

TRAVELLER

POWERS AND PRINCIPALITIES

CREDITS

Classic Traveller

Marc Miller

Loren Wiseman, John Harshman, Frank Chadwick, Darryl Hany, Winston Hamilton, Tony Svajlenka, Scott Renner, Doug Poe, David MacDonald, Wayne Roth, Paul R. Banner.

Mongoose Traveller

Writers

David Thomas, John G. Wood and the ISBA – Douglas E. Berry (Gridlore); Robert Eaglestone (Culinary Temple, EntreSys, Gilgameshu, Marliiner, Xenobotanicals, UCP); Roderick Darroch Elliott (Famille Spofulam); Glenn M. Goffin (ISD, Yoyodyne, UCP); John Groth (AuricTech, Saurian Farmers, Sweet-Carroll, UCP); Andy Lilly (additional plots); Andrea Vallance (UCP); Greg Nokes (Tributis and subsidiaries); William 'Commander X' Prankard (X-TEK and subsidiaries); Tim Reynolds (Founder ShipWorks, ISBA, UCP); Robert Walsh (Maximus Interstellar); Ian Whitchurch (Famille Spofulam, UCP), Michael Barry, Craig Berry, Douglas Berry, Peter Brenton, Timothy Collinson, Steve Daniels, Harold Hale, Andy and Sarah Lilly, Hans Rancke-Madsen, Allison Mawhinney, Richard Mawhinney, Dominic Mooney, Peter Newman, William Prankard, Rob Prior, David Thomas, John Wood and Jeff Zeitlin, with additional assistance from Ann Hindson and Barbara Lucas.

Editors

Andy Lilly, Timothy Collinson, Richard Mawhinney, Dominic Mooney, John G. Wood and Matthew Sprange

Layout

Will Chapman

Interior Illustrations

Sean Thornton, Olivier Frot, Carlos Nunez de Castro Torres, Evan Shippard, Nuno Nobre, German Ponce, Rich Longmore, Vitor Ishimura

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Corporations	4
Administration	9
Agriculture	14
Construction	20
Finance, Insurance	23
and Real Estate	23
Manufacturing	28
Mining	38
Service	41
Trade	50
Transport, Communications	54
And Utilities	54
Corporate Scheming	59
Glossary	62
Governments	63
No Government	65
Company/Corporation	68
Participating Democracy	70
Self-Perpetuating Oligarchy	73
Representative Democracy	76
Feudal Technocracy	80
Captive Government	83
Balkanisation	85
Civil Service Bureaucracy	89
Impersonal Bureaucracy	91
Charismatic Dictator	95
Non-Charismatic Leader	97
Charismatic Oligarchy	100
Religious Dictatorship	105
Glossary	112
Religions	113
Animism	115
Polytheistic Animism	118
Polytheism	121
Rational Polytheism	123
Dualism	126
Interactive Monotheism	130
Influential Monotheism	135
Crisis Monotheism	137
Remote Monotheism	140
Deism	144
Pantheism	147
Agnostics	151
Atheism	154
Other Beliefs and Cults	157
Glossary	159

©BITS UK Limited 2014. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission from BITS UK Limited.

Powers and Principalities ©2014 Mongoose Publishing. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this work by any means without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden. All significant characters, names, places, items, art and text herein are copyrighted by Mongoose Publishing.

This game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Game License, please go to www.mongoosepublishing.com.

This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United Kingdom and of the United States. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people organisations, places or events is purely coincidental.

Traveller is a trademark of Far Future Enterprises and is used under licence.

INTRODUCTION



This book is, in many ways, a continuation of *Supplement 13: Starport Encounters*. Whereas that book provided a ready toolkit for referee's to flesh out starports with ships, crews and passengers, *Supplement 15: Powers and Principalities* does the same with the forces and organisations that control the planets players land upon – the corporations, governments and religions.

Not all participating democracies will be identical. Each will have its own eccentricities and nuances. The same applies to the corporations players will take jobs for or purchase from. Not all agricultural companies are run the same way, after all.

By using the provided corporations, governments and religions in this book, referees will be able to populate their universes with the minimum of effort, ensuring now that not only every starport is different, but the world beyond its gates remains vivid and alive in the minds of the players.

The goal is to make every planet in your campaign unique and interesting, and *Supplement 15: Powers and Principalities* will do just that with no extra work on the part of the referee.

To this end, this book covers three key areas where referees can always use a little help.

CORPORATIONS

This part of the book provides a broad range of public and private companies with which to populate your Traveller

universe. No longer will your players need to buy equipment from, work for, or invest in, faceless, nameless businesses – you need only pick an appropriate corporation from this supplement.

GOVERNMENTS

Probably one of the most important features of a given world (beyond whether one can breathe the atmosphere) is the ruling government. The rulers of a world dictate the laws by which one must abide, the attitude of the natives to visitors, and frequently the basic philosophies by which everyday life operates. Governments provide players with a wide variety of challenges and adventure opportunities, in addition to being valuable background colour.

RELIGIONS

Religion is almost universally intended to answer The Great Questions; Who are we? Why are we here? Life is incredibly common (in the Traveller universe). Most people now take this for granted, but philosophers, scientists, theologians and mystics still debate why such an unlikely event has happened on so many worlds. There are many popular explanations for why life is so widespread. Some credit the Ancients, a semi-mythical species that died out millennia ago. Others invoke deities and supernatural intervention. Some raise Life itself to godhood, believing that Life called itself into existence out of the very fabric of the universe. Others go farther, believing that our universe is but one of many such living (or even dead) universes. Most sophont species develop religions during their climb to civilisation.



CORPORATIONS

Trade is the lifeblood of the Imperium.

- Cleon I

Corporations are presented according to the products or services they supply. Each has an entry as follows.

Description

This is data about the corporation which is generally available, that is, it may already be known to the players, or it can be found in the appropriate library database, obtained from locals, employees, and so forth.

Referee's Notes

Additional information for the referee, some of which may be uncovered by research, some of which may be so secret it is known only to the corporation's chief executive.

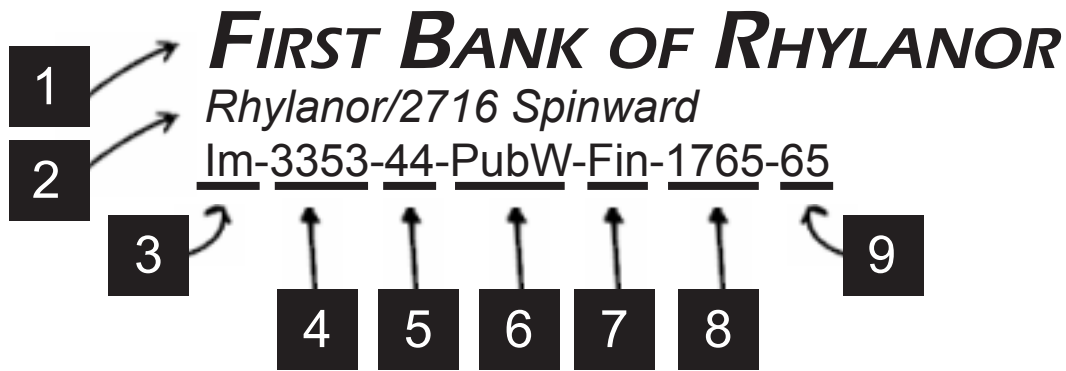
Plots

One or more plots, for use as background colour, subplots or red herrings within an existing adventure, or for expansion into full adventures.

THE UNIVERSAL CORPORATE PROFILE

Originally developed by the Imperial Ship Builders Association (ISBA), the Universal Corporate Profile (UCP) is a method of describing companies and other corporate entities. Originally the UCP comprised a string of hexadecimal digits similar to the Universal World Profile (UWP) published by the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS). When the Imperial Securities Department of the Ministry of Trade adopted it they found a need to make the information more directly accessible and recast it in a more legible form. The UCP is now the standard for information transfer between business directories across the Imperium.





1. NAME

Though a corporation may have several names, as well as subsidiaries, it should have one legally recognised named body to which all operations are ultimately subservient.

2. HEADQUARTERS

A corporation's headquarters (HQ) is defined as the main world from which it is governed. It is denoted by the world name, sector or subsector hex position and sector name. For example, a Regina corporation would have the code Regina/1910 Spinward Marches. This is omitted for most corporations in this book, making them suitable for placement on almost any world.

3. ALLEGIANCE

The IISS survey two-letter allegiance code is used to represent the most appropriate of the following: the company's major nation of registry, the first nation in which the company registered, the current location of its HQ, or the largest nation the company is registered with, as shown here.

Im - Imperium
Fa - Federation of Arden
Da - Darrian Confederation
Hv - Hive Federation
Na - Non-aligned World
So - Solomani Confederation
Va - Vargr
Zh - Zhodani Consulate

4. CORPORATE SCOPE

4.1 Number of Employees

They number of employees within the corporation.

4.2 Range

This shows the geographical spread of the company's operations. Ratings of 6 (Imperial) or 7 (Trans-Imperial) indicate megacorporations.

4.3 Revenue

This represents the corporation's gross annual revenue as a percentage of the Gross Regional Product (GRP), or the total monetary value of goods and services produced and sold annually of all businesses in its operating area.

4.4 Risk

This represents the probability of the company losing money for investors, and is rated from 0 (risk-free) to 7 (extreme, heavy losses expected). Note that riskier companies may result in higher returns but there are no guarantees. Non-profit organisations are given the special code N, since no return on investment is expected.

5. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

5.1 Influence

This represents the corporation's influence on politics within its region, from 0 (no influence) to 7 (total control).

5.2 Public Image

This represents the company's public image, from 0 (public enemy number one) to 7 (the people's favourite).

6. NATURE

This is the manner in which the corporation is owned.

7. INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

This defines the areas in which the corporation is active.

Since a corporation may have more than one main operation it may have multiple codes. In this case, each entry is

suffixed with a digit from 1 to 9 representing the proportion (in tens of percentage points) of company revenue received from that particular activity.

8. CORPORATE STYLE

8.1 Research and Development (R&D)

This measures the company's interest in research, from 0 (no R&D) to 7 (the company exists purely for research). It governs the percentage of revenue that the corporation is willing to invest in R&D, so a large operation with little interest in R&D may still have a bigger research budget than a small concern which is devoted to investigating novel discoveries.

8.2 Tradition

This measures the resistance of the company to changes in the corporate style, from 0 (no tradition) to 7 (completely hidebound).

8.3 Centralisation

This measures how power is concentrated within the company, from 0 (everyone has equal influence) to 7 (the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) may make major decisions without consulting anyone). A typical large public corporation will be rated 4-6; the board of directors decides policy but department heads make the day-to-day decisions required to carry it out. It can also be used to measure the administrative rank of people within the company – those with the most power have rank matching the company rating, others correspondingly less.

8.4 Unity

This measures the unity of opinion within the decision-making elements of the company. It ranges from 0 (everyone has their own idea of where the corporation should be going) to 7 (a single united vision).

9. LABOUR RIGHTS

9.1 Paranoia

This measures the degree of paranoia within the company, from 0 (totally open) to 7 (genuinely paranoid). At high paranoia levels, office communications are routinely monitored, personnel are subjected to psychological analysis and drug testing. In the extreme, security go through personal effects and conduct covert surveillance of staff outside work.

9.2 Employee Relations

This measures how the company regards/is regarded by its employees, from 0 (actively antagonistic/very poor) to 7 (totally paternalistic/vitally concerned with its employees' well being).

EXAMPLES

The following examples demonstrate how the UCP should be interpreted.

First Bank of Rhylanor

Rhylanor/2716 Spinward

Im-3353-54-PubW-Fin-1765-65

The First Bank of Rhylanor is a publicly listed Imperial company with a wide shareholder base, governed from Rhylanor, employing thousands of people and generating virtually all its income from financial activity. It operates over less than a subsector but is very influential there, while being regarded fairly neutrally by the public. It has very large revenue and is a safe investment. The bank has little interest in research; it is extremely traditional, with highly centralised management and rarely modifies its corporate style. There are frequent and intrusive security checks on its employees but the staff are well looked after.

Sunarimi Bay Collective

Im-2035-24-Mut-Ag7-Manu1-Ret1-Svc1-2101-04

The Sunarimi Bay Collective is a co-operative society whose activities are limited to a single area on an Imperial world. Hundreds of people work for the collective, generating income mostly from agriculture (70%) but also from manufacturing, retailing and service provision (10% each). It has fairly limited influence locally but is moderately well-regarded (it has some strong supporters but also some vigorous opponents) but while it generates modest revenue, is not a very safe investment. It spends a little on R&D, is not particularly traditional, trusts its employees and distributes power very widely. Disagreements over where to take the company next are common. It does its best to look after its workforce but cannot afford many benefits.

BOOK 7: MERCHANT PRINCE

The corporations presented here are intended to be used to provide colour and background for players when they visit worlds and interact with larger organisations. While the UCP may look complicated at first (though we are sure Traveller veterans will take it in their stride!), it is simply a very neat way of presenting a corporation in a readily useable format.

Referees looking for greater involvement for corporations are encouraged to look at *Book 7: Merchant Prince*, which includes a system for treating corporations in a similar manner to characters, with their own characteristics and skills. This is recommended if players have their own businesses that interact with corporations on a regular basis, and handles campaigns where such things as engaging in commercial wars and corporate espionage are a core focus.

However, for most campaigns, the system presented here will be more than sufficient.

UNIVERSAL CORPORATE PROFILE

1. NAME:

DATE OF PREPARATION:

2. HEADQUARTERS:

3. ALLEGIANCE (ENTER TWO-LETTER CODE):

4. SCOPE

4.1 Employees ☐

4.2 Range ☐

4.3 Revenue (% GRP) ☐

4.4 Risk ☐

0. 1-9	0. Local	0. Insignificant (<10-6)	0. None
1. 10-99	1. Global	1. Tiny (10-6+)	1. Tiny
2. 100-999	2. Interplanetary	2. Small (10-5+)	2. Small
3. 1,000-9,999	3. Interstellar	3. Low Average (10-4+)	3. Low Average
4. 10,000-99,999	4. Subsectors	4. High Average (0.001-0.009)	4. High Average
5. 100,000-999,999	5. Sectors	5. Large (0.01-0.09)	5. Large
6. 1-9 Million	6. Imperial	6. Huge (0.1-0.9)	6. Huge
7. 10-99 Million	7. Trans-Imperial	7. Immense (1-9)	7. Extreme
8. 100-999 Million		8. Monopolistic (10-99)	N. Not for Profit
9. 1 Billion or more			

5. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

5.1 Influence

5.2 Public Image

0. None	0. Hated
1. Very Minor	1. Strongly Disliked
2. Minor	2. Disliked
3. Significant	3. Mildly Disliked
4. Major	4. Ignored
5. Very Major	5. Popular Friendly Society base)
6. Dominant	6. Very Popular
7. Total Control	7. Worshipped Liability

6. NATURE

Div	Division	Div	Division
Emp	Employee Trust	PubS	Publicly Listed Company (PLC) (single dominant
Fam	Family Business shareholder)	PubL	PLC (limited shareholder base)
Gov	Corporate Government	Mut	Mutual Company/
LL	Private Limited Liability	PubW	PLC (wide shareholder
NL	Private Non Limited	StSp	State Sponsored
StO	State Owned Enterprise	Sole	Sole Proprietorship
Part	Partnership	Sub	Wholly-Owned Subsidiary
Priv	Private Trust		

7. INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION (enter one digit to indicate tens of percentages)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation, Communications, Utilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Service
<input type="checkbox"/> Mining	<input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale trade	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Administrative
<input type="checkbox"/> Construction	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail trade	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclassifiable
<input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	

8. CORPORATE STYLE

8.1 R&D ☐

8.2 Tradition ☐

8.3 Centralisation ☐

8.4 Unity ☐

0. None	0. No Tradition	0. Equal Influence	0. No Consensus
1. Very Little	1. A Few Customs	1. Very Broad	1. Very Little
2. Little	2. Loose Guidelines	2. Broad	2. Little
3. Low Average	3. Tight Guidelines	3. Broad Average	3. Low Average
4. High Average	4. Standardised Rules	4. Narrow Average	4. High Average
5. High	5. Rigid Rules	5. Narrow	5. High
6. Very High	6. Very Rigid Rules	6. Very Narrow	6. Very High
7. Devoted to R&D	7. Totally Hidebound	7. All Power at Centre	7. Single Vision

9. LABOUR RIGHTS

9.1 Paranoia

9.2 Employee Relations

0. Totally Open	0. Actively Opposed
1. Token Checks	1. Totally Uncaring
2. Minor Checks	2. Very Minor Benefits
3. Standard Checks	3. Minor Benefits
4. High Security	4. Significant Benefits
5. Very High Security	5. Major Benefits
6. Intrusive Security	6. Very Major Benefits
7. Genuinely Paranoid	7. Paternalistic

10. NOTES

ADMINISTRATION

Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants.

- E. Burke

1. CITYWIDE FIRE SERVICES

Im-101N-02-StSp-Pub-0226-21-

Description

CFS is a well-equipped, taxpayer-funded fire-fighting service. It is constantly trying to recruit high quality volunteers into its ranks and also advertises for donations to supplement its funds. It has stations throughout the locality and provides full time fire cover at the starport.

Referee's Notes

CFS was once a well-funded, well-equipped organisation, funded solely from local taxes back when safety was a top priority for the local government. Times change; repeated cutbacks over more than a decade mean the service is struggling to keep going. Equipment bought in better times is aging and as items wear out they are being replaced by inferior substitutes. A significant proportion of funding now comes from voluntary contributors, including local businesses – the recent 'sponsor a fire-fighter' appeal has been very successful, allowing the service to defer the closure of two stations. The largest single source of private income is the starport authority (SPA) which demands an on-site team for instant response. This is expensive to provide, but the SPA contribution pays enough to subsidise the rest of the service.

Apart from equipment, staffing is the main problem caused by the reduced government funding. The CFS used to have a small pool of volunteers to step in at busy times, but now these helpers form the bulk of the workforce. Though unpaid, their equipment, training and maintaining them at readiness still cost money; the lack of permanent staff is affecting performance. Morale is low. The fire-fighters have kept the service running with sheer determination but it has become obvious that the government is using their efforts as evidence that the CFS can operate on an even smaller budget. The public is beginning to lose faith in a service that, increasingly frequently, turns up too late or with insufficient equipment or people to function effectively. The fire-fighters feel that it is only a matter of time before a tragedy occurs.

Plots

1: The players are hired to collect a very valuable document from a government building. When they get there they find the building in flames and the CFS packing up to leave. The fire-fighters explain that all the occupants are now safe and they have another call to attend. If the players make a fuss, the frustrated captain will say 'I don't see why we should prioritise them when they don't care about us.' The players may offer to help, bribe or threaten the CFS group to help them get into the building and retrieve their vital document.

2: Two burly men approach the players and look over their ship. 'Very nice,' says one. 'It would be *such* a shame if it was destroyed in a fire. Lucky for you we're here to offer you some (cough) protection...' These are collectors for CFS, who have been watching too many gangster vids...

3: As 1 or 2 above, plus the players learn about the impending station closures and a very recent death due to equipment failures which has been covered up by the government. The authorities will discourage players from publicising this data.

2. THE COMPANY

Im-6280-74-Gov-Pub-4435-56

Description

Listed in the ISD register as T'lark State Corporation, everyone refers to this government as the 'Company'. It runs the world as a socialist state and although technically every resident is an employee they are referred to simply as citizens.

The Company works tirelessly to maintain the health, well-being and economic prosperity of all its citizens, making this world the ideal place to live. Trust The Company; The Company is your friend; The Company's products are the best; be proud of your membership of The Company.

Referee's Notes

This world's corporate status is a convenience to allow a minimally-capitalist, centrally-planned economy to flourish within the Imperium. They believe their dream of a socialist paradise is hindered by the Imperial stance on free trade. Though forced to compete with foreign imports, citizens are proud of their society and work hard Administration to prove that their way is best, and their products are as good or better than offworlder rubbish. Other corporations are

allowed to set up on the world, but have a hard time of it; locals who work for them must leave the Company and lose their citizenship; employees from other worlds lack the basic rights of citizens. Given the local dislike of outsider goods, external enterprises are rarely financially viable. However, one import welcomed by the citizens is entertainment – many of them see the rest of space as an exotic place, good to read or hear about, ‘although you wouldn’t want to go there’. Some young citizens *do* emigrate, fired by the potential excitement of life elsewhere.

Plots

1: As part of a recent surge of citizens leaving the planet, a man approaches the players, seeking passage for a large group of emigrants. When they come aboard, they appear excited, but during jump the players find out their passengers’ view of the Imperium is based on the soap operas and adventure holos they have seen. It may be difficult to break the truth to them...

2: As 1, but the passengers have paid the patron extortionate amounts for the flight as they have little knowledge of offworld finances.

3: As 1 or 2, and the passengers have paid the patron for housing and jobs at their destination. The patron has lied and will disappear with their money at the destination. The forlorn citizens (and police) will no doubt hold the players responsible...

3. ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION

Im-3233-33-StO-Pub-4422-43

Description

The ERC is charged with the licensing and management of all projects in this system which may have a significant environmental impact. It has far-reaching powers to investigate and, if necessary, suspend a company’s operations pending legal proceedings.

Referee’s Notes

With industrial pollution threatening to alter their atmosphere code to ‘tainted’, this world is now very concerned about the environment. They have invested the ERC with enough resources and legal authority to be a truly effective body. Companies, government departments and even individuals have to submit proposals and buy licenses for any activities with ‘a significant environmental impact’ (a catch-all phrase which is interpreted very broadly). The ERC has popular support, but industries pay heavily to meet the environmental regulations. A tiny minority, which includes some of the most powerful entities in the system, are openly hostile, actively manoeuvring to limit the ERC’s powers and claiming the

ERC contravenes Imperial free trade rules. Unless they win, this looks like backfiring as ERC enthusiasts have boycotted the companies and their products. One of the arguments raging within the ERC (and the population at large) is the status of barren planets elsewhere in the system. Should these be preserved in their natural state or exploited to reduce pressure on the main world? So far, the ERC has compromised by issuing only short-term licenses (although the most extreme environmentalists see this as total surrender).

Plots

1: Arriving in-system with a cargo of industrial equipment, the players discover their goods do not meet the latest ERC legislation – the cargo is effectively worthless. One company covertly offers to buy the goods, if the players do them a little favour, carrying supplies to a secret mining operation on a nearby gas giant moon. The players arrive just as the ERC is delivering an order to cease operations... the miners respond violently.

4. GLOBAL BEANSTALK CONSORTIUM

Im-1136-31-PubW-Util4-Fin1-Pub5-0444-42

Description

This company was formed with one goal; to build a beanstalk, or space elevator, carrying visitors and cargo between the highport and the planet’s surface. They succeeded and rides on the beanstalk are comfortable, safe and afford spectacular views of the planet and passing ships.

Referee’s Notes

GBC is the butt of much local humour. The project went vastly over-budget and, despite high ticket prices, the company is having difficulty servicing its debt. Rumours of technical problems are rife, but their safety record is spotless.

Plots

1: The players are travelling on the beanstalk when power suddenly fails. Emergency brakes bring the car to a halt 2,000 km above the ground. Unknown to the GBC steward and panicky passengers aboard the car, an irate debtor has sabotaged the beanstalk to provide leverage in negotiating rapid payment of the debt by GBC.

5. HAPPY ENLI’S REDISTRIBUTIONS

Im-3142-50-StSp-Pub-0465-64

Description

HER helps you calculate what you need to pay the government in taxes and will even transfer it from your account for you. Paying your dues was never so easy as it is now, thanks to Happy Enli’s.

Referee's Notes

HER won the bidding war when the government privatised its tax collection. HER has demonstrated its effectiveness over the last decade but is now quite unpopular with taxpayers because of its high-handed approach and brutal response to anyone who has problems paying up. The company is invested with extensive powers (including statutory right of entry to homes and offices) and does not hesitate to exercise them.

HER's contract is coming up for renewal or reassignment. It has often been suggested that HER is run by a bunch of criminals, but this is dismissed as popular paranoia. Very few people know that it genuinely does have connections with organised crime on the planet; this, in turn, strongly influences the actions of the government. To date, any attempts to expose these connections have always been violently quashed.

Plots

1: HER agents raid the players' ship to collect due 'transient taxes'. The burly men will do their best to antagonise the party and will look very pleased if they resist. The starport authorities reluctantly admit that a change in local law means staying dirtside more than 24 hours allows HER to tax travellers and cargo as if they were natives.

2: The players find two dead reporters hidden in their cargo. The police detain the players briefly, then release them and encourage them to leave planet quickly. The reporters were on the verge of uncovering the connections between HER, the government and the crime syndicate; the police have orders to hush up the deaths. If the players investigate further, the bodies will vanish and the party will suffer a potentially fatal 'accident'.

6. IMPERIAL SECURITIES DEPARTMENT

Capital/2118 Core
Im-462N-65-StO-Pub-1456-54

Description

Established by Imperial Edict 38 as a part of what is now the Ministry of Trade, ISD's mission is to preserve the integrity of the Imperial securities, commodities and financial markets. It is also charged with assisting member worlds in the management of their internal securities markets. ISD has two key divisions: Registration reviews applications for the Limited Imperial Charter (LIC), then receives and disseminates the prescribed financial reports of chartered corporations; Market Regulation monitors interstellar securities markets and intervenes in cases of fraud or manipulation.

Referee's Notes

It was well remembered in the early Third Imperium that the Long Night had been triggered in large measure by

the collapse of the Rule of Man's financial systems; ISD was founded to prevent a reoccurrence. It is a largely autonomous department within its parent ministry; its Director reports directly to the Minister of Trade. To inspire corporate confidence, ISD has always been one of the least secretive departments of the Imperial bureaucracy. It actively investigates violations of the Imperial securities laws and has broad investigative powers, working closely with the Ministry of Justice in prosecuting cases that are not settled at the administrative level. The ISD has a small staff of subject matter experts, scattered across the Imperium, with a moderate headquarters on Capital. Registration fees provide part of its funding but most comes from the Ministry budget.

Plots

1: ISD is investigating Schunemann und Sohn, AG, LIC (SuSAG) for securities fraud. SuSAG is accused of falsifying test data on a new drug and including the false results in reports filed with ISD to improve its stock price. The local ISD agent engages the players as deputies to help serve an administrative subpoena on the SuSAG Pharmaceutical Division laboratory where the tests were conducted. The team must accompany the ISD agent to the laboratory, arriving unannounced just before the administrative staff goes home for the day. The players must help copy the computer databases and take away any physical evidence, such as drug or tissue samples, and printed or written records. Pay is Cr. 1,000 per player per day.

2: As 1, but SuSAG has wind of the ISD subpoena and needs to destroy the laboratory evidence before the raid. Posing as an employee of a rival company, a SuSAG operative engages the players to destroy all samples stored in the laboratory for a flat payment of Cr. 20,000. The players are warned not to injure anyone or they will be exposed to local law enforcement authorities. In reality, SuSAG will destroy the computer files via a faked hacker attack. The lab's night watch staff are not aware of the scheme, and will respond rapidly to any intrusion into the lab.

7. INTELLIGENCE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Im-3434-40-StO-Pub-6663-63

Description

Concerned about national security? IMS provides training, equipment and (if necessary) personnel for any government's intelligence needs. This company has decades of experience in all aspects of data-gathering and analysis, as well as leak elimination and infiltration.

Referee's Notes

A dictatorship on a balkanised world set up IMS in order to earn money from the expertise built up through years of running its secret police and spy network. The venture

has been very successful; there is always a demand for intelligence, even within the Imperium. IMS will deal with anyone who can pay its exorbitant fees; it does not vet prospective clients based on ideology. This, combined with the fact

that it does lucrative business training, equipping and hiring out specialists in counter-insurgency and interrogation has made the company very unpopular with sophont rights groups. One of the company's strictest rules is that it does not give out information about its clients – it recognises that this would immediately destroy its market. Even so, no government trusts IMS to keep information from its parent dictatorship; consequently most customers are from worlds some distance away, who feel that they will not be harmed by limited leaks of information. A closely-kept secret is that a significant proportion of IMS clients are corporations, whose intelligence and security needs are often similar to (and may conflict with!) those of governments. Most IMS equipment is imported from Spy-TEK as the latter supplies far higher quality kit than can be produced locally. IMS sells or leases this on at a significant mark-up to its clients. However, the company's real selling point is the experience of its staff – from relatively mundane bodyguard services to highly covert intelligence operations.

Management of IMS is in flux at the moment – the old head of operations was recently assassinated and various senior executives are currently jockeying for position.

Plots

1: Arriving on a high-law level world, the players are detained in a soundproof room and shown evidence of previous misdemeanours. They are given a choice; act as spies for the government during their stay or be deported. In reality this is an IMS training programme; the agents holding them are being tested. The players will be asked to pick up messages from dead letter drops and other suspicious acts, though the encrypted texts are actually harmless and nothing the players do is illegal. At the end of their stay, the players will be debriefed by the IMS trainees, then let go, with a warning not to discuss this with anyone else.

2: As 1, but this is a real IMS operation – the players act as go-betweens for stolen intelligence documents. If discovered by the local authorities, the players will be arrested and tried as spies.

8. MADKASHGERG & CHIN

Im-1122-35-Part-Svc3-Pub7-4356-66

Description

When you have to appear on 'Trial By The People', you need the best representation you can buy. M&C have provided the highest rated legal counsel for three seasons running; don't trust your opportunity for justice to anything less. On this world, it is claimed that 'justice is in the hands of the

people.' Trials are broadcast live and the audience votes on the result; the show's host then passes sentence. Currently led by senior partners Harika Gaarrasa and Vassily Sudeiko, M&C is one of a small group of companies that has taken the process to new heights of showmanship, including full holo reconstructions of the crime starring famous performers.

Referee's Notes

The company does a lot of work that is paid for by the government. Much of this is prosecution on behalf of the state but a growing proportion is legal aid work, helping those who cannot pay for their own defence team. High-profile cases are taken on by the company's top people but less popular cases are used as practice cases (or 'trial trials' as M&C call them) for newer employees. Though supplemented by advertising revenue, M&C's fees for government work have rocketed recently, yet the number of commissions keeps growing. Cynics point out that this coincides with the elevation of Sudeiko's wife to the premiership.

Plots

1: One (or more) of the players is arrested and charged with a crime. M&C are assigned their case but as it is uninteresting they give it to one of their least experienced teams. Another showy firm is handling the prosecution; it is obvious that the players will lose unless they can attract the interest of someone higher up in M&C.

2: As witnesses to a crime, the players are paid to appear in a holo-reconstruction of the event. When the show goes out, they find their evidence has been badly misrepresented; friends of the wrongly-convicted party then come after them...

9. RAHMAN ECONOMIC INSTITUTE

Im-2433-45-LL-Svc3-Pub7-6544-35

Description

The REI is a centre for economic excellence – it employs some of the best financial minds in the Imperium. It can provide advisors, trainers, administrators and co-ordinators for economic projects of any scale, under any conditions.

Referee's Notes

Originally a school of economics, in recent years the REI has moved more and more into the administration of large economic programmes, primarily for local governments. It is impartial regarding economic ideology and will work on any project, from a fully state-planned economy to free-market capitalism. REI-run projects have had both notable successes and disastrous failures; for the latter, REI have avoided publicity or fought strenuous legal battles to deflect the blame.

Plots

1: An REI contract on a balkanised world is threatened by the

actions of a neighbouring state, who have imposed a trade blockade. The REI needs the project to succeed and are offering a reward for anyone who can break the blockade.

10. THIRD SET INCARCERATIONS

Im-3426-32-WOS-Pub-0552-71

Description

TSI are experienced in managing prisons, detention centres and rehabilitation programmes on many worlds. They provide an economical and secure service flexible enough to meet almost any local criminal confinement requirements.

Referee's Notes

TSI is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Lindarport Security. When LS bought the company three years ago it found that most of the individual prisons were being run effectively but that the high-level finance and administration were a shambles. It has spent the intervening time restructuring the operation and has begun the messy task of cleaning up the few prisons where incompetent management is apparent. TSI matches their prison management style effectively to local conditions by using a locally recruited workforce with offworld personnel in key positions. TSI's operations range from electronic tagging and monitoring of convicts allowed back into society, to prisoner transport and maximum security buildings on hostile outer-system moons.

Where legal, TSI puts prisoners to work on unskilled tasks to earn the company extra income. Security has always been the company's top priority and even the worst-run operations have an excellent record on escape prevention. Prisoner rights are less of a concern and this has brought public criticism; Lindarport are investigating ways of improving the company's image in this area.

The new management plans to spend another year or two consolidating before aggressively expanding the company. The sales group are investigating potential new customers and preparing a big advertising campaign, but Lindarport are wary of pushing too hard until TSI has finished its housecleaning operations.

Plots

1: The players are arrested (justifiably or not) and placed in a TSI-run prison. Unfortunately it is one of the worst, with constant gang warfare between prisoner factions. The guards are completely ineffective at keeping order and some covertly or overtly support the gangs. As newcomers with no status, the players are the targets of every frustrated prisoner looking for somebody to push around...

2: TSI hires the players to test security at a prison, by trying to break out a convict planted by TSI. There will be no legal repercussions if they succeed, provided no other prisoners escape.

3: As 2, but the TSI rep is acting for the prison governor, who has a poor administrative record and believes Lindarport will fire him for incompetence. The break out will be subdued with maximum force to provide him with good publicity.

4: As 2, but the governor has been embezzling funds for years and fears discovery by the LS investigators. He plans to make good his escape during the confusion of the break out.

5: As 2, but the TSI rep is actually from a crime gang who wish to spring their incarcerated colleague. To reinforce his story, he will supply the players with low power stun guns 'so no one gets hurt by accident'. On the day of the escape, a coded radio signal increases the weapons' power to lethal levels.

AGRICULTURE

All taxes must, at last, fall upon agriculture.
Edward Gibbon

1. AL-G

Im-4443-26-PubW-Ag8-Whol2-0334-22

Description

Al-G provides raw materials for a wide variety of synthetic foodstuffs; they can also build and staff the processing facilities. Algal farming the Al-G way is cheap, energy-efficient, and an important contributor to air and water recycling. Al-G concentrate on the cultivation of their product, contracting out for processing equipment when necessary. Many of their plants produce a surplus, which drives their wholesale trade.

Referee's Notes

It is nearly impossible to grow food in traditional ways on most starships, space habitats and hostile worlds. Al-G uses geneered algae to produce proteins for synth-meats as well as carbohydrates for synth-veg and synth-fruit. Few people realise that some high-cuisine foodstuffs are also Al-G products sold under alternative trading names such as Allierian Finest.

Plots

1: A passenger books two jumps on the players' ship but after the intermediate stop-over, he fails to turn up for the onwards journey. Enquiries reveal that he has not been seen since shortly after arrival. As the players' ship makes to leave, it is impounded by port security. Human remains have been found in the local Al-G plant and DNA tests link these with the missing passenger. The victim was killed in a bar brawl by a worker at the plant, who tried to hide the evidence... however, until this is discovered, the players are prime suspects.

2: The players obtain a shipment of surplus Al-G foodstuffs at rock-bottom prices. There is an explosion in the hold during jump – the cargo area is plastered with algae. After the players clean up (especially if using high pressure water sprays or similar) they find algal deposits forming in air vents, water outlets, etc. The shipment contained raw, super-fast growing algae in addition to the inactivated, processed food. The algae continued to grow, gases built up and caused the explosion. Traces of the algae were subsequently spread by the crew or in fine water mists (from spraying).

2. FAR HORIZONS LANDSCAPERS

Im-1322-25-LL-Ag-5525-44

Description

Whatever your dreams for your land, FHL will help you fulfil them. They offer an exclusive, individually tailored service; you take part in the creative transformation of your surroundings.

Referee's Notes

FHL is *the* landscaping company for the elite; it works on an 'if you need to ask the price you can't afford it' basis. They provide planning expertise and supervise operations, but subcontract most of the actual work and any specialist requirements.

The company uses sophisticated visualisation software to show clients how the completed project will look. No expense is spared to meet the client's exact requirements, including artificial climate maintenance, importing offworld flora and fauna, and geneering them to behave correctly. The company has developed a close relationship with Hypagene to satisfy these needs. FHL was founded 25 years ago by a group of landscape gardeners and a lone angel financier. They struggled to break even for a decade but as their reputation spread, they were employed by increasingly top-quality landscapers, further building their reputation to its current heights. Samir Benatar, the current CEO, is one of the founders. In recent years he has found it hard to cope with his changing role in the growing company and has been frustrated by his inability to get involved on the ground. An added thorn in his side is the arrogance of his rising new star 'scape designer, Guiseppe Njenja.

Plots

1: A wealthy noble inherits a garden world, unpopulated save for a small staff on the family estate, and hires FHL to transform it to fit his grandiose vision. This is the largest project the company has ever undertaken and they require an army of extra helpers including: security to fend off environmental protesters; free traders to transport flora, fauna and equipment; scientists, engineers, labourers and basic service providers to keep everyone else happy. However, when their excavations uncover the ruins of a previously unknown civilisation, Samir has to decide whether to conceal the find, exploit it, or call in the IISS...

2: The players are hired to find a buried treasure (or equivalent), using directions from an ancient map. However, the burial site has been completely transformed by an FHL operation for an immigrant noble. Interrogating locals who worked for FHL on the project will identify where key landmarks *used* to be, which allows the burial site to be located – in the middle of the main lawn!

3. GOLDEN HARVEST LABOUR ASSOCIATES

Im-1034-35-Part-Ag-0423-35

Description

Demand for farm labourers on this world varies according to season and location but peaks dramatically at harvest times. GHLA benefits farmers by selecting suitable workers and handling their payment. It benefits labourers by providing a single place to look for work, transport to and from the farms and a standard contract (including formal grievance procedures).

Referee's Notes

GHLA was formed on a low-tech world by Brigg Sugaya, son of a farmer, and Nandelle Buhl, a business graduate fresh out of college. Brigg had the practical experience and contacts; Nandelle had the knowledge required to set up the business and make appropriate financial plans. She also had the idea of advertising for workers at the starport and in startown, where many people without money or prospects gathered hoping to make it offworld. They started small, organising labour for Brigg's family and neighbouring farms, but have grown to become the largest labour company on this world. As they expanded into areas spanning the equator, the differing seasons evened out demand. There is now a core group of labourers

who are effectively employed by the company; most fluctuations in demand can be met by the starport irregulars and only at peak times does the company struggle to meet its contracts. Brigg and Nandelle try hard to satisfy both their customers and labourers, but managing more than 100 full-time staff (mostly involved in recruitment) has taken its toll. The couple have been linked romantically for some years and are thinking about starting a family; however, they find it hard to delegate guidance of the firm, so have deferred their personal plans for the moment.

Plots

1: While down on their luck, the players hire on as labourers. While digging a field they discover a small artefact, possibly

of Ancients origin. Technically it belongs to the farmer; will they hand it over or try to smuggle it off the land?

2: As above, but the artefact is a fake buried by the farmer to test the honesty of the labourers.

3: Brigg hires the players to investigate a senior manager whom they are considering promoting to run GHLA while Brigg and Nandelle start a family. They want some background checks to ensure the manager is really as good as he seems. The players are completing their investigation when by chance they find out some labourers are getting special payments to work on a special farm – it is growing illegal drugs under the manager's control.

4. HYPAGENE

Im-5552-5?-PubW-Ag7-Manu2-Non1-7444-63

Description

Hypagene are specialists in the genetic engineering (GE) of lifeforms to meet the needs of their customers, whether the requirements be ecological, economic or simply aesthetic.

Referee's Notes

GE is a controversial subject in the Imperium and all GE companies have to follow very strict guidelines. Hypagene's public operations are very visibly by the book, but their success has turned them into a huge company, which has made them prime targets of the anti-GE lobby anyway. The company divides its products into two categories; Bespoke covers high-price creations, precisely tailored to the customer's specifications, for which it is justly famous; Mass Market items are existing designs that need no further research or development, including a range of high-yield crops and cattle animals, air-scrubbing lifeforms and popular pets such as the boosted-IQ Peekers Monkey or the Baladragon. Of course, today's Bespoke may be tomorrow's Mass Market unless the customer pays an additional exclusivity fee. Hypagene's operations are divided into three market-based divisions. The Ecology Division (ED) handles all projects that improve or preserve the environment, from long-term terraforming to designing diseases targeting a specific local pest.

The company always points at ED's successes to counter criticisms from eco-protesters and is very careful to ensure ED gets only positive publicity. However, ED only provides 14% of the company turnover – the economic heart of the business is the Commercial Division (CD), bringing in 63% of revenues. CD focuses on agricultural products, including licensing and selling seeds and eggs to

farmers. In addition, pets and decorative plants help keep the company in the public eye. The Private Division brings in the final 23% of sales from private individuals and organisations who wish to remain anonymous, such as nobles with unusual hobbies or pleasure ships. The designs (which have to be published for Hypagene to retain its license) skirt the limits of the guidelines, but this is partly a blind. The products are real but the prices and quantities are inflated to hide the fact that a third of PD's income comes from black projects for the Imperial military. The Imperial auditors know about this and aid the cover-up. Ironically, Hypagene uses this loose auditing to hide their work for other military organisations from the Imperium.

Plots

1: Arriving at an agricultural world with a cargo of Hypagene seeds, the players' ship is surrounded by anti-geneering protesters who try to stop the seeds being offloaded. Any conflict with the players will be captured by the local media.

2: As 1 but the imported seed is not licensed on this world (this may be an oversight by Hypagene or a deliberate attempt by a local farmer to flout import laws in the hopes of out-producing his competitors). Customs officers impound the ship and crew while the seeds are destroyed and the ship is sterilised.

3: As 1, but the players are carrying geneered pets. These critters were a pain to feed and care for during jump, but now they're out of food and must be offloaded soon or they'll starve.

4: As 1, but the pets are carrying a geneered plague designed by terrorists (or an aggressive neighbour world) to wipe out the local livestock. If Customs bio-sniffers detect the plague, the crew will be quarantined and the ship sterilised or taken into space and destroyed. Otherwise the plague will decimate cattle and ruin the planet's economy; the players will be tried as terrorists.

5. KAWA-PABER-A-ABA FUR AND HIDE SUPPLIES

Im-3143-20-LL-Ag8-Manu1-Ret1-0553-42

Description

Specialists in kalaig products, KFHS rears its animals in humane conditions and delivers highquality fur and hide to manufacturers. They also supply other animal hides, and their own range of exclusive, hand-crafted, fur and leather products which they sell direct to retailers and consumers.

Referee's Notes

This Bwap-run company initially failed to realise that farming kalaig – furry creatures with rather human-like faces – was

going to be a rather emotive issue. They are now *very* careful about their image and run an extremely clean operation, but are still the target of many animal rights campaigners. The Bwap business mentality has also made it unpopular with some furriers.

Plots

1: The players are hired as guards and/or investigators at a KFHS ranch where a number of immature animals have gone missing. The players discover animal rights campaigners breaking in at night and taking the creatures to a nearby forest.

2: As 1, but KFHS has implanted tracers in some of the kalaig – the players have to track the stolen creatures and recover them.

3: As 1 or 2, but the thief is a local furrier who is trying to build up his own kalaig farm.

6. OCEAN PEOPLE

Im-204N-25-Gov-Ag7-Svc3-2644-05

Description

Looking for the ultimate hunting thrill? Join the Ocean People on a traditional expedition as they seek out the rarest deepwater creatures. If you prefer something more relaxing, why not taste the unique OP dishes in the luxury of one of their cruise vessels, or dress yourself in authentic piscihide garments and try your hand at some of the many crafts kept alive by this exciting culture!

Referee's Notes

The original ocean people were a utopian experiment on a fertile water world – a herderhunter- gatherer society that exploited (rather than rejected) the benefits of high technology. The experiment was moderately successful; the community traded surplus food and sea-based products for the equipment it needed. Seeing other such experiments swallowed up by interstellar society and corporations, they determined to preserve their culture and values. The community, once acting as many independent fishers and traders, consolidated itself into a single Imperial company, bringing benefits from increased administrative efficiency, political clout and trade leverage. To supplement their exports, the community has incorporated the needs of tourists into their everyday life. The most radical change has been the addition of cruise vessels to the community fleets. Staffed partly by islanders, these are luxury floating resorts. A growing population and a profitable export market for sea produce is putting pressure on ocean resources but OP is careful not to overexploit the sea. However, their leaders are worried about the future and are looking into technological and political ways to lessen the impact.

Although it offers little in the way of financial reward, OP is a community and looks after its people well, providing food, shelter and company even for those who are too young or old to be productive. The people often have to deal with naive offworlders, who want to join the tribe but have little idea of the contribution every member has to make; only a very small number are accepted, usually those with a sensible attitude and specific skills the company currently lacks.

Plots

1: A bedraggled, smelly old man has been hanging around the starport for years, claiming the ocean people are hiding secret treasures. Everyone ignores him until one of the players sees him using a tiny hand-carved fishbone to heat up some soup – instantaneously. If they can obtain the item they find it is a nanotech heater of unknown origin. He can, indeed, lead them to an underwater Ancients site where he found this artefact, but he is nearly insane and the site is deep and hazardous to explore.

2: As 1, but high-ranking locals already know of the Ancient site and intend to exploit it. They will go to any lengths to ensure no one plunders the site or gives away its location.

3: As a publicity stunt, an environmental protest group gets an OP elder to publicly deride the over-fishing of the seas caused by offworld demand. A number of people at the starport (possibly including the players) get sick eating seafood. A small eco-terror cell, separate from the original protest group, is trying to scare off tourists and stop the export market.

7. SAURIAN FARMERS' COOPERATIVE

Saurus/1320 Spinward Marches

Im-1324-15-Mut-Ag8-Whol1-Svc1-1223-22

Description

The SFC co-ordinates the sale of agricultural produce grown on Saurus in the lucrative Vilis market and acts as a collective purchasing agent for manufactured goods from Vilis. As of 1105, approximately 30% of Saurian farm production is marketed through the SFC. As a sideline the company also arranges the sale of both indigenous Saurian artwork and hunting permits for the megasaurs that inhabit Saurus' swamps.

Referee's Notes

SFC was formed on Saurus in 1074 to improve the bargaining position of the world's farmers in their dealings with buyers on Vilis. In 1089, it sponsored the incorporation of Sweet-Carroll Lines (p.54) to reduce the cost of shipping its goods to Vilis. While the co-operative is a major shareholder in S-CL, in the peak harvest seasons, requirements sometimes exceed S-CL's shipping capacity and rapid shipment of certain perishable cargos can bring profitable spur-of-the-

moment contracts for free traders. The co-operative has been highly successful, attracting the attention of outside interests. SFC's membership rules allow anyone to join but limits their individual investment to 6%.

Ownership

Farming Members 86%

Hortalez et Cie 6%

Imperial Family 5%

Sweet-Carroll Lines 3%

Plots

1: An art collector hires the party to purchase selected pieces of the 'powerfully primitive art of the Saurians'. He reckons dealing direct with the Saurian craftspeople should keep the price down. The SFC dominate trade in Saurian artworks and feel obligated to ensure the natives get fair prices. They will view the players as unscrupulous offworlders out to exploit the natives and will disrupt their dealings at every opportunity.

2: As 1, but the collector wants the players to buy the artworks secretly and smuggle them offworld to avoid the SFC and any taxes. To complicate matters, the artworks are large and fragile.

8. SIYLRILHYA'A VETERINARY SERVICES

As-1422-14-Part-Ag-4634-54

Description

SVS maintains Hierate traditions of care for their beasts by tending to the needs of Aslan livestock located far from the Hierate, where the animals suffer unfamiliar environments, foodstuffs and diseases. With no clan affiliation of their own the vets can treat herds for Aslan of any clan and even non-Aslan who own Hierate fauna.

Referee's Notes

SVS is a partnership run by unmarried female Aslan in Imperial space. They have good contacts within both the Imperium and Hierate, allowing them access to the best possible vaccines, specialist feeds and veterinary information; however, in the final analysis it is the skill of the partners that determines their success or otherwise. So far failures have been few.

Plots

1: A number of large prey animals in an Aslan region of an Imperial world begin dying from a mystery illness. When SVS are called in they find the infection is spreading rapidly and though they quickly synthesise quantities of a suitable vaccine, it is difficult to administer the drug to 400-kilogram beasts which run free over a huge wilderness area. The

Aslan put out a polite appeal for non-Aslan manpower; if the players provide useful aid the clan will owe them a debt of honour.

9. SUNARIMI BAY COLLECTIVE

Im-2035-24-Mut-Ag7-Manu1-Ret1-Svc1-2101-04

Description

SBC is a community project producing seafood from the unique bay ecosystem, creating desirable craftworks from the colourful local corals, shells and fish scales and providing guided tours of the scenic bay, diving excursions and extensive scientific submarine trips.

Referee's Notes

The SBC is a very lucrative attempt by local people to benefit from the tourist trade. The bay is the most beautiful on the continent, with a very rare combination of beautiful sea creatures which also happen to make some of the finest dishes on the planet. However, several large tourism companies and a mass-food-processing group are trying to take over the operation.

Plots

1: The players are hired by an unknown patron (one of the larger concerns noted above) to go 'cause some trouble' in the bay. The more tourists scared away, the more the players get paid.

2: The players are visiting the bay when they are threatened by some thugs (hired as in 1 above).

3: The bay's submarine goes missing – the players are hired to use their ship's sensors to help locate the sub and effect a rescue before their air runs out. When it is discovered the sub has been sabotaged, the players are asked to investigate...

10. ULTIMATE KIAN STABLES

Im-2424-16-Priv-Ag-5214-25-

Description

UKS supplies some of the finest kian from their homeworld, Prilissa; company-bred beasts have even won the Kian Cup against pure homeworld stock. UKS deals in racing animals, the heavier strains beloved of low-tech farmers everywhere, the sure-footed mountain varieties and general purpose pack animals. If you can find a better bloodline elsewhere UKS will obtain a breeding pair and fill your order from the offspring at no extra charge.

Referee's Notes

Kian are two-legged mammals resembling the Terran ostrich. There are several breeds; the beasts are hardy and are used on many low-tech worlds in the Spinward Marches filling similar roles to Terran horses, mules and oxen. UKS'

sales rely on the pedigree of its stock so it goes to great lengths to make sure this is kept fresh and up to date. Its primary source of new genetic material is a small office on Prilissa which tracks the fashions and the condition of various bloodlines, purchasing animals as appropriate. The company was set up by a wealthy kian racing fancier to indulge her hobby; before she died she arranged for her estate to finance a private trust to keep the company running along the lines she had established. As a result, UKS has several unusual conditions, most noticeably that every employee is paid the same hourly rate whether they are cleaning stables or managing the business plan – the more profitable the company, the higher the rate. Everyone is encouraged to take responsibility for the well-being of UKS as well as that of the animals (a certain proportion of the profits is always put aside to pay for the care of elderly or injured kian). UKS now serves a whole subsector and though its growth has slowed, analysts are baffled by the success of a company which such unusual practices. With such small financial rewards, any manager joining the company either loves the animals or *really* fancies a challenge!

Plots

1: UKS are bringing in two pairs of 'show kian' to fulfil their customer promise; when their ship suffers a drive malfunction, the Players are hired to ship the beasts and their handlers for the final jump. The kian are heavily overbred, pampered monsters and the handlers annoy the players with bizarre demands for their charges' comfort.

11. UMINARGA LUMBER

Im-3333-33-Mut-Ag6-Manu4-1424-23

Description

UL is a major supplier of timber, providing many woods but specialising in hellboria. UL plantations are carefully managed to minimise disruption to the surrounding environment.

Referee's Notes

The hellboria tree has a pale blue striated grain pattern which alters slowly over time, even once the tree is dead. This makes the wood very attractive and it is used in a wide variety of designer products. As the tree ages it hardens; five-year growth produces wood used for the racquet handles of star zipwire players while twenty-year trees are turned into luxury furniture. UL is one of the largest producers of hellboria wood, with extensive plantations on three worlds. Because the tree takes a relatively long time to mature (and except on its homeworld requires above average care and attention) the company charges a high price for the timber; demand still exceeds supply. Huge tracts of more common, low-maintenance trees provide additional income. UL lumberjacks form a close-knit community. They take pride in their work and many live permanently on the plantations, staying with the company throughout their working lives.

Some have little contact with the rest of the world. Aided by their environmental science group, the company has good relations with forestry management and even most environmentalists. Company chief executive officer Caroline Uminarga has recently stepped down to return to life as a lumberjack; her successor is finance director Januk Cther.

Plots

- 1: To satisfy a rush order from a neighbouring system the players are hired to collect the hellboria wood directly from a plantation. When they arrive there is no sign of the loggers but the wood is stacked ready for collection. During loading, the somewhat xenophobic UL workers return and accuse the players of trying to steal the wood.
- 2: As 1, but the loggers were killed by a vicious beast which begins hunting the players.
- 3: As 1, but the loggers are tied up nearby and a group of thieves who intended to remove the wood on trucks will now try to hijack the players' ship.
- 4: When the players' ship arrives on this world, a Customs biosweep of the decks finds eggs of the Kendry Worm – a wood-boring beetle. To protect the hellboria woods, the ship is impounded.

12. XENOBOTANICALS OF PEQUAN

Pequan/1210 Spinward
Na-2033-34-Emp-Ag6-Whol3-Ret1-3353-44

Description

XoP imports, grows, and exports exotic and delicate plants. Whatever your horticultural needs, XoP will do their best to fulfil them.

Referee's Notes

Four parsecs from the Imperial and Zhodani borders, Pequan is a convenient place to grow and test crops which are illegal on other worlds. XoP is a small company, but owns vast tracts of wilderness on the sparsely populated planet. It maintains camouflaged reinforced plasticrete slabs at

various sites, strong enough to support a 1,000-ton starship (for transporting goods without the Pequan authority's knowledge). One site has a few outbuildings which house the traffic control and an unrefined fuel bunker, but starship visits are rare. Each site cultivates a different type of plant (roll 1D for each category below):

Plant Type	Origins/Needs
1. Carnivorous	1. Local
2. Narcotic	2. Offworld
3. Anagathic	3. Local but needs special environment
4. Succulent (water-storing)	4. Offworld, needs special environment
5. Fruiting	5. Genus/origin unknown
6. Poisonous	6. Bio-engineered

Some plants may have special properties (roll 1D).

- 1. Blocks selective-hearing ability
- 2. Contains undetected bacterial cultures
- 3. Is really the larval stage of a fast, nasty alien
- 4. Has leaves/fronds/stalks that heal wounds
- 5. Ingestion temporarily modifies Str/Dex/End/Int
- 6. Causes motion-only vision

Plots

- 1: While moving through jungle, some players contract a rash from touching a native groundcover plant. The rash gradually becomes life threatening. Local medics cannot fully counteract the irritant and suggest the group travel to Pequan to consult the xenobotanists there. The Pequan researchers can heal the player(s) but ask for a sample of the plant in return (it looks useful).
- 2: As 1, but this is on Pequan; the players have stumbled into a XoP plantation of semi-poisonous plants intended for covert assassinations. If asked for help, XoP will heal the players but will try to cover up any connection between them and the site.

CONSTRUCTION

...How very little, since things were made, Things have altered in the building trade.

Rudyard Kipling

1. THE DEMOLISHERS

Im-1315-24-LL-Con-1344-23

Description

Nothing lasts forever; sometimes when the time comes to take things down, specialist help is needed. The Demolishers are experts in the safe dismantling of structures in space, leaving the system free of potentially dangerous debris.

Referee's Notes

The Demolishers were the brainchild of Kur Trebek, whose father ran a successful dirtside demolition company. Kur had always dreamed of working in space; this was his ticket to the stars. The Demolishers sift debris through a factory ship and reuse, resell or recycle as much as possible. Depending on location, quantity and local regulations, the remainder is launched into a star or planetary atmosphere (where it will burn up) or dumped on a barren body. As a last resort they it is incinerated by a factory ship to reduce the bulk and shipped out of system.

Most of the company's business is still in its home system. They have taken on several very successful one-shot contracts in nearby systems and this persuaded Trebek to set up branches on these worlds; however, none of these have yet managed to do more than break even.

Plots

1: The players emerge from jump some distance from their intended destination and receive a radio signal warning of impending danger: the company is gathering debris to be incinerated in a controlled explosion; the detonation can be cancelled, but the rubbish is heading straight for the players' ship from several directions...

2: The players are asked to collect a package concealed on a derelict space station, due to be demolished by this company. Not only is the station out of bounds to all traffic but the parcel contains highly illegal material hidden by a criminal just before being caught and imprisoned. If the players are caught, they are in serious trouble.

3: As 2, but the players do not know the station is due to be demolished and the charges are already aboard the station and counting down...

2. DIVINERS WELL-DRILLING

Im-2424-03-Part-Mine3-Cons5-Svc2-5364-42

Description

Short of water or other important fluid resources? DWD combines high-tech solutions with proven techniques to solve the principal problem with living on a low-hydrographic world.

Referee's Notes

DWD was founded by Nei Xao, a diviner from a desert world, with a remarkable, unexplained talent for finding water. DWD is very good at finding the best well sites, thanks to the abilities of its founder and her hand-picked team. However, after losing contracts due to client scepticism, they now play down the means used.

DWD also provides and installs the equipment necessary to get at the liquid resources, but here it performs less well. DWD uses cheap third-party equipment with only moderately proficient techs and barely adequate after-sales support. In their specialist market, the divination service cannot survive alone and, much to Xao's disgust, an ever-growing proportion of their revenue comes from the hardware and maintenance contracts.

Plots

1: A desert community belonging to the Universal Synod of Reason employs DWD but also hires the players to determine whether the prospectors are using proper scientific techniques or mystical divining. When the players uncover the latter, the Synod orders the imprisonment of the DWD staff...

2: A poorly-maintained DWD facility, extracting subterranean water for a colony on an otherwise barren world, suddenly fails. Though the colony's water tanks will last several weeks, panic ensues – the players get caught up in this and if they have a starship, it will be mobbed by colonists demanding their water supplies or trying to get offworld.

3: As 2, but the failure is causing water to flood the colony – ironically, there is too much water!

4: As 2 or 3, but the players are hired to bring in DWD repair staff. Given the colonists' anger, they will probably have to provide security too!

3. GAMBINI BROTHERS

Im-1214-06-Fam-Cons-1111-04

Description

The Gambinis are experts in holomeshing and can handle any type of interior building or decorating work (plastering, tiling, carpentry, etc.). They are now available for work off-planet!

Referee's Notes

The Gambinis have worked the building trade for generations, mostly on private residential contracts. Over the past 20 years they have started working on larger projects. Eleri Gambini was the first member of the family to experiment with non-traditional materials, using holomesh on ceilings, walls and even floors to good effect.

Holomesh can present almost any image but has an unpleasant, gritty texture; Eleri combined it with other decorative materials to counter this problem. This reduced the image quality but since he was using it to present shifting patterns rather than holovids or communications this was not particularly noticeable. Eleri's sister Yoshiko is an expert on traditional mosaics, while their younger brother Max concentrates on plastering and painting. Together they form the core team; grandma Claire and papa Claude handle finance and administration. Other friends and family members are also involved, but it is the skill and imagination of the three siblings that is driving the company on to bigger things. They have recently completed redecorating the main passenger concourse of the highport and the port is pleased with the results. The Gambinis hope this will bring in more offworld custom.

Plots

1: The players are hired to collect an important datachip from beneath a floor panel in the highport (where the patron hid it). When they locate the panel, they find that area of floor has been covered with an immense decorative mosaic. Has the chip been covered up too, or did the decorators find it?

4. HABITATS 4 ALL

Im-324N-44-StSp-Cons-4346-43

Description

H4A is the government-sponsored and licensed provider of habitats for all hostile environs in this system. Colonists may purchase their new homes extremely cheaply, safe in the knowledge that there has never been a fatality caused by an H4A habitat failure.

Referee's Notes

Overcrowding on the mainworld has caused the government to encourage colonisation of other planets, moons and belts in the system. To support this, H4A was formed in partnership with private industry. At first, political commentators anticipated cost and corner-cutting by the commercial partners but the regulatory authority has kept close control; after much manoeuvring, the businesses involved now see it as a loss leader, with opportunities to recoup that loss in other ways from their captive colonial markets – through supplying supplementary equipment, furniture, protective clothing and survival courses. The company uses tried and tested habitat designs, concentrating on surface domes and subterranean chambers. Much attention is paid to marketing the colonisation effort, striking a careful balance between the spartan look required to attract people with dreams of pioneering and the comfort needed to get them to actually sign up. The government's opponents love to point out how little difference the colonisation has made to overcrowding on the mainworld and how much the programme has cost; so far popular sentiment is still swayed by the romance of the high frontier.

Plots

1: The players are hired to take H4A habitats to a colony on a gas giant moon. A short while after the habitats are set up, they fail, causing many deaths. The players will be hunted down by the government. In reality, the habitats were sabotaged prior to loading, by a group of religious fanatics who wish to dissuade people from living on the moon because they regard it as a holy site.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE, LIC

Im-5452-34-PubL-Cons8-Util2-2454-33

Description

ISL is an established firm, with a proven track record in large public works projects. They undertake all types of heavy construction – highways, bridges, tunnels, piping, power and communications infrastructure – all tailored to the individual needs of the local community.

Referee's Notes

ISL know their own limits; they subcontract specialist work to other firms (such as SubAqua Plumbers) where appropriate. They prefer to employ local construction workers where possible, restricting their own people to key positions. Their quotations tend to be higher than most of their rivals, but their reputation keeps the contracts coming in. Because of their reliability they are regular contractors on projects administered by the Rahman Economic Institute .

Plots

1: A straightforward highway contract has been going particularly badly, due to a combination of natural disasters and the political instability of the employing government. ISL wants to get out as quickly as it can, but feels it must first finish the project to preserve its reputation. This is currently impossible because a strike by local transport workers has prevented materials reaching the construction sites; ISL charters the players to bring the materials directly to the sites by ground, air or space, bypassing the local blockade. The transport workers will not appreciate such acts...

6. McKENDRIE ORBITAL

Im-5532-25-PubW-Cons-3544-43

Description

MKO has been constructing satellites, space stations and orbital platforms, both civilian and military, since the Interstellar Wars. They offer a full design service and all the equipment and skilled manpower required for the largest projects.

Referee's Notes

MKO's claims of longevity are exaggerated; there was a famous Solomani construction firm of that name which flourished during the Second Imperium but it vanished early in the Long Night. As the Sylean Federation expanded, a group of primarily Solomani workers took on the name; the company has expanded with the Third Imperium. Despite modern technology, automation and robotic aids, space construction still requires long hours of hard physical labour; many construction workers conform to the stereotypical tough, rough -and-tumble labourer. MKO plays this up when it needs to put a human face to the business. The company rarely gets contracts for Imperial highports and senior management suspect that there are political reasons – perhaps nepotism within the Starport Authority (SPA). MKO are considering building up their expertise in drives, to begin taking on work on larger in-system transports and perhaps, in the future, starships.

Plots

1: Another company outside MKO's area of operations has set up a space construction company, also called McKendrie

Orbital (for similar reasons). The latter refuse to alter their name and MKO believe they are now grabbing customers by using the MKO reputation. They hire the players to resolve the problem – by diplomacy, bribery or whatever means necessary.

2: MKO is close to winning a contract to upgrade an Imperial highport in a system where they have done a lot of other work. Then there is a serious failure at an orbital factory; preliminary investigations by the SPA report suspected use of inferior construction materials. The SPA investigation will not be completed before the contract needs to be signed, meaning MKO will almost certainly lose out. The players are hired to check out the accident and the investigators. Sure enough, a competitor is behind the problems and they have friends inside the SPA.

7. SUBAQUA PLUMBERS

Im-3435-24-LL-Cons5-Util4-Svc1-4234-23

Description

Piping, Pumping and Purification are three mainstays of life underwater. A long-established firm of good repute, SubAqua Plumbers provide integrated solutions covering all these areas.

Referee's Notes

SAP's founder, waterworld citizen Gani Sharama, quit his job at the air-recycling plant in his home dome to become a freelance plumber but soon recognised how interconnected the fluid processing systems were in an undersea city. Taking a holistic view, he built up a team with experience in all aspects of subaqua work. The group analysed potential problems caused by independently managing the different processes, setting themselves up as a rapid response team to deal with failures as they arose. Regular plumbing jobs barely kept the company afloat but their skills, plus an innovative proposal, won them the contract for fluid processing in a new city extension despite competition from much larger firms. Since then SAP has gone from strength to strength on Gani's homeworld but is now struggling to handle the organisational changes required as the company goes multiglobal.

