leave. The colony has recently been the victim of a number of setbacks and some believe that the Takashi Group may be on the way to bankruptcy as a result. This makes those who live here somewhat bitter and angry, especially when someone from either Daedalus Complex or Flare City comes to visit.

Earth

UWP: A867A44-8 Ga Hi Ht Ri

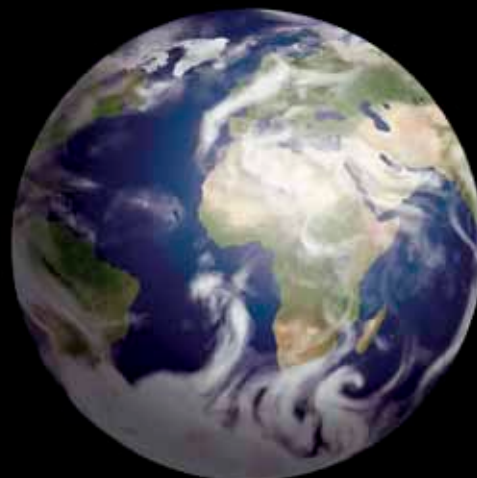
Birthplace of Humanity

The nations of Earth are still pretty much as they have been for the last century and a half, though some borders and centers of power always shift and new alliances are formed. The threat of nuclear holocaust and the nuclear devastation of Port Klang in Malaysia woke the world up. Modern nations have become more civilized and choose to resolve their disputes through the forum of the Unified World Council – the powerful cooperative body that has replaced the impotent United Nations.

Sociologically speaking, the people of Earth have finally shed some of their prejudices. No more is there a question of the equality between men and women. No one is concerned with who you choose to love – opposite or same sex. However, despite that bit of cultural evolution, there are still conflicts between countries and religions. There most likely always will be.

The primary superpowers are the Alliance of American States, the European Federation, and the Sino-China Alliance. Despite colonization and population control measures, China is still wildly overpopulated. However, that overpopulation puts out a massive Gross Domestic Product, making China the financial center of the world. The European Federation suffers from the most internal squabbles of any superpower, but their progressive policies, solid economic base, and high standard of living make them the trend-setters of the world. The Alliance of American States is the least powerful of the three, having fallen from its former glory. There is, however, still a can-do attitude of optimism among its citizens and it is once again on the rise.

Fortunately, the Earth suffers no more from the threat of ecological disaster. The damage done during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries was halted and, in some cases, reversed. However, the Earth has been damaged and a person from the 21st century would find the world to be quite different. Air quality has recovered, but climates have changed permanently in many parts of the world. There are places where it is not safe to travel outside without special suits, where the thinning or non-existent ozone no longer protects life from dangerous solar radiation. Many



Type: Terrestrial Planet

Size: 1 Earth by Mass

Gravity: 1 g

Surface Pressure: 101 kPa

Surface Composition: Rocky surface with active plate tectonics. Composed mostly of iron, silicon, magnesium, sulfur, nickel, calcium, and aluminum.

Atmosphere: Mostly Nitrogen (78%) with Oxygen (21%), with the remaining amount made up of argon, carbon dioxide, and water vapor.

Surface Temperature: Average 24° C/75° F.

Day: 24 Hours

Year: 365 Earth-Standard Days

Satellites: 1

species are permanently extinct, though cloning efforts labor to bring some of them back – to little avail.

On the other hand, pushing people out to live on other worlds has helped ease the threat of overpopulation. People still have not learned, however, and there are few population controls in place over most of the planet. It will only be a matter of time before overpopulation becomes a problem again – or at least it would were not things awakening in the galaxy that will soon be helping to thin the herd.

Compared to the rest of the solar system, though, the Earth is paradise. Large cities and population density make it very safe and the natural ecology of the planet is where humanity was meant to exist. That, however, does not mean that the strange happenings in the rest of the solar system have not found their way to Earth. They most certainly have, though the media isn't saying anything.

The Colonies

One might assume that the birthplace of humanity would have no need for colonies. However, there are two places where humanity has been able to expand, even in their own sphere of influence – the moon and the five orbital Lagrange Points.

The moon is no longer simply called such, as the people of Earth have expanded out to many worlds with moons. It is now known as Luna, a name used by many romantics for the rocky satellite. To be honest, the only reason there's a colony on Luna is because it was the first and most promising world that wasn't Earth that was the easiest to get to. While the nations of the world were still working out how to get people living on places like Mars or Venus, they used Luna as the prototype.

Tranquility was and is the only colony on Luna, named after the "sea" in which it is built. While once a vacation spot for the rich and powerful, Tranquility has become a thriving colony with no such bias in resident. It is still a luxurious colony, by domed city standards, with millions of residents. It is where all prototypical colonial or terraforming technology is tested. Luna is also resupplied by Earth every week, so citizens of Tranquility can enjoy fresh vegetables and seafood, nearly like the residents of the planet below them. Luna holds the most habitable colony in the solar system.

The five Lagrange Point space stations are where the citizens of Earth experiment with living in microgravity. Each station holds thousands of citizens, most of whom have chosen to be permanent residents. Those who live there view themselves as the lab rats that will help make space stations throughout the rest of the solar system more livable. However, like Luna, they are resupplied regularly, so residents aren't really suffering from a lack of amenities.

Life on Earth

Once one has finally been beyond the confines of the Earth, one realizes how amazing the planet really is. Humanity is nearly perfectly designed to live on the blue-green rock and the spartan nature of the rest of the solar system only reinforces that. Those who were born on Earth or who have visited for any length of time can quickly find other colonies unappealing.

There is most definitely a rivalry between Earth and the rest of the solar system. There is an attitude

among those born on Earth that the planet is simply superior and that all other planets and colonies are like children that need to be managed. Most people on Earth think that everyone from a colony is in some way backward or stupid, much in the way residents of big cities so often look down on their rural neighbors. Those from the colonies tend to look at people from Earth as spoiled, arrogant, and, when push comes to shove, helpless.

Though not technically a colony, the gigantic Warden Prime station orbits above the planet. Also known as the Eye, this monolithic structure buzzes with Warden activity. Ships come and go on a regular basis, dispatching or receiving Wardens to and from the rest of the solar system. It is, however, a subject of concern for some. Most residents of Earth or Luna stare up at the Eye and feel a sense of dread. What are the Wardens doing up there? Is it safe to be living under the shadow of the Eye? Are they watching us? The presence of the Wardens on Earth is often met with some level of trepidation as a result.

However, the Earth is not immune to the changes that are happening to the rest of the solar system. There are already things that have made their way to the planet. There are a variety of unspeakable horrors that are beginning to terrorize humanity in what many believe is their most secure home. Strange things happen and people disappear in the rural areas of the world, as well as sometimes in the dark parts of the urban jungle.

There are already reports that the oceans are becoming less and less safe. Several luxury cruises have experienced incidents where survivors swear that things crawled out of the water to terrorize the people on board. Fishing vessels go missing with regularity and even some smaller military vessels have been compromised.

Others who live in rocky or desert regions now claim to see things in the night. Small towns have suddenly vanished. Overland shipping is sometimes disrupted in the wastelands. Something is moving out there and such places appear to no longer be safe.

Those who live in Earth's colonies actually have much less to worry about. The Lagrange Point stations seem to be safe. However, Luna is just starting to feel the encroaching darkness. With so many residents, things are bound to start happening very soon, if the growing cult population is any indicator.

Mars

UWP: A450546-8 IC

The Red Money Pit

For as long as humanity has realized that the red light in the sky was a planet, there has been a need to set foot on that planet and make it a home for humanity. Centuries of missions were planned and executed to assess the scientific and economical viability of a permanent settlement on Mars. Nearly all of these missions found great possibility in the natural resources of Mars. In most cases, if we could have just overcome one or two hurdles, the collection of resources from the planet could have led to fortunes.

112 years ago, the first permanent settlement was created on the surface of Mars. Deep within the 4000 km/2485 mile long Valles Marineris canyon. The settlement, a joint effort by all space faring nations on the planet Earth, was built at the lowest point of the canyon (7 km/4 miles from the surface) to provide as much protection as possible from the dust storms, solar winds, radiation and meteorite impacts. Simply called Mars Base, the personnel set about expanding the facility and digging for the materials needed to support the even larger community they hoped to build along the valley floor.

15 years after Mars Base was established, the Mars Space Elevator was completed. This breakthrough was critical to the delivery of materials to orbital ships for transport home. Even though the escape velocity of Mars is much less than that of Earth, to use rockets or shuttles to get materials to orbit for transport back home would be very cost prohibitive. The tether which connects the main base in the Valles Marineris to Mars' single orbital station allows for materials to be delivered to the surface and off-loaded to orbiting freighters without having to land on the planet. The strength of the tether also allows for the access to the main base from orbit during the dust storms that make planetary flight very dangerous.

As the Space Elevator became operational, the first of the current twelve atmospheric processors went online to begin the conversion and generation of the canyon's weak Martian atmosphere to a human breathable environment. Along with these converters, the floor of the canyon began to fill with domed enclosures that housed mining facilities. Housing for



Type: Terrestrial Planet

Size: Approximately 0.5 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 0.375 g

Surface Pressure: 1 kPascal

Surface Composition: Primarily a basalt rock base containing some silica glass. Surface covered in finely grained iron-oxide dust.

Atmosphere: Mostly Carbon Dioxide (95%), with traces of Argon, Carbon Monoxide, Krypton, Neon, Nitrogen, Ozone, Xenon, and Water;

Cloud Layer Temperature: Around -125° C/-193° F.

Day: 24.6 Hours

Year: 1.8 Earth-Standard Years

Satellites: Formerly 2, now a loosely formed ring.

the mining personnel and their families was created to support long-term life on the planet.

In the beginning, the mining operations on Mars produced better than anyone ever hoped. Jobs were plentiful and calls to Earth for more settlers brought shuttle after shuttle of people hoping to cash in on the prosperity. Unfortunately, this did not last. The dig sites all began to encounter a material in the ground that was incredibly hard to drill, blast, or bore through. The material was useless to the miners and no one could find a way to profit from it. Worse still, all indications were that this material was present all over the planet. The mining operations were shut down or severely curtailed in most locations. Unemployment rose and, with no way to return home for most of the settlers, the sheen of the new home for humanity began to fade.

Tourism began to lag behind the more exotic locations found on the moons of Jupiter and Saturn.

However, the planet had one final message to the people of Earth that thought that life could be restored to Mars – two years ago the moon Diemos radically shifted orbit and swung into the path of Phobos. The impact shattered the moons and blanketed the orbit of Mars with millions of particles of space debris. Much of this debris rained down in a hail of meteorites that peppered the planet for days on end. The settlements in low-lying areas saved them from the worst of the damage. The Space Elevator sustained massive damage and was offline for nearly nine months. The dust storms created by the impact of so many meteorites continues to blanket the planet to this day. Solar collectors struggle to collect the little sunlight that sneaks through the clouds above.

The Colonies

By the year 2060, the original settlement, now going by the name Mariner Valley, housed over 400,000 people. It has developed into a thriving community of close knit colonists – all very proud of their lineage as Martian settlers.

Subsequent bases were created in the caves found in the flanks of the Arsia Mons volcano. The settlements, named after female loved ones of the original discoverers of the caves (Abbey, Annie, Chloe, Dena, Jeanne, Nikki, and Wendy, were small but the caves provided a safe environment with natural barriers to radiation and meteor impacts. Collectively called the Seven Sisters, the bases were created to provide a secondary agricultural center for all of Mars. In case a disaster struck the main facilities in Mariner Valley, food supplies could still be maintained from the Sisters.

Other smaller research bases have been constructed near the poles, but these are domed facilities without the benefit of atmospheric conditioning. Most of these are corporate-owned facilities that allow for off-world testing of items the Unified World Council would never permit back home.

Life on Mars

The heart of Martian life remains in Mariner Valley. All the comforts expected on Earth were available as the corporations shipped goods and products to Mars to support the people there. Many corporations with interests already committed to the Mars colony have set up branch offices. It was once considered the height of power and prestige to hold corporate annual meetings in the expansive Busi-

ness Center created on the upper rim of the canyon. From the view stations located under the armored meteorite canopy, it was possible to see the entire colony as it spread across the floor of the valley.

To support the growing population and attract tourism, the corporations funneled money into all forms of entertainment and development. There are high-class theaters, restaurants and bars. There is even a large domed park where Founders square, a site dedicated to the original settlers, is located.

The agricultural colonies located in the Seven Sisters region have remained as isolated and separate as most rural communities – the residents are perfectly happy with that arrangement.

These days especially, prostitution, drugs, and other criminal endeavors are as evident here as anywhere else people exist. The criminal element has had to adapt to a more mobile setup, due to the lack of space in the colony, with no organization staying in one place for very long. A series of signals and marks placed around the community will lead those looking for a not so ethical good time to the correct location.

Life continues on Mars because there is no place for these people to go. There are still jobs and healthy commerce because the corporations are being kindly blackmailed by the UWC into staying there during this crisis. There is little hope that, should things return to some form of normalcy, that the perceived economic boom will ever take place.

It is the desperation of Mars that calls to those who worship ancient and malefic things. The people who have been caught in this cross-fire of inhospitable conditions and economic crisis need something to bolster their spirits and, unfortunately, there are many who have been so crushed that they fall prey to the promise of “fringe spiritual leaders.” While considered a minor problem by local law, the stage is set for something far worse.

The agricultural colonies have been experiencing predations by unknown parties. People, especially the young or elderly, have gone missing. Strange tracks around the colonies have led the locals to believe whatever is stalking them isn't human. Recently, this problem has found the Mariner Valley as well. There is some kind of predator stalking the people of Mars, and there are many who are afraid to go out at night.

Jupiter

UWP: AF20546-8 Na Po

The Cyclopean Giant

It is the largest planet in our solar system, so large that it is two and a half times the mass of all the other planets combined. The gas giant known as Jupiter has captured the imaginations of science fiction writers and explorers alike, with its massive satellites and giant red eye. It's too bad for them that the reality turned out to be far less fascinating than they had hoped.

Jupiter is a gas giant that is composed primarily of hydrogen, with about a quarter of its mass also made up of helium. The atmosphere contains trace amounts of ammonia, carbon, ethane, hydrogen sulfide, methane, neon, oxygen, silicon-based compounds, sulfur, and water vapor. The planet is eternally covered with clouds that are made up of ammonia crystals, with lesser amounts of ammonium hydrosulfide. Underneath the main cloud layer is a thin layer of water clouds, which produce lightning that is about a thousand times more powerful than any lightning on Earth. Together, the clouds are about 50 km/31 mi thick. Furthermore, wind speeds throughout the cloud layers reach up to 360 kmh/224 mph.

The atmosphere of Jupiter is further split into bands that occur at different latitudes of the planet, giving it its distinct look. However, it is at these borders where storms occur. The Great Red Spot of Jupiter is a storm that has existed since its discovery by astronomers in the 17th Century – most theorize it has existed for much longer than that. It has never, since it was first observed, shrunk in size or dissipated in any fashion. In 2000, another massive storm dubbed Red Spot Junior appeared in the southern hemisphere of the planet and has grown dramatically in size since then. It is likely to become a twin to the Great Red Spot within the next century.

The clouds are perhaps the most hospitable place on Jupiter. As one approaches the planetary core, temperature and pressure both increase steadily. While the clouds may be cold, the core is estimated to be 36,000° C/64,000° F – nearly six times the surface of the Sun – with pressures in the range of 3000-4500 GPa. Though many are extremely interested to find out what is down there, they cannot reach the core.



Type: Gas Giant

Size: Approximately 318 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 2.53 g

Surface Pressure: 20-200 kPascal (cloud layer)

Surface Composition: Liquid Metallic Hydrogen with Some Helium

Atmosphere: Mostly Hydrogen (89%) and Helium (10%), with trace amounts of Ammonia, Ethane, Hydrogen Deuteride, Methane, and Water, as well as Ammonia, Ammonium Hydrosulfide, and Water Ices.

Cloud Layer Temperature: Around -125° C/-193° F

Day: 9.9 Hours

Year: 11.86 Earth-Standard Years

Satellites: 63

What is perhaps most interesting, and most dangerous, about the planet is its broad magnetic field. The four largest moons, the Galilean Moons of Callisto, Europa, Ganymede, and Io, all orbit within Jupiter's magnetosphere. They are protected from the solar winds – but in turn subjected to intense radiation from the planet, in most cases. This magnetosphere is fourteen times stronger than the Earth's, and the poles of the planet emit intense radio bursts that are more powerful than those of the Sun. Colonies within the magnetosphere must be shielded.

In concert with this is Jupiter's gravity well, which draws in stellar debris as well as comets. Jupiter and its satellites receive the most comet hit of any planet in the solar system. There are those who believe that Jupiter is what protects the rest of the solar system from the bodies that float through from the Oort Cloud. The planet also boasts a small planetary ring composed of dust.

Jupiter is the first of the outer planets once one has left the orbit of Mars. Its distance from the Sun is about 5.2 times the distance from the Earth to the Sun. The chasm between Mars and Jupiter is vast.

Colonies

The Jovian Gas Mines

Using the atmosphere to their advantage, two large gas mines float in the upper atmosphere of the planet. They scoop and process the gasses, sending it out to collection ships in giant containers. Both stations are operated by medium-term corporate government contractors, for use and distribution by the Unified World Council. Both are industrial facilities, with little reason for anyone not working there to visit – most workers live on Callisto and come in month-long shifts.

Callisto

The outermost of the Galilean Moons, Callisto is less influenced by Jupiter's powerful magnetosphere than its siblings. The low radiation has made it one of the most ideal of the Jovian moons for colonization. It is the second largest Galilean Moon and the third largest moon in the solar system.

Callisto's most distinct features are the numerous and massive impact craters that cover the surface. It appears that many of the stellar bodies lured in by Jupiter's magnetosphere have found their way to Callisto. The craters are from 5 km/3 mi to 100 km/62 mi in diameter, all with frosty peaks. There is no tectonic movement on Callisto, so dark plains cover the rest of the surface of the moon. The surface is part silicate rock, but mostly ice made up of water and carbon dioxide. The moon has an extremely thin atmosphere of carbon dioxide and molecular oxygen.

Beneath the surface of Callisto, more than 100 km/63 mi down, is a subsurface water ocean. This ocean is heated by radioactive material, rather than other sources, making it far less likely for life.

The only colony on Callisto is named Ursa, with a population of around 80,000. It is unique among the Galilean colonies in that the city is on the surface, within a giant crater, protected by a giant dome. Since Callisto is in synchronous orbit with Jupiter, the same side faces the planet at all time – this is the side of the moon on which Ursa lies. The colony is where many of those working on other Galilean Moons live, and it is best described as a bedroom community.

Europa

The Artemis Project had already begun work on a plan to colonize Europa as far back as the 20th century, so it's no wonder that it was the first Galilean Moon to be colonized. It is the sixth moon of Jupiter and also the sixth largest moon in the solar system.

The moon is made up of silicate rock, covered with smooth surface ice. It is one of the smoothest surfaces in the solar system. However, the surface of Europa has some very distinct features. Lineae are dark streams that run across the entire planet and can be up to 20 km/12 mi across. Some believe they are from eruptions of warm ice from below, while other believe they occur due to Jupiter's gravitation pull. Lenticulae are domes, pits, and smooth dark spots on the crust, where warm ice breaks through the surface to make uneven patches.

However, what is most interesting about Europa is its giant underground saltwater ocean, kept warm by the magnetic influence of Jupiter. Scientists previously believed that this ocean was deep underground, when in fact it was only a few kilometers (about a mile) under the icy crust. It has conditions that resemble the deep oceans of Earth, complete with its own life and ecosystem – the first extra-terrestrial life discovered in the history of man. The lifeforms survive by chemosynthesis, similar to the black smoker environments of Earth's seas. There is a vibrant ecosystem here, the subject of much attention.

There are three medium-sized scientific colonies on Europa – Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Sarpedon – each with a population hovering around 7000. Each is embedded within the icy crust, about a third of the way between the surface and the ocean. Rhadamanthus and Sarpedon are both dedicated to the exploration of the alien ocean, while Minos processes all other scientific forays for the rest of Jupiter. The colonies are shielded against the daily radiation dose of 540 rem – enough to cause serious fatal illness. Like the other Galilean Moons, Europa is locked in rotation, leaving Rhadamanthus with a view of only the stars.

Ganymede

Ganymede, like Callisto, receives low doses of radiation (only 8 rem), making it the second-most ideal Galilean Moon for colonization. It is the largest moon in the solar system, bigger in diameter though not more massive, than Mercury. It is the third Galilean moon of Jupiter.

The surface of Ganymede is composed of silicate rock, with a water ice crust. It is hardly smooth, with about a third of the planet covered in impact crater and the rest covered in grooves and ridges. There is a thin oxygen atmosphere with minor quantities of atomic hydrogen. Furthermore, it is the only satellite in the solar system that has its own magnetosphere. It is suspected that there is a saltwater ocean nearly 200 km/124 mi beneath the surface, but scientists are too wrapped up with Europa to have explored it yet.

Ganymede has only one colony on its surface, named Troy, with 40,000 inhabitants. However, that number does not adequately reflect the number of people on the moon at any given time, for Troy's primary trade is tourism and entertainment. It is, for lack of a better analogy, the Las Vegas of the outer planets. Visitors can enjoy the casinos, shows, and restaurants of Troy, as well as low-gravity skiing, snowboarding, and the like. The corporations that own the casinos here go through great effort to make Troy a draw. The colony has been placed so as to face its parent Jupiter, in a stunning view.

Io

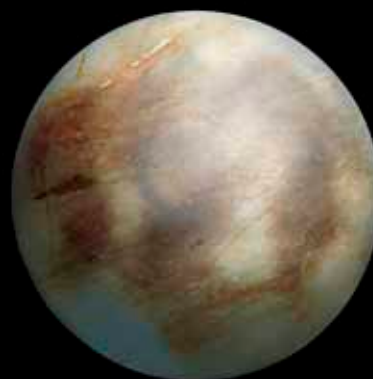
Io is the innermost of the four Galilean moons, the fourth largest moon in the solar system. What is distinct about Io is its geological activity – it is the most active object in our solar system. There are two primary features, including mountains and volcanoes.

The surface of Io is composed primarily of silicate rock, with extensive plains coated in sulfur and sulfur dioxide frost. This covers the surface in shades of black, green, red, white, and yellow. From these plains rise more than 100 mountains, some of which are taller than Mt. Everest. They average 6 km/4 mi in height, reaching up to 10 km/11 mi. They are all tectonic structures, not volcanic, so they are stable – except for the occasional earthquake.

The volcanoes are reserved for the paterae, resembling terrestrial calderas, which dot the surface. There are more than 400 active volcanoes on Io, some producing plumes of sulfurous spray more than 500 km/311 mi high. These produce lava flows across the surface, some more than 500 km/311 mi in length.



Type: Galilean Moon – Callisto
Size: Approximately 0.018 Earths by Mass
Gravity: 0.126 g
Surface Pressure: Negligible
Surface Composition: Silicate Rock with Water Ice
Atmosphere: Thin, Carbon Dioxide and Molecular Oxygen
Surface Temperature: Around $-140^{\circ}\text{C}/-230^{\circ}\text{F}$
Day: 16.7 Days



Type: Galilean Moon – Europa
Size: Approximately 0.008 Earths by Mass
Gravity: 0.134 g
Surface Pressure: Negligible
Surface Composition: Silicate Rock Covered With Water Ice
Atmosphere: Tenuous, Molecular Oxygen
Surface Temperature: Around $-160^{\circ}\text{C}/-260^{\circ}\text{F}$
Day: 3.55 Days

Io, however, receives the greatest radiation of any Galilean Moon – a daily dose of 3600 rem, enough to kill a person outright. This radiation constantly strips the planet of atmosphere. It's a miracle anyone comes here at all.

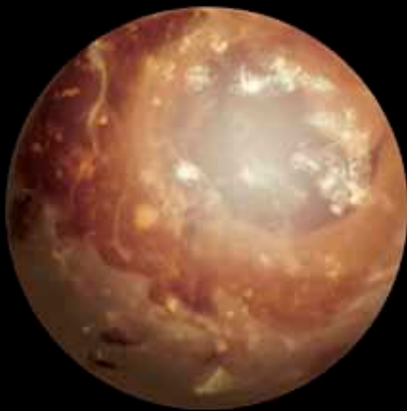
However, subterranean shielded bunkers provide staging ground for those who wish to come and climb the majestic mountains of Io in a low gravity environment. It is the destination of the rich, thrill-seekers, and those who already dwell in Jupiter's orbit.

Life on Jupiter

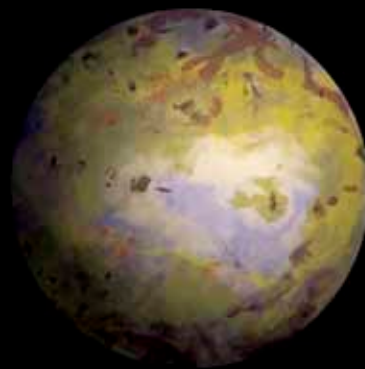
Because of Ganymede and the traffic it brings, Jupiter doesn't feel as far out as the other outer planets, though the colonies have their difficulties. It's proximity to Saturn guarantees regular shipments of fresh food as well. Enclosed environments provide more than adequate shelters, and shielded vacc suits allow the intrepid to go outside. However, all the colonies face the problems associated with low gravity. To stay healthy, colonists visit giant gravity spinners, huge structures that allow them to work out at 1G.

Though all the colonies are under the aegis of the Unified World Council, they have their own unique flavors. Ursa is a quiet place. It provides everything that scientists, miners, and administrators need to survive in a modicum of comfort. Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Sarpedon all have an atmosphere of exploration and excitement, populated only by those qualified enough to be there. Troy is a party place, where there are always new people to meet and fun things to do. Io is a place where only the daring go, holding some amazing experiences that cannot be had anywhere else in the solar system.

However, things are no longer this comfortable status quo. There have been some unusual reports that have filtered to the Wardens. Gas miners in the upper atmosphere of Jupiter report seeing shadows of things in the clouds, things that are difficult to detect on sensors. Scientists on Europa claim that the "fish" they're studying have been acting differently, as if something was disturbing their environment. Perhaps most unusual is the way that a part of Callisto has begun to change – like it was developing an atmosphere of its own.



Type: Galilean Moon – Ganymede
Size: Approximately 0.025 Earths by Mass
Gravity: 0.146 g
Surface Pressure: Negligible
Surface Composition: Silicate Rock Covered With Water Ice, Small Percentage of Ammonia Ice
Atmosphere: Thin, Oxygen with Small Amounts of Atomic Hydrogen
Surface Temperature: Around $-200^{\circ}\text{C}/-300^{\circ}\text{F}$
Day: 7.15 Days



Type: Galilean Moon – Io
Size: Approximately 0.015 Earths by Mass
Gravity: 0.183 g
Surface Pressure: Negligible
Surface Composition: Silicate Rock with Sulfur and Sulfur Dioxide Frost
Atmosphere: Patchy, about 90% Sulfur Dioxide
Surface Temperature: Around $-160^{\circ}\text{C}/-260^{\circ}\text{F}$
Day: 42.5 Hours

Saturn

UWP: AF94645-8 Ag Ri

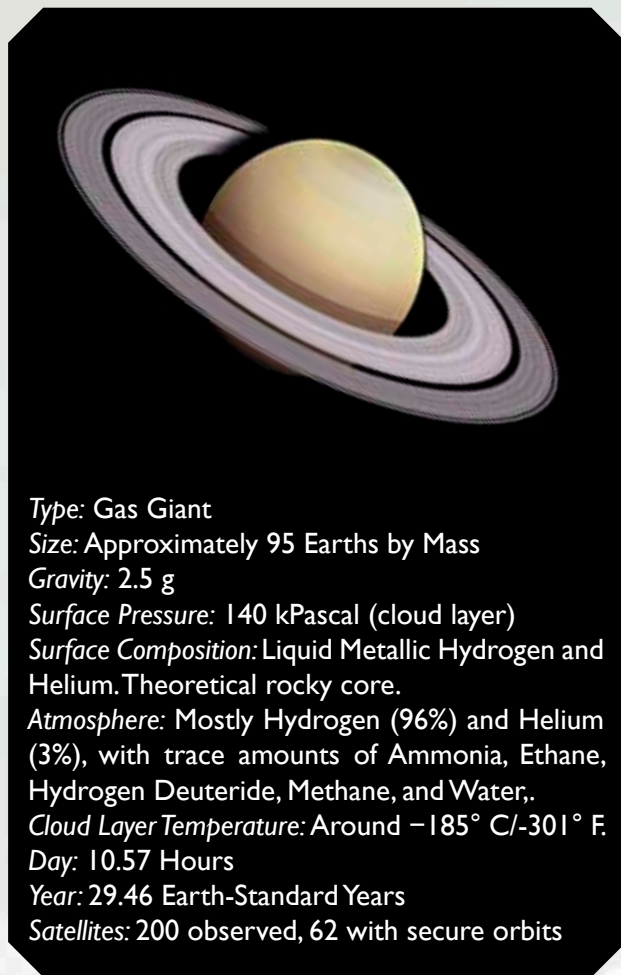
The Greater Malefic

The brilliant rings of Saturn have fueled the fire of human imagination for hundreds of years. Long have the adventurous of heart gazed longingly into the night sky. Long have they wondered at what discoveries awaited the touch of man among the many moons and sparkling discs of ice that adorn, like crown jewels, the second largest gas giant of the solar system. It wasn't until the arrival of Earth's first colony ships, some seventy-two years ago, that humans would discover Saturn's abundant wealth of natural resources. All the ingredients of life lay dormant – ripe for harvest by the most ingenious of minds. Human ingenuity has brought sustainable life and prosperity to Saturn, marking the ancient giant as one of the most important planets of the outer system.

Saturn's outer atmosphere is primarily composed of molecular hydrogen, helium, and other residual elements. In fact, the planet's outer atmosphere is a primary source of valuable Helium-3 fuel for the planetary system's nuclear fusion generators. Though the actual surface appearance of the atmosphere seems dull, wind speeds stirred up by atmospheric storms can range as high as 1800 kph/1118 mph. The planet's interior is theoretically comprised of a small core made of rock and ice encased in a thick layer of metallic hydrogen. The magnetic field generated by Saturn can be measured in strength midway between that of Earth and the significantly powerful fields of Jupiter.

One of Saturn's oddest features is that its equatorial bulge compares to its flattened poles by a sizable difference of 10%. This is caused by a combination of the planet's swift rotation, its flowing condition, and its low density. Though Saturn is only 20% smaller than Jupiter, its lower density would only equate to 95 Earth masses compared to Jupiter's 318. In fact, the overall density of Saturn's outer atmosphere is less than water.

Saturn's space is heavily occupied by numerous moons that differ greatly in both size and composition. 62 moons, ranging from tiny Thrymr to gigantic Titan, roam the many diverse paths of Saturn's orbit. Only 13 of these moons however possess a diameter of greater than 50 km/31 miles.



Type: Gas Giant

Size: Approximately 95 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 2.5 g

Surface Pressure: 140 kPascal (cloud layer)

Surface Composition: Liquid Metallic Hydrogen and Helium. Theoretical rocky core.

Atmosphere: Mostly Hydrogen (96%) and Helium (3%), with trace amounts of Ammonia, Ethane, Hydrogen Deuteride, Methane, and Water.

Cloud Layer Temperature: Around $-185^{\circ}\text{C}/-301^{\circ}\text{F}$

Day: 10.57 Hours

Year: 29.46 Earth-Standard Years

Satellites: 200 observed, 62 with secure orbits

Of course Saturn's most prominent feature is the startlingly beautiful array of concentric rings. One of the most breathtaking views in the solar system is to watch the Sun rise over Saturn's horizon and cast its brilliant radiance across the diamond-like surface of the rings – this has given rise to Saturn's popular cruise-line industry. The rings themselves are composed mostly of ice particles, small traces of rocky debris, and dust. The outermost edge of Saturn's rings extends from the planet's equator at approximately 120 thousand kilometers. However, the average thickness of a ring is only about 20 meters, making for a startling display for any ship crossing its plane. Saturn's rings are unique in size, composition, and presentation and are therefore protected under Saturnine law.