Plots

1: An underwater domed city partially floods and kills many people; blame falls upon SAP, who installed key systems. SAP are suspicious that they were not asked to service the systems for the last few years. They hire the players to prove that the city cut costs by using cowboy engineers whose poor quality work caused the catastrophic failure.

FINANCE, INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE

Money is indeed the most important thing in the world; and all sound and successful personal and national morality should have this fact for its basis.

- George Bernard Shaw

1. FIRST BANK OF RHYLANOR

Rhylanor/2716 Spinward

Im-3353-54-PubW-Fin-1765-65

Description

One of the longest-established banks in the region, the First Bank of Rhylanor is a safe and convenient place to keep your money, and a sound choice of partner for any form of financing.

Referee's Notes

The FBR is an old, established institution, set in its ways and dependent on its reputation for reliability. So far this has worked; younger, more dynamic institutions have come and gone, temporarily stealing customers, but the FBR has always had enough loyal members to keep it profitable through the lean years. It has branches on several neighbouring worlds and good relations with correspondent banks on many more. Its interest rates and charges usually tend to be unfavourable compared to younger institutions but are more stable, making them a good choice when a depression is imminent.

Plots

1: Advertises for the First Bank of Rhylanor with huge guaranteed interest rates rapidly attract vast deposits from hopeful customers. First Bank are suspicious and investigation proves this is a front company misusing their bank's name to fool punters. The players are hired (along with many other bounty hunters) to track down the fraudsters who put out the adverts. The culprits are a local criminal gang using contacts within FBR.

2. GREY GUILD

Im-2156-52-Mut-Fin3-Svc3-Non4-1662-74

Description

The Grey Guild are *everywhere*, linking together cells of thieves from thousands of worlds into an Imperium-wide network of crime, so secretive that even many of the members do not know its true extent nor who runs it...

Referee's Notes

The Grey Guild is a conspiracy theorist's delight. Tales of a massive Imperium-wide criminal network have great popular appeal, and some relatively minor local organisations have decided to take advantage of these stories to boost their reputation. Allegedly, the Guild coordinates its criminal fraternity to maximise profits; members benefit from the guaranteed sale of stolen goods and strong support, both against non-Guild rivals and in conflicts with the law. In return, the Guild takes a large cut of any profits. In theory, the Guild forms an Imperium-wide crime network; in reality internal politics and greed mean that on many planets it is non-existent or merely an ineffective group of minor criminals.

Plots

1: A pair of reporters approach the players to ask for protection. They claim to have evidence that the legend of the Grey Guild is true, and that the local government is involved. This data is false.

2: As 1, the Guild link is false, but the reporters *have* stumbled across dealings between key members of the government and local criminals.

3: As 1, but several members of the government really are current or previous members of the Grey Guild and will do anything to prevent this becoming common knowledge.

3. HANUMAN & SAGARUU, BROKERS

Im-0225-23-Part-Fin-5355-23

Description

H&S provide brokerage of both cargo and stock. With an excellent record in both fields and the dynamism to tackle challenges that scare off older, more staid institutions, the company can serve the most demanding of customers.

Referee's Notes

Yelena Hanuman and Ilikush Sagaruu were roommates at business school – extremely talented students but with a reputation as hellraisers. When they graduated, they found they were temperamentally unsuited to the menial positions available to them in an industry which, on their homeworld, is male-dominated. Despite their different fields of expertise, they decided to set up business together. Spurning traditional behaviour, they have thrown themselves into their work with an energy that shocks many of their rivals. They do not hesitate to use any advantage they can to stay in business in spite of establishment opposition.

They live in a sideroom of their office, employ minimal staff and frequently turn on the charm to get what they need. Their biggest asset, however, remains their financial talent. The partners have had some amazing successes but also some notable failures. They have been careful to make sure that customers understand the risks involved and although they are currently under investigation for malpractice (almost certainly initiated by one of their enemies) they have no doubt that they will be cleared.

Plots

1: A group of traditional financiers determined to break H&S has come up with a 'sting' which needs some dupes to initiate it. They prime the players with information about a new company about to float its stock, which is hugely undervalued and guaranteed to rise dramatically in value. The players are told that H&S will pay for this data. In reality, the company is a front and will disappear almost immediately, losing H&S huge amounts of money if they were fooled into investing in it. If the players do not catch on, they will be arrested for fraud.

2: H&S offer their services at a reduced rate as a special deal for new customers. The players have come into a little money; should they risk it with such a wild company? You can extract money from the players and provide a good or bad return at a later date, as necessary to drive the campaign!

4. NITS – NEW ISLANDS TRAVELLER SUPPORT

Tobia/3215 Deneb

Im-152N-14-Priv-Fin-3222-12

Description

The people of the Islands clusters are isolated within the Great Rift; travel outside the Islands is infrequent and too expensive for all but the wealthiest. NITS is a registered charity which helps the mass of would-be travellers by providing them with holos and other data on Known Space, including the NITS newsletter. Contributions are desperately needed: money, old holos and articles for the newsletter are all gratefully received and volunteers are always welcome.

Referee's Notes

NITS' main office is on one of the two high population worlds close to the Deneb departure point for the Islands. The few staff are overworked; there are never enough volunteers to do everything. A second office has recently opened on the far side of the rift but there is almost no communication between the two. The only other paid workers are part-time distributors in the Islands who take the NITS cargo (carried by the occasional ships making the long trip) and deliver it to subscribers.

The charity appeals mostly to people who like to travel themselves. Many donors cannot afford to leave their own homeworld but sympathise with the Islanders' plight; regular contributors receive a copy of the NITS newsletter, which is full of articles about history, astrography, travel stories and interviews with mildly famous personalities. This is also distributed to Islands subscribers. Many Imperial citizens do not see the point of NITS' activities, arguing that if it does not help people to travel it isn't really helping at all, and also that it is dangerous to incite such dreams in warlike barbarians such as the Islanders. However, the charity's subscribers are grateful for an opportunity to escape for a while into a wider universe, if only vicariously.

Plots

1: Due to an audit by the Imperial Charities Commission NITS needs to fetch some records from their Islands offices. No ships are scheduled and they hire the party for an emergency run.

2: On seeing a NITS advert, the players realise that they may be able to make a significant profit running passenger trips to and from the Islands.

5. OUTSYSTEM ESTATE

Im-1234-22-LL-Fin-4334-32

Description

Outsystem Estate offers a full service for those who wish to buy or sell real estate and other major products between the populated worlds of this star system. Robot drones allow prospective buyers to view a site, starship or other such item remotely from the comfort of their own world.

Referee's Notes

This system is seeing heavy colonisation of its outer worlds and moons. Most of this territory is still technically owned by the mainworld government, but for several years it has been selling off large tracts to raise funds; re-selling this ground is now a significant market.

Plots

1: A customer suspects that the drones are showing too rosy a picture of the valley he intends to buy on a gas giant moon. He hires the players to take a trip out to the moon and investigate. When they arrive they find the correctly numbered drones placed around the wrong valley; clearly the images they are broadcasting do not match what they are pointing at. Outsystem has had to reuse the drones for another customer and are therefore transmitting pre-recorded signals to the patron; a quick check reveals the patron's site is nearby and is exactly what he was seeing remotely.

2: As 1, but the valley being sold is covered in military engineering vehicles. The area has an old underground munitions silo; the military are behind schedule decommissioning it, so have requested that OE show their client recorded scenes from the site until they have completed work. They will not appreciate anyone snooping around the site, and the munitions are hazardous.

3: As 2, but the military are installing a longterm deep cover system defence installation, so ground and space security will be very heavy.

6. SHAIM INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LESSORS, LLC

Im-3251-61-PubW-Fin-5655-34

Description

SIPLL are the official recorders of intellectual property (IP) ownership for this star system as well as a major holder of IP in their own right. If you wish to license IP they can arrange all necessary administration for a relatively small fee. The company also conducts investigations to establish the validity of new claims.

Referee's Notes

Most people in this high-law, high-population system who have heard of SIPLL see it as a sprawling bureaucratic parasite on people's creativity. The IP laws of the Third Imperium, only slightly less restrictive than those of the Ziru Sirka, have stifled innovation everywhere; SIPLL follow them to the letter. The company has a great deal of influence with the government, which has protected their corporate interests against stiff resistance. SIPLL holds system-wide rights to more than half of the Imperial IP licensed for use on this world (meaning that, for a fixed annual fee to the actual holder, they administer and receive the royalties for use of the IP). They are ruthless about pursuing infringements, even for IP which is no longer regarded as valuable on other worlds. Far less efficient is the company's handling of new developments; claims can be tied up for years while SIPLL search for precedents. Many people hold the company responsible for the decline of research and the arts here; their accusations are almost certainly correct.

Ownership

Naasirka 11%
Hortalez et Cie 8%
SuSAG 5%
Other Corporations 42%
Imperial Family 5%
Other Nobles 23%
Local Citizens 8%

Plots

1: The players buy a cheap cargo of holovids for speculative trade. Before they can leave they are approached by SIPLL investigators; the seller had not paid the required royalties on certain techniques used in their production. The players must pay the fees or get their seller (who has disappeared) to pay before they can leave.

2: As 1, but the artistic IP in the holovids precludes them from being taken off world. The players must try to re-sell them here (for a significant loss) or negotiate a waiver to take them off-world.

7. SIEDLER INSURANCE

Im-3445-33-PubW-Fin-2542-54

Description

SI provides a wide variety of services including small vehicle, life, health and accident insurance. High-risk occupations and activities are catered for at very reasonable rates.

Referee's Notes

SI began as a small concern on the Imperium frontier. It took a high-risk approach, insuring settlers and their equipment when colonising (or in some cases re-colonising) new worlds.

Despite some notable payouts, the gamble paid off. SI soon began to absorb other insurance companies with differing specialities and as the frontier moved on it adopted a more conservative role. Recently competition has been fierce and the company has had to reduce its premiums drastically to keep its customers. As a result it has had to streamline its operations and is currently managing the optimisation of 40% of its workers. Its share price has suffered accordingly.

The current CEO, Musush Gemana, is a visionary who is unhappy with the current state of the company. She is actively looking to recreate the dynamism of its early days and has branched out into insuring active mercenary groups, despite opposition from the board of directors, who refer to the project as Mad Musush's Scheme. Ms. Gemana sees this as a first step; if the venture is profitable she has much more ambitious plans!

Plots

1: SI agents approach the players regarding an insurance claim by a foe from one of their recent adventures! The agents want the players to confirm that they destroyed certain property and to clarify the circumstances in which this happened.

2: As 1, but the agents are really undercover law officials looking to trap the players into confessing their illegal activities.

3: As mercenaries, the players are preparing for a new mission and see an SI advertisement. They can barely afford the rates but it *would* provide them with security if the mission goes wrong.

8. THE TRIBUTIS ARMS GROUP

Im-4545-34-Emp-Manu4-Fin6-0235-37

Description

Members of the Tributis Arms Group offer high quality military, paramilitary and civilian starships as well as vehicles and small-arms. Unlike most such companies, TAG is run for the benefit of its employees rather than shareholders.

Referee's Notes

Originally a co-operative venture by several smaller arms manufacturers attempting to gain Imperial contracts during the Third Frontier War, TAG grew beyond all expectations. After the war, in a move that surprised everyone, the company became an employee trust with the former board of directors as trustees, reinforcing the company's belief

in the value of its staff. The position of Tributis Employee Retention Magistrate was devised, responsible for crafting a life-enhancing corporate culture and dealing with troubled individuals. When possible, people who are not happy with their work are moved, at the group's expense, to a more rewarding area. Primarily a holding company, TAG's policy is to buy knowledge rather than cultivate it internally. The group has often run up large debts to facilitate takeovers of smaller companies with skills it wants, a prime example being the absorption towards the war's end of several small shipyards in the Regina subsector. These gave Tributis the ability to expand into the private market when peace arrived, the profits being used to purchase more shipyards. Tributis Naval Yards (TNY) has always been considered one of the stars of the company.

Other sections include the Small Arms Division (SAD), Military and paramilitary Vehicles (TMV), the Rapid Strike Force (RSF, p.45), the Tributis Acquisitions Department (TAD), and the recently acquired Pinkerdoo Design Group (PDG).

Tributis takes over the top-level administration of its subsidiaries, restructuring where necessary to match the corporate vision, and assigns the purchase to one of its divisions. TAG has just started an aggressive campaign to expand into Corridor and the central Imperium.

Plots

1: TAG is interested in acquiring another small weapons manufacturer. However, they do not wish their interest to become common knowledge or the share value of the acquisition will rise, making it more expensive to buy. They hire the players (who should have some appropriate military background) to covertly evaluate this company.

2: As 1, but the company to be acquired is leaking press reports of a new explosive it has developed. The players are hired to steal information about the explosive, so TAG can determine if it is worth the extra cost of the company given its rapidly rising share price.

9. X-BANK

Im-5544-54-PubW-Fin-1543-64

Description

When payments absolutely, positively have to be made between systems, X-Bank use the express-boat network to do so as quickly and efficiently as possible for a negligible fee. Various insurance and security options are available.

Referee's Notes

X-Bank was set up by Zhiani Corpbank in Core sector shortly after the x-boat service was begun in 624. It minimised the costs of interstellar money transfer by using the new public network to carry the required information (heavily encrypted). They managed to undercut their competitors and as the x-boat network expanded, so did X-Bank, outgrowing its parent. It began forming agreements with other banks across the Imperium and to avoid bias it became an independent body. It is now the de facto standard for interstellar money transfers between non-correspondent banks.

Plots

1: Large payments appear mysteriously in a player's bank account, always for the same amount and always sent via X-Bank from their previous port of call. X-Bank officials start investigating the player for fraud... The cause is an X-Bank computer error, but it will take time to prove this!

2: As 1, but this is a hacker stealing funds.

3: As 1, but this is payment for a covert government operation which must remain secret.



MANUFACTURING

He therefore searches for means to spur them on to consumption, to give his wares new charms, to inspire them with new needs by constant chatter.

- Karl Marx

1. AMALGAMATED AIR

Im-3434-35-PubS-Manu7-Svc3-3554-33

Description

AA provides a complete breathing solution for vacuum worlds and planetoids – air processing and generating equipment accompanied by fully trained service staff on hand 24 hours a day.

Referee's Notes

Following a recent corporate take-over, AA has become much more ruthless in its business affairs. It still offers the latest technology but rather than tailoring solutions to local conditions, it provides standardised systems, installed and supported by inadequately-trained staff. Charges have also gone up, but AA still rides the reputation it developed in earlier days.

Plots

1: Air recycling fails on a low-tech vacuum world. To avoid a panic, the local AA maintenance team claim they'll have it repaired within a few hours, but when it's still not working after two days, they eventually admit that they do not have the expertise or equipment required to fix it – that is when the panic really starts...

2. ANTIOCH ARMS

HRD/1623 Deneb

Im-6532-34-WOS-Manu8-Ret2-2544-64

Description

Antioch Arms produces personal arms and armour for military and civil use, specialising in energy and gauss weapons. The Antioch HHG-15 fusion grenade is known to most marines serving in the Marches for its high yield. Other weapons include the S/99 Special, a 9mm gauss pistol produced by the company since the early days of the Imperium, a highly experimental rapid fire fusion rifle and marine hyperdense cutlasses.

Referee's Notes

Antioch Arms was one of the earliest subsidiary companies to be spun off from X-TEK and it closely follows the corporate

style of its parent, with management structure following military lines. The company has been known to perform black ops but never against Imperial interests; because of Navy ties it has always avoided censure. Its competitors accuse Antioch of promoting instability on balkanised worlds to boost sales but nothing has ever been proved.

Plots

1: Antioch Arms hire the players at good rates as field testers for a new weapon at a test area (blasted ruins in a wilderness area). Everything must be recorded but the players must not disclose any information concerning the weapon outside the R&D facility.

The goal is quite simple; using only the test weapon, the party must seek and destroy various target drones. Obstacles include dummy targets, automated attack drones and even other weapon testers. There is a chance that the weapon will malfunction in some way. It could fail to fire accurately, jam, or even explode.

2: As 1, but for realism, the attack drones may have semi- or fully-offensive capability...

3: Antioch hires the players to do a weapons run on a world plagued by civil war. Antioch has a contract with the military, but against the wishes of the government. It has invested heavily in this weapons run, but will deny any knowledge of the group if the government intervenes and arrests them for smuggling. If for some reason the players try to keep the weapons for themselves, Antioch will hire BureauX to retrieve their goods.

3. AURICTECH SHIPYARDS, LIC

Trin/3235 Spinward

Im-5443-2?-PubW-Manu7-Svc3-3345-44

AuricTech: Gold-plated solutions for copper-plated problems!

Description

AuricTech produces military and commercial ships of all sizes. Their designs are often more capable (especially in terms of sensor ranges), more spacious (usually providing individual staterooms for all crew) and far more expensive than ships from more conventional shipyards.

Referee's Notes

AuricTech was founded on Sylea in Imperial Year 6 by Marcus Weishaupt, a businessman of Solomani ancestry,

to produce standard 100-ton scout/ couriers for the IISS. It soon progressed to in-house designs; the first commercial success was the C20-2 light transport – a 100-ton jump-2 ship packing in 20 passengers. The 1,000-ton *Electra* series yachts (procured by the Imperial Navy as the *Isabel*-class VIP transport/C3I ship) cemented the company's reputation. Early products ranged from UA-series 30-ton ship's boats to 160,000-ton *Agincourt* battleships. As the Imperium expanded, AuricTech shifted its base of operations to the Spinward Marches. By 1100, the company was a major supplier of warships to the Imperial Navy and IISS, with shipyards at Mora, Trin, and Lunion. In 1101, AuricTech unveiled the *Montana* class battleship, a 500,000-ton technological *tour de force*. It is also a player in the civilian market, having recently been contracted by Thermopylae Lines to provide new designs of freighter and passenger liner. AuricTech's public image is good; military personnel generally favour the performance and habitability of their ships, and the public view them as competent, quality builders. However, Imperial Navy budgeters believe they deliver insufficient crunch for the Credit, so their warships have mostly been purchased in limited quantities, with the vessels serving as flagships for squadrons of more reasonably priced ships in order to make the best use of the superior AuricTech sensor arrays and spacious Combat Information Centres. Few know that the shift to the Marches was due to most AuricTech stock being donated to the Imperium in 625 after the Civil Wars (the AT board backed an unsuccessful pretender to the Throne). In 626, controlling interest in AuricTech was sold to Ling-Standard Products. In 845, LSP sold most of its interest in the unprofitable Marches yards (and rights to the AuricTech name) to investors led by Baron Eneri haut Rearden.

The current CEO is Dame Jenifer Rearden-Taggart.

Ownership

Hortalez et Cie 24%
Rearden Family 18%
Other Noble Families 14%
AuricTech Employees 12%
Ling- Standard Products 7%
Imperial Family 5%
Thermopylae Lines 2%
Other 18%

Plots

1: The characters are assigned to field test a new AuricTech design (ship type depends on the players' skill set, service and campaign). Possible complications include fussy budget analysts; arrogant senior officers; pressure from AuricTech to submit a positive report; bribes from other shipyards to submit a bad report; attempts by rival shipyards

or governments to gain possession of the ship (or at least its technical specifications); and the inevitable bugs of a prototype.

2: The players are hired to deliver an *Electra III* 1,000-ton yacht to its new owner, several parsecs away. Complications include engineering faults, pirates, rival shipyards and a very tight schedule.

4. BARON VON KRINGLE TOYS

HRD/1623 Deneb

Im-5533-36-WOS-Manu7-Ret3-3555-21

Description

Baron von Kringle is a toy and novelty maker specialising in gravitics. Their toys range from the ever popular gravboard and graviballs to the *Hulahoopajumparopapogoball* which combines all the classic children's toys from the last millennia in one convenient package. The toy of your choice is activated at the press of a button!

Referee's Notes

Baron von Kringle is the name of the company, its CEO and its marketing image. A jolly, ruddy-cheeked, snowy-haired and white-bearded man, the baron has been in charge since the company was founded over 200 years ago (thanks to extensive use of anagathics). He loves to portray himself as the children's friend, making frequent publicity appearances in the lead-up to Holiday with a sack from which he distributes free toys. Within the company, the baron is regarded as a hard taskmaster, obsessed with lowering costs and not at all concerned with the well-being of his workers. There is a huge turnover of staff in the lower ranks; young people join the Kringle workshops imagining something very different to the sweatshop conditions they find; almost all leave when their year's contract runs out. The company relies heavily on its market research to decide what would make a successful toy, including product test placements and surveys in public places (including starports).

Plots

1: Von Kringle hires the group to deliver his latest toy, due to be out on the shelves by Holiday. The group must deliver the goods to the world specified two days before Holiday (to allow time for distribution across the world) or incur the wrath of unhappy children and the Baron. However, customs officials are on a work-to-rule.

2: As 1, plus a competitor wants to get a preview of the new Von Kringle toy, so tries to bribe or steal samples from the players.

5. CENTRAX METRICS & HIVER

Motion Systems

Hv-5532-56-StO-Manu-5203-04--2513-12-WOS-Manu-4212-24

Description

Hiver electronics are the best in known space; now Imperial citizens, governments and corporations can share this quality in the field of motion capture and processing. Applications include communications, ergonomics, health, entertainment and security.

Referee's Notes

Hiver corporations have always been difficult to classify; many are listed as state owned by default, and there is debate over who exactly to count as the employees. Centrax Metrics is a long-established Hiver nest community producing optical sensors, hardware and software used in the study of motion. Hiver Motion Systems is a new nest set up to distribute CM product in Imperial space, so closely affiliated with CM that it is a subsidiary in all but name. HMS products are very expensive but are very popular with big-budget organisations. However, while Imperial competitors cannot match the HMS equipment for quality they still win many orders because of cost, patriotism or the threat of Hiver manipulation, fears they play up for all their worth. CM's core business is input systems for Hiver language computers; optical sensors watching Hiver gestures and analysing them allows for virtually hands-free communication with speaking lifeforms. There is now a small market for HMS kit adapted for human sign language and communicating with the incurably deaf.

The ergonomic and population flow analysis systems are much more popular, especially with ship architects. By studying how people interact with prototype control systems, designs can be very finely tuned. Their holo-character software is often purchased by the entertainment industry. However, HMS is failing to make an impact in medicine, where Imperial systems already allow analysis of the way people move to be used for diagnosis; a few sports training centres claim HMS systems give their clients the competitive edge. HMS security systems that recognise people by their movements as well as their appearance have impressed would-be customers but few can bring themselves to trust their security to a species famed for sneakiness.

Plots

1: A wild-eyed pilot with his arm in a cast and a bandage on his head accosts the players, claiming the Hivers are engineering the deterioration of Imperial starship bridge crew by sabotaging the designs using HMS products. He shows them some bridge plans with controls and bulkheads arranged in a very strange manner and points at the label 'optimised using HMS Layout Manager'. In fact, the

architects messed up the plans without any manipulation, though they will never admit it.

2: The players are delayed attempting to leave a world by a demonstration at the starport. The management used HMS population flow analysis to show the workers were extremely inefficient; the port demanded increased productivity at no extra pay. Naturally, the workers have turned nasty and accusations are flying in all directions.

6. FAMILLE SPOFULAM

??-????-??-Fam-Manu?-Non?-????-??

Description

Famille Spofulam? Never heard of them. And even if I had, I would certainly not have bought any of their products. And *definitely* not their weapons. Anyway, I was on holiday at the time.

Referee's Notes

It is sometimes said that a company defies classification; this is literally true for FS, due to a virus introduced into the ISD records system by persons unknown (though we have our suspicions). Inquiries to the expert system tend to produce answers like 'Paranoia? Frankly, that depends on who's asking and what drugs Accounts have been taking lately.'

FS products range from bizarre toys (such as the orbit-rated MegaBoing Grav Pogo Stick) through the bizarrely daring (such as the euphemistically-named smuggler's delight, the *Moonshine*-class Rapid Insertion/Extraction Starship) to the dangerously bizarre (pelvic-mounted high-energy weapons, anyone?). All display a complete disregard for common practice and are bigger, bolder, more expensive or more destructive than anything seen elsewhere. Hard facts are... well, hard to come by.

According to legend, the company was founded as a shipyard in -25. When Hereditary Patriarch Hengabar 'Uncle Hengie' Spofulam took the helm he firmly positioned FS as a high-end niche player in a number of fields, including vehicles and weaponry. He also formed a long-lasting strategic alliance with the Sayat Concourse and defined the organisational structure and culture that has carried FS through to the present day. Little is known about the inner workings of 'the Famille', although the dark rumours of inbreeding with eugenic intent, rampant substance abuse, and child labour are so prevalent they may be at least partly true (and the High Energy and Starship Weapons Divisions *are* both led by children of dubious stability). An early Gridlore advertising slogan 'At least our products aren't designed by drugged-out children' was quickly suppressed by a massive legal action. Of course, all of the above could be entirely false and merely a marketing ploy, or a competitor disinformation exercise.

Plots

1: Ditzie, the head of the High Energy Weapons Division, is looking for test subjects for their latest offering, the Elephant-Mounted Particle Accelerator Weapon. The players are volunteered. Note: this is a good plot to use for the last adventure of a campaign. It is probably not a good plot to use on any other occasion.

2: The players are involved in a high-speed chase during which their air/raft is disabled. The only other available transportation belongs to a group of children playing nearby – some FS fusion-powered gravboards (or a Megaboing pogo stick).

3: Three crates marked 'FS - Export Only - DFG' turn up on the cargo manifest. The crates contain 20 flat plastic refill packs of Hydrazine and Nitrogen Tetroxide ('Ditzie's Favourite Gloop'). These are incredibly dangerous chemicals, as anyone with any knowledge of chemistry will know. Put together (for example, in the reaction chamber of the FS Jet Bike), their waste products are corrosive, carcinogenic and mutagenic. If Customs, or the local environmental authorities find this on board they will impound the ship!

4: As 3, but the DFG was not packed correctly...

5: The players discover a derelict FS-built yacht, with a spotless interior and no sign of its crew. Any player left alone for more than a few minutes will discover the cleaning robots are doing double duty as security robots, capturing and then killing their victims by pouring Draino-13 into their ears.

5: The players are hired to transport a Racing Forklift team to the Makalli 500 with their FS Light Export Forklift (top speed 404 kph). Unfortunately the mechanics keep wanting to borrow spare parts and tools; the PR rep (young, nubile, ambitious, dresses in red leathers) keeps scouting for more talent. Then the driver (blonde, dashing, and sober three hours out of twenty-four) busts both ankles falling out a third-floor window while drinking Scout Brew the night before the race. One of the players will have to stand in – it is worth a lot of money and the PR rep will be so persuasive.

7. FAR PAST ENTERPRISES

Im-0215-25-Sole-Manu6-Svc3-5677-23

Description

FPE keeps alive the memory of history and cultures through games, re-enactments and plays. The company is the brainchild of pure-bred Vilani Mazun Shugilii, winner of 19 design awards and author of such classics as the *Ancient Days* rolegame and the *Ancestors' Wars* series.

Referee's Notes

Mazun Shugilii was always fascinated by the past but felt that traditional classes were an ineffective way of

teaching people. Instead he devised ways to make history entertaining, beginning with a historical wargame based around the *Interstellar Wars* period. Other releases followed, both wargames and rolegames, but although popular within their niche market, the company for which he worked folded. Determined to continue, he set up Far Past Enterprises. FPE has performed extensive consulting work and Shugilii is much in demand by re-enactment societies. He is very good at organising events for maximum visitor enjoyment but wishes he could spend more time on actual game design. He has also written a few historical plays and a holo script, all of which have had a mixed reception. FPE has secured backing from all the Vilani megacorporations, as well as Oberlindes Lines.

Although these funds are a tiny amount from the donors' perspective, the money has kept the company going in hard times.

Plots

1: During a jump, a spotty youth with poor personal hygiene tries to interest his fellow passengers in a FPE roleplaying session based on a published adventure he has brought with him: *Murder in Jumpspace*. When nobody wants to play he decides to go ahead anyway, capturing one of the passengers and pretending she has been killed. The players (as crew or passengers) must deal with this over-enthusiastic gamer.

2: As 1, but his chosen victim is a police witness travelling under a cover identity. The undercover law enforcement agent accompanying the witness is likely to over-react...

3: The players emerge from jump to hear confusing messages coming over the communicator. It sounds as though a pitched battle is taking place for control of the space above the main world but there are far too few ships within sensor range to match the described events. Nevertheless, the locals seem to be losing. The party has stumbled into a re-enactment of a local battle, though they may not discover this before they get involved. Careful sensor analysis will reveal two yachts controlling fleets of small shuttles acting as battleships.

8. GILGAAMESHU YARDS

Arden/1011 Spinward

Fa-4431-15-SS-Mine2-Cons1-Manu7-4545-53

Description

Gilgaameshu Yards is a profitable concern, using its mines and manufacturing operations to drive its modest public shipbuilding facilities. It employs a large number of local Arden workers, and provides on-the-job and off-site training to bring the workforce up to interstellar standards. Gilgaameshu has achieved the Friend of Education award

for the tenth year in a row, for contributing time, equipment and cash to local schools to train the burgeoning populace of Arden in high technology. From belt mining and refining raw materials to finishing technologies such as fusion plants and starships, Gilgaameshu is one of the major players on the Arden Free Market, and one of Arden's best hopes for changing the world into a high-tech powerhouse.

Referee's Notes

Gilgaameshu Yards is a profitable company for the Arden economy, and is a major force driving an increase in Arden's tech level. However, it is also a front for the secretive Arden Navy, which maintains an excellent TL-12 shipyard in a remote location under Gilgaameshu's name. The Arden government, military, intelligence agencies, and military-contract companies own most of Gilgaameshu, in conjunction with a select group of very wealthy Arden citizens. Ownership is forbidden to outside entities, though since ownership is via holding companies, it is difficult to track down exactly who the stockholders are.

Plots

1: While clearing out his estate an extremely wealthy patron, retired medical doctor Mr. Philihp Kazar discovered a mothballed Jump-4 luxury yacht that had been on lease from Gilgaameshu Yards; he forgot to return it and wants the players to do so. Unfortunately Gilgaameshu has registered the ship as stolen; the doctor also used another identity to lease it since he was involved in some shady dealings at the time, so the Arden Navy is also interested. As soon as they arrive at a major port the players will become the target for repo agents, bounty hunters and the Arden Navy who may not believe their protestations of innocence...

9. GRAVAMETRIX

HRD/1623 Deneb

Im-6533-35-WOS-Manu8-Ret2-4534-54

Description

GravametriX produces fine gravitic vehicles for civilian and military use. Their air/rafts and speeders are well-known throughout the Domain for their efficiency and speed. Luxury grav vehicles are available for nobles and executives, as are grav sleds, tanks and APlayers for the Imperial Armed Forces.

Referee's Notes

Originally a purely military supplier, GravametriX was forced to broaden its market during a period of low investment in the armed forces. Initial offerings were overpriced, over-specified and too utilitarian to do well but the company soon rectified this. Their civilian vehicles are aimed firmly at the top end of the market; they have a reputation for making reliable, energyefficient, high speed vehicles that are second to none. The marketing slogan, 'no compromises', always makes military-orientated designers wince.

Plots

1: GravametriX hires the players as test pilots for a new design of grav vehicle, employing a new propulsion system. Due to an administrative blunder, when they arrive the players are given a top secret next-generation grav tank instead. However adept the players prove at handling the tank, the army officers on the trial realise something is wrong and arrest the players, thinking they may be spies. Provided their police and/or military records are clean, they are released with strong hints that they should not talk about this.

2: A competitor's vehicle has a remarkably similar drive signature to GravametriX's. The players are hired to steal the design so that the company can check it for copyright infringement.

3: As 2, but BureauX agents are actually undertaking the investigation – they have hired the players to provide a distraction while they make their own entry into the rival company buildings. Manufacturing 30

10. GRIDLORE TECHNOLOGIES, LIC

Lunior/2134 Spinward

Im-5444-24-Fam-Cons1-Manu5-Whol3- Ret1-6342-33

Description

Gridlore is a venerable family firm dating back to the Imperium's founding; it still focuses on its traditional concerns – starships and trade. The company is currently seeking partners willing to invest in expanding trade into the Outrim Void.

Referee's Notes

Company founder Baron Arameth Gridlore was one of a few nobles who wanted to push the Third Imperium's boundaries beyond those of its predecessors as swiftly as possible. Heading out behind 'the Claw' he invested heavily in colonisation of the Spinward Marches, focusing on expanding trade and providing the starships necessary to do so. The enterprise prospered. One of the Baron's principal concerns was that his family should retain control of the company. He set up rules for inheritance and over the centuries these have become increasingly elaborate. As a result, Gridlore remains firmly in the Gridlore family's hands, but management transitions can cause bloody internecine strife. The Board of Directors meet in the corporate HQ, an orbital habitat high above Lunion. Each operating section is headed by a family member; each has considerable autonomy. The Overce Shipyards, also in Lunion orbit, have a reputation for excellence with customers seeking custom vessels; a more recent endeavour, ACQ Defence Systems, is an industry leader in personal arms manufacture. Many observers attribute ACQ's success to its aggressive marketing, focusing on the division's distinctive Terran penguin logo. Under the current Chair of the Board Kellier

Ovari-Gridlore (62), the firm has experienced a rebirth of purpose. A newly-formed division, Outrim Horizons, LIC, will begin exploration of the Outrim Void within two years with the purpose of expanding trade with the scattered Aslan and Human worlds in that region.

Ownership

Gridlore Family 53%
Hortalez et Cie 10%
Instellarms 7%
Noble Families 15%
Imperial Household 5%
Other Investors 10%

Plots

1: Gridlore is looking for travellers with a wide variety of skills for their Outrim Void expedition: ex-scouts, merchants, diplomats, scientists, starship crew and security will all be needed. Also on board is a survivor of the Baraccai Technum expedition which set out in 1107. The new mission is intended to last approximately two years. This can be used to lead into a long adventure!

2: Immediately after passing through Customs, the players are stopped by bailiffs intent on confiscating their recently acquired ACQ sidearms. The officials represent a computer software firm who claim that the penguin image on the guns' butts is a violation of their trademark.

11. HUAI ORNAMENTALS, LIC

Im-2344-25-LL-Manu-4224-22

Description

Zdeld Huai's amazing fauncultural creations keep his customers on the cutting edge of fashion. His animal-based clothing, wall and floor coverings, decorations and objets d'art always invite comment and admiration from observers.

Referee's Notes

Zdeld Huai was a struggling young artist looking to make his name. Certain species of animal on his homeworld could shape themselves very flexibly to suit the environment in which they grew and he hit upon the idea of faunisculpture, stretching and extending the creatures' natural ability to produce 'living art'. His first exhibition was a resounding success, earning him instant wealth and recognition. Other artists copied him but he stayed one step ahead by moving into areas other than sculpture. The mimics quickly adapted, but his reputation was made. As demand for his works grew, Zdeld decided to concentrate on design and took on assistants to perform the actual manipulation. The arrangement worked well and he set up Huai Ornamentals. Fellow artists accused him of selling out but he considered this to be petty jealousy. HO went from strength to strength. As time passed and production grew, Zdeld handed over most of the design work to subordinates and withdrew from

the day-to-day running of the operation. He is currently considering going public, or else selling his shares and retiring. Zdeld is a great self-publicist, appearing regularly on talk shows and HO advertisements. He comes across as a passionate believer in his art, although privately he now cares far more about the wealth it has brought him.

Plots

1: The players are hired to quietly recover some artworks removed by accident from an HO plant. It is explained that these are part of next season's line and must not be seen by competitors. The truth is that HO has been experimenting with a low-maintenance line – manipulants that rarely need feeding or cleaning. All was going well until the earliest specimens reached maturity when their metabolic rate increased, sending them into a feeding frenzy. The creatures need to be recovered before they start to eat their owners...

2: A forensic check on a dead HO garment (possibly following the events above) reveals the Hypagene trademark embedded in the junk DNA, indicating that the garment was bred from stock modified by the larger company. HO has always claimed that its works were created by traditional breeding so Hypagene's involvement would be embarrassing. Similarly, if Hypagene products are being used without their permission, this would mean a significant loss of intellectual property which could damage them commercially.

3: As 1 and 2, but this is a secret Hypagene project to breed HO artworks to selectively assassinate their owners. Hypagene will go to any lengths to conceal their involvement. There are also clues leading back to Imperial Intelligence...

12. KNAPPERS

Im-2043-46-Mut-Manu-2116-13

Description

Knappers design and manufacture a wide variety of low-tech goods from flint, obsidian and other traditional substances. All items are carefully hand-crafted in genuine lithic communities; high technology manufacturing techniques are never used.

Referee's Notes

Knappers rely on the desire of industrialised peoples for traditional goods and the image of the simple, peaceful, native lifestyle. Low-tech worlds rarely make significant money from selling their natural resources, but Knappers have found a successful and profitable niche. Many local communities are wholeheartedly involved in the business, performing all functions from quarrying stone to packing the finished product. The best-selling items are jewellery and bladed tools, but the crafters are always experimenting – *blenith* pottery is a recent addition to their product line.

Plots

1: Some Knappers want to make their lives easier by purchasing high-tech tools to perform jobs faster. The traders who buy their goods are worried that this will destroy the simple people image and have been trying to block these purchases. The players are hired by a Knapper representative to bring high-tech stone-working tools (such as laser cutters) to the world, but when they arrive the traders, and the more traditional Knappers, try to stop the sale.

13. MAXIMUS INTERSTELLAR DEFENCE INDUSTRIES

Terra/1827 Solomani Rim

Im-8553-5?-PubW-Manu6-Util2-Svc2 -4433-54

Description

MIDI is a huge firm with interests in many areas although its core business is aerospace, with specialised shipyards for military and civilian craft of all sizes. It maintains well-equipped private security at all its facilities, supplementing its own troops with local contract agencies.

Referee's Notes

MIDI was a major beneficiary of the Solomani Rim War, declaring early for the Imperium and supporting it wholeheartedly. When Terra was taken, it moved its headquarters to the Solomani homeworld, receiving honours and concessions from the victors. The company began to expand, swallowing many smaller businesses who had backed the wrong side. As a result of its actions it became very popular with Imperials but hated by Confederation sympathisers. Because its growth was so rapid, MIDI's management structure failed to keep up with the changes and the corporation stagnated. The current CEO, Baron David Colsworth, instigated a major restructuring of the upper levels and MIDI has recovered well. Some problems remain, however, and there is bitter rivalry between Defence Division head Harlan Walker and Leann Downing, the new VP of Public Relations. Subsidiaries include Ventronics Industries (starship sensors, communications and fire control systems); Ishyama Limited (laser and energy weapons systems); Gluttonous Maximus (luxury food production/distribution); Confederated Dynamics (atmospheric craft and grav vehicles); Confederated Electric (power generation and distribution); Integrated Data Systems (computers); and Pegasus Services (security). For the past few years MIDI has been negotiating a merger with X-TEK, which would create a new megacorporation. One of the main sticking points has been a disagreement over security; X-TEK accuses MIDI of being too lax while Colsworth believes the Deneb giant is obsessed with BureauX to the extent that commercial interests take second place. There is also significant interest from the Imperium to ensure that any potential megacorp involves the right sort of people doing the right sort of thing.

Plots

1: Following a number of threats from Solomani separatists, MIDI hires the players as extra security at one of their plants. When the terrorists attack, the players observe a third group covertly observing the situation. These are BureauX agents sent by X-TEK to check MIDI's security procedures. They will assess the response to the terrorist threat and report back to X-TEK. If the players show undue interest in them, the agents will arrange some further incidents to determine just how intelligent and/or tenacious MIDI's security staff can be.

2: Harlan Walker is notoriously blunt; Leann Downing hires the players to delay him so that he misses meeting (and probably upsetting) some important clients, by any means necessary short of hurting him. If they are successful, she may be tempted to use them again, this time to delay Walker from a board meeting, so that she can promote herself and make him look incompetent.

14. PLANET X RECORDINGS

HRD/1623 Deneb

Im-6534-34-WOS-Manu7-Ret3-0432-44

Description

Planet X Recordings is a relative newcomer to the X-TEK family. A major media producer specialising in holovids and musical recordings, their outlets offer all kinds of music from Vilani Opera to Classical Terran Rock & Roll. Planet X Recordings is currently producing the works of Tir Na n'Og, a Classical Terran Celtic Heavy Metal Rock group, on tour in the Spinward Marches.

Referee's Notes

With Hot 'n' Spicy (see *Supplement 13: Starport Encounters*) signed to a major competitor, Planet X Recordings have been struggling to compete in the teenage market and have been actively scouting for fresh talent. However, the company has a lead with older, more selective buyers and Tir Na n'Og's latest album has been a huge success. In the holo field, Planet X are well known for high quality costume dramas and situation comedies but are seeking success in the field of documentaries. They have recently paid a large amount to persuade the renowned presenter Harlik Slicker to defect to their team to improve the popularity of their work.

Plots

1: Tir Na n'Og's latest stage show is the most extravagant ever and the recording company is looking for new roadies. Duties include keeping the tour ship working, procurement of goods for the band, setting up the stage and, of course, keeping fans, reporters and anti-social elements away from the stars.

2: The players get a chance to try out in a Planet X studio. Whether they have talent or not the experienced production staff can make it sound good. The players are offered a contract straight away but the terms are extensive, restrictive and their royalty percentages are very low.

3: MegaDoc, previous employers of Harlik Slicker, hire the players to persuade him to return to them. If bribes do not work, the players are told to 'make it difficult for him until he sees the light'.

15. SPY-TEK

HRD/1623 Deneb

Im-6533-34-WOS-Manu7-Ret3-1543-53

Description

Spy-TEK is best known for producing fine optics and sensing equipment for civilian use, including full electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) sensors, image enhancement and automatic visual identification systems. It also offers a complete line of home and starship security and anti-hijack systems. They also stock stun guns, stickyspray, Blur, and almost any other non-lethal anti-assailant weaponry available in the military and civilian marketplace.

Referee's Notes

When forming BureauX, X-TEK needed a wide variety of espionage and counterespionage equipment. Although some could be bought from other companies it was judged that for security reasons it would be best to keep design and production in-house. A portion of X-TEK's R&D budget was diverted to pay for this. Spy-TEK is a commercial enterprise set up to recoup some of that expense. It sells non-sensitive security equipment, along with older designs no longer used by the agency (which keeps the cutting-edge equipment for itself).

Plots

1: The players are involved in a minor car accident which cracks open the boot of the other vehicle and spills a large quantity of Spy-TEK stickyspray canisters. The two occupants of the car are very angry and try to stop anyone from getting hold of the canisters. However, some spray is picked up by a gang of street children, who use it to cause havoc.

2: As 1, but the men have stolen a new acid spray from Spy-TEK for disabling heavy armour or vehicles. A child grabs a can and burns one of the thieves badly by spraying them. The thieves then draw weapons, fire warning shots and run for it. Spy-TEK will be very grateful to anyone (such as the players) who helps apprehend these thieves.

3: The players discover their Spy-TEK anti-hijack system is using their ship communications to send bursts of encrypted data whenever they are in a starport. Enquiries with Spy-TEK will reveal that this is a fault in the software; then that it's an anti-hijack feature to allow their ship's location to be traced once stolen. They may eventually learn that this software dumps their full databank to a BureauX receiver concealed in most ports, but this feature should not have been enabled

on their software. Spy-TEK cannot let this feature become public knowledge under any circumstances.

16. SYLK

Im-3442-33-PubW-Manu-4434-32

Description

Sylk is a quality clothing manufacturer, specialising in sleek, silky materials using the latest heat-, light- and sound-sensitive colourings and scents. They are well known because of their recent advertising campaigns featuring the hugely successful youth band Hot & Spicy.

Referee's Notes

With the Hot & Spicy connection, Sylk has finally succeeded in making its products part of youth culture across the subsector. Teens are mocked if they do not wear the latest styles, applying heavy pressure on their parents to buy new Sylk garments long before the old ones wear out. Because of this marketing strategy the clothes are designed to look good with little effort expended on making them long-lasting. A two year-old Sylk shirt will already be starting to stabilise, with patches of fixed colour here and there spoiling the effect of the responsive cloth. Sylk's clothing is expensive but just within reach of ordinary families on the subsector's highest population worlds. Manufacturing takes place on the poorest planet, where workers are paid a pittance and subjected to long hours in poor conditions, which has led to a call by concerned citizens of other worlds to boycott the company. So far this has had little effect on sales. While still popular, Hot & Spicy are no longer the phenomenal draw they were a couple of years ago and Sylk are secretly looking for alternatives to keep their image as up-to-date as possible.

Plots

1: Sylk has been experimenting with emotion-sensitive clothing which changes colour and odour according to the wearer's mood (based on body heat, pulse, muscle tension and perspiration). They have conducted simulations and laboratory tests and recruit the players to try out the garments. The players will be pestered by teenagers wanting to know when they can buy the clothes, but showing their emotions openly may be a disadvantage...

2: As 1, but the clothing is faulty – it can turn transparent when they get angry, starts flashing if they are lying, and if they get scared, it releases pheromone-analogues that makes the clothing irresistible to certain local animals!

3: The players are offered a cargo of new Sylk clothing at a low price. The garments are actually 18 months old; a retailer over-ordered and failed to sell the excess. His contract requires him to destroy the out-of-date stock, but he preferred to forge new date certificates and sell the clothes.

17. WELLER ASSOCIATES

Im-3544-44-PubL-Manu6-Whol2-Svc2 -4444-53

Description

WA deal in all kinds of precious metals and all aspects of their processing, from refining to casting and delivery. As well as providing refined metals for local industry, WA work within local technology constraints to provide a sustainable solution for self-operated metal processing, including presses for minting currency.

Referee's Notes

Weller Associates began as a simple metal processing company, but as they expanded they were able to market their relatively low-tech industrial operation as a key asset and virtue. WA target lower tech worlds and adapt their locally sustainable equipment to be at the cutting edge of the client's capabilities – giving the client a competitive edge but usually making it most cost efficient to retain WA for maintenance. Many customers ask for minting machines to be at a higher TL to make it difficult for local forgers.

Plots

1: WA minting equipment has been stolen and the world is flooded with counterfeit coins, indistinguishable from the real thing. WA's guarantee may force them to pay for upgrading the government mint and the cost of the currency changeover if they cannot find the culprits. Bounty hunters and the like are swarming around WA, hoping to become part of the official investigation and get part of the huge reward. The forgers have contacts in the government and police but are actually offworlders – tracking them down will be a very arduous but rewarding task.

18. X-TEK OF DENEK, LIC

HRD/1623 Deneb

Im-9562-54-PubW-Cons2-Manu6-Ret2 -3532-64

Description

X-TEK is a starship and aerospace manufacturing firm, specialising in weapons and propulsion systems. A major supplier of advanced fighting ships to the Imperial Navy, it is also involved in Naval R&D on projects such as black globes and turret-sized meson weaponry. X-TEK also accept contracts for civilian starships, including merchants, seekers, and yachts. X-TEK facilities range from massive Naval and commercial shipyards to the smaller and more common Repair and Upgrade shops. They can be found at most TL13+ worlds with class A or B starports within the

Domain of Deneb. X-TEK's subsidiary companies range from smallarms manufacturing to media entertainment.

Referee's Notes

As a major Naval contractor, X-TEK is one of the most secretive companies in the Imperium and while many rivals have attempted to dig up dirt on it nobody has yet succeeded. Corporate employees are no-nonsense, spit and polish, by the book types; though customer-facing staff are friendly and helpful, most X-TEK facilities have the air of a well-ordered police state. Restricted areas are common – in addition to more subtle protective measures, they are guarded by armoured security personnel carrying the latest in personal weapon technology. Due to the sensitive nature of its research, X-TEK has developed an elite counter-espionage team known as BureauX. BureauX agents can be found at most X-TEK facilities and are often referred to as Men in Black due to their featureless black uniforms and combat armour. The company's original CEO and founder was a man known only as Commander X. Awakened from low berth on a vessel of unknown origin in -5 he quickly made his mark as a remarkable Naval strategist, first in the Chanestini wars and later on piracy suppression and re-contact missions. Elevated to Count in 19 he claimed an abandoned deep space supply station as his fief, converting it into a worldlet he called Planet X. He formed X-TEK and provided ships for the Pacification Campaigns until his retirement in 70, when he boarded a ship and disappeared from the records. In the antebellum period, business in Core Sector slumped but as war with the Zhodani approached, the company focused on its Spinward operations, eventually moving Planet X itself to Deneb during the First Frontier War. However, the Civil War split the company and disaster struck when Planet X was destroyed. Under Deneb businessman Kruger Xavier, X-TEK was rebuilt after the war. Xavier won some important Naval contracts and set up a research facility on HRD, which became the new corporate HQ. The wars with the Zhodani (and Vargr corsair actions) helped the reborn company to prosper as a major weapons and warship manufacturer, but Xavier ensured that the company began to diversify to help it survive during times of peace. Today X-TEK is enjoying renewed prosperity. The last Frontier War came as a boon to R&D as many new classified contracts were made with the Imperial Navy. It is rumoured that the company may have made a deal with Darrian interests to research pre-Maghiz technology. It has currently claimed a world in Jewell Subsector for use as a testing range and has spun-off an entertainment media company known as Planet X Recordings. Other developments include a partnership with Maximus Interstellar Defence Industries based in the Solomani Rim, in the hope of opening the door for the two companies to become Imperium-wide in scope and thus become a true megacorporation.

Ownership

X-TEK 60%

Imperial Navy 10%

Domain Nobility 7%

Imperial Family 5%

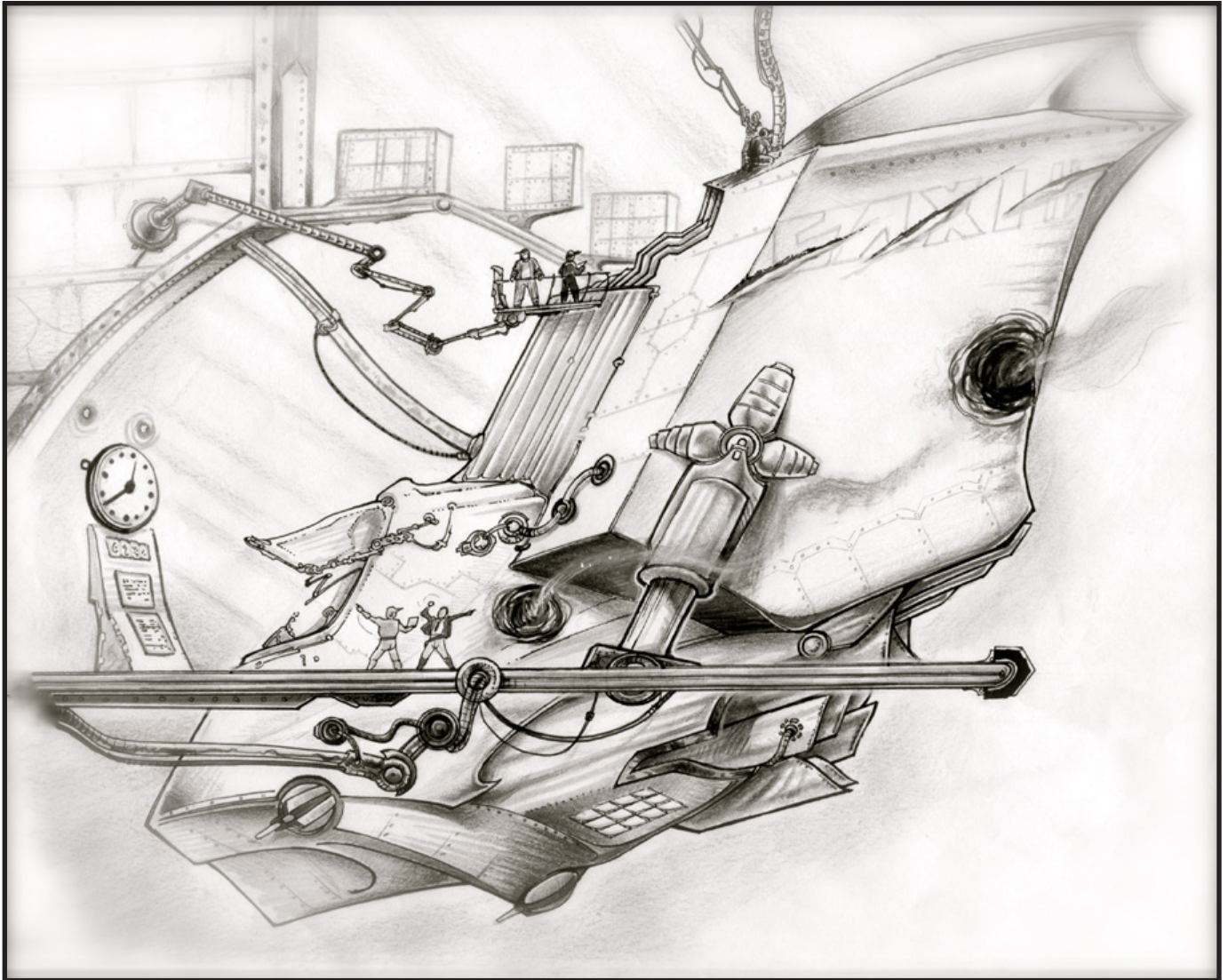
Other Imperial Corporations 12% (MIDI 5%, GSBaG 3%,

Instelarms 2%, General Shipyards 1%, SUSaG 1%)

Individual Private Stock Owners 6%

Plots

1: An injured woman begs the players to carry a message for Imperial Intelligence to a contact at the starport. Moments later, sinister black-dressed people arrive – the players have just enough time to escape. The woman is a spy for an anti-Imperial group (terrorists or foreign power), carrying secret details of black globe research from X-TEK. The BureauX Men in Black will be ruthless in their pursuit of the players to regain the data, believing them to be part of the enemy spy ring – the true spies are waiting at the starport...



MINING

Gold is for the mistress, silver for the maid, copper for the craftsman, cunning at his trade.

- Rudyard Kipling

1. BEST QUARRIES, LIC

Im-2333-24-LL-Mine-3433-34

Description

BQL produce some of the finest marbles in the sector, guaranteed 100% natural. All order sizes accepted; discounts for bulk orders. Samples available for inspection.

Referee's Notes

An outstanding source of easily-accessible top quality marble was discovered during a routine survey of an undeveloped vacuum world 20 years ago. Formed to exploit this resource, BQL soon turned a good profit. Naturally, shipping solid marble across interstellar distances means their prices are high; however, competition is low because marble rarely forms on worlds without native multi-cellular life. BQL's biggest market is a nearby high population world. Previous building fashions used glassteel and crystalliron; now traditional materials are making a comeback. The company has recently been expanding to meet increased demand; it now operates five large quarries, although the original is almost exhausted. There is concern that the quality of marble from the newest sites may not live up to customers' expectations. The head of on-site operations is currently Foreman Corbin Stikas, an ex-army sergeant with a reputation for discipline and looking after his people.

Plots

1: A university wishing to investigate the mechanisms through which marble formed on this lifeless world has been refused access by BQL. The players are asked to smuggle in a crack geology team; unfortunately they find a BQL survey team in the vicinity, trying to solve the same question.

2: The players are hired to deliver BQL marble to a customer on a nearby world. The marble seems fine when loaded, but during offloading the marble simply crumbles. This is due to an atmospheric contaminant which corrodes the marble. However, the recipients will hold the players liable and they will not be allowed to leave planet until they have determined and proven the cause.

2. COAL SURVIVOR

Im-2036-47-Mut-Mine-4316-32

Description

CS provides traditional fuels for the local community and for export. It is run by and for local people in defiance of pressure from offworld interests pushing modern energy sources.

Referee's Notes

The coal industry has been dying a slow death on this world, with a continuous increase in imports of high-tech power generation equipment. A group of miners collaborated to save their livelihood by buying out their colliery and running it as a co-operative. Naturally, CS has been milking their image as 'noble little people being crushed by big business' for all it is worth. Although criticised strongly by environmental activists, CS is immensely popular with locals. The co-operative is surviving at the moment as local people and businesses want to be seen to support the popular cause. However, if interest fades, things may well get tough.

Plots

1: The players are pressured to take an export shipment of coal at half the standard freight rate, to support the CS heroes. If they do not agree to do this, the locals will be very unhappy.

2: The players are approached by a CS member who believes a new safety inspector at the mine is acting suspiciously. In truth, the inspector has found some real safety issues at the mine and is building evidence before telling CS management.

3: As 2, but the inspector is a saboteur from an offworld energy plant manufacturer. A major safety incident would put CS out of business...

3. IMPERIAL SANDCASTER SUPPLIES

Im-4543-42-PubL-Mine-1445-63-

Don't trust your safety to anything less than the best!

Description

It is key for a ship to have the right crystal mix in its sandcaster canisters, to block energy weapon fire effectively. ISS have

supplied this mix to local Imperial Navy depots for centuries – a sure sign of their reliability. Civilian canisters are filled with exactly the same material.

Referee's Notes

Although the content of a sandcaster canister is commonly known as 'sand', it is actually a specific mix of crystal types which requires careful treatment to produce. ISS have standardised their operations across the Imperium and rely heavily on automation. Most mining operations are set up on vacuum worlds with suitable mineral deposits. The material is processed, sorted and pressure-treated without direct sophont intervention (though the systems are supervised and samples checked at random). Once loaded into containers, it is sent into orbit using a mass driver, where ISS ships pick it up for distribution to ports and Naval bases. These mining operations require significant initial capital investment but ISS has a large cash reserve for this. The resulting operating costs are low and allow them to undercut the competition. Product quality is rigorously enforced – ISS does not want to risk its valuable Naval contracts. ISS has some major competitors but the only companies who have achieved long-term success in its region are small, single-system operations, solely supplying civilian ships. ISS has grown complacent about its market position; ironically its dominance has helped these small firms to drum up local sentiment in their favour.

Plots

1: A fault at an ISS plant allowed several shiploads of dangerously substandard sand to be carried out-system before the error was spotted and the problem rectified. The plant manager is in a panic and is hiring every ship's crew he can to jump after the cargo vessels in an attempt to warn them before the sand is sold. He will reward the players well if they can stop a particular shipment of sand reaching a nearby Imperial Navy base.

2: The players arrive in a system and receive a distress signal from a ship which has lost its manoeuvre capability; its decaying orbit will soon take it into the path of the ISS mass driver.

4. MICHAELS & MICHAELS, SKIMMERS

Im-0206-05-Fam-Mine-2234-32

Description

M&MS is a small family firm, skimming hydrogen from a gas giant. They mostly sell unrefined fuel to the local starport authority, but also sell direct to ships from gas giant orbit.

Referee's Notes

M&MS is constantly on the edge of insolvency. The sale of unrefined hydrogen does little more than cover their costs,

and the family's dream of setting up a large-scale refining operation seems unattainable. Their ships are in constant use just to meet the demand; all family members pull long shifts; they expect the same of their employees.

Plots

1: Members of an M&MS skimmer crew have fallen sick, and the company must meet its contractual obligations to avoid a financial crisis. They recruit the players as temporary crew. Gas giants are dangerous places – a rogue electrical storm damages the skimmer's drives and M&MS has skimmed on emergency kit such as vacc suits!

5. OCEAN EXTRACTIONS, INC

Im-2043-53-PubS-Mine-5444-42

Description

OEI's primary business is the cracking of sea water to produce hydrogen fuel for ships at the starport; they have a water processing plant situated nearby. A growing proportion of income, however, comes from the extraction of minerals from the sea water and the company also runs a small fleet of filter ships in the area.

Referee's Notes

Whether through luck, shrewd foresight or inside information, industrialist Adkhar Mirgacre set up the OEI hydrogen-extraction plant just a few months before an upgrade to the starport was announced. With OEI providing refined fuel right at the edge of the proposed port expansion it made little sense not to use it; the company was granted the contract and has kept it ever since. Trade at the port increased and the company expanded to keep pace but recently there have been signs that the growth is coming to an end. Once again OEI is well-positioned to prosper; ten years ago it began to mine the mineral-rich ocean with experimental deepwater filter vessels. These have been highly profitable and OEI growth has not been affected by the interstellar downturn. Environmental protesters claim that the filtering process plays havoc with the ecology of creatures in the deep ocean, many of which rely on a precise balance of minerals in the water. Scientists are divided over the question and evidence can be found to support both sides. The company recently went public to raise funds for expansion but the Mirgacre family still holds 80% of the shares. Following Adkhar's retirement last year on his 120th birthday his grand-daughter Mirikei has taken over the running of the business; investors are watching closely to see if she can prolong OEI's golden run.

Plots

1: A protest group has been unsuccessful in infiltrating an OEI ship's crew, to get a closer look at the process and gather evidence that the company knows it is harming the deep ocean environment. They hire the players to get on board and get evidence, either as crew, or covertly. OEI

have minimal security, but the ship's crew will react badly to anyone threatening their livelihoods.

2: A woman approaches the players, offering a cheaper source of fuel than can be obtained from the starport. She claims to represent OEI, cutting out the 'middle man'; in fact she is from a fly-by-night operation whose fuel comes from tapping OEI pipes. Their distribution facilities are not kept clean and the fuel will have dangerous impurities, increasing the chance of a mis-jump.

6. PROSPECTOR'S GOLD

Im-3525-26-Emp-Mine7-Fin2- Svc1-0322-54

Description

PG is run by independent belt prospectors, for independent belt prospectors. In return for a share of profits, PG will provide all the services a miner needs, including equipment, legal aid and loans in times of hardship.

Referee's Notes

PG do plough all profits back into the fund but claims about its members' independence are exaggerated. Members have to sign a contract registering the area in which they are prospecting. Penalty clauses are included to dissuade members who might 'coincidentally' decide to quit the company just before making a large strike. Many mining companies also prefer the simplified administration of buying claims through PG rather than dealing with individual prospectors. It is rumoured that troublesome independent miners suffer an unusually high accident rate...

Operations in each belt are run independently; 1% of funding goes to cover administrative costs for the company as a whole, but the rest is used locally. Equipment is made available to members on low-cost loan or hire purchase schemes.

Plots

1: When the players emerge from jump they find that there has been a severe mining accident. PG are requesting their members – and any visiting ships – to mount a rescue and recovery mission. However, PG will be very reluctant to pay up when the players bring home the rescued miners.

2: The players find a belter ship which suffered a catastrophic failure, killing its crew. The players should be able to claim significant salvage value, but when they do so, PG steps in

and claims most of the onboard equipment was on loan from them, drastically cutting the ship's value.

7. UNIVERSAL BELT MINES, LIC

Im -5542-52-PubW-Mine-6653-54

Description

UBM is one of the biggest Imperial companies specialising in belt mining. Advanced survey techniques, highly trained and motivated staff, the best equipment and good management have kept the company expanding consistently from year to year, making it a safe bet for investors.

Referee's Notes

UBM has all the advantages and disadvantages of a very large company: economies of scale, a huge resource base, conservative inward-looking management and a reputation as bad guys. It treats its employees well, but tends to have little understanding of local issues in the systems where it operates. UBM relies on independent prospectors less than most mining companies, instead using large, well-equipped survey teams. These are supported by automated, factory ships which convert metal-rich asteroids into pure, easily transportable ingots.

Plots

1: The local branch of Prospector's Gold claim that UBM are trying to eliminate the independents in a recently-surveyed belt. They allege that UBM are using dirty tactics, including tying up PG's legal staff and funds with a flood of minor actions, threatening prospectors and bribing the official claims monitors. PG ask the players to go undercover (as prospectors, or hire on as UBM crew) and try to find evidence so that they have some chance of fighting back against the giant.

2: As above, but UBM has suffered bomb attacks from what it believes are rogue beltters. It fears these terrorists have infiltrated its organisation, so in addition to increased internal security, UBM recruits the players as independent investigators to identify the traitors. However, this may be a double-bluff, where the situation is as per 1 above, and the non-violent infiltrators are actually after evidence of UBM's wrong-doings.

SERVICE

I don't know what I want, but I want it now!

- Vivian Stanshall (as Sir Henry of Rawlinson End)

1. BANK JANUS

Im-5542-24-Emp-Svc-7233-66

Description

Bank Janus specialises in the storage and dealing of electronic information, from currency transactions to company records. They tailor their systems to each customer's individual needs; personal attention and confidentiality is assured.

Referee's Notes

Bank Janus' symbol is the silhouetted doubleprofile of an ancient Solomani god of gateways, looking into the past and future at the same time, overlaid with an old-fashioned mechanical key. The bank deals purely in information. It maintains an immense network of investigators and inside contacts in corporations, public departments and the underworld. It monitors all public newsfeeds and published financial records, employing teams of analysts with the best available software to deduce further information. It pays a token amount for any new fact, thus encouraging people to submit odd details about neighbourhood activities, useless individually but collectively forming a detailed statistical picture. On some worlds and for some types of data, BJ's operations are in a grey area of potential illegality. However, the bank's clientele (including every Imperial megacorporation and many governments), plus its carefully preserved reputation for neutrality, have so far kept it from direct prosecution. BJ was the brainchild of an as yet unidentified noble in Cleon's original Moot. The noble saw the imbalance of power in the nascent Third Imperium caused by political and trade secrets and decided to create an equaliser. To assure impartiality, the bank was set up as a trust, the only beneficiaries of which were the company's employees; health care, pensions and other benefits are excellent. The bank investigates all customers thoroughly and has been known to reject applications for data. Only Imperial citizens may use the service – a limitation imposed in the early days to keep the Emperor happy – but what they do with the data afterwards is up to them. Even the results of the customer investigation may, of course, be sold to others but Bank Janus will never reveal its client list nor what questions have been asked. BJ only charges a fee if it can provide the information requested. It has never been caught trying to mislead a client but may return (and charge for) undesired data, for example if the question was ambiguous. Repeat customers are more likely to be given helpful bonus facts than a first-timer. The cost of the service

limits its clientele to the wealthy few – any 'equalising' effect the bank might have only applies to the richest citizens and the larger corporations.

Plots

1: The players are hired to infiltrate a corporate HQ based on detailed plans and information which the patron claims was provided by Bank Janus. However, the data turns out to be dangerously flawed. Either the patron has set them up or BJ has provided erroneous data.

2: As 1, but BJ deliberately provided bad data – its neutrality was compromised to keep the target corporation (a major customer) happy.

3: As 1, but the patron's source was a front for fraudsters selling bad data for hard cash.

4: Landing on a poor world for the first time, the players are followed by crowds of people who ask strange questions, try to photograph them, fingerprint them or look in their bags. The people are trying to gather information to sell to Bank Janus to earn a few extra credits.

2. CULINARY TEMPLE ON VLAND

Vland/1717 Vland

Im-4511-32-StSp-Svc-0767-73

Description

The CTV trains *Shugilii* (chefs) and *Khagilii* (waiters) in the sacred purification and preparation rites associated with the Vilani native religions which roughly equate chefs with high priests.

Referee's Notes

CTV has three bureaux, each headed by a Grand Master; these masters form the Prime Temple Authority, which is the head of the judicial branch of the Temple. Matters of doctrine, faith, practice, and recipe are settled by increasingly39 Service authoritative levels of jurisdiction. The Prime Temple Authority settles the highest matters concerning the Vilani Rite Temple. The Shugilii art of food preparation is considered a defining cultural attribute of the Vilani. Many delicacies are considered by some to be utterly disgusting in their procurement and preparation; however, even dung (of the right kind and under the right circumstances) can be turned into a graceful garnish in the hands of a capable and creative Shugilii. There are three major categories of trainee: the *Naabaduur* (Apprentice), who lives a monkish life of deprivation and meditation; the *Khagilii* (Waiter) who

learns both diplomacy and food preparation at the feet of a master; the *Shugilii* (Chef-Priest) who is qualified to perform the rite of food preparation to serve at a Vilani Temple.

Plots

1: The players share a ship with Daashulinta 'Dash' Kaardhaaraag, an Argu-class Shugilii who was unceremoniously evicted from the CTV over an embarrassing incident concerning the Duke of Ilelish and a plate of solar-vacuum-burned Groat gizzards. His disgrace means he can only find work as a steward, chef and medic onboard small liners. Dash is driven by the need to perform his culinary rituals and though he can whip up excellent food with whatever is available, his methods are unusual – he might jam the airlock to expose the food to 'enough vacuum', or ask the gunner to shoot a side of Tree Kraken from short range 'on minimal power' to get the optimal taste. And he does not usually think to ask permission...

3. ENTRESYS CASINOS

Im-3423-25-Fam-Svc-0464-45

Description

EntreSys rents out gambling equipment and personnel for shipboard entertainment, including slot machines, card and dice tables, gambling wheels, and expert game masters to keep the games fun, exciting and profitable to the house.

Referee's Notes

ESC contracts generally guarantee a 10% yield to the ship's owner or corporation, making a profit for the liner as well as getting a higher rating in the travel guides. Smaller ships can hire either personnel or machines alone to reduce costs or volume. ESC personnel are experts in card or dice games and are usually trained in self-defence (gamblers can react badly to losing!)

Plots

1: The players are hired to play at the ESC tables on a liner and determine whether the table masters are skimming some of the profits. Very careful observation will reveal that this is the case.

2: As 1, but the ESC staff are innocent; it's the ship's purser that is doing the skimming.

4. FOUNDER SHIPWORKS

Knabbib/2115 Core

Im-5514-15-PubL-Man2-Whol2-Ret2- Svc4-5342-33

Description

FSW has been building and repairing ships for over a millennium and has yards throughout the Imperium, concentrated in border areas such as the Solomani Rim and Spinward Marches. They service, repair and refit ships of all

classes and sizes in their extensive yards. An FSW space dock (or one of its franchises) can be found in most major systems of the Imperium.

Referee's Notes

FSW received its official licence in Imperial Year 0, hence its name. From its original head Talili Reycal to current CEO Stepen Marxhela the company grew from a small floundering shipyard to a major force in starship manufacturing and repair. As the company grew, its focus moved to larger ships in the 320's then to warships during the Civil War. From 975, after buying up dozens of shipyards and dry-docks around the Imperium, the company switched its emphasis from manufacture to becoming renowned as a provider of repairs, parts and retrofits. The company is anything but traditional, taking whatever measures necessary to stay in business. This flexibility has frequently saved FSW from disaster but it also creates great internal confusion. The current CEO's temper is being strained by Amadas Zillink, manufacturing division head of the Spinward Marches, who claims that her design teams are on the verge of a technological breakthrough that will put FSW back at the top of the starship-production field.

Plots

1: Amadas Zillink's new technology is from a black ops expedition to the Darrian Confederation. Several highly technical covert operatives, aided by wet ops agents with computer hacking skills have pulled together a wealth of useful technical data. The players are hired to help get them out of the Confederation – either to transport them or as part of a diversionary action.

5. HOUSE JUSTIN

Na-255N-46-Fam-Svc8-Non2-0217-07

Description

Few have heard of House Justin, though many of the rich and famous are occasional customers on the Lady's pleasure liners. HJ provides a wide variety of services to enhance their clients' enjoyment of life, including activities that are illegal on some worlds (the liner therefore remains in orbit). The only complaint regularly received from customers is that HJ ships turn up too rarely!

Referee's Notes

House Justin is an enigma; on the surface it appears to be a vice and drug ring but it is not driven by the profit motive. Instead it runs on the principal that joy shared is magnified and that pain shared is diminished, as taught by an ancient Terran philosopher. Of course, happiness doesn't pay the bills, so HJ has to charge for its services. HJ's founder, Justin (last name unknown) is Terran and runs the operation with his wife, daughter and son-in-law. All of the family act independently (as do many of their extended family of employees), taking ships where they feel they will do the

most good. The House operates 15-20 vessels at any time, which seem to appear erratically anywhere in human space, including the Imperium, Solomani Sphere and Zhodani Consulate. Analysis of these sightings would reveal that even Jump-6 HJ ships could not be responsible for all these sightings (for example, Justin's ship was once seen in the Marches only two weeks after visiting the Hinterworlds). It is rumoured that HJ is associated with the restaurant chain, O'Shugilli's through some distant family connection, but details remain obscure. Confusingly, although the Lady is usually thought to be Justin's wife, rumours that it is a musical instrument strikes a chord with conspiracy theorists. Only the highly strung worry about it.

Plots

1: At a low point in their adventuring, the players are stranded in space but are picked up by a HJ liner. The House staff are ready and willing to listen to their woes and provide free passage to the nearest port. For a reduced fee (given their sorrows) the players can also indulge themselves...

2: The players are hired by an agent of the local government who claims a pleasure liner in orbit is breaching all sorts of laws and that all agents sent aboard so far have disappeared. Suspecting the security service is compromised, she is forced to rely on independents and wants the players to visit as customers and plant a special tracking device. In reality, the lost agents have decided that House Justin is on the side of the angels and are simply delaying reporting in until the ship leaves.

3: As 2 but the agent is really part of the local underworld which sees the liner as competition. The tracker is a cunningly-disguised bomb.

6. IMPERIAL SHIP BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

Capital/2118 Core
Im-250N-35-Priv-Svc-2420-33

Description

The ISBA is an association of ship-builders which aims to benefit all its members by sharing information and resources and co-ordinating political lobbying. It also has a social function, including an annual dinner at which awards for innovation and design excellence are presented.

Referee's Notes

Founder ShipWorks and X-TEK formed the ISBA in year 22 as a joint project to strengthen their position against Cleon's Zhunastu Corporation. Sir Josphanoer Cailfor, FSW's lead negotiator, became the first Project Co-ordinator. Over the following 600 years, the association grew to represent the interests of many diverse entities concerned with

manufacturing starships. However, the organisation was destroyed by the Civil War in the 7th century as members found themselves supporting opposing sides in the war. The ISBA has subsequently been resurrected several times in various parts of the Imperium but has remained a much smaller affair and has never regained its earlier strength. The Project Co-ordinator is the elected head of the ISBA and serves for four years unless a vote of no confidence is passed. The association has always been a hotbed of barely concealed strife, from political struggles between members to disagreements with the Imperial government. If a contract for a faulty ship design is accepted, or a truly good design is shelved, it is frequently attributed to the machinations of the ISBA.

Plots

1: The Emperor is to make a surprise appearance at the ISBA dinner and awards ceremony, in the grand ballroom of Sylea's main orbital station. The players are hired by an anti-Imperial isolationist movement to infiltrate the high security event and assassinate the Emperor.

2: As 1, but the players are Imperial security staff. In addition to foiling the attack, they must find the traitor in the Emperor's personal staff who let the assassins know about this surprise visit.

7. LIFETIMERS

Im-0024-25-Priv-Svc-0434-45

Description

LifeTimers provide cryogenic facilities for those who wish to see the far future. Their facilities are powered by natural energy sources, minimising the danger of power system failures, to give ultimate security for every time traveller.

Referee's Notes

Timers' clubs exist throughout known space. Members freeze themselves in extended-duration low berths for a fixed period of time then wake to see how the universe has changed. LifeTimers was one such group. They were more cautious than some, siting the facility on a sunny continent close to water to provide solar and hydroelectric power to make it self-sufficient. They set up a private trust to maintain the equipment, watch over their finances and handle emergencies. Fifteen years after the members were frozen a world depression caused a financial crisis for the trustees, who were forced to open the facility to other applicants (for a large fee); this has been very successful. Some of the new sleepers are Timers; there are also people waiting for science to solve their currently incurable illnesses; some are just looking to ride out the economic slump. The trustees now have to spend time and money dealing with lawyers, accountants and advertisers, but the paying customers cover the running costs for the institution.

Plots

1: A woman believes her missing husband, who disappeared after withdrawing all the money from their joint account, has had himself frozen by LifeTimers. The company has denied this and blocked her from inspecting their facility. She will pay the players all her remaining money to break in and find him, plus a large bonus if they bring back sufficient evidence to allow her to reclaim the funds from the joint account.

2: The government plans to build a dam upstream from the LifeTimers facility, making their hydroelectric plant unviable. The solar collectors will still support the original Timers (they allowed a large safety margin) but not all the additional sleepers. LifeTimers hires the players to import and install a fusion generator. They wish this kept secret while they sort out a new strategy so that they can continue to advertise their independence from industrial power sources.

8. LINDARPORT SECURITY

Im-3433-25-LL-Svc-0463-54

Description

Lindarport is a small but fast-growing multi-world security firm specialising in transporting or escorting high-value cargos and VIPs. Individual operators and bodyguard teams are available, as well as an excellent privacy protection service.

Referee's Notes

Captain Simon Lindar was a harbour patrolman who was severely injured by a terrorist bomb. Preferring medical discharge to a desk job, he set up Harlow, Janes and Lindar, Port Security Specialists with two other ex-cops, to capitalise on their waterfront knowledge and police contacts. The firm flourished as security consultants and alarm installers, until Harlow and Janes were killed by an armed gang who raided a warehouse while they were installing the alarm system. Lindar decided to carry on, and hired every suitable candidate he could afford, from ex-cops to retired mercenaries. He set up insurance for the staff and began taking on almost any security jobs from night watches to personal bodyguards. A few months later his police contacts paid off and his own security personnel captured his partners' killers as they raided another warehouse. The company (now Lindarport Security) gained in reputation, expanding globally, then to other worlds, while moving upmarket into the executive protection market. Lindarport now supplies bodyguards, couriers and escorts for many media personalities and is renowned for its privacy protection service, including anti-surveillance sweeps, setting up electronic countermeasures and site security consultancy. Lindar is now in his 70's but still keeps tight control. He insists that all staff operate within

the law (or be able to justify any lapse as essential for a client's survival); guards on high law worlds are experts in unarmed combat and high tech, non-lethal weaponry. Recently Lindar bought Third Set Incarcerations, believing it to be a bargain and a complementary service. He now regrets this decision and is working hard to sort out the financial burden this has placed on Lindarport. Much to his second-in-command's disgust, Lindar currently shows no interest in retiring.

Plots

1: The players are hired to escort a courier with a briefcase of vital religious documents on a large liner. They are shadowed by two hefty musclemen who fade away when approached. The patron has hired a Lindarport team as backup – but while the players are focused on these shadows, a team of art thieves will try to steal the briefcase.

2: As 1, but the players are hired as a decoy. The real documents are transported by a separate Lindarport operative. The Players are shadowed, but if confronted, the shadows claim to be Lindarport operatives; of course, they are really the thieves.

9. LOCAL EYES

Im-2434-24-LL-Ret1-Svc9-5535-24

Description

Whether setting up home, selling things or just looking for fun, Local Eyes helps by providing an insight into local customs, giving information to bridge gaps and avoid misunderstandings.

Referee's Notes

Local Eyes was founded by retired scout Darin Hanratty, who was fascinated by the variety of cultures found within the Imperium. Sometimes unfairly portrayed as the poor traveller's TAS, LE's declared aim is to provide services for visitors who wish to interact with local inhabitants. LE is divided into Commercial (merchants), Residential (immigrants and long-stay personnel) and Leisure (tourists); all of these services are available from any Local Eyes office, but staffing varies depending on the world. Levels of service offered include Economy (brochures and data packs providing just the basics), Standard (classes, seminars and group tours) or Deluxe (individual service, including personal tuition, guides, interpreters, and so on).

Plots

1: A rival keeps getting the sweet deals while the players are mired in culture clashes, legal difficulties and dead-end leads. It turns out the rival is using Local Eyes services – can they really make that much of a difference?

10. LOXIBAC

Im-2433-34-PubL-Manu2-Svc8 -7121-56

Description

At the forefront of medical research, Loxibac is a young, dynamic firm employing only the most highly-skilled scientists, to produce truly innovative medical solutions that benefit shareholders and Imperial citizens alike.

Referee's Notes

Loxibac's founders gathered a team of highly reputable medical researchers and raised significant capital based simply on the company's prospects. This start was consolidated by the development of several innovative products including an inhibitor for some forms of cancer, a selective immunosuppressant to reduce the risk of transplant rejection and an effective cure for Vargr mange. The company has been expanding rapidly, its stock value is high and its competitors are watching Loxibac enviously.

Plots

1: Loxibac have developed a variant of Fast Drug, suitable for slowing a human metabolism by a factor of 30 but without the usual damaging side-effects. Human trials are about to begin and they need volunteer subjects, for reasonable pay. If the players volunteer they must sign a waiver absolving the company of any responsibility for health problems caused by the drug. Actual side effects are up to the referee to determine!

2: As 1, but the players are in prison and are offered the chance to effectively reduce their sentence by a factor of 30 using the drug. However, a prison is not a good place to be drugged and helpless for a long period of time.

11. PORTER & STREETMAN ASSOCIATES

Im-1422-55-LL-Util1-Svc9-0444-33

Description

When you have the very best antiques or art to sell, you need the very best auctioneers to sell it. You need Porter & Streetman Associates.

Referee's Notes

P&SA are extremely exclusive auctioneers to the rich and famous. They handle only top quality merchandise and their auctions are by invitation only. Being invited is a potent status symbol – attending the auction tends to attract media attention and gossip. P&SA use only the best auctioneers and pay them handsomely to ensure loyalty. Fees are high

but prices tend to be higher as well, so sellers usually make a larger profit than through other houses. The current owner is Lady Ariadne van der Gaag, great-granddaughter of one of the founders, Isaac Streetman.

Plots

1: A player who is neither rich nor famous is hand delivered an invitation to a P&SA auction on a neighbouring world. The well-groomed courier in P&SA livery claims 'Porter and Streetman do not make mistakes, sir.' A count on the other world wished to invite a friend on this world but mis-spelt the name slightly such that it matched the player's name. The players can play on the associated media attention and good-will until they arrive on the other world, but if they actually enter the auction, the count will expose them as fraudsters.

12. RAPID EMPLOY

Im-3334-45-PubS-Svc-1545-23

Description

Rapid Employ brings together the people with skills in need of a job and the companies with vacancies in need of those skills. Sliding scales available depending on experience required.

Referee's Notes

RE is a rapidly-expanding enterprise, with offices on many worlds. Originally a temping agency, it now focuses on worlds in recession, providing a redeployment service for permanent staff 'optimised' out of their previous jobs, as well as advising the unemployed and new business ventures. It keeps extensive records of its clients and charges employers more for staff with a good, verifiable record. It actively recruits from starports and demob centres, and on a few worlds has reached the critical size where it effectively acts as a clearing house for all local employment.

Plots

1: An agent claiming to be from RE tells the players he can find them work, though the form-filling takes an entire afternoon. When they visit the RE office the next day to see the results, RE has no knowledge of their forms, or this agent. In truth the man is a freelance market data collector – the players can catch up with him while he's persuading another group to fill in his forms.

13. REVENGE! UNLIMITED

Im-1324-03-Part-Svc9-Non1-2651-72

Description

Wronged? Can't find justice in the courts? Then Revenge! Unlimited may be solution. Please note: only strictly legal contracts undertaken.

Referee's Notes

R!U steers close to the edge of legality, and despite claims to the contrary occasionally goes too far. They basically harass their victims on other people's behalf in exchange for large fees. Their methods vary depending on local laws, but can include slander, threats, sabotage or personal violence. R!U agents are given a lot of autonomy by the management, but their contracts are written to divert blame from the company if they are caught breaking the law.

Plots

1: A car accident leaves several R!U staff in hospital. The players are hired as temporary heavies to go threaten a local businessman for his unpleasant behaviour towards an R!U client.

2: As 1, but the target is a mobster and it is his heavies who put the original R!U team in hospital!

14. RRODHOGH'S

Im-4504-25-LL-Svc-5112-33

Description

The Vargr grooming house, Rrodhogh's, now caters for humans, Aslan and other races as well. Rrodhogh's – the ultimate in fur and hair fashions.

Referee's Notes

Kaengueksan Rrodhogh, an Imperial Vargr from Antares sector, had a talent for bringing out the best in every customer's coat. Her salon soon attracted critical acclaim and with this came hordes of would-be apprentices. Making the most of her new-found leadership role, Kaengueksan trained her disciples to her exacting standards then sent them out to open new branches. Rrodhogh's spread gradually across the Imperium, the Julian Protectorate and parts of the Vargr Extents, with branches on many high-population worlds. As widely spread as many megacorporations, in reality the various branches are effectively autonomous subsidiaries, adapting their styles to local fashions but with a continued emphasis on quality. Rrodhogh's reputation keeps most of its salon leaders from going independent. Her son Oedzunur was the first to accept human customers. The move was an instant success, especially with young nobles looking for a novel style. Expansion of the service to other races has had a more mixed reception. Each salon has few staff and a small turnover but the sheer number of branches means that the company's total revenues are significant. The company is now run by one of Kaengueksan's many great-grandchildren but he lacks his ancestor's charisma and there are continuous disputes over control, both locally and regionally.

Plots

1: The players are passing a Rrodhogh's salon when a fight spills out into the street. A Vargr with multicoloured dyed fur falling out in chunks is fighting with his groomer while other customers and staff try to separate them. A disgruntled member of staff sabotaged the shampoo.

2: A Rrodhogh's branch offers haircuts for Cr. 1 to non-Vargr willing to be served by trainees. The results are haphazard! The players are unexpectedly invited to a meeting where they need to impress their hosts (like potential clients or employers). If they complain about Rrodhogh's they will be accused of racism – their hosts use the salon all the time (of course, not at the Cr. 1 rate).

15. SHIVSHUSH HOUSE OF HEALTH

Im-1034-27-Fam-Svc-4306-24

Description

Health is important to everyone, but most people pay little attention to it until something goes wrong. SHoH restores balance to your life by helping you deal with potential problems through massage, osteopathy, dietary advice, counselling and other preventative techniques. SHoH is a Virushi-led community but all are welcome regardless of race or background.

Referee's Notes

About 75% of the staff at SHoH are Virushi, including all the masseurs; many humans find this intimidating. However, the Virushi are very skilled at what they do and almost all clients are very happy with their service. Shivshush's family run the facility as a community but only those who are willing and able to contribute are allowed to join. Payment is on a formalised sliding scale based on the wealth of the client. The poorest are not turned away but are asked to contribute their labour. The centre barely earns enough to cover its costs but Shivshush regards the accumulation of excess wealth as harmful. SHoH does not subscribe to any particular faith but holds a definite philosophical position which shares aspects of many local religions. Staff and clients are expected to respect each other and to work at improving their mental and physical health while at the site. The community is well-regarded by local people; even those who do not participate think of them as good neighbours. Many visit the centre for a few days every few months just to maintain their well-being.

Plots

1: The players are arrested for a misdemeanour. The judge views their behaviour as antisocial and lets them off with a light fine, provided they attend SHoH for a week. Unfortunately one of the other guests is a past adversary of the players...

2: A series of accidents at the SHoH end with a wealthy client nearly dying from an allergic reaction to a medicine administered in error. He sues the House for malpractice and the authorities may shut it down. Shivshush hires the players to investigate his theory that the accidents were sabotage by a group of religious extremists who disagree with the Virushi philosophy.

16. SIX SUNS PRODUCTIONS

Im-0405-05-Part-Svc-3065-22

Description

Creators of such hit series as Shop! and Shipbuilder!, Six Suns Productions provides high quality entertainment programmes for all.

Referee's Notes

The brainchild of partners Angus Deering and Liadin Imkhimasi, SSP is a small production group specialising in docu-soaps – holos following the everyday working lives of 'real' people. Imkhimasi had trained in holo production and worked as an actress and as a technician but was frustrated in her desire to become a director. Deering had charm, money, industry contacts and a glorious voice which brought him a successful career in advertising voice-overs. Increasingly reliant on drink and drugs to overcome boredom, he was looking for a change and Liadin's enthusiasm inspired him to start SSP. The company is tiny, requiring all staff to perform multiple tasks. Deering spent his savings on the best holo-production equipment available. They specialised in docu-soaps because these lent themselves to small-team efforts (a larger team just gets in the way of those people being filmed) and docu-dramas were relatively rare on their world. The company has created two series, both of which were so well-received by local45 Service viewers that they were bought by a subsectorwide network. The critics have not been so generous and the network has suffered financial difficulties of late. It has been delaying payment of money due to SSP, which has caused the smaller company cash-flow problems. SSP have had to cut back to five staff (the minimum needed to produce marketable holos) and are actively looking for a new network to buy future products.

Plots

1: Deering and Imkhimasi approach the players as potential stars of their next series (Tramp! or Merc!, as appropriate). They offer royalties and the cost of the upcoming annual maintenance for the players' ship at the next port of call. On the first jump, SSP are mildly irritating, insisting on filming the players at inconvenient times and setting up their equipment in silly places. When the maintenance inspection goes badly, SSP film the players' frustration while they are stuck on-planet for an extra week. On the next jump, the ship suffers repeated faults and troubles. The players gradually realise that SSP may be engineering problems to make the show as interesting as possible...

17. STELLAR EDUCATION COOPERATIVE

Im-4412-33-Mut-Svc7-Pub3-6217-54

Description

SEC provides top-quality education for children of all ages and abilities with the catchphrase 'Improve your child's chances and help advance humaniti toward the next phase of its evolution.'

Referee's Notes

SEC was formed 200 years ago by rich businessman Thomas Devine. Devine was raised in the Church of the Stellar Divinity by devout parents but became disenchanted with the church and after much searching, found a religion he could believe in, based on the sharing of knowledge and experience. A key tenet of the faith was that humankind was destined to evolve to a higher plane of existence as beings of pure mental energy; an essential prerequisite for this evolution was that everyone be enlightened in order to raise the stellar consciousness. Devine's faith is an offshoot of the School of Shared Experience which was banned during the Psionic Suppressions. To spread the word, Devine took on a small group of disciples, teaching them the faith, but the benefits were frustratingly slow and small. He decided to target children at school and found that his formidable commercial skills were better suited to creating and organising the SEC than to directly teaching people. The SEC quickly expanded and is now directed by five of Devine's original students. Not all teachers at SEC facilities are members of the faith but there is always a religious component to the school day. Teaching uses all the most advanced methods, including hypnosis and chemical memory-stimulation where this is allowed. The schools have a reputation for academic excellence but some people have accused them of indoctrinating children; the SEC responds by pointing to the number of former students who do not belong to the faith. Adult education programmes have recently been started on some worlds. There is a persistent rumour that Devine still lives, running the organisation in secret.

Plots

1: Players looking for (or investigating) psionic institutes note some suspicious reports about an evening class on self-actualisation run in the local school. One trainer for the local SEC still secretly uses psionics for teaching. They will also use their powers to deal with anyone who uncovers their secret...

2: The players see a class of schoolchildren wandering round the starport. As the class passes nearby, one girl trips and falls into the nearest player; before they can disentangle themselves and get up again she whispers that she is being held against her will and asks for the player's protection. In reality, she just has an overly-dramatic dislike of school, but her story is somewhat embellished.

3: As 2, but the girl is a powerful latent psionic who rebelled against SEC's secret psi teaching methods (her untrained mind suffered great pain from the psionics). She is now being forcibly indoctrinated by the over-zealous teachers.

18. TRIBUTIS RAPID STRIKE FORCE

Im-2525-13-WOS-Svc-0524-55

Tributis RSF: When you absolutely need it destroyed tomorrow.

Description

The five-battalion Tributis RSF is a highly mobile mercenary company, available for strike, cadre, and Special Ops mission. They operate two detachments, one equipped at TL12, the other at TL15.

Referee's Notes

Following the Fourth Frontier War, the Tributis Arms Group acquired the Rapid Strike Force mercenaries, a light armoured platoon specialising in high-speed strike missions. Tributis has greatly expanded their scope and the RSF is now dispersed over more than 20 subsectors; many surviving original members are still active in organising and training newer recruits. The RSF has always kept its roots in mind and maintains a very high level of mobility. It has several crack commando units for orbital insertions and all its infantry are mechanised. RSF battle tactics are centred on speed and mobility. 'Shoot and scoot' is their motto. Although the company mostly operates independently of TAG, they use their equipment in battle to test and perfect it. These actions are also used as demonstrations of TAG equipment for prospective clients. The security forces at all Tributis installations are trained by the RSF.

Plots

1: TAG is buying out a small mining concern that has developed a novel method for extracting deep space ore. The players are hired to provide site security for two weeks between the takeover announcement and the arrival of RSF troops and TAG Employee Retention Magistrate staff. There is a lot of ill will between the hard-driven workers and the owners (a married couple who are retiring with the proceeds from the sale); Tributis is rightly concerned about possible sabotage. A day after the announcement, the main fuel depot is destroyed, stranding everyone at the base. A message is found demanding proceeds from the sale be distributed to the employees. When the owners refuse, the computer and radio rooms are sabotaged, leaving only the emergency environmental systems functioning. Finally the ex-owners are targeted for assassination.

19. YOYODYNE PROPULSION SYSTEMS

Terra/1827 Solomani Rim

Im-2335-24-Sub-Svc-6263-66

Description

YPS was one of the first Terran jump drive manufacturers; in 1038 it was reborn as the brainchild of brilliant jump drive designer Jon Karper von Bikbutay, and since then has become one of the leading firms in the design of jump drive, manoeuvre drive, and power plants.

Referee's Notes

Although details of the original Yoyodyne's history have been lost over the 3,000 years since it last operated, in 1038 parts of its original building remained standing in New Jersey's Dead Zone. Von Bikbutay was preparing to go into business and, seeing a holo on the archaeological excavation of that site, decided to name his new firm after the ancient predecessor. The new YSP headquarters are located in the New York Arcology, not far from the site of the old plant, but it has employees throughout the Sol system. Yoyodyne was acquired by GSbAG, LIC, in 1100. Since then, approximately 90% of its design work has been devoted to GSbAG products, though Yoyodyne maintains virtually complete autonomy in its design methods. GSbAG has long had the exclusive licence to provide vessels to the Imperial family and most such ships now in service use drives designed by Yoyodyne. Recently, an engineering intern found a flaw in an old jump drive design that appears to have been carried over to some current drives. In theory, this error could lead to fractures in the zuchai crystals causing sudden precipitation out of jump. The intern's detailed report passed only slowly up the management chain as each rank required investigation before passing it upwards. The report has not yet been passed to GSbAG as the cost of redesigning and replacing thousands of jump drives throughout the Imperium would bankrupt Yoyodyne and dramatically cut into GSbAG's corporate profits for several years.

Plots

1: YSP hires the players as independent consultants to inspect various drives and see whether the faults found by the intern are being exhibited. The party must keep an extremely low profile while obtaining legitimate access to vessels belonging to the Imperial family. They must also avoid notice by GSbAG until they have reported back to YSP. Finding a vessel assigned to a member of the Imperial family is itself a challenge. A Yoyodyne manager will supervise the team but will not join them for any inspections.

2: An Imperial family vessel precipitates out of jump space immediately after jump. No one is injured but the Imperial Navy begins a detailed inspection of the drives. The players are hired to ensure the Navy's report does not conclude the problem was due to a Yoyodyne design error.

3: As 2, but the intern hears of the incident and feels he should bring it to Imperial attention. The players are hired to silence him, by whatever means.

TRADE

Every one lives by selling something
- Robert Louis Stevenson

1. DONALD'S USED AIR/RAFT EMPORIUM

Im-0026-15-Sole-Ret-0664-71

Description

When buying a used air/raft you want two things: a good price, and confidence in its condition. Donald's offers both.

Referee's Notes

Since his partner ran off with most of the firm's money Donald Chibewa has been convinced that people are out to get him. He distrusts his employees, micromanages everything and will not listen to advice; as a result things have been going steadily downhill for the business, which is now barely breaking even. Donald has a good eye for the value and condition of vehicles but less of a head for paperwork. He never deliberately cheats anyone, but he is a hard salesman. Many customers have come away convinced they have a bargain when they have paid over the odds.

Plots

1: Donald is offered a cheap fleet of vehicles from a hire company which is upgrading, but he can't raise enough money in time, so he is looking for backers. Players with money to spare could find this a good long-term investment. However, Donald's paranoia leads him to be rather over inquisitive – after an initial period of enthusiasm he will begin enquiring as to the players' jobs and the means by which they make their money.

2: As 1, but Donald begins to believe the players are going to run off with all his money (even if a large proportion of it is now *their* money). He will become increasingly secretive and he will be dismissive of any request for accounts or access to the money. If the players persist, he will hole up in his office with a shotgun and threaten to kill anyone who comes 'to steal my business again'.

3: As 1, but Donald wants to make money fast. He hires out some vehicles on special conditions; if the hirers can drum up 10 more customers within the week, they pay nothing for the hire, *and* receive commission on the sales. If not, he retains their deposit (usually 10% of the rental).

2. ENLI & ELSA'S GENERAL STORE

Im-0034-57-Fam-Ret-1167-03

Description

Enli and Elsa Ligarmuka run a small, friendly general store in a rural village a long way from the nearest starport. They offer most commonly requested hardware and groceries, and will happily order special items for customers.

Referee's Notes

Enli and Elsa arrived in the village over twenty years ago. They set up shop and were accepted by the somewhat xenophobic villagers surprisingly quickly – partly because they always seemed to be keeping one or two of any items a villager asked for in stock, just in case. Elsa is psionic, with a special talent that seems to be a limited form of precognition. She can look at lists and feel which items are going to be important. She gets great pleasure by exceeding her customers' expectations but, recognising she has a peculiar gift, she and her husband deliberately chose an out-of-the-way location and low-profile business to avoid undue attention.

Plots

1: While the players are in town, a bounty hunter arrives, claiming that Elsa is a fugitive from Imperial justice (she is merely on file as a suspected psionic but he will make it sound more dramatic than this). Some villagers approach the players quietly and ask them to prevent the bounty hunter from harming their friendly store-keepers.

3. IVAN EVANS, ELECTRICAL WHOLESALER

Im-1053-24-Sole-Whol-0363-72

Description

IEEW is a major importer of high-tech consumer electronics. If your customers want it and it can't be produced locally then IEEW is undoubtedly the best source.

Referee's Notes

As a young man, Ivan saw an opportunity for profit when a free trader arrived with a hold full of high-tech gizmos for quick sale. Swiftly arranging a loan through his mother (a businesswoman herself) he acquired the items and

proceeded to sell them piecemeal to friends and local retailers with a modest mark-up. He used the profit to form his own company and to buy more goods. IEEW has expanded from its humble beginnings. At 45, Ivan now directly employs more than 50 people and supplies electrical outlets across the continent with items that cannot be produced on-world ('I specialise in the unavailable', says Ivan). He has his own fleet of delivery vehicles to keep down costs and many good contacts on neighbouring higher-tech worlds. His mother's investment has been paid back many times over. Though IEEW has grown dramatically, Ivan has decided not to register as a limited liability company, despite advice from many friends. Until recently a model employer, he has become increasingly paranoid about internal security since a group of delivery drivers attempted to make off with expensive electronic goods from a transcontinental shipment. Ivan is a short, round human with blue-black skin, a ready laugh and a high lilting voice. He sees the company as an extension of himself and spends most of his waking hours working, although he has been spending more time at home since his mother's recent illness.

Plots

1: IEEW is sending a particularly large shipment cross-country and Ivan fears his delivery workers will steal it. He hires the Players to accompany the goods and keep an eye on things; naturally this makes them extremely unpopular with the regular employees who are quite honest.

2: As 1, but the employees are not trustworthy and intend to make off with the goods, once they have got rid of 'those snooping offworlders'.

3: The players arrive with a cargo of new gadgets; Ivan has heard the pre-release publicity and believes they will be hot sellers. Unfortunately the marketing was a little premature and the devices do not live up to their specification. Ivan thinks he's been swindled and threatens to sue the players.

4. KANKIR SHIPPING

Im-3435-15-Mut-Util4-Whol6-1103-13

Description

Kankir Shipping is one of the fastest growing shipping companies in the sector. Its fleet of over 100 vessels of all sizes can support the full range of options for interstellar haulage, from bulk goods to small luxury items, and offers flexible terms designed to meet the customers' needs.

Referee's Notes

KS was formed by a group of independent traders looking for a way to compete with the larger lines. Organising themselves as a cooperative, the traders shared information, jointly planned routes and trans-shipped cargos for each other. Through a combination of skill and good luck, they have been successful, and as the company has grown it has

taken on an increasing role in interstellar trade in the region, purchasing larger vessels for bulk haulage. KS is still run along co-operative lines, but the original members wield far more power than those who joined later. Growth has begun to slow down; it appears a restructuring along more traditional corporate lines would be beneficial for further expansion but there is strong resistance from some members. A vote has been called at every one of the last five annual general meetings, and each time the motion for change has been defeated by an increasingly narrow margin.

Plots

1: Two KS captains try to recruit the players' ship; they believe if they can attract enough new members to swing the next vote, they will benefit from the large windfall. Naturally the players will come under pressure from these captains to vote for restructuring; they will then be pressured by the opponents, accused of being bribed, etc. If the vote succeeds, the players can take the windfall and go, or stay with KS (if they are still accepted).

5. MA BARKER'S

Im-3443-24-PubS-Ret-0526-51

Description

A chain of Vargr fast-food restaurants serving traditional Vargr fare, but also catering for humans with a taste for spices. Ma Barkers are a familiar sight in many starports.

Referee's Notes

There is no universal traditional Vargr cooking but if there was, Ma Barker's would not provide it. These restaurants are aimed directly at the human market and, in particular, at the just-landed spacers who have had a few too many drinks and who then dare each other to eat the hottest food (or most unusual meat). The Vargr who work in Ma Barker's tend to be very low status; even so, they quit with alarming frequency.

Plots

1: A charismatic Vargr, Knourra Uegusdouk, has organised protests against Ma Barker's for its 'demeaning portrayal of a noble race'. Some of his followers have decided to take things further and plan to break in and set light to the local establishment. The players may be caught up in the protests, witness the break in, or be hired to help with the protest or break in (if they are Vargr).

6. NOBLE IMAGE

HRD/1623 Deneb

Im-6534-35-WOS-Manu4-Ret6-3434-34

Description

Noble Image outlets are almost everywhere behind the Claw, with stores at the majority of the larger starports. They produce the finest in electronics and personal technology

– everything from wristcomps to psi-helms to vision enhancement sunglasses. Noble Image also produces fine, handcrafted duelling rapiers and revolvers for the noble who wishes to protect his 'honour with dignity and style'.

Referee's Notes

The company actually operates in two distinct markets. Ironically, the retail outlets at starports are targeted at upwardly-mobile consumers who are not themselves of the nobility but aspire to be like them; most genuinely noble customers use the exclusive, personal, home delivery service which the company provides for their benefit. Much of the equipment sold by Noble Image is bought in, frequently from other subsidiaries of XTEK, rather than manufactured by the company. Some of these lines are produced exclusively for Noble Image but many are simply re-branded versions of pre-existing product. The distinctive styling on the handcrafted items comes from the use of Aslan labour. In particular, the duelling weapons benefit from an unusual blending of traditional Aslan carving with human motifs and as a result are instantly recognisable as Noble Image items. The company promotes each artist such that they develop a reputation, adding considerably to the value of their work.

Plots

1: The latest gadget from Noble Image is the FLN-1120 Flynn fencing trainer. This is simply a hovering spherical robot with a practice rapier attached to it. At the starport this robot is being demonstrated in front of the store. The Players are welcomed to challenge the bot to a mock duel. Difficulty can be set by voice command and at the higher levels the bot is quite devious. The players may be embarrassed by the bot's expertise!

2: As 1, but the bot malfunctions and begins wounding the combatant or even the bystanders.

3: A customer leaving a Noble Image store bumps into one of the players. He is quite abusive, insisting it was the character's fault and challenging them to a duel to first blood with his new rapier. He is actually a skilled opponent who will probably win if the character fights and will gloat loudly about it afterwards; if the challenge is refused he will dog the players' footsteps, trying to provoke them. In either case he will be found dead in an alley the following morning. He was murdered by another noble he had offended, but many people saw the incident with the players...

7. O'SHUGILII'S

HRD/1623 Deneb

Im-6533-35-WOS-Ret-0422-33

O'Shugilii's! It's a great place to meet friends, co-workers and family. The atmosphere is always pleasant and the food excellent. While at your next starport, why not visit O'Shugilii's? Please note violence is not tolerated; weapons

must be checked in at the door. If you want a fight, take it to startown.

Description

O'Shugilii's is a chain of restaurants and public houses quite popular in the area behind the Claw. They combine the best of old Terra (in particular Ireland) with that of Classic Vland. The food includes basic fare found throughout the region as well as Vilani and Terran delicacies, including spicy fried Argu patties, Janx Pudding and ground Frezel gourds.

Referee's Notes

Like all within the X-TEK family of companies O'Shugilii's is protected by the BureauX; *unlike* its siblings it also has unofficial outside connections and members of House Justin are frequently seen chatting to the staff. The House's philosophy also seems to have rubbed off on the chain. Almost all outlets are as good as the advertising, with a great atmosphere and friendly people (both staff and customers). Many travellers have taken their troubles to O'Shugilii's and come away without them. The Culinary Temple on Vland has objected to the company's chosen name as demeaning to true Shugilii and orthodox Chef-Priests are forbidden from working for the chain. Very few other people pay much attention to this official pronouncement as the food is very good (and the traditional Vilani dishes are genuinely cooked in the approved fashion).

Plots

1: The players are eating at an O'Shugilii's restaurant when a noted food critic comes in. A disturbance outside draws the door security guard outside, then another customer attempts to choke the critic. The attacker is a chef whose restaurant has recently gone out of business because of a scathing review from his victim. Only the players are near enough to do anything; if they interfere, the ex-chef will grab a steak knife and use the critic as a hostage.

2: While eating at an O'Shugilii's, the players notice a suspicious customer hovering between the tables; closer inspection reveals they are covertly dropping a fine powder over some of the dishes. This is a member of the Culinary Temple spreading mild poison around in an attempt to discredit the restaurant. If the players tackle the poisoner, O'Shugilii's will be very grateful and will give them a special voucher for free food at any O'Shugilii's in the subsector.

8. VILANI MAN/VILANI WOMAN

Im-5552-34-PubW-Ret-1555-53

Description

Vilani Man/Vilani Woman has served humaniti since before the formation of the Third Imperium. They provide traditional clothes for all classes as well as innovative modern designs for the daring.

Referee's Notes

VM/VW is a very traditional company; what it describes as 'daring' would be classed 'conservative' by more Solomani-influenced observers. While it is true that they provide a full range of clothing, they attract little custom from the nobility since they do not offer a hand-tailoring service. VM/VW claim that their computer styling provides just as good a fit but most nobles disagree. A critic once accused them of providing 'middle of the road clothing for the middle-class, middle-aged middle management'; a harsh comment but with a certain ring of truth. The company was founded in Vland sector around -300, as the Long Night drew to a close.

Ownership

Naasirka 43%
Sharurshid 18%
Zirunkariish 8%
Imperial Family 4%
Others 27%

Plots

1: After visiting a VM/VW store, the players find themselves being followed. Eventually they find their belongings ransacked but only their VM/VW clothes are taken. If asked, the company will claim to know nothing about it and will offer replacements as a goodwill gesture; if the players investigate further they may be able to discover the truth: elements in Naasirka have been using VM/VW for industrial espionage, bugging members of rival firms. A player was given bugged clothes by mistake. How the players use this information is up to them.

9. VILANI SUBJECT RACE

Im-2316-04-Sole-Ret-2374-02

Description

Vilani Subject Race aims to bring Vilani fashion to those excluded by the masters of the First Imperium – the minor human races with shapes not matching the Vilani ideal and non-humans of any description.

Referee's Notes

VSR was founded as a political statement 40 years ago by Deelo Forasee, a disgruntled Geonee with a strong dislike of all things Vilani. He initially produced Geonee clothing parodying Vilani styles, but when the range proved popular he decided to cater for other races as well. As interest grew he started selling franchises to entrepreneurs in neighbouring systems. Deelo is surprised by the success of VSR and is not sure what to do about it. He feels that he ought to be able to make some political mileage out of the situation but suspects the message is being lost along the way. The company is currently being sued by Vilani Man/Vilani Woman, who claim that Deelo's success is based on *their* name recognition and that their good reputation is being damaged by his substandard workmanship. Deelo believes the real reason is more political but can't afford to lose in court; he will be liable for full damages since VSR never incorporated (he sees Limited Imperial Corporations as being an artefact of Vilani commercial practices).

Plots

1: Deelo is running out of funds to fight the court case. He believes certain groups concerned with the rights of minor races may be willing to help but he and his staff are currently forbidden to leave the planet, so he needs someone to carry a message. Unfortunately he is right about the political motivation for the action and VM/VW will not make delivery of the message easy...

2: Given his current troubles, Deelo hires the players to watch his warehouse. Sure enough, some Vilani activists try to set his stock alight.

TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND UTILITIES

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

- Herodotus

1. AGUUKARUU STORAGE

Im-0023-04-LL-Util-0244-11

Description

AS provides cheap, no-frills, short or long-term warehousing. Insurance available on request.

Referee's Notes

One step up from the cheapest warehousing, AS is typical of basic starport storage facilities everywhere. The few staff work shifts to cover all required jobs – receptionist, crane operator and security guard – and keep the business open at all hours of the day (starports never sleep).

Plots

1: The players arrive to collect their goods from AS, only to find nobody on duty and the door unlocked. A lone AS worker is asleep in the office and their goods are gone. It looks like theft, but once tempers have cooled, a check of the records *and* remaining stock gives clues that their stock was accidentally shipped out by another company and can be recovered fairly easily... provided it did not contain anything too compromising, that is!

2: The players come to collect or deposit goods but a very scared employee refuses them access, claiming they are closed for refurbishment, or on strike, or... look just go away! Unknown to the players, he has a gun pointed at his head, because heavily-armed thieves are currently removing the entire warehouse contents via the rear doors.

2. BARGAIN TRAVEL

Im-0034-13-LL-Util-3333-24

Description

World-hopping on a budget? Need to get places fast? Bargain Travel can find the right ticket at the right price for you!

Referee's Notes

BT provides a service to passengers and ship owners alike, ensuring that berths are rarely empty and that people can travel on a budget. Many tickets are sold cheaply on a standby basis – the passenger may be bumped if someone comes along who is willing to pay the full fare. Other deals guarantee a berth but say nothing about the conditions of the journey, which can result in a cramped and unpleasant trip.

Plots

1: The players buy berths through Bargain Travel and are told they will be met at the starport with the tickets two hours before the flight. Time passes but the tickets do not arrive. Someone bumped the players, but BT forgot to notify them.

3. BENI MA INTERPLANETARY

Im-2243-44-Fam-Util9-Whol1 -2656-?4

Description

For settlements on planets and belts around both the primary and its far companion, in-system transportation is vital to the system economy. BMI is the single biggest provider of in-system freight and passenger capacity on all major routes.

Referee's Notes

BMI is run by octogenarian Rashid ibn Ma, great-grandson of the founder ('Beni Ma' means 'sons of the horse'). Almost every family member works for the company but it has grown so large that outsiders are also recruited. These applicants are vetted exceptionally carefully and there have been accusations of discrimination against them; certainly almost all managers are family. Financially and logistically, BMI divides its operations by region. Head office is on the mainworld, handling matters of general policy, but each major population centre has its own office which is fairly autonomous for local matters. The company divides its operations according to the skills and facilities required for a particular run: ground-to-orbit, local space (between moons or stations orbiting a single world), short interplanetary, long interplanetary and microjump (trips over seven days in normal space, including travel between the primary and its companion). BMI now runs its own academy, which handles their space pilot and steward training needs. They need few

jump pilots, so these are recruited externally. The company treats its employees well but demands a high level of performance from them; family members who cannot make the grade are quietly reassigned to less critical positions while outsiders are let go.

Plots

1: Two BMI starships are currently undergoing repairs, but service must be continued, so the players are contracted to make a microjump to the far companion. They are *not* told that the repairs are for damage sustained during repeated pirate attacks (or hijackings by in-system rebels).

2: Rashid intends to retire soon. His brother and several of Rashid's children are hoping for his role, jockeying for position and building up support in the family. One of them hires the players to make the opposition look bad – the means are up to them but plausible deniability must be maintained.

4. CHANNEL 17 MEDIA GROUP

Im-3143-33-PubS-Util7-Ret2-Svc1 -3554-33

Description

C17MG is now the largest broadcasting company on the planet, providing quality viewing and up-to-the-minute news globally. C17MG can meet every need – education or entertainment, holovids or text, interaction or relaxation.

Referee's Notes

C17MG was formed by Bwap financier Kaper-wewepa-waka-a shortly after he arrived on this world. Through shrewd marketing and farsighted buyouts of established firms the company grew swiftly; it now controls almost half of the broadcasting stations, produces its own programmes and merchandising and has financial interests in various other telecommunication firms. Few realise that although many C17MG broadcasts are produced in-house, few of them are popular. Imports from larger companies such as Planet X Recordings and independently produced local shows tend to get higher ratings. This doesn't worry the management, as profits are still good and the programme-making budget has been cut for the third successive year. The news division has a good reputation but has been struggling to maintain its quality. Rival networks gleefully covered the recent resignation of a group of executives and presenters in a dispute over editorial control. The remaining less experienced teams must now prove themselves.

Ownership

Kaper-wewepa-waka-a 59%
Makhidkarun 11%
Other Corporations 17%
Imperial Family 5%
Private Individuals 8%

Plots

1: C17MG News seeks an interview with the party about one of their recent exploits; they are very persistent. If the players grant the request they will find the results distorted in whatever way is most likely to interest viewers; if not, their refusal will be used to make them the bad guys in a story which bears little resemblance to reality (but just enough to make a libel case expensive).

2: A C17MG worker approaches the players with a recording he has made that he wants them to take to an offworld broadcaster. It details an alleged financial scandal within the government, discovered by C17MG but suppressed by Kaper himself. Someone is certainly trying to get at the worker, and once he has talked to the players they are pursued as well – whether or not they accept his commission. Kaper and a government contact are swindling huge amounts of money.

3: As 2, but Kaper is being blackmailed by the government fraudsters. He will deny any involvement but will try to use the players to free himself from the blackmail *and* get a good story out of it!

5. CHU'S TAXIS

Im-0025-04-NL-Util-1224-32

On call all the time. Choose Chu's!

Description

A fast, efficient, cheap and convenient taxi service running throughout the city and to the starport.

Referee's Notes

Chu Adnan's fleet stands at five enclosed air/rafts and three grav sedans. He has kept his operation going in the face of strong competition from bigger firms through sheer determination and hard work, putting in long hours for little personal gain. This has now paid off, and he has a good reputation locally with many loyal customers. He has a core family of four drivers and a receptionist; these people have been with him for years, other staff come and go.

Plots

1: The players are travelling to the starport by taxi. It seems to be taking a very long time, and the driver finally admits that he has lost his way. He pleads with the characters not to tell his boss (Chu) as he is new and might lose his job. If they help him and do not reveal his incompetence, he will be a useful ally later, giving them free rides, street gossip and similar services.

2: As 1, but the driver is actually taking the players to a quiet back street where a gang will rob and perhaps even kill them.

6. INTEGRATED TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Im-424N-73-StO-Util7-Pub3-3337-52

Description

The ITA directly or indirectly controls all public transportation in the star system, managing everything to ensure *all* transport runs on time.

Referee's Notes

The people of this world place great value by efficient public transport and willingly make sufficient public subsidies available for this to be possible. The ITA is charged with overseeing all public transportation and, unlike similar bodies elsewhere, it has the power to enforce its policies. Key features of their strategy include banning all powered transport from cities (except for ITA carriers, emergency services and a limited number of licensed commercial vehicles); all ground, water and atmospheric vehicles are fitted with a transponder so ITA computers can monitor traffic flows and send routing advice (or in some cases, orders); traffic offences are seen as major infractions and punished with heavy fines and community service sentences. The public transport system is as good as the ITA can make it, with regular, reliable gravcar services in cities and gravrail cross-country; feedback mechanisms for complaints and praise are also well-integrated. The ITA is not responsible for in-system traffic and there are occasional disputes over the point at which control should be transferred. The ITA also has bases on the moons of outer system gas giants. Its authority here is only nominal but the small populations this far out are relatively compliant, so the ITA effectively controls all non-space traffic throughout the system. Some decry the lack of freedom the regulations entail but most citizens are happy with the way the system works, particularly those whose lives have been saved by the extremely rapid response of the emergency services made possible by ITA management.

Plots

1: The players need to get to a specific place within the controlled traffic zone of the capital city. Every time they try to get there using the public transport system they are thwarted – the trains do not stop, the buses get rerouted – and if they try to walk they find the footbridge closed for repairs. Does the ITA want to stop them getting to their destination? In reality they are not being paranoid – a terrorist is claiming they have planted a bio-weapon in the area; to avoid panic, the public have not been informed, but all ITA traffic is being directed away from the area.

7. MARLINER ENTERPRISES, LIC

Rhylanor/2716 Spinward

Im-1415-15-PubS-Util7-Ret2-Svc1 -0266-13

Description

Marliiner Enterprises is a small interstellar transport operation moving people, freight, and mail between Rhylanor and

Porozlo in the Spinward Marches. Currently the company runs three liners, employing almost a hundred people.

Referee's Notes

Nathler R'Elvarte is the original owner and largest shareholder of Marliiner Enterprises. He is something of a local hero to the Free Trader crowd, having worked his way up from just an old tramp trader. His crew hit the jackpot when they discovered a small cache of Ancient artefacts. Nathler used this to secure the niche trade route that has made him a wealthy individual. He resides on Rhylanor, where he involves himself in local subsector business politics. What his admirers do not know is that some of the artefacts were used to bribe SPA contacts on several worlds to allow R'Elvarte's liners a piece of the hotly competitive and highly lucrative Rhylanor-Porozlo trade route. However, his original Far Trader (the *Marliiner*), refurbished by his own tiny shipyard, contains one of the remaining treasures – an antimatter battery, with sufficient output to power the ship for about a hundred years. His ship therefore has extra space that no customs inspector would imagine could exist. ME owns stock in a few fledgling trade lines and sometimes collaborates in mutually beneficial trans-shipping agreements. ME has also done business with MarchLines and Oberlindes.

Ownership

The R'Elvarte family 65%

Heroni MinCorp 10%

Baroness Kira von Huytera 10%

Harris Engineering LIC 10%

Other 5%

Plots

1: Baron du Nobe of Lunion offers the players a nice reward for stealing Nathler's refurbished Far Trader. Little do they know that the Baron has been paid to sabotage all Nathler's liners; he plans to blow the whistle on the group, using their infiltration as a diversion to get a crack team of saboteurs past security and into the shipyards.

2: A noble on Rhylanor hires the players to find out whether it is true that Nathler once sent a Far Trader from Rhylanor to a college on Regina. If the players do some digging, they will find the ship was piloted by Nathler himself and that he spoke with a few noted archaeological professors there, exchanging some unmarked packages with them before returning to Rhylanor. The noble asks them to find out, by whatever means necessary, what was in those packages (he is trying to determine what artefacts Nathler owns).

3: The players find an abandoned Free Trader between Rhylanor and Tremous Dex. Inside is a hidden packet marked 'Marliiner' containing coded Imperial military data about Arden's forces. Nathler is trying to broker a deal between Tremous Dex and Denotam to set up a feeder line to transport food into the Imperium. He suspects Arden of

planning to conquer the world and is worried about losing his trade opportunity; Arden is actually seeking closer trade ties. If the players try to deliver the package to Tremous Dex, they find an Arden team already there; if they try to sell the information on the open market they will be labelled as smugglers or anti- Imperial agents; if they return the information to Nathler they will be rewarded.

8. SOUTHERN STANDARD POWER

Im-3152-52-PubW-Util-4443-32

Description

SSP generates and distributes more than 40% of the world's electricity, making it by far the largest supplier. They guarantee to match any competitor's price and have an enviable record of avoiding power cuts.

Referee's Notes

SSP has been growing steadily for decades, often acquiring smaller suppliers, such that now it dominates the energy generation industry. Because of the world's anti-monopoly laws it is now in a quandary: investors demand further growth but if it takes a larger slice of the market it may be forcibly broken up. The directors have taken a three-pronged approach; promoting high energy projects and greater consumer energy use to increase demand, encouraging the use of cleaner electricity for which they can charge more, and vigorously cutting costs. This has kept the company growing in the short term but they need to come up with longer-term solutions soon. The most advanced power generation technology the world can produce is fission; SSP has been importing fusion generators, but there are still a lot of older power plants online. In the past SSP has been careful about safety and waste disposal but with the new cost-cutting measures this is no longer the case. They are also having problems introducing so-called green alternatives – attempts to set up solar, wind or wave farms and dams for hydroelectric plants all suffer 'not in my backyard' protests from locals. SSP stock is almost entirely owned by onworld concerns.

Plots

1: A group approaches the players, claiming to be environmental activists who believe that safety is being compromised in an old fission plant operated by SSP. They want the players to help get them into the plant to acquire video evidence. Unfortunately the group are actually terrorists on a suicide mission who intend to blow up the plant.

2: A cargo of food the players are due to ship offworld is found to be radioactive. Has SSP been dumping waste near where it was grown? The players will get no compensation unless they can prove who is responsible for the contamination.

9. SWEET-CARROLL LINES

Saurus/1320 Spinward

Im-1314-15-PubL-Util7-Whol3 -0224-34

Description

S-CL carries freight, speculative cargo and passengers. They operate primarily on the Saurus-Vilis run; many of their clients are tourists wishing to hunt the megasaurs native to Saurus' swamp regions. S-CL is also a specialist in providing charter flights; all ships carry fuel refining plants to enable wilderness expeditions. A much-advertised selling point for S-CL passenger traffic is that every ship has enough emergency low berth space for all passengers and crew – a useful safety feature.

Referee's Notes

A former merchant with Oberlindes Lines, Kyle Sweet approached the Saurian Farmers' Co-operative (p.15) with a business proposal in 1089; if the SFC would help bankroll him, he would set up a shipping line to provide cheaper transport of SFC-controlled goods to the industrial world of Vilis. The SFC Board of Governors wanted another merchant to participate in capitalising and operating the new shipping line and Sweet enrolled the captain of the last Oberlindes ship on which he had served, Andrei Carroll, who contributed his 80% ownership of his ship. Following his marriage in 1103, Carroll sold his share of S-CL to his cousin Eneri McCormic and retired to the life of a country squire in the hinterlands of Saurus. Current S-CL assets include four refurbished 200-ton Far Traders, with emergency low berths replacing the standard low berths. Fuel refining plants were originally installed to reduce operating expenses but have proven a boon when hiring out ships for private expeditions. By holding a significant percentage of stock in S-CL, the SFC recoups a portion of their shipping costs. This subsidisation justifies a regular service outside normal shipping lanes. The Saurus-Vilis run is a marginal route and the main competition comes from free traders rather than larger companies; the latter would prefer to move in by taking over an existing concern. S-CL has recently been the target of three take-over bids but all of them have been firmly rejected.

Ownership

Kyle Sweet 32%

Eneri McCormic 30%

Saurian Farmers' Co-operative 25%

Hortalez et Cie 8%

Imperial Family 5%

Plots

1: The players are hired to take a hunting party to Saurus. Unfortunately, the patrons do not tell them of S-CL's exclusive rights to use of the three spaceports (Class E) within the megasaur hunting preserves. By avoiding co-

ordinating the hunt through the SFC and S-CL, the hunters are saving a lot of money but also laying themselves open to charges of trespass and poaching. There are also the inherent hazards of hunting the megasaurs with hand-held weapons (using energy weapons violates both the sporting spirit and Saurian law).

2: As 1, plus the group encounters native Saurians who, lacking any warning of the hunters' presence by the local SFC liaison, are somewhat hostile – the hunters may become the hunted...

3: As 1 or 2, plus escaping Saurus is hampered by an attempted interception by an heavily armed S-CL ship.

10. X-Link

Im-2347-42-PubW-Util-0433-33

Taking up the torch of fast communication where the Scout Service stops.

Description

Mail travels fast by x-boat, but there are many worlds which are not directly on the main x-boat route. For these people X-Link provides a regular, reliable mail service.

Referee's Notes

Many entrepreneurs have attempted to make money filling in the gaps left by the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service's express boat network but most worlds do not generate enough mail to support the required number of long-legged ships, leaving data instead to be carried by merchants who happen to be going in the right direction. X-Link's territory includes several profitable high population worlds and the company uses the income to subsidise the loss-making routes. It also receives government subsidies from those worlds that value the service highly. X-Link attempts to balance two main factors when preparing schedules – the cost, and the public perception of the service as fast and reliable. However, some bad decisions over the last

decade have seriously damaged the company's reputation: insufficient investment and the cancellation of some loss-making runs led to reduced income, making it still harder to keep the smaller routes open. The new CEO, Alvin das Gupta, has adopted an aggressive strategy to reverse the company's fortunes. A key focus is to counter the perception of X-Link as unreliable. Although this has resulted in larger losses in the short term, analysts are optimistic about the company's future. X-Link crews are encouraged to carry some freight to help offset costs (although for security reasons passengers are forbidden). This practice has become even more important recently because of the financial squeeze, making the ships more like subsidised merchants. Only a small amount of cargo can be carried, but it can be priced as low as necessary to ensure the space is filled – any money is good money! An argument is currently raging between some board members over whether the company should replace its fleet with larger subsidised merchants; das Gupta strongly opposes this.

Plots

1: Due to an unexpected safety problem with two X-Link ships simultaneously, the mail service is threatened. This could be disastrous for the gradually-recovering public confidence. X-Link will recruit the players' ship to fill the gap, paying over the odds to keep the service running.

2: As 1, but one of the messages in the databank carried by the players is a virus, which will spread throughout the databank, attempt to infect the players' ship and the communications systems on the destination world (unless the players realise the danger and disable the databank transmitter).

3: The players need to send a vital message in a hurry; X-Link seems to be the only secure option. Locals see the service as a bad joke, commenting that they will be lucky if the mail is delivered at all, let alone quickly; the company representative disputes this. The players must choose whether to make a costly detour to deliver the message themselves or entrust it to X-Link.

CORPORATE SCHEMING

Trade is the lifeblood of the Imperium.
- Cleon I

PLAYER VENTURERS

As mentioned earlier, referees looking to make corporations central to their campaigns are directed to consult *Book 7: Merchant Prince*. However, those wanting to keep big business on the sidelines and avoid book-keeping may prefer to use the method of presenting corporations in this book and involve their players through the ideas below.

The classic example of players running their own business is the 'merchant' campaign – one or more of the characters own a ship (or a share in one), which they use to generate income through trade. Corsairs are similar, though their source of income has rather different risk factors! Fixed-location businesses (shops, farms, etc.) are rare as adventurers rarely settle in one place for long.

FINANCE

Capital is the first key factor in setting up and running a business. The bottom line is that money is needed to keep things running, and profit is the desired outcome. Few entrepreneurs can afford the initial capital investment required to start a business on their own, and obtaining funding is not always easy. This is especially true of venture capital for a trading vessel, which is regarded as a high-risk investment. Cash flow can also be a problem once the venture is up and running, even if the business is making a profit.

Plots

1: Nobody will finance the players' planned venture, except at extortionate interest rates. An agent offers the funding, but only if her unnamed employer can join the scheme as part-owner.

2: The players find themselves unexpectedly in the red, but their creditors will not wait for things to improve and seem intent on bankrupting the characters. Possible causes for the crisis include; debtors defaulting on their debts; increased corporate taxes; increased import and/or export duties; unfavourable interest rates; the secondary effects of almost any of the other situations detailed further on.

3: The government offers strong financial incentives to entrepreneurs to set up shop in an economically-depressed part of the world. Only when they have accepted do the players find out how bad the conditions are – the local workforce is demoralised and the infrastructure is very poor.

EMPLOYEES

Labour is the second key asset in almost any business. Finding and retaining the right people for the right job is not easy, especially for high-profile jobs such as starship pilots, executives and scientists, but sometimes also for the factory floor.

Plots

1: The players are short-staffed at a vital time; a vital employee is headhunted by another firm; an infectious disease strikes down many employees, leaving them unfit for work; a traffic accident injures or kills key staff; it is a religious or political holiday; people are not prepared to work, even for extra pay; some of the workforce are on strike, either because of the players' practices or in sympathy for workers elsewhere.

2: A downturn in profits means the players can no longer keep their entire workforce. Who will stay and who will go?

RESOURCES

Resources and assets (including land) are the third key factor of a business. These are most important in primary industries such as agriculture and mining, but almost all businesses are dependent on having a trading location and their outputs depend on some form of input materiel.