Colonies

The Hades Gas Mines

Two large mining platforms, called Hades and Hades II, float in the outer atmosphere to harvest valuable gasses for processing and shipment via large container vessels. Though both mining platforms float freely around the planet's atmosphere, the pos-

sibility of a catastrophic storm raged with Saturn's high-speed winds is a very real threat. Thus, both Hades and Hades II have been equipped with the latest in meteorological forecasting equipment and a series of thrusters that allow the platforms to climb to the outermost edge of the atmosphere.

Dione

Dione is an icy moon whose colonization is fairly new. This 1120 km/696 mile moon holds the potential to join the ice-harvesting game among the wispy lines and crags of its surface. Nova Lyon, with a population of over 12,000 people, has evolved into the cultural and commercial hub of Dione. New settlers flock here each year with the hope of making their dreams come true with new opportunities for business and wealth.

Enceladus

Check any Saturnine tourist advertisement and you will find mention of the famous Geysers of Enceladus, located at the moon's south pole. Tourists are drawn regularly to these gigantic plumes of space-bound ice crystals. The beautiful snow white mosaic of Saturn's sixth largest moon reflects almost 100% of the sunlight, more than any other moon in the solar system.

Enceladus' largest city, Oceanus, has a population of 550,000 citizens that focus largely on the tourist industry. Oceanus is also the center of extensive scientific research efforts into the moon's surprisingly complex ecosystem. The reason that Enceladus' geysers exist in the first place is due to internal heat and warming tidal activity. Widespread geological activity has created a vast subsurface ocean populated with life, from the smallest of microorganisms to actual marine animals. The fact of a self-sustaining marine ecosystem outside Earth's environment has left scientists with an amazing opportunity for study.

Unfortunately the Enceladus ecosystem has also given rise to a growing conflict between those who wish to study the moon's marine environment and those who wish to exploit it. Thus far, fishing has not been allowed, though certain special interest groups are aimed at changing that. Some wonder if a violent conflict may one day erupt.

Enceladus is also home to an important water-mining colony near the North Pole called New Halifax. Its population of 30,000 possesses a far more conservative political view than her sister city.

Hyperion

Hyperion is probably the strangest moon in the Saturn system. Its odd shape, abundant impact craters, and chaotic rotation give the moon a kind of sponge-like look. If it weren't for the fact that Hyperion was the only known source of Therminium in the Solar System, colonists would have no reason to settle there. Nevertheless, Hyperion Station, with its 17,000 residents, was established due to the discovery of Therminium. This extremely rare element is the most thermally stable substance known to modern science – making it the best and most efficient choice for insulation material. Modern colonial structures make extensive use of Hyperion's bounty.

Iapetus

Iapetus is 1440 km/895 miles in diameter. Its predominant feature is a 10 km/6 mile high mountainous ridge that separates the walnut-like moon into two unique halves. There's a striking difference between its light and dark sides. The leading edge is composed entirely of darkened matter and the trailing edge reflects brilliant white – giving a kind of yin-yang look.

Many theories have been postulated to explain this phenomenon, though none have been proven for certain. The doubtful stability and geological impact of the moon's surface meant that Iapetus was overlooked for initial colonization until thirty-two years ago. A small religious group petitioned the Republic of Saturn to build a colony there. The petition was granted and the colony was established on the dark side of the moon. Contact lasted for about a year, after which all communication was suddenly and inexplicably lost. Search and rescue teams reported back that the entire colony, buildings and all, had disappeared without a trace. No one has stepped foot on the dark side of Iapetus since.

Fort Saragossa was established some eleven years ago on the light side of Iapetus as a strategic defense location for the rest of the Saturn system. The exact number and complement of troops stationed there is classified and the entire moon is considered restricted to all but authorized personnel.

Mimas

Mimas is the innermost of Saturn's major moons. This 390 km/242 mile moon is so small that it could fit between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Its surface is severely pocked with impact craters, the largest of which is the 130 km/81 mile Herschel Crater. This crater has also become significant for other reasons.

The orbital path of Mimas through Saturn's rings and its close proximity to Saturn made Mimas an attractive place to locate a science research station. Cassini University, with backing from the Saturnine Government, set up a scientific research colony called Mimas Station inside the Herschel Crater. Results of scientific study had been fruitful for fourteen years, but that changed three years ago.

Scanners could barely track a strange cloud-like object that emerged from Saturn's atmosphere. It moved as if guided, to envelop the entire moon. All communications with Mimas were suddenly lost. Rescue missions were attempted, but none returned. The Saturnine navy has since set up a strict security blockade around this moon. Only select governmental agencies are allowed to get anywhere near, most notably the UWC Wardens.

Rhea

It was decided early during Saturn's colonization that Titan's atmosphere would not be put at risk due to the residual pollutants of industry. Thus it was determined that major construction and fabrication should be located on another moon. Rhea was chosen.

Today the 1500 km/932 mile moon is the home of ship-building, industrial manufacturing, and the modular construction of arcology and environmental dome structures. Rhea's primary colony is the city of New Glasgow, whose population stands at about 335,000 residents. Fort Alexander is also located here, providing a strong military presence to protect the Republic of Saturn's vital construction industry.

Tethys

Tethys, the third largest of Saturn's inner moons, has a 1050 km/652 mile diameter. This crater-decorated ice moon serves one single purpose – to provide fresh water. Tethys is made up almost completely of water ice. A large 400 km/248 mile impact crater known as Odysseus is featured on the leading edge of the moon. From here, the Odysseus water-mining colony, with its 36,000 residents, works to support the miners who venture out each day into the high walls of the Ithaca Chasm. These miners carve out large chunks of ice for daily shipment back to Titan. The wholesale price of fresh water on the interplanetary market fetches a steady price and this natural bounty has certainly contributed nicely to Saturn's growing wealth.

Titan

Titan is by far Saturn's largest moon and the second largest moon in the Solar System. Its 5150 km/3200 mile diameter is about as wide as the old United States. Titan is particularly striking however in that it's possessed of a thick, nitrogen-rich atmosphere with a higher density than that of Earth. The experience of roaming freely inside Titan's atmospheric pressure is much like moving through the bottom of a deep swimming pool. The moon's average surface temperature is $-178^{\circ}\text{C}/-289^{\circ}\text{F}$.

Titan's rich supply of nitrogen, hydrogen, hydrocarbons, and oxygen mined from frozen water deposits has allowed colonists to piece together the essential needs to sustain life. The ability to tap into Titan's natural resources to produce an abundance of air, soil nutrients, and other essentials have given rise to an extensive and successful agricultural industry. Massive hydroponics domes heated and powered by fusion generators yield enormous volumes of produce each year for consumption and export. Livestock originally imported from Earth supply dairy products, eggs, and reusable fertilizer to maintain the whole production cycle. One can say that Titan has become the virtual bread-basket of the outer system.



Type: Saturnine Moon – Enceladus

Size: Approximately 1.8×10^5 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 0.011 g

Surface Pressure: Trace, significant spatial variability

Surface Composition: Near pure Water Ice, Sub-surface Oceans, South Pole Geysers

Atmosphere: Water Vapor (91%), Nitrogen (4%), Carbon Dioxide (3.2%), Methane (1.7%)

Surface Temperature: Around $-198^{\circ}\text{C}/-388^{\circ}\text{F}$

Day: 1.37 Days

Titan is the center of Saturnine culture, prosperity, and government rule. Several domed townships and communities exist here, but the largest centers of population reside within its three major cities. Chronos, with a population of just over 830,000, is clearly the largest of these cities and serves as the trade center of Titan. Products move on and off world, with goods and people shuttled back and forth regularly between Chronos and the orbital Chronos Station. From there, they find their way to much larger interplanetary spaceships normally restricted from entering Titan's atmosphere.

Cassini is the next largest city on Titan, with a population of approximately 560,000. Cassini's municipal planners clearly paid attention to the concepts of beauty and symmetry in the city's design, reflecting its purpose to serve as the Saturnine national capital and seat of government. Cassini is also the home of the famous Cassini University, whose schools of Planetology and Organic Chemistry are unmatched.

The third largest of Titan's cities is Crius, whose population hovers just shy of 460,000. Known as the Palm Springs of Saturn, Crius caters to the wealthy by featuring opulent estate homes, the finest in din-

ing and entertainment, spa resorts that gratify elite clientele, and an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of Titan's natural surroundings. Since Titan is the only planetary object besides Earth to feature surface lakes and rivers, tourists flock to Crius to visit the beautiful shores of Kraken Mare and float upon the low-gravity atmosphere of Titan's orange sky in air-tight flight suits.

Life on Saturn

The Republic of Saturn is a sovereign nation. Independence was declared only forty-nine years ago, when the various moon colonies voted to band together. Recognizing Saturn's strategic significance to other planets of the outer system, the Unified World Council agreed to recognize Saturn's independence under the condition that the planet would always remain a neutral regime – a policy that the Saturnine government strictly enforces. Saturn, to this day, protects its sovereignty with system defense satellites, military installations, and a respectable navy. Living in the Saturnine system is living with all manner of opportunities for wealth and prosperity if you are willing to follow the rules. However, there are those other governments and colonies that resent Saturn's independence, so Saturnians can find themselves the subject of bigotry in places.

Ancient astrologers once referred to Saturn as the Greater Malefic. They saw this world as an extremely powerful planet that often taught harsh lessons through the building up and tearing down of individuals – a belief that often brought dread to seekers of signs. Saturn's ancient astrological reputation certainly holds true for any individual unwilling to respect the order of her planetary system. Humans have learned the hard way that attempts to conquer Saturn's resources and bend her to one's will only leads to disaster and death. The balance of life is fragile among the moons of Saturn and the Saturnine realize that their only means of survival is to live in consort with their home world, not in command of it. Saturn has proven to be a great benefactor for those who are willing to live a disciplined lifestyle that takes nothing for granted. Yet for those who resort to risky short cuts, Saturn's reputation as the Greater Malefic eventually reveals itself with devastating results.

Aside from the disappearances, something else is odd about the planet. Though minor, it seems that something inside Saturn is heating up...



Type: Saturnine Moon – Titan
Size: Approximately 0.0225 Earths by Mass
Gravity: 0.14 g
Surface Pressure: 146.7 kPascal
Surface Composition: Silicate Rock, Water Ice, Methane Lakes and Rivers, Hydrocarbon Sand Dunes
Atmosphere: Nitrogen (98.4%) and Methane (1.6%)
Surface Temperature: Around -178° C/-289° F
Day: 15.95 Days

Uranus

UWP: CF2A4I6-8 Na Po

The Frozen Wasteland

On March 13, 1781, the English astronomer William Herschel discovered an object in the sky farther out in space than Jupiter and Saturn. The planet was originally named Georgium Sidus (George's Star) after King George III of England. After Herschel's death, the name of the planet was changed to fit with its neighboring planets. Because Saturn was Jupiter's father, the next outward planet should be called Saturn's father, Uranus.

The planet Uranus is an oddity in the solar system – unlike the rest of the planets, its rotation has an axial tilt of 97 degrees. This causes the planet to orbit the sun while rotating on its side and appear to roll in its orbit. There is also an odd wobble to the orbit of Uranus that seems to indicate that the center of gravity for the planet is not actually located in its center, but instead somewhere inside the planet's mantle.

The surface is not actually a surface at all, but a mix of the water, ammonia, and methane in a thick liquid form. Belying its large size, the gravitational forces of Uranus are actually less than that of Earth, so it would be possible to land on its surface if the surface was solid. This near-Earth gravity allows for low orbit geostationary satellites to function without risk of degrading orbits. It is the atmosphere, however, that brought explorers and industry to Uranus. The outer atmosphere contains a large percentage of the molecular hydrogen used for stable fusion power generation, a discovery made by the Chinese scientist Kong Rui-Bin.

Several years after Kong's discovery, a brilliant and exceedingly wealthy British entrepreneur by the name of John Paul Wesley made plans to create a space station orbiting the planet Uranus to scoop the molecular hydrogen out of the atmosphere. The technology was simple but dangerous. Attached via an umbilical, scoop ships were dropped from the bottom of the extraction facility and trolled through the atmosphere to separate and collect the molecular hydrogen and send it up the umbilical to the station. Once there, the fuel was stored and sent back to Earth and the inner planets via transport ships. He has turned this business into a massive empire and treats Uranus as his own personal fiefdom.



Type: Ice Giant

Size: Approximately 4 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 0.89 g

Surface Pressure: 100 kPascal

Surface Composition: Hot and dense fluid mixture of water, ammonia, and other volatiles.

Atmosphere: Mostly Hydrogen, with trace amounts of Helium, Methane, and Molecular Hydrogen.

Cloud Layer Temperature: Around $-193^{\circ}\text{C}/-379^{\circ}\text{F}$.

Day: 17.9 Hours

Year: 84.01 Earth-Standard Years

Satellites: 27

Colonies

Veronica Station

Given that Uranus has no solid surface, the only colony considered Uranus proper is Veronica Station, the mining facility run by John Paul Wesley to extract molecular hydrogen from the atmosphere. Veronica Station is a patchwork of various components and sections from a number of failed attempts to set a mining rig in orbit of Uranus. This odd place is the heart of Uranus.

Only Wesley's operation has been able to maintain an operational rig for any length of time. Either equipment or financial failures have caused all of Wesley's competitors to abandon their facilities half-completed. This has allowed Wesley to purchase the remains of the failed bases to expand on his own facility to what it is today. This has created a station that, from the outside, looks like a jumbled mess. That image does not get any better once you get inside.

Cabling hangs at odd angles and hallways disappear as you walk, when a bulkhead from another section cuts across the path. It is only once you get inside to the original Veronica Station, what the inhabitants of the station call the Inner City, where things take on a more orderly feel. The Inner City is home to Wesley's corporate headquarters. The halls are clean and appear nothing short of an office building. This part of the station is one expects from Wesley.

Veronica Station sits in very low orbit of Uranus and, because of this, the facility has the added advantage of a natural gravity very near Earth normal. There are 8000 people on board Veronica Station, most of which who are employed directly or indirectly by Wesley.

Oberon

The second largest moon of Uranus has the most established long-term mining operation in the sector. There are no permanent settlements, however. Everything is processed from mobile mining units that are moved from site to site as new mineral deposits are found.

This is a corporate moon and no outside private contractors are allowed to land. The AQX Corporation bought up all deeds to Oberon a little over ten years ago and established its off-world mining operations there. Security is nearly as tight as on Titania, except the security force consists of security personnel from AQX's corporate security division. There is no indication what exactly AQX is digging for on the moon, as surveys have found nothing worth the expense that the company has put into the endeavor.

Puck

When the Wardens approached Wesley about setting up a presence in the Uranus system, they were initially offered a location on Veronica Station. When that location turned out to be a tiny office tucked behind the atmospheric processors and waste recycling center, they initially objected and deservedly so. Wesley, with a smirk on his face, then offered complete run of one of the moons of Uranus – Puck. It is a small moon with no discernible value, so it was a perfect choice to offer to the Wardens. The Wardens, however, kept the small office on Veronica Station, much to Wesley's apparent disapproval. The Warden base is currently under construction and hopes to be online sometime in the current calendar year.

Titania

There is no proper name for the spaceport and shipping facilities located on the moon of Titania. It is where all the prospectors in the region have to report to stake their claim and turn in any valuable materials for sale. Here, unlike any other location in the region, you can actually sense what an old west gold rush town must have felt like.

The region is heavily patrolled by Wesley's personal mercenary police, as law is maintained with an iron fist. Wesley takes the protection of the people that prospect his territory very seriously. Theft is dealt with severely and claim jumping can get you a short walk out an open airlock.

Life on Uranus

Life in the Uranian sector exists solely due to the efforts of one family – the Wesleys. The Wesley family had been a financial success for many years, and always as a privately-held corporation. The original founder of the business, Steven Wesley, taught the need to remain independent to his children. So it was that his current heir, John Paul, took the family fortune and invested it into what he called the Uranus Adventure. An uncontrolled sector, there were no established bases in the region – it was merely a stop for trips to Neptune and beyond. Out in the orbit of Uranus, Wesley could create an empire that would be beholden to no one, his own private empire.

Due to its size, Veronica Station can house a great number of people – a total of 20,000 people should the need arise. Most of this space is currently empty, being used as storage, or is home to an underground of squatters that have found their way out to the fringes of the solar system. Wesley has allowed them to take up residence in the bowels of station.

The moons of Uranus have been set up as mining and prospecting regions where independent contractors and corporations obtain deeds for mining rights from Wesley. Law is officially maintained by the internal security supplied by Wesley, though local prospectors and corporations will deal with criminals internally. The region has the lowest reported theft rate of anywhere in the Solar System. This is because thieves are rarely seen again once they are caught and thefts are almost never officially reported. It is quite common to see mercenaries on-board Veronica Station waiting for private or corporate security work.

Neptune

UWP: BC2A416-8 IC Na Po

The Point of No Return

Neptune, the last planet of our solar system, so far into space that it is thirty times the distance of the Earth to the burning Sun. Beyond it lies only the Kuiper Belt, a place filled with only dwarf planets and miscellaneous chunks of rock. It's no wonder it is a frigid, inhospitable world, where only the greedy or desperate would dare set foot.

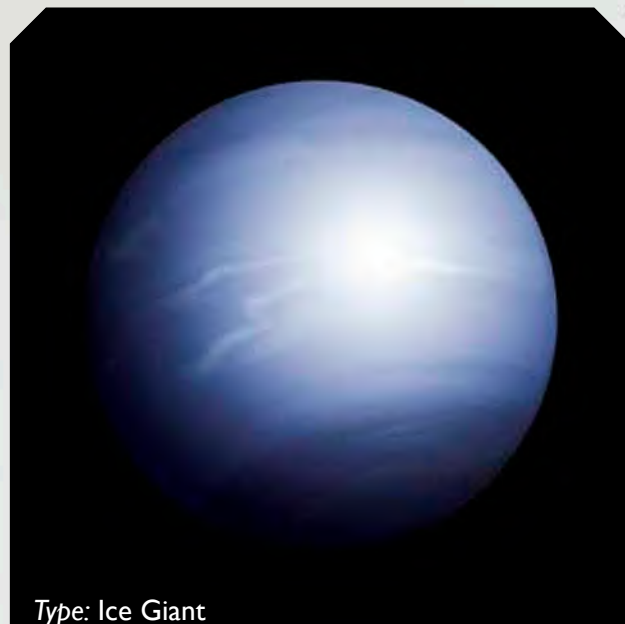
Theory once posited that Neptune had no solid surface, similar to Uranus. However, there actually is a layer of ice covering the planet, which has driven the scientific community mad as they try to prove why it's there.

Wind is a near constant on Neptune. The average daily winds range from 45 mph to nearly the speed of sound. The winds are even worse coming through the cloud layer, where they average 560 mph to 900 mph – approaching or exceeding MACH 1. The biggest danger on Neptune are the massive storms, which can produce sustained winds of up to 2100 kph (1300 mph) – nearly twice the speed of sound. The dark spots on Neptune are the worst of the storms, which can last for months at a time. Storm systems on Neptune are dynamic and can blow up with little or no warning.

Getting down to the planet is opportunistic. Shuttles leave in between storms, when the wind speeds are at their least. People can wait weeks on Triton station, hoping for a window that will ferry them safely to the surface. Even then, the storms of Neptune are extremely dynamic and journeys are always perilous.

The core of Neptune, in stark contrast to its surface, is extremely hot – reaching temperatures of 5000° C (9032° F), nearly the temperature of the Sun's photosphere. This creates a super-heated swirling mass underneath the icy crust of the planet. It is here that the methane decomposes into diamond crystals, the only reason there are colonists here at all. This heat also sometimes destabilizes the icy surface, adding to the danger.

Back in orbit, the blue hue of Neptune stands in contrast to its faint reddish ring system. These rings are nowhere near as striking of those of Saturn. The



Type: Ice Giant

Size: Approximately 17 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 1.14 g

Surface Pressure: 1.5 Pascal (equal to about 75 miles above Earth sea level)

Surface Composition: Mostly Ammonia, Ammonium Hydrosulfide, Methane, and Water ices.

Atmosphere: Mostly Hydrogen (80%) and Helium (20%), with a small percentage of Methane and trace amounts of Hydrogen Deuteride and Ethane.

Surface Temperature: Around -200° C/-300° F.

Day: 16.11 Hours

Year: 164.79 Earth-Standard Years

Satellites: 13

ice particles that make it up are fragments, small, and unstable – the rings are decaying over time and one day will be gone entirely.

Colonies

While Neptune is considered to have thirteen satellites, most of them are small and insignificant. Triton is the only satellite that is spheroid and is large enough to comprise 99% of the mass of all Neptune's satellites. What is also significant about Triton is that it is locked in synchronous rotation with Neptune – it always hovers in the same place, over Salacia.

Triton is not that dissimilar from Neptune, especially in terms of atmosphere and surface composition. It is extremely cold – with surface temperatures in the range of -235° C (-391° F), with an icy surface composed primarily of nitrogen and methane. It shares the same surface pressure as Neptune, with icy lava plains from its hot core and dark plains of ice. Triton, fortunately, does not suffer from the

extreme weather patterns of Neptune and functions as a gateway – both to the planet below and to the places beyond.

Triton, whose station is eponymously named, has around 1000 people who live there. Its primary function is to support the people of Neptune. Shipments of goods come up from the planet and supplies come in for the planet, all passing through Triton. The colony also services those coming back from even further out, providing both supplies and repair facilities. It is an oasis for those traveling the outer black.

Salacia is the primary and only colony on Neptune, with a population of around 15,000 at any one time. It is powered entirely by geo-thermal taps, utilizing the extremely hot core of the planet. It is built into the surface of the planet, sealing it from the atmosphere and protecting it from the storms. At first glance, it would seem amazing that anyone would want to spend the large amounts of money and incredible effort required to maintain a colony on Neptune. Posterity or curiosity hardly seem reasonable motivations. The answer is simple – Neptune produces diamonds, the most precious gem in the solar system.

Salacia is a mining colony, utilizing advanced robotics to dig down through super-heated water-ammonia ocean to get to the diamond crystals created as the methane decomposes. While diamond crystals might not sound very exciting at first, the truth is that many of the diamonds extracted on Neptune are the size of a fist. The largest raw diamond mined on the planet to date was more than 5000 carats – several thousand carats bigger than the largest diamond ever found on Earth. It is dangerous and it is expensive to operate the mining on Salacia, but the profit is worth all of it.

The colonies of Neptune are a joint operation of the European Federation and the Rhodes Company. The Rhodes Company is a firm with long roots in the diamond business and the fabulous wealth that goes with it. When scientists first discovered the possibility of diamonds on Neptune, Rhodes jumped at the opportunity and financed the first real prospectors. In the end, the Rhodes Company convinced the European Federation to help back them in colonizing the planet, promising to share the massive wealth and power with the countries of the union. It has turned out to be a profitable arrangement for all involved.

Life on Neptune

One might wonder why anyone would come to such an inhospitable place. The reason is simple. People come to Salacia because an eighteen-month contract can give a person the equivalent of ten years worth of income. Not surprisingly, there is a waiting list to be eligible to work on Neptune as a result. The pay on Triton isn't quite as good – about half – but it's still better than most places in the solar system.

Nearly everyone in Salacia or Triton is an employee of the Rhodes Company. There is a small contingent of EU officials and EU laws remain supreme, but the planet is functionally run by the corporation in stewardship. No one comes to Neptune unless its for work or for official governmental business.

Life out here is austere. Little attempt to create an aesthetic has been made – they're nothing more than mazes of metal rooms and corridors, with exposed pipes and conduits. Living quarters are cramped and basic at best. Since most people won't stay on Neptune more than eighteen months, this isn't much of a concern. However, there has to be entertainment and miners making high wages need ways to spend it. There are several flourishing bars and nightclubs, as well as a legal trade in prostitution. Rhodes also operates one single casino, which is popular.

Since Neptunian days are short, people become accustomed to 32 hour shifts. This means that your average person works a sixteen hour day, sleeping ten to twelve more, leaving several hours for personal pursuits. It takes people about a month to truly acclimate.

People rarely step out onto the surface, and then only on a good day. There are some heavy tracked vehicles designed to explore the surface of Neptune, but that's mostly left for robots. Nearly everything on Neptune happens within the confines of Salacia.

Over the last few years, strange things have become commonplace on Neptune. Many people have started to have intense nightmares, some of which have induced homicidal fits in otherwise normal folks. Insomnia (or sleep aids) are an epidemic. People also have started to go missing from time to time, without any trace. Some believe there's a conspiracy afoot. On top of all that, there are those who claim to have heard eerie distant sounds through the surface flurries, like the songs of whales. None of this advertised by Rhodes – it would be bad for business.

Pluto & The Kuiper Belt

UWP: XI50000-8 Ba Na

Pluto, the Enigma

Pluto has been a bit of an enigma to astronomers ever since it was accidentally discovered in 1930 by Clyde Tombaugh. The fact that it was discovered at all was a miracle. Tombaugh was searching for what, at the time, had been termed the 'Planet X,' which was theorized to exist due to orbital artifacts found in Neptune and Uranus. Since its discovery, the designation of Pluto has been rife with controversy for decades. It was originally designated as the ninth planet of the solar system. However, in 2006, the definition of what made a planet was altered and a battle began in academic circles that saw the small body's designation constantly change, leading to confusion for many until the term 'dwarf planet' was finally settled upon.

Pluto's orbital track is as odd as the small planet itself. At times, it is the most distant planet in the solar system. At others, it actually orbits inside Neptune's orbital path. It also does not sit on the orbital plane, as do the other major bodies of the solar system. Instead its orbital plane is tilted roughly 15 degrees and, unlike every other planet, its orbit is not centered on the sun. Pluto orbits the sun roughly every 248 years and has a rotational period of 6 Earth days and 9 hours.

A tiny world, Pluto can almost fit inside the geographical borders of the former United States. The surface is made up of a mix of rock and ice of various natures. The dwarf planet supports an atmosphere roughly equally as dense as Earth's own – something scientists are still trying to understand, since such a dense atmosphere should be impossible for such a small body. In addition, this thick atmosphere did not always exist, but has thickened over the last one hundred years or so.

Pluto has a single significant moon, known as Charon, which itself is nearly half the mass of its host. It also hosts two other satellites – Nix and Hydra.

Life on Pluto

Another unique aspect of Pluto is the fact that it is virtually the only major body in the solar system



Type: Dwarf Planet

Size: Approximately 0.002 Earths by Mass

Gravity: 0.067 g

Surface Pressure: 0.3 Pascal (trace)

Surface Composition: Granite-like rock and ice, explosive out-gassing common

Atmosphere: Even mix of nitrogen, methane, and carbon monoxide

Surface Temperature: Around $-229^{\circ}\text{C}/-380^{\circ}\text{F}$

Day: 6.4 Days

Year: 230 Earth-Standard Years

Satellites: 3

not to feel the presence of mankind in some fashion. Even Sedna, another dwarf planet that orbits the sun over 90 AUs distant, has a small mining and research station in orbit above it. This unique aspect is not by design, however. There have been more than a dozen attempts to establish a presence on or even in orbit above the world. The last occurred nearly five decades ago when a group of researchers set down on the surface to establish a research base. An emergency beacon from the group's ship was detected a week after they were scheduled to arrive on the surface. The transmission lasted only two hours before it abruptly cut off. No sign of the researchers or the ship was ever found and today approaching the planet is strictly forbidden.

Even with the difficulties that have been encountered, or perhaps because of them, much research is still done today to try and unlock the secrets of this isolated and seemingly cursed world. Such research has intensified over the last three decades as ever more bizarre behaviors of the dwarf planet reveal

The Kuiper Belt

Type: Asteroid Belt

Accepted Border: Inner 35 AU – Outer 50 AU

Composition: Primarily iceroids with a small percentage of asteroids, infant comets, and roughly half a dozen dwarf planets.

Major Locations: Dyonis Complex, Fog Field, the Lighthouse, Smoke, the Forge

themselves. Roughly 32 years ago, Pluto's orbital velocity was noticed to be changing. Specifically, it had actually increased by almost one percent and there seemed to be no reasons for this inexplicable behavior. 20 years ago, the planet's orbital track also began to shift. At first many believed it was a result of the increase in velocity, but the shift was not stable and seemed to alter at random. Most recently, the surface of the planet has begun to change. While it is still a rocky and ice covered world, unexplained fissures have begun to appear and seismic activity has been detected where there was none for as long as astronomers have been able to detect such activity from a distance. Something is happening with Pluto, but no one knows what.

The Kuiper Belt, The New Frontier

In many ways, the Kuiper Belt is similar to the asteroid belt between the Earth and Mars, though it is much more massive. With an inner border kissing the orbital path of Neptune (almost 35 AUs from the Sun), its outer edge is generally agreed to be a full 50 AUs further out. Made up of literally billions of small stellar bodies, it is believed that the solar system's entire wealth of precious ores, gasses, and more can be found again within the various rocks and infant comets that populate this region.

Unlike the asteroid belt, the Kuiper Belt is mostly made up of large frozen volatile substances, such as frozen methane, water, and ammonia, that range in size from a few meters across to many miles, and even include a number of dwarf planets similar to Pluto. Scattered amongst these are a lesser number of more traditional hard rock objects that most people are more familiar with, and that dominate the asteroid belt that lies in the inner planets. Even though these asteroids make up a relatively small percentage of the objects in the Kuiper Belt, their numbers are estimated to be more than three times that found in the asteroid belt. Such is the massive scale of the Kuiper Belt.

Life in the Kuiper Belt

Despite its distance from anything that can be considered civilized, the Kuiper Belt is surprisingly rife with activity. There is a virtual smorgasbord of wealth to be claimed the extent of which has, in the last couple decades, become evident thanks to the number of self-made millionaires that have made their mark on the solar system through their risky ventures in this distant solar body. There are literally dozens of small outposts scattered across the Belt that serve as headquarters for a variety of corporate, government, and independent concerns. Some, like Smoke, an outpost built in orbit around an especially large iceroid – that gets its name because it is forever shrouded by a fog of slowly evaporating gases that escape the meager gravity of the 'roid – are home to hundreds of independent prospectors and explorers looking to score the next big thing. Others like 4G Enterprises' massive Dyonis Complex act as local corporate headquarters for major corporate concerns, as well as refining and logistical facilities.

While some of the larger complexes offer relative comfort for their inhabitants, most life this far out in the solar system is harsh and replete with danger. Even in the best of circumstances, prospecting and mining is dangerous work. Out here, far from help, even a minor accident can turn deadly. However, the potential rewards are seen by most as far outstripping the danger. Corporate and government contracts pay extremely well, even if they are lengthy in nature. Independent miners and prospectors can also make fortunes by selling especially impressive finds to the large mining concerns or even by trying to mine it themselves, if they have the funds and equipment to do so.

In the last three decades, strange stories have begun to filter out of this region of space. Some are stories of things seen by independent explorers that cannot be explained or, for most, even believed. Ships have been found floating near iceroids and asteroids that are devoid of crew, with not even whispered clues of what happened to them. The most popular story revolves around a mine operated by 4G Enterprises that has been closed down. While the official story is that an accident caused a major collapse of the mine, killing dozens of workers, those who survived the incident swear that the miners opened a cavern that had some sort of living monstrosities hibernating within. Speculation on the truth is a common topic of conversation in the Belt, but no one will go near the former mine.

BAD SALVAGE

This was a much better haul than the crew of the Vulcan's Forge was hoping to find. The random salvage drifting between the orbits of Neptune and Saturn had often been picked over by the pirates that turned the ships into salvage in the first place. This was different and it had Valentino nervous.

The young Sicilian rubbed his finger over stains on the cargo container in front of him. It flaked off. It was definitely blood. "Skipper, why would pirates chop the crew to bits like that and leave all this stuff behind?"

The Skipper was a man who'd gone grey so long before his time it was impossible to tell how old he was. However, there were few people who knew the salvage game better than he. "Who cares? Could have been a message or a revenge trip. Their lapse in judgment, our bounty."

Annie finished dropping off the last jack of cargo. "That's the last of it, Captain." Though, with her thick New Zealand accent, it sounded more like "lest of it Cepten."