Plots

1: A natural disaster disrupts the players' supply lines, their distribution network or a company site.

2: The rent on the players' site doubles. They must persuade the landlord the rise is unjust, come up with the money, or move elsewhere.

3: As a result of a new government transport strategy, the players are presented with a compulsory purchase order for their land.

RIVALS

Competition usually benefits consumers with lower prices, but to most entrepreneurs competition is an unwelcome obstacle.

Plots

1: A rival seems to be anticipating the players' every move. Is it luck, skill, or an inside source?

2: A bomb destroys key company property. Did a rival plant it, or has the company offended an environmental or religious action group?

3: A bold rival tries to take over the players' business. If the players resist the buyout, will the rival up the offer or employ bribery, threats, etc.?

REGULATION

In theory, the Imperium guarantees free trade between the stars, but this sometimes conflicts with its policy of non-interference in the affairs of member worlds, creating a regulatory interface – usually at the edge of the starport or startown. Even trade taking place on a single world or within a system can be subject to variations in local law, reflecting local customs, safety issues, etc.

Plots

1: The players arrive with a potentially highly profitable cargo, only to find that their goods need costly additional licensing before they can be sold.

2: As 1, but the goods are now prohibited and thus worthless... unless there's a black market.

3: The government bans a resource that the players' business needs in order to operate.

4: New environmental, religious or political policies require the players to change the way they conduct business. The new way is, of course, more expensive.

5: The government decides to nationalise an industry, including the characters' company, but is offering compensation far below its worth.

WORKING FOR OTHERS

Many players find themselves in casual employment from time to time; mercenaries work for their unit, and merchant starship crew without shares in the vessel are generally full-time employees. Some of the following plot ideas can also be applied to government workers such as active military, scouts and diplomats.

UNEMPLOYMENT

In the short term, unemployment (or the fear of unemployment) can help employers by keeping wages down; in the long term it benefits no-one. It is never a good thing for the unemployed...

Plots

1: A character is sacked. The dismissal is fair but comes at a bad time, for instance when debts are pressing and a loan shark wants to collect.

2: The players are dismissed unfairly due to discrimination against offworlders. Can they prove their case when the system is stacked against them and every hour in court is very costly?

3: The players cannot find a job without a union card, and cannot get a card without a job...

4: The firm goes bust, and the players (along with all the other workers) are let go.

CASUAL WORK

Much work is done without a formal contract: the employee agrees to perform some task and receives a pre-agreed payment at the end of the work. This is common for manual labour; payment is often on a daily (or at most weekly) basis.

Plots

1: At the end of the work period the company refuses to pay the agreed amount (or anything at all). Without a contract what can the players do?

2: The players find the health and safety conditions are appalling for cheap casual work.

3: The players are constantly intimidated by regular workers, perhaps because they fear their own jobs are at risk from cheaper casual labour.

FIXED-TERM CONTRACTS

A more formal arrangement involves a contract between the employer and the employee, usually for a fixed time or until a specific job is completed.

Plots

1: The players suddenly find they need to move on, but their contract has a month before it expires and the penalty clauses are severe.

2: Halfway through the contract the players find that they cannot possibly fulfil the conditions.

3: After signing up for a term of work on a world with a hostile environment, the players find they have to buy all their equipment, food and protective gear at extortionate prices from the company store; they cannot avoid being in heavy debt to the company when their contract is over. Worse, the company will not provide transport off the world unless the players can pay for it...

OPEN-ENDED CONTRACTS

This is the most secure form of employment. The contract states the terms and conditions under which the employee can quit or be fired, but specifies no fixed duration.

Plots

1: The company merges or is taken over, and announces all contracts will be renegotiated, or that the players' jobs are no longer required.

2: While performing their job, or when moving on, the players find that one world does not recognise the legality of another's contracts.

3: The characters fail to read the small print when they sign up, e.g. the basic contract does not include a pension, clothing, accident insurance...

CONSUMERS

Players may encounter awkward customers, but their biggest problems usually occur when buying goods or services from other corporations.

Plots

1: The players start receiving demands for payment from a company they have never heard of. Is there some mistake on the company's part, or has someone been misusing their identities?

2: The players buy something expensive that turns out to be useless because of shoddy workmanship. The local laws offer no protection to consumers, so how can they get their money back?

3: The players buy something only to find at a later date that far too large an amount has been debited from their account, and the vendors have mysteriously disappeared...



GLOSSARY

Asset: Anything of value owned by an individual or business.

Business: Another name for a firm.

Capital: Physical items (such as factories or tools) and staff development (training) required by a business; one of the main factors of production.

Capitalism: An economic scheme in which firms and individuals hold the means of production; a free-market or private-enterprise economy. Except for interstellar government and the military, the Imperium as a whole is capitalist (although many individual worlds are not).

Collectivism: An economic scheme in which the state holds the means of production; a centrally-planned economy. Imperial law on free trade makes it difficult for pure collectivist societies to exist within its borders.

Company: Another name for a firm.

Consumer: A buyer of goods or services from a business.

Corporation: A state-owned company, or one funded by shareholders. Less formally, another name for a firm.

Creditor: A firm or individual owed money by the company for goods or services provided.

Debtor: A firm or individual owing money to the company for goods or services received.

Entrepreneur: An individual organising a business in an attempt to generate a profit.

Firm: A producer of goods and services.

Friendly Society: An organisation into which members can deposit funds and from which they can draw money in times of need.

Goods: Tangibles such as steel, soap or air/rafts produced by a firm for sale (or, more formally, contributing to the fulfilment of intelligent creatures' wants).

Labour: The sophont effort required by a business; one of the main factors of production.

Limited Liability Company: A firm whose shareholders are protected from loss greater than the amount originally invested.

Megacorporation: A company with significant presence in every sector of a large interstellar empire (such as the Imperium, Zhodani Consulate or Hive Federation). There are 13 Imperial megacorporations, all large and diverse enough to wield significant political power.

Mixed Economy: A scheme in which the state holds the means of production for some goods or services but firms and individuals provide the rest. Many Imperial worlds have mixed economies.

Mutual Society: An organisation which distributes all profits to its members, who are regarded as creditors rather than shareholders.

Natural Resources: The raw materials and land required by a business; one of the main factors of production.

Publicly Listed Company: A firm financed by the sale of shares which can be bought or sold on a stock market.

Return On Investment (ROI): The profit margin (revenue minus costs) divided by the amount of money invested in the business. A measure of the money-generating efficiency of the company.

Revenue: Money coming into a company, either from the sale of goods and services or from grants.

Services: Intangibles such as hairdressing or banking offered by a firm for sale (or, more formally, contributing to the fulfilment of sophonts' wants).

Subsidiary: A firm owned (and often controlled) by another firm.

Trust: Assets managed for the benefit of some group by appointed trustees.

Venture: A high-risk project.

GOVERNMENTS



'Davus Farrar... Yes, I'd like the exit visa please... Yes, that's the - hold on, by Lorbil, goddess of transactions, what's this bill?'

'Yes please sir off-world person, this payment is required to allow you to leave.'

'This is a joke, isn't it? "Use of planetary oxygen at a rate of Cr3 per day?"'

'Pleasing you sir, but we all share this world's beautiful air and your breathing has been adding contamination to it.'

'And what's this? "Import of various bacteria and micro-organisms..." blah blah, hold on - this is a list of normal human gut bacteria!'

'Yes sir thanking you but our ecology is sensitive to external contamination.'

'Oh yes? And I guess you're going to tell me you don't have any gut bacteria?'

'Oh sir, we are all born in debt to our society. The best we can be hoping for is to pay back our dues by working hard throughout our pitiful lives.'

'Look, this item reads "re-education of citizens"? This lot totals nearly Cr100!!!!'

'I'm afraid after talking to people like you many citizens require counselling as they become bewildered as to the benefits of our wonderful society.'

'You mean they see the light, that's what you mean!'

'I'm sorry sir but your bill is now Cr150 - I feel I will need to be counselled myself due to the trauma of this interview.'

'I want to see a supervisor! NOW! No, hold on! Let me guess - it's more expensive to re-educate a supervisor, yes?'

'Of course, yes, thank you sir.'

'Oh, take the !@?!* money. I just want off this god-forsaken dirt ball.'

FORMAT

This section is divided according to the government codes used in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* to classify the method by which a world is ruled. Each entry in a section has the following details: a description of the government - its basic ideology and distinguishing features, a section for the referee containing additional details which might not at first be apparent to players, a plot which you may wish to exploit, linked in some manner to the government and its background. You should feel free to adapt any or all of this information to suit your campaign background and/or personal preferences.

Selecting a Government

Consult the section of this book corresponding to the government code from the Universal World Profile (UWP) of the world your players are intending to visit. Either skim read the available government entries and decide which is most suited to your purposes, or choose one government description at random. Now read through the entry in detail and make notes on any ideas which occur to you, with regard to similarity to an existing regime (which will help you describe it to your players). If any plots or non-player characters occur to you, jot these down too.

Player Information

Generally the players should be able to gain most of the information in the description section (of a government entry) simply through background knowledge of the area or quick reference to any decent library data source. The referee section contains data which the players should only obtain through a detailed library search or, in preference, by talking directly to travellers who have already visited the world.

Adapting for Alien Worlds

The government descriptions in this book avoid, where possible, any reference to the type of world on which they are set. In most cases you should be able to adapt a given government to the planet, whether it be a rocky asteroid or an Earth-type planet.

No GOVERNMENT

No discernible planetary government structure.

1. CLAN WORLD

The locals are all members of families, each of which has a specific job. Thus there are Talkers (diplomats and merchants), Fighters, Healers, Growers, Herders, Butchers, etc. Individuals are referred to by a personal name and a matri- or patronymic and occasionally by a nickname. An example name, combining these factors, could be Sam's Boy Shifty Dickie Talker.

Referee

Any visitors wishing to do business here are required to undergo adoption into the most appropriate family. They must then uphold that family's interests and good name (they should not defraud the natives and then fly away). Casual visitors may join the Guest family. Once adopted into a clan, taking on the attributes or responsibilities of another clan is frowned upon except where necessary, such as in an emergency. Those who abuse local hospitality are expelled into the Pariah clan, the consequences of which are unpleasant, if short lived.

Plot

This world has many inherent hazards relating to its atmosphere, flora and fauna. However, only the Healers are allowed to discuss such things, so players may well fall foul of these dangers while the Talkers and others stand by looking helpless (they are not allowed to apply first aid, either...).

2. ENLIGHTENMENT

The inhabitants of this world believe that each individual is a lone agent, winning through out of pure self-interest. They accept that individuals have dependants who need support (families comprise individuals who share responsibility for the dependants). The locals co-operate only on a barter or reward basis, e.g. trading medical treatment for food. Physical goods, services and the promise of future support

or services are all valid barter items. Knowledge is also valuable and can be bought and sold. This society requires that its members have a thorough understanding of its ideology, and that they are sympathetic to it. The main local taboo is that no one can try to win through by offering peace enforcement or security services. This results in a prompt lynching. Failure to perform a contract is a very shameful thing, which results in a dearth of people to do business with in the future (in addition to any retribution by the other party). Decisions affecting the society as a whole are reached by consensus, either face to face or through electronic or video media.

Referee

Players should be careful what they offer or promise on this world - the inhabitants do not recognise groups, governments nor many of the laws off-worlders take for granted. The inhabitants also react very badly to anyone not fulfilling their contracts.

Plot

Torbas Zik approaches the players to get him off planet quickly. He has obtained a valuable collection of antiques in exchange for telling an important local of a planned assassination attempt by a fellow local. Not only has Torbas found his information was wrong (invalidating his deal) but the supposed assassin is irate and is also after him.

3. LIBERTY COUNTY

The citizens of this world perform some mineral extraction, farming and low grade manufacture. However, their main interest is to live free, rather than to become rich or important. They have a horror of centralised authority and of having rules and orders imposed upon them. They abhor concepts such as police forces, taxes and trade restrictions. The citizens band together as a local militia, and go out on patrol, mainly to prevent fires, find lost children and so on, but also to look out for signs of government interference. Settlers with the same ideology are welcome, but will be shunned if they prove a disappointment.

Referee

Free traders and independent travellers are welcome here: weapons, luxury and novelty items are sought after, as is news of local oppressors (such as any neighbouring governments). The locals take most visitors at their word, and will become very angry if they ever find out their trust has been betrayed. Trading activity will be a little slow, given the dispersed population.

Plot

Thieves from a neighbouring world have taken refuge here, with enough cash to live out their lives. There are no police here, no extradition treaty and the thieves are now on best behaviour. However, the noble who was their last victim is hiring a group of bounty hunters to covertly bring them back for trial...

4. EDEN

The natives of this world live in blissful innocence amid the ruins of a high technology civilisation. A combination of bad leadership, extreme conservatism and popular apathy led to a decline in their knowledge, to the degree that they are no longer able to sustain their high-tech systems. The populace has dropped sharply due to a lack of medical treatments for diseases brought recently by off-worlders. They are now barely self-sufficient, relying heavily upon remnants of the old technology. For example, many use food from the cold locker stores in the old buildings, cooking it in the automated (talking) microwave ovens. However, as each piece of equipment fails, it can rarely be repaired.

Referee

Traders may find little to trade here or may strike lucky - if they have a replacement part or technical knowledge required to keep a critical piece of equipment going, the locals might just decide to swap for some fabulous works of art or some other valuables which are now of little use to them.

Plot

One of the players acquires a minor illness prior to visiting. A number of locals become nervous that they will be subjected to a new plague and make every effort to save their people by getting rid of the player.

5. GRIEVANCE DAY

This world is the worse for an ancient disaster and a brutal civil war. The natives live in small, dispersed clans who survive by reclaiming the resources of the preceding civilisation. They break down old buildings to get at the masonry and metal frames, excavate power lines and water mains and filter the contents of spoil tips. Each clan has a defensive element, an extraction element and a defined

territory. Some areas have been poisoned by weapons of war, such that extracted resources must be traded for food and medical supplies (often from off-worlders). Occasional truces are called and sites are cleared to allow ships to land. However, the clans tend to spend more time stealing from each other than observing their frontiers or trading peacefully. Violence has been reduced to some degree by Grievance Day, a regular truce allowing the clans to gather peacefully. The event focuses upon setting out each clan's grievances against each other, so that they can be cancelled out. Any inequalities remaining (such as you killed Jim, we killed Leonard, but you knocked down our toilet as well, so you owe us) are compensated for in trade goods, or by a promise of service. This system is actually quite equitable and Grievance Day has developed into a popular fair, including lots of eating, drinking and sporting events.

Referee

Local hospitality traditions hold strangers inviolate until a feud develops, and most of the locals are reliant upon food, medical or other imports. Traders may be paid in reclaimed antique currency, specie, reclaimed valuable materials, or by barter. Cleared landing fields will adjoin the territory of 2D clans. Each day the players' ship remains, roll 3D. If the roll is less than the number of clans, there is a spontaneous outbreak of violence, which could carry over to the players' ship. Visiting during Grievance Day gives a +D3 DM on any trading-related checks. If this society has acquired space or star travel, piracy may be a problem and the system may be amber rated.

Plot

Violence erupts during a visit by the players and wounded natives try to take refuge with the players (for example aboard, or hiding beneath their ship). The players must decide whether to watch these victims being massacred, or help defend them (the landing zone is in theory the 'territory' of the players so they might be excused if they use force to defend themselves).

6. GET THAT STITCHED!

In this state groups are formed on gang lines, held together by terror. There is no law, and interpersonal relationships are generally governed by superiority in combat. Interpersonal issues are usually resolved without a fight, on the basis of which individual would most likely win if a fight did occur. There is a common and seemingly unbreakable cycle, from timid deference and lordly restraint between gangs, to irritable cooperation, the formation of larger gangs, and then sudden break-up in a spasm of violence. Lesser individuals follow the local top dog then scabble to serve someone else when their leader gets killed. Internal gang coup d'états are rare - most gangs merge through competition between

leaders. The end result is a hybrid of organised crime and a return to the ancestral savannah. Being old and sick is a disadvantage; a point appreciated by the local scavengers and predators. This society is now very resistant to change. Attempts to regulate it by neighbouring worlds (and the Imperium) have failed, although occasionally a few power-suited marines are sent in to show the locals who's boss.

Referee

As members of the Imperium, players are regarded as part of the Emperor's 'gang' and are shown some respect in the

starport and startown. They can go further afield if they like, but will then be dependent upon their own abilities to win over the natives.

Plot

A foolish vice-president of a neighbouring world was taken hostage in startown. His ransom is a starship and an array of weapons. His company, encouraged by the Imperium, wishes the players to infiltrate startown, determine which gang is holding the VP and try to obtain his release - by whatever means necessary.



COMPANY//CORPORATION

Government by a company managerial elite; citizens are company employees.

1. JORKIL COMPANY

This corporation controlling this world dominates the starport and all aspects of high technology. The company only supports the population in respect of any work they do for Uncle Jorkil (the company literature portrays its leaders as parental figures). For example, individuals engaged in important work for the company have their health needs taken care of; when not working directly for 'Uncle J', they must pay for their own medicines and treatment. The same philosophy is applied to law enforcement, crime prevention, the fire brigade and other public services. A side effect is the tendency of the police to emphasise protection of company property and interests over that of people generally. Similarly, unless the inhabitants of a building are deemed important to corporate plans, the fire brigade will give them a lower priority than saving the building they are dying in. The result is that there are two strata of citizenship: core employees, who effectively have a job for life; and mobile employees, who are taken on to perform specific tasks. The society is thus divided between well fed, smug, healthy haves and diseased, malformed have-nots. The have-nots can only pay rent while working for Uncle J, otherwise they live in shanties around the local corporate citadel, and cluster around the gates when the gang bosses come out to hire day labourers. Any have-nots fortunate enough to acquire a longer term job (such as domestic service or medical experiment subjects) get accommodation inside the compound but are usually thrown out at the end of their contracts. Occasionally, in a fit of human frailty, some corporate managers adopt have-nots as surrogate family members, but are forced to pay for their medical and educational expenses. Falling from favour with the company can devastate one's life, thus most citizens are constantly anxious and untrustworthy. Apocalyptic and salvationist religions are strongly represented among the have-nots. The company seeks out and eradicates unionists and other revolutionaries. The private education system requires the 'haves' to devote much of their income to assuring that their children will be qualified to remain in the core work force. Have-nots with remarkable talents come to the attention of the company through police information, and may be recruited into new risky ventures or the dirty tricks divisions.

Referee

Travellers to this world will be untroubled provided that they pay for everything, including the costs of any investigation of crimes perpetrated against them. If they cannot pay,

then they will find themselves living in a rusty shack eating cardboard salvaged from the corporate tip...

Plot

A corporate executive has been cunningly back-stabbed by a colleague; through manipulation of the computer systems, the executive has no access to his accounts and unless he can pay a range of bills within a few days, he may be thrown out. He pleads that the players help him with a loan (a large amount!), help resolve the computer problems (by hacking if necessary) and trace whoever was responsible (he cannot prove it is his colleague). If they are successful, he can repay them twice over (a huge amount!)

2. SENSITIVITY INC.

This society is corporate controlled and dominated, but all the inhabitants are voter-shareholders in the company. However, the votes are skewed so that the executive has the same influence as the management and workforce combined. This means that the chairman's casting vote usually clinches any close-run decisions. All the locals have been indoctrinated into believing that this is as it should be. To avoid accusations that it is behaving like Jorkil Company, this corporation has elaborate social security provision, frequent partner satisfaction surveys, wear-what-you-like days and a lot of culturally uplifting events. Ceremonies to reward the employee of the week, month, year and so on are big occasions, marked by extensive buffets, balloons and lapses in manners. The only downside to this is the amount of paperwork (printed and/or electronic) required to get anything done.

Referee

Travellers will probably find the whole mess suffocating, and it will be very expensive to reside on this world unless you work for the company. Every employee will be desperate to get good feedback on the customer satisfaction forms they are required to use for every transaction.

Plot

The players are approached by a harried trade executive. He feels his well-paid position is in jeopardy unless he signs up a major deal and gets a 105% customer satisfaction return on it. He would like the players to pretend to be top level executives from off-world, sign the papers, give him an excellent mark, and meet his bosses. Provided the subterfuge goes well and his position is stabilised, in a month's time he will simply tell his bosses that the off-worlders reneged on the deal - he should have something else in place by then.

Unfortunately for the players, he is actually setting up this fraudulent deal for a colleague whom he intends to frame. The players may notice that the paperwork does not have their patron's name on it yet (he plans to fill in his colleague's details later).

3. BEREK STATE

This world is run by public limited companies, but along franchise lines rather than monolithically: Berek Trading, Berek Humanitarianism, Berek Externalities, Berek Judicial Services, Berek Interior, etc. Citizens have one voting share in each company as a birthright. The private limited companies compete to win the franchise to provide services for each public company. The public companies have a charitable ethos: they do not distribute a profit, but reinvest and otherwise disburse their dividends among worthy causes. There is no tax as such, as such funds are recouped through the dividend system. The operations of the state are performed by the successful franchisees, under the scrutiny of the appropriate company's board, but there is obviously scope for corruption; the franchisee's employees can collaborate to skew votes (at the company's General Meetings) in the franchisee's favour, and the franchisee's executives can bribe board members to collude with them against the public interest. Naturally, a private company's first duty is to its shareholders rather than to the community, so franchisees tend to emphasise big dividends over good service. Citizens are encouraged to develop an interest in the public companies, and may purchase extra shares in them, either with cash, or through the cash equivalent of voluntary good works undertaken in the community. Citizens are encouraged to attend General Meetings, but seldom do.

Referee

Travellers will find that everything on this planet falls into one of two categories; privately owned and swanky, or publicly owned trade will involve a certain amount of bribery; make a Routine (+2) Broker check. Failure means the players must roll an extra die on the Modified Price Table, and take the worst three dice). The usual boundary disputes occur between agencies (all trading tasks take D3 more hours than usual, or an extra D3 days if a routine Admin check is failed). Violent travellers will find that the state's police and armed forces are poorly equipped and understaffed, but that private security forces are top quality and well armed.

Plot

Tolomek are a private company who hold the major starport ticketing franchise. They double-book tickets, add excess fees and generally make a packet. The players may fall

foul of their deceit or may be hired by a government official to determine why Berek Starports (the public company responsible for all franchises within the starport) has not stopped this. It is simple - key people in Berek Starports are getting huge cash backhanders from Tolomek. The latter are willing to kill to keep this a secret, as it is hugely profitable.

4. COMPANY TOWN

This state is controlled by a very self-conscious company (Seal of Quality, inc. SA. PLC) which has decided that awkward things like quality control and customer satisfaction can be dispensed with provided that the company motto 'A Sealed [thing] is a good [thing]' is repeated often enough, and that SoQ's imprimatur appears on the item or service in question. Every conceivable product bears the company logo and certificate of quality, complete with a facsimile of the founder's signature, which looks a bit like a Mr. Walrus. Of course, what this means is that everything produced locally is expensive tat, and there is a healthy black market in products from other brands. In fact there is a vogue amongst the higher management to use nothing produced by SoQ, except when appearing in public.

Referee

Travellers will be pestered for off-world designer goods and pressed to endorse local products. If they ever try to complain about the quality of anything locally produced (this situation is likely to arise within minutes of arrival on the planet), they will be shown the Seal with all due solemnity, and told to lump it. A similar fate awaits traders at the starport. Unless they have agreed a black market sale, they will have to pay to get their goods inspected and Sealed. Usually the goods are declared inadequate, dangerous and are 'destroyed' (that is, stolen) by the customs officials. Merchants can circumvent this by becoming SoQ franchisees; Cr. 100 gets you a little rubber stamp. All one needs to do then is stamp the goods (which will take ages) and customs will be happy. Obviously, this works in reverse with exports: Sealed goods are almost worthless off-world. The players can while away those days in jump space by rubbing the Seal off their goods.

Plot

The players are approached by a young woman who says she can supply them with Seal stamps with apparently legal ink (the ink contains tiny coded microdots) which fades after a given period of time. Strangely enough the players have just received an order for a shipment of valuable off-world grav vehicles that would not be allowed on world unless carrying the Seal... is it too good to be true?

PARTICIPATING DEMOCRACY

Government by advice and consent of the citizen.

1. SMUG WORLD

This world was settled by idealists who were taken with the philosophy and teachings of an ancient civilisation from their homeworld. Following these principles, they have created a society of citizen-warrior-philosophers, who bow to no outside power (unless it has spinal meson guns). The citizens feel that it is the civic duty of each person to spend some time (typically a year) in the police, the judiciary, or as an executive officer (minister). The holders of these posts are selected at random from a list held in a central computer. The citizens' education prepares them for this variety of roles by being rather broad, if not superficial. All legislation is decided by popular ballot, which is done through the communications net (if this world has a population digit of less than 100,000 voting is performed face to face in a big stadium). Visitors are accorded rights and privileges only so far as they can pay for them, or to the extent that these people are of interest to the state. Traders, manufacturers and visiting experts are welcome, but refugees and settlers are not. Visitors intending a long term relationship with this world can buy a residency permit, giving them slightly more rights and protection than a casual visitor. The local laws favour citizens first, residents next and visitors last. For citizens, extreme punishments include death or exile (which most citizens dread) but fines are the most frequent penalty. Visitors and residents can expect death and/or the confiscation of property. The Imperial Consulate (at the starport) will offer safe haven for fugitives.

Referee

Visitors will tend to find the locals infuriating: they are smug, superior and condescending. As they are convinced that their society is perfect, they are even less bearable when travelling off-world.

Plot

The Imperial Consulate is looking to provoke a major incident with the locals to justify a full scale invasion. They may hire the players to hack the voting computers (or otherwise rig the system) to cause sufficient panic that the marines can be called in.

2. CARING AND SHARING

The citizens of this world have the highest opinion of themselves as individuals, and are keen that their fellow citizens agree with their self assessment. The planet was settled by religious extremists who fought a particularly

bloody war. This ended in the moderate factions turning on and killing their demagogues (an event still marked by the Sanity Day public holiday). The moderates decided upon a new doctrine which encapsulated the positive, life affirming parts of the old scriptures and enshrined 'no more leaders, no more gods' as the highest public doctrine. Perpetuating such a system requires thorough indoctrination, so the locals adopted a standardised education system. Anyone vexed by the workings of this perfect state can share their doubts and feelings with special therapists, who reassure them with their own positive experiences. All laws are debated through the communications net, often passionately, but never acrimoniously: having opinions is a virtue, as is being susceptible to reasoned argument. All citizens are fairly well informed and each will debate enthusiastically with outsiders. Foreign policy is essentially conciliatory and accommodating. (This planet may be considered part of the Imperium, but this is a legal fiction: all Imperial facilities are at the edge of the system, and are jump capable. Both the Imperium and the locals maintain the pretence that the Imperium will leave if the locals ask it to.) This society may seem perplexing to outsiders: rich employers and their poor employees meet on terms of perfect social equality; each understands this financial disparity as a negotiated relationship, freely entered into by both sides. Leadership in defence is entirely formalised; the Book of Strategy and Tactics is owned by all citizens, and is updated regularly by the citizens (after debate, naturally). All citizens train in the local militia, but they supply their own equipment, so their armament varies widely. The militia is mostly light infantry with a small amount of powered armour and a few fighter planes. Close friends may purchase, crew and maintain a tank or a flying gunship between them.

Referee

Visitors can find this society heavy going: the locals are friendly enough, but very talkative, being keen to brush up their debating skills with foreigners. The simple legal system applies with equal force to all on the planet, and trade is fair and equitable. You can also buy or sell almost anything here, although items which allow individuals to exert undue power (bio-warfare weapons or thermonuclear devices) are taboo.

Plot

A group of rich citizens wish to take passage off-world to study a new jet-copter gunship and (probably) purchase it to bring back and run as part of the militia. As well as the problems of helping obtain and ship such a war machine, the players will have to cope with their patrons' need to assert their superior culture over everyone that they meet.

3. NEUROSIS

The citizens of this world are obsessed with their mental health, the negative effects their actions have on others and, much more importantly, the effect that others' actions have on them. Hence, most days in the workplace begin with a colleagues circle meeting where co-workers sit down and discuss how they hope the day is going to go. Inevitably, the end of the day concludes with a similar workshop where they analyse how the day lived up to their expectations. Any unresolved conflicts are worked out in counselling sessions. The same behaviour is carried over into family and other personal relationships, and spontaneous sharing frequently breaks out at the slightest excuse. At the planetary level, this translates into protracted discussions which continue until a consensus is reached. This has caused all policies to end up somewhere between laissez-faire and abject capitulation to external reality. The planet is recognised as a difficult entity, in part because its natives are so neurotic. All crime is seen as a mental illness of sorts, so that all criminals (who are mostly foreign) are kept in counselling until they are better (completely brainwashed by the resident neurotics). Arresting criminals usually involves stun weapons and is carried out with apologies and sincere enquiries about the feelings of the perpetrator. Having to resort to lethal force is regarded as failure.

Referee

Travellers may find being asked 'how do you feel about that' all the time a bit odd, but can amuse themselves by provoking anger among the natives. Perhaps surprisingly, trade is a brisk and efficient affair as the transparency of local behaviour is a barrier to any sharp practice; they know that the trader wants a healthy profit, they know what they can afford and a compromise is reached. However, the method of reaching the deal seems strange.

Plot

A player is mistaken for a wanted criminal and, after being stunned and apologised to, is taken off to be counselled.

4. VICTIM CULTURE

This society is self-consciously and idiosyncratically fair. Recognising that all people have different talents and abilities, and that society tends to work in favour of those who have a certain set of these (intelligence, good looks, rich parents, etc.) this state is run on a sort of handicap. The list of beneficial traits has been identified, and all the things which make you unattractive to an employer or business partner get you extra points (the higher your points score, the greater your need for a state benefit or service, thus the sooner you get housing or medical treatment). This scheme has worked through to the legislature, where people like to speak for themselves (no one else would understand). The executive is artificially large, to allow all disadvantaged

groups to have a voice. Large companies must have a workforce with the same percentage of each disadvantaged group as occurs in the wider population. In many cases this has had the effect of promoting very small commercial outfits except where the state is in control.

Referee

There will be some odd moments for visitors here, for example when confronted by a queue, a local will work out who is more disadvantaged, and who is less so, and push in at the boundary. Stern but very patient liaison officers will be on hand to make sure that everything is working well. They will be particularly keen to assist any neophyte traders in finding responsible people to deal with. People will read labels thoroughly and then quiz shop assistants on what their interpretation of the words is. Leaflets covering rights and responsibilities will be thrust at strangers. Traders in search of a quick deal will be pursued by other agents demanding that their more disadvantaged collective be considered. These effects will become more extreme the further visitors stray from the starport. Provided merchants ignore any trading partners beyond the small, efficient outfits they find by themselves, and fend off any approach from the state sector they will be fine. If they do not then they roll only 2D on the Modified Price Table, and have to spend D3 days longer than normal concluding their business.

Plot

The players give passage to, or share a voyage with, travellers from this world. These people will interrogate stewards (and other passengers) about all conceivable minutiae; which allergenic compounds are present in their bedding, dietary requirements, etc. Anything the players find annoying will become an absolute necessity to these people.

5. STAKEHOLDER SOCIETY

In addition to venerating an individual's civil rights, this society also imposes commensurate obligations. So to be educated, you must be attentive; to be protected by the law, you must abide by it yourself; to have a stake in government, you must dedicate yourself to public good. Everyone has a vote and anyone, in principle, can be a minister or a judge. However, there are far fewer positions of trust than there are people who fancy the jobs, so one must be appropriately committed to following the correct dictates: a minister for environment would be expected to clean up the parks; a judge would help run evening classes for delinquents; a housing official might serve up soup to the homeless. The legal system does not try a criminal on a single offence but rather their whole life and value to society are considered, with the specific offence acting as a pretext to bring the accused into court. Similarly, the accuser or victim is also audited and the remedy (if any) is doled out according to each party's contribution to society; any loss caused to society in general (and then to the victim in person); and

what either party may promise about their future conduct. Punishment is creative, to say the least.

Referee

This system works tolerably well for the planet's native population but travellers will find that their value to the host society is close to nil, and that they are treated with appropriate scorn. Any court or rules decisions will be to their disfavour. This is especially important in trade; if the value

rises above 150% of normal, the other party will immediately file a complaint for sharp practice, which might result in anything from a fine, to impounding the players' ship.

Plot

The players are arrested (with good reason or mistakenly) for a minor misdemeanour but then find they have to justify their entire life's works or (given their low value to this world) they will be sentenced to several years of community labour.



SELF-PERPETUATING OLIGARCHY

Government by a restricted minority, with little or no input from the masses.

1. JANE AUSTEN WORLD

The state is controlled, in its own interest, by an entrenched local nobility. Life is skewed in their favour by a mix of legal privileges and exemptions. They maintain their influence by instilling a sense of deference in the population, by ownership and control of the media and by ensuring that their children are better educated than those of the great unwashed. Whether the lives of the common people are appalling or comfortable depends entirely on the disposition of the local grandees. The nicer nobles have philanthropic establishments, the others have workhouses. However, to stop the peasantry becoming an eyesore, most communities have a poor house, a soup kitchen and a damp and rundown cottage hospital.

Referee

Visitors of high social status (10+) will find themselves fêted, but will of course be expected to reciprocate. Lower class itinerants will find themselves worth as much as their bank balances. Anyone acting against the interests of the aristocrats (whether causing them harm, defrauding them or stealing from them) will find the state responds with ultimate force.

Plot

A noble's son has eloped with one of the unwashed. His parents cannot be seen to condone this, nor to actively pursue him. They will pay the players well to persuade him to give up his love or else ensure he has a permanent accident.

2. SENATE AND PEOPLE

This society is mostly comprised of a plebeian class, although it is controlled by a self-appointed patrician class. The patricians take all political offices, in particular all posts in the ruling senate. They are educated to believe that they should act in the interest of the state as a whole, and that their lofty social position requires them to take an equivalently high moral stance. The fact that they enjoy these privileges and get to make all the big decisions is taken as proof that their society works. Legally speaking, the senate can regulate both themselves and the people, while the people can pass laws covering their own behaviour (plebiscites). It is possible for suitable individuals to be elevated to the patrician class,

but the most that the average pleb can expect is to be looked upon as a senior pen-pusher.

Referee

The local laws regard all visitors as plebs unless they have a Social Standing of 10+ in which case they are given honorary patrician status for their stay. Laws are fair and rational, typical penalties being imprisonment, fines, industrial conscription, exile or death, with reduction to plebian status being a dread sentence applied to a few sinful patricians.

Plot

A trader has a valuable trade deal for this world, but has no chance of sealing the deal unless he is regarded as an honorary patrician. Given his actual SOC of 6, he is seeking players of higher class to give him a few quick lessons and to accompany him as an entourage (to reinforce his status and give him on-the-spot advice).

3. BUSINESS WORLD

This world is ruled by a gang of rich merchants who arrange things so that they remain in charge. Unlike a corporate state, these people do not co-operate but rather they compete through the action of their diversified corporations. Eventually one corporation may become truly dominant (becoming government code 1), but that time is very remote indeed. Members of the successful corporations bid to provide the various services; police, health, media, etc., and then run them down in pursuit of profit. Crime and punishment is focused on protecting the merchant rulers. Breaking a contract, taking or breaking the possessions of the rich, or defaulting on a loan are all heavily frowned upon, while killing a labourer is usually thought a fairly minor crime. All the corrective services have been put out to tender and are of a low quality: death by drowning, working on chain gangs and so on. Fines and confiscation of assets are de rigueur for any sentence, however trivial.

Referee

Visiting traders can expect to have a prolonged stay. They must first decide just whose landing and entry clearance service will provide the best value (roll D3 + the world's Population code for the number of offers). Whether selling or buying cargo, or purchasing other kinds of goods or services, they will receive multiple offers from a range of providers, all of whom are extremely competitive and will be greatly offended if not chosen by the players. This will

be true regardless of the financial standing of the travellers involved: the locals always believe there is a profit to be made, even from the poorest traveller.

Plot

A man gives a player a holocrystal just before being executed in cold-blood by the security forces. The crystal contains details of a plot by one merchant group to dominate the world through collusion with an Imperial megacorp. Naturally, any of the merchant groups would pay huge amounts to get hold of this evidence.

4. NEW JANE AUSTEN WORLD

The ruling class on this world is an elegant, propertied elite, who act as magistrates and make their laws in a comfortable palace. Their luxury is maintained by a yeomanry which outnumbers them by approximately 20-to-1, most of whom are brave, cheerful, cheeky (but respectful), and as thick as two short planks. The world's income actually derives from off-world holdings of the most scandalous type: strip mining, asset stripping, sweatshops, flouting of safety regulations and even direct slavery, etc.

Referee

Visitors are treated politely; high status travellers are invited to parties and weekend trips shooting wildlife. Merchants will wheel and deal over a barley wine in a comfortable drinking establishment. Laws are strictly applied, but by very polite police officers. As soon as the suspect gets to prison or into a convenient cellar, the façade drops; they are beaten black and blue before being shipped off to a work camp on the frontier.

Plot

The players are asked by an off-worlder to investigate the disappearance of a young off-worlder noble. The youth offended one of the elite and, on a pretext, was arrested and sent to a work camp. Discovering this will be difficult - the noble's itinerary is known by contacts at the starport, but a direct approach to those he visited last will be politely rebuffed with denial of ever having met such a youth. More questioning will lead to internment in a work camp, but a covert approach to a lady-in-waiting will reveal she was 'sweet' on the youth and will explain how and why he was taken away. Getting him out of the labour camp and then exacting his revenge may prove more tricky.

5. THE RULE OF THE FITTEST

The founders of this perfect state were much inspired by a long-dead philosopher (analogous to Terra's Friedrich Nietzsche). Regrettably, their inspiration was a woman-hating loon with cerebral syphilis. It is still disputed whether they knew this, or whether they simply thought this would not have coloured his outlook. The state that they have built revolves around not trusting half of the population or allowing them near to anything important, while forcing

the other half to endure a variety of physical and mental tortures. The latter is intended to make them stronger... or destroy them. Few supermen ever think they are going to fail, despite the appalling score of corpses preceding them. The top dog is whichever male has devoted most time and effort to becoming a physical and mental colossus. The ruler controls as many underlings as he can dominate. His pack is similar to a top-down diversified corporation with a harem in the annexe. While collusion with other colossi would seem advisable, this is not on, as the mightiest heroes are those who stand alone. The end result is that public life is dominated by men with wonderful immune systems, very focused intellects, big muscles, surgically reinforced joints and ligaments and the most monumental self regard. The difficulty is that they do not understand compromise, diplomacy, win-win situations or women. Actually they hate women.

Referee

Interstellar relations could be better; every visiting man is treated as an opponent in the game of 'I'm hard, I am,' and women can conduct no business apart from gyrating on tables, cooking and having babies. The Imperium would like to give the natives a kicking to show them what a real society can do, but this would be a diplomatic faux pas.

Plot

The players find themselves in a confrontational situation with a local top dog. There will be off-duty members of the Imperial marines around who will back up the players, encouraging them not to back off. Whether they lose or win (competitions like 'let's see who can catch a bullet in their teeth' are commonplace) the competitive nature of the marines and followers of the top dog will result in a small fight, which builds into a huge running riot (the Imperial Marines have been waiting for a good excuse to have a go at these posers and if there is a plausible enough pretext - such as protecting Imperial citizens such as the players - their commander is more than willing to let the leash slip).

6. WARLORDS INC.

This society is controlled by an association of free companies who use the planet to provide logistical support for their military ventures. Foreign currency and trade goods are obtained through the sale of military services; the association takes a percentage of an individual unit's fee. This state has an evil reputation and could well be rated as an amber or red zone. Criminals, deserters and assorted sociopaths end up on this world in search of sanctuary or even gainful employment. Soldiers being soldiers, there is constant friction between the military and civilian populations. Trade is problematic: the state is oriented to the export of services and the import of goods, thus the major way to make money is to ship in goods (often weaponry) and ship out mercenary units. Since the latter are usually en route to a war zone, this can be a risky (if lucrative) business.

Referee

Visitors are regarded as sources of valuable intelligence and (if they act at all suspiciously) may be suspected of being spies. They are questioned very closely on arrival and will be followed at any time that they leave the starport. Strangers are also often the victims of bullying or random violence by mercenaries. The number of criminal types on the world makes it an exceptionally hazardous place to spend any time.

Plot

A nearby world fears its rebels may be supported by a coup using troops from this world. The players are hired to spy on incoming equipment specific to such an operation (such as desert kit if it is a desert world, hostile environment kit if it has a hazardous atmosphere, and so on). If the players can locate the unit hired for the coup, they will be paid an extra fee to infiltrate the unit (as mercenaries) and sabotage it before it can help the rebels.

7. THEBES BY HEINLEIN

This state is a model of a balanced economy and domestic order, but only members of the military can hold positions of authority or be involved in politics. This means that the army is inclined to swank about and has extra privileges (such as tax exemptions and the right to insist on being called sir by civilians). Foreign policy is, ironically, conciliatory; there is a good chance that those entering a battle will never return home, and as wielding power requires one to be alive, it is generally accepted that the risks of being on the losing side are unacceptable - better to avoid conflict if possible.

Referee

The conciliatory nature of the ruling military leads to an interesting problem for visitors: much of the local iconography and oral tradition is devoted to praising the heroism and ability of the soldier/rulers, who actually rarely do anything more dangerous than watching their troops marching around the parade ground. Pointing this out is a severe breach of etiquette, of course. That aside, visitors will find this state to be orderly and pleasant enough, provided they remember that they are legally defined as being inferior

to the local military and watch their manners. There is a local underground, and visitors who get embroiled with it are in no end of trouble.

Plot

The players are approached by Yain Trumps, who wishes to smuggle some heavy armaments off-world. Yain arranged for the stolen weapons (missiles and light artillery) to be replaced with plastic replicas, on the principle that the world has avoided war for decades and the mothballed equipment would not be missed...

8. WORLD OF THE GENERALS

The military holds this state under its rule with unabashed brutality. Members of the officer corps hold civilian posts of commensurate status: thus lieutenant generals are continental governors and subalterns are borough mayors. The people are cowed, despondent and if suspected of any misdemeanour are given to disappearing mysteriously at about three in the morning ('travelling off-world' in official parlance). The generals enjoy the prestige of huge public engineering works. The underground press claims that the foundations of these developments are full of the bodies of those who fell foul of the regime.

Referee

General advice to visitors is to be very careful indeed. Do not give offence to the local provosts and do not criticise the local regime when outside your ship. An increasing problem is that the state is not awfully efficient. The generals like to kit out their favourite troops in gaudy uniforms and enjoy the latest toys, and this accent has a depressing effect on the local economy. As the soldiery have not been paid in living memory, they are given to inventing impromptu taxes and collecting these at the point of a gun.

Plot

A number of rebel groups have taken to Robin Hood style operations, robbing military banks so that the poor can pay their taxes. The players are asked to smuggle weapons to one such group.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Government by elected representatives.

1. A WORLD IN BALANCE

This planet is ruled by two political parties who command roughly half the vote each and who are, to outside observers, mostly indistinguishable. The difference between them is that one party, the Democratic Republicans (DR), favours finance and banking while the other, the Republican Democrats (RD), is inclined towards trade and industry. This dichotomy influences the balance of trade: when the DR are in charge the local currency is strong, and thus imports are cheap, but the cost of exports rises. This has the effect of depressing the industrial sector and raising unemployment. The electorate therefore vote for the RD next time round. The RD depress the local economy, causing import prices to rise and making it easier for industrial producers. However this feels like an austerity regime to the electorate, the inflation rate rises and imports become more expensive. Thus the DR gets back in again.

Referee

The main effect on visitors is that prices are rather volatile. Every time they stop off at this world, decide who is in power (roll 1D, odds it is the DR, evens it is the RD). If the DR are in, then import prices (paid on cargo being sold) are lowered by 2D%, and export prices (paid on goods being bought) are raised by 2D%. The reverse is true if the RD are in charge.

Plot

The players are hired to help ship out a large consignment of computer technology - the seller is desperate to get it off planet before the election results are known; he will then wish it to be shipped straight back. He is using the fluctuation of import/export prices to perpetrate inventory fraud to avoid taxation.

2. SPECIAL INTERESTS

This planet has a pluralistic system entrenched by proportional representation. This means that while significant shares of the vote are held by a few mainstream parties, the balance of power is in the hands of an assortment of fringe groups and eccentrics. The actual composition of the government changes rapidly as new coalitions are formed and then break up acrimoniously. The main feature here is that while the main partners in a coalition can get their policies through, they have to bow to the interests of their more specialised partners.

Referee

The players cannot depend upon constancy in the economy or laws of this world!

Plot

Roll 1D before the players' ship touches down to determine the current political situation.

- 1: Religious extremists have managed to outlaw work during new religious holidays of D3 days a week (consecutive or spaced out).
- 2: Moral tribunals have decided that some forms of dress are outrageous for one sex or compulsory for another (generally being too disgusting to contemplate).
- 3: Protectors of family life have passed a law preventing non-married or same sex groups who are not siblings, or parents and children, from sharing hotel rooms.
- 4: In an effort to protect local jobs and industries, visiting traders are prohibited from doing their own work: they have to hire local intermediaries at all stages. They are not allowed to hire themselves out to other such merchants!
- 5: Exports of local products are being taxed at 5D% to encourage economic self sufficiency.
- 6: To save the environment from the perceived effects of synthetic graviton emission, visiting ships are required to dock at an orbital facility and hire a reaction engine powered lighter to transport their goods to the surface (and back again).

3. A HOUSE DIVIDED

This world is a two party state where strife rules: one party represents the rich and their lackeys, and another party represents the workers. The vote is calculated on the basis of electoral districts rather than by number of voters so, by making sure that the workers' districts are more densely populated than those of the rich, the rich party tends to be in control. This makes for a very robust political culture indeed. The workers are organised as a constitutional party, but also have revolutionary aspirations. The rich are similarly constitutional, but retain private investigation and enforcement services. The division between the two parties can be seen at every level of society, from the insincere works picnics and other outings (at which the bosses can be seen grimacing at the forced intimacy) to union disputes which are occasionally turned into terrorist plots by agents provocateur. Civil rights marches have previously turned into massacres. To balance the rich party's unfair weighting of the electoral districts, rich districts are frequently threatened

(with street violence or explosions) to make them return Worker representatives at the next election. There can be vicious street fights (often on a huge scale) between unionists and the 'scabs' who continue to work while their colleagues are on strike. The only break in this regime are the four World Unity Days; planet-wide parties where the rich try to placate the poor with festivals of food, drink and entertainment. These are clearly unsuccessful, but are now expected by the masses, such that stopping them would simply cause yet more bloodshed.

Referee

Travellers can expect delays of D3 days in commercial activities undertaken on this world. The delay is usually due to wildcat strikes and unofficial stoppages. Prolonged stoppages or walkouts may cause delays of up to 5D weeks. Visitors may be approached by members of either party, to favour them in transactions, seek political leverage off-world, or even infiltrate the opposing party. Traders who consort with scabs may well be beaten up by workers. Those who do not go through official channels and work directly with labourers may be beaten up by the rich party's enforcers.

Plot

The players stumble into a small street fight between unionists and some bosses protected by hired security. Depending upon their attire, the Players are mistakenly assumed to be with one or other group and are also assaulted. One of the unionists throws a petrol bomb, a security man shoots back...

4. UNDER THE THUMB OF THE FIRM

On this world the local politics are dominated by one middle ground party (the Firm), while the margins to left and right are cluttered with a number of smaller groupings. These latter could defeat the Firm if they co-operated, but over many years they have only managed to bring themselves to do so for a few voting issues and never for the main elections. The Firm has been in power for so long that it is thoroughly enmeshed with the local establishment, where it makes corrupt deals, gorges itself at the public trough and generally flaunts its invincibility. The local media is respectfully reproofing of the government's excesses, but always supports them fully at election time.

Referee

Obsequiousness is the order of the day for dealing with any business, as the Firm has stamped its corruptive influence throughout this world's corporations. This abuse of power leads to inefficiency and delay. Most contracts, guarantees and other 'paperwork' are defective (due to fraud or plain incompetence) such that any goods exported from this world will lose 3D% of their final value on the Modified Price Table when sold off-world. Regular traders pay bribes to ensure

that they get what they really paid for, but new visitors are likely to get stitched up.

Plot

A new leader has arisen within the ranks of Democoop, one of the many parties. He is so politically adept that he might finally manage to bring several of the smaller parties under a single banner. Naturally, the Firm does not wish this to happen. The players may be hired to implement the Firm's wishes (by discrediting, threatening, kidnapping or killing the new leader) or they may be hired by Democoop to prevent such events.

5. ETERNAL VIGILANCE

This state reluctantly changed from a pure to a representative democracy because the process of face to face discussion on a planetary scale was too time consuming and, if truth be told, the people were disillusioned with it. However, the authors of the present constitution were fond of the old ways and did their best to assure that personal freedoms were protected at all costs. They instituted the most ferocious antitrust legislation possible and supplemented it with the True Description Act and laws to limit the size of any company. In effect no company can exist where the actions of its workers are more than two steps away from its chief executive, so the chief executive delegates to a line manager, who then instructs the actual workers. This has the result of limiting the largest companies to about 400 employees. To an extent, this is circumvented by establishing a pyramid of holding companies, but it has the salutary effect of cutting down on bureaucracy. The Anti-trust laws are designed to 'prevent utterly the combination of commercial or private enterprise against the public good'. They specifically forbid collusion in price fixing, enforce competitive tendering 'in a company's area of operation', and have a vaguely worded 'conspiracy against the public good' clause. The most entertaining law is the True Description Act, which limits advertisements to a simple, uncontentious account of a product's purpose, fitness for the same and its shortcomings. The Act also proscribes any advertisement which 'seeks to induce excessive demand' which means it is quite hard to introduce new products to this market. A second, less obvious aspect of the Act is that excessive induced demand often arises from built-in obsolescence, so all manufacturers and importers either do their best to provide sturdy, hard wearing goods, or include the caveat 'this machine will break one month after the guarantee period expires' in their advertisements.

Referee

Private travellers may find the openness and honesty of the local culture refreshing. However, traders will have to acclimatise themselves to telling the truth. Failing a Broker check for a cargo means the quality of their cargo has been challenged and it loses 1Dx10 % of its value when rolled for on the Modified Price Table.

Plot

Covert use of a hierarchy of holding companies is, to some degree, acceptable. However, the players are hired to investigate the remarkable success of a select few companies in off-world dealings. These companies are part of a huge fraudulent holding structure by an Imperial megacorp. The latter will do its best to conceal this, as the Anti-trust advocates would be vehemently opposed to such interference from a huge external corporation.

6. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

A close shave with a military coup convinced this state's people that they would have to keep a firm hand on their representatives' throats. To regain public esteem, politicians were required to stand as individuals, not parties and were also obliged to publish a personal manifesto. This has to cover two areas: the hopeful candidate's plans and the ethical philosophy which inspired them. Electoral terms run for five years, of which the first and last six months are, respectively, a settling-in period and a public audit. To stand any hope of re-election, and occasionally to avoid criminal charges, the incumbent politicians have to satisfy their electorate that they did what they promised (or must offer transparent reasons why they failed); that they kept faith with the spirit of their tenure of office; and that they avoided bringing dishonour on the elected assembly. This last item requires that politicians not only abstain from wrong doing, but that they abstain from giving the impression of wrong doing, and even of frivolity.

Referee

The system works well. The public are genuinely interested in current affairs and tend to be politically literate (features which may surprise many visitors). In return, the natives find ignorance of politics to be pitiable and they may treat their guests as over-sized children. The high awareness of current affairs means that local traders will only accept plausible stories about cargoes and business ventures so all trading, bribery and fast talk tasks will be one level harder.

Plot

The players are hired to gain evidence of a given politician's wrong-doings. In fact, he is squeaky clean so after a short investigation their patron will pay them to fabricate some appropriate evidence. Best to be off-world by the time it gets to court...

7. CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT

This world noticed that without a substantial involvement of the electorate, the representative democratic systems of neighbouring worlds tended to die off, being replaced by an oligarchy or dictatorship. A major contributor to this failure rate seemed to be the ability of political parties to buy themselves into power with saturation advertising such that people felt that their vote did not actually count for much. All political parties are now state funded and are

forbidden to generate their own income. All parties have to be constitutional, and prepared to contest and abide by the results of elections. All valid candidates receive a fixed sum in electoral expenses and a couple of public servants to act as aides. Party members can offer their services for free, but any expenses have to be approved by Electoral Civil Servants. Elections use an additional member system; candidates stand in first-past-the-post contests, and any imbalance (between the number of seats won and the total proportion of the vote gained by each party) is made up by giving extra seats to representatives drawn from each party's list of reserve candidates. To promote this election culture, elections and referenda are held regularly: each party has to contest a quarter of the seats every year, and any changes to the constitution have to secure 67% of the vote in a referendum. Rather than make voting compulsory, the electorate are exhorted to take part: the fact that they have voted is recorded on their Citizen Smart Cards. Legally, politicians can opt to ignore correspondence from, or refuse to acknowledge the existence of non-voters. Accountability is assured through a tiered government, with political power devolved at the lowest level to phalanxes, each of 5,000 members, which are responsible for day to day local policies, with a budget and employees to implement them. City, county, regional, continental and planetary levels have increasingly greater power but at a strategic level, rather than operational. Additionally, the concepts of state security and official secrecy were abolished; all correspondence received by elected politicians is available for voters' scrutiny on the local computer web and all political conversations can be observed, either through a voice conference facility or through visitors' galleries at all the conference chambers. The same goes for all civil service activities. Of course private or personal business is excluded, but 'any elected representative or civil servant caught trying to conceal improper public activities behind the veil of privacy' are dealt with very sternly indeed (barred from future public office or government employ and imprisoned for 2D years).

Referee

Visitors here will find that everything is orderly and will notice that there are always elections and referenda taking place. Trade will run smoothly with very little red tape, but travellers will find that they will require a patron (a voter who will help the players by talking on their behalf) if they intend to get involved in anything which involves the local power structure (this might be as simple as resolving a customs dispute).

Plot

A number of individual intelligence units have noted a large amount of confidential government and military data making its way off world. Naturally, all political discussions are, in theory, available to the public but security matters are talked around using catch-phrases and code words as otherwise significant on- and off-world interests could be compromised. They believe the intelligence leak is being perpetrated by a neural learning computer which can

somehow amalgamate the multitude of publicly available data into a clear definition of future military and government actions. In principle, the government cannot move against this; the freedom of information movements would crucify them. However, a small group of off-worlders, suitably supported by local intelligence units, could locate the spies, destroy the computer and stop this data getting off-world.

8. DIFFERENT AND COMPLEMENTARY

This state's extreme sex segregation grew backwards out of the pre-Diaspora Solomani fashion for declaring that females required extra political representation and considerations for their special interests to be covered adequately. A parallel thrust of the period was the obsession with the supposed genetic determinants of key female abilities: always knowing where things are, superior social skills and affinity for co-operative work. Later in Solomani history, this ideological predisposition broke down with exposure to different, inarguably genetically human cultures, a greater appreciation of hysteresis effects and of the role of infantile behaviour conditioning (through nurture). Most other humans quietly brushed this whole idea under the carpet, but this state fell in love with it. During the Long Night, the complementary roles of nurturer and protector became so thoroughly entrenched in the local culture that they are never questioned. Thus there is now a society with parallel governments (first past the post for males, proportional representation for females,

reflecting the respective notions of competition and co-operation), and a bewildering set of rules as to which sex can do what. This last feature has not been determined rationally but has evolved over the centuries from an initially random distribution of sexes and jobs. Another oddity is that, due to the extreme sex segregation males and females rarely meet for any reason other than for copulation: all youngsters are raised exclusively by females, and boys are thrown out into the male world when they reach puberty.

Referee

Visitors here will find that they are expected to talk only to members of their own sex. Members of each sex will even try to convince players that the sexual liberalism outside this world is wrong. They will also find that there are arbitrary distinctions between man's work and woman's work. Of course, this inefficiency means that things arrive late, in different sorts of containers (add $\frac{1}{2}$ D days to delivery time to model this).

Plot

Whenever the players undertake a task, roll 1D; an odd number indicates the task is 'man's work', otherwise it is for women only. Deliberate and repeated breaking of these rules will result in the player being beaten up by irate members of the opposite sex.



FEUDAL TECHNOCRACY

Government by specific individuals for those who agree to be ruled. Relationships are based on the performance of technical activities which are mutually beneficial.

1. THE NERDMEISTERS

In this society, the scientific community has left no one in any doubt as to who is in charge. The scientists maintain their control through knowing useful things such as the self-destruct codes for the life support system, the power plants and the communications network. The scientist upper class are curious people and always trying out new ideas, for which they need experimental subjects. Naturally, this leaves them little time to do little things like grow food, make clothes or build shelters. As a result they are kind enough not to blow up other people's power plants in return for being kept in luxury. The creation of children is of great importance to the scientist rulers - they are constantly searching for means to refine and perfect their gene pool. Unfortunately this has led to genetics becoming the major interest of these leaders - not only do they rank each other on their parentage, but they also experiment widely with the extremes of bio-modification, eugenics and other sciences. Naturally, rather than subject their fellows to experiments, they make wide use of the lesser populace as laboratory subjects. Unlike the world of Genetics are Good, the general populace are not happy with their lot. However, isolated outbreaks of rebellion are quickly put down when the offending city's power, life support and other critical functions are turned off. Clearly this threat tactic would become invalid if all the peoples rebelled at once - for the Nerdmeisters would be committing suicide if they killed off all their workers. However, should such a time come, perhaps the ruling class would decide it was better to go out with a bang...

Referee

Visitors, especially good looking ones, would be advised to make their dealings with this society as perfunctory as possible. The ruling classes like to compete with each other to see who can acquire the best mates from off-worlders. Courting consists mostly of exchanging information on lineage, IQ rating, etc. At best, attractive visitors (of either sex) will find themselves surrounded by several suitors all having the social skills of a rampant terrier.

Plot

A player with a particularly high physical or mental aptitude is approached by a man offering a free ticket for an all-expenses holiday on this world. He will even offer other members of the player group tickets if necessary. Unbeknownst to the players, the Nerdmeisters view visitors as useful sources

of novel genetic material, which may be obtained for their experimentation through a variety of means... if they are not careful, they will find they don't need a return ticket, but they may be saved by local rebels.

2. GUN POWER

On this world the military industrial complex has simplified the process of government to 'we make the weapons and you will do things for us or you will die'. This is distinguished from a military dictatorship in that it is the armaments sector rather than the military which has achieved a primacy in this state; the companies retain the services of the military as their servants, not as their masters. The prioritisation of military hardware above other productivity has done untold harm to the competitiveness of the rest of the society. Needless to say the natives are generally listless, oppressed and occasionally individually aggressive. Except, that is, when they aren't being shot at, experimented upon or drafted into the militia.

Referee

Visitors can expect to face moral dilemmas as the gun makers watch their soldiers push people around. They can also expect to be watched very carefully themselves just in case they are industrial spies. They might even get embroiled in a local revolutionary organisation or, even worse, into a government trap. The tech level for armaments and computers will be at least one level higher than any other category of technology. The lack of high quality goods in these other areas means that the world is often willing to trade for them in exchange for some really excellent engines of destruction.

Plot

The players are hired to infiltrate one of the high tech weapons factories and steal some of their advanced design work. Very risky, but extremely well paid!

3. DOING OUR BIT

On this world, people are free from taxes and any other kind of obligation provided that they spend one sixth of each year performing their trade for the state. This period is usually taken as one or two blocks during a year (for an Earth-type world, for example, this would be two 30-day periods or one 60-day period). This philosophy has resulted in a great deal of standardisation in software engineering and manufacture generally, to allow tasks to be passed from one person to the next as easily as possible. Consequently, a lot of the noise which slows down work in other societies is absent.

Coupled with the very light burden on the citizen, this society is mostly made up of enthusiastic workers. There is no full time police force or army but rather a territorial force six times normal size, of whom one sixth are on duty at any one time. To fill the remaining five-sixths of their time, there are a lot of private security, mercenary and investigation outfits. During a crisis, mobilisation of the assets of this state would be prodigious. Similarly, the public medical and education services are much smaller than their private counterparts, and needing to rely on them would result in real personal disadvantage.

Referee

For visitors, this society should be safe enough, but with a couple of caveats: the constant turn-around of officials makes bribery and other corrupt practices difficult, and local prices are quite volatile. The authorities frequently seek to make good any deficits in their balance of trade with impromptu tariffs, which can significantly impact visiting traders.

Plot

An Imperial agreement has just been delayed again by the regular change of officialdom. The Imperium wants the agreement signed now, and will hire the players to ensure the current official has an accident (or similar) so that his successor - known to be sympathetic to the agreement - will have to enter office a month early.

4. GENETICS ARE GOOD

The founders of this world believed in the overriding importance of genetics in personality formation, and decided to take advantage of it to found the perfect state. The colonists were social scientists and experimental biologists who experimented with their genetic material to create the perfect inhabitants for their world. A millennium or so down the line, they have produced a society which works... almost. The early settlers divided the duties of their people into two basic categories; obeying and leading. The obedient were to do all the work, and were adapted to fit their new duties through both genetic engineering and behavioural conditioning, while the leaders (intended to make all the tough choices) were tinkered with to develop their mental faculties. Touchingly, this tinkering also included incorporating anything which had been reported to promote psionic abilities. When the scientists felt that they had produced a stable product, they used further manipulation to fix the traits they had introduced as dominant characteristics. They also conditioned the various different populations to reproduce only within their own groups, both through social pressure and by rendering the products of cross group reproduction infertile, effectively producing a selection of different species. This planet is thus effectively inhabited by a variety of very specialised, distinct groups, each with its own form of life style, work, entertainment, etc. However, while

the inhabitants have found physical characteristics are easy enough to manipulate, they have had much less success with intelligence, which tends to be developed through environmental processes. The stability and conservatism of this society has reduced the need for incisive and innovative minds (the daily round is not all that stimulating) and the local culture no longer encourages intellectual curiosity. Note that unlike the Nerdmeisters, the inhabitants of this world have completed their genetic manipulation and all are happy with their resulting place in society.

Referee

Although this world disturbs most visitors, it makes sense to the natives. They feel that they all have a place in their society. Many visitors make the mistake of thinking that the inhabitants of this world are either evil scientists or mindless drones. The truth is more complex; despite the appalling behaviour of their remote ancestors, these people are fully aware individuals, who happen to be very good at what they do. When creating characters from this world, roll 2D for each characteristic except SOC. Any points above 7 in INT or EDU can be transferred to STR, DEX or END as desired, on a one-for-one basis. SOC is assigned at the end of character creation and is equal to 2 plus the highest career rank achieved.

Plot

The players are recruited to covertly locate and copy the ancient records of the founding geneticists - their patron believes significant information about psionic powers may be found therein. Genetic engineering for psionic powers did not actually work, but a lot of people suspect it might have.

5. TECHNO-PRINCES

When this paradise was founded, the technocrats responsible decided that their best bet for continued primacy was to establish two parallel societies: their own diversified social structure and a similar society for the non-technocratic majority. In return for taking care of information and technology needs of the majority, the latter were expected to reciprocate by doing the laundry, growing the food, building things and serving in the army. After the Long Night, the technocracy still resides in large palaces, patronises the arts, has its own shops and familia regiments in the army (with nice white uniforms, shiny buttons and lots of frogging). However, everything they have is now shoddy and second rate. Apart from the Princes' full time (foreign) servants, everything done for them is done reluctantly and badly. The food and goods the proles deliver is the worst of any given batch. Princely orders are followed in the Švej kite manner. In practice manoeuvres, the familia is allowed to win through the opposition's expedient of marching across a large area of open ground. When the proles serve as mercenaries elsewhere, or take part in interstellar exercises, they are

a daunting prospect, whereas the familia are regarded as a laughing stock and ranked lowest in fitness for role or marksmanship competitions.

Referee

Non-noble visitors are treated courteously and receive uniformly excellent service. Trade is honest and efficient (+2 DM to all categories of cargo, freight and passengers available).

Plot

The players are hired to escort an Imperial noble (part of the Diplomatic Corps) on world. The noble is expected to call on her local counterparts. The journey is bad enough; the limousine has not been cleaned (inside or out) in living memory, but it is as nothing compared to the abysmal hospitality. School dinner-quality catering, power cuts, no heating and grimy bed linen are the best most Princely families can manage. They are also under the impression that this is because their useless proles cannot do any better.



CAPTIVE GOVERNMENT

Government by a leadership answerable to an outside group. Often a colony or conquered area.

1. CIVILISING MISSION

This planet has come under the control of a more powerful neighbouring government which claims to be helping the host society by expanding its industrial and knowledge base and by rooting out corruption. In reality it is trying to wipe out all the cultural reference points which made this planet unique. The conquerors genuinely believe that they are civilising this world, but will refuse to acknowledge that they are doing it in an unnecessarily violent manner. The rulers maintain a constant smiling friendly appearance while dissidents are murdered or simply disappear. There are spontaneous public demonstrations of support for the regime, and a change in taxation policy subsidises collaboration and intermarriage with the invaders. Cultural exchange events force the locals to come to appreciate the superior values of their new masters, and informally compulsory friendship circles are commonplace.

Referee

Visitors are likely to notice how heavily the virtues of peace and order are emphasised on this world. They will find the cost of local produce to have been pushed to one or other extreme. Some goods are expensive because they have been through the invaders' quality control, while other goods are very cheap, being sold by locals desperate to liquidate their assets and leave. It would be as well for visitors who intend to return, such as traders, to affect a sympathy for the ideas of the ruling power; failing that, neutrality would be a good choice. Anyone taking an interest in the plight of the conquered is just begging for trouble. It is not unknown for off-worlders who ask too many questions to suddenly disappear.

Plot

The players are asked to ship a cargo of agricultural machinery to this world. The crates really do contain farming equipment, but the associated paper and electronic manuals are filled with rebel literature inciting insurrection. This is unlikely to be noticed at customs, but will be traced back to the players later, once the literature is widely available.

2. JUST CHILDREN, REALLY

The rulers of this world are not the same species as the ruled. The leadership monopolise high technology and have imposing military forces, while those they rule work in the

mines, on the land or in dangerous occupations. The rulers hold themselves aloof and have little if any interest in the affairs of their subjects. All that matters is that the food and the ores appear on time in the right quantities. Failure to comply has been known to result in a large rock falling from a very great height.

Referee

No doubt travellers would find this treatment of a whole species deplorable, but it is unlikely that they will discover the true situation. Around the starport and major towns there are plenty of collaborators who will give the party line if asked, who will bow and scrape and do cute native things, and who will kill or maim their own kind for a bit of material comfort. What most travellers will notice is that raw materials are cheap and plentiful and the facilities gracious.

Plot

The players are recruited as aides (bodyguards) for a reporter and her cameraman who wish to covertly poke around in the outback of this world, to determine just how despotic this regime is. They will certainly be watched, but with some thought should get some prize-winning footage. This will be irrelevant if none of them manage to get off-world alive...

3. THE GUESTS

This society is controlled by a foreign power which wishes to remain aloof from the street level butchery necessary to maintain control of this world. Local traitors, Quislings and other criminals provide the illusion of a government with domestic support, supposedly free from outside influence. Needless to say this is far from the truth. The local forces are equipped by the friendly power, are subordinate to it in wartime, and the embassy of their guests is enormous, with rather a lot of signals intelligence equipment, and what looks like an armoured barracks. Everything available in the markets is low quality and there are seemingly endless queues. The listless, hopeless look in the eyes of the populace shows how their guests have broken their will. There are frequent power failures (except in the government blocks which have their own generators) and the government services (police, emergency services, etc.) prioritise the guests and their underlings. Locals who express doubts about their guests are either framed for small, non-political crimes or disappear, if only for a while. If they return, they are thinner, quieter, and fully aware of the wonderful people who help their society stand on its own feet.

Referee

Visitors to this world will notice, but would be advised not to remark upon, the failing state of this society. Trade goods purchased here will fetch 1D% less on the Modified Price Table when off-world due to their lower quality. There will also usually be D3 days delay in acquiring the goods at the port. Selling one's goods here is problematic; the state's inefficiency has led to it imposing heavy taxes on imports, and all government-related contracts will be for a selling price of 2D% below the Base Price. Traders could sell to the black market of course, but this would be dangerous. Naturally, traders from the colonising power will get preferential treatment and will make a point of rubbing their competitors' noses in that fact. There may be occasions when visitors are contacted by members of dissident factions, or by agents provocateur. Such visitors should be careful, for the guests operate a wide network of spies and turn-coats.

Plot

The players are tasked to deliver a cargo of luxury goods to the guests' embassy. En route (either during the stellar trip or on planet) dissidents will attempt to plant a bomb in the cargo. If the players allow this to happen, they will be blamed when the embassy suffers severe damage and will be hunted down by several hired assassins.

4. REGRETTABLE NECESSITY

In this society, the locals are being ruled from outside because they are fractious, unpleasant and downright dangerous if left to their own devices. There are military governors, huge forces and a lot of humanitarian support for the occupation, but the locals are firmly opposed to it. The civilised nature of the occupation is evident from the labyrinthine rules of engagement and standard operating procedures followed by the peace keepers, to the extent that the locals frequently ambush them, rob them and embarrass them with seeming impunity. While this society is dangerous, especially if you are a peace keeper, it is not amber rated. That would be an admission of failure.

Referee

Travellers should be advised that the authorities take a very dim view of arrivals with military backgrounds seeking to 'tour the country'. Shipments of weapons are, needless to say, banned. However, because of the need to perpetuate the fiction of order, trade prices are controlled to keep them in line with neighbouring worlds.

Plot

The players are hired to escort an off-world charity-sponsored medical team who are bringing critical vaccines to this world

to fight a new epidemic. Unfortunately, not only are some natives hostile to help from outsiders (believing the epidemic is a bio-weapon simply to make them dependent on off-world help) but rebels may steal the medicines, believing they can sell them on the black market. In any armed conflict, the peace keepers will be of little use due to their overly limited engagement rules.

5. MASTERS AND SERVANTS

This society has just lost a war to someone who means business. There is no sham of acceptance or democracy here, just a naked display of force. From the police who walk the streets armed with assault rifles, to the punishment beatings and public executions, there is no sign of any accommodation with the invaded. Almost everything here requires a permit or licence (with associated interviews, fees and delays). All types of travel are monitored, with checkpoints being a regular feature of all land-based transport systems. The soldiers use a special form of currency - occupation credits - and expect priority treatment ahead of citizens and all but the most important off-worlders. The conquerors will not be satisfied until they feel sure that every native head will bow to them. The locals rebel sporadically, and are cut down. Dissident leaders are rounded up, tortured and killed. Whole villages are wiped out in revenge for the death of one invading soldier. Public gatherings of more than ten people are forbidden and are broken up with force - the use of chemical agents is commonplace and live rounds and fragmentation grenades are used against large crowds. The invaders are quite unabashed about their brutality: they are the victorious army, what else should they do?

Referee

If they can stomach this, travellers will find this society a place where a lot of unsavoury business can be done profitably. Individual soldiers will have plenty of loot that they would rather convert into hard cash. All kinds of recreational goods are needed by the army, and the local output will be very cheap (if of low quality). It would be best, of course, if travellers remained inside the starport compound. There are a lot of desperate people out in the dark streets of the surrounding cities.

Plot

The players are approached by a group of soldiers who wish to have various art treasures smuggled off-world. They will want two of their number to escort the cargo to a bank on a neighbouring world. However, not only is a higher-ranking officer trying to track down these treasures for his own collection, but the locals will also try to regain them - by persuasion if possible, by force if necessary.

BALKANISATION

No central ruling authority exists. Rival governments compete for control.

1. UNITED STATES

This world considers itself to be sufficiently urbane to have a single voice at the interstellar level, while maintaining diversity at home. It therefore has a supranational authority which runs the starport and represents individual states' interests with the outside and vice versa.

Referee

Travellers to this world will find that although the facilities are adequate, they lack personality and are not run efficiently. The cuisine is designed to assault as few palates as possible, and the officials they meet are anodyne and uninteresting. However, as soon as they go out into the street, things will change. A big issue with supranational authorities is that they tend to be money hogs, so there are many people more than happy to undercut them. This borders on illegality, but it's profitable. Travellers will probably not get any worse punishment than a slapped wrist if they get caught; the authority is intended to preserve the wonderful diversity of this world, and the travellers are up to their necks in it. Essentially, authority facilities are boring, expensive and safe, the outside is a bit wild, inexpensive and very stimulating. Merchants can get 1D% better prices if dealing direct with the public, and deliveries take D3 less days to arrive. This is illegal but socially acceptable behaviour.

Plot

One of the states believes it has been badly represented by the supranational authority. The players will encounter this due to the disruption of starport operations by a computer virus, small firebombs, etc.

2. STABILITY IN A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

This planet's starport is a huge orbital installation. Early in this planet's history, a commercial group decided to relocate to the Clark belt (where geo-stationary orbits are possible). After some competition with the main world, they quickly monopolised interstellar travel. Eventually a peaceful agreement was reached with the multiple world states, such that the commercial group took over ownership and operation of the associated ground port under licence from the individual states. The agreement can be summarised as; 'We will pay rent for these ground facilities. In return for this, we won't drop rocks on you and you won't try to infiltrate,

assault, or destroy our orbital port.' The commercial group realised early on that they needed to supply all the states with ports to keep them happy. Although a few of the states had attempted to begin their own ground ports, the investment needed to complete ports in every state was well beyond the capability of either the states or the orbital port owners. The solution arrived at is a mobile ground facility: essentially a huge set of caravans and trailers which deploy around a landing area and contain prefabricated buildings housing all the facilities for the port. Portable beacons, communication equipment, etc. provide quite adequate traffic control and landing telemetry. To stop any nation complaining, the facility is rotated between all of them over a rather long (32 year) cycle, and the rent is paid out to all the states, with the current host of the down port getting a double share.

Referee

Travellers will find the orbital terminal to be comfortable and efficient, but the surface element is a bit of a dump. If the orbital port were ever to be destroyed, the starport would immediately drop to class E. To reduce the likelihood that the surface nations ever decided to try to take-over or destroy the orbital facility, the port authority makes sure that its rates are very good indeed, and that its operation is efficient and fair. Taxes are thus minimal, the effect for traders being that all goods they sell will fetch D3 % more than that generated on the Modified Price Table, and all bought goods will be D3 % cheaper.

Plot

The mobile starport is about to move nations but the current host wishes ill of its successor and wishes to delay the transfer and disrupt operations thereafter. The players may be hired to perform the necessary sabotage or, alternatively, to prevent such a delay.

3. LET A THOUSAND FLOWERS BLOOM!

Every state on this world maintains its own starport, its own individual interstellar policy and its own territorial space (projected from the state's terrestrial borders for as far as their sensors will reach). This arrangement obviously favours the equatorial countries (their territory includes the Clark belt) and there is a technological gradient on the planet, with the richest and most advanced states straddling the equator, while the less well off and more backward polities cluster around the poles. The main starport is linked to the most advanced and powerful nation, and serves to entrench its status as this world's policeman.

Referee

On approaching this world, many visitors will be heading for the main starport, but they will still receive a huge volume of communications traffic from other starports, (advertising their services) and from all the states whose space the players have violated on the way in (the precise volumes of space owned by each is constantly being re-negotiated). Despite threats of retaliation or interception, there will be no trouble: no one in authority is quite that stupid. However, when the players land, they will be served with bills from everyone they have annoyed. They do not have to settle these (as none of the states has jurisdiction within another's starport) but should they land at a different port in future, they will find that such charges are never forgotten, and the interest charged on unpaid fines can mount up quite quickly...

Plot

On landing at one starport, the players find their ship has been mis-registered as owing fines from 12 years ago. The accrued interest is around Cr. 5,608,345...

4. OUR OWN WORLD, OUR OWN WAY

This planet really celebrates its own diversity. It is divided into intensely proud if somewhat insular states who are determined to emphasise their own cultural traditions, which are very diverse indeed. Cultures range from the extremes of the depraved to the noble and saintly. During a fit of moral responsibility, the Imperium established an enclave on this world, so that anyone who wanted to return to sanity could exercise the rights and privileges of Imperial citizenship by getting drafted. In time, this enclave has grown into the world's starport and trading centre, and is a rich source of income for the Imperium.

Referee

Travellers will find the starport unremarkable enough, except for the Rag Market, a huge enclosure, partly roofed, where all the world's nations and many of its trading houses maintain a presence. This market can provide almost anything, including large quantities of contraband and illegal items. An especial favourite is copyright infringement alley, where canny locals will knock out copies of any item, 'just like the real thing, honest, guv'. This highly competitive environment works in the traveller's favour, so visitors can expect to benefit by 2 x D3 % on all prices. The enclave has stopped competing as a brokerage, but still charges for berthing and demurrage. Anyone can rent a stall in the Rag Market for Cr. 2 per hour per square metre.

Plot

The players find their next shipment off-world is of local fakes rather than the real item. If this is freight, the receiver will accuse the players of selling the real goods and trying to replace them with cheap rubbish; if the players bought the

shipment, then the fakes were sufficiently good to fool them, but not their buyers. No doubt the players will want revenge!

5. WHO CARES?

This planet was settled by a large number of laid back folk who decided that it was their spiritual duty to take it easy for the rest of the galaxy. They are split up into little (county sized) statelets which occasionally bicker and fight, but which mostly just get along. Economic activity is very depressed here. The locals are fond of poppies, hemp, mushrooms and other similar cash crops, practice highly efficient (in terms of yield per hectare) but labour intensive agriculture, and generally just hang out. From an outside observer's perspective, there is a huge reservoir of concealed unemployment, and the local health service is rudimentary, emphasising acupuncture, homeopathy and other alternative therapies. Wars, when they break out, are generally very small scale and have a low fatality rate. Preferred weapons are explosive compounds and mind altering chemical agents: the locals have a gift for both.

Referee

There is a surprisingly high level of interstellar traffic to this world, simply because it is a good place to get out of your head, and because the natives sell their crops at a low price. The starport is actually run by immigrants who, despite being heavily reliant upon the local crops, are still viewed by the locals as oppressively uptight. Some locals live in the starport area, because they like proper medicine, electricity, etc. Trade here takes for ever (2D extra days per transaction) and selling to the natives for cash is not profitable (prices generally 5D % lower than on nearby worlds). However, direct bartering of imported goods for native crops could result in a cargo which is worth a huge amount on other worlds, provided one has the black market contacts to safely sell such mind altering drugs. Of course, the customs officials of neighbouring worlds take a close interest in any cargo or passengers originating at this world.

Plot

The players take a local passenger off-world but find him apparently dead just before landing on the next world. He is actually in a drug-induced catatonic trance and will recover in 24 hours, but it should scare them and the customs officers will arrest him for the other 'medicinal' herbs in his luggage.

6. MIND GAMES

This world seems like an unusually fractious balkanised planet, with a healthy demand for engines of destruction and a very competitive, very comfortable and extremely secure starport. For the benefit of traders and rash tourists, the Starport Authority maintains an office in the capital city of each state on the world, these offices having full embassy status.

Referee

What is not apparent to outsiders (so the players can only find this out the hard way) is that the Starport Authority is controlled by a self-perpetuating clique of psionic adepts who arrange things to keep the world's nations at each other's throats. They also manage trade so that visitors will always make sufficient profit to encourage their return, but never a huge amount (this will require some arithmetic if you are so inclined; work out how much the players need to satisfy their repayment schedule and salaries, then give them enough extra for a round of drinks). The psionists also arrange for the efficient delivery of outgoing cargoes, and visiting traders should find their stay very pleasant indeed.

Plot

The players meet (or transport) an enthused psi-shield seller en route for this world. Shortly after arriving they find him murdered. No guesses for who is responsible, if you have read the referee's section above...

7. UNDER STRAIN

The experts at the Census office agonised long and hard before deciding that this world was in fact Balkanised. Constitutionally it has a global representative democracy, but unfortunately, this and the attendant rule of law only hold good as far as the starport and nicer parts of the urban centres are involved. The outback is the site of an armed struggle which has been going on for as long as anyone can remember. Despite having purported ideologies, the various revolutionary factions are now gangs of racketeers and kidnappers who prey on their host population and occasionally operate in the big cities with the assistance of dupes, bleeding hearted liberals and dedicated urban guerrillas. The situation is complicated by the fact that a lot of constitutional political parties have historical links with the guerrilla movement, and some even control its actions and give warning of government moves against them. A lot of the factions have more than one division, so a constitutional party could have military, cultural and urban revolutionaries. The factions cover a range of beliefs, from religious fanaticism, through autonomous government to communism. The planetary government is incapable of policing the entire world, and focuses its efforts on the main population centres. This normality is punctuated by assassinations and robberies (the main manifestation of revolutionary activity in the cities). The government mounts its own raids into the outback, often with Imperial or mercenary assistance.

Referee

Outside the safe havens noted above, this society could be sufficiently dangerous to rank an amber rating. Anyone dealing with a specific faction automatically becomes an enemy of the others. Travellers in the hinterlands risk kidnap and ransom, or torture and execution as a spy. Traders will

find that selling prices for mood-lifting drugs, weapons and surveillance equipment are in their favour (add D3 to the roll on the Modified Price Table). There is a healthy passenger trade for mercenaries, fund-raisers for the revolutionary groups and journalists, as well as a steady outward trickle of exiles and ex-revolutionaries on the run.

Plot

The players are hired to smuggle a shipment of medical supplies from the starport through customs and some guerrilla-infested outlands to a specific rebel group. The players can disguise the supplies or bluff their way through. Hidden amongst the medicines is a vial containing a lethal bio-weapon for use by the rebel group.

8. RICH TAPESTRY

This world has a drastic assortment of cultural purists, separatists, bigots, segregators and others who all have the constitutional right to enforce their own laws on members of their own societies. This situation grew out of a desire during the immediate pre- Diaspora period for smaller cultures to be preserved from absorption in the United Earth machine by their settlement elsewhere. An early attempt at colonisation was delayed by an argument over the authorities' desire that the colony's descendants be able to rejoin mainstream human society at a future time. The emigrants were strongly opposed to this and refused to do anything other than mount noisy protests until they got their own way. The end result is a Commission which regulates off-world trade for those societies which desire it, joins in on the losing side in the frequent wars (to prevent the absorption of one state by another) and which returns refugees to face their remote ancestors' ideas of justice. The Commission retains armed forces drawn from those societies which have a warrior ethic, and enables some kind of regular outside contact, but otherwise does nothing at all for the people.

Referee

Visiting merchants will find that the Commission's trading facilities are fine (they retain the services of passionate free traders to run this for them). Similarly, travellers' accommodation needs are well taken care of, and the cuisine is outstanding. Many of the small states and communities are well worth a trip and partly finance themselves out of tourism but there are other, more hard line polities where the only holiday might be described as a bracing survival adventure.

Plot

The Commission hires the players' ship to transport holidaymakers to one of the states which has only just opened its doors to foreigners. The travellers come back rather less happy than they went and the players will suffer their angry ranting!

9. PERFECT CHIVALRY

This world has a huge number of petty kingdoms and principalities due to the use of appanage (the provision of territory for each heir) as the system of inheritance. This has led to the fragmentation of society into minute portions, some little more than a church, a pub and a handful of farms. Given that each of these portions is meant to support a monarch in style, economic efficiency is lamentable. There is very little hope of the formation of larger polities, short of fratricidal wars of conquest or (much more commonly) the acquisition of lands and titles by financiers through foreclosure. However as local tradition requires that land be held by people, not by institutions, the financiers rapidly find themselves effectively becoming the new magnates. Unless they limit themselves to one child, these new nobles end up splitting their estates just as their predecessors did. The wars which rage across this planet are curious affairs: a principality could become lost inside a golf course; a tractor mounting a light machine gun is heavy ordnance; and logistics is no problem when you are just popping next door for a bit of a scrap. War is thus a picnic which both sets of villagers come along to watch. Those who feel like getting stuck in, line up with their seigneurs, shotguns at the ready and drink themselves into fighting trim. While the princes exchange stirrup cups and choice snacks, the commoners make rude gestures at each other. Then the two lines advance, there is a whiff of buck shot and they settle down to clubbing each other with their gun butts. Fatalities are rare, but injuries are common, so the wars happen at the beginning of summer or after the harvest, so as not to interfere with farming.

Referee

Travellers who like to see thick nobles and sturdy peasants beating seven bells out of each other in a rural idyll will find their tastes well catered for here. The same does not go for merchants: few of the local principalities can actually provide a full cargo, and it is rare to find a local factor who will take an entire consignment of goods off a trader's hands, so trade is distressingly slow: add 2 x D3 days to trading tasks. Similarly, the need to consolidate produce from a very large number of small suppliers means that the unit cost of goods on this world is higher than it would otherwise be (subtract 1 from the roll on the actual value table).

Plot

A noble hires the players to infiltrate the courts of his neighbours such that they have convenient accidents, allowing him to expand his rather small holding; should the neighbouring villagers cause problems he expects the players to teach them a lesson.

10. GONE NATIVE

This planet, which supported its own sentient life before humans 'discovered' it, was earmarked for a campaign of conquest by settlement. It was hoped that aggressive human colonists would kill the natives out of self-preservation, thus saving the principal companies the trouble and expense. However, to the settlers' immense credit, they soon realised the true situation and made common cause with the indigenous population against their masters. A protracted guerrilla war followed, with the natives and their human 'traitor' friends keeping the corporate authorities penned into environmentally sealed enclaves along the coasts and around the starport. The corporations would probably have won in the end, but for the Long Night which cut them off from outside aid and forced them to exploit the rest of the planetary system for resources, rather than fight against an enemy which was recovering as fast as the corporations' external support dried up. Over the next millennium, as the more hard line corporate types festered in their citadels and the defector/native alliance fused into a remarkable mixed species civilisation, the space-based element realised that it had very little in common with the companies on the surface and developed along separate lines. The system now consists of a variety of societies: the bitter, siege-minded Strongholds filled with 'true' humans; asteroid belt colonies and O'Neill stations; and a patchwork of sophisticated native/human Republics. The spacers are the system's police and take a dim view of the wars which occasionally break out between the Strongholds and the Republics.

Referee

Visitors will have most to do with the space-based civilisation as they regulate trade and operate the system defence squadron. The Republics are mostly self-sufficient but being outward looking and energetic societies they like to receive visitors, and quite often have good quantities of goods to trade. The Strongholds are worth a visit too, provided travellers are human, in no way adapted to non-Earth standard conditions, and have not previously visited the Republics (those who have are tolerated but distrusted). Everyone they meet will ask 'when is the Race coming to help us?' in all seriousness, which could be good for a few laughs. The Strongholds' most interesting export is their icons, which 'fuse human supremacist imagery and inspirational spirituality into durable artefacts of breath-taking power and restraint', according to the catalogue. A referee might opt to make the natives either Droyne or Chirpers.

Plot

The players are hired by a Republic to investigate rumours that Stronghold extremists have hired an off-world laboratory to develop a bio-weapon to exterminate this world's non-human residents.

CIVIL SERVICE BUREAUCRACY

Government by agencies employing individuals selected for their expertise.

1. PRIVATE EMPIRES

This world was once a representative democracy which funded its numerous political parties from the public purse, to eliminate corruption. Combined with the power sharing arrangements typical of proportional representation, this resulted in the parties becoming closely associated with the ministries which ran the services in which they were most interested. Thus the socialists got health and transport, the tree-huggers got environment and so on. After a while, the democratic state withered away and the parties decided that, as they were going to control their favourite ministries anyway, they may as well save the exchequer the expense of funding a moribund electoral super-structure. Consequently, if you want to do good, you join Health, Transport or Environment, and if you were a bully at school, then the Ministry of the Interior is the place for you. Of course, joining a ministry is the same as pronouncing your political and ethical principles to the world. A side effect of this is that all the ministries have a most pronounced personality all of their own; austere and dignified for the Exchequer, whimsical for the Environment, laconic for War.

Referee

Travellers should not find too much to bother them here, except that they will be operating at an unfortunate junction between the Exterior, Exchequer, Trade and Transport ministries, so each major activity will be delayed by 1D hours while the civil servants sort out their boundary disputes.

Plot

Major financial cutbacks are required by the Exchequer and Transport gets to be the one picked on by its peers this time. As a result anything not currently making a profit at the starport grinds to a total halt, berthing fees and import taxes quadruple overnight.

2. A LAMP IN THE DARK

In this society, the administrators realised quite quickly that while politics is a matter of fashion, government is a matter of style. The civil service recruits suitable new members from the best that the world's schools can produce, and ensures that their appreciation of culture, reality and their circumstances is complete. When suitably indoctrinated, they start in the lowly Departments and, with sufficient determination and talent, end up in high office. Regulations are passed rather than laws, and they are formulated and

revised by experts in the field. Thus the society is stable, cultured and ordered. It is also diabolically inefficient, serves its people badly and is only stable because of the energy of the departments of Information Services and of Public Order. The civil servants do not apply brutal retribution to dissenters; they know talent when they see it. Working on the principle that the best game keepers are ex-poachers, captured rebels tend to be signed up for the appropriate department and then educated to act for, rather than against, the government. The government maintains strict control of prices of most products (leading to over- and under-pricing of many items compared to other worlds). It is a strong supporter of ballet, theatre and opera. However, it is a desert for sport fans. Imported entertainment, especially the cheap, tawdry type commands a premium among the common people.

Referee

The majority of this world runs on documentation, so Players will find that progress will be fastest if they have paid for the best quality contracts, permits, etc. It is impossible to persuade any civil servant that there is any more efficient way to perform a service - it is ingrained within each such bureaucrat that doing job X requires form Y to be filled in (in triplicate), stamped by three departments (in different cities, or even continents) and then filed in the pending tray for several weeks. A hard-working traveller might persuade a clerk to place their form in the urgent pending tray, but that's about as flexible as they get. Due to its inefficiency, there are 1D day delays for all significant contracts. Prices are often fixed by the bureaucracy, meaning that an item in demand may have been fixed at a relatively low price (giving the opportunity for profit) or vice versa. Double a trader's Broker skill when rolling on the Modified Price Table.

Plot

There is a growing mountain of holovideo sets which the government will literally give away if the players will ship them off-world. The alternative for this over-production is that the product is recycled - at great cost.

3. NON-PROFIT REWARD

In this society, the basic dynamic is which department has the biggest share of the expenditure, the nicest offices and the most and best staff. This is because the civil service ethic is so deeply ingrained that the administrators' actual pay is not commensurate with their level of responsibility. Naturally, therefore, they seek compensation in other ways. The main fight is between the Treasury and the Department of External Affairs, but all the other Departments are keen

to compete in wasting money on grandiose schemes and private empire building: you might very well earn a lot less than some captains of industry, but they can certainly buy you a very expensive lunch. The net effect of this is a top-heavy and inefficient administration which only remains in power through the wholesale collusion of other interested parties, such as financiers, manufacturers and organised crime. This means that the common people subsidise their own exploiters. The rule of law is not too onerous here; it is manifestly unfair, and those higher up the pyramid get lighter and lighter sentences. However, there is no apparatus of repression, and the authorities do not care what outsiders think. There is dissent, but it is usually expressed as apathy and depressed economic activity.

Referee

Given the authorities' disdain for the views of outsiders, visitors are unlikely to get into trouble for criticising the way things are run. General inefficiencies are likely to add D3 % to all purchase prices (subtract an equivalent amount from all player selling prices).

Plot

The players are hired as streetwise aides to an entrepreneur who wishes to build a new office complex so plush that the civil servants will be fighting each other to get into it. He needs help making local deals plus he expects to need protection against the local mob, on whose toes he will be firmly treading.

4. JOBSWORTH'S WORLD

Here everyone the state employs has strictly laid-down duties and responsibilities, which are fastidiously observed. The governing ethic is do not do it if you are not paid for it, and this attitude is common to all state controlled ventures, which of course includes the customs and port authorities and just about any service which travellers would want to use. Society fairly crackles with frustrations and irritation as counters close for three minutes because the relief shift is slightly late. There is a private sector, mostly concerned with production and entertainment, but all services are firmly in the hands of the state, which directs them through an assortment of bureaux whose demarcation lines are exactly drawn and jealously guarded. Permits and restrictions, often seemingly pointless, abound. For example: fluorescent orange cartons show up against most backgrounds, and are therefore safer. So all cartons must be fluorescent orange. However, the precise definitions for these two terms are open to interpretation. Thus it might be possible to secure a good deal from an independent factor, but it could still be screwed up by an official refusing to allow the containers on the dock because either they are not fluorescent, or because they are fluorescent, but are not cartons (and thus should not be fluorescent)...

Referee

This society is most appropriate for light relief (for the referee) and maximum irritation (for the players).

Plot

You need me to tell you a plot? Start with fluorescent orange cartons and work up from there!

IMPERSONAL BUREAUCRACY

Government by agencies which are insulated from the governed.

1. THE WORLD MACHINE

Some wise old professor once programmed a huge computer with an algorithm for the perfect society, and this planet bought it. The World Machine knows everything, makes the best decisions and orders society accordingly. At least that's what it said on the box. The result is that this world has only one kind of anything: all walls are beige, all carpets rust, all plants are green with red flowers, everyone wears a grey boiler suit and all the soap is pine scented. A large and arguably inaccurate database of genetic traits is used to assign infants to schools and to their ultimate careers, and their subsequent education is designed to make them optimally productive for that career, no matter what other skills they may show a talent for. The Machine rewards individuals for the work they do, and in accordance with the venerable professor's prejudices. Thus academics, domestic servants and workers get a reasonable standard of living, while bureaucrats, traders and security forces have much more spartan arrangements. The planet's foreign policy is transparently tit for tat, with provision to mutate to tit for two tats if the rest of the galaxy plays along. Diplomats, officials and other representatives are stonily loyal to the World Machine, and almost seem to be programmed themselves. There is, of course, some dissent: this is fuelled by off-planet goods and information, and is ignored by the Machine provided that it does not run contrary to its algorithms. Coloured underwear is a sign of antisocial tendencies.

Referee

Visitors can expect to trade raw materials for utilitarian products through official channels, or contraband (cosmetics, lingerie, entertainment and software) for stolen or illegal goods (including computer parts and harrowing art work) on the black market. Just wandering around looking foreign will be enough to generate a lot of interest, and visitors can expect to be pestered for off-world novelties. Tales of places where life is different go down well, of course, and players can get a long way with a packet of wine gums, which would be a taste explosion compared to the local food.

Plot

The players are hired to escort Dan the Mad Processor while on this world. Dan's act revolves around the destruction (by

hammer, tongs and explosions) of old computer equipment. He was booked by a rebel group under the guise of a government department. His first performance will result in a riot by the Machine-loving crowd.

2. THE RULE OF LAW

This world's constitution, and a fairly complete plan of duties and responsibilities (including core job descriptions) is literally carved in stone. Huge monoliths carrying a total of several million lines of writing, are arranged in a rectangular grid pattern in the largest park in the capital city. Aligned with the long axis of the grid are the supreme court building, and the Justice Spire, a 100 metre obelisk used in public executions (the condemned are dropped from the top). The preferred career here is the law, and all advocates (defence, prosecution and judiciary) are drawn, at state expense, from a pool which all local lawyers must join. Lawyers are assigned to each of the roles at random, and to prevent any suggestion of corruption, must refrain from developing social links with non-lawyers. Promotion is gained by winning cases or by making a ruling which isn't overturned on appeal. All trials are before a single judge, and both parties must be represented. As it is only prowess in court which counts, and not public acclaim, the advocates do not really bother with public relations, and the media are packed with trivia and light entertainment.

Referee

The problems for visitors to this world are largely concerned with the local obsession for litigation. There is no real leeway for bargaining, as everything is set down in stone, or can be extrapolated from one of the resulting legal codes. The local currency is regularly deflated to ensure convertibility (into Imperial Credits) and prices for all goods are set under the Exchange of Goods Law. Any new import has to be judged by an appropriate court (the bargaining is performed on the trader's behalf by an advocate) and the price is then set, forever. This actually has a potentially huge advantage, in that traders will know which speculative goods are likely to sell here, and which will not.

Plot

A corporate president is about to be sentenced to prison due to a technicality of the great laws. His defence is hopeless so he will hire the Players to fabricate a copy of one of the monoliths, with the offending law modified in his favour. Replacing the huge stonework at dead of night will be no small feat!

3. INCORRUPTIBLE

To avoid any suggestion of corruption, and in the naïve hope of preventing any possibility of this, this world's civil service was taken over by brutal young reformers who established a faceless society. Anyone working for the state is forbidden to use a name while about the state's business, and no one encountering the state apparatus is allowed to actually meet a civil servant face to face: individuals or groups from each side sit in small booths with a separating grill through which they can speak. As technology has developed, electronic interfacing has allowed both parties to be separated by continents, while still allowing impersonal communication and the exchange of electronic documents. Such practices extend to the police, who always keep their face plates down, and who are very intimidating as a result. Fortunately, this system does not work particularly well. While it is possible to segregate the civil service as much as possible, and to have closed leisure facilities and ghettos for bureaucrats, there is still a minority of hardy individuals who break through the wall and use their information to their own benefit. Similarly, the civil servants do have outside lives and interests, and these inevitably bring them into contact with their subjects. On these occasions personal relationships can develop, and the stony impartiality of the system gets subverted.

Referee

Travellers are likely to find this world somewhat strange. Newcomers might get the impression that the blank wall with the voice coming from it is just a tatty computer simulation. Problems arise if there is a difficulty of any kind (such as late deliveries, theft or accident) as in these circumstances it is never possible to determine which individual was responsible. On the streets, the society appears almost normal. However, the people will seem twitchy: they never know when there might be an important official standing next to them (so they are always careful what they say), and the police really do look very mean.

Plot

A player is attacked when his voice is mistaken for that of a faceless civil servant by an irate individual who was refused his pension due to an administrative mistake. When revealed as an off-worlder the attacker will be most apologetic.

4. MOVING UP

On this world, the bureaucracy is separated from the people by a horizontal social barrier. All children take the civil service entrance exams, and are psychometrically tested. The results are sent to the recruitment bureau along with a picture of each child. Those who pass the criteria of native ability, venality and attractiveness are recruited into the elite, where they swan about in designer clothes and seek advancement through displays of ability, broadmindedness and adaptability. They also mix with similarly inclined financiers and industrialists into what amounts to a well

organised conspiracy against the common people, and an outstanding party to boot. Conditions for the masses and for any visitors are much the same: services are poor and facilities are badly maintained, it is next to impossible to meet anyone in authority, and the police always seem to have something more important to do. Any tendency to foment revolution is dissuaded by a policy of making individuals feel alone against the power of the state; tax statements, permits and assorted permissions are all targeted at individuals, never pairs or groups. The media reinforce this image of self-centred individuals such that no one really trusts anyone else; even long-term partnerships (such as marriage) are fragile and subject to constant mistrust.

Referee

Off-worlders will find it difficult to relate to the people of this planet as they will all appear nervous and shifty, unwilling to commit to contract or relationship. Even a simple question (such as, 'What's the time?') to a stranger will be met with suspicion (perhaps 'Why do you want to know?'). The same is true of mercantile relationships; unless the shippers have a prior arrangement (such as have been to a party) with the state, then they will be offered non-negotiable prices and be given a closed list of available freight and cargoes.

Plot

A rich couple have realised that their beloved child is not going to pass the civil service exams - they hire the players to rectify this, by whatever means they can.

5. LOBBY WORLD

On this planet, the authorities do not care to deal directly with the citizenry. Rather, they prefer to use lobbying organisations as intermediaries. This is a drain on local efficiency, and it is compensated for by bleeding the people through taxes. The authorities recruit their personnel by a species of head-hunting, but this is unknown to the general populace. A special recruitment agency scours the colleges for the right stuff: motivated go-getting individuals who are willing to sever all personal and family ties in the public interest. These individuals then cultivate relationships with lobbying firms and between them they implement many extremely disparate business plans, building projects and other schemes. The effect of all of this is to keep the bureaucrats and their lobbyist chums in the good life. Which is more than can be said for the locals; the ultimate consumers of the grand plan will find that it has been diluted, scrimped upon, left dangerously incomplete or just not done at all. While this is inconvenient in some cases, it is life threatening when it involves medical supplies or civil engineering (for example). In general the natives suffer poor service, little choice and long queues. Naturally, the leaders have sufficient sway to ensure that they always stay on top (for example, being admitted to the one hospital that has not collapsed and in which the life-support machinery is known to work properly all the time).

Referee

Travellers will find that a casual visit is a little uncomfortable, and that a business deal is close to a nightmare. All plans have to be funnelled through a lobbyist who will approach a good contact. The contact will then mess around with the arrangements and attempt to get the outside party to agree on slightly worse terms than before (more stringent delivery schedule, lower price, different volume). Of course, adept traders will simply bump up their first asking price and will do very nicely out of it.

Plot

The players are inside a major building when part of it collapses - many civilians are killed but the players should escape (with some injuries). The collapse is blamed on the government's shoddy work and a particular lobbyist (should the players seek reparation).

6. SOCIAL DEBT

This society is essentially a meritorious gerontocracy, but it got there by an indirect route. The planet began as a Second Imperium penal colony. The idea that you had to work to secure your release had ingrained itself thoroughly before the Long Night came down. To avoid any awkwardness about due process, voting and other inconveniences, everyone on this world is born in debt. Recognising in advance that each individual is going to be an irritation, a drain on resources and a safety liability for at least twenty years, the constitution imposes an individual's debt to society and the government insists on repayment from an early age. Anything in the public interest (such as learning languages or science subjects) is rewarded by a lessening of the debt. Anything neutral (such as being creative, practising sports or studying the humanities) leaves the debt unchanged. Being a further drain (by illness, indolence and antisocial behaviour) increases the debt. A similar pattern is carried on after education, with work in the social interest counting in your favour. The greater the level of debt, the lower the level of entitlement to civil rights, and the higher the level of personal taxation. Paying off a debt can be done by completing a career in police or military service, as a scientist, teacher, in medicine or as an administrator (the state's blind spot!). This enables the citizen to join the ranks of the Governors - thereafter regarding others in debt as untouchable (hence the impersonal nature of this state). There are no elections, law is revered, Governors generally enjoy their new-found powers and so are wholly approving of the arrangements. Unlike their citizens, Governors are also allowed to travel.

Referee

Trade is routine, except for the tariffs on products which might inconvenience the world: unhealthy foodstuffs, imported entertainment and all kinds of drugs. Some locals in heavy debt to their society may attempt to take passage

off-world. Ships caught with such passengers will be in serious trouble.

Plot

The players will find themselves billed when they depart this world: the bill ranges from use of planetary oxygen to the import of *E. coli*, and the costs of re-educating several locals unfortunate enough to spend any time with the players. The bill must be settled before departure, by cash or by performing work for the state (the bill is Cr. 10 per day, more if the players have been particularly obnoxious).

7. EXPERT OPINION

The settlers of this planet were awed by the massive intellect of their leaders. The leaders were so enamoured of their own abilities that their conceited beliefs have led to the government imposing a system of professional qualifications and aptitude examinations on the citizenry. To hold a job at a certain level, you must have passed a specific examination. These examinations apply to nearly every aspect of life. By extension, the level of your skill in any area gives you a ranking against other citizens, and in a disagreement, the higher skill wins automatically, even if the argument deployed is actually wrong. The locals are exceedingly deferential to those with higher level skills, and have been conditioned to accept their word without question. This system has attractions: everything is simple, there are no real arguments (except when experts with equal skills disagree), and the top down power structure enables big or impersonal projects to run efficiently. Personal matters present difficulties, of course, and a recurring theme in soap operas is a love match across social boundaries. Either the lesser partner enrolls in night school in a heart-warming frenzy of self improvement, or the better qualified half debases themselves for love (their problems after the resulting loss of status are supposedly gratifying and instructive). The main problem with this society is that its education system is obsessed with the recapitulation of received wisdom, and has stagnated completely.

Referee

Skills are ranked numerically (each rank being roughly equal to a level of a Traveller skill). For any major task, visitors are required to take a local examination to confirm their skills are appropriate. This costs Cr. 100 and takes 1 hour, per level of skill. This then allows the locals to determine whether the player is lesser or greater with respect to a given skill. For example, traders determining the sale price of their goods only use their Broker skill level as a modifier if it is greater than that of the expert on hand when the deal is made (the expert's level will be D3+D3). If the players argue about this, then subtract the difference between their skill and that of the expert, from the value roll. Players will generally find themselves either being held in awe for their great ability,

or being lectured to as though they are slow, delinquent children.

Plot

If a player exhibits some great degree of skill in a task, the locals will tell them of Hyilia - a great expert in the given field. Hyilia will challenge the player to a test of the skill. If the player does well and then spends 2 weeks per level of their current skill training with Hyilia, they will raise their skill level by 1 (once only).

8. BAKSHEESH, BAKSHEESH

On this world, the government does nothing except tax the population, build huge pyramidal office buildings (actually these are arcologies where the bureaucrats live in luxurious isolation) and talk to important visitors. The Imperial Diplomatic Corps loves it here. The same is not true at ground level: a great ocean of tatty shanties houses the majority of the population. The starport is in a fortified compound, and the only route from it to the pyramids is by air. The local occupations are begging, joining apocalyptic religions, casual labour and taking bribes. Local production is highly automated so that the need for skilled workers (also known as industrial civil servants) is minimised and most jobs can be filled by people with no skills at all. The culture of bribery applies everywhere (even the police can be bribed to overlook most crimes) except within the pyramids, where it is punished most severely.

Referee

With such a depressed local economy, this state relies heavily on its export trade in high value goods. As high value goods tend to be low volume, this world deals with small traders rather than bulk transporters, so merchants like the Players are always welcome. This is evident from the fact that the port workers are clean, polite and eager to please. They will even beat beggars away with sticks if the Players decide to go out and about. Naturally, this extra service should be rewarded. In fact any service beyond standing, smiling, with one hand open, palm upwards, at waist height, requires a small honorarium. Once the fellow with the broom has swept clear the bit of pavement in front of the access terminal, merchants can conduct trade with the pyramids in the normal Traveller fashion, except that outgoing cargos will predominantly be luxury items. Traders who accept 'bargain' deals with anyone outside the pyramids will be robbed blind.

Plot

Tips are typically only D3 credits, but the players will only find this out through experimenting. A player failing an Average (+0) Carouse check will over-tip; news of this will spread fast! Any future reward which is less than the first one paid out will result in truly shocking treatment. Baggage will accidentally be tipped into an open sewer; freight containers of fragile goods will be dropped; environment seals will be open; and a lizard will appear in the bidet.

9. GIMME, GIMME

This state's early liberal democracy mutated into a socialistic welfare state and then finally degenerated into a moribund system which was controlled by its civil servants. These bureaucrats put it very simply; 'We will implement the constitutional framework you want, for money and the promise that you will not to bother us'. The result was an inclusive constitution in which all the nice things that an individual could expect to happen were guaranteed by statute, and anchored in the requirement that they could only be rescinded by a 67% majority of the whole citizenship. This is such an unlikely event that only two constitutional guarantees have ever been revoked; the declaration of 'eternal independence' from any interstellar empire except 'our own' (the Imperium put paid to that), and the Lifestyle Acceptance Regulation of 3475 AD. The locals are reasonably sure that their world owes them a living and are exceptionally obdurate and truculent when anyone suggests that they do things for themselves. They can just about motivate themselves to work in order to distinguish themselves from their neighbours, whom they despise as lazy and worthless. Bizarrely, this society also pays lip service to personal growth, public service and virtuous living, all of which are enshrined in the state religion with such homilies as 'Neither a lender nor a borrower be', 'Just say "Can do!"', 'I broke it, I'll fix it.' Apart from making a shoddy job of whatever it is they do, the main entertainments are watching horrific themed chat and audience participation shows or trying to sue the bureaucracy for non delivery of civil rights.

Referee

Travellers, especially those from the more robust cultures will find these people gruesome. Any complaint about poor quality, late delivery, rudeness or unhelpfulness will be met with an injunction to respect the subject of the complaint's civil rights next time. This will be accompanied by a boycott of 5D hours. Travellers will, however, find the bureaucracy a pleasure to deal with; efficient, charming and wry. Of course the rotten quality of this world's goods is well known in the trading community, and the maximum roll (including all skills and DMs) that can ever be reached on the Modified Price Table when selling goods from this world is 9. After one trip, the players will find out why all the other traders stick to freight only, and the sole passenger service is by a subsidised liner with an ever-changing crew.

Plot

The players escape this world with a cargo and passengers only to find that the recipient expects the crates to have been hand-polished in transit and the forms to have been signed in high quality gold ink. This is after the passengers have spent the entire trip complaining about every trivial imperfection in their cabins, the food, etc.

CHARISMATIC DICTATOR

Government by a single leader enjoying the confidence of the citizens.

1. THE LIVING SAINT

This world is ruled by a genuine, albeit extremely focused philanthropist who makes sure everything is pleasant, peaceful and safe. This is brought about by a policy of indoctrination, the elevation of self-policing and following the leader's example to prime virtues. The leader's example is available in comic format, with daily updates in the state regulated news media. It is also taught to the world's children in parables and bed-time stories. As concern for others is another virtue, the locals are very nosy and are always on the look out for the unsatisfied. Anyone failing to live up to the high standards of the leader is to be pitied... and re-educated. It is quite difficult for outsiders to find evidence of this aspect of the leader's plan, but if they look they will see the halfway houses where those on their way back into the community can be seen trying to fit in - trying to maintain a permanent smile, for instance.

Referee

It would be well for travellers to mind their manners, and for traders to choose their cargoes with care as all kinds of things can give offence here. However the prices are stable, and everyone seems nice enough.

Plot

Jenz Olsen has sold an awful lot of dolls of the Living Saint which quote his parables when squeezed. Unfortunately the dolls are cheap and are falling apart - the citizens are in uproar at this and are after Jenz who pleads with the Players to get him passage off this world immediately!

2. A POPULAR HERO

The despicable tyrant who runs this world is careful to keep his hands clean. By identifying himself with all that is good and his enemies with all that is wrong, and by casting his world as an island of hope in a sea of despair, he has convinced his subjects that he is their best hope. He has been so successful that the people assume that he does not know about the terrible, corrupt things that happen all around them. It is presumed that he is ignorant of the death squads and the internment camps. The leader's popular image is emphasised in colossal murals and sculptures, generally as a protector, provider of knowledge or giver of presents, but also as a keen sportsman and enthusiastic dancer.

Referee

Visitors will see a different picture of course, and the local underground will be keen to open their eyes. This is very dangerous and traders would be advised to conclude their business quickly and leave. Anyone wanting to take in the sights will be sent out with a personable tour guide of an appropriate sex and shown a few public works and some charming folk dancing. Going off alone is forbidden. All service will be sloppy, slow and substandard; the only kind of dissent available is apathy.

Plot

A young woman befriends a male player and asks him to take her off-world with him. She is one of the leader's ex-mistresses, has extremely incriminating holocrystal evidence with her (valuable to off-world rebels) and is being chased by the secret police.

3. ERIDU

This world is ruled by an individual dictator who is selected as the best available exemplar of the heroic idiom. The monarch must be wise, brave and fair; good looks are an added advantage. In return for spreading these qualities about, the monarch gets status, celebrity and stuff. Lots of stuff. The monarch is the principal shareholder and chief executive of the world corporation, but must submit to the selection process every seven years. Selection is by open competition (the Contest), judged in the wisdom and fairness contest (the Moot), the skill at arms contest, and the war contest (involving a model of interstellar relations). The competitor with the highest total score becomes monarch while their predecessor joins the Council of Advisors. The career of each monarch is followed very closely, partly because of the state propaganda machine, and partly because an intimate study of the opposition might show weaknesses. The planet's laws can be a little confusing, as they are simply an accumulation of the decisions of previous monarchs, with commentary and clarifications by the Council. The monarch cannot be bound by previous decisions, with the single exception that the Contest cannot be outlawed. This can lead to problems should the monarch become mentally unstable or power-hungry; in theory the ruler could perform hideous acts and acquire vast wealth simply by passing the appropriate laws. Such decisions may be moderated by the Council if necessary. Only once has a monarch become so crazed - they suffered an unusual demise which is never spoken of openly, and a new Contest was held immediately to find a new leader.

Referee

From a visitor's point of view, there are few hazards associated with this world. In fact if a Traveller has all the right qualities then he or she will be eligible to enter the Contest; a lot of hopeful adventurers travel here to do just that.

Plot

Some act performed by the players' pilot during their visit falls foul of an ancient law which declares anyone doing such an act to be insane. Insane people cannot be allowed to pilot starships thus the players' ship is grounded. The only way out of this is to do some heroic act to disprove one's insanity – such as take part in The Contest.

4. GOOD QUEEN BESS

This hereditary ruler has a very good relationship with her people, despite being tight-fisted, capricious and vengeful. She achieves this by frequently going out among her people, and modestly declining the credit for anything nice that happens. She is, however, the terror of her wealthier subjects, because she imposes herself (and the cost of her upkeep) on anyone who might be rich enough to support an independent power base. This has the gratifying result of making them poorer and also preventing much long term planning (such as finance and planning which might lead to a coup d'état).

Referee

Senior visitors and traders are advised to send a small token of their respect (artwork or exotic produce) to the palace, on arrival. Occasionally, the queen has been known to impose upon off-worlders, perhaps to obtain (temporarily) an entire liner for her entourage to make a diplomatic visit to another system. The major traders accept this as a necessary imposition to maintain good trade relations. It is best not to be rude about the queen. This will lead to fights with locals which the police will not bother to break up.

Plot

The players are passed by the queen's carriage in the street - the monarch notices some oddity in the players' behaviour or dress (likely, given they are off-worlders) and insists that they accompany her for 1D+3 days to entertain her with tales of foreign worlds (insist means do it or die). If they play their cards right they will be well rewarded, although once

she loses interest in them they will be escorted back to the starport.

5. KING OF KINGS

This planet is constitutionally an absolute monarchy whose hereditary King (only males may be crowned monarch) prefers to keep the dirty business of ruling at arms length. The monarchy is supported by a system of satrapies whose rulers (satraps) can do as they please provided that they keep the King's laws, pay his taxes and acknowledge his supremacy. As a physical token of this subservience, the King maintains (at local expense) a small unit of guards in each Satrapy. These troops are quaintly kitted out in archaic uniforms on local riding beasts and are armed with wheel-lock pistols and scimitars. The result is akin to balkanisation except that there is always an appeal to the King as court of last resort and all inhabitants will strenuously deny that the planet is disunited. The King also holds the popular annual Tribute Day holiday, which was originally a humiliating festival when the Satraps sent goods to the palace in a show of subservience. Now it is an excuse to parade the achievements and wealth of the satrapies, and is more like a carnival with floats, street parties and revelry. The current King, Cyrus XIII loves it.

Referee

There is no reason to be cautious on this world: the monarchy is popular, the Imperium is obviously an upward extension of the same principle of devolved authority, and the people are happy. The assorted Satrapies tend to be run on benign monarchy lines themselves although there is some friction and the following border incidents can be a little sharp. This might be inconvenient for travellers, but it is a gift to the Imperium's arms manufacturers, as it provides live fire tests in a variety of climatic conditions.

Plot

The lead officer of the Pontin Satrapy has caused the King great embarrassment by openly flirting with members of the monarch's harem. However, official retribution would show weakness on the King's part so he wishes to hire the players to do the job for him. The players can determine the means of embarrassment (such as dragging the officer naked through the streets), provided the officer is not killed. The King must not be implicated in the venture or his popularity would suffer.

NON-CHARISMATIC LEADER

Government by a single leader who does not have the popular support of the people.

1. NUMBER ONE

The Leader is in charge. It has always been that way, and always will. When this Leader disappears, another pops up and things go on as before. Opposition to order is futile and in any case very painful. The Leader owns everything, gives people enough to eat and drink and everyone gets by. Off-worlders come and off-worlders go, and things are always the same. The Leader is in charge, what else is there? This grey, conformist society has been controlled by the Leader of its only political party for generations. The method of selection is unknown, but the result is obvious: order. There is dissent, and it is smashed, there is workplace inefficiency, and it is stamped out. There is crime and there are disappearances. The Party has been in charge for so long it does not even bother to pretend that there's an outside enemy. There is the Leader, there is order. Nothing else matters.

Referee

Travellers will want to conclude business here quickly, usually trading one sort of basic commodity for another. They will meet very few people and they will leave. Travel outside the startown is heavily frowned upon and any comments against the Leader will result in immediate termination of one's stay on the planet.

Plot

The players are hired to escort several anonymous citizens off-world. These people will pay well and expect to be aided while they tour a neighbouring world. These are not spies nor escapees, but party officials wishing to experience life beyond the Leader. Naturally, they will thoroughly disapprove of their visit but at least one will wish to return with samples of the 'foul merchandise' (such as malt whisky) available here.

2. HELLO AGAIN

This world started out as a religious settlement, loosely based on a peaceful, philosophical outlook (similar to Tibetan Buddhism). The key belief that has been retained after many millennia is that the Highest is reincarnated into the body of an innocent. Otherwise, the ruling class has been saturated with entirely secular, unbelieving priests. When the Highest dies, there is a nine month interregnum, after which the priesthood is led to the birthplace of an appropriately unexceptional infant, who is taken into the Temple. The infant is taught rulership and law, and love of the new Leader is inculcated among the people. As a reward

for providing the new Highest, the parents are taken, with any close family, into the Temple complex, where they live in blessed seclusion, free from the cares of the world. This is a polite way of saying that they are strangled and their bodies thrown into a deep pit within the Temple complex. The priesthood have got the hang of power, and know enough psychology to avoid recruiting anyone who would upset the situation, so the state is run tolerably enough. The Temple is supported by the people's offerings, and the leader always seems concerned and just. As the Highest is publicly associated with all decisions, policies and state actions, it is in no way apparent that the Highest is just a puppet, and the long term consistency of government is taken as proof of the many generations of wisdom handed down through reincarnation. Needless to say, anyone who starts suggesting that the people are living under the heel of a gang of murderous hypocrites ends up in blessed seclusion (see above).

Referee

Travellers will find it fairly easy going within the starport and its surrounds; the priests understand about trade, and deal fairly. People seem content (or at least demonstrate the usual range of human emotions and behaviour), and the ruler seems to be affable, if remote. Travel outside the normal territories is not restricted, and there is little sign of the true nature of the government. However, travellers who become involved in governmental issues might conclude that all is not what it seems. Naturally it is in their best interests to quiet while on planet.

Plot

The players are approached by a poor family in panic, who ask that their child be hidden for a few weeks. They know that the local priests have been eyeing up their little one as a new Highest and hope to save him, and their own lives, by hiding him until the priests have to go look for someone else.

3. EL PRESIDENTÉ

This planet has been ruled by a self-selected (secondary) sociopath for as long as anyone can remember. Secondary sociopaths have a high order of social skills, but no empathy, and tend to cluster. They like each other and despise everyone else. As a result they have established themselves as a ruling élite, under the absolute control of the sociopaths' sociopath, El Presidenté. This relationship remains until one of the élite kills the incumbent tyrant and takes over. There is a purge of the outgoing president's supporters, and a general bloodbath. This has bad effects on the populace; sociopaths have interesting hobbies, which generally

have bloodletting elements, and they like to use political opponents as their material. Sociopaths also acquire the weak-willed as imitators and allies, so state oppression is of unparalleled brutality, but of doubtful efficiency.

Referee

Oddly, travellers are mostly inviolate: outsiders would not necessarily understand El Presidenté's unique genius, and might draw the attention of interfering do-gooders to the planet. Trade is therefore well regulated and encouraged. The locals will seem to be exuberant and party mad (live, drink and be merry, because the death squad might call at three in the morning). Dissent is quite often expressed in magnificent local art forms; especially music, dance and literature (anything which can be slipped out on a really small holo-crystal, or which could be misinterpreted as meaningless pap). The locals also understand the need for visitors to be polite to the government, but any sign that they might actually approve of the existing brutality will lead to sullen, uncooperative behaviour and perhaps even violence.

Plot

The next psychopath is advancing on the presidential palace and the Imperial ambassador wants out - now! The players may be seeking safety at the embassy or may be hired to help move out the ambassador's valuables to a villa safely outside the main city. In either circumstance, involvement in a running gun battle is likely.

4. POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

This society is entirely governed by ritual observance, ornate ceremonial and is wholly hidebound by its traditions and heritage. The president is a hereditary figurehead and the government rules dispassionately. The bureaucracy makes sure that the citizens do as they should and that the hovertrams run on time. Every single native family has a hereditary position which cannot be relinquished. All occupations have a dress code which cannot be altered. Every working day begins with the boss saying good morning to all the employees and thanking them for being there. They all thank their employer for their jobs. Every day the army officers ask their troops three times 'Are you ready for war?', and the soldiers yell back 'Ready! Ready! Ready!' The state is entirely impervious to change. At the start of the Long Night this seemed like a good idea, but it is inappropriate for the dynamic Imperial period. The only advantage of this ossified society is that it helps with tourism, but only for adventurous tourists. The ceremonies must take place just so, and although they include contingency plans for bad weather or illness, they do not in any way accommodate casual observers.

Referee

There are categories of trade goods (novelties, to local lawyers) which are simply not allowed on planet. To know which these are in advance, the player must succeed at a Difficult (-2) Broker check. A Formidable (-6) Admin check must be rolled for a visiting merchant to mesh well enough with local activities to assure prompt delivery of goods; add one extra day for each point of negative Effect.

Plot

Whether as visitors, or providing passage to natives, the players will encounter innumerable irritations. For example, coffee can only be served mid morning, after lunch and dinner; tea is limited to breakfast, mid afternoon and after supper (where cocoa can be substituted); specific alcoholic drinks are allowed at points during the day, with specific meals, etc.

5. ROTA SYSTEM

The power bases - finance, mercantile, religious, military, communications media and manufacturing - take turns at running this world. Each puts up a dictator who has supreme executive power for a period of two years. This supremo is little more than a puppet, making policy adjustments in favour of their backers, in the hope that a number of these rulings will survive until the next presidency. The end result is a selection of stop-go policies in virtually every area of public life, with a few behind the scenes compromises assuring some kind of basic economic activity. The major difficulty is that there is very little state provision of services, and most healthcare, education and transport needs are catered for by the private sector. The public domain most adversely affected by the rota system is the army, which tends to experience eight years of retrenchment for every two of stable investment. This has knock-on effects in manufacturing, and except for small arms, all this state's materiel is imported. The police suffer too, as whichever power base is in office expects to be exempted from obeying inconvenient laws during its stint. The power bases also expect exemplary service from the public sector (such as better treatment than the general citizenry). There are occasional rumblings of revolt, but the dictators are used to dealing with this.

Referee

Visitors to this world encounter run down, shabby municipal buildings, apathetic civil servants and an ever-changing panorama of public relations campaigns instituted by whoever is dictator at the moment. All public sector activities are inadequately trained, poorly equipped and unenthusiastic. They are also paralleled by bright, shiny private sector outfits who monopolise the profit making aspects of social provision. Private fire-fighters here are difficult to distinguish

from protection racketeers. Traders will find that conditions are generally favourable, especially during the Army's turn when the demand for arms goes through the roof. It is better to avoid this planet during the mercantile dictatorship when anti-competitive tariffs are imposed (Cr. 10 per kilolitre, in or out).

Plot

The media are currently in control and extremes of live entertainment are in vogue. Given their background, the players are offered a weekly fee to have a holorecorder embedded in their skull to record their adventures for global broadcasts.

6. NANNY STATE DISSIDENTS

Travellers, malcontents and drug-users refer to the Exemplar of Morality as 'Nanny'. Especially when (as at the moment) Nanny is a man. The very first Nanny (also a man, Daniel Aston), had noticed at the same time as his devoted followers had given him control of the starport, the communications net and the power grid that the problem with laws was that someone would get around them by insisting that the court take notice of what the precise wording of the law said, rather than its intention. Nanny therefore decided to base all future social regulations on moral imperatives. This was unfortunate given that Nanny's main interests were decency, cleanliness, seemliness and corrective measures such as gruelling punishment drills, flogging and public executions. The central role of these concepts was discussed at great length in *My Moral Struggle*, this world's equivalent of a digest of law. Poor Mr Aston was badly let down by his own children, seven of whom fled the planet and four others he had to flog, brand and eventually hang for 'ingratitude, slander and unrepentant lewdness'. While this meant that there would not be an Aston dynasty, it did give him the idea of the Exemplar system. The most moral people in the realm would be observed, tested, graded, be inducted into the judiciary and be given cases to try and any eventual

tie would be resolved by psychometric testing. The winner was the Exemplar in Waiting, to succeed on the death of the incumbent. In the history of this world, rather a lot of elderly Exemplars have been found wanting. Touchingly, they always muster enough decency to take their own lives and spare the state the embarrassment of an appearance on the scaffold.

Referee

Travellers will find this world very hard going. Instead of a business deal, a trader is subjected to a discourse on what the local broker expects from the deal and the cargo and will ask painstaking questions until the visiting party has satisfied any reservations or queries. As lying and exaggeration are immoral, any false or colourful description of the cargoes will lead to an appointment at the whipping post. Anything which promotes lewdness in others is also suppressed. Needless to say Aston was a vegetarian, teetotal non-smoker. Private visitors will find the natives to be po-faced, repressed and easy to shock. They are also very conservative dressers, and are morally outraged by anyone who isn't. As a propensity for being shocked, combined with a willingness to act upon it, are prerequisites for a career on the bench or in government, it is wise not to upset anyone. This is especially true for foreigners, as the Book says they are 'naturally wicked and wanton'. They also refused to extradite Aston's seven children.

Plot

Three descendents of Aston's children have decided that they should return to the world to try to correct the mistakes of their predecessor. Depending upon the skill set of the players, they will be hired as aides, diplomats or bodyguards. The trip will be eventful and quite hopeless, with the main problem being how to avoid being imprisoned for wearing the wrong clothing during the hours of darkness, or some such.

CHARISMATIC OLIGARCHY

Government by a select group, organisation or class enjoying the overwhelming confidence of the citizenry.

1. PARTY, PARTY

This planet is ruled by a single party which is obsessed with public relations - on the grounds that if you can fool enough of the people enough of the time... The Party is acutely aware of the fact that there are large parts of the economy that they don't control - the financial and manufacturing sectors - and hence limits its activities to promoting happiness in its people. This involves parades, festivals of culture, indirect taxation and stern discouragement of dissent and apathy. There are regular Joy Days and Pride Marches, when the citizens are obliged to join in spontaneous displays of, well, joy and pride. At such times a liberal quantity of recreational chemicals and party food is provided by the government for its citizenry. There are plaques celebrating workers and citizens of the month, and diligent citizens are awarded the Hero of Labour medal.

Referee

Travellers may well be taken in by the regular Joy Days and Pride Marches. What they might not appreciate is that the state also discourages private gatherings and occasionally seals off and systematically searches suspect housing estates. As can be imagined, there are disappearances, bits and pieces of non-elective brain surgery and organisations such as the Youth League for Truth and Beauty. When trading, travellers are advised to deal with the locals in the state sponsored Friendship Houses where very good prices can be obtained (the commercial and industrial backers of the regime insist) and where visitors can be sure of meeting only the most contented citizens.

Plot

The players are hired by a concerned young woman who wants them to find her father - a cynical scientist, she knows he was going to join an Anti-Pride March several days ago. There were no incidents reported on the news but the players can determine from bystanders that there was a small scuffle and the protesters were removed to be educated. Her father may be saved prior to this or may be found to have developed a sudden heartfelt love for the ruling party.

2. SI, PATRON

Like many worlds, there are haves and have-nots. However, here have-nots set themselves at the feet of a have - their patron. Patron-client relationships are the most common

kind of non-familial bond in this society. The patrons give their clients jobs to do, and generally expect clients to protect their interests, in return for which the patron will patronise the clients' businesses, look after their health and security and burn down their houses if they defect to anyone else. That sanction aside, patron-client relationships are civilised enough. At an executive level, the patrons run the society between them - a sufficiently highly ranked patron can gain ministerial office by the acclamation of their peers. The patron can then appoint appropriate clients to offices within the ministry. As failure to perform, gross embezzlement or proven bribery results in a knife in the ribs, most patrons attempt to do their jobs well. Becoming a patron is easy enough; you say 'I will accept clients' in public and register yourself on the tax roll. Paying tax enables you to vote and to hold governmental office. The tax payable is quite onerous, being the previous year's deficit divided between all the patrons, and it needs to be recouped from the patrons' respective client bases. This means that patrons have to acquire clients. Ideally, prospective clients step out of the woodwork of their own accord; realistically, people need a special kind of persuading. Note that anyone, native or otherwise, can become a client or patron.