"Good. Let's get prepped to get back to someplace civilized. Annie, help V get these crates secured." And with that, the salty space mariner left the cargo bay.

Valentino and the pretty blonde tomboy started to square away the gear. "Doesn't this make you nervous?" he asked.

Before Annie could answer, the Skipper poked his head back into the bay. "And V, get the blood off the cargo before you stow it. Don't want the authorities asking questions we don't have answers to." And then he was gone.

Valentino looked at the spattered boxes, knowing this would not be a fun job. "Why is it always me?"

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Valentino tried to catch his breath. He didn't know what it was about coming out of a grav couch that made Annie so horny, but he sure wasn't complaining.

"Whew! That was exactly what I needed! We'd better get dressed before the Skipper notices we're gone again." Annie slipped on her coveralls in one smooth motion. She made those things almost look good.

The pair tried to look innocent as they went out to join the rest of the crew for the post-stasis meal. Hector was still decanting Nguyen, but everyone else was bright-eyed and ready to eat. It was at times like these that the Skipper was a generous man – he made sure his crew had honest to goodness food, instead of the usual crap rations that went with deep space voyages.

Little did they know that this was going to be the last normal moment any of them would ever know.

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It was only two days later when Ilse, one of the new crew, needed Hector to check her out. She'd developed a painful welt on her lower right back and hadn't felt right since it showed up. Ilse thought that it happened when she hit some of the scrap the wrong way when working the cargo bay, but Hector said it looked more like the bug bite of something big.

Since there weren't any bugs on board and since they hadn't been to a port with bugs for quite a while, Hector was stumped. There wasn't much he could do about it, other than give her some topical medicine. He was a medic, not a doctor.

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Valentino knew something was wrong, and he hadn't felt right since they pulled the salvage on board.



The Skipper looked across the table, one eyebrow raised. "Lord, Ilse. You trying to eat me out of house and home?"

The skinny little German girl wolfed down a second helping of miso soup and something that was supposed to be potstickers. "I don't know what's been going on. Seems like I can't get enough to eat every since this last stasis. I must look like a little piggy!" She stopped eating long enough to make little piggy shorts at everyone, which made

Annie burst into laughter. At least Ilse still had her sense of humor.

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It was later that day that Valentino discovered that something had been into the food stores. He called the Skipper down, because this wasn't something that was going to be easy to explain. Food containers had been torn open, even the ones that were sealed in hard materials.

"Now what could have done this?" The Skipper seemed more curious than angry.

Valentino shook his head. "I don't know, but I've got a bad feeling about this. Think this has anything to do with Ilse's bite?"

The Skipper reached down to grab himself a handful of nuts, which were spilled across one of the shelves. "If it is, it ain't a bug and it's a whole lot bigger than I thought. We're going to have to get everyone stun rods and search the ship. But where did it come from?"

"It couldn't have come from that ship," said Valentino. "What could have survived? It was vented to space."

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Nguyen checked in with Hector later that day. He'd gotten stung by something down in engineering, but he never saw what it was and couldn't find anything.

It was for certain. Something was on the ship. Everyone gathered together to make a plan to find it and the Skipper broke out the stun batons.

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The crew had gotten about halfway through their first pass of the ship when Ilse called in, saying she wasn't feeling well. She'd been complaining about feeling bloated the last couple of days and her digestive system had been on the fritz. No one thought anything of it and simply adjusted their search pattern to accommodate her absence.

It had been several hours and no one had seen anything. It didn't help that they didn't know what they were supposed to be looking for. They assumed it could be as small as a rabbit and went from there. Since Ilse had gone radio silent, the Skipper sent Hector to go find her.

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Hector was just as freaked out as everyone else. He had no good explanation for what happened to Ilse. It took him a while to find her, but she had

been dead for at least a few hours. He managed to keep it together enough to bag her body, but we had to draw straws to see who was going to clean up all the blood.

Ilse had died just outside her bathroom. Hector wanted to say it was some kind of hemorrhagic fever, but that's only because he didn't have any other explanation that even sounded good. It was like her digestive system had exploded out her backside.

The Skipper asked Hector to do some kind of work-up on the body to make sure there wasn't a disease loose on the ship. He made Hector put Ilse's body in quarantine, but we all knew that wouldn't help. If it was a virus, we already most likely had it.

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The crew, shaken and distraught, managed to complete their first pass of the ship.

They didn't find anything. When they got back, they discovered that both Hector and Ilse's body were missing. It was pretty obvious that there was no disease.

The Skipper put Annie on modifying the ship's sensors to find whatever was doing this. He also opened up the weapons locker and gave everyone shotguns.

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Nguyen was more freaked out than anyone. Now he was hungry all the time and eating like a horse. With Hector gone, there wasn't anyone left who could do anything about it. Nguyen did the only graceful thing – he locked himself into quarantine.

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Everyone had gathered around the dining table. The Skipper was pulling up diagrams of the ship on the flex screen that hung above it.

"Whatever's here knows we're looking for it and knows how to hide," he said. "We've got to

assume that these things are using maintenance ducts or the other life support ducts near them. I hope nobody's claustrophobic."

The rest of the crew fidgeted, eager to get to some kind of action.

The Skipper continued. "I know we're all on edge, but please be careful what you shoot at in there. Otherwise, you could blow out something important, like life support. With Nguyen in quarantine, we don't have a genius to pull us out of the fire."

Valentino raised his hand. "Um, boss? Why don't we just get what we need to survive and lock ourselves on the bridge until we get back to civilization?"

"No way." It was Annie that replied. "We'd be locked up in quarantine the minute we arrived. They might even destroy the ship and our salvage. I'm scared, but I don't want to end up broke, jobless, and in UWC solitary for six months."

That was that. Annie had the sensors modified and was going to be guiding the teams. Everyone else was given a section of the duct grid. It took a couple of shots of whiskey to build up the courage for the crew to get to the task ahead.

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Crawling through the ducts was no joy for Valentino. Fortunately, they were big enough to crawl comfortably on hands and knees, unlike smaller ships where one had to alligator crawl through them.

Annie found two unusual readings and guided the teams toward the first. Tensely, the other crew tried to move as quietly as possible, trapping whatever the thing was in the net.

Then Annie screamed it was moving. Then the ducts echoed with the sounds of gunfire. Then the Skipper was gone. Annie called a general retreat after this, but everyone was already scrambling to get out of the ducts.

Rallying on the bridge, Valentino had discovered something along the way. Nguyen was dead now,

in a massive pool of his own blood. It was the same way Ilse had gone.

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Valentino's lungs burned as he ran like he'd never run before. Fear gripped his brain like an ice cold vice. All he could think about was getting as far away from these things as possible, as quickly as possible.

Rounding another corner, unsure where it was he was heading, Valentino finally registered the voice screaming in his ear. "No, V! No! Not that way! It's in front of you!"

Finally, his higher brain functions retook command. "Where are you?"

"I'm locked in the bridge," replied Annie. "You're clear for the moment. Run!"

It took Valentino a second to figure out where he was, while Annie continue to scream at him over the radio. Then, he was off.

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The thing was on his heels, it's black chitinous claws clicking on the metal plates as it clawed its way along in OG. Valentino rushed the bridge doors and wasn't even through when Annie started to close them. He turned, watching in slow motion as the thing came closer. It wasn't going to make it, but it was still going to try.

It was hard to make it out by the emergency lights. However, in the last few seconds it had, it gracefully leaped towards the doors, wheeled around, and snapped its sharp tail through the opening. The tail lashed only a few inches from Valentino's head before whipping back out the door before it closed completely.

He turned to Annie, both of them in the throes of shock. They would be safe for a while, but the thought would occur to them later – what would they do when they needed to get back to their grav couches for deceleration?

It seemed they were only delaying the inevitable.

Monsters have always been the stuff of human legends. As soon as early hominids figured out how to communicate, they began to tell of horrible things that went bump in the night. Some of those stories were the product of imagination and some of them were exaggerations of animals that might have scared primitive humans. However, some of these legends have always been close to the mark, for there have always been unspeakable horrors lurking out there, just beyond what humans know.

Now that the Chthonian Star again approaches, there are many monstrous creatures that are coming into the world – some in ways never before seen. We'll take a look at some of them here.

Reading Entries

Each monster entry begins with an italicized description of the creature, designed for you to use in your game. Once you've used the stock description a couple of times, you'll most likely want to riff on it, adapting it for your specific uses.

Following that is a general overview of the monster, to help you understand what it is and how you might want to use it in your game.

In a black box near the bottom, you'll find the actual game statistics for the monster. These include the creature's size and habitat, as well as its characteristics and DM's, natural skills, weapons and armor, its Horror Factor DM, the number encountered (if you'd like to randomly determine how many there are in a group), and its special abilities.

These game statistics are designed to represent the average member of the monster's species. As a Referee, feel free to tweak the creature's characteristics and skills in order to change it up. It's always fun to keep your players guessing and that most certainly happens if the monsters have different capacities within the same type.

Monstrous Traits

While many of the monsters presented here have traits unique to themselves, there are many that they

have in common. Presented here are descriptions of how these traits work.

Adaptable

A creature that is adaptable is capable of changing its physiology in such a way to survive in ecosystems that might not normally support its life. The ecosystems in question are explained along with the monster.

Burrower

A burrowing creature is one that has the ability to travel underneath the ground. Some simply tunnel, while others actually pass the substrate through their bodies as they go. Some may even burrow so fast that they can move at speeds faster than a human can run – the listing will provide a speed modifier, if this is the case.

Climber

Some monsters have the ability to climb in ways far beyond that of humans. There are even those that can stick to sheer surfaces like an insect or some lizards. The listing will provide a multiplier in climbing speed, as well as if the creature can stick to walls.

Constrictor

A constricting creature can wrap itself around an enemy and squeeze. To do so, the monster makes a normal melee attack, with a -DM equal to the target's Dexterity +DM. If this attack is successful, the target cannot move or attack, and suffers damage each turn until he succeeds at a Strength 8+ check, with a -3 DM. He automatically escapes if the creature is killed.

Echolocation

Some creatures can "see" by bouncing sound waves off nearby objects. They have a range of 75 yards to "see," even in complete darkness.

Entangling Attack

A creature with this trait has the ability to attack a second time in the same turn it successfully hits with an entangling attack. Usually, this second attack is a bite or something similar. The second attack requires

a second melee attack, with a -DM equal to the target's Strength +DM.

Deceiver

Monsters with this ability can physically or mystically deceive a target, making that person believe the creature is something other than what it is. This trait requires a successful Deception check.

Flyer

Some monsters are equipped for flight, usually with wings of some kind. They are also equipped to survive in altitude. The creature may fly faster than normal ground movement, and that multiplier can be found in the listing.

Glider

A creature who is capable of gliding can travel through the air, with a distance that depends on the winds and the height from which launched, as well as gravity. A gliding creature can glide in any real atmosphere.

Infrared Senses

A creature with this trait sees into the infrared spectrum, in addition to normal visual perception. This allows them to see in the dark and detect basic heat patterns.

Jumper

A creature who is a jumper is capable of incredible leaps. It can leap a number of times as far as a human in 1G, but is of serious benefit in lower gravity environments. The multiplier in question is listed with the monster.

Skilled

There are those monsters who are fully sentient and capable of learning. Such creatures are given additional skill points with which to buy skills other than those listed.

Sorcerer

The monster in question is not only sentient, it is capable of mastering magical rituals to harness the powers of the cosmos. For more on magic, see the Referee chapter.

Telepathic

The creature can sense any sentient creatures within a given range. It can also become immediately fluent in a target's language by succeeding at a Language 8+ check.

Tool-User

A creature with this trait is not only sentient, it also knows how to use tools and technology. Depending upon the creatures, they may actually have technology of their own.

Truly Amphibious

A creature with this trait is able to operate uninhibited both under the waves and on land. Such creatures can breathe both air and water and have the anatomy to support long-term existence in both conditions.

Void-Dweller

There are creatures whose alien physiology allows them to survive in the vacuum of space. They are shielded against any of the perils that come from exposure to the void, and usually have some sort of way to find sustenance among the scant bodies of the solar system – or to hibernate.

Alien Technology

There are several of the creatures presented in this chapter that are not only tool users, they are from races that have technology of their own. The three most notable are the Deep Ones, the Ghosts, and the Mi-Go.

This new alien technology will be presented in future books, most notably *Horrors of the Void*. For now, just assume that they utilize their own alien versions of any kind of human technology.

A Few Differences

You may notice that some of these monsters are familiar from Lovecraftian fiction, but that they are somehow different. That is because the Chthonian Star isn't just awakening them, it's causing them to change – to evolve for the first time in millions upon millions of years.

Bhole

It feels like an earthquake. The ground shakes with an intensity that throws most of your fellows to their feet. As it grows more intense, you realize that something is coming up from underground, something very big. You try your best to run, but it's impossible to know where this thing will surface.

The ground kicks up in a massive cloud as the gigantic worm-like creature breaches the surface. The smell would hit you first, if it weren't for the vacc suit. It lets loose a deafening roar, blowing the cloud away. There it is, a deathly color, longer than several football fields, with a mouth filled with sharp, grinding teeth. You pause to wonder how such a beast could never have been seen before, but only for a moment. Then, all thoughts are pulled under the waves of sheer panic.



Bholes are gigantic worm-like predators that burrow beneath the surface of planets, moons, and large asteroids. They are attracted to heat and vibration, the two standard signatures of prey. Their mouths are so large and powerful that they are capable of destroying or swallowing most atmospheric vehicles in one shot.

These monstrosities have mostly been encountered on the outer planets and in the Kuiper Belt, and are fortunately rare thus far. What is perhaps most disturbing is that no one knows how bholes wind up on planetary bodies. It seems that one minute the planet is clean; the next, there are bholes burrowing beneath it. Perhaps their larvae have been laying dormant or perhaps there is something seeding them throughout the solar system.

Bhole

Size:	300-500' long, 400-600 tons	
Habitat:	Any Rock-like Substrate	
Characteristics:		
Strength	60	(+17 DM)
Dexterity	2	(-2 DM)
Endurance	30	(+8 DM)
Intelligence	4	(-1 DM)
Instinct	7	
Pack	0	(-3 DM)
Skills:	Athletics (endurance) 4, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Recon 2, Survival 2	
Weapons:	Bite (8d6+17), Smash (6d6+17)	
Armor:	Thick Hide (8)	
Horror Factor:	-4 DM	
Number Encountered:	1	
Special Abilities:		

- **Burrower (x3)**
- **Earthquake** – as a bhole approaches the surface, it sends out shockwaves not unlike an earthquake. Anyone caught in the 30 yard area extending from any side of the bhole must succeed at an Athletics (coordination) 8+ check to stay on his feet.
- **Infrared Senses**
- **Swallow** – anything that can fit in a bhole's enormous mouth can be swallowed, where it is ground to bits in the thing's innards. Any bite attack that has an effect of 10+ will swallow a target.
- **Void-Dweller**

Cultist

It's then you realize that this person is not right. There is something in their intensity, something in the madness hidden behind their eyes that speaks to fanaticism. At first, you'd thought it was for something normal, like the pop culture obsessions of most people, but the conversation has turned a dark corner and he is not showing signs of slowing.

Then, the smile turns evil and the wickedly-shaped knife comes out from hiding. He's lost himself to the worship of something forgotten. Let's hope there aren't too many more around.

Cultists are not so much monsters on the outside, per se, but they most certainly have given up enough of their humanity to be monsters on the inside. They are those lost souls who have, for whatever reason, chosen to worship the Old Ones. The primary cults

of the solar system include the Children of the Void, who commune with their disembodied god through murder, the Order of the Storm, dedicated to the worship of the sleeping god Cthulhu and his children, Primoris Nox, the cult of a thousand faces, the Scions of Blight, who have heeded the call of the Unnamed in order to perpetuate suffering, and the Wild Ones, those who embrace the dark worship of nature and Shub-Niggurath.

In return for their worship, many cultists are given the opportunity to learn how to wield the powers of magic. Through their dark sorcery, they are capable of many amazing feats that defy explanation.

The cultist listed here is an elite cult leader. Cultists in your game are going to be widely varied characters.

Cultist

Size:	5' 10" tall, 180 lbs. (Male) 5' 5" tall, 135 lbs. (Female)
Habitat:	Earth-like Atmospheres
Characteristics:	
Strength	7
Dexterity	6
Endurance	10 (+1 DM)
Intelligence	9 (+1 DM)
Education	9 (+1 DM)
Social	9 (+1 DM)
Skills:	Athletics (endurance) 1, Deception 2, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol) 1, Leadership 2, Me- lee (blade) 2, Occult 3, Persuade 2, Recon 2, Streetwise 1
Weapons:	Anvil Hvy Pistol (2d6+2), Blade (2d6)
Armor:	Flak Jacket (4)
Horror Factor:	None
Number Encountered:	3d6
Special Abilities:	
•	Skilled – assign another 30-50 points in skills for individual cult leaders in addition to the skills listed here.
•	Sorcerer



Deep One

It is not the mer-folk of legend. The thing isn't quite fish or man or frog, but an alien combination of all those things. Gray rubbery flesh covers gaunt limbs and veiny flaps drape from its sides, like a stingray's wings. Large black unblinking eyes stare at you above a slitted nose and lipless mouth, filled with needle-like teeth. There's something in the talons that tip its hands and feet that tell you it not only knows how to climb, but also how to hunt. It's a predator that moves with a speed untold by its awkward form. And from the way it chitters, you can tell that it is not alone.

It opens its mouth and croaks something. The coarse sound is wet and smacking, making your skin crawl. It croaks again and this time you hear it. It's speaking. It sounds like it called your name...



Vulgar creatures from the depths of Earth's oceans, the Deep Ones represent what humanity might have become if it never crawled onto land during evolution. They have, for the most part, quietly lived at the bottom of the sea, awaiting the return of their sleeping god. However, from time to time, the Deep Ones have come to land as they slowly pervert isolated fishing communities into sick cultists with the desire to breed with the horrific creatures.

Deep Ones are intelligent, sentient creatures, and they behave as such. They are highly organized and have their own alien forms of technology. However, their behavior has changed within the last year – they have begun to raid the land, stealing technological devices and expensive materials. The Deep Ones are clearly up to something and it is becoming more dangerous to be in the mother waters of Earth.

Deep One

Size:	5' - 6' tall, 200 - 230 lbs. (Male) 5' - 6' tall, 190 - 210 lbs. (Female)
Habitat:	Saltwater Ocean, Coastal Land
Characteristics:	
Strength	9 (+1 DM)
Dexterity	7
Endurance	12 (+2 DM)
Intelligence	6
Instinct	7
Pack	9 (+1 DM)
Skills:	Athletics (co-ordination) 2, Gun Combat (any) 1, Melee (blade, natural weapons) 1, Recon 2, Survival 2
Weapons:	Bite (1d6+1), Claws (2d6+1)
Armor:	Hide (1)
Horror Factor:	+2 DM
Number Encountered:	3d6
Special Abilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptable – capable of surviving in both terrestrial and alien saltwater ecosystems. • Amphibious – capable of operating both on land and in the extreme depths of an ocean. • Echolocation • Infrared Senses • Skilled – Assign another 40-60 points in skills for individual Deep Ones, in addition to the basic skills listed here. • Tool-Users – they have technology of their own, as well as using that of humans.

Ghast

With a powerful leap, it hits the floor, its ragged black talons scraping across the ground. Built like some awful cross of man and alien kangaroo, it bares its sharp teeth with a hiss. A ruddy coat of fine, dirty fur seems to cover the beast from the top of its head down its body, all the way to the tip of its powerful tail. Perhaps most disturbing is the creature's face, a hideous mockery of a human's. Sickly sulphurous eyes narrow as a forked tongue flits out of its mouth to lick its lips. It's clear you're on the menu.

The problem is, it's not this one you have to worry about. The others have snuck around while you were distracted, and you can hear their hisses in the shadows. The things are pack hunters. Damn.

Ghasts are disturbing kangaroo-like humanoid creatures that seem to be native to Martian soil. They have been waking up from their eons-long hibernation as the Chthonian Star approaches.

These creatures have a society all their own, complete with their own guttural language. They even appear to have technology that they are resurrecting as they come back into the world. For now, they seem content to steal human technology, but more of their own is popping up all the time. The ghast race is coming back, and these first are assessing how that might best happen.

In general, ghasts are reasonably intelligent, but they are very clever. They are pack hunters that instinctively know how to work together, much to the chagrin of their prey. While they can eat any kind of meat, they prefer the colonists of Mars – but will eat each other if necessary. Ghasts have difficulty operating in sunlight, and prefer to come out only at night.

Ghast

Size:	6' - 7' tall, 180 - 220 lbs. (Male) 5' 6" - 6' 6" tall, 160 - 200 lbs. (Female)
Habitat:	Martian Plains & Mountains
Characteristics:	
Strength	10 (+1 DM)
Dexterity	7
Endurance	8
Intelligence	6
Instinct	13 (+2 DM)
Pack	9 (+1 DM)
Skills:	Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Deception 2, Gun Combat (any) 1, Melee (blade, natural weapons) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 2
Weapons:	Bite (1d6+1), Clawed Kick (2d6+1)
Armor:	Hide (1)
Horror Factor:	+2 DM
Number Encountered:	3d6
Special Abilities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptable – can survive and thrive in thin atmosphere of Mars, as well as that of Earth. • Climber (x1) • Echolocation • Jumper (x3) • Skilled – Assign another 20-40 points in skills for individual Ghasts, in addition to the basic skills listed here. • Tool-Users – can and do use human tools and limited technology of their own. 	



Ghoul

It shuffles around the corner, its beady black eyes narrowing as it sees you. Leprous-colored flesh stretches tightly over a wiry bipedal frame. It might be human, if it weren't for the almost canine snout. It drops what looks like a crooked club and it crouches down, growling.

There's this smell that follows the thing, the smell of rot and decay. It's as if the creature slept in a communal grave. You choke back the vomit in your throat as it bares its sharp, ragged teeth. The wave of stench that rolls over you is too much and you retch as you realize that the stink comes from whatever this thing eats. That's what you saw in its hand. It wasn't a club. It was a human arm.

As long as there have been humans, there have been ghouls. These bestial humanoids are carrion eaters, designed to clean up the dead. However, their favorite kind of dead are human beings. Ghouls pre-

dominantly wait until after a person is dead and then prowl in to pick the bones, but they are not above picking off stragglers, children, and pets.

Ghouls are mostly nocturnal, though out of necessity more than biology. They hide underground whenever they can, or at least in places out of the sun when in colonies. However, some don disguises that make them appear more human in order to make their way around fringe settlements or societies.

While most of the ghoule population still lives on Earth, they have migrated to any planet or moon with a colony of appreciable size. They have found places on Mars, Ganymede, and Triton, most particularly. They are not a great threat, but they have proven to be dangerous anywhere they are.



Ghoul

Size: 5' - 6' tall,
150-190 lbs. (Male)
5' - 6" tall,
100-140 lbs. (Female)
Habitat: Earth-like Atmospheres

Characteristics:

Strength	9	(+1 DM)
Dexterity	8	
Endurance	9	(+1 DM)
Intelligence	6	
Instinct	9	(+1 DM)
Pack	7	

Skills: Athletics (endurance) 2, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2,

Weapons: Bite (2d6+2).
Claws (1d6+1)

Armor: Hide (2)

Horror Factor: +2 DM

Number Encountered: 2d6

Special Abilities:

- **Burrower** (x1/2)
- **Climber** (x1)
- **Infrared Senses**
- **Necrophage** – these creatures subsist only on flesh that has begun to decompose.
- **Skilled** – assign another 20-40 points in skills for individual Ghouls, in addition to the basic skills listed here.
- **Subterranean Dweller** – they have a natural sense of direction and general position, and do not get lost underground or in confining spaces.

Hybrid

There's something wrong with her voice, though it's difficult to place. There's a menace that oozes from her every word, though there's no reason for that here. It's when she reaches up to pull back the hood of her coat that it starts to become clear. Her hand is grayish and waxy, something dark beneath her fingernails, and webbing that runs halfway up each finger. The hood slides back to reveal something that may have once been human, but no more. Coal black bulbous eyes stare coldly at you and her lips pull back in a snarl above abnormally pointed teeth. Perhaps most disturbing are the gills pumping on her neck...

When these abominations are born, they appear to be completely human. Nothing could be further from the truth. Hidden away in their genetic code is the DNA of their alien heritage, which will one day manifest. Through years of transformation, they will become Deep Ones. The reason Hybrids even exist

is because they mature into Deep Ones faster than Deep One babies, by centuries. It helps the under-sea people keep their population growing, also giving them agents that can hide inside of, and interact with, society.

The transformation begins sometime during adulthood. Some transformations take only a matter of years, while others take decades. Regardless, there are three stages each Hybrid goes through. The first is called the Innsmouth Look, where the Hybrid's skin goes waxy, their eyes grow bulbous, and their hair thins. Hybrids begin to manifest inhuman traits, such as webbed digits and gills, in the second phase, but can still pass with the right disguise. Once a Hybrid reaches the third phase, he is more Deep One than man and has to hide from the world. It won't be long now.

Hybrid Second Stage

Size:	5' - 6' tall, 180 - 215 lbs. (Male) 5' - 6' tall, 100 - 160 lbs. (Female)
Habitat:	Any Land, but mostly Coastal Land
Characteristics:	
Strength	9 (+1 DM)
Dexterity	7
Endurance	9 (+1 DM)
Intelligence	6
Education	7
Pack	5 (-1 DM)
Skills:	Athletics (Co-ordination) 1, Deception 2, Gun Combat (any) 1, Melee (Blade, Natural Weapons) 1, Recon 1
Weapons:	Retractable Claws (1d6)
Armor:	None
Horror Factor:	+2 DM
Number Encountered:	1d6
Special Abilities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Amphibious</i> – capable of operating both on land and in the extreme depths of an ocean. • <i>Infrared Senses</i> • <i>Skilled</i> – assign another 40-60 points in skills for individual Hybrids, in addition to the basic skills listed here. • <i>Tool-Users</i> – they have technology of their own, as well as that of humans. 	



Karrak'in

Something clicks in the darkness. You shine your flashlight around, trying to find out what has entered your ship uninvited. There it is. It could be a spider, but no spider is that big. Easily a yard across, it is covered with rough black chitin and a host of legs. You can't see its face, as it appears to be eating. However, its fangs are ripping out chunks of metal from the bulkhead – or at least that's what it sounds like.

It seems disinterested in you, until you draw your pistol and take aim. Suddenly, its head snaps around as if on a swivel, revealing a multitude of eyes and several saw-like mouths. Then it unleashes this horrible sound, a high-pitched keening wail. Now behind you, all around you, more somethings click in the darkness. The keening ends, but it's already done its job.

Karrak'in are spider-like creatures that live in space, jumping from asteroid to asteroid to moon

searching for food. They are immune to the vacuum, and launch themselves across the void using their powerful legs, maneuvering with gas pockets, hibernating for months at a time. While traveling, they appear to be just another chunk of space debris.

They consume minerals, which is what attracts them to spaceships. The karrak'in have mouths and salivary glands that allow them to chew through nearly any substance with ease. They chew an entry into the spaceship, and then begin feasting on it. Left to their own devices, karrak'in will consume nearly the entirety of a spaceship. At first, they ignore the crew and will not respond unless something clearly threatens them. Then, the karrak'in send out a call and all the creatures on the ship set about exterminating any living thing before getting back to their meal.



Karrak'in

Size:	3' across, 40 lbs.
Habitat:	Space – Asteroids, Moons
Characteristics:	
Strength	8
Dexterity	10 (+1 DM)
Endurance	15 (+3 DM)
Intelligence	2 (-2 DM)
Instinct	7
Pack	6
Skills:	Athletics (co-ordination, endurance) 2, Me- lee (natural weapons) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Weapons:	Bite (2d6)*
Armor:	Chitin (2)
Horror Factor:	0 DM
Number Encountered:	2d6
Special Abilities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Climber (x2)</i> – can cling to sheer surfaces. • <i>Void-Dweller</i> • <i>*Hallucinatory Poison</i> – any bite attack that does damage to a person will deliver this poison. Make an End 8+ check, which a -2 DM. Those affected by the poison will soon begin to suffer from mild hallucinations, which will ramp up to full-blow dissociative waking nightmares within a few hours. Such victims will have difficulty making rational decisions or discerning friend from foe. This poison flushes from a person's system in six hours – if he can survive that long. 	

Lashing Horror

The ground underneath your feet begins to rumble. It worms its way out of the ground, a horrific thing that looks like a tentacle a foot in diameter. It lashes around, like a maddened blind snake. Dodging the thing as it whips, you see out of the corner of your eye another, this one smaller. However, that's not all. Dozens begin to push up from under the ground all around you. Whatever is hiding underneath all this must be enormous. Unfortunately, it looks like you'll be finding out very soon.

A lashing horror is a creature that is capable of living anywhere in the solar system. It appears to be some kind of tentacled mass that can burrow through pretty much any kind of substrate, attracted to the energy and vibrations of living things. It is even capable of burrowing through metal.

While most assume that there is some kind of creature to which the tentacles are attached, no one

has ever survived an encounter that would have provided conclusive evidence. Even sensor readings are garbled. What is certain is that a lashing horror has from eight to eighteen tentacles, ranging from a few inches to more than a foot in diameter. These tentacles hone in on the heat and vibrations of living things, which they promptly then try to kill. While most assume that this is so the creature can feed, lashing horrors display disturbing behavior. Some victims are pulled underground, whether whole or in pieces, where it is believed they are consumed. However, sometimes the creature appears to show up simply to rip perceived prey limb from limb, taking nothing at all for itself.

Lashing horrors are adaptable and immune to the vacuum of space and launch egg pods across the solar system to procreate. They can be found anywhere.

Lashing Horror

Size:	Individual Tentacles from 6'-20' long, 4"-18" diameter		
Habitat:	Anywhere		
Characteristics:			
Strength	12-23	(+2-+5 DM)	
Dexterity	7		
Endurance	12-21	(+2-+5 DM)	
Intelligence	3	(-1 DM)	
Instinct	9	(+1 DM)	
Pack	0	(-3 DM)	
Skills:	Athletics (strength) 2, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Recon 2, Survival 2		
Weapons:	Tentacles (1d6+2-4d6+5)*		
Armor:	Hide (3)		
Horror Factor:	0 DM		
Number Encountered:	1 (8 to 18 tentacles)		
Special Abilities:			
•	<i>Burrower (x1)</i> – moves underground at normal speed, and is capable of burrowing through nearly any substance.		
•	<i>Decentralized</i> – treat each of the creatures tentacles as if it were its own beast, with its own Strength, Dexterity, and Endurance, as well as damage and damage capacity.		
•	<i>*Entangling Attack</i>		
•	<i>Infrared Senses</i>		
•	<i>Void-Dweller</i>		



Metamorphasite

It is the thing of nightmares – intelligent, cunning, alien, and malicious. To call it a shapeshifter would be far too limiting. Dripping flesh peels back, spurs of bone spring forth, newborn tentacles thrash violently, and a fang-filled maw rises upward from a mound of writhing tissue. Only within these few rib-crunching and blood-spurting moments does this creature reveal its true self. For once the process of transformation is complete, the true masquerade of this creature begins. It could appear as your dog, your best friend, or your wife. You'd never know until it was too late, not until the weight of this beast held you down while tentacled tendrils erupt from its morphing carcass to wrap your helpless body. Only then would you feel your consciousness begin to ebb as your life slips gradually away. Only then, in those last moments of silent screaming would you realize that everything about you was now ending only to be replaced by... it.



Nobody is sure if the metamorphasite is a single organism or a community of countless, rapidly evolving microorganisms. Few people believe that it even exists outside of barroom talk and urban legend. Yet supposed eyewitness accounts seem to mark the metamorphasite with certain common characteristics. It can transform itself almost instantly, even by separating body parts and growing new limbs with which to move. Attacking any part of it, even a pool of blood with a hot poker, will cause a physical reaction. Some believe that this is the only effective way to detect a metamorphasite from other organic life forms. It is highly adaptive, intelligent, and cunning. It relies on subterfuge and stealth in order to survive – preferring to take a victim while alone so as to avoid detection. The one thing the metamorphasite is particularly vulnerable to is fire. Burning every last cell of the creature is the only way to make sure that it's completely dead.