Referee

If, as for most visitors, you are not a client, then you can enjoy the state's facilities for free; a situation which makes all the patrons unhappy. It does not last for long. Anyone who stays on the planet for more than two weeks or becomes a regular visitor will have to become some patron's client (or become a patron themselves). Trade relationships will be done through any broker, but any repeat business should find its way to the same broker, or there will be great aggravation. Apart from that proviso, visiting this world is fairly safe.

Plot

When the players encounter Sylvia Fennig she will plead with them to help her - through an administrative error she was kept here beyond the two week period and forced to become a client. Legally she cannot leave unless (for example) a player buys out her patron - she would be willing to work passage or whatever is required to pay them back.

3. THE RULE OF THE THREE

This state has three executive offices, covering External Affairs, Internal Affairs and Finance. These positions are filled by the most hawkish and energetic candidates available, and the offices are held until death or voluntary retirement. If two of the officers feel that the third is bringing the government into disrepute, they can have that individual

removed, which is seen as a valuable safeguard. Each of the three is obsessed with public relations: being unpopular attracts envy and envy attracts assassination attempts, and all of them are keen to be recognised as the big movers within their spheres of influence. Selection for a vacant office is either performed by the two remaining rulers, or is by the outgoing incumbent's nomination. Apart from friction with the treasury, and the fact that all three offices maintain their own intelligence and security forces, the spheres of influence do not overlap very much and there is little rivalry between them. Public support for this regime is based on the winning personalities of its leaders, its simplicity, and the multiplicity of intelligence and secret police services.

Referee

Visitors will find this world unremarkable; in fact it is remarkably orderly and peaceful when compared to most worlds.

Plot

The Internal Affairs (IA) secret service is trying to acquire a global surveillance capability which will allow it to monitor and then (through blackmail, etc.) manipulate the other two leaderships to ensure their successors all favour the IA philosophy. The players will be approached to smuggle part of this surveillance capability (high tech spying equipment) onto the world.

4. THE GUILD MASTERS

This society is organised on craft guild lines: each job has an appropriate guild, and all the guilds have an internal ranking system. The higher ranks get to form governing bodies at the different levels: local, state, continental and planetary. The planetary government is composed of the guild masters, who are there until death or incapacity takes them. Generally speaking, most guild members approve of their particular master's office and actions, but are less likely to extend this courtesy to leaders of the other guilds. However, being convinced of the merits of workplace organisation, they approve thoroughly of their state's political system.

Referee

Visitors will find that work place organisation has led to overpricing, and the friction between the different guilds results in delays in delivery or performance of services. Prices are 1D % to the players' disadvantage, and all deliveries are D3-1 days late. The only thing which the players can do legally on this world is to buy and sell through members of the Merchants' Guild and consume goods and services. To work on this planet requires guild membership which is pretty much hereditary.

Plot

The players encounter a fellow trader who shortly after is beaten to death by a gang. It turns out he had been selling outside the guild. Shortly after, the Merchant Guild head is

murdered using off-world weaponry. The locals turn against the players and other off-worlders. This is all a plot by isolationists within various Guilds. The Imperium will hire the players to stay (or return to the world if they have fled) to find out who's behind it all.

5. THE BEST OF THE BEST

On this world competition rules. Society is fairly free and open, but public life and economic activity are oriented towards the recognition and reward of outstanding achievement, and the approving media do everything in their power to build public acceptance of the system. It works by consistently rewarding success: even those children with the highest test marks in the week's schoolwork are published. This continues into adult life, whether one works in business, government, industry, sport or entertainment. Each entry includes a lot of detail of the achiever - effectively a curriculum vitae of their life. People scramble to have their ideas endorsed and to be associated with celebrities or high profile events and products. As the society has developed a fairly sophisticated ranking system for recognising achievement, those with the highest rank in any one sphere get jobs at the top of that endeavour. Hence the highest scoring financier is Treasurer for the next term. Terms are not fixed, but come to an end when an incumbent really screws up.

Referee

Travellers may feel exhausted by the spunky, go-getter attitude of the locals. In any trade, brokerage, gambling or other 'competitive' activity, they will find that not only do their competitors generally get a DM of +D3 on any check, but even native colleagues will compete to out-do the players. The failure of this society is that it really is not that good at long term planning, and has a pronounced stop-go policy at the planetary level. This means that it tends to follow the natural trade cycle, and does not really stand out in the interstellar relations.

Plot

Radicals are fighting over whether key decisions (political, financial, etc.) can be left to neural learning computers which, although machines, can beat most natives in the specialised tests of individual ability. As a result of resistance to this concept, the players are hired by a computer importer to stop his imports being vandalised.

6. CREAM RISES

Much to the glee of the merchant and criminal classes who disport themselves at the base of this society's pyramid, their rulers are obsessed with the ideals of justice, austerity and probity. In fact psychometric tests for these virtues ensure that only individuals with these qualities in abundance make it into the ranks of The Guardians of Public Service. The government actually only concerns itself with public works: the transport infrastructure (and low cost public transport services), defence (including criminal law), health and

education. Everything else is provided by free competition on the open market. The result of this is that the world has excellent hospitals, police and judiciary, roads and schools, a monorail system and a small, poorly equipped but superbly trained and well motivated army, system squadron and air force. As a belief in ethical virtues has to reinforce itself constantly, and as the leaders of this planet are consciously selected for this trait, the rulers tend to view those who don't possess their vision with pity. Of course when they break one of the life-affirming, ethical laws, the Guardians get very peeved indeed and attempt a reconciliation. Failing this the full weight of the law falls on the criminal. However apart from fines, public work and shaming in the media, the main sanction is denial of the privileges of the high office which the malefactors wouldn't want anyway. Incarceration and exile are penalties reserved for the post persistent recidivists.

Referee

The local merchants are rather hawkish, but otherwise trade is normal. This society does have the advantage that medical treatment is free. Settlers are welcome, provided they keep out of trouble, pay their taxes and do not annoy the local merchant/criminals (who take personal exception to being messed about). Retribution works on the principle that what the Guardians do not see, they cannot stop or meddle with.

Plot

The players are asked to sponsor (provide free passage for) a poor, frail invalid to this world; unable to pay for treatment on his own world, the man can be given a few more years of life here. In return the players will get great publicity on his own world which should lead to more job offers.

7. SAFETY FIRST

This planet's timid population places all its trust in the Protector class, who do everything. In addition to a huge number of obsessive safety regulations (which cover anything: shoe laces are unsafe because you might trip or get caught in machinery, etc.) the people are convinced that it would be very bad for them to place themselves in danger. To get around this, everyone carries a little cellular transponder which broadcasts an 'SOS' message whenever it is set off. The Protectors respond as quickly as they can. The Protectors fill the roles of army, paramedics, fire brigade, police and government. A cynic might observe that the Protectors have taken over and imprinted abject submission on the populace, but this is not quite true. Anyone can become a Protector (psionic abilities are an advantage). Protectors are taught a major discipline (war, law or helping people), political philosophy and interstellar affairs. They are trained to take charge. They are supported by the press, sympathetic portrayal in soap operas and a monopoly on violence. Most of the time they don't abuse their position, but

if they did, you'd never find out. A popular urban myth is of the Protectors' club where every vice is available.

Referee

Visitors who keep their noses clean and do not litter will be fine here. Of course the customs procedures are exacting (add D3 hours to clearance times). Visitors will see Protectors strutting around in their silver uniforms, but will not have anything to do with them unless they are involved in a disaster or break the law. There is no nonsense about the use of minimum force; the Protectors will not even attempt to take prisoners if they pose any kind of threat.

Plot

The players will witness a bank robbery by a rebellious local; the victims will flap about like landed fish but the robber (and the players if they have done anything other than grovel on the floor) will be arrested by the most heavily armed, uncompromising troops the players have ever seen.

8. FROM EACH ACCORDING TO ABILITY, TO EACH ACCORDING TO WORK DONE

This state began as a communist regime but failed to wither away, instead retaining all the characteristics of a one-party dictatorship, especially that of keeping its leadership in luxury at the expense of the citizenry. Membership of the Party is the only route to good living, and membership is a privilege which has to be earned. Earned by showing a willingness to be indoctrinated into believing that everything the Party says is the truth, and to devote every free hour to Party work (snitching on neighbours, work mates and family members). The final prize for Party work is induction into and promotion through the ranks of the Central Agency, which is where the real money is earned. Party members are quite convinced that the work they do entitles them to this level of reward (houses in the country, big cars, penthouse flats, champagne) and look forward to the day when the Revolution is so advanced the proles can have it too.

Referee

The Party will insulate Travellers from the worst inequalities; it is recognised that they wouldn't understand and could be upset. However, the locals will make strenuous attempts to contact outsiders, partly to beg trinkets, partly to engage in black market dealings, partly to get the real story out and occasionally to enmesh visitors in the overcomplicated schemes of the secret police. Trade proceeds normally except that merchants cannot use any Broker skill DM unless they first succeed in an Average (+0) Streetwise or Deception check.

Plot

Certain radical proles have decided they cannot wait for the Revolution. A shipment of rich wines and foodstuffs carried on the players' ship will be poisoned while in customs. The players will be held responsible for the resulting massacre of Party members unless they can prove their innocence.

9. SHOW TRIALS

This world is dominated by a Communist government which has been in power since the planet was settled by idealists at some time during the Diaspora. Unlike many similar worlds which just mutated into corrupt, inept oligarchies, the Party on this world was made of sterner stuff. Here the Revolution is continuous. The party and its acolytes (especially the talented youngsters who are brigaded together to be the cadres of the future) are always on their guard for signs of counter-revolutionary activities. The manifestations of this are a rise in materialism, apostasy, and the penetration of society by the agents of Reaction. The Party is very skilled in spotting these, of course, and they tend to appear every time there is a shift of personnel at the top. The public face of this society is bland, impenetrable and efficient. However that is not the case for the locals: they face problems in manufacture (central planning is required for ideological reasons, but it is hard to implement) and in service provision. The Party is remote from the people; membership is by invitation, although brown nosed commoners can join the Friends of the Revolution, which eats into your free time, and forces you to go out sweeping the streets before work starts. There is a constant demand for consumer goods, information on the outside world, and of course for low cost off world travel.

Referee

This does not affect visitors much, provided they do not stray from the starport or visit anywhere not on the official tour routes. More enterprising traders will encounter problems (Admin, Streetwise and Deception checks are one level of difficulty harder) and if they get caught, they will end up on trial before the world's media, in prison and without the ship they came on. Even hanging around in the starport is potentially fraught with danger: people are always trying to sneak information about the real situation to outsiders; sometimes they are sincere, sometimes it is state entrapment. The real situation is shocking: show trials, executions, disappearances, poverty and ill health. Trade with this planet is easy - the planned economy guarantees that traders will never lose money, but there is less latitude for a killing (roll 2D+3 instead of 3D on the Modified Price Table; there are no Broker DMs). Visiting the natives can secure higher prices (Broker skill can be used if successful at a Difficult (-2) Admin check, followed by either a Difficult

(-2) Streetwise or Deception check). Catastrophic failure could lead to incarceration and confiscation of assets.

Plot

The players are hired by an ex-scout who is concerned that attempts to amber rate this world seem to have failed, despite good cause. He wishes them to investigate the on-world scout group. Previously the Party has threatened court action or trade sanctions or mounted a charm offensive but indeed there are two occasions on which key scouts have either been bribed or blackmailed.

10. KITCHEN CABINET

This planet is ever so popular with tourists, travel shows and those journalists who churn out 'and finally' items. It has an adorable aristocracy who participate in pretty rituals, silly light entertainment vehicles, high profile scandals and heart warming charitable crusades. These are never far from the headlines, but they are regarded by most as harmless fun. It is occasionally wondered how such a collection of intellectual featherweights could run a society which is stable, happy and tolerably prosperous. The answer is that they don't. Due to this state's strict primogeniture and belief that all positions of responsibility should be filled by the scions of noble houses, all army officers, judges, bank presidents and high clergy are members of aristocratic families. All of these people have personal servants, to whom these nobles turn for advice. Consequently all matters of policy and diplomacy are decided by a conclave of butlers, who give highest priority to the preservation of their society's way of life followed by material advantage. The same is true of judicial sentencing, moral stances and general education. When the inevitability of the Ramshackle Empire's collapse became apparent to the butlers, valets, ladies maids and nannies of this planet, they decided that it was in their duty to preserve their civilisation. They undertook an educating mission for themselves, inclining more towards P.G. Wodehouse than Machiavelli. Without ever dropping the façade that they were devoted servants, they so ingratiated themselves with their employers that they ended up giving the advice on which all decisions were made. They are resolved on this point: it is necessary to induce absolute dependence in their employers, so that the nobles instinctively look to their servants for any kind of help. The rule from below stairs is not apparent to casual observers: the Imperial Diplomatic Corps knows all about it but is quite happy to observe the appropriate formalities; ask a question one day, get an answer the next. This means that the aristocrats can agonise about it overnight and their body servants can put them out of their misery when they wake them with morning tea. The local nobility is so dependent on their servants that they will not travel without at least one of them.

Referee

None of this really affects non-noble visitors. The servants have arranged it so that none of the local ceremonial gets in the way of business, and that any rebellious feelings are diffused by a comprehensive and efficient welfare state. Actually, most locals have got into their roles and are happy to play the picaresque scamp. Noble visitors have to put up with house parties, parlour games (sardines, hide and seek or murder in the dark preferred) and attending race meetings. They will also find that their personal assistants turn bossy and manipulative. If they do not bring a servant, one will be provided.

Plot

The players are accompanying a group of nobles (as aides or perhaps as nobles themselves). One of the nobles is found knifed after a game of Murder in the Dark. All the evidence points to it being a servant (whom the noble had offended earlier). In reality one of the other nobles held a long term grudge and planned the murder. The servants cannot be seen to solve the murder, nor to ask the players directly to solve it, but will act through their puppet masters.



RELIGIOUS DICTATORSHIP

Government by a religious organisation without regard to the needs of the citizenry.

1. NICE WORLD

Here a humanistic philosophy has taken hold and is choking the planet to death. Everything is nice, no one is ripped off, robbed, offended, hurt, lonely, and most important of all left untreated. This world checks everything: satisfaction surveys abound, all questions must be answered, and any problems are sorted out through face to face conciliation, group therapy and similar traumas. If you do not want to be better, you are drugged abducted and locked up until you do. And they can check.

Referee

Travellers here will find a multiplicity of tasteful, safe, high quality goods and services, high class entertainment and curious sporting events (like synchronised swimming). After their first encounter with the authorities they will learn not to complain about anything. Prices are normal, but nothing unsavoury is available.

Plot

The players will find it difficult to leave - not staying to breathe in the local atmosphere is seen as discontentment (and crying out for treatment), so any players expressing a desire to leave will be encouraged to stay. If they are careful what they say and talk politely for at least a day or two they can escape!

2. HOME OF HEROES

This planet's population believes that it has the racial destiny of conquering the entire universe and that whenever its heroic warriors get killed, they are reincarnated into the next generation of the master race. The master race has not yet fulfilled its destiny because it is always being betrayed from within and conspired against from without. Although some of the War Priests disagree, it is recognised by the planet's more moderate politicians that in order to take over the universe, they have to build up a big space navy and arm it with really good weapons. This planet is, therefore very keen indeed to trade with its neighbours and has a voracious appetite for anything that might give an edge in combat. It has a large intelligence unit dedicated purely to obtaining Ancient artefacts. Dissent is not encouraged, but dissent in favour of a more hard line with foreigners is usually safeguarded by the War Priests. The majority of the diplomatic service

are nothing more than spies, reconnoitring for the oncoming take over of the universe.

Referee

Visitors will be tolerated, trade will be fair, and will take place extremely quickly. The natives will be torn between the desire to show their wonderful civilisation to its future subjects, and the instinct to give them a kicking as a foretaste of the great Crusade. Complaining to the police will not help much.

Plot

A patron hires the players to follow a party of 'heroes' from this world (the patron believes they know the location of an Ancients site). The patron wishes the players to locate the Ancient site for him and (if possible) retrieve any artefacts not removed by the team of heroes.

3. UNCLEAN, UNCLEAN

The settlers of this new Eden were strictly isolationist and introverted, and tried not to have anything to do with the galaxy at large, until they discovered that they needed a lot of medical aid. The world's environment, flora and fauna harboured many illnesses which were only evidenced within the colony after several generations. The true hard core went and hid themselves in the outback, while the more moderate factions began to encourage limited outside contact. Due to a desire to populate known space with the faithful, the hard core element are committed to generating big families, while as a result of pollution by more liberal influences, the moderates tend towards fewer, better educated children. This has had the result that there is a small starport with a tolerant but deeply spiritual community round it, amid a sea of fanatics. The peace is kept by asking any visitors to respect local traditions and not to tease the country cousins, in return for which the savages will not sweep down and return the starport to 'God's way'. The liberals try to reinforce this by keeping themselves better equipped and more united than the hard liners but, being liberal, their hearts are not really in it. What keeps the fanatics manageable is their tendency to kill each other over tiny points of doctrine.

Referee

Prices are very competitive here, and weapons are a much appreciated trade item. The most striking thing from a visitor's point of view is the number of emaciated mad men with loud hailer who just stand on street corners bellowing drive! until they collapse from dehydration.

Plot

The players find themselves on the outskirts of the city when a group of the outback brethren come looking for trouble.

4. MIX N' MATCH

This planet is ruled by the almost impossibly Labyrinthine precepts of an old, polytheistic, revealed religion. The great prophet (or new-age loon) Francis was once hit by the fundamental revelation that if everyone just followed the mythology of an appropriate deity, translated into a contemporary idiom, of course, then everything would be alright for ever. Francis might very well have understood the foregoing concept, but his successors have been arguing about it ever since. This has not stopped the population from developing an intricate caste system in which each caste follows Francis' version of the myth cycle of an appropriate deity (updated to reflect real world conditions). The pantheon has been looted from the traditions of just about every culture which Francis had ever heard of so there are gods of fortune (for gamblers, venture capitalists and merchants); soldiers worship gods of war; the police follow gods of judgement and retribution; etc. Problems arise because there are many overlapping deities (who are also regarded as spirit guides, guardian angels and totem figures) who have different mythologies. Consequently the instructions their followers take are inconsistent, and are in any case subject to reinterpretation in the light of contemporary reality. Add the caste system's strict demarcation and hereditary nature and you have a monstrously confused society where you need three people to do each job. However, as most of the divine traditions involved have fertility and 'secret mystery' elements, there is much scope for time-wasting, mind-warping fun.

Referee

Visitors will be struck by the vast selection of temples, shrines, and churches, priests, acolytes, pilgrims and votaries and hordes of sellers of coloured beads, holy relics and special incense. As caste demarcation is so exact, there is only a small chance of a character being pestered by missionaries, however they will be regularly quizzed by hopefuls to determine their background and employment; 'A military man, eh? Ah well, you have come to the right place for I am Phelim of the ground trooper sect. Oh, you're a tank man. No, sorry, you'll be wanting Tyrannir, god of death by shelling.'

The missionaries who concentrate on gangs of scruffy interstellar vagrants are probably not the sort the players would want to meet anyway. However, this does not apply to traders; Tlazoteotl, goddess of seduction and vice, is always happy to accept new worshippers. Obviously trade will take longer than usual, but given the effect of special incense on the native traders, visitors can opt to take the best two out of three dice on the actual value table.

Plot

A statue of a figure alleged to be Francis himself has been discovered on a neighbouring world. The players are hired to escort representatives of just ten of the key religions to examine the statue. These will want to bring back the statue but the local world regards it as an archaeological relic and thus sacrosanct. The players will be paid extra to help steal the statue.

5. UTOPIA

When Thomas More wrote that only God could create the perfect state, he probably did not have Edwin Scrope in mind. The astoundingly rich Mr Scrope, in his self realised role as the Perfect Being, decided to reinterpret The Great Book (of an ancient religion) in the light of his own perfection. He consequently erased all sexist, homophobic and similarly unpalatable references, and inserted the Book of Wondrous Machines and the Second Book of Leaving, in which he explained his pivotal role in the industrial revolution and the space programme. He re-edited the equivalent of Revelations to better account for human history and added the Book of Friends and Creatures in which he extended the privilege of having a soul to the 'blessed ally species' of cats, dogs and horses, and explained what his worshippers could do to any other animal they came across. The Book of Herbs and Spices contained his work in the field of recreational pharmacology. While he was doing this he was also recruiting very suggestible people to lead to a promised land. They boarded a tatty old ship and set off corewards. Old Scrope is long dead. This charismatic psychotic's embalmed, gilded corpse abides in a rather vulgar mausoleum. His work lives on and his people have prospered following his daft religion to the letter: it is lucky that the Book of Wondrous Machines set the record straight on the value of , not to mention that whole planets/sun orbit thing. The legal system is entirely transparent; it is in a series of chapters of the book (analogous to Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus) and is applied with perfect impartiality.

Referee

Travellers might well be bemused by the three Days of Rest, the strict diet (no meat originating from creatures of four or less legs) and the strange architecture, but this place should provide few unpleasant shocks. The natives are hospitable in a pitying kind of way, but have many odd habits derived from the Great Book. There is their curiosity about those with earlobes (natives have their earlobes removed a few months after birth, for they provide a hiding place for the devil...). For some reason they also have a tendency to grab each other by the thigh - in a friendly manner, of course.

Plot

The players are hired by a group of fanatics who are in search of the Great Missing Chapter of Scrope's book (the bit that defines which end of a banana one should peel from and other great mysteries).

6. HEAVEN'S MANDATE

Set up according to the New Revelations of the sage Kung Fu Tzu, as told to his prophet Julie Wong, this world is a nice, orderly, respectable, top down social pyramid. At the top is the Big Dragon (BD for short), ruling with the mandate of Heaven and sporting a rather far-out hat. At the bottom are the Dragon's dung - shifty reprobates such as beggars, merchants, financiers and other swindling, grasping parasites. Between these two levels are the functionaries and state officers, then the defenders (the military/police caste) and the workers, who despite relative poverty have quite high status. Individual subjects take whatever jobs they fancy and for which they are suitable, but there is effectively a negative relationship between making money and achieving social advancement. Service to the state is admired, not money. Government is simplicity itself. BD's directives are the last word in law and politics, interpreted if need be by the state Officers, and enforced by the Defenders. It is the duty of all other inhabitants to obey the BD's words, because the BD has Heaven's mandate. BD's rules are consequently the will of heaven, and that's that. Unless, of course BD loses Heaven's mandate to a worthier ruler. The test for this is easy too: it is proof positive that the incumbent Big Dragon has lost the mandate of Heaven when said incumbent is overthrown in a coup d'etat or loses a civil war. In the case of natural death, the state officers provisionally nominate a suitable successor and wait for any tests of validity to resolve themselves.

Referee

Travellers will find that no matter how tolerant they try to be, the locals will make assumptions about them, based on their apparent social role. Thus ship's crew, nobility and working people will be treated with respect, while the merchants, generally the top dogs at the starport, have the worst facilities and are subject to intrusive customs procedures (body searches, et al). Cross-generation relationships are generally characterised by respect for the elder and indulgence of the younger, while inside the same generation they are far more liberally minded. Currently there are only three laws and prescribed punishments; for killing, death; for theft, similar loss and adequate recompense; for injury, equivalent suffering and adequate recompense. What these mean is up to the presiding magistrate who sits alone and is judge, prosecutor and sole investigator. This society does not believe in prisons, and will frequently impose indentured labour instead.

Plot

The players are hired to help and guard an entrepreneur who is offering a 'wealth removal' service to help those who wish to achieve social advancement. Naturally, a few cynics have realised this is not quite true to the spirit of this society and would like to teach the entrepreneur the error of his ways - should things heat up he will ask the players to get him and his valuables off-world quickly.

7. VOICES

This world is home to a charismatic, evangelistic faith which preaches that the Supreme Being talks to the faithful, and that the really blessed can hear the words clearly. Thus social selection is skewed towards the generation and veneration of people who hear strange voices or noises, whether due to vivid imagination or a mental affliction. In the statistically very rare cases when the subject is dangerous (mentally unstable), they are regarded as having fallen under the spell of the Enemy. This is not a reflection on the unfortunate subject, who needs looking after in a secure environment. Such subjects are cared for at the state's expense, not least because the pronouncements of the evil one are high grade spiritual intelligence. With enough faith, such people will be cured. The 'safe' voice-hearers are welcomed and supported, and their voices (which are, of course, generated by their own subconscious) are taken to be Divine advice. The rationalisation of the system is this: order is reflected in the regular procession of the sun across the sky, the tendency of life to spread and of good people to prosper; chaos manifests itself when things break, when good things happen to bad people (and vice versa) and unpleasant random events. The locals reason (as did the Greeks) that the whole immensity of the Divine is a bit much to take in and can drive you mad; this explains the mental instability of many of the better voice-hearers.

Referee

Travellers will find that they have to keep an open mind here; bullying the weak and pitiable is not on, neither is being rude about the local religion. If the visitors do anything which the locals regard as suspect, such as sharp business practice, the advice of one of the blessed will be sought. As noted above, the blessed are integrated as fully as possible into society, so they will have been educated to a fair standard, and the Divine word could very well be intelligent advice. Quite obviously, law breakers are agents of chaos, so there is the asylum. The truly recalcitrant are put out of their misery.

Plot

The players encounter several strange situations where 'blessed ones' suddenly begin giving away money or crying out for cuddling or sweet foods. The more perceptive players will note the same young child asleep in both locations - he is a strong natural psionic and his uncontrolled dreams are being received as words of holy wisdom by those around him!

8. TITTER YE NOT!

The original settlers of this planet had intended it to reflect the values of a leading occultist who believed himself to be a Great Beast. Fortunately, their descendants proved to have more robust mental health and all they retained of their founders' faith were the two dicta: 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law', and the contrary 'love is the law,

love under will'. All on their own the inheritors reinvented simple utilitarianism and decided that, in combination, what the Great Beast must have meant was 'Do what you want provided that you do not limit other people's freedom to do the same, and be nice to people. Sleep with them if you like.' The end result is a fanatically tolerant and easy going society, full of laid back, friendly, sensual people. They have very few inhibitions and taboos, and raise their children in large, informally related family/ friend groups. They do appreciate real world needs and have a fully developed social structure protected by an indifferent military establishment. Other native idiosyncrasies of note are their fondness for Gothic fashions and architecture and their puckish sentencing policy: the obverse of not limiting the freedom of others is that those who break the law are subjected to imaginative burdens and penalties. The locals have lost their original ponderous dignity and now talk with innuendo-laden flirtatiousness, punctuated with fits of giggles.

Referee

Some visitors enjoy the freedoms of this world, but the penalties for misdemeanours can be terrible. The market for luxury items gives a 2D % bonus to their selling price.

Plot

The players find themselves being held up by a gunman who insists upon robbing them without violence. If they cause violence back they will be the ones arrested...

9. OLD-TIME RELIGION

The people of this world follow the creed of their octopoid god scrupulously, but don't let it get in the way of business. They are fond of the sayings; 'Ye shall have everything in abundance' and 'The gods help those who help themselves'. Their philosophy extends to 'an eye for an eye', right down to the 'root and branch unto the fifth generation'. Revenge is a dish served with great relish, to just about anyone even vaguely involved in the original misdemeanour. Strangely, the creed prohibits murder and advocates repentance and forgiveness. However, this has been refined over the years, following the principles that to err is human, and it is difficult to promise to do better (spiritually speaking) in a highly competitive environment. Thus confession, true repentance and forgiveness of sins are once only deathbed events. This has the side effect that the locals are obsessed with technologies which prolong life and with procedures allowing the time of death to be determined with precision. In other words, when the locals are sufficiently decrepit that their doctors feel that death is imminent, a priest is called in, does the confession and forgiveness bit and a doctor applies a painless lethal procedure. Society is composed of happy, striving capitalists with a scattering of priests. Priests come in two flavours: the Fellowship of Holy Poverty, and the much more numerous Apostles of Repentance. The Apostles are in charge, and dislike the Fellowship intensely, and would wipe them out, but for their inescapable spiritual

provenance, and the fact that they are a cheap manageable opposition. The Apostles take a much sterner line with independent holy people, self proclaimed prophets, and similar unbelievers, blasphemers and heretics. The religion has a charismatic character, with lots of singing, dancing and speaking in tongues. Most of the locals truly believe that they have a personal relationship with the deity and interpret life events in that light.

Referee

Visitors may be inconvenienced by the regular days when all commercial activity is forbidden and everyone is 'encouraged' to go to church. Travellers should avoid causing offence; breaking the law can result in ferocious penalties. Visitors should not contradict the belief that everyday events can be attributed to the tentacles of the Almighty. Psionicists are regarded as witches and are sentenced to death, along with their close relatives (to contain the spread of the 'affliction').

Plot

A member of the Fellowship begins following a player around; if challenged he will refuse to declare his purpose until forced, when he will reveal that he has a method of calculating a person's time of death from their foot movements.

10. MOTHER EARTH

The inhabitants of this world think it's alive. Not as a metaphor, but as a matter of fact. They are therefore both grateful to the planet for allowing them to live on it and zealous about guarding it from harm. As a source of pollution and as a persistent threat to the ecology, they take steps to circumscribe their own actions for the benefit of their world. In order to imbed this philosophy in the social fabric, they have made a religion of it. The precepts of this faith are to be found in the Revelations to Maude and are enforced by her priesthood. Revelations is an overcomplicated book in which the planet invited the Prophetess to a world where the faithful could abide, and in a novel twist, showed her two visions of the future. One was the destruction of the planet through misuse, while the other was the eternal bliss of living there with Respect. Respect dominates the inhabitants' lives; all possible environmental harm is avoided through scrupulous recycling, careful management of local resources and the replacement of harvested plants with new ones. It is with deep regret that the locals acknowledge that their presence has lessened local biodiversity and they accept the increase in domestic parasites (cockroach and clothes moth analogues and the growth of fungi around air vents) as a mild chastisement by the planet. They refuse to eat animals, preferring to grow vats of algae rather than eat food stolen from the mother. Resource reclamation is accompanied by huge ceremonies of public contrition, which involve flagellation, fasting and general mortification of the flesh. The priesthood is on hand to make sure that the mortification is done with enthusiasm. They also prefer to live in floating off-shore structures rather than sink their

foundations into the screaming body of their home. Worship takes place in the open, either on a barge or in a field. The faithful declare what they believe, how grateful they are to their planet, list the nasty things they have done, and beg for forgiveness and the planet's continued sufferance. It is led by priests who look like extreme punks in dirty Hessian. They have taken the mortification of the flesh to heart and practice body piercing, ritual scarring, fasting and the wearing of sackcloth and ashes (rubbed into hair and skin). They are very thin; as the local saying goes 'a fat priest is a bad priest'.

Referee

There is a flourishing trade with this world: the locals know a lot about ecology and are happy to take students and to export their ideas. It might be as well to note a few idiosyncrasies here: the penalties for littering, polluting and being disrespectful to the planet or its priests are severe. Visitors are required to make small acts of contrition for putting the biosphere to extra trouble and traders have to make a modest contribution to church funds (Cr. 10 per passenger or tonne of goods in or out).

Plot

The players will be able to find local health foods and natural materials (from renewable sources) which are in high demand in the Imperium's speciality shops. However, all such shipments must be accompanied by an equal volume of their most odious sewage. In return, the players can import high tech goods which cannot be produced in an environmentally friendly way.

11. WILL ROBERT'S BIG IDEA

Brother Bill Bob (3B) had a scheme. People were best off being nice to each other, managing their rage through sharing, caring and commitment. 3B also disliked the idea of leaders: once you knew the truth, what good were they? The swine would only change things. So Brother Bill Bob set it all down in 3B's Threefold Way to Bliss. This book, which ends with 'This is the Word. Anyone who tells you different is just plain wrong', inspired a movement which eventually took hold of a pestilential little rock somewhere in space. Because there are no leaders, and because 3B hated to use the same word twice, the Word is packed full of ambiguities, shades of meaning and points of contention. The society which resulted works quite well; Brother Bill Bob's three other main dictates were for sexual segregation, the number 3, and its square 9, this being the basis of the Plan. Society is split, as nearly as possible into groups of nine people all of the same sex, who care and share and commit themselves to looking out for each other. Each individual is also committed to an outsider of the opposite sex. This pairing raises a family, whose children join an adult grouping when they turn 18. Actually, new adults are given the choice of joining a Nine of their own free will or breaking their parents' hearts and being shunned by the community.

Sometimes the newly adult have to wait until a vacancy comes along. The individuals' economic lives are based on their talents and inclinations, but they are always on hand to help the other eight members of their Nines. Groups which have less than nine members are open to new admissions. Social frictions break out over the interpretation of the Word, what to do when members of a Nine end up hating each other and how to deal with outsiders.

Referee

Outsiders usually show little interest in the Word, and are only concerned with seeing the sights, conducting business and waiting for a connecting flight. However it seems unjust to leave them ignorant of the Word, so they are pestered by evangelists. Off-world traders are visited by their partner's other eight friends who make it clear that any deal must be fair and above board (if a player forgoes all or part of the Broker DM on the Modified Price Table, the portion forgone counts as a beneficial modifier in all social encounters). Consulting with the other eight adds D3 hours to major transactions and D3 days to delivery times.

Plot

The players get to share (or provide) passage with seven natives returning home after two were killed in an accident. In their need to acquire Nine-ship again, the natives will temporarily adopt two players into their group - at first simply befriending them, then increasingly talking of 3B's great book. They mean well - honest.

12. AT ARM'S LENGTH

This state is owned, financed, controlled and operated by the Galactic Church of Purity. The world itself is a den of vice, a haven for criminals and a damn fine place to have a party. The Galactic Church found itself in possession of some very large development grants, and noted that most rates of return were on the low side. They then noticed that Kim Leslie, a noted figure in Solomani criminology, was in need of substantial investment for a licensed, taxed, otherwise peaceful sink of depravity provisionally named Fun World. Initially, the Galactic Church had qualms, but then they looked at the dividends and decided that the irony of vice supporting virtue was just too beautiful. They leapt at the chance. A side effect of this was that members of the Galactic Church had a well deserved reputation for industry and probity, so a lot of other money followed theirs into the venture. Eventually, there was so much cash available that the developers had to extend their vision to encompass a diversified host society to support their casino town. As Kim Leslie had a poor reputation, the Church became the major shareholders, with Kim receiving dividends. This is how it remains: the planet is brash, lively but rather trouble free: the authorities know who the criminals are but do not touch them if they keep quiet. In return, the fun houses pay taxes to the Church, and the Church has daily parades, preachers on every corner, pickets of the least salubrious attractions

and a huge training college. Although the Church's activities are sincere, possibly even acts of contrition for living off the wages of sin, most visitors think that they are part of the fun, and join in enthusiastically, contributing to charities, singing along with the choirs and teasing the pickets. Old hands among the faithful find this a little sad especially as neophytes tend to take false hope from this public acclaim.

Referee

There are no problems here unless visitors go armed, break the law or are obnoxious. The Church runs a tight operation and will not let anything spoil it (thus all trade prices are fair).

Plot

Brokers who consistently get good prices also get job offers; the Church has an eye for talent. So do the fun house bosses: likeable (high social skills), able (high gambling) or useful (high combat skills) people can earn a good living here. If the players stay in touch with their employers, they will find job offers on other planets too; some of the local crime groups are devout churchgoers.

13. MEN OF BRONZE

Someone had to try to recreate Plato's Republic, and these boys gave it a go. Everyone here is inculcated in the belief that they are an intrinsic part of their society, have a natural and necessary role to fill for the public good, and that they will be personally satisfied only through the performance of their social function. Consequently, everyone is psychometrically tested, examined and certified fit for a specific occupation, separated from others as far as is possible, and trained up to be mentally and physically fit for the job. Jobs run from philosopher king right down to toilet cleaner, and each occupation has accepted standards of behaviour, 'appropriate' living conditions, and a system of support and counselling to help people remain happy in their places. Of course people are not bees, so this does not work very well; cognitive dissonance strikes in all too many cases, helped by Plato's complete loathing and absolute ban on anything frivolous or entertaining. In fact the only permissible pastimes are athletics and intellectual debate, which are not enough, although they add new terror to the term 'café society'. Therefore a lot of citizens find themselves in residential care, on drugs, or slaving after foreigners and their naughty diversions. This last is policed by the Men of Bronze, the local police force, customs service and army.

Referee

A Difficult (-2) Life Sciences (psychology) or Formidable (-6) Streetwise check will alert players to corruptible men through whom they can off-load contraband. Failing that, the only cargoes which the locals will touch are functional manufactures, raw materials and agricultural products.

Plot

The players bring a group of locals back to their homeworld. Strangely, the locals seem quite upset, claiming their eyes have been opened by seeing other worlds. Shortly after they land the locals are arrested by the Men of Bronze (for subversive activities) and the players will be interrogated to see if they were instrumental in corrupting the minds of these people.

14. THE CALIPHATE

When the Solomani went to the stars, the word of the Prophet went along too, despite the problem that a pilgrimage to his birthplace might be hard to achieve. The society which emerged is a strict theocracy, in which everybody submits to the will of the One God and to the rule of his deputy the Caliph. The Caliphate gave the second Imperium a great deal of trouble and here at least the Long Night was most welcome. Without the need to protect itself from the meddling of a hostile super power, this world settled down to the same kind of civilised, urbane, hospitable and tolerant society that it had been in Earth's middle ages. In fact the Caliphate maintained its entire industrial and technological base intact throughout the Night, even to the extent of making discrete visits to Earth, so that at least some of the Faithful could visit their holiest place. This world is an unenthusiastic member of the Imperium, and because of the regular trips to Earth the Caliphate is simultaneously a security risk and an unparalleled intelligence resource. The only real local difficulty is the argument over whether the sixth pillar of the religion should mean 'struggle for personal improvement' or 'holy war against the infidel?' The Caliph is satisfied that it means the first, and is happy to arrange the beheading of those who have a go at the second.

Referee

Travellers are advised to respect the local laws, especially those concerning mind-altering chemicals and addressing the question of vice. Woman travellers will find a better reception if they cover their legs and hair; the people in the urban centres are open minded and understand that strangers require some latitude, but appreciate it if their guests make the effort. Most of the time visitors will find the local people to be friendly, welcoming and interested in the worlds outside. Traders should be honest and assertive in their dealings: they will earn friends and respect that way. Would-be criminals should be aware that the laws against theft and fraud are strict and punishable by savage beatings, mutilation or public execution.

Plot

The players' ship is chartered for a long trip in the direct of Sol. The travellers refuse to discuss their purpose (they are en route to their holy site on Earth and their intended ship was held up with a major drive failure).

15. ANIMAL CRACKERS

Everyone here is required to emulate the spiritual essence of the Wise Animal Guides in their daily lives, and all this state's knowledge is cast in parables featuring talking beasts. While, this is mostly confined in daily life to figures of speech and a truly awesome number of superstitions, the state religion does protect the lives of animals completely. The local people live on a strictly vegetarian diet supplemented with synthetic vitamin supplements, and will not hurt or otherwise interfere with an animal in any way. Children are taught to be friendly but alert, (like the Harun Feather-rat). Merchants should be shrewd but honest (like Mr. Rolf the Jungle King). The Priesthood do their best to mimic the movements and noises of their particular totem beast. The local soldiery are taught to be relaxed, but always ready (like cats), self-sacrificing (like the eek-bird) and loyal to their pack (like the sabreelk). Pack is the local equivalent of platoon and the only higher level of organisation is the herd, or flock in the air force. Most local terminology has animal associations; hospitals and schools are called nests, homes are called dens. Industrial structures are dams or hives. The people never do things like walk under ladders or break mirrors. They are forever putting fallen eye lashes in their hair and blowing out candles (supposedly giving them a free wish). Local structures and natural features often have good or bad fortune associated with them and the people devote a lot of their time to making appropriate observances at them.

Referee

Nothing here should upset visitors unless they are carnivores, for whom no allowance is made. A disconcerting feature is the tendency of the natives to look at passing animals for inspiration or guidance: the movement of an insect or a cat's choice to yawn are taken, quite seriously as omens. Things take time here; D3 extra hours for customs clearance and D3 extra days for deliveries.

Plot

When the players wish to use their ship, they find it surrounded by a small family of cats. The locals will not let them take off while the cats are there, nor allow them to move the cats. The locals will not deliver cargo, refuel the ship or do anything until the cats leave of their own volition.

16. MOTHER KNOWS BEST

This polity is an explicit matriarchy backed up by an uncompromising state religion and a really groovy statue

of a big snake with a woman's arms, torso and thirty-six mammaries. On paper, the dominant ethos is life affirmation, mutual support and niceness, but the actual institutions strike outside observers differently. There is a hierarchy of matriarchs running from Planetary all the way down to Community. Each matriarch is selected by her superiors and within her own sphere of activity, her word is final. To complete the picture, every mother is matriarch in her own home. The Sisters who founded this state were of the opinion that men were surplus to requirements. While the founders preferred to manufacture daughters only through gene splicing or the artificial fertilisation of ova with material from other ova, they did keep a store of frozen sperm just in case. When their medical capabilities declined during the Long Night they resorted to using the semen and eventually to making children the old fashioned way. This produced a surplus of males. The society still practises male infanticide, but a proportion of boys are retained as pets and as soldiers. Deep in the Long Night a lot of the Sisters fell out and started to conquer each other, a process which led to the current Matriarchate. While women took all the command decisions, they used their expendable men as cannon fodder and this system has continued to the present day. Men appear in athletic competitions, the visceral blood sports favoured on this world and in the combat arms of the armed forces. Particularly impressive specimens are allowed to father the children of the more important Matriarchs. The locals boast that while girls need to understand science, art and politics, boys need only learn how to love, fight and tell the truth. Local men are very happy with the arrangements.

Referee

Male visitors will have problems here; they have no civil rights, and are not even really regarded as mentally competent. Any female companion will be assumed to be their owner and all business will have to be conducted through her. All male crewed ships can deal with this state through the legal fiction of being adopted by a local factor who will arrange things on their behalf. As the planet requires off world trade, the factor will do her best to secure good deals.

Plot

Female players with male companions will be invited to enter them in a competition - usually a hybrid of full-contact karate and wrestling, although it might include athletics or weight lifting.

GLOSSARY

Appanage: Making provision for all children, usually by dividing the parental estate between them equally.

Constitutional: Of the essence of the state. Constitutions can be written (usually delineating philosophical principles, personal rights and sometimes, responsibilities) or residual (anything not forbidden is allowed). A written constitution can fall into disrepute over time, because the meaning of words change. For instance property meant 'that which is close and dear, including personal liberty' in the eighteenth century, now it just means 'my stuff (which you don't touch, not ever)'.

Democracy: Rule of the people but which was originally understood to exclude women, slaves and effectively the uneducated and those too poor to take time off work. Most Classical and Renaissance writers preferred to translate democracy as 'mob rule'.

Feudal: The holding of land in return for a pledge of limited personal service, incorrectly taken to mean abject subservience. A feudal society still has taxes and rents.

First Past the Post: An electoral mechanism where the candidate with the largest share of the vote wins, even if that share is not a majority of votes cast.

Hysteresis: The tendency of people to be influenced by their history.

Kung Fu Tzu (Confucius): His work, available in English as *The Analects*, describes a state where just laws, duty and respect for elders make everything right. This proposition becomes more attractive the older you get.

Machiavelli: Best known for *The Prince*, a short treatise on rulership, Niccolò Machiavelli also wrote the diabolical *Discourses on the Republic* and the fanciful *On War*. Machiavelli is the father of Realpolitik and the origin of the proposition that it is better to be feared than to be loved.

More, Saint Thomas: Coined the term Utopia (Greek for 'no place' or 'good place'), had a fatal disagreement with Henry VIII, and always wore a hair shirt (which his daughter took to wearing after his beheading).

Nietzsche: German thinker who wanted to 'philosophise with a hammer'. Nietzsche was a major influence on Nazi ideology and was obsessed with the idea of the superman.

Patrician: The senior class in Roman society, from whom senators were drawn.

Picaresque: Having the properties of a loveable, lower class rogue.

Plato: Inventor of Atlantis as a metaphor for the consequences of pride and an implacable foe of light entertainment. He described his perfect state in *The Republic*.

Plebian, pleb: Non-patrician Romans.

Plebiscite: A law which plebs could pass and apply to themselves but not to patricians.

Primogeniture: Inheritance by the first born only (unless a will makes different provision and often provided the first born is male).

Proportional Representation: Any one of several dozen suggestions of those who do badly under first past the post.

Proletarian: Rich through offspring (that is, the availability of children to sell into slavery). Very poor Roman citizens.

Quisling: A local puppet ruler for an invading power.

Realpolitik: A German compound word for the facile observation that politics is concerned with matters of pragmatic advantage, not abstract theories - no matter how noble.

Republic: From *res publica* or 'public affairs'. A state managed in the public interest by its governors, typically a hereditary élite.

Švejkite: From *The Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hašek, in which the hero leads his regiment's surrender to the enemy by following all his orders to the letter.

RELIGIONS

‘What in the name of Manod is that sound?’

‘...’

‘Hey, I said WHAT’S THAT NOISE?’

‘Sorry, hold on a second...’

‘Ear plugs - no wonder you did not hear me the first time.’

‘Well, you can hear the racket - five minutes working on this water recycler and I just couldn’t take it any more.’

‘So what’s the racket then?’

‘It’s the Aslan in 5A. A couple of the other passengers have already complained but apparently the captain says there’s nothing we can do.’

‘What? With that raucous noise? Surely if it’s disturbing the others the captain should have had the cat confined to the brig?!’

‘Religious tolerance statute 738, apparently - one of those new-fangled things the Emperor pushed through the senate some months back. That ‘noise’ is “religious chanting” according to the Aslan.’

‘But why does it sound like he’s gargling?’

‘He only chants while he’s in the shower. He takes one about three times a day.’

‘Sheesh!. That is one clean cat.’

‘Yes, but only because all his dirty fur has ended up in our recycling system. Look at this filter... yuck! Oh, please tell me this is not a furball?’

This section is intended to provide Traveller referees with a selection of interesting beliefs with which to flesh-out the worlds of the Imperium or your own custom star systems.

Religion begins as an attempt to explain the world and its phenomena; followed by the more general questions of life, the universe, and existence. Religions often evolve into philosophical schools which set down modes of conduct intended to lead the believer to a better existence. As they develop, religions may also become a means of entrenching cultural identity and stability and (sometimes regrettably)

for establishing or maintaining a power structure. Early religions may include ancestor worship, veneration of climatic processes, plant and animal species and even individual topographic features. A common key belief is in the existence of incorporeal entities (spirits), interacting with and influencing events in the physical world. Early religious rituals might have been used to bring success in hunting or good crops. Over the millennia merging of cultures may result in the integration of the associated belief systems. At the same time, breakaway extremist or purist groups often cause divergence.

RELIGION WITHIN THE IMPERIUM

The Imperium practices freedom of religious expression provided the activity of churches and sects does not threaten the peace and security of other member star systems. However, Travellers may discover that the religious practices and beliefs they encounter are more restrictive, repressive or more complex than they anticipate when they leave the security of the Imperial starport extralimity zone. It should be emphasised to Travellers that local religions are rarely something to be ignored - breaking a religious stricture may cause offence or bring swift retribution, perhaps even death!

FORMAT

This section is divided into sections according to the general religious classifications used by the Imperial Scout Corps. Each entry in a section has the following details; a description of the religion - its basic ideology and distinguishing features, a section for the referee containing additional details which might not at first be apparent to players, and one or more plots which you may wish to exploit, linked in some manner to the religion. You should feel free to adapt any or all of this information to suit your campaign background and/or personal preferences.

ANIMISM

Animism is the belief that all aspects of the natural landscape (rivers, mountains, etc.), the flora and fauna (plants, trees and creatures) are inhabited by spirits or gods. Similarly, all phenomena (storms, etc.) are caused by these spirits or by dedicated gods of the phenomena. The potential range of spirits or gods is thus quite huge and there is little or no regime to it.

1. ABLENKA

Found throughout human colonised space, Ablenkas have taken animism to new heights by treating not just natural objects as spirit-filled but all objects. Such objects are known as calipe. Six times a year, on specific days, each follower is expected to collect together one item from each of four different groups. Namely, an item from the natural world, one from their own personal world, one technological thing and an item of information. A like-minded believer must be found to discuss aspects of each of the items' divinity. Upon their death, each believer is buried with the chosen object (anything from a seed to a starship!) - a calipe - that they wish to become.

Referee

Ablenka developed over several millennia. If there was an original founder, the name has been lost over the ages. Players may mistake followers of this faith as slightly strange collectors.

Plots

1: The party are asked to transport an item which is then damaged or destroyed in transit. The owner is an Ablenka who claims damages far exceeding the item's intrinsic value as it was to be his/her calipe.

2: A player becomes friendly with an Ablenka and is asked to take part in the ritual discussion of six mundane objects and how they contribute to the spirituality of the cosmos. The Ablenka will then reveal that they are dying and request that, no matter what happens, the players ensure their desired calipe is buried with them.

2. HELIOGAIANISM

Heliogaianism originates from within the worlds of the Terran Confederation and comprises the twin beliefs that planetary biospheres are themselves living organisms and that, as stars have influence (via astrology), they too have personalities. The personality of stars is dependent

upon their perceived effect on an individual's star chart. The basis of a star's personality is derived from that of the astrological constellation in which it lies. Followers of this faith believe that stars and planets are receptive to human communication. There are many branches of Heliogaianism, among them.

Official: These believe that Terra is the only correct place for humanity. The more militant try to stop others leaving the homeworld by sabotaging their ships.

Orthodox: Neo-Luddites who give themselves the benefit of the doubt as far as space travel is concerned. Otherwise they will have nothing to do with high technology beyond wrecking any they come across.

Reformed: These believe humanity's destiny is to spread among the stars, and the stars themselves want humanity there. However it is only polite to perform appropriate ceremonies of thanks at the new location.

Referee

The astrological correspondence fell apart once faster-than-light travel became commonplace. Heliogaianism needed reforming in order to fit into humanity's expanded horizons. It did this by correlating the zodiacal effects of stars on Earth with estimates of those stars gravitic influence on the planet. The data was then extrapolated to visible stars of other settled systems.

Plots

1: Amongst the party's passengers is a radical reformed Heliogaianist who wishes to visit the local star more closely. An expert in computers, he hacks into the ship's astronav systems such that after take off it dives towards the sun. The players may panic but after one circuit of the star the ship will resume normal operation. They can try to circumvent his hacking in the meantime (as this detour will add several days to their time insystem!)

2: The party carry an Orthodox Luddite to a high tech, high population world. They are preparing to lift with new cargoes and passengers when the Port Authority's security detain them for shipping in a terrorist. Apparently, the Luddite has performed a major act of sabotage and had bought another ticket on the party's ship to get off planet. He has not been caught yet and may be heading for the players' ship...

3. NEO-PAGANISM

The followers of this faith believe that it is a resurrection of the traditional religions of Terra. In a similar manner to some other faiths, this organisation has come under investigation from the Ministry of Justice to establish if it is, in fact, another elaborate tax evasion vehicle. However, the outcome of the enquiries concluded that it was not a fraud - the state of the religion's assets and the members involved in running it were too shambolic to suggest tax evasion! Members of this faith tend to cluster around places with shops where they can buy candles, incense, oils and little bags of herbs. They gather whenever a moon is about to rise and scamper naked around a bonfire until they are exhausted, then settle down to a nocturnal beanfeast with mulled ale and sausages.

Referee

This faith is a pale recollection of what once was. Once the living sacrifices, the close connection with the land and flocks, the central importance of the local stream and the ever-present danger of raiders from the next valley are removed, there is not that much left of the traditional religion to resurrect. What remains is a vague impression of the mysteries of Eleusis, literary accounts of Bacchanalia, the mildly amusing phrase sky clad and a conviction that if they associate themselves with an ancient persecution - in this case that of witch-like people - you acquire spiritual depth. They insist on being taken seriously, but are often treated with smiles of mild indulgence.

Plots

1: The party has the misfortune to encounter a member of the faith at a festival just before the full moon. The member will focus their attentions on one of the characters who they feel would be ideal for bringing back the old ways. They will attempt to draw them off from the party to capture them for a sacrifice at the coming moon rise.

2: Members of this faith, while travelling between systems on the same ship as the players insist upon holding a celebration when the ship passes a moon in normal space. Unfortunately, as the ship is on approach to a gas giant for refuelling there are a large number of moons which will rise, and are being used for an excuse for inebriated revelry.

4. LET THE SUN SHINE

This faith is superficially similar to the beliefs of the Lords of Light but originated amongst starship crews during the longer journeys associated with early Solomani exploration vessels. Light worshippers are usually long-term space travellers who have seen much darkness in space and desire the presence of bright light to prevent anxiety or depression.

Often, they will sleep with the lights on for reassurance, and have a great belief in the healing quality of light.

Referee

Worshippers carry sources of light with them at all times and do not tolerate darkness very well. If they awoke to a darkened room they would panic (ingrained culturally now, but probably originating from a time when loss of light equated to a potentially fatal power plant failure). Worshippers are most often found on the enormous family-crewed bulk carriers that endlessly circulate through the core regions of the Imperium. The belief moves between ships and is slowly becoming a more formal affair with writings and a slowly developing philosophy.

Plot

1: A crew member from one of the bulk carriers has bought passage with the party's ship to catch up to another bulk carrier, where she is to marry. A light failure in her cabin incurs her wrath (born out of real fear) but she's finally pushed over the edge and panics when the pilot dims the lights prior to jump. She genuinely does not know about this custom and believes there is a power plant fault. In her terror, she will not be quietened until she has been provided with several alternative sources of light (torches, etc.).

5. CULT OF THE VOID

As the Solomani colonised the stars, Walter Beaumont (a physical chemist) started the Cult of the Void. He preached about the importance of the five elements to would-be travellers and colonists. The Cult initially did not have a strong following, but after the Long Night a resurgence began as more and more people turned from more secular beliefs.

Referee

A text written by Beaumont forms the core of the Cult's beliefs; the journey into a new life starts with a passage through the vast void which can take an unwary acolyte into the abyss. Once the rite of passage has been completed you will join other initiates on the new world. With an induction into the necessary elements for survival in your new home your new life will begin. To colonists, Earth and Water are essential to sustain life and they must be looked after and tended in order to feed both families and livestock. Fire is required to keep one warm and cook one's food, but a lack of vigilance can result in the destruction of all that one has striven for. One must be careful not to make the same mistakes as one's ancestors and take too much from the elements. Doing so may cause a new world to turn against one just as has happened in the past.

Without enough trees the Air will grow stale and will not be able to sustain life.

'We all have a responsibility to look after and respect each of the elements or ultimately we shall loose our children's future.'

Plot

1: Fanatics of the Cult who believe that the colonists have grown unworthy of his teachings have stolen the original book of Walter Beaumont. The party is hired to retrieve this valued religious artefact.

6. ANIMAL ANGEL ALLIANCE

This society offers to put one in touch with one's personal animal angel. Essentially, they believe that not only are there spirits in almost all creatures and objects, but that each person is attuned to a specific spirit. Willing recruits pay for a lengthy period of attunement, during which Alliance helpers try to determine the location of the associated spirits. This may include novel forms of divining, much touching of animals, rocks and the like and eventually each recruit is told the nature and location of their spirit. This may be a small stone in their immediate neighbourhood or a strange alien creature on a world many parsecs away. The follower is then supposed to obtain their allied spirit and keep it with them thereafter. Through communing with the spirit, the follower benefits from their advice (often through dreams).

Referee

This religion has been accused of being a money extraction operation; the attunement is often expensive. Then again, if the Alliance can identify a rock on another world, presumably they have to do quite a bit of research!

Plot

1: A sceptical player should be encouraged to try out the attunement, perhaps on the advice of someone who gives them some remarkably accurate 'dream advice'. They will be told they should seek out a weasel-like creature on a

specific cliff in a jungle on a neighbouring world. If the player goes through with this and pays their Cr. 5,000, they will eventually find something more like a fat rat awaiting them. This creature is actually mildly psionic and, having picked up the player's desire for friendship, will attach itself to them. Whether they grow to be a pest or a genuine aid in the future is up to the referee!

7. THE PRESERVERS

This organisation is claimed to date from pre-jump Earth. Alarmed at humanity's propensity to obliterate those features of the ecosystem which interfered with the pursuit of the profit, a conglomeration of entertainers raised funds to preserve areas of the biosphere sufficiently large to be self-sustaining. This philosophy has been continued into the Imperial era and some groups of Preservers have taken on a far more religious outlook, regarding the rape of a biosphere as being a direct assault on various deities. Preventing such rape, but whatever means necessary, has led some Preservers to become eco-terrorists. The majority, however, concentrate on consolidating purchased lands (on various worlds), planting between them, expanding animal friendly zoos and building up an exhaustive library of life forms in frozen DNA and actual embryos where possible.

Referee

Naturally, those who rape worlds for profit (from strip mining to deforestation) really dislike the Preservers. The latter can often have sufficient financial muscle to protect themselves and enforce their views.

Plots

1: The players are hired by a relatively small Preserver group as temporary rangers to guard the boundaries of their land against poachers.

2: The players are hired by a mining corporation to disrupt a land purchase registration about to be placed by local Preservers. Given a week's delay (such as by stealing the Preservers' paperwork) the miners will have time to put in their own claim.

POLYTHEISTIC ANIMISM

Polytheistic Animism is the belief that certain natural phenomena are associated with specific deities. There is commonly a defined hierarchy of these gods and/or goddesses. There may be a huge range of gods but, unlike strict animism, they operate within a defined regime.

1. SIATSDLER WORSHIPPERS

A dwindling group of Zhodani worship the Siatsdler (or 'Beings') who are personifications of the six Shidr (or 'seasons') of Zhdant. Ataniebl (or 'harvest') is supreme amongst them and Atshtiavl ('chill') is regarded as the least powerful. Complex inter-relations between these deities rule the lives of the Siatsdler who are usually very well acquainted with meteorological sciences. In Atrint ('spring'), a sacrifice of dried moss is burnt. Believers are convinced that the devastation of Zhdant that occurred during the final war of the Ancients is about to be repeated but that the combined power of the Beings will be sufficient to save all true believers.

Referee

One mark that identifies Worshippers amongst themselves is the way they tap the back of their hand to their cheek every hour as a mark of respect to Ataniebl. This faith developed in the pre-history of Zhdant, and lingers on. It is tolerated by the nobility and intendant classes as a harmless pastime (mainly) of the lower classes, and is gradually dying out, with less than a thousand practising worshippers believed to survive. Siatsdler is a form of polytheistic animism, in which the followers hope to be saved from the imminent 'final war'. There is a strict hierarchy within the faith which maintains control of documents believed to date back to the times of the Ancients. Although Siatsdler is dwindling, there are regular missions to try and save more of the Zhodani and others.

Plots

1: Fire suppression systems on the players' ship will be activated when a sacrificial ritual gets out of hand. The smell of moss will pervade the ship for some time to come but no real damage will be done. The Worshippers will be a little embarrassed but will not miss the opportunity to tell anyone who listens why they do what they do.

2: In the middle of trade negotiations a player's nervous habit (scratching the back of their hand on their chin) will be misinterpreted by a Siatsdler worshipper. The player will then be taken aside for a lengthy explanation of why the Worshipper is convinced that the final war disaster is nigh

and that the two of them should make plans to leave the area as soon as possible. Should the player play along with the Worshipper's conviction that he is another Worshipper, the players will get very advantageous trading deals.

2. STARFOLK

Starfolk believe that the stars are gods and they have a complex pantheon based loosely on stellar classification with 'O' Type stars the most venerated. All stars are thought to be children of the First One - the monobloc from which the universe formed. 'Starmen' are highly charismatic leaders who make stellar pronouncements each day to starfolk. These pronouncements are vague and flowery, but lapped up by followers who will become stars at death if they have attached themselves to a Starman and listened faithfully.

Referee

In the Third Imperium, Darrians are held in absolute abhorrence as god destroyers through the use of the Star Trigger. Occasionally, Starmen have preached that revenge should be taken against the Darrians. Followers number in the thousands, and may often be found travelling the starlanes to become closer to the stars.

Plots

1: The party provide transport to an enthusiastic group of starfolk under a very charismatic leader. If the party fail to prevent a hijacking attempt they will find the starfolk have placed the ship on a direct course into the nearest star to make them all gods.

2: The party are hired to investigate the collapse of a star to a white dwarf and find out why it took place. They not only have to deal with the emotional outfall of distraught starfolk, but a firm conviction that this was not stellar evolution at work but a deliberate act (probably by a Darrian!).

3. GAIANISM

The belief that each garden world is connected to the divine life giving force. This is based upon the Old Terran Gaia Principle, where all life is connected to each other on a world. Gaia is both the Earth Mother and the force of nature itself. This is similar to animism, but with a divine force/being controlling it all. Nature is to be respected, as all things are interconnected. The adherents believe in reincarnation, but what one does with one's current life does not determine the outcome of the future life. Gaia will ultimately decide where your life force is needed when one 'passes over'. Seasonal

festivals are observed, mostly a naturalistic ritual followed by a celebration. The organisation is loose with each local area having their own priest or priestess.

Referee

The religion is open to anyone who wishes to join, but they are not evangelical; they believe in each person's choice to participate. It may be found across the Third Imperium and Solomani Confederation, but it has more followers in the Solomani colonised regions.

Plot

1: The party are hired to find lanthanum deposits on a recently colonised world. There are rich deposits on a remote, heavily forested, part of the world. Many native animals make their homes here, as does a Gaianist settlement. The party must make arrangements with the Gaianists for the lanthanum extraction without disrupting the balance of nature of the forest. Failure to do so will initially result in the sabotage of the Players' efforts, and eventually lead to outright armed conflict. Unfortunately the caves in which the lanthanum is found are home to a native creature. Wanton killing of these beasts will guarantee the wrath of the Gaianists.

4. THE DUA ALMU

The Dua-Almu believe that the first human life on their world was the result of the sacred ice panda rubbing against standing stones set in the ice. This slight warming of the stones, along with the panda's breath, resulted in the first ten humans - the Dua-Noc - who are venerated and whose tombs are by the sacred standing stones. Followers eat no hot food, and pray at random times throughout the day, stopping suddenly (whatever they were doing) to stand absolutely still (wherever they may be). They then spend several minutes singing quietly before resuming their previous activity.

Referee

The followers are reluctant to leave their native planet and if they do they are very nervous travellers. The faith is found on a low tech planet on the Imperial fringes.

Plot

1: One of the Dua-Almu takes passage on the same ship as the party, and becomes increasingly nervous as the journey continues. This will eventually result in a panic attack at an inopportune moment. This attack is unlikely to be violent, but may require the characters to coax the Dua-Almu out of an inaccessible space (for example the drive or avionics access ways).

5. VULCANISM

A city-based religion where most of the inhabitants are adherents and worship the local volcano which brings fertility to the land and judgement on wrong-doers. Priests

claim that they are accurately able to predict eruptions and warn the faithful to evacuate their homes, thus non-believers and wrong-doers are left to face the wrath of the volcano.

Referee

In actuality it is the old, the infirm and the very young (who are not fast enough to escape) who tend to die. The predictions of the priests are accurate, thanks to the purchase of some high technology seismic analysis equipment with an orbital observation satellite many years before. This faith is found in a small area of a low technology, medium population world, whose cities cluster around the world's lakes in fertile areas at the base of the volcanoes. Outside these areas the ground is generally not viable for agriculture.

Plots

1: The party are arranging a trade deal on this planet, when the merchant hears a bell, and makes some excuse of needing a few minutes to make a religious observance. They disappear into the back of the shop... After a few minutes the characters may notice that it has gone quiet. Outside, the priests have evacuated the city and only unbelievers are left. The rubble and tremors associated with an eruption are then heard and the players will have to get back to their ship as soon as possible as the starport is on the local flat rock structure, part of the lava plain.

2: The party are approached clandestinely by one of the priests to supply a replacement seismic warning system as the old one is wearing out. Once supplied, the priests may not want the characters to escape knowing that their predictions are more technological than their people realise.

6. THE FLOOD-MAKER

This Aslan sect believes the flood-maker brings fertility to their homeworld and cleanliness to their fur. They believe that floods wash away unclean aspects of all worlds and provide a fresh start for the survivors and the land. The waters coat the land with a deep silt, out of which life springs.

Referee

Members of this faith show the behaviour patterns typical to Aslan - honour, pride and a sense of rightness. There tend to be more female members of this religion, and generally they tend to extend their philosophies to cover most disasters. As a result, they are unbearably cheerful in the face of disaster, looking for the good which they believe will come from any such time of trial.

Plot

1: The party find themselves on a long duration journey where their transport has a closed environment with an Aslan who is a follower of the flood-maker. The players may be irritated when the water recycling system bungs up with fur

(the Aslan insists on regular baths or showers during which they sing an ear-splitting song loudly and continuously). The Aslan will be belligerent if prevented from practising their faith but then hopelessly optimistic if anything goes wrong during the journey!

7. THE SUPERSEDING SAPPHIC SISTERHOOD

The SSS is a conglomeration (over many centuries) of several religions each based on predominantly female deity hierarchies, preaching that bringing forth new life into the world is the key aspect of godhood. As technology became available for artificial fertilisation, gene splicing, in-vitro ova merging, cloning, etc. the SSS decided that males were redundant. They run a selection of business enterprises, operated exclusively by females with males used only for the most subordinate roles.

Referee

The SSS have an extremist arm. They might have simply set out to massacre males but instead have created a virus which substitutes x for y chromosomes when a cell reproduces. It generally takes seven years to complete this process for a grown male subject and produces a hulking, big footed ugly woman, which most of the SSS think of as puckish justice. Women can be carriers of the virus, which has a body fluid vector and also edits the DNA to prevent the emergence of males from any future union. There is currently no cure. Thankfully perhaps, the virus only works on humans.

Plot

1: A local SSS group has been spreading the trial virus near to a military base and, through close association with the male soldiers, has been monitoring the results. The Players may encounter this when operating as mercenaries or be asked to investigate peculiar changes some wives have noticed of their military husbands.



POLYTHEISM

Polytheism is a system where multiple gods, all of roughly the same importance and power, co-exist, generally within one or more god-specific habitats. A given deity does not tend to have a link to a specific natural phenomena (as per animism) although they may be associated with specific powers (love, war, etc.). Where a polytheistic religion has its origin in animism, some deities may retain animistic-related names or associations.

1. CHURCH OF THE STELLAR DIVINITY

One of the most popular churches in the Imperium, the Church of Stellar Divinity teaches that the stars themselves are gods, and when a believer dies, their soul goes to join with the Gods. The religion is fairly easy to belong to, asking little more than adherence to the Golden Rule, and attendance at the weekly services. There are numerous minor variants to the strict church doctrine, but most of these are tolerated as the will of that God.

Referee

The Golden Rule is never disclosed to non-believers, but is an open secret due to the widespread nature of this church. However, discussion of the Rule in front of a church member by a non-believer will often cause offence.

Plots

1: The party are hired to transport a fairly highranking church member to another system. In jump, she dies of a stroke. At the destination, the party are accused of dooming the leader by allowing her to die cut off from the Gods.

2: Two non-player characters in close proximity to the players (on the same ship or involved in the same adventure) find they are from different branches of the church. Their theological differences swell until their arguments threaten the players' mission.

2. THE TEMPLE OF THE STELLAR DIVINITY

The Temple of the Stellar Divinity believes that all races are derived from star gods, and that the stars will ultimately destroy all life and create it anew. Believers are convinced of every sophont's ability to become a star if they can be born-again at a high enough spiritual level. One way to achieve this spirituality is through chanting and the quest for an ever more perfect form of words and music. The church is well

known for the beautiful and often very popular chants used in their long services.

Referee

Found throughout the Imperium with a small membership, this faith is another which appears to have derived from humanity's obsession with the stars. Some of its more extreme followers believe that early destruction by sun-like effects (such as standing next to a nuclear device when it goes off) will bring them nearer to divinity.

Plots

1: The players are engaged to hunt down a team of linguists who are prepared to translate some of the chants into Hiver. The only experts they will be able to find will be a disparate group of people whom it will be hard to even get to travel together to the temple, never mind work together.

2: A fellow traveller turns out to be a disciple and reveals (in great secrecy) to a player the fact that he has a special relic of his church - a star map that purports to mark the sites of temples many, many millennia previously. The disciple wants to visit these sites if they still exist and an observant player will notice that some of the sites correspond to known Ancient sites.

3. THE CULT OF THE DEEP ONES

The Addaxur, a carnivorous reptilian minor non-human race of the Zhodani Consulate, exhibit a semi-religious belief system based on characteristics of their homeworld and their unique sensory abilities. Their primary senses are smell and sophisticated underwater sonar. The planet Addaxur (A A8A876-D) is a water world, with a high proportion of heavy minerals making the planet's surface gravity in excess of two standard gravities. The heavy minerals include radioactives, which heat up the interior of the planet and make the ocean floors geologically active. The reptilian Addaxur live in the ocean surrounding the planet's many volcanic islands, but venture ashore to feed and reproduce where they are safe from large aquatic predators. The Addaxur's sonar sense detects tectonic disturbances beneath the ocean floor, which in pre-history were explained as voices of the Deep Ones - a race of giants living at the bottom of the planet's 20 kilometre-deep oceans. Many Addaxur have maintained this belief to the present day.

Referee

There are followers among the Zhodani proles (non-psionic lower classes) in the sectors surrounding Addaxur.

Plot

1: A wealthy Zhodani merchant (a prole) approaches the party to crew a submarine which will bring back proof of the existence of the Deep Ones. The party will be able to clinch a spectacular trade deal if they are able to demonstrate the existence of Deep Ones on the planet. Any giant, deep-ocean creature will be sufficient, but live capture is essential. The repercussions of obtaining such proof may be dangerous!

4. THE CHURCH OF ALL FAITHS

The Church of all Faiths was founded by a history student who decided that every religion was correct. The only way to ensure salvation was to worship in every way known, changing every day. The Church is small, and currently found only on Sylea. They follow a 2962 day year, to allow for each of the religions they have identified to be properly observed.

Referee

The Church compound resembles a movie set due to the huge number of costumes, props and artifacts required for the rapid conversions. Some libertines keep track of the Church's calendar, and conver' for the more hedonistic faiths... The faith was founded in -13 on Sylea by Philip Godet and has around a 100,000 members across the Imperium.

Plots

1: The Church hires the players' ship to investigate the religions of a recently re-contacted world. The trip takes five weeks. That is 35 different religions to deal with. Be creative!

2: A player happens to be the very image of a religion's major force of evil. For one Sylean day, the character will be pursued by fanatic Church members determined to slay him.

5. MOTHER WORSHIP

Followers of this religion worship their individual mothers as goddesses who bring life to all. They carry holovids of their mother with them always and visit their mothers once every three to four weeks (at least).

Referee

The mothers themselves are sometimes believers, but some are not, so this worship can cause some friction between mother and children.

Plot

1: One of the characters is approached by a serving Imperial Marine who asks them to deliver a message and small gift to his mother, a few jumps away. He explains he has not been able to contact her as his unit was moved out unexpectedly. He gives them the gift, message and delivery details. Soon after, the party are intercepted by the Marine's colleagues who wish to retrieve the message so they can use it to tease the marine. The players must decide how they wish to respond.

6. THE REPENTERS

This cult flourishes in the richer backwaters of Imperial society, where people often spare a few credits for the poor and needy, but rarely have any genuine care for such people. Fortunately for them, the Repenters do care. Irritatingly, the Repenters care totally and care all the time. They will not stop caring and sharing until the whole Empire cares too.

Referee

The Repenters is a coalescence of campaign groups from a range of religious groups. Their church has settled down into a diocesan syncretist institution with a recognised hierarchy on each world. It is partly a well-informed and sage research establishment, specialising in social justice, partly an aggressive street level proselytising and fund-raising movement and partly a way for the over-privileged to assuage their guilt at not being born a peasant. Promotion within the hierarchy is by good works and visible simplicity of living.

Plot

1: The players are hired by a businessman whose shady mercantile dealings have brought him the unwanted attentions of the local Repenters who now hound him everywhere, pointing out the error of his ways. The police are not interested in helping him, so he wishes the players to deter the Repenters (permanently if possible).

RATIONAL POLYTHEISM

Rational Polytheism is the belief in a small number of deities who manifest themselves in numerous different ways, each perhaps having a different name, association and method of worship. At first site such a religion may appear to outsiders as plain polytheism.

1. THE AURUM ASTRUM

Numerous branches of this faith exist, some on good terms with one another, others feuding bitterly. Each has its own distinct variation on the beliefs with a constant core; the belief that magic works. Adherents pursue spiritual progress via esoteric mysticism, based on a grab-bag of techniques from a variety of cultures - mostly resembling those of ancient Terran Europe and the (Terran) Middle East, but from numerous other sources as well. Prominent activities include arcane rituals filled with chanting in dead languages, meditation on sacred geometric patterns, and obsessive pursuit of any rare or unusual books, artworks, or similar items which might aid in the path. God-images used metaphorically in the faith's teachings and ritual are (mostly) Egyptian or Greek, but again wider borrowings are common, and all are (usually) held to be aspects of a single divine presence in the universe. In the Imperial era, many adherents of the Aurum Astrum assert that what others describe as psionics is in fact a discipline known to their high initiates since ancient times, and that this discipline can be taught to anyone who accepts the faith. Furthermore, they also claim that their system teaches powers far beyond the known capabilities of traditionally-trained psions.

Referee

The PsionicSuppressions (ca. 850), led to a deep paranoia in many Aurum Astrum groups, as they were forced underground to protect their persecuted psionic skills. Whether the Aurum Astrum can in fact train its adherents in psionics is an open question, as is the existence and nature of the super psionic powers attributed to the group's elite inner circle.

Plots

1: The players are contracted to transport a sealed shipment of rare books and objects between Aurum Astrum communities in adjoining star systems, with a representative travelling with the shipment. On arrival, both the intended recipients and a rival faction try to claim the shipment, the latter claiming it was stolen from them. Whichever group the party decide against will seek revenge, ranging from leaving disturbing ritual objects in the players' quarters to sabotaging their ship.

2: A female noble hires the characters to provide security against unnamed potential attackers. Gradually, it becomes clear that the noble is an ex-Aurum Astrum member who has published some of their secrets, and fears reprisals. Whether she is paranoid or prudent remains to be determined.

2. SUBJECTS OF THE CELESTIAL COURT

The Subjects of the Celestial Court believe that three deities control all aspects of the universe. These deities appear in many different forms depending on the circumstances. Doctrine stresses obedience to authority, and adherence to tradition; through such behaviour the believer will enter the next life with appropriate rewards. Outsiders are rarely welcomed into the faith, most members were born into the church. The Subjects have been undergoing a decline since joining the Third Imperium, as many younger members reject the rigid social code imposed by the faith.

Referee

This faith developed on Vland (the Vilani homeworld); it is unknown if it actually predates the Ziru Sirka. During the Rebellion period (post 1116 Imperial), there is a sudden resurgence in the popularity of this religion. Most encounters with worshippers will occur within the Vilani Sphere - only in the Ziru Sirka was this faith found beyond this region.

Plot

1: A teenage Subject child runs away and hides on the players' vehicle or ship trying to escape off-world. Although capable of expressing their objections rationally, the child is still legally a minor, and the players may face charges of kidnapping if the situation is not handled carefully.

3. THE SERVANTS OF DERUPO

Derupo, (the Greatest God), has multiple Attributes; Lyando, the Goddess of the Harvest; Nes, the God of War; Ryalas, the God of Makings; Yal, the God of the Stars; Kamba, Goddess of the Seas; Saleno, Goddess of the Hunt; Dombor, God of Peace; Lapesir, God of Health; and Ryner, God of Weather. The high priests of the various attributes meet 'in Clave' to make and implement government decisions. All instances of an activity consecrated to an Attribute, or requesting assistance of an Attribute, must be preceded by a propitiatory offering to the governing Attribute. Depending on the activity/request, this may be anything from praying or genuflecting to an idol or altar to a ritual bloodletting or sacrifice. The high priests define (under the rubric of

the Word of the God) procedures that are pleasing to the Attribute; special dispensations must be requested for consecrating non-standard procedures. Training is by rote, but exploration is not discouraged; the High Priest of an Attribute may allow new procedures or discoveries to be consecrated to the Attribute, or to Derupo's Self, and thus approve it for routine use.

Referee

The Servants of Derupo are found on just one world, a theocracy where other beliefs are seldom tolerated. Those offending or preaching another faith may find themselves on the receiving end of an experimental ritual.

Plot

1: A player needs medical attention while on-planet. During the course of the treatment (obsolete, but still effective for the player's ailment or injury) one of the players is bound to enquire why a more modern, more effective treatment is not being used. They are rapidly convicted of blasphemy, and sentenced to death. Their friends can apply to the ecclesiastical court for a stay (which will be granted) in an attempt to get the conviction overturned, due to the offending character being an off-worlder unfamiliar with local religion. Once the stay is granted, they will have three weeks to either convince the trial court to reconvene and overturn the sentence, or to convince the high priest of Lapesir to consecrate the procedure suggested by the arrested character. The latter will require the priest be taught the procedure, shown why it is better than the consecrated procedure, provided with any tools, implements, drugs, etc., not locally available, and shown how those tools, etc., may be made or procured locally (giving profit-minded characters a route for opening up regular trade). Of course, the players will have to be careful to avoid the same fate as their colleague. Success will lead to the death sentence being commuted to ten years hard labour. The high priest themselves must then pardon the convicted player to have them released. A jailbreak is always an option but will result in a death sentence for all involved.

4. TELOR

Followers of Telor, the primary faith of the Darmine minor human race, believe that there are fundamental numerological patterns underlying all things. The prophet Telor was educated in the traditional Vilani manner by an assimilationist upper class clan but went on to reject Vilani cultural norms in favour of a codified form of the loose polytheism that governed Ishag prior to its conquest by the Vilani. Telorists believe that it is almost certain that anything that happens in fours (or multiples or fractions of

4) has an inner meaning that should be thought about. To many believers the Telor faith is the single most important factor in their lives. It has served as the primary means of preserving the traditional Darmine culture. The Telor faith is a polytheistic one with the sun, the moons, the land, and the water being seen as the primary deities. Traditionally Telor requires private devotion every 4 days, or one quarter of a month, and public ceremonies of devotion every 64 days, or one fourth of Ishag's year. Telor taught that the body was the seat of the soul and that therefore hedonistic promiscuous indulgence of the body would show reverence toward the soul.

Referee

Toleration of Telor can be very trying for a non-believer as its numerological obsession is unnerving. Some non-Darmine critics of the religion have suggested that the rigidity of its numerological basis may lie in a fundamental tendency towards obsessive compulsive behaviour which is purportedly endemic to the Darmine race, possibly due to Ancient genetic engineering. Telor wrote that the fourfold way was only for humans and thus believers have been brought up to distrust aliens. They do not believe that aliens are inferior but rather that aliens cannot fully understand and must therefore be dealt with with caution. This faith developed on Ishag/Zarushagar around -3520 Imperial, and there are in excess of 5 billion worshippers within ten parsecs of Ishag.

Plots

1: The players, whose ship is berthed at the local starport, are approached by a married group of four Darmine who wish to acquire High Passage on their ship for its next four jumps. It seems their ship is on docking pad four (this will work even better if the ship is Jump-4, displaces 400 tons, has a crew of four, and so on). All is as it seems but the passengers will prove very annoying. They will constantly be asking questions like 'What was the weight to four significant figures of the box this meal came out of?' 'How do you spell your full name? I need to check its significance.' 'How many standard minutes did it take to build this ship?' 'We need to use the ship's lounge for our revel.' (which turns out to be a fertility ritual).

2: The (preferably four) players, who are unfamiliar with Telor, are hired by a Telorist patron as her bodyguard. She is a merchant who is negotiating a deal with some fellow Telorists and she anticipates trouble. The negotiations go badly and subsequently someone will try to assassinate the patron. However, the assassin will work in a predictable manner – such as. firing four bullets at four o'clock on the fourth day after the meeting.

5. CHURCH OF SECULAR SAINTS AND MARTYRS

The followers of this Church venerate those people of such perfect charity, humanity and exceptional public relations that they are forever associated in the public mind with the best of good works. These saints, alive or dead, are beyond criticism, and their lives are held out as examples of the capabilities of the (originally) human spirit.

Referee

Although the church has a spiritual arm, dictated to self-improvement and teaches a slanted version of history, the main purpose of the church is to make money. This money originally went to the causes which the Saints and Martyrs were associated with: poverty relief, arms control, hospices and animal friendly research: but a high proportion of it now goes to keeping the church elders in luxury and to erecting huge buildings for the faithful to pray in.

Plots

1: The Church announces a new saint who is still living. The recipient is embarrassed by this accolade and, through a friend, contacts the players to get the saint off-world and away from unwanted attention.

2: As per the preceding plot but the players are approached by a megacorporation to try and get the saint to endorse a product. The saint refuses to talk to them, but soon after the church approaches the players to discuss terms under which such endorsement could take place.

3: One of the more spiritual members of the church accidentally accesses the wrong archive and discovers the true uses that the church is putting its funds to. They approach one of the players (who they know from past service) to ask them to help expose the truth and right wrongs.

6. THE FOLLOWERS OF MANY

The Followers of Many believe that there are just three deities - star god Aso, world god Boso, and Cho, god of the emptiness (i.e. everything other than stars and planets). Just as stars can have many appearances and planets likewise, so Aso and Boso are many-faced deities (of undetermined sex). The Followers live their entire lives behind masks, using different masks to represent their status and role. With modern technology, ancient metal masks have been replaced by composite plastics which can change shape, colour and feel to reflect every aspect of the user - from how healthy they are feeling to their emotional state. However, masks are generally left fairly blank - the Followers abhor the uncontrolled manner in which outsiders' faces reflect their inner soul. A mask may only be removed when alone or with one of one's promised life-partners.

Referee

Dealing with Followers is difficult - human communication relies heavily upon facial expressions. Although unmasked visitors may be tolerated in public areas of a Follower town, close liaison (trade, dealing with senior officials, etc.) requires even outsiders to wear masks (usually marked in garish orange to show them as unbelievers). Some Follower groups wear masks less often, preferring to make themselves up instead. A few individuals are reputed to be used by the intelligence agencies as experts in disguise and facial surgery.

Plot

1: The players observe a murder committed by a masked person. They fail to catch the perpetrator but do find a mask. The police take on the case but the players are then recruited by Followers who wish the players to prove their belief that someone was masquerading as one of their number.

DUALISM

Dualism is the belief that there are only two deities or deific principles, representing two opposing viewpoints (such as good versus evil), thus leading to continuous antagonism between them. Their belligerence is reflected in opposing forces of nature (such as water versus fire or light versus darkness). Believers often spend a great deal of their time discussing these opposing morals/ethics of the two deities.

1. HI'ALYA

This faith is one of the more closely studied among Imperial sociologists. It arose during the Long Night, on a relatively isolated world with both a native sophont species (plains-dwelling centauroids) and an immigrant human population of mixed Solomani and Vilani descent. Occasional traders visiting the world would report that a religious movement of epic proportions was sweeping the human population, leading to a renaissance in art, letters, and government. These visitors described in glowing terms the peaceful, friendly, welcoming society whose hospitality they had received. Other traders disappeared entirely after having stated their intention to pay this world a visit. It was soon discovered that the new religion – Hi'alya, or Glory of God in the local language – had taken a dark turn. The native sophont species had been annihilated, as had a sizable fraction of the human population. The world has been under interdiction by the Imperium since the latter's border reached it, with subtle interventions from time to time to prevent them from reacquiring space-travel technology while the Imperium decides how to handle the potentially large problem of integrating this world into interstellar society. Hi'alya teaches that two deities, of good and evil, are battling for control of the cosmos. It further teaches that those controlled by the evil god will always betray themselves by certain quirks in appearance, behaviour, or speech, collectively known as the Signs of Evil. However, the list of potential signs is so long, complex, and subjective that avoiding them all is very difficult for an off-worlder.

Referee

The Guardian of the Faith (the autocratic leader of the religion, and de facto ruler of the planet) is seen as a living aspect of the good deity, and thus is free to change the list of Signs at will, usually triggering spasms of planet-wide death and destruction as newly evil people and items are eliminated. The locals are aware of the Imperial interdiction, and will greet any visitors with great enthusiasm – until they betray one of the Signs of Evil, at which point the offender

will be immediately, publicly, and painfully killed. Any companions will not be suspect, however, unless they too display a Sign of Evil.

Plots

1: The party are Imperial operatives, sent to this world on a covert mission to disrupt a research facility which is close to perfecting space-travel technology. They must derail and discredit the research without betraying themselves as Imperial agents. One risky but attractive strategy would be to arrange for a key researcher or the research itself to display a Sign of Evil, triggering destruction of the researcher, the facility and the disbanding of the project.

2: The party is refuelling at the system's gas giant when they detect a distress signal from the (interdicted) planet's surface. Apparently a noble's yacht has crashed in a rural area. The noble offers a huge reward for rescuing him and his crew – a dozen people in all. The players will have to avoid Imperial entanglements, and the natives. If successfully rescued, the noble will claim to be a great adventurer who was trying to return a religious relic to the locals. He will bluff his way through detailed questions although his crew will seem less certain of the story. If the players try to blackmail him with threats of reporting his actions to the authorities, he and his crew will turn nasty: they are actually a covert Imperial scout team, intended to undermine the current autocracy.

2. THE CHOSEN

Farmer Irzu Arnashi discovered a cache of relic technology and decided to use it to help her people. She saw the find as a gift of Imuripipar, the noble aspect of their deity - the fact that many of the devices were corroded and useless was obviously the work of the destructive Lagashag. She wanted to reform her church, but did not anticipate how the people's beliefs would be restructured around her and her find - she has become the arbiter of all disputes, and is expected to look after everyone's welfare.

Referee

Arnashi has been trapped by her situation for the past thirty years, and despairs over ever escaping it. She is concerned that anything that she says may be taken out of context, and the meaning twisted. She feels a heavy sense of responsibility, and misses the past when she was a humble farmer. The world will be TL3 or less, with a small or medium size population.

Plots

1: Arnashi falls ill shortly after the party arrive - they are accused of being agents of Lagashag by a population intent on their destruction. If they get to see Arnashi it will be plain that she is suffering from radiation sickness caused by one of the recently renovated relics.

2: A group seeks sanctuary on the players' ship, claiming to be part of a persecuted minority. Only later will it become clear that they are followers of Lagashag, out to 'correct the balance' by performing random acts of violence against people and property.

3. PHILOSOPHIES OF MERLNA

Followers of the Philosophies believe that the Universe is permeated by forces of darkness and light and those who learn to recognise the differences between these two forces will eventually achieve Divine Enlightenment. A religious leader, the Holy Philosopher, issues guidance to worshippers regarding their daily meditation. These proclamations are discussed amongst communities of worshippers who contemplate their meaning.

Referee

Throughout the Third Imperium, the Holy Philosopher resides on Dral (0728 Core Sector). According to legend, Merlna Agmurgushi, a half-Solomani, half-Vilani religious figure during the Rule of Man (Second Imperium) founded the faith. The precise date is unknown, lost during the Long Night. Followers are found through the Imperium.

Plots

1: The time has come to select a new Holy Philosopher and the players are hired to escort one of the prospective candidates (chosen for their knowledge of Merlna's writings) to Dral for the official selection ceremony.

2: One of the players (or a non-player character) is a member of the faith, and is troubled by a recent event in their personal life. The rest of the party accompanies the player to Dral to seek guidance from the Holy Philosopher.

4. HARMONIANISM

There exist two opposing forces, constantly in conflict with each other, at every level of existence (the universe, nature and every individual). This faith's goal is to acknowledge the existence of these forces and balance them within and without. Achieving harmony in one's life pushes one's soul closer to paradise. Followers believe in reincarnation; each life is but a lesson to be learned on the path to achieving harmony. When all the lessons have been learned, one's soul is truly in harmony with the universe, a perfect balance of the two fundamental forces. That soul is then admitted to paradise. Harmonians have a central priesthood which holds the sacred texts of harmony. Only the priests have gained enough harmony within their souls to understand

the texts and interpret them to the masses. Harmonians usually live together in small communities and can be found throughout charted space.

Referee

As a result of their beliefs, followers of this faith may be found acting on the side of what may traditionally be considered evil, as this will support the achievement of a balance. This religion may be found throughout the Imperium, with tens of millions of followers; the followers can be quite enthusiastic about their views, looking to recruit members of humanity. Other sophonts such as the Aslan, K'Kree and Vargr are looked upon unfavourably, as their nature is described as inherently unbalanced by the sacred texts.

Plot

1: A Harmonian priest hires the party to recover some of the sacred texts of harmony recently stolen from their vaults. The group will have to search the community, interacting with Harmonian culture to find the culprit. Eventually it will be discovered that it was a student of the priesthood who stole the texts. Knowing the priests would never allow him to view them, he stole them to try and read them for himself. He is now keen to reveal to fellow students that, in fact, anyone can understand the texts. The priests will argue that this is a very superficial understanding but it might be more convenient for them if the student were struck down for his theft...

5. LORDS OF LIGHT

The followers of the Lords of Light believe that light is the good of existence, and that darkness is where evil hides. Believers refuse to sleep in darkened rooms, and will never voluntarily enter a dark area. The truly strong believers think those who live around dim stars are consorting with evil. Worshippers avoid dark clothing, and make pains to keep everything brightly lit. Services are held in open, airy churches, preferably with numerous skylights, every few weeks. The incidence of services increases in the darker seasons of the year on systems with noticeable seasonable variations as the followers pray for their safe passage back to the light. The faith's churches are some of the most beautiful in known space.

Referee

Followers of this faith tend to be found near clusters of new, brightly burning stars. The fear of darkness has lead many researchers to believe that the religion must have started out in a binary or trinary system where true darkness is never found. Persistent rumours remain of a sect which is a mirror image of this religion.

Plots

1: When the characters attempt to deliver cargo to a Lord of Light area, the presence of dark clothing or a dark vehicle causes a very poor reaction by the locals. When they further

discover that the cargo is painted/coloured black and not white as they'd ordered, a quick response will be needed to avoid a sticky situation.

2: The party comes across a good bargain for solar panels. If they try and sell them in the Lords of Light area there will be a very bad reaction because in addition to being dark, the solar panels are believed to steal the light of the stars.

6. THE RESTORED CANON CHURCH OF SYLEA (RCCS)

Claiming the authority of a longrunning Terran religion, the RCCS has become one of the most widespread religions of the Third Imperium and Known Space. Holding to a strict good versus evil philosophy, the RCCS is very conservative; services are held in an ancient Terran language, and Church doctrine seems quite restrictive on a wide range of subjects, from marriage to salvation, having changed little since the foundation of the RCCS in -535 by Bishop (later Pope) Michael Enshuggrim. The RCCS admits alien races on a case by case basis; very few races have applied. Authority is vested in the Pope, who also carries the position of Baron. Day to day authority lies mostly with the Archbishops who oversee the Church on Imperial worlds.

Referee

The RCCS often faces charges of being an unfeeling machine, due to its restrictive, conservative doctrine. However, it also supports and performs a great deal of charity and disaster relief work. There has been occasional friction with the Imperial Authorities, with the usual argument being that the RCCS should keep from interfering with politics. The RCCS will happily accept members and sends out missions to recruit unbelievers.

Plots

1: The party is hired to escort a Bishop to his new diocese on a world just recently admitted to the Imperium. The Bishop is beginning to have real doubts about some aspect of his belief and will engage anyone nearby in angst-ridden debate about the nature of truth and so on. Any out of the ordinary event may push him into demanding the party return him to his world of origin.

2: The characters obtain information on early church history that could be very damaging. Part of a computer file they buy in a cheap lot of Library Data tapes contains a text that a knowledgeable scholar will confirm to be a non-canonical

text that paints a very poor picture of some noted early church fathers and contains passages flatly contradicting an already controversial precept of canon.

7. THAMMERITES

Thammerites believe in Bartha rightness and Null-Bartha wrongness. Disciples strive towards rightness as revealed in 120 sacred texts - some ancient, some more recent. Rightness might include fundamental physical laws of the universe, moral issues, or quite arbitrary and minor stipulations given in the texts. By striving towards Bartha, followers avoid an eternity within the chaos of Null-Bartha (and whether they spend eternity with Bartha depends on how right they've been in their lives. With little in the way of an organised hierarchy, Thammerites meet every 50 days to discuss one of the 120 texts which they all have read in the previous 50 days. Those considered most right lead the discussions but any can contribute. Thammerites may be found throughout the Imperium.

Referee

The definition of right and wrong for this religion comes from the close, subjective, readings of the sacred texts - the interpretation of which may be swayed by a suitably charismatic person.

Plots

1: The party's ship is considered right on a world where the Thammerites have considerable power or influence. Crowds will gather as close to the ship as the starport allows and will hinder cargo handling and other port operations. The Port Authority will claim to be neutral but will delay the ship for 1D days on some pretext so that more people can see the ship. Meanwhile the players will find themselves receiving the close attentions of excited Thammerites, which may cause discomfort. Careful exploitation of the situation may result in the party gaining better prices, and their port fees may be waived if the right believers are approached.

2: A situation the reverse of that above. Agitated and distraught crowds gather, this time chanting ominously 'Null-Bartha, Null-Bartha'. Again, the Port Authority will claim to be neutral but will eventually ask the party to leave immediately - before they can complete any cargo transactions. They will be allowed to refuel (and may even do so at no cost if they embarrass the port officials enough over their treatment or threaten to bring the situation to the attention of the Imperial Ministry of Justice).



8. PRINSLOO

Prinsloo is a syncretistic religion which is a mixture of Vilani and Terran faiths. The founder, the Most Revered One Eneri Sullivan, was a former NCO in the Planetary Army. Prinsloo teaches that earlier faiths had an element of truth in them but that the whole truth was never revealed anywhere until

the divine spirit of the galaxy itself appeared to Sullivan and told him to reveal the truth. Sullivan is a very charismatic man whose almost hypnotically compelling voice has convinced tens of thousands to join his faith. Prinslooians can be easily recognised by their asymmetrical Vilani style robes of indigo-died Terran cotton. They can be seen in public places throughout the world. They will typically go up to anyone they see and, with a face glazed over with religious joy, say 'Hello, would you like to hear about the one true way to achieve all?'

Referee

Followers of Prinsloo give all their worldly goods to the faith. They work sixty hours a week and pray and proselytise thirty hours a week. Every aspect of their lives is controlled by Sullivan who lives a decadent lifestyle supported by his cultists. Sullivan founded the cult 25 years ago on a high population world. It is estimated that there may be 50,000 followers, most of whom remain on the homeworld.

Plots

1: A member of the ship's crew does not report back to the ship. This can be a non-player character or, if they are up to playing it, a player. They do not respond to communicator signals. When the party homes in on the communicator signal they find it in a local pawn shop. The faithful player brought all his remaining worldly goods here to sell. When the party goes to the main temple they are not allowed in. By shadowing the temple they can find their friend and shipmate. When they do he is very eager to tell them about the faith. Under the laws of this planet the characters cannot do anything about his decision. Do they leave their friend or kidnap and deprogram him?

2: A local man comes to the players for help after his wife joined the cult, abandoning him and their young children. He offers them his life savings (a modest sum) if they can recover his wife. He claims that Sullivan is a powerful psionicist who is using his powers to coerce his followers.

INTERACTIVE MONOTHEISM

Interactive Monotheism is the belief in the existence of a single deity, who takes an active interest in the daily actions of followers. The deity may be omnipresent, omniscient or use lesser agents to watch its followers and influence their lives.

1. ANG'RROK

Ang'rrok is the shaman of a primitive tribe on this world, about whom many claims are made. Most relate the tale of his many uses of supernatural powers to protect his people. Of course, no rational citizen of the Imperium still believes in magic. He preaches against the injustice of Imperial Occupation.

Referee

This religion may be found on any TL0-1 world, and will have been founded in the last 30 years. Ang'rrok is a powerful psionic, and has used his abilities to become a living god to his followers. He is gathering followers, and has sworn to drive the Imperials off his people's land. How Ang'rrok's latent abilities became so powerful are a mystery, but he has spoken of the cave of mad dreams and the One who waits.

Plots

1: Ang'rrok leads his followers against the small Imperial settlement on-world. The players are caught in the horde's attack.

2: The players are hired to investigate the existence of the cave of mad dreams. They discover that there is such a cave and it houses an Ancients computer site; the site is not happy to be disturbed.

2. GABREELISM

Gabreelism has as its basis the beliefs of the Searchers for the One Faith - its holiest writings were written by two such Searchers - and incorporates its mission as part of its structure. While it tends to be inclusive (and as a result met much resistance from the remnants of the Solomani Occupation Government after the Collapse) its adherents hold very strong beliefs regarding the use of automation, particularly artificial intelligence systems and robotics. Virus to a Gabreelist is an evil, soul-less abomination that must be destroyed regardless of whatever intentions are professed by 'it' or its allies. Followers of Gabreelism recognise the spiritual leadership of the Priestess of the Faith, a psionic holy person who issues pronouncements on topics ranging from proper behaviour to prophecies (actually psionic visions) of the future.

Referee

Traditionally, Gabreelism was founded by Gabree-el Dahnara in Jerusalem on Terra (popularly known as Earth) in the Imperial year 1132, the year that she gave her famous Call to the Faithful speech. The New Terran Calendar uses this year as year zero.

Plots

1: The players are hired to provide transportation and security for a group of Gabreelist priests who are attempting to spread their faith to a world in the Wilds. Unknown to the party or the priests, agents of a rival pocket empire, the Dingir League, are already on the planet and are preparing to cause trouble.

2: The players are hired by a Terran corporation to discover who has been sabotaging the corporation's efforts to salvage an assembly line from an automated factory on Agidda. The trail leads to an ultra-orthodox Gabreelist faction based out of Prometheus.

3. DISCIPLES OF THE BRIGHT WAY

The Disciples believe that God dwells in jump space and speaks to followers whilst travelling in jump. Views of jump space are called the Face of the Deity and a secret combination of drugs and meditation reduces the chance of going mad when looking at the ever-shifting greyness of the jump bubble. This knowledge is both secret and not entirely effective.

Referee

Most passenger and cargo lines refuse passage to the Disciples, due to prior disconcerting experiences where hatches and access ways have been opened to allow a better path to God. Many are willing to pay large amounts for any kind of passage except low, and will put up with uncomfortable and cramped quarters. Some own their own ships and offer passage to brave Travellers. Followers of the Bright Way may be found throughout known space.

Plots

1: A polite, well-dressed young man approaches the party and asks them to deliver a large crate to the starport. He will pay each member Cr. 1,000 for the delivery, on condition that they do not open or examine the contents of the crate in any way. If asked, the man will identify himself as a Disciple. The crate contains four Disciples, who want to stow away on board an interstellar ship. They are harmless, but completely insane.

2: A similar crate is offered as above, but this time it contains a small, home-made effort at a jump-drive with timer attached to deliver a message to the divine being. The man will ask the crew to jettison the crate outside the 100 diameter limit but will not reveal why. In fact the jump drive will not function but could cause a potentially dangerous explosion.

4. CHURCH OF VELIS

The beliefs of the Church of Velis mirror more mainline monotheistic religions. However, adherents of the Church of Velis believe that he was a prophet of God, who through his words (both spoken and lyrical) and his actions provided Mankind with divine inspiration. Most followers are concentrated in the Solomani Rim region, but can also be found throughout the Third Imperium, Solomani Confederation and elsewhere.

Referee

This religion originated on Terra before the foundation of the Rule of Man. The faithful credit the foundation of the Church to Velis Repsley, a late 20th century Terran entertainer. The actual foundations can be traced to a group of fans/religious fanatics who founded the religion soon after his death.

Plots

1: The players must investigate the mysterious disappearance of several items of Velis memorabilia from a museum on Terra. Several members of the Church of Velis have been implicated in the disappearance.

2: The party are hired by a mysterious stranger to provide him with transportation to a nearby world. All indications are he is Velis (he is merely a Velis impersonator in reality). A crowd of Church of Velis fanatics spot him and chaos ensues. Alternatively, the party are hired by a wealthy Church of Velis member to track down the mysterious stranger who resembles Velis (and it really is him - the referee is free to invent a nearly plausible explanation).

5. CARETAKERS OF THE ANAK'T

In the beginning, there was nothing. Then came the Anak't, building and maintaining all the material in the universe from their own substance. So believe most of the members of the minor race here. The Anak't are a lizard-like animal who build exotic structures in the same way that spiders build webs - but these are large, solid and beautiful, like fairy tale castle versions of termite nests. The Anak't are rare, and guarded zealously by the Caretakers - since they maintain the fabric of the universe.

Referee

This religion may be found on a single world inhabited by a minor race with a medium or low population (7-), and a low tech level (3-). The religion developed when the race was young.

Plot

1: The party have stopped at the port on the world where the Caretakers are found, en route to another system. However, the ship becomes infested with Anak't building furiously, and the authorities will not let them leave or kill the creatures. Nor will they compensate them for the effective loss of their ship (the players will be informed that they should consider it a great honour)!

6. THE TRAVELLING CHURCH

The Travelling Church is made up of members who occasionally take one or two year sabbaticals to travel the space-lanes and promote their worship of T'uaslua. Fairly ordinary citizens otherwise, whilst on their starfaring journeys they are very likely to look for Travellers in need of help, whom they will provide them with food, shelter, transport or whatever might be required. The Travelling Church is only concerned with humanity and no aliens would be included in such largess. They will endeavour to help those in need anonymously if at all possible but make sure that it is clear that it is T'uaslua who has provided. Believers who are not travelling meet informally in houses and arrange collections and donations on a planetary basis to provide for any of their members who are passing that way. There is no formal organisation at a higher level. Some believers on higher tech worlds have taken to meeting on grav platforms over a mile above the planet's surface, as this both brings them closer to T'uaslua in his home amongst the stars, and advertises T'uaslua's presence.

Referee

Followers of this faith may cause concern to down-at-luck Travellers who will no doubt be suspicious of such unlooked-for charity!

Plots

1: If the party are down on their luck, the human members may be the recipients of a gift from T'uaslua. Attempts to trace the donor will be difficult. If they succeed, the donor will make strenuous and persistent conversion attempts on the most receptive players.

2: In the starport, the party are approached by collectors looking for donations to the Travelling Church. If they choose to give any money, they may find their luck is good for a month as a result of prayers said on their behalf (but not in violent or illegal situations). The exact nature of luck is at the referee's discretion.

7. SEARCHERS FOR THE ONE FAITH

This faith holds that all Terran religions are valid, each being a different interpretation of the divine message. The Searchers have established a massive computer database, maintained on Home and Terra, where all religious scriptures, teachings, and sayings are pooled. The Searchers hope that when all Terran belief has been assembled and analysed,

the message of the Divine Being will become evident. A wide variety of beliefs regarding the nature of God and the nature of worship can be found among Searcher members. The Searchers do not recruit members from other sentient species. Searchers can be found travelling throughout Solomani and Imperial space, interviewing religious leaders and amassing data.

Referee

This religion was proposed by Dr. Myadus Lynne on Terra during a conference on Solomani religious beliefs and spirituality in 650 Imperial. The faith is generally restricted to Solomani Confederation or former Solomani Sphere worlds.

Plots

1: The players are hired to escort a prominent member of the Searchers to a religious conference on Turin in the Alpha Crucis sector to locate some caves, wherein it is claimed there have appeared a series of writings of the One Being. Given the caves are in the middle of a hazardous jungle this is no easy task. It will take around 30 hours to record the writings which are on every surface of the strangely smooth cave walls.

2: The party are hired by a member of the Searchers who believes he has found the key to locating a lost holy relic which will give great insight into the message of the Divine Being. Unfortunately the relic is in the possession of a wealthy collector who refuses to let anyone examine it, and the Searcher has concluded that the only way to obtain the relic is to steal it.

8. ONAARA

Onaara (also nicknamed the Trader's Creed, or a similar phrase in several other languages) is a religion practised almost exclusively by merchant starship crew members. There is no central Onaara church; instead the faith spreads by informal and very low-key recruitment of new members by those already practising. Onaara consists of a spiritual component (a personal deity who is an aspect of the single god, Onaar), an ethical component (a rather abstract commitment to service all sophonts), and a physical component. The latter is a martial art called Onaar-asii (roughly translated as Onaar-concentration). Each component is pursued with varying degrees of seriousness by different adherents. The only organisational structure associated with Onaara oversees tournaments in Onaar-asii, while also promoting the philosophy more or less as a sideline. However, most adherents treat Onaar-asii more as yoga-like body exercises than as a practical fighting skill. Adherents taking Onaara's spiritual side seriously will tend to have a small altar or other sacred space for meditation. This can be as unassuming as a small box which is pulled out from under a bunk at need, containing a gemstone and perhaps a candle for meditation. On ships where all or most crew members practice Onaara, it is quite common to find a more elaborate altar in one corner of the ready room.

Referee

Curses based on Onaara are almost universal among merchants, even those not practising the faith. Colourful phrases featuring various parts of Onaar's anatomy will often be heard when something goes wrong aboard a merchant vessel. The faith originated during the Long Night, when a thin web of independent tramp merchants was all that held the tatters of civilisation together. The details of its origin are lost; numerous attempts have been made to tie the name of its deity, Onaar, to some planetary culture, but so far no convincing case has been made.

Plots

1: A crew member or passenger on the same ship as the players is a strong adherent of Onaara; during a jump, another passenger discovers this, and is openly disparaging of this crazy superstition, missing no opportunity to mock and belittle the faith and its practitioners. The follower eventually cracks and uses their martial arts to retaliate. The players will gain the good will of one or perhaps even both sides if they stop the fight and find a peaceful resolution.

2: The party are contracted to provide security for contestants at a regional Onaar-asii competition; local organised crime is suspected of having plans to rig the competition in some way. This could include injuring or killing competitors, bribing judges or the like, or could simply be an unfounded rumour.

9. MONASTIC ORDER OF THE SOLDIERS OF GOD

Also known as the Chaplains, this religion is only open to those of Solomani descent. They are a military monastic order which traces its roots to ancient Sol. On the battlefield they are very aggressive and militant. These battledress wearing brothers inspire fear in all who meet them, especially the battle-hardened Inquisitors of this order.

Referee

Many atrocities are rumoured to be attributable to the Order, but not within their hearing. They claim to be able to trace their roots back to similar orders before the founding of the Second Imperium, and to have ultimately been founded by a Terran called Pietre. Fortunately (for their enemies), there are less than ten thousand brothers in the Order, and they are spread across several sectors. Their relationship with the Church of Sylea and the RCCS is unknown.

Plots

1: The party are hired to break someone out of prison on a remote world. The price seems right. But no one told them it was a Chaplain base. More surprises; the person they are trying to break out turns out to be a Cardinal in the Church of Sylea who was reported dead...

2: The Chaplains are on a holy mission fighting heretics who bombed one of their holdings without warning or reason. The surviving Chaplains are in need of combat-trained veterans immediately for assistance in retaliation/ investigation as their closest holding is many parsecs away. The party are hired for meagre pay, though they are promised eternal reward in the life hereafter. However, the players learn too much and discover hints of ancient technologies and even older secrets that may shake the church and all of the Imperium apart. What are these references to a Temple and an Ark?

10. SYNAGOGUE OF THE STARS

Almost 6,000 years old at the time of Vilani contact with Sol, this ancient religion has persevered through the most daunting challenges, including determined efforts at their extermination. Their longevity of a core system of faith and beliefs has made them an item of interest to Vilani religious scholars. Adapting to interstellar society was difficult and required much rethinking of the Ta'alm-ua and reinterpretation of the To'or-ah, but they have nonetheless kept a coherent and identifiable culture and tradition.

Referee

There are some who believe that the lost tribe (one of thirteen sacred tribes) from Terra's distant past, was actually a Vilani offshoot that had contact with ancient Sol. The faith is found throughout Solomani contacted space.

Plots

1: The new crew member is working out well. But in the middle of a crisis where his technical (or other) skills are required, he says that it is a holy day and he can do no work, in fact none at all for the next 24 hours. What to do? The players may reason that he cannot actually do the work, but can he talk about it? The party will need to find a way around this problem!

2: Joshua's coming of age party is coming up soon and his father hires the party to make a quick run to a nearby system to acquire a few tons of rare Gefeltesfish for the celebration. It should be a milk run with just enough time. But when the ship develops a major drive fault, the players are in a spot. If they do not get the cargo to the celebration on time, they'll lose more business than they can imagine because Joshua's father owns the largest trading company in this subsector and can blackball the players at every local starport.

11. CHURCH OF SYLEA

The Church of Sylea (later the Imperial Church of Sylea, and later still, the Imperial Church) is another tool for the Third Imperium's expansion efforts. Where the Imperium cannot go, missionaries can. Their dogma preaches the value of unity of belief and political organisation. They are adept

at incorporating the beliefs of various faiths into their own, thus attracting followers of all sorts. Worshipers include Solomani, Vilani and Sylean alike. They use this diversity to advantage in their missionary work.

Referee

Vague rumours of an Inquisition surface from time to time, but these have never been substantiated. Open criticism in the Third Imperium is decidedly unwise. There is a degree of friction with the RCCS, but both organisations may be found working side by side.

Plots

1: Father Sier Mar needs passage from the outof- the-way world on which he finds himself. He is willing to pay a high rate for passage to the closest major church holding. As the party prepare to leave orbit, local authorities order them to stand down. The players must decide whether to hand over the Father to the locals, who are claiming he has stolen RCCS documents.

2: The players deliver a cargo to a small planet they haven't been to before. As they are unloading, armed men in priest's robes appear and arrest them for heresy. Has the Church created its own government on this planet? Or is someone seeking to discredit the church by acting this way?

12. CANINE TIME WORSHIPPERS

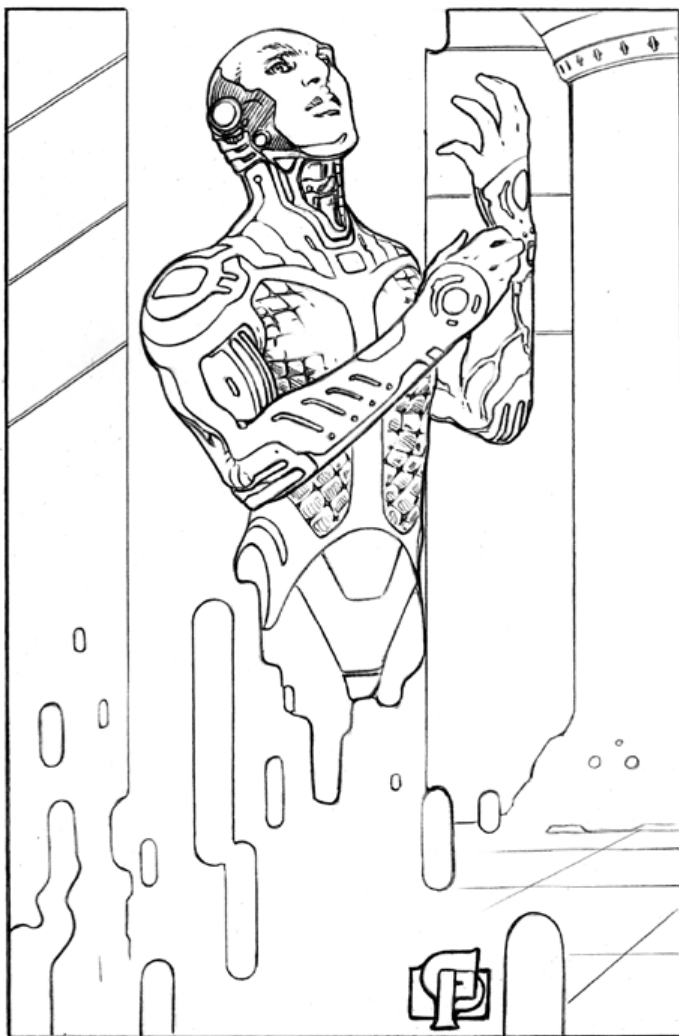
Vargr beliefs are not generally well known to the other sophont races, but there is at least one sect which worships time. They pray for more time to allow them to fulfil their dreams - their aims in life. Ceremonies are actually very intricate with detailed readings, chants and discussions of the nature of time and Vargr society. Unfortunately, this intricacy may be lost on most of the other sophont races as the services are often seen as rowdy Vargr behaviour with much guttural growling, yelping and gambolling.

Referee

As Vargr society can be chaotic, the aim of this faith is an understandable desire, as members strive to resolve the conflict of their chaotic society, against their aspirations. Sometimes the only real outward sign of such a worshipper is an outward obsession with time (many clocks, watches and fascination with the time systems on different worlds).

Plot

1: The party is given a contract to deliver goods to an Imperial Research Station, which is raided by the Vargr while they are there. Surprisingly, the Vargr are not interested in the material things at the base, but rather the information and opinions of the scientists and engineers. It turns out that the Research Station is working on investigations into the manipulation of time through jump technology. Of course,



should the players find this out they may become targets for Imperial Agents seeking to keep the knowledge of the research secret.

13. OCD CULT

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is recognised as a disease entity, but members of this cult view their own OCD behaviour as directions from a higher being. Thus they obtain positive reinforcement every time they perform their highly repetitive rituals, both during meetings with other members and at home (for example, checking the life support power supply multiple times every hour) and also when they are meeting others and strangers (for example, shaking hands every 5 minutes).

Referee

This is a very small cult, which is often not accepted by the authorities. However, they do keep track of when meetings occur, to allow them to check on their medical patients.

Plot

1: The party arrives back at the starport to collect their ship after some maintenance, and find that the work is not ready. The foreman says that he just has a few things to check and goes back to the engineering section. Checking the paperwork while he is away will show that his has been doing the same checks for the last three days, repeatedly. He believes that his higher being is instructing him to keep on checking this minor equipment until it is perfect, and will make many excuses why he cannot hand the ship back to the party. Without his signature, the ship cannot fly. The party begins to discover why this repair company was available at such short notice.

INFLUENTIAL MONOTHEISM

Influential Monotheism is the belief in the existence of a single deity, who only takes an active interest in the daily actions of followers at key moments in their lives. The deity may be omnipresent, omniscient or use lesser agents to watch its followers and influence their lives.

1. THE VIRTUOUS SONS OF CREATION

The Virtuous Sons (and Daughters) believe that you have control over your own destiny - including the circumstances in which you will be reincarnated. Thus, the poor and the sick owe their condition to lack of faith and will. Believers try to prove their worth, so charity is plentiful - but always accompanied by a sermon. Equality is an evil concept, and animal rights are irrelevant. Church authorities hold a tight rein on the media.

Referee

This faith developed on a world which suffered greatly during the Long Night, under a religious dictatorship. Some followers may be found off-world but most are still on the original homeworld of the faith.

Plots

1: War is brewing between the Virtuous Sons' homeworld and a strongly-egalitarian nearby world. Imperial diplomats and the Imperial Navy have to intervene before things get out of hand, but mercenary groups are sensing an opportunity for profit...

2: The party are temporarily stranded in a Virtuous Sons' dominated area, and the local priest decides to use them as examples of the results of weak faith. Denouncing them publicly at every opportunity, the priest will make it hard for the party to deal with any of the local populace. The authorities will have little sympathy and if the party get obstreperous life will become even harder.

2. DEDICATED SERVANTS OF LARRH

The Servants of Larrh are completely un-selfseeking and will not take any paid employment. They are often found as personal servants to a munta with whom they will stay for life (their own or the munta's); if forced to take a wage they will donate it to their church. On the hour, every waking hour, they promise in set prayers in an archaic language to be dedicated to serving others and not themselves until Larrh's revelation. Once every two years they will make a

pilgrimage to the local capital in a ritual offering of service to their government. The more authority the capital has vested in it, the greater the devotion.

Referee

Each servant believes that they will eventually have a revelation from Larrh at which point they will follow his instructions immediately and to the letter (whether it be to gamble on the local lottery or join with Larrh and commit suicide).

Plot

1: A dedicated servant gets her revelation whilst in jump space. She proclaims she is to join with Larrh and and there may be hints about opening airlocks, crashing the ship or anything else which might induce paranoia amongst the other passengers or crew or party. In fact, all she is actually going to do is quietly take poison in her stateroom. However, the Servant's munta insists that she must be kept alive and may eventually admit that the Servant (who would be disgraced if this were to be made public) is bearing his child.

3. THE MACHINE GOD

The colony was set up at the height of the Rule of Man on a very inhospitable world, a world rich in some very rare minerals, thus justifying a sealed colony. This colony was to be run by one of the most advanced expert systems known to humanity at that time. The system ran the life support and maintenance systems, was self-repairing, and was the life of the colony. Without it all would eventually break down and the people would die. As mining operations grew so did the colony and eventually it became known as the City. Then came the collapse of the Rule of Man and the onset of the Long Night. Cut off from the outside world with little or no hope of rescue, sealed on an inhospitable world, the people in the City began to panic. Fear led to anger and anger led to violence. Many died - administrators and scientists who could not defend themselves were the first victims and many more followed. The City slid into barbarism with the strong ruling the weak. Then a madman tried to end it all by blowing a hole in the dome. Thousands more died before the City could repair itself and the by-now superstitious people believed that the City had sent a warning. A prophet came forward and preached that the City would bring disaster and all would die unless they heeded its warning. This led the people of the city to worship the City and the Machine god that ran it all. They would offer up prayers for guidance, for forgiveness and for thanks. The prophet himself was

venerated as the Voice of the Machine and around him formed a priesthood. They preached non-violence and used the threat of 'the Wrath of the Machine' to dominate those who would not co-operate.

Referee

Millennia have passed and still the expert system continues with the tasks that it was programmed to do, heedless of the worship given to it by the people of the City and the priests that manage them. Limited contact has been made with the Imperium.

Plots

1: After many centuries the expert system has begun to fail and the City is dying. What could have caused God to desert them? Is it the newcomers with their blasphemous talk of computers and programs? Perhaps the players can offer some way of repairing things before the locals decide sacrificing the off-worlders might be a solution...

2: A fault has developed in the expert system such that it initiates an evacuation procedure. All available personnel, equipment, etc. are to be loaded aboard ships and taken to a neighbouring world. The players may find good money carrying cargo and passengers as ships are scarce here.

4. CHURCH OF STRENGTH

The Supreme Being teaches his believers that their mortal body must be a strong temple to receive immortality. The teachings, related by the prophet Philippa Niets, declare that the body gets stronger when intentionally pushed beyond the pain barrier. Services tend to consist of mass fitness sessions, where getting closer to the Supreme Being is best served by getting as tired as possible. Groups jogging along the streets try to recruit newcomers into the church.

Referee

Severe mortification of the flesh leads to hallucinations, compensatory endorphin secretion and a feeling of common cause with fellow sufferers; this is mostly what binds the church followers together.

Plot

1: There are some within the church who take the fitness regime to extremes. One such group believe that they must prove themselves against others - they kidnap outsiders and force them (on pain of death) to take part in violent and ruthless contests of strength, dexterity and endurance. The losers tend to die of their resulting exhaustion or injuries. The players are hired by a concerned mother, whose fitness-fanatic son disappeared mysteriously a few days ago (he was kidnapped for a contest and is now dead).

5. THE GOD WITH THE BIG GUN

Sometimes there is a need for a god. The comparative anthropologists of the Imperial External Affairs Ministry recognised that in the Imperial expansion it was difficult to convert newly discovered planets from their existing religions to a suitable Imperial credo. For the more primitive worlds, the empire's lack of a religious basis was perplexing. In their minds these indestructible, fire-spitting, flying warrior demons (marines in battledress) had beaten their own gods. It was felt rather futile to tell them that there might be no god or even an infinite number and that, relatively speaking, we are just tiny specks of dead star dust whose actions are irrelevant to the universe. Far better to reinforce their beliefs in the invulnerable fire-spitting demons and encourage them to transfer their allegiance to the new, all-powerful Imperial god.

Referee

Diplomats visiting newly acquired primitive Imperial worlds are required to dress in godly dress, perform miracles (using high technology) and ensure the locals revere an appropriate composite idol. The more able locals are inducted into a priesthood and are very gradually introduced to the reality of the Imperium such that the world can begin to accept off-world visits and trade.

Plot

1: An interdicted world, subject to the Gun God principle, has become a slave world under an Imperial governor who enjoyed the idea of being master of a whole planet of fearful, awe-struck followers. An underling attempts to make this known but is killed shortly after having passed his knowledge to the players...

CRISIS MONOTHEISM

Crisis Monotheism is the belief in the existence of a single deity, who only takes an active interest in the actions of followers at critical points in history. The deity may be omnipresent, omniscient or use lesser agents to watch its followers and influence their lives.

1. THE WAY OF GLORY

The Way of Glory is increasingly popular among Imperial soldiers, especially the Marines. Glorists believe that combat is the ultimate expression of faith in God, and that a good death in combat assures one of a favoured place in the afterlife. Glorism is an informal religion, with groups of believers congregating on an irregular basis. There is no formal priesthood. Glorists believe that a great warrior's equipment can be imbued with his spirit, and pieces of a hero's equipment are often the centre of Glorist shrines.

Referee

Glorist philosophy may result in units behaving in an unexpected manner - holding a position when Imperial doctrine (and indeed common sense) would suggest retreat, for example. At its best this faith becomes a driver for an honour culture within the military; at worst the unit's culture may develop an attitude not unlike barbarian warrior cultures of Ancient Terra.

Plots

1: The players are hired to retrieve the equipment of a Marine who died in the Chaneston War. The patron has the serial numbers for the bulk of the man's gear. Some of the marine's gear will still be in service and obtaining it from the military could prove tricky (though their record keeping makes it easier to locate). The remainder may be tracked down in surplus stores and so on which will be exceedingly difficult and time consuming. The players will have to visit several different worlds but the patron is willing to pay well. It may not be possible to locate every last item but if they come close, the patron will get very excited. One of the hardest items to recover will be an old laser rifle lost in zero-G combat and now in its own orbit around a star!

2: A terminally ill Glorist has decided to make a bid for the afterlife in the same place that the players happen to be. The Glorist is heavily armed, and quite irrational. Too ill to pass a medical to sign up even with a backwoods mercenary group, the Glorist's last vestiges of morality may just give the party time to act before he starts a killing spree or taking hostages.

2. THE MACHINISTS'

The Machinists (a nickname; they have no name for themselves) believe sophonts are indebted to their Creator for the flesh they are given. Nerve refusion technology allows them to reduce the debt by replacing some of that flesh with metal and plastic. The loan on the old flesh can be transferred to those more willing to pay it. Machinists are voluntary cyborgs, replacing fully-functional body parts with prosthetics. Most of the cost is covered by the medical purchase of their surplus flesh for transplants. At this TL the bionics are no more capable than the original flesh - but at least the only payment for them is in this life.

Referee

Imperial culture is generally opposed to voluntary replacement of human organs by cybernetic prosthetics - as a result, the actions of the Machinists would be frowned upon in many systems. The faith is only a half century old, and is found on a TL11 industrial world. Very few members are found off-world.

Plots

1: A young child comes to the party seeking help. Her Machinist parents intend to replace her eyes with prosthetics, and she does not want this.

2: An anti-cyborg gang is terrorising Machinists who work in the starport extrality zone, mugging them and smashing their bionic parts. The authorities seem unwilling to get involved. The party will become involved when a Machinist working in a store they have used is set upon in front of them.

3. THE CULT OF ONE (MONADIN)

Monadin is the sole worshipper of god. God speaks only to Monadin, preparing him for a crisis that will come. As god's only representative, all of Monadin's actions reflect god's will and are part of his preparation for the Terror that comes. God needs no other worshippers than Monadin for only Monadin can avert the coming crisis.

Referee

Most who encounter Monadin and learn of his beliefs (it's hard not to), believe he is mentally ill, but there are stories told of a friend of a friend of a cousin of a guy who saw Monadin save a starship in which the hull should have breached but did not, thanks to Monadin's praying. Are these miracles or are they achieved with ultrahigh tech equipment?

Plots

1: Monadin comes to the party seeking passage aboard their ship. He cannot say to where exactly or for how long. Rather he tells them, albeit politely, that they will take him aboard for as long as God wills. The players have heard the stories about Monadin and are hesitant to dismiss him. In fact, they cannot seem to resist him at all. Although they seem to have complete control over themselves, they cannot actively resist Monadin. Is he psionically forcing them to do as he wishes, or is it a higher power? And what with all the strange coincidences? (Any psionics aboard cannot use any precognitive powers or any telepathy powers on Monadin).

2: The party and Monadin are both on the same lightly populated world. Monadin announces at the starport, and anywhere else he can, that everyone must exit their buildings and structures and remove all electronic objects from their presence at noon three days from now, or face doom. The players are asked to investigate what he is talking about by the local authorities, because he's stirring up a lot of trouble, especially amongst the less educated. But what are they to do when they find evidence that Monadin is right, especially when that evidence is then destroyed? And is Monadin the cause or the cure?

4. RELIGIOUS MILITARY ORDER OF ST. RICARDO I, KING OF SYLEA

Generally open only to those of the Sylean minor race and Sylean-born Vilani, this order is less sincere but more patient than the Church of Sylea with which it is affiliated. Despite this affiliation, it has a more moderate approach to daily living, and focuses its attention on preparing for crises and trying to diffuse them before they begin. Obviously influenced by Sylean Vilani, they take a long-term view of events. There is still an organisational preference for the pure-bred Sylean, but Vilani are able to advance. The monks are sometimes called Ricardos.

Referee

The Order was founded by Mikal Kern, a former Colonel under King Ricardo's command during the Long Night. Most of the Order may be found on Sylea, but small expeditionary missions occasionally accompany larger missions of the Church of Sylea.

Plots

1: Popular entertainment has always had fictional stories about another Cleon (or your favourite Third Imperium Emperor); the Emperor's New Clone, the Man in the Crystaliron Mask, etc. But when best-selling author Coml Tancy announced that he was going to begin researching and writing a definitive treatment based on actual fact, public anticipation grew because of the author's uncanny ability to accurately portray state secrets in his Imperial Navy series of books. Now his publisher has tried to contact the reclusive

author to no avail. The deadline for his first draft has come and past. He was last seen entering the grounds of the Ricardos on Ton Vorn. The party are hired to find him or his electronic manuscript and return it to the publisher for a handsome reward.

2: Local meeting houses of the Ricardos have been being bombed lately. And some of its undercover agents have been assassinated. They hire the players as independent agents to investigate who is behind these attacks. But who should they go to when they discover that it appears the order is attacking itself?

5. DOOMSAYERS COLLECTIVE

Woe, woe and thrice woe - these people have a taste for apocalyptic prophecy and enjoy scaring themselves. They also go out and try to scare others, both to hear themselves talk and in a sincere attempt to alert the rest of the Galaxy to the doom which approaches. This doom is not a plague or a sudden snap collapse to a singularity; it is generally the return of a massive Power which will rearrange worlds in accordance with the goodness of their inhabitants. Of course this means that the Domsayers fear for much of the Imperium. Most Domsayers offer a rapidly approaching date for this visitation. Usually the date is quite immediate, next Tuesday or on the birth of a new child.

Referee

The Domsayers are entirely unabashed by all their failures to accurately predict the Change so far. Usually, they claim they knew the Change was less imminent than they had indicated, but that they felt it better to shock their audience into a realisation of the dangers.

Plot

1: One of the players is harassed by a doomsayer whilst at the starport; this will not stop unless they repent or they get security to remove the offending preacher. After the date that they were told that the Visitation was due, they receive a visit from some local thugs about an invoice. Apparently, the doomsayer is invoicing them because of the actions that they had to take to save the world in the face of the player's intransigence. The thugs are friends of the doomsayer who have decided to help them out.

6. THE HERALDS OF LAMARCKIAN SELECTION

This small, thinly spread and highly mobile organisation is a driven body of people who object to the philosophy of doing good. Charity, they claim, is against all the godly principles of natural selection: adapt or die! Heralds travel widely, attempting to sell their idea of the need for courage in the face of adversity, the undesirability of humanitarian intervention and the moral taint gained by relying on other people. They

are sometimes criticised for accepting sponsorship but claim that this is a necessity to support their proselytism.

Referee

The Heralds gain a great deal of sponsorship from companies and nobles who wish to maintain starvation wages, keep enslaved natives under the thumb, etc.