Metamorphasite

Size:	Variable
Habitat:	Any, Natural Unknown
Characteristics:	
Strength	Based on current form
Dexterity	Based on current form
Endurance	14 (+2 DM)
Intelligence	12 (+2 DM)
Instinct	11 (+1 DM)
Pack	0 (-3 DM)
Skills:	Deception 2, Gun Combat (acid spray) 1, Jack of All Trades 2, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Recon 2, Survival 3
Weapons:	Acid Spray (3d6-3), Pseudopods (2d6+4)*
Armor:	By form, min. Hide (1)
Horror Factor:	-2 DM
Number Encountered:	1
Special Abilities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Glider</i> • <i>Deceiver</i> – perfectly imitates other life forms. • <i>*Constrictor</i> – once dead, the victim is completely absorbed within minutes. • <i>Mimic</i> – absorbs knowledge, experience, and physical characteristics of victims. Can separate into multiple organisms (divvying up physical characteristics). Can shift into any life form ever absorbed within minutes. • <i>Skilled</i> – may be as skilled as humans, including advanced science and engineering. • <i>Tool User</i> – Can use and decipher all forms of technology. 	

Mi-Co

It's almost as if evolution couldn't figure out what it wanted this creature to be. Diaphanous wings and segmented limbs make it seem like an insect, but the hard, spiky, wine-colored shell speaks of a crustacean. However, the budding mess that covers what should be its head is furry and cancerous like a fungus, though protruding in places to the point of cilia.

It moves as if it doesn't have a sense of up and down, with a maddening stuttering cadence. Pieces of that fungoid head lap out at the air like a snake's tongue. Worse is that you can almost make out words when it buzzes its wings...

The inhabitants of Pluto, the mi-go are creatures that came to this solar system millennia ago. Eventually, they came to serve the Old Ones and drove many other more noble races from these cosmic shores.

The mi-go are very, very alien. They do not operate like other terrestrial life. The creatures are incredibly intelligent and technologically capable, but lack anything resembling emotions or what could be construed as ethics. To a human being, they appear to be emotionless and malevolent.

While they once lived on Earth, they now only travel to our blue-green planet to mercilessly experiment on people and to gather resources not found in their neck of the solar system – Pluto. They are the reason nothing gets near Pluto, a planet they revere in a religious fashion. Their legends foretell that the dwarf planet is part of something special that is coming – now on its way. Though secretive until death, the mi-go might be the only race in the universe that knows what's coming for sure.

Mi-Co

Size:	4' - 5' long, 10' wingspan 120 - 170 lbs.
Habitat:	Pluto, some parts of Earth
Characteristics:	
Strength	7
Dexterity	13 (+2 DM)
Endurance	8
Intelligence	12 (+2 DM)
Instinct	11 (+1 DM)
Pack	8
Skills:	Athletics (co-ordination) 1, Investigate 2, Gun Combat (any) 1, Jack of All Trades 1, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Recon 1, Science (biology, genetics) 2, Stealth 1
Weapons:	Claws (2d6)
Armor:	Hide (2)
Horror Factor:	0 DM
Number Encountered:	2d6
Special Abilities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adaptable</i> – can adapt to pretty much any environment, given a few hours. • <i>Climber (x1)</i> – can stick to sheer surfaces. • <i>Flyer (x1)</i> • <i>Skilled</i> – assign another 40-60 points in skills for individual Mi-Go, in addition to the basic skills listed here. • <i>Tool-Users</i> – they have technology of their own, as well as that of humans. • <i>Void-Dweller</i> 	



Myriad

"The whispers... they speak to you too, don't they? They didn't make sense at first, but they became clearer and more entrancing as time went by. What glories have they asked you to perform? How have you shown your love for the one who sleeps below? No. No! No! I can see it in your eyes, they don't speak to you. You're not one of the chosen. Not yet, anyway. Let me show them to you..."

- Final video recording of an interrogation of a murder suspect on Titania. Neither the suspect nor the interrogator have ever been seen again.

Not all monsters shamble through the night with claws and horns. One of the most insidious threats to humanity so far is a creature no larger than a blood cell. The Myriad seep into the blood stream of unsuspecting hosts and multiply until they are able to influence the mind of their new puppet. To the vic-

tim, it starts with whispers, soft voices at the edges of the room. Making no sense at first, they seem to care more than anyone the host has known before in their lives. Then, as the Myriad acclimate, the voices speak to the glories about to unfold before the faithful. While the Myriad can never completely take over their hosts, they can convince even the most strong-willed person to commit horrifying acts of depravity in service to their unknown masters.

This alone would make the Myriad threat enough for humanity, but they will not allow themselves to be caught. In such an event, the creatures convert the energy in the host body, forcing it to become a dreadful protoplasmic blob. If this wasn't bad enough, the process of converting the body turns it incredibly acidic. The Myriad will attack anyone in the vicinity as long their physical form remains intact.



Myriad

Size:	Microscopic	
Habitat:	Atmosphere of Uranus	
Characteristics:		
Strength	12*	(+2 DM)
Dexterity	7*	
Endurance	12*	(+2 DM)
Intelligence	14	(+2 DM)
Instinct	7	
Pack	n/a	
Skills:	As victim	
Weapons:	As victim	
Horror Factor:	0 DM	
Number Encountered:	Millions in an infected body	

Special Abilities:

- **Adaptable** – can survive in cold environments with thin atmospheres, like Uranus or Neptune, as well as Earth-like atmospheres, like Earth and Mars.
- **Infection** – a potential victim must succeed at an End 8+ check, with -1 DM, to avoid infection. Once infected, must succeed at an End 8+ check to resist compulsion. Each day after the first incurs a cumulative -1 DM to resist. There is no known cure for this infection.
- ***Protoplasmic Blob** – if discovered, will convert to this form and take on the above physical characteristics. Attacks do 4d6 damage, and anything that physically touches the creature will likewise take damage.

Night-Gaunt

It is almost a demon of legend. Slick obsidian skin covers an almost humanoid creature, though its legs bend backwards like a wolf's. Giant membranous wings sprout from its back, flapping gently as it lands. It doesn't so much move as flow, with an almost blurring effect, as if the creature wasn't entirely tied to three dimensions. Worse, it makes almost no sound as it does. Horns jut from its head, as well as wicked barbs from its serpentine tail. It is clearly some kind of predator. However, it's the creatures face that is most terrifying – or it's lack of one. Smooth, shiny skin covers its head. It has no eyes, no ears, no mouth, no nose, but it seems to see and hear just fine. Looking into its face is like looking at a dark reflection of oneself.

Night-Gaunts are the kind of creatures that make one realize from where legends of demons have come. They seem to have no home in particular, and most think that night-gaunts exist in this solar sys-

tem because sorcerers have summoned them from beyond.

These creatures are stealthy, intelligent hunters, found lurking wherever human beings have settled in sufficient numbers. They are especially found anywhere with an appreciable cultist population – particularly around Jupiter and Saturn. Night-Gaunts also can travel between planets on their own, their wings carrying them on the solar winds in an almost mystical sense.

One of their most unusual traits is their touch. While their horns and claws are obviously lethal, their touch essentially puts whatever body part they touch to sleep. The victim then loses use of a limb, and wherever the night-gaunt touches suffers the intense pins and needles sensation of such a thing.

Night-Gaunt

Size:	6' - 7' tall, 160-180 lbs.		
Habitat:	Atmosphere, Vacuum		
Characteristics:			
	Strength	9	(+1 DM)
	Dexterity	12	(+2 DM)
	Endurance	7	
	Intelligence	9	(+1 DM)
	Instinct	8	
	Pack	2	(-2 DM)
Skills:	Athletics (flying) 2, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Zero-G 2		
Weapons:	Claws (2d6+1), Horns (3d6+1), Touch*		
Armor:	Hide (3)		
Horror Factor:	0 DM		
Number Encountered:	1d3		
Special Abilities:			
•	* <i>Debilitating Touch</i> – puts body parts to sleep with a touch. The higher the Effect, the more important the body part. Torso and head are merely distracting, but a victim loses the use of limbs. This effect lasts for 1d3 minutes. The victim also suffers an intense pins and needles sensation, causing a -1 DM to all actions due to distraction.		
•	<i>Flyer</i> (x3)		
•	<i>Special Senses</i> – can see and hear without eyes or ears, including infrared senses.		
•	<i>Void-Dweller</i>		



Nypheious

From the shadows it looks almost human, though it walks with a gait decidedly alien. It is, however, only from the shadows that it appears nearly human. As it steps into the light, you hear the gasps of dismay of those around you. The creature is a sickly green color, with a mottled pattern of darker green running along the sides of the arms, legs, and torso. A thick black mane of hair runs from the lower back up to its crown. Two small eyes sit on opposite sides of its head. Between them, a large round mouth, with lips that seem to have been peeled back from its jaw, is filled with ragged teeth. What you thought were limp arms in the shadows turn out to be a pair of tentacles sprouting from each shoulder. As the creature nears, they stir as though they sense prey is near, giving you a glimpse of the small barbed hooks that line the bottom of each. Its legs are no less alien, with knees that bend the wrong direction and feet that look more like articulate, wickedly-clawed hands. You had thought it only a figment of a nightmare but now it is very real.



Nypheious

Size: 5' 9" - 6' 6" tall,
210 - 240 lbs.

Habitat: Any Non-Corrosive
Atmosphere, Vacuum

Characteristics:

Strength	10	(+1 DM)
Dexterity	10	(+1 DM)
Endurance	10	(+1 DM)
Intelligence	6	
Instinct	14	(+2 DM)
Pack	2	(-2 DM)

Skills: Athletics (Co-ordination) 2, Deception 3,
Language 2, Melee (Natural Weapons) 2,
Stealth 1

Weapons: Tentacles (2d6+1)*,
Bite (2d6+1)

Aarmor: Hide (1)

Horror Factor: 0 DM

Number Encountered: 1

Special Abilities:

- **Coercer** – may convince anyone it has deceived to perform any action. Requires another Deception check.
- **Deceiver** – one target within 50 m. Appears as anyone target knows or has known.
- ***Entangling Attack**
- **Telepathic** – senses within 50 meters and knows a target's greatest fears or past tragedy.

Seethari

The emergency lights flash off of its black, almost bio-mechanical skin. It's as big as you, without the lashing tail whipping through the air behind it. It is clearly a creature of death, with sharp claws at the end of every digit, the blade tipping its tail, and the mouth filled with rows of teeth. You can't tell if it should move on two or four legs – it seems to be both – as it crouches and leaps an impossible distance towards you. Its jaws open, dripping thick ooze, and it hisses. Suddenly, a stinger-like tongue lashes out and stabs you in the belly. The pain isn't as bad as the sensation that something was just pumped into your innards. God only knows what...

Seethari are horrible creatures that are capable of hibernating for centuries in the cold vacuum. They are usually brought aboard ships or stations as part of salvage or mining, whereupon they awaken with two urges – to eat and to procreate. They, in fact,

seem to have no other reason for being – other than to bring horror in their wake.

Seethari reproduce in a disturbing manner. Each is asexual and seeks to implant a tiny embryo into a living host using its stinging tongue. Once implanted under the skin, it makes its way to the digestive tract. There, it feeds on what the host eats (who seems to be hungry all the time), for the next three to five days. Then, properly gestated, it starts to move its way down the digestive tract, ultimately ripping its way out of the victim's colon and anus. The victim usually dies, while the baby skitters out into the world. However, this can be stopped, but only while the baby is painfully moving to be born – while gestating, it will kill the host if removed. This brief ten minute window is all there is to remove the angry baby seethari and save the host.

Seethari

Size:	4-5' tall, 120 lbs.
Habitat:	Any atmosphere
Characteristics:	
Strength	8
Dexterity	9 (+1 DM)
Endurance	14 (+2 DM)
Intelligence	3 (-1 DM)
Instinct	12 (+2 DM)
Pack	6
Skills:	Athletics (co-ordination) 2, Melee (natural weapons) 1, Recon 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1
Weapons:	Bite (3d6), Claws (1d6), Tail (2d6)*, Tongue (1d6)*
Armor:	Chitin-like Hide (3)
Horror Factor:	0 DM
Number Encountered:	2d6
Special Abilities:	
•	Climber (x1)
•	Jumper (x3)
•	*Embryonic Implantation – when stung by a Seethari's tongue, a character must succeed at an End 8+ check, with a -4 DM. Failure means the embryo enters the character's body and moves to his digestive tract. Within three to five days, the embryo will mature and begin to move down the digestive tract. This is the only time it may be removed. This can be done once every 48 hours, if the creature is eating properly.
•	*Entangling Attack – can use their tails to entangle opponents.
•	Infrared Senses



Spawn

The shadow in the storm is at least twenty feet tall. Paralyzed, you can't help but wait for it to reveal itself. Its movement is alien, a stuttered uneven gait. It's lithe, smooth body ripples with power. Tentacle-like tails thrash out behind it, furling and unfurling, revealing hooks hidden within the suckers. Perhaps most frightening, however, is its head, round and with eyes peering out over a mass of tentacles that seem to move as if each were alive in and of itself. It pauses, as if sensing something in the air. Then, suddenly, it takes off into the sky on giant bat-like, or maybe manta ray-like, wings, flying high into the clouds overhead. You may have survived, but you will never be the same.

There is perhaps no creature that exemplifies the Old Ones like the spawn. Most learned occult scholars believe that the spawn are made in the image of the great Cthulhu itself, tentacled monstrosities with a fiendish intelligence.



These creatures are often associated with cults, where they are sometimes the object of worship. They are strangely active with the Order of the Storm, and where spawn go, Deep Ones are sure to follow. Worse yet, spawn are capable of molding the power of the cosmos. Their knowledge of sorcery and magic is frightening.

Thus far, the spawn seem to be a phenomena restricted to the outer planets and the Kuiper Belt. It is rumored that there are several living in the storms of Neptune, but these rumors are difficult to substantiate given the nature of that planet's surface. Madmen claim that there are at least a few spawn on Earth, but that is a horror few wish to know. One thing is for certain – they seem capable of travelling through the void of their own volition, much in the same way as night-gaunts.

Spawn

Size:	20' tall, 2 tons
Habitat:	Nearly Any
Characteristics:	
Strength	18 (+5 DM)
Dexterity	9 (+1 DM)
Endurance	15 (+4 DM)
Intelligence	12 (+2 DM)
Instinct	8
Pack	2 (-2 DM)
Skills:	Athletics (endurance) 2, Athletics (flying) 3, Deception 2, Melee (natural weapons) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Weapons:	Tentacle Lash* (3d6+5) Tentacle Whip (2d6+5)
Armor:	Alien Hide (8)
Horror Factor:	-2 DM
Number Encountered:	1d3
Special Abilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptable – capable of surviving in both terrestrial and alien saltwater ecosystems. • Climber (x1) – can cling to sheer surfaces. • Echolocation • *Entangling Attack • Flyer (x2) • Infrared Senses • Skilled – assign another 40-60 points in skills for individual spawn, in addition to the basic skills listed here. • Sorcerer • Telepathic • Tool-Users – they have technology of their own, as well as using that of humans. • Truly Amphibious • Void-Dweller

Terofex

Long have you read about dragons, but you never thought you'd ever see one for real. They are myths, or so you keep telling yourself as you stare down the hinged jaw of that myth given form. Its serpentine body is nearly fifteen meters long and nearly as thick as a man is tall. Its broad, pyramidal head is dominated by three jaws lined with dagger-like teeth. As some scared soul strays too near the beast, it suddenly unfurls a wing-like membrane that was hidden within an armored spine along its back. The wing envelopes him and a thick vile substance spills fills the membrane, melting armor and skin alike as he screams in agony from within the cocoon. As the screams die, the beast fiercely roars as it leaps off a nearby cliff and glides away on the wind.

Some say the terofex is what gave rise to the legend of dragons. These monstrous beasts have lain dormant for millennia, only rising on occasion to

feed before vanishing into the dark. Terofex are rage incarnate. They live to kill and they prefer to kill as much as they can in as short a period as they can, gorging themselves on flesh and eliminating anything in their environment they see as a threat. Despite their size, they are incredibly fast and agile – a feature that allows them to close in on a victim before said victim can react. When attacking a victim, it likes to encircle and constrict them with its body. If amongst multiple targets it can extend a membrane of skin out from its body and use it to enwrap several foes at once. Once it has done so, a toxic acid is pumped into the cocoon dissolving several targets simultaneously. Judging from the screams of victims, the process is excruciatingly painful. These membranes have often been mistaken for wings, another reason some believe they are the forebear to the draconic legends that can be found in almost every culture.

Terofex

Size:	45' - 55' long 2 tons
Habitat:	Forest or Mountainous Regions, mostly Earth
Characteristics:	
Strength	15 (+3 DM)
Dexterity	8
Endurance	14 (+2 DM)
Intelligence	4 (-1 DM)
Instinct	8
Pack	0 (-3 DM)
Skills:	Athletics (co-ordination, flying) 3, Melee (natural weapons) 2
Weapons:	Bite (3d6+3), Constrict (2d6+3), Toxic Acid (2d6)*
Armor:	Scales (3)
Horror Factor:	-2 DM
Number Encountered:	1
Special Abilities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cocoon – attacks up to 3 targets, no more than 5 m/5.5 y apart. Once cocooned, victims suffer Toxic Acid damage each turn. Victims may make unarmed melee attacks (half damage) against the Terofex, or try to escape with a Strength 8+ check, with a -1 DM. • Constrictor • Glider 	



LEVEL 23

This was a big deal for Francesca. It wasn't like she hadn't been to the Eye before – nearly all Wardens had at one time or another. However, today she was getting to go to the infamous Level 23. This was the kind of place that was the topic of many rumors among the agency, kind of like their very own version of Earth's Area 51. Most people thought Area 51 was where the old United States of America kept aliens and alien artifacts. Similarly, most agents thought Level 23 was where monsters were kept.

Such privilege was not without its price. The last several weeks seemed like a terrible nightmare to Francesca. Her memories even seemed smeared in an effort to protect her from the truth. The Kuiper Belt, dead friends, floating in space, the... thing. Or was it several things? These were many of the shadows that stalked her subconscious now. Under different circumstances, she would just bury the memories and move on. Unfortunately, being a Warden meant dealing with just this sort of madness.

The waiting room outside Major Contee's office was about as nice as they get on space stations. It had wood paneling, several padded chairs, a water dispenser, and the Major's assistant seated behind a wood desk that matched the walls. This wouldn't be much planet-side, but up here was another story. The Major's assistant was a rather severe-looking girl, most likely eastern European, who had greeted Francesca with a kind of cold formality.

Finally, the comm on her desk beeped and, without looking up, she said, "The Major will see you now."

Francesca rose and straightened her uniform, but before she could take a step, Major Contee opened the door and stepped out. He was an impressive figure, a tall man of African descent who would best be described as stately. The Major had the kind of aura that spoke to one day running for elected office. He made Francesca want to salute, but the Wardens weren't that kind of organization. Instead, he held out his hand and said, "Lieutenant Ortiz, thank you for coming."

Francesca shook his hand and smiled deferentially.

Major Contee gracefully moved through the cramped office, towards the door. "Walk with me," he said, as he passed Francesca.

The senior officer walked out into the hallway. "Lt. Ortiz, what we have to discuss is sensitive. I'm taking you somewhere that is currently beyond your security clearance, so the meat of our conversation is best saved for when we arrive. I know you're accustomed to dealing with sensitive information, so I know this won't be a problem."

"Of course, sir."

They made their way around a corner, heading for a part of the Eye that was unfamiliar to Francesca – not that a good chunk of the station wasn't in that same category.

"While we're walking, why don't you tell me about your most recent mission? I read the reports, but the reports never really do such things justice."

Francesca cleared her throat. "I'm still sorting through it in my head. To be honest, I'm not sure I want to remember."

They approached an unmarked security checkpoint, the guards armored and packing submachine guns. The Major paused for a quick retinal scan and signed in. The guards nodded and they were through. Unsurprisingly, this hallway was much less crowded.

The Major continued to lead the way. "That's only natural. From what I gather, you lost some good friends out there."

That was most certainly true, but the details were still a little fuzzy. Tyrone's suit got a tear in it and the vacuum claimed him. All Francesca could remember about Yvonne was her screaming.

"What I remember is this," continued Francesca. "The Lighthouse had recorded some strange activi-



ties out in the Kuiper Belt during routine patrol. Me and my team were on a six month tour out there on the edge. It was our turn on the duty roster, so out we went to investigate."

They approached an elevator, which automatically opened for them. The Major scanned his retina again and entered a code. The door shut and they descended.

"Not to interrupt, but what is it like out there? I've never had to go further than the Umbrella."

"It feels like the end of the universe. Like there can't possibly be anything out further." Francesca paused. "It makes you feel small, like the human race is totally insignificant."

Major Contee shifted a little. "It might be. But please continue."

"We were quite a ways out there when we came to the asteroid. Now when I say asteroid, that doesn't really do it justice. It was almost a planet in it's own right. For some reason, it had a very thin

atmosphere. The asteroid was riddled with caves, so we began to explore. They were more like tunnels, so it made it easy for us. Then, a ways down, they started to change. They started to look more organic."

The elevator slowed and came to a stop. The door opened, and they exited. The lights flickered on in what appeared to be an antechamber, clearly an entrance to something much bigger. There was a door over which was marked simply "23."

The Major stopped at the door. "We're here, but please finish."

"There's not much more to tell. We found something down there and I barely escaped. I know my brain will sort it out, because it always does. Whatever it was, it was big, fast, and terrifying."

"Let's see if anything in here rings a bell," said the Major, as he punched in yet one more code. The door opened into a place and Francesca immediately knew that the rumors were true.

The room beyond the door was enormous, lit by the glow of tube after tube of... thing. Unspeakable monstrosities floated within them, clearly dead and suspended in preservative. It was a graveyard of the darkest things in the universe, kept on display for those morbid enough to seek them.

Though Francesca had hoped the rumors were true, the reality was not what she expected. It was much, much worse. She stood, frozen in horror at the freakshow in front of her.

The Major gently put his hand on her shoulder. The warmth of human contact helped lessen the reality some. "Most people have the same reaction when they first see it. I certainly did. Take as long as you need."

After everything she'd seen, especially recently, it took a few minutes for Francesca's mind to deal with this place. Finally, she said, "Why did you bring me here?"

"First, let me tell you what Level 23 is," replied Major Contee. "It is a place to learn. This is where we bring the things we've found so that we can study them."

With a gentle nudge, the Major guided Francesca into the room. She found herself strangely both repulsed by and attracted to the things in the tubes.

The first thing she passed was nothing she'd encountered before. It was a grotesque lizard-like thing, with a lamprey sucker mouth. She couldn't tell if it walked on two or four legs, or both. Regardless, it was clearly a predator.

As Francesca pressed further into the room, the next tube contained something that looked like a thing that had started to spit out a human woman, even though it was all part of the same body – if you could call it that. The woman wasn't fully formed, however, but enough to be eerie nonetheless.

Major Contee guided her slowly through the room, giving her the time to see what she wanted to see. While some of the creatures were new to her, there were many with which she was unfortunately familiar. Though short one of its heads, there was a karrak'in floating limply ahead, one of the many that had tried to eat her corvette after a stop in the asteroid belt. A ghast, one of the nasty hopping predators she'd fought away from a frontier colony on Mars. And there were others, each carrying its own memory.

The pair reached the far wall, having made but one pass through one row of this macabre laboratory. Francesca turned to regard the place again, this time with eyes of fascination instead of disgust.

"You still haven't told me why you brought me here."

In her reverie, Francesca failed to notice the door near them. Major Contee turned and keyed in his code yet again. "There's still more for you to see."

This new door opened and Francesca realized that the surprises today were hardly over – and that the Major had taken her into Level 23 the back way. Before her was an even larger lab, this one complete with equipment and scientists, each in a Warden uniform. However, they weren't alone here.

Lining the walls were clear fronted cages, and in them were live versions of many of the monstrosities from the other room.

"It's only so useful to study them when they're dead," said Major Contee. "Thought it's hard to bring some of them back alive."

Francesca turned to the cage closest to her and jumped back. A black, winged thing pressed its horned, featureless face against the clear front. It followed her as she moved, as if anticipating its prey. She took a deep breath and relaxed. "Night-gaunt. I hate night-gaunts."

"We managed to capture this one in Jupiter space, completely by accident. Many of these are here by accident, but that's not going to help us learn what we need to learn in time."

"In time for what?" asked Francesca.

The Major ignored her and continued on. "That's where you come in. I need people who can go out and hunt these things and the other things we haven't even seen yet. Teams that can seek them out and capture them to bring back here, instead of killing them, as is usually the case."

"Wait a minute. Why me? I'm the kill them as quickly as possible, let the researchers work with the pieces kind of agent. Most of these things give me nightmares as it is."

Major Contee guided her further into the lab. The scientists at work here didn't even stop to acknowledge them. They were apparently preparing for an experiment in a black-lit cage on the far side of the room.

"Lt. Ortiz, are you aware of your record?"

"Yes, sir," she replied. "Dedicated service for nearly six years."

The Major smiled. "That's not what I'm referring to. The incidence of you encountering hostile life-forms is higher than most of your fellow agents."

Francesca looked back over her shoulder to make sure the night-gaunt wasn't still following her movements. "I didn't know that."

"It's almost like you're attracted to places they are – or that they're attracted to you." The Major continued to guide her across the room.

"That's not a comforting thought," Francesca replied.

Major Contee smiled. "No, but it could be a useful one. You're not alone, Lt. Ortiz. There are others like you in service of the Wardens. Others who always seem to find themselves in the middle of something strange, at ground zero for cult activity, or finding the things that go bump in the dark. We've only recently begun to correlate this data. After all, it's not the sort of thing you immediately look for in your personnel."

As they approached the cage of interest, Francesca could see why the cage was black-lit. Inside were a pair of ghosts, stripped of any form of technology. From the looks of the equipment, it looked like the scientists were trying to figure out how to communicate with them. The creatures were certainly intelligent enough for that. She knew from personal experience.

"So you want me to join one of these monster hunting units and go out into the solar system and bring these things back alive?"

Major Contee stopped walking and turned to make eye contact. His presence was undeniable, especially with that move. "Yes, I do. Your last team met with an unfortunate end, and now is the time to make a move."

Several waves of emotion hit Francesca, and it was difficult to determine one from another. However, one emotion made itself plainly known. Dread.

"Sir, I'm not sure I want to start actively hunting the things that give me nightmares."

"I don't think you have that luxury," replied the Major. "If past history is any lesson, these things will continue to find you, whether you want them to or not. Why not meet them head on?"

For some reason, despite the conflicting emotions, that made a lot of sense to Francesca. She sighed. It was going to be a hell of a job.

Running a *Chthonian Stars* game is going to be very different from running a standard *Traveller* game. This chapter presents some of the things you'll need to know as a *Chthonian Stars* referee.

Since neither *Traveller* nor *Chthonian Stars* are beginner games, we're going to assume that you already understand what goes into creating and running adventures. This chapter will instead focus on tools that are of specific use to the *Chthonian Stars* referee.

Classic Story Structure

Most of us should be familiar with the classic three act structure, handed down from the Greeks. It can be a useful tool when creating your own roleplaying adventures for *Chthonian Stars*, helping you pace your story and provide the necessary elements to make it feel fulfilling.

While classic story structure may apply to a single adventure, it can also apply to an overall multi-adventure story arc. Try using it on both levels to see how it works for you.

Let's take a look at the elements of classic story structure, followed by the overall guiding three acts.

Elements

- *Plot* – A series of events caused by protagonists going up against opposing forces; the core of the story.
- *Subplot* – A secondary story, occurring underneath the main plot, which usually involves the plight of individual characters; often more personal stories.
- *Twist* – An unexpected development in the story.
- *Climax* – The most important or exciting point in the story.
- *Denouement* – The final part of the story, in which loose ends are wrapped up. Everything is now clear and few questions or surprises remain.

Act One

This should be about the first quarter of your overall story. Before this act is complete, you should have introduced the setting, the main player characters and non-player characters, and the plot of the

story, as well as have introduced any subplots. You should also have introduced the antagonist's main goal, or at least evidence of it. At the end of this act there is a twist, which alters what the characters are used to and forces them into action.

Act Two

This should be about the middle half of your overall story. Characters explore the setting and complications of the story during the first half of the act, uncovering piece after piece of the puzzle and overcome one hurdle after another. About half of the way through Act Two, both the plot and any subplots should have their own twists. The second half of the act, in general, gets more dangerous and more dark. The end, in particular, should have its own dark twist that makes things not look good for the characters.

Act Three

This should be about the last quarter of your overall story. Things should get more and more challenging for the characters, to the point where they should wonder whether or not they can succeed or survive their experience. This all should lead up to the climax, which is the thing to which the whole story has been building and which will ultimately conclude the tale. After the climax, stories typically move into the denouement, which answers most of the questions raised by the story and ties up loose ends. The denouement should be short, sweet, and to the point.

However, since you may be playing a game that will last more than one adventure, you may want to leave some things open. That way, the characters' next course of action is clear.

Themes

Since *Chthonian Stars* is a game that is heavily influenced by the kind of horror pioneered by Lovecraft, there are some of the themes common to this genre that will aid you in creating an atmosphere that feels right. These themes are like spices – don't use all of them at once. You'll know best when to add a dash of this or a pinch of that. The key is to always be using at least one of them, so that the players are never quite at ease.

Creeping Dread

In *Chthonian Stars*, there should always be a feeling that something isn't quite right, and it only gets worse the more a character discovers what is really going on. The truth is rarely a comfort and denial is the only true shelter. Dread is always in the background, like white noise, waiting to grow into a cacophony.

You can simulate this by always upping the ante. Each piece of the mystery the characters uncover reveals another darker, more disturbing layer – like peeling back the layers of an onion of pure madness. Just when they think things couldn't get any worse, voila! However, be cautious and know the limits of your players so that you do not cross a line and offend them.

Fear & Insanity

What people believe to be reality is merely a cleverly fabricated story to make them feel better. The reality of the universe is usually too much for people to face. As they do, they lose themselves to the fight-or-flight instinct, and eventually lose touch with reality altogether. Characters spend a lot of their time frightened, losing friends, and oftentimes themselves, to the downward spiral of madness.

The Fear and Madness rules do a good job of simulating this. However, don't be afraid to put important non-player characters into harms way using these rules. Madness should claim those around the characters on their journey, just to remind them how lucky they are. Of course, given unfortunate circumstances, a couple of characters may follow them...

Futility

Fighting against the awakening horrors of the universe is, in the end, pointless. The things humanity now faces are simply too powerful – there is no way they can win. Characters, though they may be dedicated to just such a fight, will eventually have to face this terrible fact.

A great way to implement this theme is to create adventures in which the horrors of the unknown are so great that the only choice the characters have is to retreat. Put them up against enough fundamentally unbeatable odds and they'll get the point. However, be very careful doing this, because you don't want your players to get disheartened. Make sure they win enough that they want to continue on – just remind them of their place in the universe from time to time.

Isolation

The solar system is a big place with lots of nothing in between settlements. It can take weeks or even months for help to arrive. Characters, even if they are part of solar system-wide authorities like the UWC Wardens, are ultimately on their own. What's worse is the time that is lost in gravity couches while spaceships accelerate or decelerate. Many, many things can happen to an unmanned spaceship in the void...

Players are used to, in many settings, being able to have their characters call for help – especially if they are governmental agents. Though that help may not come for hours, the cavalry is on the way. Don't give them that luxury here. Corporate or governmental intrigue may block them, or they may be so far out, deep in space, or trapped in a terrible storm so that help will only get there in time to find their corpses.

Tragedy

Things do not often turn out well for those who face cosmic horror. Many things are sacrificed, including minds and lives. Some such sacrifices are difficult choices to make. Characters are the kinds of people who, over time, will have a litany of tragedy that they have faced. Such things become their battle-scars and can bring an unbearable heaviness to life.