Plot

1: A local megacorporation boss is relying upon low wages at a production plant on this relatively primitive world. At least one religious group has arrived to bring charity to the underprivileged but the boss has brought in the Heralds to counter them. The players are hired to bring in charity supplies but are then discouraged from unloading at the starport by the Heralds (who will, if necessary, attempt to bribe the players to destroy or take away the cargo). If the players learn of the slavery they must decide whether to intervene.

7. NOYΣ

A self-consciously purist revision of the other attempts to discover a scientific basis for faith, νοῦς (pronounced 'nees') is a return to the basis of anthropopsychic cosmology and the mighty brain of that intellectual giant Anaxagoras of

Clazomenae (500-428 BC). Anaxagoras preferred to explain the bits of cosmology which were beyond his knowledge - and there were lots - by saying that a first cause νοῦς ('mind') did it. νοῦς is described as a big whirly thing which separated out chaos into the elements. Most of Anaxagoras' writings are lost, but νοῦς argues there is still a lot of whirly things out there: galaxies are whirly, black holes are whirly, tap water's whirly and you cannot get whirlier than a hot tub.

Referee

Followers of this religion undertake many experiments with whirly things to try to get closer to god. This ranges from computer studies of the mathematics of turbulence around plugholes to various attempts to reach god (generally involving a spinning spacecraft diving into a spinning sun, or some such).

Plot

1: Having met several νοῦς scientists (perhaps passengers on the players' ship) the players are hired as lab rats for a whirly experiment. They will be accelerated in a huge spinning bullet around a 50 km diameter magnetic rifle. Apart from the hideous strain imposed upon them, they may find some strange side effects (temporary glimpses of the future, short periods of psionic ability, etc.).

REMOTE MONOTHEISM

Remote Monotheism is the belief in the existence of a single deity, who intervenes only very rarely in the affairs of mortals. The deity may be omnipresent, omniscient or use lesser agents to interact with mortals but is either busy elsewhere (with other godly projects) or restrained in some manner from frequent intervention.

1. CHRONST SECT

The Chronst Sect is exclusively male and follows strict rules given in the writings of their long-dead founder, Chronst. Monks of the Chronst Sect are extremely devout in their worship of the Great One. Their assured superiority makes outsiders see them as very arrogant, a charge which is not unfounded. Chronst left several (actually very dull) books which the monks jealously guard from outside eyes. Some describe the Great One and his fabulous surroundings; some record Chronst's lectures and travels; and some give Chronst's Rule for Living which details how believers should conduct themselves and dress (dark blue culottes and a light blue shirt).

Referee

One of the Rules includes the manual copying of the tomes. Every additional copy has been hand-written at TL8- or re-keyed into memory letter by letter at TL9+, which gives them great worth to followers of this faith. The Chronst Sect do not believe the Great One will ever intervene in the affairs of the universe except one day to resurrect Chronst to live as an eternal amongst his faithful. Chronst died a millennium ago, and there are only a few thousand members in the entire Imperium.

Plot

1: Believers charter the players' ship. One of them will go into a trance for several hours and then claim to be the resurrected Chronst. The others will worship this passenger with incredible awe and reverence (and point to various signs in the writings that confirm the claim). If the party perform any checks, they discover that the erstwhile immortal is a known con-artist and has been previously jailed for fraud. Convincing the Sect members of this will be difficult; the players may instead choose to manipulate the situation to their advantage.

2. CHAFTLI FL

Believing in their God, Stek, Zhodani followers of Chafthlfl (or the Place) look forward to a glorious eternal future when they will finally be able to interact with their God. During their lives they have a fairly hedonistic outlook which is

their preparation for this wonderful afterlife of plenty and happiness. Followers of Chafthlfl hold in very high regard those who have walked with Stek. These are very unusual occasions when followers have had a unique vision.

Referee

Some followers of Chafthlfl have apparently predicted the future remarkably accurately. Curiously, no Zhodani with any psionic ability has ever experienced this phenomenon. Followers of this faith may be found concentrated in regions through Zhodani Space. The faith was founded around -3899 Imperial, a century or so after the first Zhodani Core Expedition.

Plots

1: The party are travelling in a ship near Zhodani space and may encounter some followers of Chafthlfl. They may stumble upon, or even be invited to, one of their parties. This will be quite a wild affair and any non-Chafthlfl Zhodani will be appalled at the licentiousness. However, it will be a good opportunity to meet all kinds of people.

2: A Chafthlfl follower has a vision of the party meeting an untimely and violent end in a year's time. While the description is very clear, details are lacking that would make it possible to avoid the situation entirely. Whether this is just a dream or a real (perhaps somehow psionically induced) vision of what is to be will be up to the referee to decide in a year's time.

3. THE CALLED TO TERRA

The Called to Terra believe that their god has specifically selected them to work toward the building of a unified and co-operative society of all sophonts that can ultimately trace their species' origins to Terra. They view society as a tool of co-operation, and work to ensure that no society under their influence allows what they consider abuses or non co-operation. Followers are encouraged to visit the group's museum and archives on Terra at least once in their lives, to see records of graphic examples of what they are working against, and to learn of the work of individuals who have inspired the group.

Referee

The overall organisation exists to promote the sharing of ideas and resources; most of the power and direction is in the hands of the ad-hoc local groups working towards the ultimate goal. Local groups have occasional conventions to share ideas and results, to debate and decide the meaning

of abuses and non co-operation, and discuss the best ways to achieve the organisation's goals. Membership is open to any sophont of ultimately Terran origin; this includes all humans (both major and minor branches), Vargr, uplifted Dolphins, simians, and so on. Non- Terran races are not shunned, though they can never be Called; sophonts of non-Terran origin are welcome to live within the society provided that they accept the values and modes of the Terrans, and make no attempt to impose their own values and modes upon those societies. The Called are prevalent in the area nearest Terra, but can be found throughout charted space, wherever Terran races can be found.

Plots

1: The ideals of the Called do not prevent pro-Terran bigotry from developing in their members; some perceive non-Terran races as less than fully sophont, or as unworthy of the respect due sophonts of Terran origin. A local group of the Called has recently become active on a planet with mutually hostile human and Droyne communities; the Droyne community has resources unavailable to the human community, but which the Called believe are essential to the human community. They will hire the party to assist in a clandestine raid to confiscate the resources. If discovered, the raid is likely to provoke open warfare between the species.

2: As above but an informer has told moderates within the human government about the planned raid, and they have approached the players to prevent the raid, preferably after it has reached Droyne territory and in a public manner to prove co-operation is possible between sophonts.

3: A group of the Called wishes to charter the party's ship to go to Terra from a planet near Sylea. They are willing (and able) to pay the equivalent of High Passage rates for Mid Passage accommodation, plus standard freight rates for their stowed goods (approximately 1 ton per person). They have plotted a route to Terra (fuel availability is virtually guaranteed, if the party's ship can refine unrefined fuel, as all systems have at least one gas giant). They will pay 10% of the total cost up front in Imperial Credits, with the remainder payable in gold upon arrival at Terra. En route, they will attempt to recruit members but will be jailed on one planet (more than halfway to Terra) where proselytism is illegal. The sentence is ten local years with no parole. The others insist that the party must help release the jailed members, or they will forfeit the remainder of the payment.

4. THE UNITED WAY

The United Way is successful because it appeals to people's laziness - there is little that worshippers have to do. The main practical tenet is that the greater percentage of your

worth you donate to the church, the better your position in the afterlife. In theory it is entirely up to the individual how far to take this, but social pressures are strong. Also in theory, there are no taxes - but vendors on the homeworld helpfully add a hefty donation surcharge to their prices which is passed on to the government.

Referee

People who do not wish to pay can go before a public meeting to obtain an exemption - their names and faces will then be prominently displayed in the Non-Contributors Index. The United Way has spread throughout the subsector. The homeworld population accounts for a little over half its adherents. The faith developed from a religious dictatorship on the homeworld during the collapse of the Rule of Man.

Plots

1: A frightened, wealthy individual approaches the party seeking protection and a way off-planet. Claiming to be a businessman fleeing an assassin hired by rivals, he is actually a corrupt church official who has been lining his own pockets with money from donations and has just been uncovered.

2: A region of the homeworld has declared that services provided by the government are giving things back, and harm the long-term prospects of the faithful. They are destroying roads and refusing all services that are wholly or partially government-funded. The church asks for unpaid volunteers to help out, since all official efforts are being sabotaged.

5. MONASTIC ORDER OF ST. MARC

This fraternity is concerned with the gathering of knowledge and are sometimes known as Marcers - pronounced markers and meaning marked ones. Though relatively few in number they can be found throughout the Imperial fringes, especially where there is evidence of the Ancients. These monks should be considered essentially evangelistic scholars. They can occasionally be found serving aboard Scout vessels.

Referee

Although the preservation of knowledge is very important to the Marcers, investigation and education are where they are more commonly encountered, either exploring an archaeological find, or teaching low-tech populations. The Order was founded by a group of scholars inspired by the work of St. Marc, who received permission from King Ricardo to maintain a great library on Ton Vorn to preserve knowledge and learning. As the Imperium ages and becomes more decadent, the numbers entering the order fall, and it never exceeds ten thousand members.

Plots

1: The party encounter Brother Oldewen on a low-tech world. Assigned to the planet to educate, as well as explore for ancient knowledge, he has become troubled and spends his days drinking himself into a coma in the local starport bar. He has stumbled onto something, 'a great evil,' he says if prodded. He wants to leave the planet, and will do anything to leave in a hurry. The players are his ticket off-world. Will they help the monk off-world, or investigate what has scared him to the root of his being - he seems afraid of the children he was teaching (they have been subjected to covert geneering).

2: Marcers hire the party to take them to a wellknown, heavily explored but barren world that has a popular gas giant fuel depot. They bring aboard a lot of equipment that they will not let the crew see (religious artefacts, they say). Everything seems to be fine until the Marcers are transported to the surface. As soon as the Marcers set up their camp, things start going haywire. The ship's main system's go off line and it cannot escape orbit or communicate with anyone in the system. Even weapons are off line, for no apparent reason. Transport between the ship in orbit and the surface is possible though. Is it the Marcers (they are experimenting with various electromagnetic fields enhanced by the rock structures within this planet)?

6. BINAY ABRIM

The Binay Abrim claim to be one of the oldest continually practised Terran religions. The Binay Abrim god, who is never named, is viewed as a stern and demanding god, but one who does not often interfere directly in human affairs, although certain covenants are said to have been made with humanity. The righteous live according to a complex set of laws set forth in holy texts, but a greater importance is given to living according to high standards of ethics and morals. There is some ritual observance, generally on a weekly basis. Special academies are established for study of scripture; there is much debate about the meaning of various passages, and students and teachers alike argue various points of view, often with the skill and rigour generally expected of legal experts. A respect for education is a major part of the ethical framework of the religion; most Binay Abrim will be found in professional positions, most notably medicine, law, and finance.

Referee

Binay Abrim do not actively solicit converts, neither do they actively discourage them, although conversion involves a course of intensive study prior to ritual admission into the religious community. The Binay Abrim are found throughout

the area of Terran colonisation or administration. The more righteous of the Binay Abrim often live in communities separate from the mainstream of the planet's society, and even the least righteous set themselves apart by their religious practices. They are therefore easy targets for anger when there are poor economic conditions, when epidemics strike, or when governments become oppressive.

Plot

1: The party are approached by persecuted Binay Abrim for passage off-planet at premium rates for low passage. The local government, however, demands they be turned over to them for crimes against the State and the People. The starport administration will suggest to the Players that the decision is theirs, but that the charges are probably trumped up - just an excuse for persecution. Note that once a person is designated a bona-fide passenger, or is an employed staff member or ship crew member, the starport covenant requires the Port Authority to protect them within its confines. Local news feed will report many arrests and murders of Binay Abrim; one feed will be cut off in the middle of a report of an organised massacre, and replaced by a continuously repeating message that the feed is off-line due to State Security issues. If the party grant passage, and word of this gets out, they will be besieged by large numbers of Binay Abrim all seeking passage, offering varying compensation, from premium prices for steerage to nothing at all (pleading for the players' mercy). The longer the ship remains, the larger the crowds will be, and the more desperate offers they will hear.

7. THE DARK RAY PEOPLE

Followers believe that all worlds are born from the all-powerful dark matter goddess Enam who gives all beings life by shooting invisible rays at that being at birth. The religion is spread throughout the Imperium and Solomani Confederation, having originated in Dark Nebula sector during the Rule of Man. The primary belief is that it is important for all sophonts to stay alive to guard their life force for as long as possible. This is because the life force is a gift from Enam.

Referee

This religion was not favoured in the Imperium during the initial expansion from the bounds of the Sylean Federation, as many worshippers were opposed to the use of military power and the cost in lives of expanding the Imperium. Followers will vigorously attempt to prevent anyone from risking their lives because of their beliefs. They are often perceived as a pacifist organisation although this is not strictly true.

Plots

1: During the reign of the Third Emperor, Artemsus, the party is recruited for an intelligence agency plot in conjunction with the Church of Sylea. They are to infiltrate the Dark Ray People to discover if they are truly anti-Imperial. If they are just 'misguided' they are to be encouraged to stop condemning the Imperium's use of force. This will place the worshippers in a dilemma - whose life is more important? The non-believing millions, or the lives of those that worship Enam?

2: The party obtains a military cargo contract, and soon after their ship is picketed by a group of Dark Ray People who set up a camp outside the docking bay to elicit support against the material expansionism of the Imperium. The players need to find a non-violent way to bring their cargo through, and may have to restrain the Imperial Marines assigned to escort the delivery.



DEISM

Deism is the belief that a single god created the entire universe but thereafter has taken no part in mortal affairs. Followers cannot interact with, or expect intervention by, such a god.

1. THE CARETAKERS

The Caretakers believe that God created the universe, and then left his children, the sophont races, to be the caretakers of creation. Therefore, it is the duty of all to show goodwill to each other and make the universe a better place for each successive generation. Once a year each caretaker is required to give some portion of their wealth to some charitable organisation, or give some service to those less fortunate.

Referee

Followers of this faith often spend much time deciding upon what the correct form of their duty should take each year. Members of this faith are found throughout known space.

Plot

1: The party are hired to transport a care package to an under-developed world within the Imperium. Instructions are explicit as to where and how the care package is to be delivered. En route the ship is attacked by pirates or hijacked. The cargo is stolen and the patron demands it be recovered. It is very clear that for the patron everything hangs on the successful delivery of this cargo; they become almost fanatical about retrieving it from the assailants.

2. KYNOS

Kynos means reality-truth or logic. Most adherents believe that they have a personal sense of the existence of a deistic creator who still cares for creation, though cannot affect it. The highest calling one may have in life is to search for the truth (in the scientific sense) and then give it away to any who request it. An adjunct to the most effective pursuit of this goal is to embrace the sub-philosophy of Yillnaldy, meaning the mastery of passion. This is a philosophy rather than a specific devotion; ideally, an adherent will live his entire life according to it. This generally involves the eschewing of most expression of emotion; an extreme form - reaving - involves training and seclusion aimed at completely eliminating emotional response. There is no organisation except among those who seek the extreme of reaving; the nearest equivalent to scripture is the writings of the original explicator of the philosophy on various subjects supposedly exemplifying the philosophy.

Referee

The pursuit of the answer to philosophical questions is considered part of scientific truth, and is encouraged, but not to any greater or lesser extent than questions that can be tested by experiment. Missionary activity is, in practice, limited to encouraging others to seek scientific truth, and to promote the sharing of knowledge, but always argued on a rational basis rather than a philosophical one. This belief is found throughout the Imperium, in moderately high numbers.

Plots

1: Yillnaldy is not universal even among practitioners of Kynos. One young researcher has become convinced that an Imperial Research Station is withholding information that could lead to better jump drives, and wants the information made public (the researcher is incorrect; although the research station is in fact doing jump research, there is currently no useful information that has not already been revealed). A background check will reveal that the researcher worked at the Research Station until the previous year. Deeper investigation shows they were discharged for psychological instability resulting from jump space exposure. The researcher will provide information on the layout, several (expired) computer access codes, and a list of files and documents, and will ask the party to obtain the files and documents and turn them over for publication. If pressed long and hard enough, the researcher may be able to scrape up Cr. 25,000, payable on delivery.

2: An independent research facility has discovered something that the local authorities wish to keep under wraps. As the leader of the research team is a Kynos practitioner, the authorities know he will attempt to publish the information. They do not know the ultimate source of the publication, although they do know one of the couriers that will be involved in transporting the information. They will approach the party to capture the courier or otherwise prevent publication of the research.

3. BEYOND THE LIMITS OF SPACE AND TIME

This faith developed amongst the Scientific community of the Rule of Man and was even popular amongst Vilani researchers freed from the constraints of the caste system of the Ziru Sirka. Followers of this faith accept scientific theories of cosmology to a point - they believe that the singularity which exploded in the Big Bang was formed by a supreme being, a being which is now beyond the confines of the universe, looking in on its creation. Believers are strong

proponents of research into deep space sensor systems in an attempt to see the light from the earliest moments of the universe, the point at which the Big Bang happened. They believe that if they can see the moment of the creation of the universe they will see the Supreme Being, and achieve deeper understanding of the ways of the cosmos (the first light is claimed to have been well-researched already, but the followers of this faith believe there is always more to discover).

Referee

Followers of this belief are often found in astrophysics research programmes, particularly those run by the Imperium. Others have departed with the Solomani Confederation's Expeditions Rimward. Although low in numbers, and somewhat academic in nature, followers may be found throughout the Imperium.

Plots

1: The party is approached by a researcher from Beyond who offers them significant payment if they will cross the border into Zhodani space to discover the purpose of the expeditions they have been staging to Coreward. The researcher does not reveal his sources, and understates the danger of the mission which will require a raid on the Zhodani University on Chronor/Spinward Marches.

2: The party has been earning good money deploying deep space research satellites for a group of the Beyond in empty space. These data from these satellites is being collated and synthesised to effectively provide a massive sensor array, seeing farther than anything before. Returning to a previously visited system the players discover the scientific team they left there has disappeared and no one is talking. They may discover that a number of Imperial Marines were seen in the University the night before the team disappeared. If one of the characters checks their mail they will find an unmarked envelope with the payment and a note asking the character to contact one of his colleagues, and tell them to 'look carefully into Longbow'.

4. THE ASLAN SHRINE OF HEROES

Most Aslan believe that the universe did not just happen but was created. The Creator, for want of a better term, used It's very essence to create. It became the stars, the planets, the seas and land. It became the prehistoric jungles in which the race was birthed and It became the plains on which they developed. But most importantly It became life. All living creatures and all things are made from It's form. Thus the idea of worshipping god is ludicrous. How can you pray to a creator that has given up Its very essence to become the universe? It no longer exists in a way that can be understood.

As an Aslan grows it is taught that it is not just an individual but part of a family, a pride, a clan. Its actions do not just reflect upon its own honour but that of all those Aslan that have gone before and all those that will come after. This can be a very heavy burden for a young Aslan to bear and so they seek guidance. As the Creator no longer exists, they must find that guidance from other sources. Most revere those Ancestors that have been true to Aslan ways, mighty heroes of Gun and Claw, cunning diplomats, wily traders and the sharpest minds of the Aslan race. They carry items that remind them of the Ancestors that have made their mark on the family, pride and clan. These objects are the Aslan's personal Shrine of Heroes. Obviously the sexes have different ideas about what qualities should be revered. A male Aslan's personal shrine would include objects that symbolise the great warriors from his family, a Trohk retelling of great deeds, an image of a powerful duellist or a plate with the names of great battles inscribed upon it. Whereas a female Aslan's personal shrine may well be the writings of a famous scientist, a lock of mane from the administrator of a great estate or any thing that reminds them of those Ancestors that epitomise that which they wish to become. The shrine can also have a darker purpose; it may also contain items that remind them of that which is not Aslan. Reminders of cowards and cheats, of liars and those without honour. It is a great fear of many Aslan that their name will not be remembered for their honourable actions but instead for their dishonourable deeds.

Referee

The Shrine of Heroes is not just a personal affair. Each family, no matter how small, will have a Shrine dedicated to those who have gone before and those that have given the family its honour. Each pride will also have a Shrine and the Shrines of the greatest clans are extremely ornate, perhaps containing the armour of a great warrior or the complete works of a renowned scientist. But be warned: one of the greatest insults you can make to an Aslan is to insult his Shrine and the duel you will find yourself in will not be to first blood.

Plots

1: An item has been stolen from an Aslan shrine and taken into human space. The Aslan are hunting for it and beware any that come into possession of it.

2: An entire Aslan starship was lost when its new power plant exploded - just a few days after its installation by an Aslan engineer. The latter fears her apparent incompetence will bring great dishonour upon her clan shrine unless she can prove the power plant itself was faulty. She will hire the players to help research the design and the suppliers to help prove her case.

5. PANSPERMISM

Life is incredibly widespread. Most people take this for granted, but biologists still debate why most lifeforms are so similar. For example, transplanted humans faced incredible difficulties surviving in the alien ecosystem of Vland, yet they not only survived but prospered: the biochemistry of Vland and most other worlds is remarkably similar. Panspermia is one explanation. Panspermists hold that life originated in only a few locations; some say only once. The building blocks of life, such as amino acids, then spread from world to world like an unopposed infection racing through the universe. Life is similar on so many worlds because it evolved from common building blocks. Finds of amino acids and RNA fragments in the Oort cloud and interstellar space have proved that this is a scientific possibility. Some individuals, both scientists and lay people, have made Panspermia the philosophical foundation of their lives. Taking proof of possibility as proof of occurrence, they attribute mythic significance to discovering the original locus from which all life spread.

Referee

The forms of Panspermia are virtually endless, linked only by the quest for the Ultimate Beginning: cladistic analysis performed on vast genetic databases, deep probe expeditions to sample interstellar dust clouds, comparative study of creation mythologies, even seances with spirits of the Elder Race. For some this is an eccentric obsession, for others it is the justification for every action they take. Reverence for all life, extermination campaigns against cladistic outliers, charismatics and con-men: Panspermism has seen them all.

Plots

1: The party have been chartered by a group of Panspermists to sample deep space or an Oort cloud. Coping with equipment failure so far from normal support would make an unusual Man against Nature adventure. Discovery of helium-based life offers opportunities for fame and fortune, despair and disillusionment. The Panspermists may welcome the discovery for the information, or they may seek to suppress it because it contradicts their particular belief structure.

2: The characters meet a group of Panspermists fleeing persecution for their religious beliefs. They believe that all life is sacred, and thus oppose any military action. This is being viewed as treason by their government, which is currently involved in a bitter war. To further complicate matters, the enemy is truly horrific - savage, ruthless and murderous. If run as a simple snatch-and-rescue adventure, this would waste the opportunities for philosophical discussion. If you wish, you can have fun as the players talk with the Panspermists during lulls in the action. A Road to Damascus conversion is unlikely but some role-playing groups delight in such chances; others would likely kill any character struck by an attack of conscience during a firefight!

3: The players are caught up in a religious massacre on a Panspermist-dominated world. The trouble starts with subtle discrimination and moves on to harassment and persecution of those considered genetically unacceptable. To complicate matters, the genetic make up of some players causes them to be regarded as cladistic outliers and thus subject to cleansing (death). The players have a chance to rise above their own predicament; heroically saving the oppressed (many examples of such eugenic cleansing can be found in past history).

PANTHEISM

Pantheism is the belief that there are no individual deities, but rather that god is everything and everything is god. It may also be regarded as a synthesis of all known religions and deities.

1. THE SOJOURNERS

The Sojourners believe in repeated reincarnation until one can break the cycle. What makes them unique is the belief that you will be reincarnated close to the place you die, and conceived very soon after your death. World of origin is no barrier - an Aslan may return as a human - and a respect for all life is a natural consequence of this. Many Sojourners are vegetarian; the most fanatical will only live on food that does not require anything to die. None will casually cause harm to others.

Referee

It is believed that this faith may have derived its primary concepts from Terran Buddhism sometime before the Long Night. Sojourners hold discussions about their beliefs in many places, and it is possible that they could be encountered by a party somewhere, where they are mistaken for a lecture party.

Plots

1: A group of Sojourner priests are harassing a Droyne community. Their head priest (who was proselytising the Droyne) has just died in the vicinity. The Sojourners claim that their head priest is being reincarnated there, and they wish to take him away for training. The party are hired to kidnap a specific Droyne and transport him off-world. If they are not willing to do this, their task is to simply locate a Droyne that meets the Sojourner's very specific criteria. If the party were around at the time of the head priest's death one of them will be identified as the next head.

2: A Sojourner retreat is being threatened by a corporation that intends to take the land for more productive purposes. The brothers will only resist passively - but they believe the corporate take-over was illegal. If the party could find evidence quickly, they would be well rewarded. The only way of finding this evidence will be a break-in that requires the presence of a Sojourner who once worked for the megacorp. Of course, his or her contribution to the break-in must be entirely passive.

2. UNIVERSAL SYNOD OF REASON

This church teaches that all of Creation is a vast puzzle (composed of myriad sub-puzzles), and that our work here is to solve it. Every event or phenomenon, no matter how seemingly trivial, is a vital clue to the solution. Many of the church's fundamental teachings come from its founder, Elias Vanim, who wrote over 100 books setting out examples of God's Puzzles and a set of formal systems for characterising and solving them. Later leaders of the church have extended Vanim's work, as have numerous other adherents, finding greater or lesser favour with the hierarchy - though those in the latter group are merely ignored, not persecuted. Reasonist services are a bizarre combination of traditional ritual (chanting, pageantry, prayer) and what can only be described as a game show, with contestants drawn from the congregation competing to solve mathematical or geometric puzzles, or in trivia competitions (to display mastery of potentially useful data).

Referee

Some local branches actually offer cash prizes to the winners, though the hierarchy frowns on this practice. More commonly the reward is simply a common perception that winners are more likely to be welcomed by God on their death - because they will be able to solve the entrance exam to the afterlife! One comedian has called this the ultimate quiz at the end of the class. The faith was founded on Sylea around -40 Imperial, and is concentrated in the orbital residences. It has spread throughout the Core sector and beyond, albeit at a low level.

Plots

1: The party are engaged in some shady actions and notice that they are being observed by an unknown individual. The observer proves elusive for some time, but when caught proves to be a Reasonist who has noticed their odd behaviour and is attempting to interpret it as a message from God. The players must determine how much he knows, how likely he is to tell the authorities, and how to act in response.

2: A wealthy and eccentric Reasonist hires the party to obtain a series of seemingly unconnected pieces of information and random objects, most of which are difficult to find, under heavy guard, or both. He offers a very good payment for the entire set, but will pay nothing if anything is missing. This can set up a long and interesting scavenger hunt.

3. TUWUKH-KAWAN

Tuwukh-Kawan is practised by a remote community on a human-compatible planet colonised by a mixed group of Terrans and Vilani who were dissatisfied by life in a technological society under the Rule of Man. Tuwukh-Kawan does not hold that God (who is called by the same name, Tuwukh-Kawan, literally, 'the heart of all') as such is uninvolved with the world, as implied by the glossary entry for pantheism; the philosophy is more of a hybrid of traditional pantheism and Interactive Monotheism, wherein Tuwukh-Kawan is actively involved in the minutiae of ordinary existence. Similarly, the spiritual aim is not a conscious promotion of harmony, being rather an ecology, where conservation of resources, non-aggression, and living within the natural order are taken as given, rather than promoted specifically as goals. These concepts form the cornerstone of the society's lifestyle; no specific devotional activities are required, living by the ecological/religious precepts is both the will and the honouring of Tuwukh-Kawan. Similarly, no specific religious hierarchy is required; elders of the society are generally accorded more power and honour due to their wisdom and experience, rather than because of any mandate. Liturgy as such does not exist; the nearest thing to it would be the teaching of sound ecological principles to the young - but this is not done separately from other teaching.

Referee

No attempts to convert others are made, and outsiders are never viewed as full members of the community - but outsiders' children who are brought up within the system are accorded full status. Moreover, through either generations-long experience with the local ecology, or perhaps latent psionic talents (it is impossible to know which), the people believe themselves to have an innate sense of the rightness or wrongness of a person, creature, or thing (and in fact, they do seem to accurately identify rightness or wrongness according to an ecological definition). Beauty is viewed as being connected with rightness, which is a fuzzy concept that is best translated as harmoniousness with nature or naturalness. The community does not tolerate wrongness - a person whose actions are consistently against the maintenance of the ecology will be reconditioned in the interests of preserving the rightness of the world.

Plot

1: The players' ship is forced to land on the planet to make repairs after a mis-jump; the planet has no starport, not even a beacon to mark a flat spot of rock. Nevertheless, they are able to put down on a plateau of bare rock less than a day's walk from the main community of Tuwukh-Kawan followers. Parts for the repairs to the players' ship will, naturally, be unavailable - but it will turn out that manufacture of the parts is well within the local technology. While in the community, the party will not be shunned, but neither will they be welcomed with open arms. All attempts at payment in cash or intrinsic values (for example gems, precious metals) will

be met with total incomprehension; the concept of money does not exist within the culture at all, and that of value only in connection with the utility of the thing valued. Ultimately, resolution of the party's problem will be possible; the locals do understand the concept of a little wrongness (the death of a creature whose bones are vital to the manufacture of the part, or else some pollution of the atmosphere) leading to a greater rightness later - the main challenge will be avoiding causing the locals to view them as wrongness that must be killed outright, and to convince them of the necessity of tolerating the little wrongness of making the needed parts in order to achieve the greater rightness of getting the party to leave the planet. It will be an uphill battle, since not killing the party could lead to the greater wrongness of other outsiders coming and doing wrongness to Tuwukh-Kawan.

4. UNCLE JOHN'S BAND

An odd group, dedicated to preserving the traditions started by the Five of whom Kesey was the first. Services feature improvisational music and communal dancing. Worshippers wear brightly coloured clothes, and profess a strong belief in miracles. Details of the cult's liturgy is unclear, but seem to centre around a box of rain. Non-believers are not privy to what the box of rain is. Followers often greet each other by saying: 'Are you kind?' and 'We are everywhere!' A small percentage of the religion's most devoted believers travel from world to world providing services for local faithful.

Referee

The homeworld of this faith is traditionally the planet Fenario, which does not appear on any known charts. The legendary founder is known only as Kesey. The worshippers of this faith actively seek to convert others to their beliefs, and may often be found travelling between the stars to achieve this goal.

Plots

1: Concerned parents contact the players; their daughter has run off with the Band. They want her back, or at least assurances that she's safe.

2: As the Year 48 approaches, Banders from around the Imperium converge on Sylea to celebrate the 2,600 years since the Five came together. A large group will take passage on the players' ship.

5. PSIONIC BROTHERHOOD

This is a small organisation which seeks to know the divine through study and training of the psionic 'Mysteries'. The divine intelligence, God, exists in everything, even in the collective consciousness and this is what the believers seek to understand. Most are telepaths and know how to regulate their bodies psionically. A select few know the other mysteries of teleportation and telekinesis. These individuals are revered as they are closer to enlightenment. Devotion to

the mysteries is shown by performance in the Igah Hipodile or Psionic Games. The group's organisation is loose, with most decisions made by the individual members, but a hierarchy exists. There is the Grand Master who oversees all training; the Masters of the individual psionic disciplines; the Adepts; and finally the novices.

Referee

Prior to the Psionic suppressions of the 800s, members of this faith were occasionally found visiting Psionic Institutes in Imperial Space. After this date no members of this faith are to be found away from their homeworld in the Zhodani Consulate.

Plot

1: This plot could happen on the borders of Imperial Space in the Spinward Marches. The party are approached by a psionic brother. He would like to hire them to find a kidnapped novice. He has been given a ransom note that specifically said not to get the police involved. The party are to find information on the kidnappers (part of an anti-psionic league) and rescue the young novice from their clutches. The rewards are the gratitude of the Brotherhood, and free psionic testing/training if the players so wish.

6. THE UNIVERSAL SIBLINGHOOD OF HARMONIC CRYSTALLISATION

The Siblinghood teaches that everything is partially divine but that only items with a pure atomic structure, such as crystals, are pure. Siblings are sensitive to what goes on around them and have a profound respect for all things. This reverence for nature does not stop them from changing nature, since people are natural, whatever they do is natural.

Referee

Most adherents are inconspicuous and are identifiable only by their ever-present crystals and their notions about architecture, naval architecture, etc. The more devoted members of the religion may live in caves, rock houses, or artificial crystal structures. They are often employed in scientific or construction fields. The faith developed during the Long Night and spread out from the Interstellar Confederacy.

Plots

1: The players' ship is chartered by a group of Siblings posing as a scientific group. They are extremists who have been persuaded that by breaking the starship's zuchai crystal while the ship is in jump and then wearing the fragments they will gain enlightenment about jump space. This action may result in dire (even fatal) consequences when the ship returns to normal space.

2: The players (who ideally include someone with prospecting or geology skills) are hired by Siblings to serve as workers on their crystal dig. The dig uncovers a covert, long-abandoned military base once intended to support an invasion from a neighbouring world.

7. FOLLOWERS OF THE WAY

Similar to Zen philosophies, this religion teaches enlightenment through self-discipline. This self-discipline is most clearly seen in the rigorous physical and martial training that its members practice. Practitioners often wander the galaxy in search of unique experiences that may serve them on the path of enlightenment but they also often spend years in solitude or in monasteries silently pondering existence or concentrating on a single physical skill, enhancing it to amazing levels.

Referee

Skills frequently chosen for study are Bow Combat, Sword, Brawling and Perception. They generally speak very little and will not fight unless forced to. Those who practice this philosophy may be found throughout the Imperium.

Plots

1: A group of Wayfarers approach the party. Their monastery and the nearby village are being constantly harassed by high-tech bandits that use energy weapons to take the harvests and pillage periodically, destroying what meagre income the village has and killing any who oppose them. They need high-tech weapons and training in how to use them, but can only offer Cr. 20 per person.

2: A character unwittingly saves the life of a Wayfarer. The monk begins to follow the character around attempting to serve them in any way they can. If pressed as to why, he will admit that he experienced a flash of enlightenment when the character saved his life (although he cannot really explain it - besides, you have to seek your own enlightenment) and has the feeling that it will happen again (perhaps this monk should be introduced to Monadin!).

8. A SINGULAR PURSUIT

There are still those who have not heard that zero point energy negates the whole concept of heat death (the gradual cooling of the universe). Among these are a hard core terrified of the idea of the Tepid Eternity. They believe they can avoid their doom by surviving high on a black hole's gravity well. The First Seeker, Raymond Graham has been developing this theory over 200 years (he uses anti-ageing drugs) and thinks he can succeed by getting things to run on Hawking radiation, interacting with X-rays, etc. Of course there are problems, not least finding a black hole to use. Luckily, money is not one of them: Raymond inherited a

major fortune from his father's megacorporation and has invested it in multiple-site deep space astronomy, two long range exploration ships and a share of survey data from the Scout Corps themselves.

Referee

Mr Graham may appear insane to some, but he has sufficient followers to populate his dream of an O'Neill station orbiting a remote singularity. The richer followers are being put in cold storage, to awake during the Twilight of the Stars while others search for a suitable singularity and pester cosmologists and astrophysicists to recognise that the end is coming, no matter from how great a distance.

Plot

1: One of Graham's stranger experiments is to attempt to create a miniature black hole. This involves accumulating a large number of gravitic generators on the moon of a carefully chosen gas giant. No one on the project seems to know exactly what's going on as Graham is extremely secretive. The players are hired to transport various unusual cargos to this site - the secrecy and strange goings on should arouse their paranoia!

9. THE CHURCH OF PURE ABSTENTION

Anyone can be pure, provided they follow a low protein diet, abstain from drink, drugs, sugar, caffeine and the like, be sure never to be alone with one of the Impure, never

sleep for more than thirty minutes at a stretch, never marry or otherwise liase with the opposite sex and work hard for the Church. All of these factors either make one remarkably hardened or very suggestible. The former tend to become priests, the rest are their obedient followers. The overriding belief is that death through such abstention will allow one to reach a state of nirvana.

Referee

COPA has diverged on different worlds. In some cases the priests believe as fervently as the followers in nirvana; if they do not manage to die through abstention then a mass transition is arranged (usually involving bringing together the local COPA group in one room with a big bomb, poison gas, etc). On other worlds, the priests use the religion to milk the followers of their worldly possessions. The priests do not believe in nirvana, but prefer to live in luxury on their followers' donations.

Plot

1: The players are asked to seek out a source for a totally illegal poison gas. Their patron is a COPA priest who is intending to help his followers transcend mortality to join god. Once they have provided the gas (or some similar killing mechanism) the players should become gradually aware of the priest's intentions. If they do not prevent the upcoming catastrophe, the authorities are likely to regard them as accomplices to murder...

AGNOSTICS

Agnostics believe it is impossible to determine whether there are any true deities or whether the universe is godless. Quite what is acceptable as proof of the existence of a deity is a fiercely debated subject amongst some people, while others simply regard it as an interesting scientific question which may never be resolved.

1. ARCHITECTS OF TOMORROW (ARAGISHGE DRANDIRDIKUN)

A quasi-religious charitable organisation dedicated to the betterment of society for the benefit of posterity. Founded in - 2484 on Daibei by a breakaway group of disciples of Dekumagi Shilaaguk. These disciples did not reject the existence of a supreme being, but merely declared such an existence unproven. The Aragishge thus allowed people of all faiths to join as long as they believed in the goals of the organisation. This made it popular with a large section of the population and ensured its spread throughout Daibei Sector and deep into surrounding sectors. The Long Night shattered the coherence of the organisation, but it survived in the form of small local organisations on hundreds of planets.

Referee

Two or three times a week followers are expected to give to anyone they meet begging; or to visit those in prison or hospital with words of encouragement; or to encourage a politician in their work for society. Once a month they work voluntarily for a day in a refuge, charity shop or other charitable service.

Plots

1: Characters hear rumours of a valuable item in one of the Architects' shops. The rumour is false (or else the item has long since been snapped up) but contact with the volunteer worker in this shop who is actually a wealthy merchant, will lead to a good job.

2: Whilst hospitalised (or in prison), the party receive a visit from an Architect. If the players makes polite conversation, they will find out the visitor is a highly placed government official who can be sweet-talked into waiving port fees (or some similar benefit) if the character expresses an interest in the official's belief.

2. SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL RELATIONS

Members believe in ethical and moral behaviour aimed at promoting good intersophont relations, both at the individual level and at the group/community level. Active attempts at conversion are non-existent, but practitioners are not averse

to discussion of the basic philosophy, and conversions have been known to occur as a result of the discussions. Most members act on request as 'Speakers for the Dead' - such an assignment requires them to speak at funerals, relating the true history of the deceased, in an effort to promote understanding of the deceased by those in attendance, and ultimately, to promote greater understanding between sophonts. Practitioners invariably request such a Speaking for their own deaths.

Referee: There is no formal liturgy, but virtually all members have read the scripture, two books, both by the same anonymous author, purporting to be Speakings for (a) an alien race wiped out by the Terran Confederation prior to contact with the Vilani, and (b) the Terran leader who laid the groundwork for the conversion of the weak and disunited United Nations into the strong and unified Terran Confederation. There is an additional document, describing the hierarchy of foreignness, that is widely circulated among members, and serves as a description of the world view that is prevalent among members. Members are found primarily in the vicinity of Terra and on Terra itself, but have been known to be found elsewhere in the former Rule of Man area.

Plots

1: A Speaker approaches one of the party for information on an old acquaintance. The character will realise that the acquaintance has died, and that the Speaker is trying to learn more about the acquaintance for his Speaking. If the players ask the right questions themselves they will realise the acquaintance was murdered; the circumstances of the murder were such that the players may feel obliged to do an independent investigation and embark on a mission of vengeance.

2: If one of the players is a Speaker, the player learns of a request for a Speaking on a nearby planet, and accepts the request. Upon arrival, they learn that the request was made by the deceased against the protests of the deceased's sticism family; the local religion views Speakings as abominable, and the family and religious community will resist the character's attempts to gain information for the Speaking. The world on which this occurs has a little known statute against religious persecution which can be invoked to give the players inquisitor status. This mandates full co-operation and precludes any limits on investigation (even if imposed by the government). Using this statute, two weeks of investigation will reveal that several government leaders and high-up religious officials are involved in a barratry and piracy ring directed against a Vilani megacorporation.

The corporation suspects this but, ironically, is barred from investigating by the world's government. An additional two weeks of research is required to do a proper Speaking. If the players used the inquisitor status there will be a riot at the Speaking, which the party must quell without co-operation from the government.

3. RATIONALISTS

Rationalists are devoted to unifying the diverse beliefs of known space into a single coalesced and unified form, believing that this act will reveal the true nature of God. Individual Rationalists are fairly agnostic, taking very little on faith. Many members are historians or sophontologists. Rationalists react very negatively to the merest mention of the Church of All Faiths.

Referee

Rationalists often cause offence to other religions when they infiltrate them to discover their secrets. This faith developed on Sylea, sometime in the Second Imperium.

Plots

1: The players are recruited to find a Rationalist researcher missing on a primitive world. Evidence at his campsite shows that he believed that he had found the great secret to the unified belief. In fact he has found an Ancient artefact that he thinks will provide a Rosetta stone to understanding the Ancients. Unfortunately, he has been trailed by a follower of the Church of All Faiths who does not want such an artefact found. The party may just be in time to stop the murder of the researcher.

2: A Rationalist passenger on board the players' ship makes a pest of himself by questioning the Players and passengers about their beliefs, and deriding any superstitious habits exhibited by the crew (like dimming the lights before jump). If there are any fervently religious types aboard, the atmosphere will become quite charged.

4. THE AWAKENED

The Awakened believe that the physical world is an illusion, and that reality may only be touched through cryogenic suspension. Rik Adugi discovered this when under hypnosis following time spent in an emergency low berth, allowing him to remember some of his 'real' experiences (which are usually lost on waking).

Referee

The Awakened will usually purchase Low Passage, but one rule is that they must convert two others before they are allowed to be permanently frozen, so they will sometimes forego this to pursue a likely candidate. The faith was

founded around 200 years ago on a TL10 planet by Rik Adugi. It is not believed that the group has any links to any of the various timer clubs operating throughout Imperial space (such clubs are paid to store people in long-term low berths, reviving them at an agreed date).

Plots

1: There have been a higher than average number of low berth failures in this part of space recently - sabotage is suspected. There have been Awakened on all ships involved, though non-believers have been in some of the affected berths. Is someone pursuing a vendetta?

2: One of the Awakened gains access to the engineering section and will attempt to freeze themselves (and anyone else close) instantly by flooding the compartment with liquid hydrogen.

5. CHURCH OF ALL WORLDS

One of the most controversial large religions in the Imperium is the Church of All Worlds. Its critics assert that it is nothing more than a huge tax scam, and few of its members argue otherwise with particular conviction. Its teachings are few and vague, basically consisting of a unified doctrine linking most mainstream human faiths under a single system. Holy Offices (such as entry to the priesthood) may be obtained by signing an affirmation of faith in the Church's teachings and - more significantly - paying a large fee to the local Church office. In return, the Church will assist members in obtaining any legal benefits extended to religious organisations, typically tax breaks. Some members treat the Church as a joke, organising services which parody other more serious religions, or simply serve as an excuse for wild parties. A few smaller, less mainstream religions have joined the Church of All Worlds en masse (simply because doing so was easier than applying for non-profit status on their own), but have kept their own original beliefs and practices despite their membership. There are even some groups within the Church who claim to take it very seriously, and conduct elaborate weekly services, prayer meetings, and the like - though many suspect that these too are elaborate jokes of a more subtle style. All in all, the Church of All Worlds is a confusing mess, just the way its members seem to like it.

Referee

Some branches have engaged in more legally dubious practices, such as serving as a front corporation to hold the papers of members' businesses, thus shielding them from taxation, fees, and other nuisances. The Church is almost constantly under investigation by several Imperial and planetary government agencies, and has been brought to court many times on charges of fraud and tax evasion - and so far, it has won every significant case. The Church was

founded on Shudusham in the year 65, and membership has spread throughout the Imperium by the time of the Civil War.

Plot

1: The party is in dire financial straits, one step ahead of an army of creditors and tax collectors who want their ship. A sympathetic starport worker suggests that they shield the vessel from repossession by joining the Church of All Worlds, re-registering the vessel through the Church, and declaring it a (mobile) temple. This may turn out to be a good idea, serving as a powerful weapon in an ongoing bureaucratic battle; conversely, it may turn out to be part of an elaborate scam to trick the players into relinquishing title to their ship.

6. CAPRANISM

Named after Fritjof Capra, who observed the striking similarities between (a non-differentiated) oriental religion and quantum physics. This cult attempts to contact the Cosmic Principle which the followers feel must be out there somewhere and indeed 'all around us, here and now'.

Referee

This artificial creed is a way for agnostics to feel good about themselves. They sit in their domes, looking up at the sky and contemplating the conic sections projected holographically around them. They put money in the collection plate without even noticing. The faith has never had a large number of followers, and grew during the expansion of the Rule of Man.

Plot

1: The party's ship is chartered by a group of Capranist believers who want to jump to an empty parsec and attempt to contact/touch the cosmic principle. The jump will be uneventful, but the contact equipment will cause a fuel leak

by shorting some systems out. The players will be forced to resolve their lack of fuel (to jump back to the nearest world) by locating a nearby ice comet. Some elements of the believers may feel this is a sign that they are meant to stay here so that the principle can be revealed.

7. THE MULTIPLE LIVES FELLOWSHIP

The MLF does not believe in a god but rather that wisdom is all-important. They go beyond past life regression, believing that the brain can still remember, or host, a range of past personalities. These are perceived as helpful aides to current existence - an accumulation of wisdom over the millennia. Naturally, the further back the previous personality, the weaker the linkage to their memories.

Referee

The MLF are generally well-meaning and a large proportion of their time is spent investigating history, to help MLF followers identify their past selves (regression does not always result in immediate knowledge of one's past identity, but perhaps only flashbacks to past experiences).

Plot

1: A group of miscreants intend to use the MLF principle to delude several rich individuals into paying them a huge amount of money to research their past history. Their regression sessions involve covertly administered drugs and hypnosis to find out which past figures the dupes would like to be associated with. They then implant the appropriate memories and their victims begin 'remembering' their past - usually as famous leaders, inventors and the like. The Players may end up as dupes, be hired to guard the operation or be asked to investigate it by a concerned visiting MLF priest.

ATHEISM

Atheism is a rejection of the existence of any form of deity or deities. Rational Atheism uses science and/or logic as the basis for this rejection; Sceptical Atheism relies on the personal belief or faith that there is no supreme being; Philosophical Atheists do not understand the concept of deities; and plain Atheism is simply a complete lack of religious beliefs.

1. THE SCHOOL OF SHARED EXPERIENCE

The School of Shared Experience affirm life, human nature and rational thought as far more important than any idea of God (rational atheism). They believe in the value of self and intelligence but without any religious connotations. Scholars aim to make the world a better place by shared thought and knowledge and to that end they have weekly linkings where they get together to share these experiences. Higher levels of thought and scholarship in fact involve some psionic ability to join in and a good proportion of the scholars are psionic (particularly the more senior ones). Only a few scholars will be found on any one world but they have a presence on many worlds.

Referee

The School will be outlawed on most Imperial worlds following the PsionicSuppressions in the 800s. Full details of its founding have never been disclosed.

Plots

1: A psionic player is approached by an elderly scholar concerned about the suspected corruption of their cell. They need help finding out whether some new members really are subverting the school's beliefs or whether they are simply getting paranoid in old age. This could be a good opportunity for the party to discover or develop any latent psionic talent.

2: Players hunting for a psionic institute may be attracted by an advertisement placed by a local cell of the school. They are looking for volunteers to help with research into psionic ability. If the party have any aptitude they will get some free training, if not, they'll be used as controls for a while and then released from any obligations.

2. SCIENTIFIC RATIONALISM

Followers of this belief seek to quash all religion by replacing it with the faith of science and rational thought over God (rational atheism). They truly believe in the Marxist statement that 'religion is the opiate of the masses'. As there is no God,

nor an afterlife that has been scientifically proven to exist, the belief is that one must make the most of one's life. This is usually done by learning the sciences and contributing new studies and discoveries to the scientific community. Needless to say, most adherents are scientists and academicians.

Referee

This group is very zealous and will try to awaken anyone they feel is being blinded by primitive beliefs and self-righteous dogma. Still, they believe that there are some races (such as the Vargr) whose minds are just too primitive or chaotic to accept the truth. There are many followers of this belief throughout the Imperium and beyond - however, not all are as zealous or organised.

Plot

1: A well known scientist (also a Scientific Rationalist) is a passenger on board the ship the party are on. Another passenger accuses her of converting his child away from the traditional beliefs of the family. The child was a student of the scientist while at university. These two need to be watched carefully as this may develop into a very heated situation. The scientist may hire a player as a bodyguard for the trip. The bodyguard will face a constant barrage from the scientist about the wrongs of religion who will make every effort to convert the players.

3. THE ENTROPISTS

These followers ensure that they promote chaos wherever they go by such acts as opening locked doors, altering signage, sounding fire or personal alarms, crying wolf over robberies, and so on. They believe this is essential to maintain the random Brownian motion of atoms and thus maintain the laws of physics in the universe (an alternative form of rational atheism). Some members, however, have clearly joined just to have an anarchistic fling.

Referee

Extremists of this group generate scares in the press (for example, food contamination) and have been known to use terrorist tactics (for example, bombings) to achieve their aims.

Plots

1: An Entropist takes passage on the party's ship. Suddenly, they are beset with many random minor failures (valves closed which should be opened, settings altered). The Entropist is very computer literate and is planning to hack into the jump controller to ensure a random exit vector.

2: The players are caught up in a terrorist bombing. They identify the bomber and give chase. When (if) captured the bomber shows no remorse - it was an act of entropy and necessary.

4. FOLLOWERS OF THE INVISIBLE HAND

This group has radicalised Adam Smith's metaphor for the workings of a free market and ended up with a spiritual justification for the centrality and rightness of being selfish (rational atheism). Quite a few of the members of this church end up with a flair for business and the organisation is rather wealthy. They also take Professor Smith's injunction against mercantile or work force combination very seriously and help out everyone else by putting a stop to unfair trading practices, unionisation, monopolies and mergers. They regard all of these activities as morally and spiritually wrong, as well as objectively undesirable in trading partners. Most preventative action is in the form of books setting out how things could be and infomercials, but the church will also finance court cases in the public good.

Referee

A few extreme Followers will take direct action, sometimes of the lethal kind.

Plot

1: One of the followers offers to intervene to help the party out during a labour dispute at the docks at the starport. If they accept, the Followers will begin a court action against the Union and the Port Authority which will result in the players becoming hate figures caught between both sides. The well-meaning Follower will not realise the financial and social effects of their action, as the Unions will blackball the ship in adjacent systems, and the Port Authority will perform stringent checks on the safety of the players' ship and also contact their colleagues on other worlds to join in.

5. CHILDREN OF THE DIASPORA

The Children are a Solomani movement pushing for a return to Earth. They consider the Solomani to be superior to the other human races, and believe that only Terra can lead mankind. They are somewhat dismissive of the question of religious beliefs (sceptical atheists), considering them either a personal choice, or secondary to the more important goal of returning home.

Referee

This faith has two periods of great friction during the Third Imperium - the period before the absorption of Terra into the Imperium in 588, and the Solomani Rim War in the late 900s. This belief was first espoused by Ingmar Svenson on Sylea

in the year -10 Imperial. Followers of this belief pattern are predominantly found in areas of the Core Imperial regions, and in previously Vilani dominated areas.

Plots

1: The party, containing aliens or non-Solomani humans runs into an extremist faction of the Children. The Children will begin by verbally attempting to convert any Solomani in the group to their way of thinking. They will be openly abusive to the others, attempting to drive a wedge between the players. If the players of Solomani extract show any interest in the Children they will benefit from gifts and excellent business deals until they convert. If they try to brush the Children aside, they could turn nasty and engage in actual violence.

6. THE SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPREME BEINGS

Existence of the Society is unproven, although conflicting rumours spring up from time to time. It is allegedly a society of thirteen wealthy sceptical atheists, who are engaged in a perpetual competition. The goal is simple: to create a religion with yourself as supreme being. Rankings are published each year, based on two criteria: a vote of all members, and a calculated score. The score depends on number of adherents, the TL and devotion of the faithful, how few resources the member spends to achieve this, and several other factors. There are 27 non-voting Collators who gather information for the vote and score calculation.

Referee

The truth about the existence of this society will be very hard to discover, and could prove fatal if the characters imply that another religion was founded by the society.

Plots

1: A noted theologian has come forward with evidence that one of the major religions was actually started by a member of the Society! The party may be hired by various patrons, to investigate or suppress the findings, or to protect, evacuate or eliminate the theologian. Alternatively they can just be caught up in the ensuing chaos. The evidence is obviously false and has been disproved already but the theologian is a fanatical conspiracy theorist and the truth is being swamped by media hype and a panicky public. The church may be delaying release of the truth to build up publicity.

2: As per the preceding plot but the evidence is strong yet inconclusive, and the church is likely to be split right down the middle. The evidence may have been planted by a rival member of the Secret Society or recovered from the belongings of the responsible Society member who died of a heart attack at an unfortunate moment.

7. THE REPOSITORYANS

These philosophical atheists believe that the AAB (the Vilani Repository of All Knowledge) actually does contain all knowledge (including how to run your life) if approached in the correct manner. The megacorporation Makhidkarun provides an expert system to help believers get at this information; for each query by a believer they supply a Khukii - a random (or 'universe-directed') snippet of data from the library which should be interpreted in the correct manner to solve the believer's current problem or provide general enlightenment.

Referee

This faith was founded during the Rule of Man (approximately -2000 Imperial) on Vland as part of a backlash against the Solomani. It is common amongst Vilani technicians and workers at the AAB.

Plots

1: An archaeologist approaches the Players claiming to have found conclusive evidence that Repositorianism was started by a Solomani officer. She wishes to smuggle this information off-world before the Repositorians can find her.

2: Based on the last three month's Khukii readings, a minor official decided that the most efficient way to serve his community was to take his own life. His son believes the readings were tampered with by an enemy, but nobody believes him. Maybe he is just paranoid, or perhaps his father really did find out something he shouldn't have...

8. STRUCTURISTS

The biochemical processes that life depends on are only possible when the fundamental physical constants of the universe are within a narrow range. Too far in one direction and the universe is frozen, unchanging; too far in the other and it dissolves in randomness. Life exists on the knife-edge, between order and chaos. There is no theoretical reason why the universe's physical constants have the values they do: they could easily be different. If they were, though, life would not exist as we know it. Some believe that we inhabit one of a vast number of possible universes, and thus there is nothing special about our universe; others believe in an undiscovered principle, a Grand Unified Theory waiting for the lucky scientist.

Referee

Structurism is more a philosophy than a religion. Most of its adherents have a scientific background. Those whose belief-pattern is more mystical tend toward two reactions: wonder and despair.

Plot

1: A researcher claims to have discovered the key to the Unified Theory, but dies en-route to a Structurist meeting where he was to reveal the information. All his belongings were lost. The party is recruited to find out why he died and what happened to the theory. (He was accidentally murdered by a more radical religion who wanted to keep his particular findings from the public.)

OTHER BELIEFS AND CULTS

There are beliefs and cults which do not fall into the normal categories of deity worship.

1. THE CULT OF THE DEAD

Every infant born to parental believers is given by the priest a date on which that person will die. This ceremony occurs five days after the birth of the child, in front of ten witnesses. If a person dies early, it is deemed highly unlucky for the whole lineage and if possible families will place dying relatives in suspended animation until the predetermined day of death arrives.

Referee

Believers know they cannot escape their fate as other cult members will arrive on the date of their death to ensure that 'nature takes its course'...

Plots

1: A member of the cult has established rather a good life for themselves off-planet. However, they know their allotted time is soon and if the original ten witnesses are not notified of their death they, or an assassin, will come to ensure his timely death. He cannot afford to change his identity or leave planet, so the cult member has decided to eliminate the ten witnesses. The party is hired to assassinate those four witnesses not already deceased.

2: The players run into a desperate man who asks for their protection. He is closely followed by an armed group who will want the players to step aside and let nature take its course. Supposedly the man's allotted time has come but he claims a business rival has altered his records. If the players get the man to safety he will hire them to have the records corrected and find evidence of his rival's involvement. Naturally, this might just be a clever plot to avoid his allotted death.

2. THE DEMETER GROUP

This informal group of planet-hoppers believe that if they eat or drink anything of the planet they are on, they will be irrevocably tied to that planet. This means that they cannot leave (or are polluted beyond hope and must roam alone for the rest of their lives). They carry with them all they need to consume: food is usually in the form of small tablets with all essential nutrients, and water is carried simply for drinking. They carry a recycling system from which they generate water from their bodily fluids and a water generating cell which uses raw hydrogen and oxygen.

Referee

Such people have a substantial amount of baggage when they travel and for this reason many groups travel in their own ships. An elite group also wear respirators at all times to ensure their bodies absorb only pure atmosphere rather than that of a particular planet. Should a player accidentally contaminate a member of a group, the member is viewed as an outcast, and the player responsible may face retribution.

Plots

1: The baggage of several group members is damaged or lost while travelling on the players' ship. The players must determine how to feed and water the group now that their recycling equipment and foodstuffs are lost or contaminated.

2: A local is desperately in love with a female member of a Demeter group who is about to leave planet (perhaps on the players' ship). He asks the players to contaminate her food and water with local food so that she will be forced to say on the planet.

3. THE RED MIST

There is much injustice in the universe and the law can only be relied upon to catch and punish a small fraction of wrongdoers. A cult has grown up to right these wrongs, by inflicting suitable vengeance on anyone whom they regard as guilty (such as a known criminal having committed a major misdemeanour but being acquitted at the trial due to a technicality).

Referee

It is claimed that this cult originated from stories in the holo-comic Red Hand of Vengeance. This may be true, but in reality there is no such organisation as the Red Mist, although many people get convicted for being members. In reality it consists of a number of fairly twisted individuals who have deluded themselves into thinking that they are acting as the hand of vengeance for a deity (any deity, it does not really matter to them).

Plots

1: The players are hired as bodyguards for a rich banker who has been acquitted of defrauding thousands of investors out of their pension money. The banker believes he may be targeted by the Red Mist (and indeed he will be). The players might have to think twice about putting their lives on the line for such a person (yes of course he was guilty!)

2: Players are usually guilty of something - have them arrested! They can try to bribe their way out of court or be released on a legal technicality. However, once free they will begin being tracked by a member of the Red Mist...

4. THE AFFIRMERS

This creed started out as a self-help group and is now run by and for the benefit of those whom God helps because they help themselves. Affirmation was originally by prayer, which involved grovelling on the floor and declaring what a miserable sinner one had become. The Affirmers have taken this one step further - their prayers have become more of a boasting session. Rather than humble prayer in private, Affirmers are sociable and meet in expensive, tasteful, windowless churches.

Referee

Becoming an Affirmer is difficult. You have to be a known criminal, hideously rich or some such. Services are often undertaken in huge communal hot tubs (ideally made of wood from an endangered rain forest) within the church. There is usually spiritually uplifting entertainment (sufficiently uplifting to be illegal on many worlds) and some interaction with the gods of chance (such as gambling).

Plot

1: A noble believes his son may be involved with an Affirmer group. He wishes to hire the players to check this out (very discretely) and if true, to prevent his son from further visits to their church. If this involves somehow disrupting or destroying the church, the noble does not care. However, should the players take direct action against the church, they will attract the retribution of the other miscreants that worship there.

5. LEAGUE AGAINST SPECIESISM

The golden age before the Long Night enabled many acts of folly but one group with their heart in the right place was the LAS. Originally the League reasoned that, given the ability to create food from tanks of algae and fungi, the need for agriculture and animal husbandry had disappeared. LAS claimed that the tendency to split creatures into prey, pests and pets was speciesist (including, for example, the tendency to eradicate plant species which human idiosyncrasies identified as weeds). The League reasoned that humanity had reached a state of technological and social sophistication that allowed it to 'walk lightly on the

land' rather than ruining yet more ecosystems. The League fared badly during the Long Night, but grew back as the Third Imperium expanded.

Referee

The LAS is well respected among life support engineers, ecologists and animal rights groups, has lecturers at the larger universities and an active public relations unit. It is much disliked by farmers and their associated infrastructure (from seed providers to manufacturers of agricultural machinery).

Plot

1: An extremist group of the LAS has begun preaching that if its principles are applied universally, then all the sophont species should be given equal rights. A lecture tour on this subject is disrupted by a group of radical human supremacists. The players are hired to prevent such problems at the remaining lectures (at one of these, a number of minor sophont species will turn up to bolster the equality principle, potentially resulting in a fairly large riot with the human supremacists).

6. BORN AGAIN POWERBASE

This is a style of religious organisation rather than a religion. In it, the members of a faith undertake to spread it with a strategic recruitment policy targeted at those who could be of use, where possible placing their confederates in positions of authority/influence.

Referee

With care it is possible to subvert whole organisations - police forces, political parties, even whole industries. Despite frequent historical records of such infiltration, it is still commonplace throughout the Imperium. This principle can be used with almost any of the other religions in this supplement, whether they be aimed at promoting good or evil ideals.

Plot

1: The players fall foul of a member of such an organisation and find themselves subjected to harassment through his many associates. Tracing the source for their problems will be difficult until they discover that all the trouble-makers can be traced back to members of this cult or religion.

GLOSSARY

Animism: All natural phenomena and objects (trees, rivers, wind, etc.) are caused or inhabited by spirits or demigods.

Animism, Polytheistic: Certain natural phenomena are associated with specific gods or goddesses, arranged in a distinct hierarchical order.

Agnosticism: It is impossible to know whether or not there is a God.

Anthropopsychic: The belief that a god has similar mental processes and driving factors to that of humans.

Atheism: A total rejection of the existence of a Supreme Being; complete lack of religious beliefs.

Atheism, Philosophical: A failure to understand the concept of a Supreme Being. The question of religious beliefs is meaningless.

Atheism, Rational: A rejection of the existence of a Supreme Being on the basis of science, logic, or reasoning.

Atheism, Sceptical: A rejection of the existence of a Supreme Being on the basis of personal, non-rational conviction (faith).

Barratry: Fraudulent practices on the part of the master or crew of a ship to the prejudice of the owners.

Cladistic: Study to determine if organisms share common ancestors by statistical analysis of their traits. Cladistic outliers are organisms which fall outside the normal statistics.

Deism: God created the universe, but thereafter took no part in mortal affairs, and is permanently out of reach.

Diocesan: Division of followers into areas, each under the jurisdiction of a bishop.

DNA: Deoxyribonucleic acids are present in the chromosomes of all plant and animal cells and carry coded instructions for the passing on of hereditary characteristics.

Dualism: Two mutually antagonistic gods or principles, one good and one evil, exist; their struggle is mirrored in nature and in moral/ethical problems.

Exclusive: A religion which limits its recruitment, for example to the offspring of existing believers. Members of such a religion may also be restricted in the interaction they are allowed with outsiders.

Garden World: A world which will support human life without the need for artificial life support.

Inclusive: A religion which does not place any constraints on the people which may be recruited (for example, previous followers of another religion may be allowed to join).

Monotheism, Crisis: God is involved in mortal affairs only at crucial moments of history.

Monotheism, Influential: God interacts with sophonts only at key moments in life.

Monotheism, Interactive: A single god exists and is interested in the daily actions of sophonts.

Monotheism, Remote: God exists, but is not generally available. A select few interactions in mortal affairs may occur from time to time.

Panspermism: The Ancient Greek doctrine that the elements were a mixture of all the seeds of things, now translated to mean all life comes from a common source, which may or may not be divine.

Pantheism: God is not a personality - God is everything and everything is God.

Polytheism: Multiple gods (probably with lingering animistic associations or titles) exist, each of roughly the same importance.

Polytheism, Rational: A multiplicity of gods is viewed as numerous different aspects of a handful of true divinities.

Proselytism: The conversion of others to one's own religion.

RNA: Ribonucleic acid, plays an important part in the development of proteins.

Structurism: The belief that because the universe shows evidence of design and/or evolution it can be regarded as being alive and/or divine.

Syncretism: A union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite beliefs and practices. Origin on Terra in the 17th Century (Solomani calendar).