Your players' characters will eventually bond with key non-player characters. Don't be afraid to kill such NPCs in disturbing ways or drive them utterly mad. It's best if you give the player characters a fighting chance, but you do not have to do the same for those around them.

The Unknown

What humanity collectively thinks it knows about the universe is a very small slice. They have chosen not to look further for fear of what they might find. Now, the unknown has come looking for them. Much of what people face is a complete enigma. The powers-that-be who have some inkling of what is going on have only the barest grain of truth.

This is an easy thing to bring to your game. Just make sure to always present things that keep your players guessing. If they've been good and haven't read the monsters or secrets in this book, this will be easy. If they have, then make crazy stuff up. Create your own disturbing creatures, make up your own cults, and generally just throw them into supernatural situations that put them so far off balance they have to wing it.

Environmental Hazard: Radiation Poisoning

There are many places in the solar system where exposure to high levels of radiation is a concern. Most of the Galilean Moons are an excellent example. However, people travel in radiation shielded vehicles or in radiation shielded suits that protect them, so it is unlikely you'll have to deal with the effects of radiation. On the other hand, it could happen, so here are some guidelines for you to use.

Radiation is measured in rems. Mild doses of radiation, those under 100 rems, won't cause any noticeable damage. Medium doses, in the 100 to 200 rem range, can make a person sick. High doses are in the 200 to 1000 rem range, and cause serious illness. The higher the rem, the more likely it will be fatal. Cancer is likely in most of the range. Lethal doses are those higher than 1000 rem. There are other factors to keep in mind, of course. Length of exposure is an important factor, but radiation does its work quickly. Layers of protection are also a factor, as is the source of said radiation.

In rules terms, treat medium doses of radiation as anthrax, according to the Disease rules on p. 73 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Feel free to make higher

doses as nasty as you want. You may want to avoid giving characters cancer, since it can be an ugly and prolonged disease – you may wish to rule that significantly high doses of radiation are simply lethal, even with a lingering death. Since such events are going to be rare at best, this may work best for everyone.

Cosmic Power

Hidden inside forbidden tomes is lost knowledge that can put the metaphysical power of the cosmos in a person's hands. This power is most often referred to as magic and its practitioners as sorcerers or magicians. Because magic requires entreating powerful entities, many which could easily be considered dark, there are few sane people who pursue its practice – those that do usually slip down the slope of madness quite quickly.

Magic is not something that should be in the hands of your players. It is primarily the domain of cultists and other madmen. Because of that, we have not provided detailed rules for magic in *Chthonian Stars*. However, we will provide you with some guidelines to implement it in your game, primarily as something the characters must face in their adversaries.

- Magic does whatever you need it to. It is a referee tool to add flavor and complications to your stories. If you need something cool and supernatural to happen, then magic can do it.
- Magic comes in many varieties, but they are all simply flavor for the practitioner. Some practice witchcraft, others hermetic magic, others voodoo, others cult magic – it is all fundamentally the same.
- Foreign, dead, or even alien languages are often a part of magic. Many use Latin, some use Arabic, while others may use R'lyehian, which is the language of Cthulhu and the Deep Ones.
- Magic is ritual-based, for the most part. The most powerful magics require groups of sorcerers or cultists to gather together in a specially-prepared space and chant for at least hours, if not days. Magic that can be done by a single sorcerer for immediate effect does exist, but it is not as powerful.
- Magic can be imbued into items, creating enchanted objects. Essentially, the object can bring its magic to bear for a user instantly and at will. The most powerful enchanted objects have been around awhile and are called artifacts.
- The practice of magic is dangerous. Sorcerers are opening themselves up to powerful entities

and the power of the cosmos. Very bad things can happen if things aren't done properly or are interrupted. There can also be alarming side-effects, some even physical.

Either you or your players may insist that they have access to magic, since it exists in the setting. In these cases, make up some kind of ritual for them to learn and give them the ability to make it happen. Then, make their lives more terrifying and dangerous because of it. Magical power is not something with which normal, well-adjusted people should play.

Unknowable Gods

The Old Ones are incredibly powerful. They are, from our perspective, simply unknowable. They exist in ways we cannot comprehend and they wield the cosmic forces of the universe. They are, for lack of a better term, gods.

Your characters should not encounter the Old Ones as a matter of course. They cannot encounter them physically, as they have not yet fully awoken or manifested yet. However, their power extends far further than that. Characters will regularly encounter minions of the Old Ones, as well as their influence over other things. The characters may have nightmares caused by the Old Ones or experience shifting weather patterns or the like. The point is to show them how much power the Old Ones wield while they're still not a part of this solar system, so that they are very worried about the ludicrous amount of power they'll wield when they return.

We have not and will not provide statistics for the Old Ones. They are gods and should be able to wipe out the characters – even armies – with a thought, if they so chose. The Old Ones are the big, scary ultra-bad guys that the characters should be trying to stop from showing up, instead of trying to figure out whether or not a nuke would destroy Cthulhu.

If you do have an itch to use the Old Ones, you may have one of their avatars appear. An avatar is a part of the Old One's consciousness and power that has been given physical form. However, there are few avatars in the solar system and only a couple of the Old Ones have avatars that are even remotely human – most are horrifying.

Forbidden Knowledge

It is likely that your characters are going to want to learn more about the secret world they encounter.

Such occult knowledge is not easy to find. Most of it has been lost to the world, and what little remains is typically hidden away in secret places, or hoarded by reclusive madmen with no desire to share. However, that does not mean the characters can't find it – especially if they work for an agency like the Wardens.

Most such knowledge is kept in old books. Since they are the province of madmen and lost places, few have been brought into the digital age. The Wardens, however, have digitized a few, so that their agents can have access in the field.

There are many such tomes that have been an important part of Lovecraftian lore throughout the years, such as the ever-popular *Necronomicon*, which we are not going to detail in this book. If you'd like to use such books, simply make up a foreboding name, detail what kind of knowledge it covers, provide a positive Dice Modifier for Occult tests regarding that knowledge, and determine whether or not the knowledge within is so mind-blowing that it calls for some sort of Madness Check. That way, you can introduce your own new legendary tomes to the experience.

Awarding Experience

Experience is what allows players to improve their characters, over time. However, many referees think that Experience is a reward for character achievement. The philosophy of *Chthonian Stars* is different – experience is a reward for players playing the game. After all, there is much that goes into creating and breathing life into a compelling character and negotiating all of the life stuff that goes into committing to a regular play group. Please remember that when rewarding your players.

Some game systems suggest docking a disruptive player's Experience for their behavior. The philosophy of *Chthonian Stars* is different. Please don't dock their Experience – confront them in an honest fashion. It's just good sportsmanship.

The traditional rules for character development, as presented on p. 59 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, dictate that a character only improves through practical application and time. The alternative rules presented in *Chthonian Stars* allow characters to advance through more traditional Experience point-based systems. It is up to you whether you would like to award a flat amount of Experience per play session, or if you would like to award it based on how the

characters performed during the session. We recommend the former, but choose whichever you like.

Flat Method

Using the flat method, you award players a flat amount of Experience each time they play. This rewards the player for playing, instead of how “well” he played, as well as providing a way for players to plan their character’s advancement in predictable ways. We recommend that you award 10 Experience each time you complete a session.

Dynamic Method

Using this method, you award a fluctuating amount of Experience based on the results of the play session. There are three areas in which you award Experience, detailed as follows. Characters should receive between 7 and 10 Experience on average, with the potential for more.

Portrayal Awards

Portrayal Awards are determined by how well a player took on the role of his character. Did the player just play himself or did the character really show through? Please be forgiving of players who’ve suffered through an awful day at work or are tired through no fault of their own.

- *Average Portrayal* – the player basically portrayed the character. 2 Experience.
- *Good Portrayal* – the player did an excellent job of portraying the character. 4 Experience.

Adventure Awards

Adventure Awards are determined by how well and how thoroughly the characters completed their goals, or came closer to completing their goals. Not all goals can be completed in a play session, but any forward motion is always rewarded.

- *Failure* – the characters failed in their goals. 2 Experience.
- *Completion* – the characters basically fulfilled their goals. 3 Experience.
- *Success* – the characters did better than just meeting their goals. 4 Experience.
- *Amazing* – the characters did an amazing job and blew all of your material out of the water. 5 Experience.

Chance Awards

Chance Awards are determined by whether the odds were for or against the characters succeeding.

- *Good* – the chances of the characters succeeding were good. No Experience.
- *Challenging* – the chances were challenging to the characters. 1 Experience.
- *Bad* – the chances were not in favor of the characters’ success. 2 Experience.
- *Ugly* – the chances in favor of the characters were nearly non-existent. 4 Experience.

Bonuses

Regardless of the method you use, if you award Experience to your players, you can award bonuses for completing sections of the story. Provide these awards after the session that completes the plot.

- *Completing a personal subplot*: 5 Experience.
- *Completing a minor plot*: 5 Experience each.
- *Completing a major plot*: 10 Experience each.
- *Completing an epic storyline*: 20 Experience each.

Behind the Curtain

People talk, and that has not changed in the era of *Chthonian Stars*. Here are a series of rumors for each of the planets of the solar system. Some of them may be true, some of them may not be, but they provide you with fertile ground to throw information at players – or from which to draw flavor or



adventures for your game. At the very least, you can simply keep them all as rumors, things the characters hear in spaceports.

Mercury

1. The recent collapsed mine that killed six miners was not an accident. It was purposely collapsed by TRIAD to contain something that had been found in those deep tunnels. The families of those killed, as well as any survivors, have been given handsome payoffs to keep quiet about the entire incident.
2. TRIAD has managed to pierce one of the deep pockets that have for so long vexed attempts to discover what they are. What was found was not some previously unknown mineral or element, but was actually the remnants of an ancient and decidedly non-human city. Now they are doing all they can to keep the Wardens from sticking their nose in the discovery.
3. The Warden station in orbit over Mercury is there to spy on what the Chinese and TRIAD are doing on the planet. The UWC does not trust the Chinese to keep them informed of any unusual discoveries and want to be certain that any that are made are shared with the appropriate agencies.

Venus

1. Rare Earths Inc. has stumbled into a series of tunnels in their mining operations that some believe are not natural in origin. Efforts to learn more about the tunnels have been mired in mysterious disappearances, though Rare Earths denies these rumors are true.
2. 4G Enterprises is making noises of a hostile take-over of Geo Excavations, in order to increase their control over Venus. The other mining concerns are working to protect Geo Excavations from the take-over, for fear they will be next. The VAB remains quiet and neutral.
3. Adam McAlister of the McAlister Mining Concern has had a mental breakdown. He has not been seen in public in almost six months and now McAlister Mining Concern is being run by Amanda Benard. The Concern's Board of Directors has denied these rumors and claims that Amanda is running things only while Adam is back at Earth on sabbatical.

Earth

1. Strangely, entire mountain villages have left their homes and migrated out to the rest of the world. Even stranger, they have migrated to major cities, not simply other rural communities – many thousands of miles from their homes.
2. The Unified World Council has sponsored Warden-supervised digs in Australia and South America. Who knows what they're looking for – or what they've already found? Some say ancient cities or artifacts, while others say they are creating some sort of planetary defense.
3. Many governments are concerned over the new movements that have been popping up among young people. It is suspected by those in the know that the cults of the solar system are aggressively recruiting from urban youths, disguising their true identities under more appealing, but related, dogma.

Mars

1. The medical breakthrough for Martian physical problems with gravity is causing some interesting and unusual side effects. Some people are even changing.
2. The original architect for Founders Square was a long time follower of the dark gods. His design for the statues commemorating the original settlers and their placement within the square are a potential gateway.
3. There is a corporate leader whose business is failing to the point he will do anything to get out from under the debt – even if it means killing everyone in Mariner Valley when the main atmospheric converter plant blows up. He'll be able to collect the insurance, and maybe those voices will stop talking to him when no one is in the room with him.

Jupiter

1. The drug trade on Ganymede has reached epic proportions. It is said that organized drug cartels have carved out their own empire there, and are buying up the casinos and hotels for themselves. It is becoming more analogous to the Las Vegas of the Outer Planets each day.
2. Miners swear they've seen things floating in the water cloud layer of Jupiter – living things.

3. There have been a rash of brutal murders on Callisto. There seems to be no rhyme or reason to the deaths, but they are clearly by human hands. The residents of Callisto are paranoid now, and do not take kindly to outsiders.

Saturn

1. An eco-terrorist group has been arming itself for what it believes to be the eventual conflict over the disposition of the oceans on the moon. Some say that the group is actually a cult that believes that the oceans are the home of beings of far more galactic significance than any human.
2. The strange behavior of the core of Saturn is linked to the odd behavior of Pluto. Something, perhaps a cult or a previously unknown intelligence, is engineering an eventual collision of the two bodies with the expectations that it will ignite the gas giant, turning the planet into a new sun.
3. The Republic of Saturn is covertly building an offensive military, diverting some of the construction capabilities of Rhea. Conspiracy theorists claim they have their eyes on taking control of Neptune, in order to wrest control of the lucrative mining operations.

Uranus

1. Wesley, and all his family, before have been deeply involved with the dark arts. While he uses conventional means like bribery and sabotage to take down his competitors, he has been known to use his knowledge of those things beyond our sight to get his way. In fact he destroyed the military mining station using dark powers. His outward calm and cool only exists because he is able to transfer his psychosis to another innocent victim, thus keeping him what he considers sane.
2. There is something on Puck after all. In the exact spot where the Wardens are building their base, buried deep within the moon, a creature sleeps. It is Wesley's plan to wake this creature up, but not before it has some fun with the Wardens there.
3. AQX's take over of Oberon, while costing them an enormous sum in fees to Wesley, was done for the sole purpose of spying on Wesley. The mining operation is merely a front for the espionage

nage missions planned by AQX senior management meant, to bring the Wesley family down.

Neptune

1. The Rhodes family, fabulously wealthy from their many years of strangle-hold on the diamond trade, maintains their own personal army and navy. This militia is outside the purview of the European Federation. No one messes with the trade.
2. Spies, thieves, and pirates are never reported in Neptune space. It is said that the Rhodes Company kills anyone who they even think falls into one of these categories, and no one from the European Union asks any questions.
3. The European Union has taken a keen interest in the strange things that have been reported on the surface of Neptune. However, the Rhodes Company isn't taking kindly to a broader EU presence on the planet. Tensions abound.

Pluto

1. Long-range observations have seen objects leaving the surface of Pluto, but the powers-that-be are trying to keep this information from the public for fear it may cause panic.
2. The moons of Hydra and Nix no longer orbit Pluto. Experts have been unable to locate them for almost a month. Some believe the destabilization of Pluto's orbit caused them to crash into the small solar body.
3. A cult has sprung up in places across the solar system that worship Pluto as a deity and believe its recent peculiar behavior is a precursor to its return to rule mankind. The Wardens are said to have taken a keen interest in this cult.

The Kuiper Belt

1. Disappearances of miners and independent operators are more pronounced than has been officially recognized. While pirates are officially blamed, many who live in the region believe that the causes are not altogether human.
2. Scientists have detected some peculiar readings inside the Fog Field. Space-time itself seems to have become distorted in small pockets within. There are no official explanations as to what would cause such a phenomena.

3. Half the members of the independent group of miners and prospectors known as the Ruffians have vanished while working an especially large asteroid just outside the Fog Field.

Plot Hooks

While you'll find three ready-to-run adventures on p. 198, this section is designed to give you some plot hooks. They are intended to spark your imagination, so that you can take each idea and flesh it out in a way that works for you and your players.

Blank Moments

Location: Spaceship

There are oftentimes days where a crew is in A/D stasis where the only thing paying attention to the ship is the computer. Sometimes, things decide to crawl onto a ship during these blank moments.

This plot hook can be attached to virtually any kind of game, for most games will involve characters traveling from one world to another. However, during this journey while everyone lays sleeping in their grav couches, karrak'in wind up finding the ship and climbing aboard.

The size of the ship should determine how long you want it to take before the characters notice they've picked up unwanted passengers. If the ship is large, the karrak'in could be almost anywhere. If the ship is small, you might want to begin their predations outside. Regardless, make sure that the creatures make their way inside, so they can become a real threat.

A Challenging Vacation

Location: Jupiter (Io)

The Jovian moon Io, while bathed in dangerous radiation, is a popular vacation spot for the wealthy thrill-seeker. Climbing gigantic mountains in very low gravity provides an experience not found in the rest of the solar system. There are companies who maintain small shielded bunkers/resorts designed to cater to those wishing to partake of Io's unique pleasures, for a healthy price.

However, the Wardens received a call yesterday from one of these companies, named Ionian Excursions. They have received a distress call from one of their guides, a veteran named Tayla Ruuk, and now have lost all communication. Normally, this would be a job for the local authorities, but it is the nature of the distress call that had the local authorities esca-

late it to the Wardens. Tayla is clearly panicked and describes people in and amongst the mountains that have been picking the climbers off one by one. However, she describes one of them as having a face that isn't human, but rather bestial and toothy.

The reality is that a clutch of ghosts have found their way to Io. This was a recon mission for them, and they simply ended up on the wrong transport. They have stolen several of the radiation-shielded suits and have taken over the resort. They are now hunting the remaining survivors in the resort, as well as those out climbing. Once they have made sure their supplies are covered and all is secured, they will set about stealing a ship to get off of the moon.

The Wardens should arrive right about the time the ghosts are still hunting, but have had a chance to get themselves in good defensible shape. The ghosts will not be afraid to go outside, where they can use the terrain to their advantage.

Claim Jumping

Location: Kuiper Belt

Out on the great frontier of the solar system, just like the former great frontier of the American west, it is not uncommon for the less scrupulous to attempt to steal a mining claim from those who are legally entitled to it. However, with the way things are changing, there are those claims the jumpers will have regretted trying to steal.

The Wardens, sometime when they are in the outer part of the solar system, are notified of a group of prospectors whose friends and families are worried. No one has come home. This doesn't necessarily speak to the influence of the Chthonian Star – even the smallest accidents out in the Kuiper Belt can be lethal. However, there aren't a whole lot of rescue vehicles out this way and the Wardens may be the only authorities around to investigate.

Naturally, things aren't as they seem. The first group of prospectors have unearthed something on a dwarf planet quite an uncomfortable ways into the Belt. They were ambushed by the claim jumpers, and only one of the original prospectors remains alive and crazed in the brig of a ship. He will tell a tale of how they found something under the ground, like a buried temple or something, which contained some kind of technology that filled their heads with horrible things. Worse yet, they seemed to have unleashed some kind of monster.

It's clear that the influence of the Chthonian Star is bringing things back to life in this universe, and that this resurrection of sorts is going to be very bad for the human race.

In this chapter, we'll peel back the curtain to let you in on what's going on. If you're a player, knowing this information may compromise your enjoyment of your game. You may want to skip this chapter entirely.

However, it's likely that you're reading on anyway. If you intend to only ever play Chthonian Stars, please do your fellow players and Referee the courtesy of pretending you don't know these secrets when you're playing.

The Chthonian Star

The Chthonian Star is an entirely natural phenomena. It has floated through the universe for billions of years, bringing with it new cycles to several different galaxies. It is, for lack of a better term, a mystical battery that is an essential part of many powerful creatures' life-cycles. It floats near a solar system, gradually bathing the planets in the Star's energy. As it comes closer, these energies intensify and bring a new era to the beings under its influence.

However, its multi-million year orbit throughout the universe means that things change while it is away. The creatures who are linked with it grow, some die out, some hibernate, and worlds change. New lifeforms can even develop on worlds that remain capable of supporting life. When the Chthonian Star comes round again, its energy brings planets to remember what they once were and breathes new life into dormant or thought lost creatures. However, things are never the same and both planets and lifeforms change and evolve from cycle to cycle.

Most people regard the influence of the Chthonian Star as unnatural, that the unspeakable creatures it is awakening are not part of the natural order. What a delightfully humanocentric viewpoint. The truth is that the world the Chthonian Star is bringing back is the natural order. Human beings are the vermin that cropped up while the true masters of our solar sys-

tem were gone – it is we who are unnatural. When the Star arrives, the natural order will be restored.

In simplest physical terms, the Chthonian Star is akin to dark matter with rather unique properties. It can't be observed in the normal electromagnetic spectrum, but can be observed by its gravitational influence on certain bodies and the rather unique energy field it emits. It is energy that cannot be quantified by science, and it is powerful indeed. This field extends light-years around the Chthonian Star in all directions, invisible to the naked eye. It is powered by meta-physics incomprehensible to human beings, a part of the order that is far, far above them. It is safe to say that such a thing taps into dimensions beyond our own, bringing power to bear that is not normally a part of the paradigm that is this reality.

It is also moving at unreal speeds, crossing light-years seemingly at speeds greater than the speed of light. Its speed also seems to vary, which is even more odd. However, regardless of such trivial explorations, the fact remains that the full-force of the Star will be brought to bear on this solar system within the next few years. The changes are speeding up. The human race is going to have to work things out very quickly if they hope to survive.

It is true. The Chthonian Star is the harbinger of extinction for humanity.

The True History of the Solar System

The true origin of the universe, much less the solar system, is a mystery that has been the topic of much debate by sentient creatures through the ages. Despite the near god-like power of some beings, no one has truly found the real answer. There are several things, however, that can be banked on. First, the universe is very, very old, much older than humans believe. Second, there is no extra-dimensional omnipotent god hiding behind the scenes protecting anyone.

This solar system has already gone through several epochs under the influence of the Chthonian Star. Information only exists about the last epoch, and even then it cannot be tied to dates.

The Old Ones are the true masters of this solar system. Tales say that they came from the stars and found these developing worlds to take as their own, choosing them because of their proximity to the path of the Chthonian Star. Bringing their followers with them, they began to use their awesome power to influence the planets they most adored. They became the undisputed masters of this corner of the universe, reigning as such for millennia. The Old Ones, however, were not the kind of beings that lived in perfect harmony, nor were the creatures that they had brought with them or that evolved under them. Fighting, even on a large scale, was not uncommon.

This is not to say that there weren't independent races that lived here as well. The power of the Old Ones wasn't absolute, and some races even made deals with them. Four of the most notable independent races are the Elder Ones, the Great Race, the Mi-Go, and the Polypous Race.

The Great Race and the Polypous Race were always at odds with one another. Both were drawn to the blue-green, oxygen-rich world now known as Earth. The Great Race were an unusual species, capable of migrating their consciousness across space and time to functionally possess the bodies of beings wherever and whenever they chose to exist. The Polypous Race were alien entities that could float and fly without wings, even across the vacuum of space, who commanded great personal powers of their own. Though no one is exactly sure what happened to incite the violence, it is said that the enmity between the two races started simply enough – the Polypous Race began to prey on the creatures the Great Race had chosen to inhabit. Wars were fought and it was the Great Race that emerged as victor, sealing their enemies deep underground. It is said that the Great Race soon after left, knowing their enemies would once again rise.

In a similar fashion, the Elder Race and the Mi-Go found themselves embroiled in conflict. The Elder Race is said to have opposed the influence of the Old Ones, fighting for these worlds to evolve on their own. They were unusual creatures from distant parts of space, who believed that they could enjoy these developing worlds, living in harmony with the natural order. However, they were too late – the natural order was now that of the Old Ones. The Mi-Go were creatures also from distant parts of space, who had come to revel in what the Old Ones were do-



ing. They had found a place under the rule of these malevolent deities, a place that included colonies on different planets. Unfortunately for both, such colonies put them into direct competition with the Elder Race and the Mi-Go promptly went on the defensive. In the end, the Elder Race retreated deep under the oceans of Earth, finally to leave this solar system all together. Their enemies were simply too strong.

However, through all this, the Old Ones and their servants built vast civilizations spanning the worlds of this solar system that lasted for more years than can be remembered. Their servants evolved and flourished, creating many of the unspeakable races that are awakening now.

Very little of this information has survived, and what little has lives in the domain of the fringe and the occult. There are many conflicting legends as to what happened to the Old Ones. Some say that they were exiled. Some say that they were beaten by a superior foe. Some say they just went to sleep – which is more or less the truth. The energy of the Chthonian Star faded from this part of the universe, the Old Ones and their servants drifted off into slumber, most often no longer entirely projecting into this dimension, waiting the scant few million years it would take for the Star to once again circle around.

Human beings have hidden from this information at every step along the way, with a few notable exceptions. People don't like bad news, especially when it comes to news like this, so organizations have always existed to deny the truth. Religions are the most obvious culprit, making up fancy stories of benevolent gods that only demand half-hearted worship and obedience to certain basic rules. Such religions have been very powerful throughout the course of human history, so powerful that they could forcibly keep the truth hidden while keeping humanity quiet and acquiescent. However, things began to change after the Renaissance as the power of organized religion began to wane. People began to once again search for lost knowledge, forming the foundation for the explosion of occult investigation that started in the early 20th century. Something, perhaps in the human subconscious, began to drive the learned to unearth that which seemed outlandish or outright mad. This further paved the way for certain government conspiracies to actively begin to fight against dark and supernatural threats as we approached the 21st century. In the end, however, such things were bad for business and politics – the new giant that would deny the existence of the inevitable.

So how do human beings fit in with the true origins of our solar system? Human beings are, simply put, an accident. If one were to have the extensive wisdom and intellect required to observe such a thing, evolution on this planet was not supposed to result in us. Mammals in general are a happy coincidence. There are several possible explanations for our existence, but it is impossible to validate any of them. The most popular is the influence of the Old One known as Shub-Niggurath. The wild energy that is thrown off by this unspeakable creature has most likely had the effect of mutating the evolution of creatures that come anywhere within its sphere of influence. Shub-Niggurath has most certainly spent a great deal of time making its home on Earth, so it seems likely that somewhere along the way, it changed the normal evolution of things. Such wild mutation may have ultimately resulted in mammals, then hominids, then humans.

However, Shub-Niggurath is not the only candidate. Legends also place the Elder Ones as a possible source. These creatures are often seen by occultists as benevolent, beings who opposed the Old Ones and the machinations of their servants. There are cryptic musings that point to the human race being a direct cause of their experiments on the life on the

Earth during the time they inhabited it. If so, we are the product of their science.

Darker legends speak of the human race being designed by the Great Race, as perfect vessels for their consciousness sometime down the road. A race that travels through time and space, possessing the bodies of whatever suitable lifeforms are present, the Great Race would have a vested interest in creating creatures that would truly suit their purposes when they came back around to this galaxy. However, given the current situation, even if this were the case, it would be unlikely they would be coming back around this way now.

In any case, human beings are all alone in a godless universe, ill-equipped to deal with the dangers ahead. We can only hope that the Unified World Council and the Wardens can make up for centuries, if not millennia, of deliberate ignorance.

The Old Gods

The difference between the gods of the human race and the old gods is this – the gods of humanity are fictional, while the old gods are beings of immense power who will one day return to claim this solar system as their own. The Old Ones are not so much gods, *per se*, but they might as well be from our perspective. They are beings of such incredible power that they exist in more than the four dimensions we perceive, and they draw power from them. While legends speak of these creatures as malevolent, such concepts are beyond them. They exist on such a level as to be incomprehensible to human beings – one might as well ask if a human being is malevolent when it destroys a bothersome ant hill.

Legends speak of two types of the old gods. The Old Ones are the powerful beings that will soon awaken, who claimed this solar system as their own billions of years ago. The Elder Ones (also known as the Other Gods) are beings that are practically embodiments of cosmic forces of the universe. They have little to do directly with the events of living things.

The Old Ones

Cthulhu

The dark deity known as Cthulhu is perhaps the most notorious of all the Old Ones. It is described as being a creature that is part alien humanoid and part octopus or squid, with giant fleshy wings – though it

is likely that this is simply the closest human interpretation of this creature. Legends say that it once ruled a great empire from the city of R'lyeh, that existed both above and below the waves.

Legends say that Cthulhu now sleeps the slumber of death inside his tomb in the city of R'lyeh, supposedly long lost beneath the waves of the ocean. At times, his power is so great that even only stirring in his sleep has actually touched the dreams of sleepers in such a way as to move them to worship or other despicable actions.

Cults have long been dedicated to the worship of this Old One, continuously throughout human history. Some of his followers, creatures known as the Deep Ones, have existed alongside human beings on Earth for the entirety of recorded history. They have perpetuated worship of this dark god, in addition to its slumbering power and the natural and unfortunate curiosity of humans.

Hastur

The Old One properly known as Hastur is most often referred to as the Unnamable, the Unnamed One, or the Unspeakable. There is something so powerful in the creature's name that it is said that he can channel his power into those who speak it – which most often destroys them or their minds. It is regarded by most sane occultists as a thing to be feared, a creature so alien that there is no Earthly way to describe it.

There are those that say the Unnamable is a creature that feeds off the energy of death, destruction, and depravity. Its minions are perhaps among what humans would consider the most evil of all. Though entreated by many who seek the power of true magic, nothing good can come by the presence of Hastur – in any capacity.

Shub-Niggurath

Though thought by some to be an eternal one, the dark god known as Shub-Niggurath only aspires to that level of power. It is a thing resplendent with the wild energies of life itself. In those cultures enlightened enough to have known this creature's name, it was most often worshipped as a nature or fertility deity. Shub-Niggurath is a powerful being whose very presence shapes the life around it.

There are those who suspect that the verdant nature of Earth is due to the influence of Shub-Niggu-

rath. After all, it really is the only planet in the solar system where life has flourished as the energy of the Chthonian Star has waned. Especially in these most perilous of time, it is Shub-Niggurath to whom the growing cults of Earth most dedicate themselves.

S'shlosuuma

While there are those who have had visions and created descriptions of the Old Ones, the being known as S'shlosuuma is one that is distinctly missing. It is said to be a creature of powerful energy, a thing that rarely deigns to touch the dust of planets. Instead, it is a creature of the void, the thing that surfs the solar winds, the master of all the things in the black. In olden days, S'shlosuuma was entreated as a thing that could reveal the wisdom of the celestial mechanics.

There are those high-ranking occultists who posit that this Old One might be somehow linked to the Chthonian Star. There are even those who believe S'shlosuuma is the Chthonian Star. Regardless, it is likely this Old One will have an important part to play as that celestial body comes ever closer.

The Eternal Ones

Azathoth

If there is a true deity that can be likened to any of the fabricated gods of man, it is Azathoth. It is the thing that made the universe and will be the thing that ultimately destroys it. Azathoth is a thing so beyond mortal understanding that very little has been written about the being. Those few who know of and worship Azathoth are few and far between, as such activity provides no other benefit than the psychological. Adulation by some of the creatures that have come into existence inside its universe is not something of which it has, or will ever, take notice.

It is a primal force of the universe that can neither be entreated nor destroyed. It simply is, has been, and always will be – from our limited perspective.

Nyarlatheptep

Its true name either lost in obscurity or deliberately hidden, Nyarlatheptep is what it was called by the Egyptians who revered it. It has been a part of human evolution from very nearly the beginning. It's almost as if Nyarlatheptep was charged with shepherding, for lack of a better term, life in the universe, for it takes an active interest in species everywhere. If there is one dark deity likely to somehow play a



part in the times ahead, it is Nyarlathotep. Its influence will bring both joy and suffering to the human race, for no one knows its ultimate goals.

It is said that Nyarlathotep's primary role is as messenger or herald of the gods of the universe. If Azathoth and Yog-Sothoth truly have wills as we understand them, Nyarlathotep is the one that brings those desires to creation. As the Chthonian Star approaches, it is most certainly the phenomenon's herald.

Yog-Sothoth

For those insane or reckless enough to play with cosmic forces, it is most often Yog-Sothoth they entreat. This being is said to dwell in the places in between, throughout all time and space. It is as if Azathoth was the thing that made the universe, but Yog-Sothoth is the intelligence that binds it together. No one knows whether or not this deity pays attention to such basic life as that of the human race, but there are those who gain power from its name.

Like Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth is a primal force of the universe. Those who entreat the aid of Yog-Sothoth are most often granted access to power beyond the confines of this dimension – but there is always a stiff price.

Children of the Old Ones

There are several important races who have given up their independence to serve the Old Ones. As races, they have seen their own empires rise and fall long before the first fish crawled out of the oceans of Earth. They are once again coming out into the universe, which can only mean one thing – their masters are somewhere on the horizon.

Deep Ones

Vicious creatures best-described as part man, part fish, and part frog, the Deep Ones are one of the few races who never entirely left this solar system. As the last epoch of the Chthonian Star faded, the Deep Ones hid under the oceans of Earth, building giant cities in the depths. There they felt content to stay, living as shadows of their former selves for millions of years. However, the appearance of human beings changed things for them. Who knows how such a thing could have occurred to them, but somewhere along the way the Deep Ones discovered that they could breed with humans. The offspring, later known as Hybrids, would begin their lives as humans, but morph into Deep Ones after maturity. This in itself is sad and bizarre, but it also has a benefit – Hybrids mature into adult Deep Ones faster than purebred Deep Ones. Mating with humans is a way to grow in population faster.

For the last several centuries, the Deep Ones have felt the pull of the approaching Chthonian Star and know their time is once again here. This time, instead of waiting for the Star's influence to help them rise and grow in numbers, they've taken it on themselves to jump-start the process. They have taken coastal towns and villages and corrupted them into dens of cultists who will breed with these inhuman creatures. The last thirty years have been the worst in recorded history, as the Deep Ones quietly plague isolated coastal communities. The Wardens have been doing all they can to conceal their activities.

Lately, the Deep Ones have changed their behavior – they have begun to send their agents far onto the land, to steal technology and materials. Certainly, Deep Ones do have their own form of alien technology, but they've never been particularly interested in the tools of humanity before. Those powerful few who know this fear what the creatures might be planning – or creating.

Hybrids have also been found as far out as Neptune, for some reason. They have also been found

infiltrating the scientific colonies on Europa. If they are that far out into the solar system, something is most definitely going on.

Ghosts

A race that in some ways bears a disturbing similarity to humanity, ghosts are often underestimated. There are legends that say these kangaroo-like creatures originally dwelled in a land beyond dreams. Such stories must be the product of hallucinations or psychic projections of the past of places like Mars, which the ghosts truly call their home.

The colonies of Mars were built over the hibernating, desiccated remains of the ghost race. Their alien physiologies have allowed them to survive throughout millennia in a death-like state. Were humans ever to have truly begun to dig down through the surface of Mars, they would have found the sleeping monsters. Unfortunately, humans mining has not been profitable, so they have simply come to complete terraforming the planet and build colonies to ease overpopulation. The Unified World Council is only starting to become aware of the threat.

It has taken quite a while for the ghosts to come back to life. The energies of the Chthonian Star in addition to underground water deposits have nourished the race back onto its collective feet. However, now it is need of something just as significant – food. Unfortunately for the colonists, they represent the best source of sustenance on the Red Planet. Ghosts have begun to quietly steal food from the colonists, as well as picking off stragglers, the infirm, and children. What's worse is that more ghosts are starting to wake up – and they have begun to breed again. The situation will only grow more dangerous for the colonists of Mars, especially as the ghosts gain a taste for humans.

Ghosts also have their own alien form of technology, some of which has survived dormant under the surface of the planet. Who knows what will happen when that strange equipment fires up again? However, ghosts have also begun to steal human technology, though this appears to be primarily out of curiosity that the creatures are putting it to use.

Unfortunately, some ghosts have stolen away onto transports to Earth. There are small colonies of ghosts whose physiologies are adapting to the atmospheric differences, but they have already begun to venture out onto this resource rich world.

Mi-Go

The Mi-Go are a race described as part-insect, part-crustacean, and part-fungus, though this really isn't adequate. They are an alien race from far out into the galaxy. An expedition came to this part of the universe a very, very long time ago and found it to be to their liking. However, the Old Ones had also laid claim to the planets of this solar system. The Mi-Go fought with the minions of the Old Ones for a time, until they realized there was no winning. The old adage "if you can't beat them, join them" became the Mi-Go's new lives, as they fell into worship of the Old Ones and became a part of life in this part of the galaxy.

Like the Deep Ones, the Mi-Go have never truly gone away. As the Old Ones began to fade away, the Mi-Go found themselves drawn to the dwarf planet at the edge of the solar system now known as Pluto. For millennia now, these creatures have lived hidden under the surface of the rock, their physiologies perfectly adapted for surviving in the cold void. They have visited Earth frequently and often, experimenting on the life that has evolved since the last epoch ended and gathering certain resources only found on the planet.

However, things have changed. The Mi-Go, like many other of the Old Ones' servants, sense the return of the Chthonian Star. There is something inside Pluto that practically hums in anticipation. The Mi-Go have begun to spread out into other parts of the outer solar system, for purposes unknown. Regardless, their intentions toward human beings are never nice.

The Independent Races

Not all of the sentient races that have inhabited this solar system served the Old Ones. There have been many who walked their own road, but left – who knows if they will return again? More importantly, will any of them find humanity as allies worth having, or at least worth leaving alone?

Elder Race

Long ago, an unusual but highly-advanced race came to this solar system. Theirs was a people that had spread out into the stars, exploring the void as far as they could reach. This part of the galaxy was an interesting place, with worlds the Elder Race was keen to enjoy. However, the Old Ones and their minions had already made this place their own. Though

the Elder Race fought both the influence of the Old Ones and the incursion of the Mi-Go, they were incapable of mounting the kind of resistance that would have gained them ground. Those left here retreated under the oceans of Earth, eventually leaving once the rest of their kind deemed this solar system a lost cause.

Legends say that the Elder Race were barrel-shaped creatures with a star-like head, capable of using their odd wings to both fly and swim. They were capable of adapting their physiologies to survive in a variety of atmospheric conditions. The last ruin of an Elder Race city was found in the arctic several hundred years ago, but it has been lost since the knowledge found there was transcribed and relegated to the occult.

There are those scholars of lost things that believe that the Elder Race may have been the true progenitors of the human race. These creatures were gifted scientists and legends say that they experimented with the life that was evolving at the time. Inadvertently, they may have made just the right evolutionary nudge to bring the human race into being.

It is unknown if the Elder Race has come back to check on this solar system throughout time. There has been no recorded evidence of them any time in human history. Perhaps the human race could send messages into space to try to contact them, but that would suppose that such creatures would somehow be, at the very least, friendly.

The Great Race

If what is known about the Great Race is true, they are a magnificent species. They have created technology that allows their consciousness to migrate across both space and time, as long as they do not cross their own timeline and exist in the same time and space simultaneously. They came to this solar system eons ago, from some other when and where, taking up residence in odd creatures that once lived in the Southern Hemisphere of Earth. They were powerful enough, or at least not important enough, to have carved out their own empire in the shadow of the Old Ones, but not so powerful that they didn't have enemies of their own.

Their wars against the Polypous Race are the stuff of legends. The great basalt cities of the Polypous Race were razed, but their numbers were just too great. Eventually, the Great Race discovered that

they could not defeat their enemies – but they could entrap them. They did just that, sealing the survivors of the Polypous Race deep underground. Unfortunately, the Great Race was wise enough to know that such incarceration would not last and they weren't interested in hanging around to find out how long. This part of the universe in this time had become more trouble than it was worth, and so the Great Race once again migrated to some other time and place.

While the Great Race has never itself returned, individual members of the species have. For whatever reason, members of the Great Race have possessed human beings for a time. Some suspect this is to learn more about us and our time, while others believe them to be passing on information. Some worry they will return to possess us, while others believe they are our saviors, passing on key information to help with our survival. Regardless, they continue to reveal themselves from time to time.

The Polypous Race

These creatures were technically the enemies of the Great Race. However, this racial enmity did not start the way others traditionally have. The Polypous Race came to this planet from far away, finding themselves drawn to this solar system the way others had. They took up residence here and discovered strange conical beings that were not only tasty, but also an excellent source of nutrition. Thus, the Polypous Race began to prey on the shells that had been inhabited by the Great Race and the hatred between the species began.

The Polypous Race is predatory and what some might call arrogant, in an alien sort of way. They created great basalt cities in their day, mighty empires that were powerful. The Polypous Race not only was capable of flight, even through vacuum, they also commanded great control of basic forces. Furthermore, their rate of reproduction was staggering. Like locusts, they ravaged whatever they came across.

It seems that the Old Ones found the Polypous Race in some way amusing, or that these malignant creatures took to worshipping the dark gods, because it was up to the Great Race to resist their blight. There really was no way their enemies could defeat the Polypous Race in their entirety, but the Great Race instead laid a clever trap. Those of the Polypous Race surviving in this solar system were locked away in subterranean prisons. However, no

prison is forever and one day it is likely that the Polypous Race will return.

Those who have studied the occult legends of the Polypous Race have always assumed that the prisons that hold them are somewhere under the Southern Hemisphere of Earth. However, we are piecing together enough information now to show that the solar system was different in those days. It seems likely that the Polypous Race was not only found on Earth, but in other planets of the inner solar system.

Valusians

Perhaps the most enigmatic of the legendary independent race are the Valusians. It is said that they were a race of serpentine people, gifted in both science and magic. It is said that they were among the more recent of life-forms, perhaps even evolved here during the days when lizards were kings of the land. Some believe that they never knew the predations of the Old Ones and died out during the last Ice Age.

However, there are other occultists who believe that the Valusians never died. They believe that creatures of such power couldn't possibly have been extinguished by something so trivial as an Ice Age. It is rumored that they simply went into hibernation until the solar system returned to a time when it was more hospitable to them. If that is the case, one hopes that the current situation might also wake them up. The big question remains – how would they be disposed to hairless mammals like humans?

While stories tell that the Valusians were a species confined to, and possibly evolved on, Earth, things were different back then. It is entirely possible that they found themselves on other planets, given their level of technology. However, the human race has found no evidence of their civilization anywhere on Earth, much less elsewhere.

Cults

Despite the fact that human beings did not evolve until long after the Old Ones had vanished from this solar system, there have always been cults of humans dedicated to their worship. Perhaps it is something in the human condition that draws people to the worship of anything that comes up in a book and sounds ancient. More likely, there is something in the powerful influence of the Old Ones that, even as they dream, they somehow exert their influence onto the universe. Here are a few of the most prominent cults that are active today.

Children of the Void

There is so little written about the Old One known as S'shlosuuma that it seems ridiculous that there would be humans enthralled by its worship. The fact that there is such a healthy and growing cult points to the influence of the Old One in the first waves of the Chthonian Star's energies. Whatever the case, the Children of the Void are most comfortable traversing the cold black vacuum of space, communing with their god the best way they know how – ritualistically sacrificing those who would blaspheme their deity's sacred void with their unbelieving presence.

The Children of the Void operate similarly to the Thuggees of old. They book passage on ships, or operate ships of their own, traveling as just another passenger. Typically, several Voidbringers, as they are also known, will travel together – though putting on the appearances of being strangers. When the time is right, they will begin to pick off crew and passengers one by one. They ritualistically murder their victims, if given the opportunity, but will happily settle for simply killing as an expression of their devotion. However, until they reveal themselves, they are most often charming and friendly.

Order of the Storm

The primary cult dedicated to the worship of Cthulhu for generations has been the Esoteric Order of Dagon. Once upon a time, the Deep Ones would infiltrate sleepy coastal fishing villages, bending the inhabitants to dark worship and sexual commune. Due to retaliation against Deep One communities during the 20th century, the Esoteric Order of Dagon was forced to disappear. The Order of the Storm, a more pure form of the Deep One religion, rose up in its place.

The Order of the Storm is a cult led by Deep Ones and their Hybrid offspring. On one hand, they continue the work of the past, corrupting small coastal towns to use as labor and breeding stock. On the other hand, they are becoming an unpredictable menace to the human world. The Order now penetrates deep onto the land, stealing human science and technology – for what reasons, no one knows. All along the way, they murder and kidnap.

The Order of the Storm is primarily confined to Earth. However, there is rumor that powerful Deep Ones can be found as far out as Neptune, or that they have tried to covertly infiltrate the scientific colonies of Europa.

Primoris Nox

An immensely powerful being, the Eternal One known as Nyarlathotep has always taken some kind of interest in the human race. It is not surprising, then, that there have been many cults dedicated to its worship throughout history. In this time, in this place, the primary cult of this unfathomable being is called Primoris Nox, a secret society spread throughout every strata of human civilization.

If one were to look at Primoris Nox in a big picture sense, the cult would appear to be schizophrenic. There are factions within the cult that are dedicated to the acquisition of occult relics and knowledge – hoarders of powerful information and objects. Other factions are dedicated to revealing the horrors now facing the solar system, sending people into a state of panic and fear. Some factions try to push science into fringe or unethical waters, past the limits of human knowledge. Just as Nyarlathotep is known as a being with a thousand faces, his cult appears to be the same. One thing is consistent – they are all in some way guided by avatars of the Eternal One itself.

One might be led to conclude that not all of Primoris Nox's activities are adversarial to the human race, but the methods of the cult are not humane. Make no mistake, for they are not friends of the human race. They promise only chaos and suffering.

Scions of Blight

There are those who have been unfortunate enough to have intoned the Unnamed during magical rituals or inopportune times of power. In those moments, their minds have been opened to the power of Hastur and the Old One has obliterated what must have once been sanity. These are the creatures who began the cult now known as the Scions of Blight.

The Scions are among what could be considered the most diabolical of all cults. They perpetuate suffering wherever they go, feeling that this is the highest form of worship to which they can aspire. They drag people down into the depths of the most dark and sick urges and addictions. They cause fear and despair in communities. They wholesale murder and slaughter when given the opportunity. Wherever the Scions go, disaster follows in their wake.

The Scions of Blight are found anywhere in the solar system, as long as there is an appreciable colony of people.

The Wild Ones

Growing out of fertility cults and those who have taken on a dark worship of nature, the cult now known simply as the Wild Ones embrace the worship of Shub-Niggurath. Their revelry is reminiscent of the bacchanals of old, where the cultists throw off any semblance of civilization to indulge their base instincts. Their ceremonies are festivals of food, alcohol, and carnal pleasures. Keeping with the rumors that Shub-Niggurath's influence is greatest in the inner planets, the Wild Ones are found predominantly on Earth, though their influence has spread to Mars, Ganymede, and Titan.

The Wild Ones have taken it on themselves to supposedly free the human race from the shackles it has placed on itself. By shackles, they mean the restrictions that have come from living like people instead of animals. They work tirelessly to infect both the media and neighborhoods with the temptation to give in, to slake one's desires. They are unrestrained killers, when need be, and have no difficulty murdering those who get in their way. With every move, the Wild Ones are working to tear down everything humanity has put in place over the millennia, to reduce us to rutting animals in worship of an Old One. They can be very clever and quite devious in their actions, unfortunately.

Secret Places

Just as the true nature of the solar system has been a mystery to us, there are also certain places that are hinted at in occult lore that are just as hidden. Here are a few of them – the Dreamlands, Leng, Kadath, and the infamous R'lyeh.

Dreamlands

Throughout time, there have been those delvers into the occult who claim that they have traveled to a land beyond dreams, an alien place filled with strange beings. They named this place the Dreamlands, supposedly a place for the gifted and, in some cases, the dispossessed. Many legends speak of it as a place of wonder.

The truth is that the Dreamlands never existed. The perceptions of the Dreamlands, sometimes shared, were simply visions induced by the remnant energies of the Chthonian Star. People have seen fragmented images of the past, of places and things in this solar system that no longer exist. The Dreamlands are nothing more than ephemeral shades of the past – or perhaps of things to yet to come.

Leng

Legends tell of a place hidden on the Earth, a plateau of such power and malignancy that it is said to be a meeting place of the Old Ones. It is called Leng and it is rumored to be somewhere in central Asia. A dark land of ancient monuments and alien creatures, Leng is mystically hidden to all save those who know for what they are looking. Even then, the journey is said to be perilous and the reward at the end is madness.

There is much debate among those in the know regarding the location of Leng. With all the technology the human race has developed, there appears to be no such place on Earth – or any other planet we inhabit either. Some believe, if Leng exists and can be found, that it contains secrets that may help the human race weather the days ahead. Of course, others believe that such a place holds new dangers and may actually hasten the end.

Kadath

There supposedly is a mystical place hidden in the cold wastes, which radiates with the power of the Old Ones. There are those who have seen it in dreams, a blasted place home only to a gigantic castle – or something that is interpreted by the human mind as a castle. Stories say that this place is a place of secrets, but one must wonder what dwells in the monolithic structure that surveys the land. Something most assuredly lives or is entombed there, but the cryptic tales are unspecific as to what.

Like Leng, there are those who wish to discover if Kadath is a real place. They seek it for the knowledge it supposedly contains, which may assist the human race as the Chthonian Star approaches. However, it is also likely that whatever the keep in Kadath contains is coming to life as the Star gets nearer, and who knows what that means. Regardless, there are few who believe that such a place exists on Earth. After all, there are only a few icy wastes on the blue-green planet, and entire planets of ice further out in the solar system.

R'lyeh

Cryptic tales place the lost city of R'lyeh in the Pacific Ocean. It is said that this great place was the home of Cthulhu and his children, a place of non-Euclidean architecture and cyclopean spires. Supposedly R'lyeh sunk beneath the waves when Cthulhu fell into his death-like slumber, one day to rise and return.



This story makes sense when run through the filter of human understanding at the time. However, the universe as we know it is not the way things have always been. Given the way the Chthonian Star is changing the solar system, it is entirely possible that R'lyeh was never on Earth.

The Awakening

The Chthonian Star is changing the planets of our solar system. Each of them is changing in its own way, though some of these changes are virtually unnoticeable now. As the Star comes ever closer, things will change more and more radically.

The hints we provide here are just the first stage of something greater. Expand them at your will. Future books in the *Chthonian Stars* line will also delve into them much more deeply.

Mercury

The planet closest to the sun is showing no outward changes as of yet. Chinese mining interests continue on as usual. However, geologists are finding strange pockets within Mercury, places where their instruments won't penetrate. Most believe this to be a sign of something great, such as deposits of rare

minerals or, better yet, an entirely new element to be mined. Were this discovery to be a new element, the profits would potentially be enormous. However, there are those that urge caution. Mercury is, for lack of a better term, an alien planet and it is dangerous to act as if we know everything about it. The forces of caution, unfortunately, are losing the battle and research efforts are in full swing. Mining towards these areas is expected to begin very soon.

Venus

There are those on Venus who claim to have had disturbing visions. This sort of thing wouldn't be particularly interesting on its own, but psychiatrists have begun to talk cross colony – regardless of corporate wishes. This small consortium has discovered that there are consistencies in these visions, even between people who have never met and live on opposite sides of the planet. Alien cities gleaming under the sulphur dioxide clouds are a common theme. For now, these patients are being treated with antipsychotic drugs, which seem to stop the visions. This is a secret that is kept by those in the know and it has not yet even been reported to the Wardens.

Earth

While all appears to be business as usual from the outside, Earth is suffering its own share of problems as well. The minions of the Old Ones have been here far longer than us, and it is only right that they would be a part of the current situation.

The Deep Ones are perhaps one of the most obvious threats to the planet. They have lived in the depths of Earth's oceans for millennia, venturing out to corrupt quiet coastal villages around the world. They have been breeding with the local populations, creating a virtual army of Hybrids across the planet. This activity has been on the rise and the Wardens are keeping tabs on settlements that are considered to be at risk. The Unified World Council is doing a good job of keeping Warden raids out of the media.

However, breeding is not the biggest Deep One threat. Hybrids and even Deep Ones have been discovered far inland, stealing advanced technology and building materials. No one is yet sure why they would be doing such a thing. It has always been assumed that the Deep Ones have their own technology, so why would they need ours?

The Mi-Go have likewise been on Earth for a long time, taking resources and experimenting on hu-

mans. There is something far more coordinated in their efforts now. There has been evidence of Mi-Go performing rituals, working with human cultists, and infiltrating secure facilities all over the world. It's almost as if they are preparing for something...

Given the proximity of Mars, the awakening ghastr population has also found its way to Earth. Many have stowed away on transports, finding their way into the wilderness to give their bodies time to adapt. Now that they can thrive in our atmosphere, they are beginning to quietly and carefully explore our world, as well as prey on the abundant human population. They have started with the wildest places, living in forests, jungles, or even in the hostile climates of deserts and tundras. However, there are rumors of Ghastr packs starting to hunt in bigger cities.

Mars

The romance with the Red Planet may be over, but that does not prevent the many inhabitants there from continuing to call it home. Mars becomes more and more habitable with each passing decade, even if the planet did not live up to its promise. Mining and exploration continue across the planet, as people search for further resources to be exploited and the romantics search for what they hope will be ruins of a lost civilization.

The truth is, there are ruins of a lost civilization, though underground in places the residents of Mars haven't gotten to yet. Ghosts are waking up from their subterranean hibernation and venturing out onto the surface to see how their world has changed. So far, the Ghosts have not made their presence widely known, stealing technology and picking off stragglers for food, but the attacks are becoming bolder. It will only be a matter of time before the Martians find Ghost ruins or enough Ghosts awaken to become a serious threat.

Those in the know whisper that they do not believe the Ghosts were the only species entombed underneath the surface of Mars...

Jupiter

Perhaps the biggest and yet quietest news is the way the Galilean Moon Callisto is changing. The planet seems to be warming up and the atmosphere is changing – both at a rate that cannot be explained as a natural shift. The change is geometric as well, which means it will soon ramp up significantly. It even appears to be developing its own ecosystem.

Though carefully covered up by the UWC, there have been incidents of Hybrids attempting to infiltrate the scientific colonies of Europa. But these are only the ones to be caught – who knows if Hybrids, or even Deep Ones, have already made their way into Europa's oceans. Furthermore, the unusual life in the oceans of Europa also are acting differently, almost as if they were spooked by something.

Before the Voyager missions, scientists posited that some form of ammonia- or water-based life could have evolved in Jupiter's upper atmosphere. This was later found to be unlikely. However, things as we know it are changing...

Saturn

The dark perils of Saturn seem obvious. The colonies on Iapetus and Mimas have simply disappeared. The UWC Wardens have investigated both Saturnine moons in an effort to determine a reason or a culprit. It appears that the cloud that enveloped Mimas before the disappearance played a part, but no one knows what that was. Since then, despite the security zone around the moon, Wardens have determined that there is no further threat on Mimas and the moon has remained quiet. Iapetus, on the other hand, has not provided so fortunate of results. The troops at Fort Saragossa have been instructed not to leave the confines of the base – surface traffic is prohibited to anyone but the UWC Wardens. Seethari have been discovered there and the Wardens are trying to keep them contained – a bloody task easier said than done. Some have even escaped, threatening other place in the Saturnine system.

Other than that, perhaps even stranger, is that something inside of Saturn itself is heating up. The change has been gradual and few are paying it any mind. There are those, however, who are worried that this is a symptom of greater change within the planet and Titan is too important to the outer colonies to be left to chance.

Uranus

The shifting ice canyons of Uranus hold a great secret, something that has not yet been uncovered. Lost for centuries, rumblings within the planet threaten to expose it. Uranus is not a planet that suffers from seismic activity, since it has no stable solid masses, so the fact that there are rumblings at all have begun to worry scientists. For now, these icequakes are localized and professionals are investigating. It is unlikely this will remain so for much longer.

Furthermore, there is something on the Uranian moon Puck after all. In the exact spot where the Wardens are building their base, buried deep within the moon, a creature sleeps. It is John Wesley's plan to wake this creature, soon.

Neptune

Far away from the heart of civilization, something in Neptune stirs. The storms, while still violent, seem to have abated some. However, the atmosphere inside Salacia is heating up. Residents are reporting terrifying nightmares at a rate that cannot be written off as chance. As the months pass, more and more colonists fall prey to night terrors and sleeping disorders.

Though there aren't that many people in Salacia, the Order of the Storm has taken foothold here. The cult has a growing membership, performing dark rituals around dark corners. People have begun to go missing without a trace and authorities are baffled. As if that wasn't bad enough, other things have found their way to the colony. There is a small group of Hybrids at work with the cult now, and it is said that several full-blooded Deep Ones have joined them.

Needless to say, between the nightmares and the ominous shadow of the Order, paranoia is reaching an all time high.

Pluto

Anyone who is paying attention knows that Pluto is changing – the dwarf planet is even moving differently, something that is unnatural from our perspective. Within the planet, the Mi-Go awaken in greater numbers than ever before. It is impossible to get anywhere near Pluto without getting their attention, and those that get too close are destroyed. Since the Mi-Go, as a race, never went fully away, they do not need to explore the solar system to see what is. However, they are getting more aggressive and it is likely they will be filtering into the Kuiper Belt in the days ahead, as well as completing whatever heinous plans they have in motion on Earth.

Kuiper Belt

The stories are true. People have come into contact with strange creatures that appear to be awakening from slumber. These encounters have been infrequent so far, making them tall tales that not everyone out there believes. However, they will soon not remain so isolated and those out on the Kuiper Belt may soon find themselves encountering all kinds of unusual, terrifying, and likely hostile creatures.

A Plot Too Far

Overview

While enjoying a relaxing break on Venus as their ship gets a new load of cargo, the characters are approached by a representative from the Venusian Advisory Board. She offers them a job to investigate some unusual activity by a mid-level corporate executive. What begins as a simple case of suspected corporate espionage turns into something uglier. The characters soon find that a much darker truth lies behind the activities of the person in question. A long believed dead man reappears, leading the efforts of the relatively new cult known as the Devout of the Returned and he wishes nothing more than to help the Returned bring mankind into his dark and fatal embrace.

This adventure is aimed at non-Warden characters – especially those with a corporate and/or security background. In general, the adventure can be completed in only one or two game sessions depending on your individual group's play style. The key events are described here, but there is plenty of room to add additional encounters that you can use to bring even more color to the adventure.

Act I: An Unexpected Job

Scene I: Approached

After a long stint aboard ship, the characters are partaking of some much earned shore leave in the luxurious Windhouse Hotel and Resort, a well-known and popular vacation spot in Flare City. The hotel is located in the side of a Venusian mountain, above Flare City proper, providing their guests some privacy away from the hustle of the colony itself. It is also one of the few places in the colony that have actual viewing ports that afford a view of the Venusian surface.

As the group is relaxing, whatever their preferences might be, a woman approaches. Read the following to your players:

"A woman wearing a high-end business suit approaches your group with an obvious purpose. Her attire seems out of place, given that the Windhouse is place to relax and unwind. All things being equal, she is not likely here for a friendly chat."

The woman introduces herself as Julie Stern. She hands each of the characters a business card which has the Venusian Advisory Board logo, her name and title (General Corporate Liaison), and her relevant contact info.

She then tells them that their names were recommended for a possible short-term contract with the VAB. The job is expected to last no more than a week. If the characters have a ship of their own, the VAB will cover all their port and orbital fees, refueling costs, as well as the next payment on the ship's title, if it is not owned outright. In addition, she will also offer the group 5000 credits each (or some other amount that is appropriate to the circumstances for your group). If the group does not own or lease a ship, then she will offer them each 15,000 credits.

The job involves the investigation of a man named Hector Valdez, a mid-level manager at Geo Excavations. The Venusian Advisory Board believes he may be involved in active corporate espionage for Rare Earths Inc. Should it be true and he be discovered by his employers, it could set up a conflict between the two companies, which the VAB would like to avoid. The VAB wishes to employ outsiders that are not tainted by local politics in order to ensure that there is no bias involved, given the antagonistic relationship of the two companies in question.

If they inquire as to the details of the feud, Ms. Stern shares that Rare Earths and Geo Excavations have been fighting over mining rights around the Cryst Rift Zone, which is located almost directly half-way between the two colonies.

The Venusian Advisory Board will provide all necessary travel visas and provide the group with papers that will exempt them from any colony entry fees, as well as cover all transport fees that may be incurred. They will be able to travel freely, without question.

The group will not be authorized to make any actual arrests, but only acquire evidence as to the truth of the suspicions one way or another. The group will have warrants that will allow them to search Hector's home, but it is recommended that they do so when he is not there. If he is innocent, the VAB would prefer him to not know the investigation ever took place. They will be unable to search his office, as the VAB could not get the warrants to violate the sanctity of corporate autonomy.

The group will be authorized to carry small arms but their use will need to be seriously justifiable should any incidents occur.

Assuming the group agrees, they will be provided with Hector Valdez's address and the appropriate authorities, and documents will be couriered to their suites later that day.

Scene 2: Hector's Home

Hector lives in Diamond Head, so the group will need to catch a train from Flare City. Once they arrive, they find that Diamond Head has a very different atmosphere from Flare City. Security is open and obvious. There is also a noticeable number of employees from other corporations, as evidenced by patches and other insignia. The group is easily able to find the sector of the colony in which Hector lives.

Mid-level managers seem to be paid fairly well, given the sector in which Hector lives. High-end shops, restaurants, and other establishments that obviously cater to those with more than average credits fill the well-maintained and open-air marketplace that dominates the sector. Residences in this sector are built above the market, with windows that afford views down into the carefully maintained and manicured parks, giving the area a very open and outdoor feel. Hector's home is built into the 'north' wall and has a private balcony and stairs that afford access.

When the group arrives, Hector will just be returning from work and the group will see him enter his home. It means the group will need to wait until the next day to search his home, unless he should go out again. There are a number of places in the sector that afford a good view of his home, should the group wish to keep tabs on him (and this should be encouraged). The group can also ask around about him. A successful Persuade check, with a -2 DM, allows the characters to find out the following information, in

the order presented. Once a check is failed, no further information is discovered.

1. Hector is a quiet man who tends to keep to himself, though he is generally a friendly sort.
2. People have noticed that he seems to have had a number of people visit him over the last couple weeks. Normally it is rare for him to have visitors.
3. He has seemed more tense in the last week than is normal. He also seems to be constantly preoccupied.

As the group finishes their inquiries, or at some point before the group decides to retire, they should make an Investigate or Recon check. Success will allow a character to notice someone on Hector's balcony.

Someone has approached Hector's door and seems to be requesting entrance. The man is fairly nondescript and doesn't wear anything that affiliates him with one company or another. As you watch, Hector answers the door. He seems agitated by the person, and the two exchange harsh words. The man pushes Hector back into his home and closes the door behind them.

Give the group a moment to react and decide what they should do. If they contact Julie, she will remind them that they can't make arrests, but she will back them if they decide to find out who is visiting and what the argument was about.

Once they have made a decision, the following occurs – please read the following to your players:

"Before you can do more than plan your next course of action, there is a sudden explosion. The doors and windows of Hector's home shatter outward as black smoke and balls of fire roll up the wall. Alarms wail and people scatter in panic as the shock wave of the explosion rolls over your group."

As everyone scurries about in panic, have the characters make an Investigate or Recon check. If successful, they notice that amidst the chaos a single man stands up calmly from a table in the marketplace and makes his way through the crowd. The characters can try to pursue him – have them make any appropriate checks you wish, but in the end he disappears into the crowd.

Shortly after the explosion, the characters will be contacted by Julie Stern wanting a report of what has happened. Assuming the characters mention the man, she will use her assets to figure out who he is and get back to the characters. If they didn't see him, Ms. Stern will tell them that there was a report of one witness acting like he had expected the explosion.

They may also opt to search Hector's home. The documents they have been provided give them the authority to do so. Through the use of Investigate, they learn the following based upon how well they succeed at the check. If more than one character makes a roll, each extra success after the first counts as one success level higher. They learn everything below through a combination of searching the scene and talking with other investigators on the scene. You should make it clear that the local security forces do not appreciate agents of the Venusian Advisory Board sticking their noses into a corporate incident.

1. *Easy (+4 DM) Success:* There is only one body to be found inside.
2. *Routine (+2 DM) Success:* The explosion origin seems to be the center of the main room.
3. *Average (0 DM) Success:* The locals are treating this as an accident until they have reason to do otherwise.
4. *Difficult (-2 DM) Success:* Hector was being investigated by Geo Excavations for embezzlement.

Act II: Not As Simple as It Appears

Scene 3: Who Is He?

The next morning Julie will contact the group. She tells them she has a lead on the man they noticed at the site of the explosion. He has been identified as a man named Careen Murphy, an employee of Rare Earths Inc., where he worked as a mine superintendent. He was believed killed in a mining accident that happened a couple months ago, though his was the only body of the 20 victims that was never recovered. They also learn that he was survived by a sole daughter – Amanda Murphy – who lives in Daysin Colony. Julie provides the group with her location and recommends a conversation with her.

Amanda is an attractive red-headed woman in her mid-twenties who works as a low-level administra-

tor for Rare Earths. She is friendly when the group first meet her, though she may grow hostile depending on how the characters proceed when talking with her. She will initially tell the group that her father is dead, killed in a mining operation. Amanda will portray him as a kind-hearted man whom she loved dearly. However, with a couple Persuade checks (which should increase in difficulty if they upset her) during the conversation, the players can also find out a bit more information. Each success reveals the following in order:

1. In the last couple of months of her father's life, he started meeting with people in secret. She had stumbled onto one meeting when she returned home early one night. When she asked him who he was talking with, Careen told her not to worry about it.
2. She has suspected that he might be alive, but refuses to believe he would not contact her if he were.
3. She has noticed some recent activity in his private bank account when she was finalizing some paperwork to transfer his assets to her. She didn't tell anyone about this activity, hoping it meant he is alive – though afraid of what it meant if he isn't.

There is not a lot more information the group can get out of Amanda. A Computer check, with a -2 DM, will allow the group to track down the unusual activity in the accounts, once they get the appropriate authorization to do so from Julie – they may need to be reminded of this formality. There have been a number of large deposits and withdrawals since Careen was supposedly killed. Julie can track down more detailed information about these transactions, which lead the group to a credit transfer station that is used to transfer credit from accounts to credit sticks.

Scene 4: Careen Murphy

The group is able to locate the transfer station Careen last used to transfer credit onto a stick. It is a run down area of Daysin Colony that is dominated by under-utilized storage spaces. There are a number possible approaches the characters may take at this point to further their goals. They may try to question the locals in which case they will need to make Persuade, Streetwise, or other appropriate skills tests. If they opt for this tactic, then they will learn the following as the move forward in their investigations.

1. They first discover someone who has seen Careen frequent a small local bar called the Last Hope. This is best discovered through a successful Persuade check.
2. A successful Streetwise check will also uncover that he has been seen with a small group of people who call themselves the Devout.
3. The bartender knows Careen, but must be persuaded to talk through a successful Persuade check. If they mention they are working for the VAB, then this check is with a +2 DM. He will tell the group that Careen comes in every night at around 9 PM.

At this point, they may try to apprehend Careen – this will devolve into a fight if they do. He comes in with a pair of friends. They may also opt to follow him to see what he is doing. If this is the route the group chooses, the character(s) who follow should make a series of Stealth checks, with a +2 DM. Careen has no reason to expect someone to be following him and has grown complacent. The first check the characters fail will cause Careen to start looking over his shoulder, as he gets the feeling he is being followed. Further checks lose the bonus. A second failure will cause the characters to be noticed and a fight will break out.

If the group successfully tails Careen, he will lead them to an abandoned storage space. If they kill or incapacitate him, they will find an access card in his pocket to the space. Stats for Careen and other combatants can be found in the next scene.

Scene 5: The Discovery

The storage space is relatively large and was once used to store heavy equipment. The door to the space is locked and a pair of guards can be spotted keeping an eye on the place with a successful Investigate check. The guards will need to be dealt with before the group can get into the space. If the guards are not noticed, they will attack the group as they try to get into the storage space alerting those inside – their stats can be found on the next page.

If the group already acquired the access card, then getting into the storage space is simple. However, if they have not, they will need to succeed at a Computer check

with a -2 DM to override the lock. A single failure will warn Careen and the others that are inside. If the first roll is successful they will take the group by surprise.

Inside the space, Careen and others are starting a ritual to worship a being they call the Returned. If the cultists are unaware of the characters, then they will lose one round of action to surprise when the characters enter. The characters may be able to make an opposed Persuade check to talk the group into surrendering – the group with the greater effect wins. This is opposed by Careen's Leadership skill, if he is alive. If he is dead or not present for some reason, then the test becomes a check at -2 DM.

Once the group either surrenders or is defeated in the fight, the group should make a series of Investigate checks. Each success will reveal the following information.

1. The group belongs to a cult call the Devout of the Returned. An Occult check at -2 DM will reveal very little, other than they are a new cult that somehow worships the Chthonian Star.



The Storage Space

2. A ledger shows that there are approximately twenty members in this cell, assuming it is correct. The names in the book all use obvious aliases (such as Brother Devout Phobos, and the like).
3. A stash of explosives are hidden in a false floor panel in the back corner of the storage space. They seem to have come from both Rare Earth's and Geo Excavations. A box of detonators is also present, but half of them have been removed.
4. A map of a transit tunnel has a series of X's at various points and a time (6:45 pm the following evening) scrawled on it. The number of X's seems to correspond to the number of missing detonators, minus 1.

The characters will need to make a Persuade check at -2 DM to learn more about what the map means. If successful, they will learn that the cult plans on destroying the transit tunnel that connects Daysin Colony and Diamond Head. The detonation is timed to coincide with the two trains passing by one another, which will likely be filled with passengers (over 200 if the trains are full).

Once the characters contact Julie about what they discover, she will arrive on scene with a Rare Earth's security team to formally arrest any survivors. If the group has not learned all of the above information, then Julie and her team will get it out of the survivors and pass the information along the following morning.

If there are no survivors to interrogate, then Julie will discover and inform the group the following morning that she believes she knows where the cult plans on striking. She has discovered what she believes to be a bogus work order on the transit tunnel in question. While she is attempting to get forces mobilized, she fears that red tape and corporate politics will delay things long enough to be too late, so she requests that characters get out there quickly to investigate. She will arrange for a shuttle to take them to the nearest access point and provide them with the hard suits needed to survive the brief time they will be on the surface.

Careen Murphy

Str: 6 (0) Dex: 9 (+1) End 12 (+2)
 Int 9 (+1) Edu 7 (+0) Soc 6 (+0)
 Skills: Admin 1, Computer 1, Deception 2, Engineer

(Mining) 2, Gun Combat (slug pistols) 2, Melee 2, Occult 0, Persuade 1

Equipment: Improved Flak Jacket, Stealth Dagger, Universal Light Autopistol

Devout Cultist

(6 Cultists inside including 2 friends of Careen, 2 Guards outside)

Str 9 (+1) Dex 7 (+0) End 8 (+0)
 Int 8 (+0) Edu 7 (+0) Soc 6 (+0)

Skills: Gun Combat 0, Melee 2,

Equipment: Stealth Dagger, Universal Light Autopistol

Act III: Tunnel of Death

Scene 6: Transit Tube Access Port

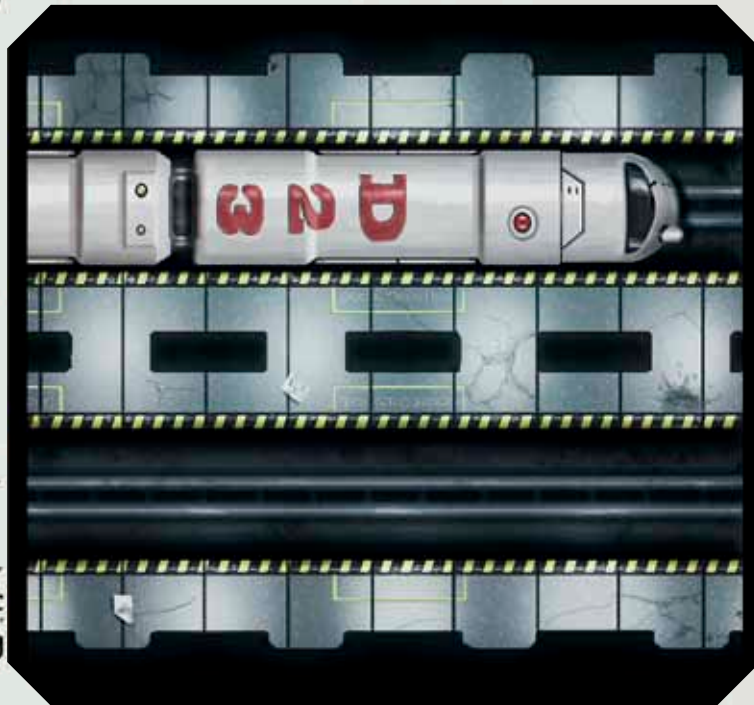
Julie provides the team with a VAB shuttle (and pilot, if necessary), as well as the location of the access point closest to the region she believes the cultists are planning their attack. She has tried to delay the two trains, but those above her believe that doing so may cause undo panic. It is up to the characters to stop the plot before it is too late.

When the shuttle arrives at the access lock read the following:

"The winds on the surface of are blowing hard and the temperature is over 400 degrees F. Fortunately, all shuttles that fly to the surface of Venus are required to carry enough hard suits to cover all passengers and crew. With help, each of you dons the clunky gear and steps outside. Even with the weight of the suits, the winds threaten to knock you over. Through the dust, you can see a maintenance vehicle with VAB markings near the structure that houses the lock. The transit tunnel itself looks like a massive concrete and steel tube that runs as far as you can see in both directions."

The maintenance vehicle, a six-wheeled monster, is empty and unlocked. Success with an Investigate check will uncover a single detonator under one of the seats. The airlock into the tunnel is locked, but Julie has provided the access codes necessary to get inside. However, when the characters get to the lock, they discover that the keypad has been dismantled and overridden. It will require a successful Engineering check to get the door to open. A failed check here just means it takes longer than normal to gain access, but they will eventually get in. As a result, the team will encounter the cultists as they retreat back

The Tunnel



towards the lock, instead of in the process of setting the explosives.

Once inside, the team can remove the hard suits if they wish. However, they should be warned that, if the explosives do detonate it will leave them exposed to the Venusian atmosphere. If they opt to wear them, they will need to succeed at a Vacc Suit check or suffer a -1 DM to any actions due to the bulkiness of the suits. The suits do offer three points of armored protection, in addition to any light armor they might wear.

Scene 7: Encountering the Cultists

If the group entered the tunnel with no delay, they will interrupt the cultists as they are planting the explosives. If they were delayed by the lock, they will encounter the cultists as they return from planting the bombs. In either case, the cultists will fight to the death. When the cultists realize they are going to lose the fight, one of them will try to run back to the explosives in order to detonate them, if possible. Doing so will require the cultist to succeed at a Explosives check with a -2 DM, as the bombs were not made to be manually detonated. This also requires two successful checks. Any character will notice this if he can succeed at an Int check with a +2 DM.

Once the cultists have been defeated, the bombs will need to be defused. An Explosives check with a +2 DM will reveal that the bombs have a timer as

well as a mercury switch that will detonate them if the bomb is moved. Disarming the bombs requires success at an Explosives check. Disarming the mercury switches alone requires success at an Explosives check with a +4 DM, but then the bombs will need to be quickly carried out of the tunnel and placed well away before the timer runs out. This is easily done, but play it up as best you can. There are five total bombs, but one of them is missing a detonator. If the team encounters the cultists before they are done arming them, only two are fully armed. If someone fails while attempting to disarm a bomb (and rolls snake-eyes), the bomb detonates, killing the the character and causing 4d6 damage to any within 20 meters. Otherwise, the attempt can be made again. The explosion will also blow out the side of the tunnel, allowing the Venusian atmosphere into the tunnel and destroy the track.

There is plenty of time to complete this last task before the trains arrive, but try to make the characters feel the pressure.

Devout Cultist Team Leader

(1 Cultist in the Tunnel)

Str 8 (+0) Dex 9 (+1) End 12 (+1)

Int 8 (+0) Edu 7 (+0) Soc 6 (+0)

Skills: Gun Combat 1, Melee 2

Equipment: Assault Rifle (TL7), Stealth Dagger, Universal Light Autopistol

Devout Cultist

(6 Cultists in the Tunnel)

Str 9 (+1) Dex 7 (+0) End 8 (+0)

Int 8 (+0) Edu 7 (+0) Soc 6 (+0)

Skills: Gun Combat 0, Melee 2

Equipment: Stealth Dagger, Universal Light Autopistol

Epilogue

Now that the VAB knows the cult is active, they will begin to take steps to root them out. The team will have the thanks of the VAB, Geo Excavations, and Rare Earths Inc. Julie Stern will also become a contact for the characters and may have additional work in the future for them. Finally, for the next year, the VAB will pick up any orbital, docking, and refueling costs the characters may incur if the characters have their own ship and visit the planet again.

Miranda

Overview

The basic premise of this adventure is a bug hunt-style investigation. The Chthonian Star is awakening sleeping horrors all over the solar system and one such horror is lying dormant under the ice of the Uranian moon Miranda. The ice miners have dug their way to the gateway of a primordial den that was previously frozen and sealed away. The digging has released something and the base has not responded to hails ever since. The base is buried in the side of an ice canyon, three miles down the sheer walls on a protruding ledge of compacted rock. It is another mile down the wall until the canyon floor is reached. The characters are a Warden investigative team stationed at the in-process Warden station on the Uranian moon Puck. The final recorded message from the base was a series of screams and inhuman howls that could not be identified. A private security team was sent by the owner of the facility, John Paul Wesley, to make contact with the base and see what was wrong. The only communication received after the security team landed was this series of screams and various inhuman howls. The Wardens were contacted to investigate. Play begins with the orbital insertion of the team and a briefing from the Warden Command staff via long range communications.

Act I: Moon Trouble

Goals: To introduce the mining station as the main setting and allow the characters to investigate the scene to help determine what they are up against.

Setting: The Miranda Ice Mining Facility

Cast: The characters and Warden Command

Scene I: The Briefing

Once the characters have settled in for their briefing, read them the following.

"The situation is this. Wesley's primary ice mining facility on the Uranian moon Miranda has failed to report in for the past two days and everyone on Veronica Station is worried. Twelve hours ago, a security detail from Veronica was sent in to check on the station and the only communications received once they landed was an unintelligible scream and some thing howling in the background. Our experts have not been able to determine the source. We all know that there really are things that go bump in the night and

this could very well be something we all need to be concerned about. Take all possible precautions. Find out what happened and who is responsible. Warden base out."

The characters should be allowed to pull up schematics of the facility, pull any personnel dossiers, and review staff rosters that they want to look at. There is not a lot of time to review these as the shuttle drops to the surface.

Station Statistics

Personnel on Site: 52

Crew Breakdown: 32 miners, 10 mechanics, 4 doctors, 3 administrators, and 2 security officers

Base Commander: John Levirit, 42

As the shuttle approaches the mining station, this is what they see:

"As the shuttle silently settles over the surface of Miranda, the pilot slowly takes the shuttle down into an impossibly deep canyon. The reports indicate that the canyon is four miles deep and three miles down. Dug into the side of the sheer walls is the mining facility. Although there is no atmosphere on Miranda, the canyon seems to hold a haze that blocks vision for more than 30 feet. The report made no mention of that before."

Homing in on the station beacon, the computer reads off the distance to the facility in a monotonous tone. Slowly the haze parts and the mining station appears in the view port. Looking down, you see that the facility is completely contained within the wall of the canyon. The only external view of the facility is the main cargo bay door that allows access for cargo shuttles to pick up ice and deliver supplies. The cargo bay door is currently open and the shuttle from the security detail is parked within. There is room to land next to them within the cargo bay."

A thermal scan of the facility will show that the heating system is still active, but nothing other than the interior structures can be made out. There are no moving hot spots to indicate anything living. The internal airlock is still functioning and is the only method to access the base. The facility appears to still be pressurized with no discernible leaks. In short, the mine is still functioning, but no one's home and there's no evidence as to what happened.

From the cargo bay the team can see that the access ramp to the security team shuttle is down and something is lying at the top of the ramp. The way the hull and ramp are situated there is no way to get a better view of what that object is without going out and physically looking.

Scene 2: Landing At The Base

The characters can land their ship without much fuss. When they decide to investigate the security team's shuttle, read the following section:

"Within your pressure suits, you inch towards the embarkation ramp of the adjacent shuttle. Due to the lack of atmosphere, all you can hear is your breathing, as well as the breathing of your compatriots via the live audio link you all share. Shining your light up the ramp, there is a dark shape lying at the top. It appears to be a combat pressure suit much like your own, but unlike yours there is obviously no pressure billowing out the sleeves and legs in this suit. Turning the unfortunate soul over, you see that the face guard has been completely smashed in along with most of this person's face.

Checking the body, the first thing that stands out is that the combat pressure suit is not the standard issue that most private security firms use in the Uranian system. The suit looks more military issue than even the Warden suits you are wearing, which is strange."

Entry into the shuttle is impossible, as the doors are locked via a very sophisticated security system. It is so sophisticated in fact, that anyone with knowledge of security systems would marvel at the complexity and wonder where a private security group was able to get their hands on something this advanced. Nothing short of blowing the door open will provide access to the ship at this moment. There is nothing on the body that would give the characters any advantage in hacking

their way inside. Scans of the ship will be blocked by a signal it is projecting.

There are no markings on the ship besides the standard markings of the Wesley Corporation and no exterior signs of damage. A closer inspection of the ship will discover that these Wesley Corp markings were only recently put on the shuttle.

Scene 3: Entering the Base

Investigating the cargo bay area will show that there is no sign of a struggle, or anything else out of the ordinary. With nothing else to investigate in the cargo area, the characters should move to the main air lock. They will find it operational and they can make their way into the base easily.



The Mining Base

Once the airlock is opened, read the following to your players:

"As the airlock opens, it becomes apparent why no one has answered any attempts to communicate with the base. Beyond the airlock is the Rec Center, but no one appears to have had fun recently in this room. Bloody, crushed bodies have been tossed around the room, as if a juggernaut had trampled them in a mad rush to escape. Monitors are smashed and furniture is flattened. Looking through the doors to the kitchen, operations, and the cafeteria, you can see similar devastation and more mutilated bodies. The bodies show no signs of cuts or puncture wounds. The damage appears to be simple and violent blunt force trauma."

Inspecting the bodies more closely will show that all suffered tremendous blunt force trauma, as though they were struck by a vehicle or large piece of machinery. The layout of the bodies indicates that they were congregated in their normal spots when an unexpected blitz attack took them completely by surprise. Securing the base is too large a task for this small group to perform, and the characters should be reminded of the dangers of splitting up too much. Naturally, that doesn't mean they won't.

Entering operations, the characters will discover that the computer systems are still in working order – just that all monitors that were operational at the time have been destroyed. The monitors that were turned off appear to be in good working order. Success at a Computer 8+ check should allow a character to download station logs to a personal computing device. There are three interesting things that the characters will be able to determine from the base logs. First, they indicate that the security feeds from the engineering, packaging, and supply areas, as well as from the actual mine, are not available. Apparently, a power spike occurred a week before communications were lost that fried the leads to the cameras. Second, the character's briefing indicated that the last communication from base personnel was three days ago, but the base logs show communications going out to Veronica Station within the last eighteen hours. Finally, there are two events of note in the video logs. The first is dated seventeen hours ago – the date that the station logs show communications were lost. The second is from thirteen hours ago, when the security detail arrived on the moon.

The First Recording

"The grainy video record shows the workers of the base going about their business. Images of the people walking around that you just found dead on the floor give you shudders. There are images from all sections of the facility, except for the mine itself and the engineering, packaging, and supply areas, due to a glitch the previous day that took those systems down."

Then, without warning or alarm, the Cafeteria is thrown into chaos. Objects are being tossed around and people are being smashed against walls with enough force to shatter bones. All that can be seen on the recording is a black blur. Even slowed down or paused there is no discernible image on the screen. Whatever it is, it moves impossibly fast. Impact with anything in its way is immediately devastating. In a flash, the creature moved to the recreation area and then beyond to other areas of the facility. Once all the inhabitants were dead, it disappeared and did not show itself again"

The Second Recording

"The security detail arrives on site just as you did, but their attention is not on the dead they find on the floor. A team of eight highly armed mercenaries bursts into the room and sets up a defensive perimeter around a man in a standard pressure suit that had started taking readings on an unknown device. They immediately travel to the rear of the facility, back towards the mine entrance. Based on the equipment they are carrying, they were obviously expecting trouble."

After leaving the supply area and going into the packaging area, there is no activity for ten minutes. Then, the civilian and one of the mercenaries come running back into camera range and are seen leaving the base via the airlock. No indication that the creature followed them is seen. The two are seen to run to their ship but, because of the camera angle, nothing more can be seen."

At this point, the characters are free to look through any area of the facility. However, once they enter the engineering area the creature encounter should begin, so head the characters off with the information starting in Act II to get them out to the shuttles again. All the other rooms in the complex look similar to the recreation room. They suit their

purpose, but they are scenes of general destruction and bodies litter the ground.

Act II: The Survivor

Goals: To ramp up the action and lay the seeds that there are other forces at work that knew about the creature within the mine. Also, the characters will lose access to their shuttle and be forced to deal with the creature in the mine or be killed.

Setting: The shuttles outside the Miranda Ice Mining Facility.

Cast: Doctor Simon Flint – An operative from an unknown organization who was sent to the moon to collect the secrets discovered in the mine.

Scene 4: The Security Team Survivor

The security recordings indicate that there were two people that escaped the facility and made it to the mercenary ship. Obviously, something happened to one of them – the pressure suit on the dead body they discovered earlier will lead the characters to believe that he was the remaining mercenary. That leaves the civilian as the only survivor.

Watching the security recording, the characters should be in an area where the current security display is also available. On this display, within the cargo bay, the civilian security team member is seen again. He is creeping from the embarkation ramp of the mercenary ship and moving to the characters' ship. Even though the characters' ship has been secured, the civilian uses some device that he is carrying and easily gains access to their ship.

Read this to your players:

"Reviewing the destruction of the base leaves you chilled by the terrible carnage that the creature is able to cause. What makes it worse is that you have not been able to get a decent image of the creature, as it is moving far too fast to get a good look. On another screen in the security room, there is a live feed of the cargo bay. There, you see the civilian sneaking along the cargo bay towards your ship."

This should not be an issue because your ship is secured, but as he approaches the door, the civilian takes an object from a case that he is carrying and presses it to the door of your ship. The door suddenly opens up and he enters. There is now a stranger on your vessel."

If the characters decide to ignore this for some reason, the civilian will be able to eventually assume control and take off. If this occurs, then skip the encounter with the Doctor and go directly to the investigation of the mercenary ship.

Racing back to the character's ship goes quickly and, when they get there, the characters find the ship is secured once again. However, the civilian has not had time to change the entry codes and the characters will be able to gain access to the ship. Upon entering the airlock, a Recon 8+ check will reveal the device that the civilian used to gain access to the ship is lying discarded on the floor.

Encountering Doctor Flint at the controls, the characters will see a disheveled middle-aged man at the end of his rope.

"After cycling the airlock to your ship and getting inside, you can hear shuffling and muttering coming from the bridge. With weapons drawn, your team advances to the bridge and finds a man frantically attempting to access the controls to get the ship ready for take off. Because he is seated with his back to you, you are unable to determine if he has a weapon."

Doctor Simon Flint

Str 5 (0) Dex 6 (0) End 8 (0)

Int 14 (+2) Edu 12 (+2) Soc 6 (0)

Skills: Explosive 2, Melee 1

Equipment: Pressure Suit, Strange Device

Notes: At the time of encounter the doctor has gone completely insane. His only goal is to get off the moon and he will kill all those in his way.

Scene 5: Last Stand

Here is how this scene will most likely play out. Doctor Flint has only one desire and that is to get off this moon to whatever safety he can find. He has already lost his mind to fear and is not thinking rationally. The arrival of the characters will push him completely beyond reason and into blind panic. He will come to believe that he has only one way out because, although the characters could not see it initially, Dr. Flint is carrying a weapon – a fragmentation grenade. Feeling that he is being cornered, the Doctor will decide to take his own life, and take everyone else with him, to ensure that the creature does not get him.

However, the characters being the heroic people they are, there should be a chance to avoid catastrophe. Read the section below and give the characters only a few moments to decide their course of action.

"With a wild look in his eyes, the civilian suddenly turns on you and waves his right hand in the air. There is something in that hand and, with a feeling of dread, you can see what it is – a grenade – and dangling from a finger on his left hand you see the pin. You have only seconds to react. Scramble for safety or attempt to rush the civilian. What do you choose?"

Diving out of the bridge into the relative safety of the hallways requires a Dex check with a -2 DM. Success means that when the blast destroys the bridge, the characters have reached cover. Anyone failing the check will take 1d6 damage from the blast and their environmental suit will be irreparably torn. Regardless, the ship has begun to leak from rents in the hull and the bridge will need to be sealed off.

Attempting to rest the grenade from the Doctor requires a Dex 8+ check with a -4 DM. Succeeding at the check will mean that the player is able to get to the Doctor before he is able to release the grenade and thus the pin is able to be replaced. Failing the check means the player who attempted to wrestle with the doctor will take 1d6 damage from the blast – they are saved from worst by the fact that they came up short in their leap and ended up behind a row of seats. The ship has been breached however, and the bridge must be sealed off.

Regardless of the outcome of the encounter with Doctor Flint, the good doctor will either be dead or a gibbering madman that will need to be heavily sedated in order to not be a constant threat to the characters. This will render him pretty much useless as anything other than comic relief, if that's the right phrase. However, he has left the key to his ship at the door of theirs.

Scene 6: The Mercenary Ship

Utilizing the access device to unlock the mercenary ship will require a Computer check at -2 DM. Once the door is open, the characters will find equipment similar to the advanced equipment that Warden ships have. Accessing the ship logs will also require a Computer check at -2 DM.

The ship logs indicate that these men are not the original security detail sent by Veronica Station. They appear to have been contracted to monitor all communications to and from the base and to intercept anything that may be of interest. There is no record of who contracted them. When the base radioed Veronica that they had opened a hole into a deep cavern with strange markings, the mercenary team intercepted the transmission and acted as though they were Veronica Station.

The station supervisor was directed to continue into the cavern and return with any information they could find. The supervisor informed the imposter crew that there was a large monolith blocking entry into the cavern. The mercenary team ordered the mining base to use blasting charges to clear the way. The base commander informed the mercenaries that the monolith was holding up the ceiling of the cavern, but that it might be possible to shore up the sides of the entryway and see if they could remove the monolith. They were told to continue and report back. This was the last actual communication with the base.

Once communications were lost with the base, the mercenaries received an incoming message that Veronica Station was sending a team to check on the mining facility. The mercenaries intercepted the ship from Veronica and destroyed their vessel. Then the mercenary ship then broke orbit to a set course for the mining facility.

Act III: The Creature

Goals: To engage in open battle with a monster.

Setting: The mine.

Cast: The creature.

Scene 7: The Guardian

Once the characters enter the packaging area, the creature will notice them. It knows nothing other than to fulfill its mission – to ensure that no one awakens those that it has been tasked with guarding. These things are creatures even more horrible than itself, that must never be allowed to roam free.

The creature has been struck by a specialized weapon that the mercenary team brought with them. The weapon is essentially an ice cannon – a compressed form of liquid nitrogen that is rapidly released and allowed to blanket a target in layers of ice

until it is immobilized and or dead. When the team attempted to enter the cavern beyond the mine, the creature attacked to keep them out. The mercenary team was able to score a near direct hit on the beast, trapping it within a layer of ice. Unfortunately the creature had already killed seven members of the team.

The creature has been severely injured by the freezing process, but it is beginning to recover. This will give the characters time to engage the creature before it can recover enough that they will be unable to stop it.

The Guardian

Str 12 (+2) Dex *

End 15 (+3)

Int 6 (0) Ins 12 (+2) Pck 1 (-3)

Skills: Melee 4

Weapons: Bite (6d6+2), Claws (4d6+2)

Armor: Thick Hide (8)

Horror Factor: -2 DM

Notes: At the start of the encounter, the creature starts at a DEX of 6. Each round this value increases by two, until it reaches 16. At this point, the creature moves too fast to be hit.



The creature was frozen to the wall near the entrance to the mine. It will just be breaking free of its bonds as the characters enter the packaging area. During the first two rounds, the speed gains made by the creature make it slower than the characters, so it will use cover to evade them. After that, the creature can move fast enough to cause damage and will attack the characters.

The ice cannon, as luck would have it, fell inside a waste bin near the entrance to the mine when it was knocked from the hands of the final member of the mercenary unit. A Recon check will be required in order to find it and a +2 DM to any character who mentions that they wish to look near where the creature was trapped before.

This combat event will play out until the creature is either too fast to hit, at which time the characters would be advised to leave if they can, or they find the cold cannon that the mercenaries used. If the characters manage to obtain the cold cannon, the creature will realize that there is too great a chance that the cavern could be breached, so it will do the only thing it can think of to stop the characters – it will bring down the mine down on top of everyone and sealing the cavern off.

If the creature is nearing death, or the characters get possession of ice cannon, the creature will not risk the cavern being disturbed so it will strike the monolith and bring the cavern down.

Epilogue

The characters have hopefully survived their encounter and the cavern was brought down sealing the hidden creatures below tons of ice. If the character's ship was damaged in the attack, the mercenary ship will be able to send communications to the Warden base on Puck to schedule a pick up.

Where to go from here:

- The mercenary ship will show that there is a highly funded organization out there attempting to gain access to the information from which the Wardens are attempting to protect everyone.
- There is no evidence that Wesley or anyone on Veronica Station was involved with the mercenary team.

The Sarcophagus

Overview & Prelude

This is a story intended for a Warden game. The characters should be a Warden team currently resting in A/D Statis while in transit aboard their Knight's Errant spaceship.

The story opens with murder. Somewhere within the empty void of space, and far beyond the knowledge of your players, drifts a space liner in distress. The transit drive is offline. Chief Engineer Paul Hardie makes his way to the engine room at the request of his Third Officer.

Feel free to read the following to your players to set up the story:

"Paul Hardie had just awoken from hyper-sleep to the sound of alarms and the urgent call of his third officer over ship's comm-link. His ship was adrift in deep space with its mains off line. But why? He damn well knew that the transit drive energy flow regulator system was almost fool-proof. The wreck of his flow regulator could only have been caused by human negligence. Someone would certainly answer for this later. For now, he simply had to figure out how to get this mess back online as soon as possible.

Even with the main transit drive offline, the engine room still echoed with mechanical noises and the hum of power plants. Perhaps that's the reason why Hardie failed to hear the sound of footsteps behind him. His mind did not register that anything was wrong, not until that first splash of blood sprayed like a paint-gun splat across the machinery in front of him. It was only the searing pain framed inside an eternity of a split second that made Chief Hardie realize that the blood he saw was his own. He tried to turn on his head to get a glimpse of his assailant. But, it was too late. The weapon came down upon him with final judgment. In just a few seconds of hard-edged metal violence, Chief Hardie ceased to be."

Act I: Mayday!

Scene I: Wake Up

Please read the following to your players:

"You come to, propped up in your grav couch. Data readouts flash upon a small screen superimposed over the clear front of your chamber's lid. It is 07:32 EST (Earth Standard Time). You've awoken 4 weeks early. Something has gone wrong.

Your grav couch lid now opens with a rush of air. You notice others of your crew stirring from their sleep. The synthesized female voice of the ship's computer suddenly grabs your attention. 'Emergency resuscitation procedure activated. Ship-to-



ship distress signal received. Executing adjustment to course and speed. Estimated arrival in thirteen minutes.”

The ship in distress is identified as the Mariner of the Stars. She’s a gigantic civilian cruise liner, the kind that makes something like the Aristocracy class yacht look tiny. Scanners indicate both life and power onboard, yet the vessel is drifting.

Standard vessel-to-vessel communications channels raise a somewhat relieved voice on the radio. He identifies himself as Captain Andre Martel. The captain explains that an accident has knocked out his main propulsion systems. There are over three thousand passengers onboard and this emergency has caused a substantial level of unrest. He urgently requests assistance from the Wardens. They are directed to moor alongside docking bay two.

Scene 2: Aboard The Ship

The Mariner of the Stars is a standard luxury cruise liner filled with amenities. Many of these are conveniently located along the ship’s extravagant royal promenade ring. One might imagine the royal promenade to be a festive and lively place. However, for today, there is a definite tension in the air as people move about their business.

A slim athletic woman meets the Wardens as they disembark from their ship. Her hair is short and well kept, her demeanor is professional, and she wears the smart uniform of the ship’s crew. She introduces herself as Chief Security Officer Monica Gabrielli. She has been sent to escort the Wardens to the captain’s quarters. She leads them through the promenade ring hub and forward toward the ship’s bridge.

Monica Gabrielli

Str 6 (0) Dex 8 (0) End 7 (0)

Int 8 (0) Edu 9 (+1) Soc 9 (+1)

Skills: Admin 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 1, Investigate 1, Leadership 0, Melee (blade) 1, Pilot 0

Captain Andre Martel is a tall, good-humored Frenchman. His manner is such that it would be easy to imagine him as an amiable and generous host to his passengers. However, it’s clear that the stress of recent events have taken their toll. He greets the Wardens warmly.

Captain Martel explains that the Mariner has been helpless and adrift for the last three days, after they found their transit drive sabotaged. The Captain explains that the transit drive alarm panels lit up like a Broadway musical when the system went offline. He’d ordered Chief Engineering Officer Hardie to investigate the problem and report back immediately. He recalls only two messages from the engine room. The first was from Engineering Officer Miyamoto to report the status of the transit drive energy flow regulator. The second was several minutes later when Officer Miyamoto informed him that Chief Hardie was dead.

Captain Martel requests that the Wardens investigate and help solve this murder. His small security contingent onboard is already pressed with managing passenger issues. The fact remains that a killer is still at large and the Wardens are the best chance of finding him.

The Captain offers what resources he can to assist the Wardens in their investigation. Chief Security Officer Gabrielli is available if needed. The Wardens may have free run of the ship’s amenities. However, it is absolutely vital that this killer be found as soon as possible.

Act II: The Killer’s Trail

Scene 3: Scene Of The Crime

Officer Gabrielli escorts the Wardens to the scene of Chief Hardie’s murder. The area is under tight security. The energy flow regulation system is located in a remote corner of the engine room between two of the transit drive mains.

The Wardens can make an Investigation check to find all the following clues at the scene of the crime. Feel free to parcel out his information in any order you like:

- Blood splatter patterns and small chunks of flesh on the surrounding equipment suggests that the attacker was struck from behind with a heavy instrument.
- Dents and cracking in the actual flow control unit also suggests a well-placed strategic assault by a heavy instrument. It was most likely something blunt.

- Sabotage of the flow control unit happened before the murder.
- Engine alarm logs indicate that the flow control unit went off line at 01:32 am EST (Earth Standard Time).
- A suspicious figure was caught on surveillance cameras in a passageway not far from one of the hatches to the engine room, according to Gabrielli's report. The figure can be seen running in a dark cloak - physical characteristics hard to identify.

Gabrielli soon addresses the Wardens, in order to go over a few case details. She explains that she'd interviewed Miyamoto shortly after the murder, but the engineer was too emotionally unstable to provide anything useful. Gabrielli also informs the Wardens that there is a UWC political delegation onboard, headed Helen Falk. They've taken a strong interest in the details of this case and have continuously badgered Captain Martell for updates.

According to Gabrielli, Chief Hardie was old school when it came to maintaining "his ship". He was very good – considered by many to be one of the best in the fleet. He was short of time and gruff in demeanor, unless you were his superior. Gabrielli can specifically recall Hardie's behavior during the ship's initial cruise party. The Chief had been seen arguing with a few people – most notably a Doctor Sebastian Wells and Helen Falk. Gabrielli recommends speaking with Cruise Director Presta Mendoza.

Once all questions have been answered, Gabrielli will take her leave to attend to other duties.

Scene 4: Examining The Suspects

The Wardens are free to conduct their investigation as they choose from this point forward. They can interview "persons of interest" in whatever order they like. Each interview will provide further information that should allow the Wardens to track down the killer. The good news is that, while there are thousands of passengers on board, they have a starting point.

In the meantime tensions begin to rise among both crew and passengers, as the course of the in-

vestigation consumes more time. An understandable level of concern among passengers has resulted from the initial news of the ship's distress. However, isolated outbreaks of violence begin take place over time, that will eventually escalate in frequency and brutality. These might include fights among passengers, drunken rampages, theft among promenade shops, or any other examples of passengers losing control. Crew members will beseech the Wardens to help keep order – providing a level of distraction from the task at hand. The Referee is free to randomly insert such scenarios during the course of the Warden's investigation.

Here are the various characters that the Wardens will encounter and can interview during their investigation:

Petra Mendoza

Str 5 (-1) Dex 6 (0) End 6 (0)
Int 8 (0) Edu 9 (+1) Soc 9 (+1)

Skills: Admin 2, Carouse 2, Computers 0, Diplomat 1, Persuade 1, Steward 2

Petra is very cooperative in her role as Cruise Director and will offer the Wardens every courtesy. However, a subtle edge will creep into her tone when the conversation steers toward Chief Hardie. She openly provides the Warden's information on the attendees of the cruise party.

Her view of Hardie's character is not flattering. She saw him as overbearing, controlling, and nosy. She recalls seeing him argue with Dr. Sebastian Wells during the party. Alcohol may have been involved. She recalls Dr. Wells interrupting a conversation between his assistant Nate Carstensen and Chief Hardie. That's when things became heated. Petra's limited knowledge of Dr. Wells is that he and Nate Carstensen are members of some sort of scientific research team headed to Titan. She's vaguely heard something about their archeological discovery on Mars.

Petra is also aware of a high-level political delegation onboard headed by Helen Falk. She doesn't know anything about the delegation, except that they're in the middle of a controversial negotiation. Interestingly enough, there was a tense conversation between Falk and Hardie during the party. Hardie seemed to be pretty chummy with the op-

position leader, Gunther Eichmann. It seems that an argument broke out between Falk and Eichmann that got pretty ugly. Things were said and Falk walked away furious.

Petra recommends talking to Maria Miyamoto. Her voice softens at the mention of Maria's name. Her view of Maria is absolutely glowing, but she is concerned about the woman's well-being. If pressed, Petra will reveal that Maria was in the midst of an affair with Chief Hardie – something that Petra despises due to her own interest in the other woman.

The last person that Petra had seen Chief Hardie with during the party was a young actress named Zarina Bahar. Chemistry seemed to explode between the two of them – something that irritated Petra due to her perceived view of Hardie's infidelity to Maria.

Petra might be considered a suspect due to a possible motive of jealousy, but her alibi is strong. She had met with Captain Martel on official business during the time of the murder. She also possesses no knowledge of transit drive flow control units.

Maria Miyamoto

Str 5 (-1) Dex 7 (0) End 7 (0)
Int 8 (0) Edu 8 (0) Soc 6 (0)
Skills: Comms 1, Computers 1, Engineer (transit drives) 2, Mechanic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Vacc Suit 1

Maria can be found in the infirmary with the ship's doctor. She's in shock and her emotional state is very delicate. Successful use of the Persuade skill helps to calm her down and allow for questioning. However, pressing her hard will cause her to completely shut down.

Maria was the duty engineer when the alarms went off that sent her to investigate the transit drive flow control unit. She recalls reporting the incident to the bridge officer who in turn roused Chief Hardie from his A/D Stasis. Hardie was in a grumpy mood when he arrived. He'd sent her to fetch a large spanner wrench from the tool locker, so that he could try to pry back the flow control unit's outer cowling. Unfortunately, Maria couldn't find the wrench. That's when Hardie sent Maria to

report to the bridge. She returned a short time later to find him lying in a pool of blood. That's when she screamed.

Maria will not talk about her affair with Hardie unless the Wardens reveal their knowledge gleaned from conversations with either Zarina or Petra. She was deeply in love with what she saw as a gentle and loving man – a side that Hardie only revealed to her.

Maria's only possible alibi is that the time between her first report to the bridge and her second report about the murder would make it difficult to kill Hardie and dispose of the murder weapon.

Helen Falk

Str 5 (-1) Dex 7 (0) End 6 (0)
Int 9 (+1) Edu 10 (+1) Soc 11 (+1)
Skills: Admin 2, Advocate 3, Carouse 0, Deception 2, Diplomat 3, Leadership 1, Persuade 2

Helen Falk's one and only focus right now is to reach Titan in time to present her proposal to the Saturnine legislature. She explains to the Wardens that missing the current legislative session would mean that her delegation would be forced to wait for the next cycle, thus allowing the opposition to rally support against them. The Unified World Council is offering a chance to reduce trade tariffs for certain Saturnine manufactured goods in return for the right to establish a Unified World Council military industrial yard facility on Rhea. This controversial facility would provide for refit and maintenance services for the UWC Navy vessels and at the same time bolster the local economy with new jobs. Many Saturnians however see this as a first step in an overall Unified World Council incursion into their territorial independence.

If asked about her argument with Hardie, she will explain that she had approached the Chief during the party in an attempt to recruit his influence with his brother. Samuel Hardie is a member of the Saturnine legislature and a clear fence sitter on this issue. Helen relates that she was shocked at the venom of the Chief's refusal, stating in his somewhat inebriated state that he'd "rather insert a hot coal into his butt than subject his brother to a gibbering shrew like her." The conversation did not end well. She also recalls, in her indignity, that

Gunther Eichmann was there as well. The last thing she heard Gunther say to Hardie as she stormed away was, "If only there were some way to delay this trip."

Helen Falk would not be a likely suspect, as she has no motivation to sabotage the transit drive flow control system. In addition, she possesses no technical knowledge of such things. She can, however, become an unwelcome distraction to the Wardens by pressing for updated on the investigation in the face of her urgent need to get to Saturn.

Gunther Eichmann

Str 8 (0) Dex 7 (0) End 8 (0)
 Int 8 (0) Edu 10 (+1) Soc 9 (+1)
Skills: Admin 2, Advocate 2, Deception 2, Diplomat 3, Engineer 2, Leadership 1, Persuade 2

Gunther is an unusual breed of politician in that he is reserved in his speaking. He is passionate about stopping Falk's treaty though. He'd only met Hardie on this voyage. The two men hit it off well during the party – Gunther in particular enjoying Hardie's sarcastic sense of humor.

Gunther admits to being pleasantly surprised by Hardie's response to Falk's overtures during the party. He admits that he joked with Hardie about sabotaging the ship so that they wouldn't reach Saturn in time for Falk's agenda. However, he insists it was just meaningless banter. If pressed further, Gunther will reveal that the last person he saw Hardie with at the party was the actress Zarina Bahar – to whom the Chief had made advances. He saw them leave together under an umbrella of chemistry that suggested a busy night.

A background check on Gunther would reveal that he spent some time working at the Saturnine shipyards on Rhea before he entered a life of politics. He likely possesses knowledge of transit drive flow control units. However, ship's records have him safely secured in his grav couch during the time of the murder.

Zarina Bahar

Str 5 (-1) Dex 8 (0) End 5 (-1)
 Int 8 (0) Edu 10 (+1) Soc 11 (+1)
Skills: Art (Acting) 3, Carouse 3, Computers 1, Deception 1, Diplomat 1, Persuade 2

Zarina Bahar is a young and beautiful actress of Arabic decent. This cruise was for her a much-needed break after a long schedule of filming and promotional engagements. She had only met Chief Hardy at the party and claims that she had found him somewhat attractive in a gruff sort of way. Her initial claim is that they only chatted briefly during the party. However, if confronted by eyewitness accounts of her departure with the Chief, she'll reluctantly admit that it was true.

Zarina explains her need to keep a low profile. The less people know of her presence on board ship the better. What dalliances she chose to take she wanted to do with caution, so that media leakage would not cause unnecessary embarrassments. She'd gone to great lengths to hide her identity, even to wear a traditional Islamic Hijab to avoid detection. She'd chosen to wear the long black overgarment to the party, but had removed it at the coat check once she'd arrived. However, the Hijab turned up missing when she went back to claim it.

The Wardens can clearly see that Zarina is upset over the death of Chief Hardie. A successful Investigate check will reveal anger underneath her upset. Zarina was humiliated after she discovered that Hardie was involved with another woman. Someone had sent her an anonymous tip.

She will share that she had also spoken to Dr. Sebastian Wells during the party. He seemed to be a very agitated man, though she doesn't know why. He talked about an important archeological find and how critical it was to get something to Titan.

Nate Carstensen

Str 9 (+1) Dex 8 (0) End 9 (+1)
 Int 8 (0) Edu 7 (0) Soc 7 (0)
Skills: Admin 1, Computers 1, Deception 2, Engineer 1, Gun Combat (slug pistol) 2, Jack of All Trades 1, Melee (bludgeon) 2, Melee (unarmed combat) 1, Stealth 0, Survival 1

The Wardens find Nate Carstensen in his cabin. He has a hard and edgy look about him. A man in his mid-thirties, Nate has been through his share of life's trials. He is cordial, however, and very willing to be cooperative with the Wardens. In fact, his overt friendliness seems to almost jar with his ruggedly tough exterior.

Nate has been an assistant to Dr. Sebastian Wells for the last two and a half years. Much of that time he'd spent on Mars managing an archeological expedition to the region of the planet known as Syrtis Major. He and his wife Maddy had moved to Mars to take up the assignment there for a sizable salary. He recalls Dr. Wells talking excitedly about clues left behind by an ancient manuscript. The doctor believed very strongly that those clues might lead to evidence on Mars of an ancient civilization that predated man. He'd come to Mars with a substantial grant from Cassini University to try to find a dig site in Syrtis Major to which the clues pointed. Nate, however, regrets taking the assignment since he lost his wife out there on that Martian wasteland thanks to a freak accident.

His wife's death happened soon after they'd found the entrance to what they believed was an alien burial chamber. While exploring the depths of the chamber, they discovered a large object lying on its back over a stone structure inscribed with concentric circles. Nate tells the Wardens that it reminded the doctor of an ancient sarcophagus that you'd find in old mummy tales back on Earth. Dr. Wells resolved to dig the sarcophagus out and ship it back to Titan to be studied at the University. Strange accidents began to occur once the sarcophagus was placed in their warehouse back on Mars. Little things like equipment breakdowns. That's when Maddy died.

Nate recounts the cruise party that he and Dr. Sebastian had attended prior to A/D Stasis. He admits that the doctor had become increasingly nervous and agitated since Mars. However, he had not expected the crazed shouting match that took place with Chief Hardie. Nate believed that Dr. Wells was being overly paranoid about the safety of the sarcophagus. He wanted the Chief to pull some strings to increase cargo bay security. Chief Hardie merely brushed off the doctor's request. That's when the doctor snapped into a raging fit of paranoid ranting. He insisted that the ship might be in danger. Nate had to forcefully pull the doctor away and calm him down.

Nate tells the Wardens that Dr. Wells is likely down in the cargo bay studying the sarcophagus. The doctor has also become obsessed with being near the artifact and refuses to eat or sleep. He of-

fers to escort the Wardens down to the cargo hold and find his employer.

A background check on Nate Carstensen will reveal that he had spent several terms in the UWC Navy working as a Chief Engineer prior to his engagement with Cassini University's archeological expedition team.

Dr. Sebastian Wells

Str 5 (-1) Dex 5 (-1) End 6 (0)

Int 10 (+1) Edu 12 (+2) Soc 10 (+1)

Skills: Admin 0, Computers 1, Diplomat 1, Investigate 1, Life Sciences (biology) 3, Occult 4, Social Sciences (archeology) 4, Survival 1

Dr. Sebastian Wells, once considered a level headed and brilliant man, appears agitated, perhaps even frightened. He mumbles to himself while frantically pacing back and forth, as if he's trying to piece together some unseen puzzle. The approach of the Wardens startles him and the message of his gaze screams helplessness. The man looks trapped and lost.

Dr. Wells' account of the happenings on Mars and during the party corroborates Nate's story, for the most part. However, his mind sometimes wanders off into a side topic, forcing Nate or one of the Wardens to pull him back. He'll clam up if pressed about what's frightening him. A Persuade check with a -2 DM will convince him to open up to one of the Wardens, but he will insist that the Warden in question speak to him privately and out of earshot of everyone else.

The doctor reveals to the Warden that something horribly evil had awoken when they removed the sarcophagus from its resting place on Mars. Dr. Wells will insist that a curse has been brought onboard ship by the sarcophagus. As crazy as this sounds, he'll beg the Warden to believe him. He claims that the curse caused the murder of Chief Hardie, just like it caused the murder of Maddy Carstensen back on Mars. He says that Nate refuses to hear such things, though. However, he has evidence that he speaks truly. He asks the Warden to meet him in his cabin in an hour. He needs the time to get everything together, but he doesn't explain exactly what that is. He leaves the cargo bay once the Warden agrees to his terms.

Act III: An Inhuman Evil

The Mariner of the Stars is caught in the grip of an ever-growing swirl of chaos among its passengers. Violent outbreaks have dramatically increased during the course of the Warden's investigation. A strange kind of paranoid and violent madness has gripped the people of this ship.

Gabrielli radios the Wardens and asks for their urgent assistance. Crowds have gathered within the promenade ring and it looks like it's about to get ugly. She doesn't have enough security people left on her team to control the mob. She needs their help now!

Scene 5: Riot

All hell has broken loose on the promenade ring. Vacationers turned rabid swarm the area with the deadly intent of an angry mob. People are running, screaming, beating, and being beaten within the ebb and flow of this nightmarish rampage. The Wardens can see Gabrielli and three of her crew trying to hold their own near the broken window of a perfume store. The Wardens also spot Zarina Bahar huddled close to Gabrielli's team. If they can make it to a hatch about forty feet away, then they might be able to get out of there safely.

The Wardens have the option to assist Gabrielli and her team. If for some reason they choose to do something else, then Gabrielli will radio them and beg for help. The trick will be to fight through the crowd and get to Gabrielli's team while minimizing casualties among passengers. The Wardens will surely have surmised by now that something supernatural has gripped the ship and the use of deadly force against civilians would be a highly questionable move. If they're fortunate, they're already travelling with stun weapons of some kind – or snagged them from the weapons locker.

Scene 6: Another Murder

The Wardens, Gabrielli's team, and Zarina make it to safety. Zarina explodes in a flurry of language as she addresses the Wardens. She claims that she saw someone wearing her Hijab. He or she was moving fast. Zarina tried to follow to get a glimpse of the thief, but got caught in the promenade riot. When asked, she'll explain that she last saw this figure headed toward one of the stateroom sections of the ship – the one that houses Dr. Wells.

The Wardens find Dr. Wells' cabin door swung wide open. They discover Dr. Wells himself lying crumpled in a heap upon the deck, awash in a fresh pool of bloody mess. The shape of his skull is unrecognizable from the vicious battering it took from behind. Near the body, haphazardly strewn on the floor, is a large spanner wrench stained with blood. A damp black garment lies scattered just beyond the large mechanics tool – it's Zarina's Hijab. The Wardens can make an Investigate check with a -1 DM to locate a small, old fashioned, hand-written notebook lodged in between a desk and the bulkhead. It's open to a final page with a hurriedly scribbled note that reads:

"...I know now that the thing is onboard. It haunts my dreams and whispers to me in my quiet moments. It seems to feed on fear. I checked the seal on the sarcophagus today. As I feared, it's broken. I don't know how it could have survived in there, but near as I can tell it would have needed help to break out. I can only think of one person that could have done it. What kind of bargain could he have made with such a devil? But, then again, it's also hard for me to believe that he would have murdered his own wife back on Mars. God, I hope the Wardens get here soon!"

Scene 7: Hunting The Beast

A successful check of the Occult skill will reveal that the Wardens are likely dealing with a Nyphealous onboard a crippled cruise ship filled with terrified people – a virtual feast for the creature. This Nyphealous is special, however. Instead of being able to affect only one person at a time, it is capable of sowing the seeds of fear and despair to dozens in a shot. It is an exceptional creature capable of much destruction.

It has somehow enlisted the help of Nate Carstensen. He had the knowledge of the ship's transit drive. He had access to the sarcophagus. He certainly had a motive to cripple the ship. He had the opportunity to steal Zarina's Hijab at the party to sneak into the engine room. It's up to the Wardens to destroy the Nyphealous and bring Nate Carstensen to justice.

How the end game plays out is up to the Referee. The Nyphealous will begin to pray on the Warden's fears as well, creating a sense of helplessness

among the mass hysteria aboard ship. It stalks the dark places inside the ship, but always goes back to the cargo bay with its sarcophagus. It will also try to target Captain Martel. A ship without its captain will surely erode into full panic.

Nate Carstensen wants power and the Nyphe-
lous has promised him just that if he does its bidding. Nate will try to assassinate the captain. If the Wardens enlist Gabrielli's aid in apprehending him, one of her security guard will report him headed toward the officer's deck. The Wardens will have just enough time to wade through the violence of the mob in time to stop Nate from carrying out his plan.

One way or the other, the hunt is on!

The Syrtis Major Nyphelous

Str 10 (+1) Dex 10 (+1) End 10 (+1)

Int 9 (+1) Ins 14 (+2) Pck 1 (-3)

Skills: Athletics (co-ordination) 2, Deception 3, Language 2, Melee (natural weapons) 2, Stealth 3

Weapons: Tentacles (2d6+1)*, Bite (2d6+1)

Armor: Hide (4)

Horror Factor: 0 DM

Special Abilities: This Nyphelous is more powerful than the average member of its species – perhaps why it was locked away in the sarcophagus in the first place.

- *Coercer* – may convince anyone it has deceived to perform any action. Requires another Deception check. It can coerce up to a dozen people with one single check.
- *Deceiver* – all targets within 100 meters. It can appear as anyone the target knows or has known, simultaneously. Therefore, multiple targets will see different people from their lives, but all will be taken in by the deception.
- **Entangling Attack*
- *Telepathic* – senses every person's thoughts within 100 meters and knows a target's greatest fears or past tragedy.

Index

4G Enterprises	22, 133	Colonial Technologies	93
A/D Stasis	102	Colonies (Type)	93
A/D Stasis Visions Disadvantage	70	Colonizing the Solar System	22
Acute Senses Advantage	68	Coming Back from Madness	77
Advantages	40, 68	Commission	40
Adventures	198	Common Sense Advantage	69
Agent Career	44	Computer Technology	86
Aging	42	Connections	41
Alien Technology	157	Contact Advantage	68
Alliance of American States	134	Cosmic Power	180
Ally Advantage	68	Coward Disadvantage	71
Ambidextrous Advantage	68	Crius	145
Annoying Traits Disadvantage	70	Cthulhu	188
AQX Corporation	29, 147	Cultist	159
Arduous Class Frigate	104	Cults	27, 193
Aristocracy Class Yacht	106	Custom Organs	84
Aristocrat Career	46	Daedalus Complex	133
Armor (Heavy)	99	Dark Secret Disadvantage	71
Armor (Light)	99	Darkness Magnet Disadvantage	71
Army Career	48	Daysin Colony	133
Arrogant Disadvantage	70	Deep Ones	160, 190
Awakening Planets	195	Deep Space Stations	93
Awarding Experience	181	Defensive Equipment	99
Azathoth	189	Depressed Disadvantage	71
Background	38	Designing Spaceships	103
Background Skills	39	Develop Qualities	73
Basic Training	39	Diagnostic Beds	85
Benefits	41	Diamond Head	133
Bhole	158	Dice Modifier	74
Bigoted Disadvantage	71	Die Roll Conventions	74
Business	28	Dione	143
Caduceus Network	20	Disadvantages	40, 70
Callisto	139, 140	Disease Resistant Advantage	69
Camel Class OTV	108	Double-Jointed Advantage	69
Campaign Skills	42	Dream Void Advantage	69
Career	39	Dreamlands	194
Cassini	145	Drifter Career	52
Cassini University	145	Drugs	86
Character Advancement	73	Earth	134
Character Generation Checklist	38	Eidetic Memory Advantage	69
Characteristic Check	74	Elder Race	191
Characteristics	39	Empath Advantage	69
Characters	38	Enceladus	143, 144
Check	74	Enemy Disadvantage	71
Children of the Void	193	Entertainer Career	54
Chronic Pain Disadvantage	71	Equinox Class Transport	110
Chronos	145	Equipment	95
Chthonian Star	24, 186	Eternal Ones	189
Citizen Career	50	Europa	139, 140
Classic Story Structure	178	European Federation	134

Events	41	Karrak'in	164
Exotic Atmospheres	78	Knight's Errant Corvette	116
Exotic Environments	79	Kuiper Belt	150, 151
Explorer Career	56	Lagrange Points	135
Extended Consciousness	78	Lashing Horror	165
Eye Bands	88	Learning New Skills	73
Eye, the	31, 135	Leng	195
Fanatic Disadvantage	71	Life	32
Fast Advantage	69	Life Events Table	68
Fat Disadvantage	71	Lighthouse, the	31
Fate Points	78	Losing Qualities	73
Fearless Advantage	69	Luck Advantage	69
Fission Power Plants	90	Luna	135
Flare City	133	Madness	75
Flex Screen	88	Madness Scale	76
Fong's Body	24	Magic	180
Forbidden Knowledge	181	Maglev Train	91
Forge Class Mining Barge	112	Maneuvering Drives	91
Fort Saragossa	143	Maneuvering Systems	91
Fuel Cells	90	Manic Disadvantage	71
Full Term	40	Manifesto of Independent Colonies	21
Fusion Power Plants	89	Mariner Valley	137
Galilean Moons	138	Marines Career	58
Ganymede	138, 141	Mars	136
Gear	43	Mass Transit	91
Geo-Excavations	133	McAlister City	133
Ghosts	161, 191	McAlister Mining Concern	133
Ghoul	162	Medical Tools	85
Gifted Metabolism Advantage	69	Medicinal Sciences	84
Gravity	102	Melee Weapons	95
Gravity Couch	86	Memory Cube	88
Gravity Gel	86	Mental Disorders	76
Great Race	192	Merchants Career	60
Guardian Class Cutter	114	Mercury	130
Hades Gas Mines	142	Mercy Class Search & Rescue	118
Half Term	40	Metamorphasite	166
Handguns	96	Mi-Go	167, 191
Hard to Kill Advantage	69	Microwave Transmission Stations	89
Hastur	189	Mimas	143
History	18	Minos	139
History (Secret)	186	Mobile Patient Monitoring Systems	86
Horror Checks	74	Modern Storage Media	87
Horror Difficulty	75	Monsters	156
Horror Effects	75	Monstrous Traits	156
Hybrid	163	Myriad	168
Hyperion	143	Navy Career	62
Iapetus	143	Neptune	148
Increasing Characteristics	73	New Glasgow	144
Increasing Existing Skills	73	Night-Gaunt	169
Independent Races	191	Nightmares Disadvantage	71
Injuries	68	Nightvision Advantage	69
Inner-System Spaceships	92	Nugget, the	31
Inter-Planetary Spaceships	93	Nyarlathep	189
Internal Clock Advantage	69	Nymphelous	170
Internal Map Advantage	69	Oberon	147
Internet	88	Occult Sensitive Advantage	69
Io	140, 141	Occult Skill	43
Jovian Gas Mines	139	Oceanus	143
Jupiter	138	Odysseus	144
Kadath	195	Old Ones	181

Old Ones	188	Skills	40, 43
Optical Computer Systems	87	Skinny Disadvantage	72
Orbital Space Stations	93	Slow Disadvantage	72
Orbital Transfer Vehicles	92	Smart Vaccines	84
Order of the Storm	193	Solar Mining Corporation	133
Organic Computer Systems	87	Space Suits	95
Oshuki Colony	133	Space Technologies	91
Peripheral Vision Advantage	70	Spaceports	92
Persistent Injury Disadvantage	71	Spaceships	92, 102
Personal Transport	90	Spawn	172
Perth Class Freighter	120	Specialty	40
Phobia Disadvantage	72	Sprint Class Shuttle	122
Planetary Transportation	90	Submachine Guns	98
Plot Hooks	185	Surgical Suite	85
Pluto	150	Survivability	78
Political Parties	26	Svobodova Aerospace Industries	29
Politics	26	Takashi Group	133
Polypous Race	192	Task Difficulties	74
Poor Disadvantage	72	Technology	84
Port Klang	19	Terms	38
Port Tian	130	Terofex	173
Portable Medical Kit	86	Terraforming	94
Power Generation	89	Tethys	144
Primoris Nox	194	Themes	178
Puck	147	Thorn Pharmaceuticals	28
Qualities	40, 68	Titan	144, 145
R'yeh	195	Titania	147
Radiation Poisoning	180	Tormented Disadvantage	72
Random Generation	41	Tough Advantage	70
Rank	40	Tranquility	20, 22, 135
Rapid Recovery Advantage	70	Transit Drives	92
Rare Earths Incorporated	133	Travel Expenses	99
Recovery Earth	29	Travel Times	102
Referee	178	Travelling	102
Regenerative Therapies	85	TRIAD	131
Resslin Atmospheric Processor (RAP)	94	Triton	148
Rhadamanthus	139	Troy	140
Rhea	144	Turbulate Class Skimmer	124
Rhodes Company	149	Ugly Disadvantage	72
Rifles	97	Umbrella, the	31
Rival Disadvantage	72	Unified Ministry of God	19
Rogue Career	64	Unified World Council	19, 26
Rules	74	Unknowable Gods	181
Rumors	182	Uranus	146
S'shlosuuma	189	Ursa	139
Salacia	149	Valusians	193
Sarpedon	139	Vengeful Disadvantage	72
Saturn	142	Venture Corp	22
Scholar Career	66	Venus	132
Scions of Blight	194	Venusian Administrative Body	133
Secret Places	194	Veronica Station	146
Secrets	186	Wanted Disadvantage	72
Seethari	171	Wardens	30
Sensory Impaired Disadvantage	72	Wealthy Advantage	70
Servant Races	190	Weapons	95
Sexy Advantage	70	Wesley Corp.	29, 146
Shub-Niggurath	189	Wild Ones	194
Sino-China Alliance	134	Wrist Comps	88
Sixth Sense Advantage	70	Yog-Sothoth	190
Skill Check	74		

ETHIOPIAN STARS

CHARACTER BIO

NAME

AGE

HOMEWORLD

ETHNICITY

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

FATE POINTS

STR

MOD

INT

MOD

DEX

MOD

EDU

MOD

END

MOD

SOC

MOD

ARMOR

TYPE

RATING

SPECIAL NOTES

QUALITIES

EQUIPMENT

MASS

TOTAL MASS

WEALTH

CASH ON HAND

Mo. Ship PMNT

RANGE MODIFIERS

WEAPONS

ATTACK

DAMAGE

P C S M L VL D

NOTES

CAREER HISTORY

CAREER

SPECIALTY

EVENTS

RANK

TITLE

NOTES

ALLIES, CONTACTS, ENEMIES, RIVALS

SKILLS

ADMIN
ADVOCATE
ANIMALS
ATHLETICS
ATHLETICS
ATHLETICS
ART
ART
ASTROGATION
BATTLE DRESS
BROKER
CAROUSE
COMMS
COMPUTERS
DECEPTION
DIPLOMAT
DRIVE
DRIVE
ENGINEER
ENGINEER
EXPLOSIVES
FLYER
FLYER
GAMBLER
GUNNER
GUNNER
GUN COMBAT
GUN COMBAT
GUN COMBAT
HEAVY WEAPONS
HEAVY WEAPONS
INVESTIGATE
JACK OF ALL TRADES
LANGUAGE
LANGUAGE
LEADERSHIP
LIFE SCIENCES
LIFE SCIENCES
MECHANIC
MEDIC
MELEE
MELEE
NAVIGATION
OCCULT
PERSUADE
PILOT
PILOT
PHYSICAL SCIENCES
PHYSICAL SCIENCES
RECON
REMOTE OPERATIONS
SEAFARER
SEAFARER
SENSORS
SOCIAL SCIENCES
SOCIAL SCIENCES
SPACE SCIENCES
SPACE SCIENCES
STEALTH
STEWARD
STREETWISE
SURVIVAL
TACTICS
TACTICS
TRADE
TRADE
VACC SUIT
ZERO-G



the **Cthulhu Saga**

2159 AD. It is a good time to be alive. The nations of the world still exist, but they have become more civilized, and we have expanded into the rest of our solar system. But, alas, it is not to be our time. Something approaches, a thing on an orbit from far away. Seemingly a large shard of dark matter, this object is known in obscure prophecy as the Chthonian Star. It is awakening things long thought lost or dead, things that have slumbered awaiting its return. The Unified World Council sends out special teams of sanctioned Wardens, whose job it is to ascertain the new threats to human life, to learn everything they can about them, and fight them wherever they are found.

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