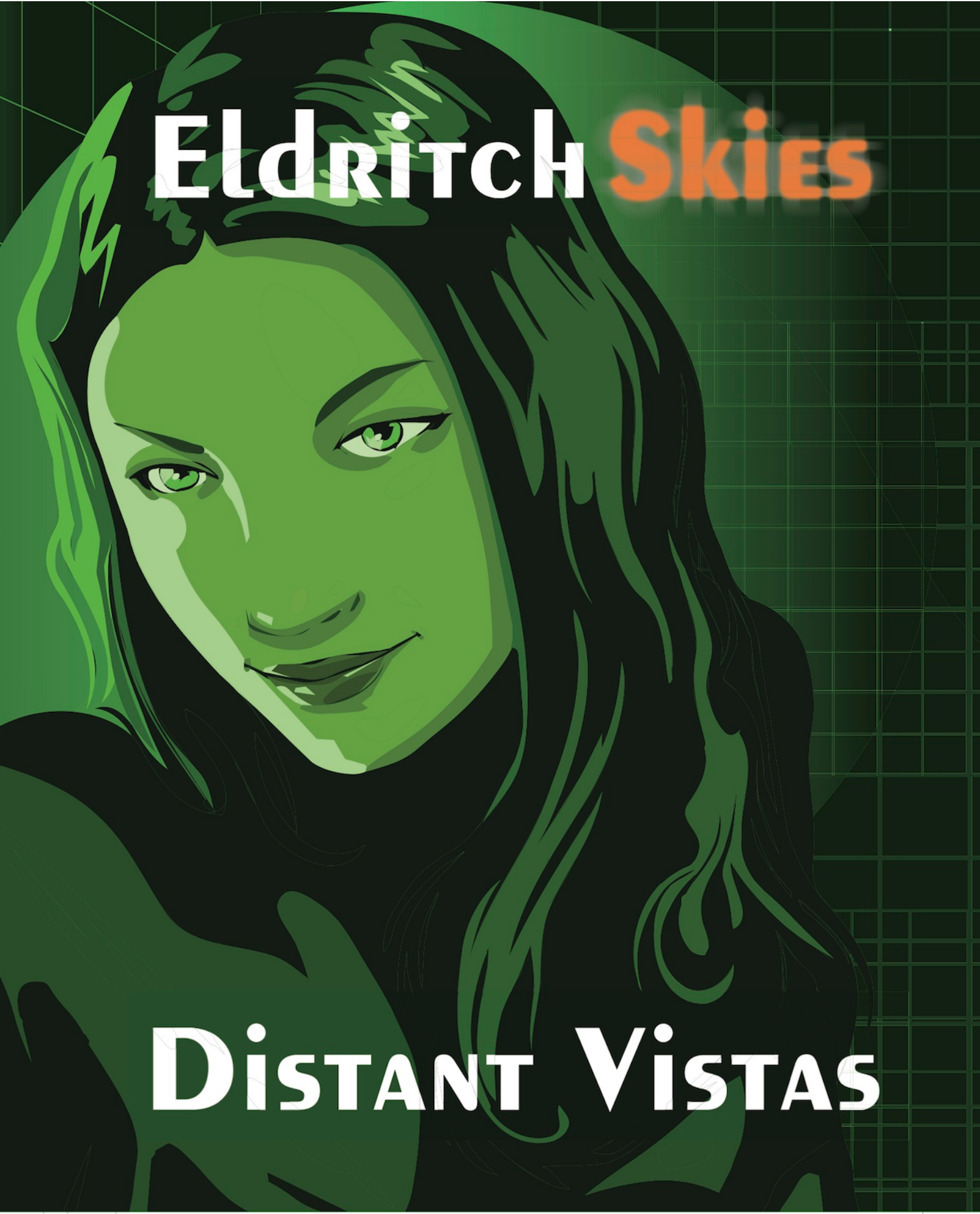
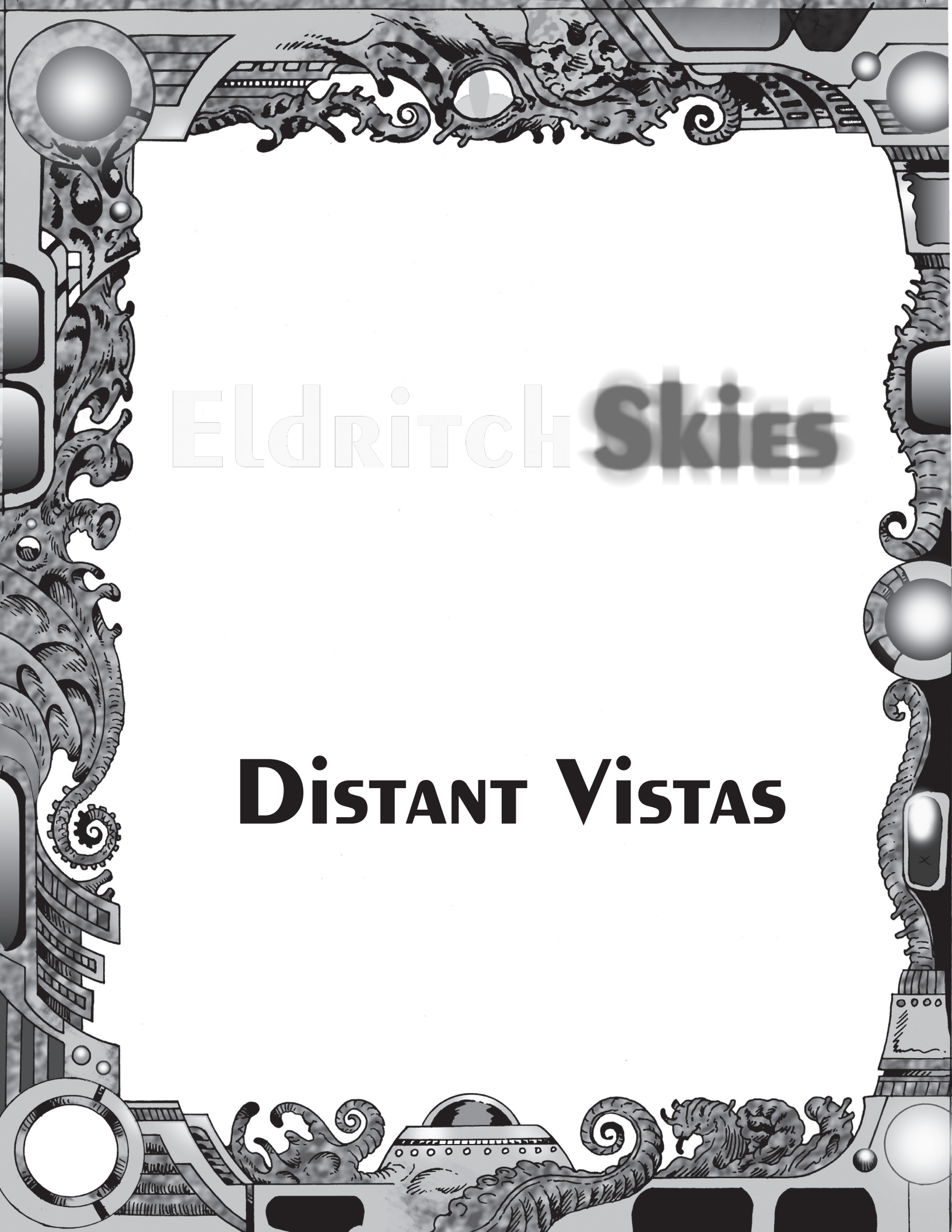




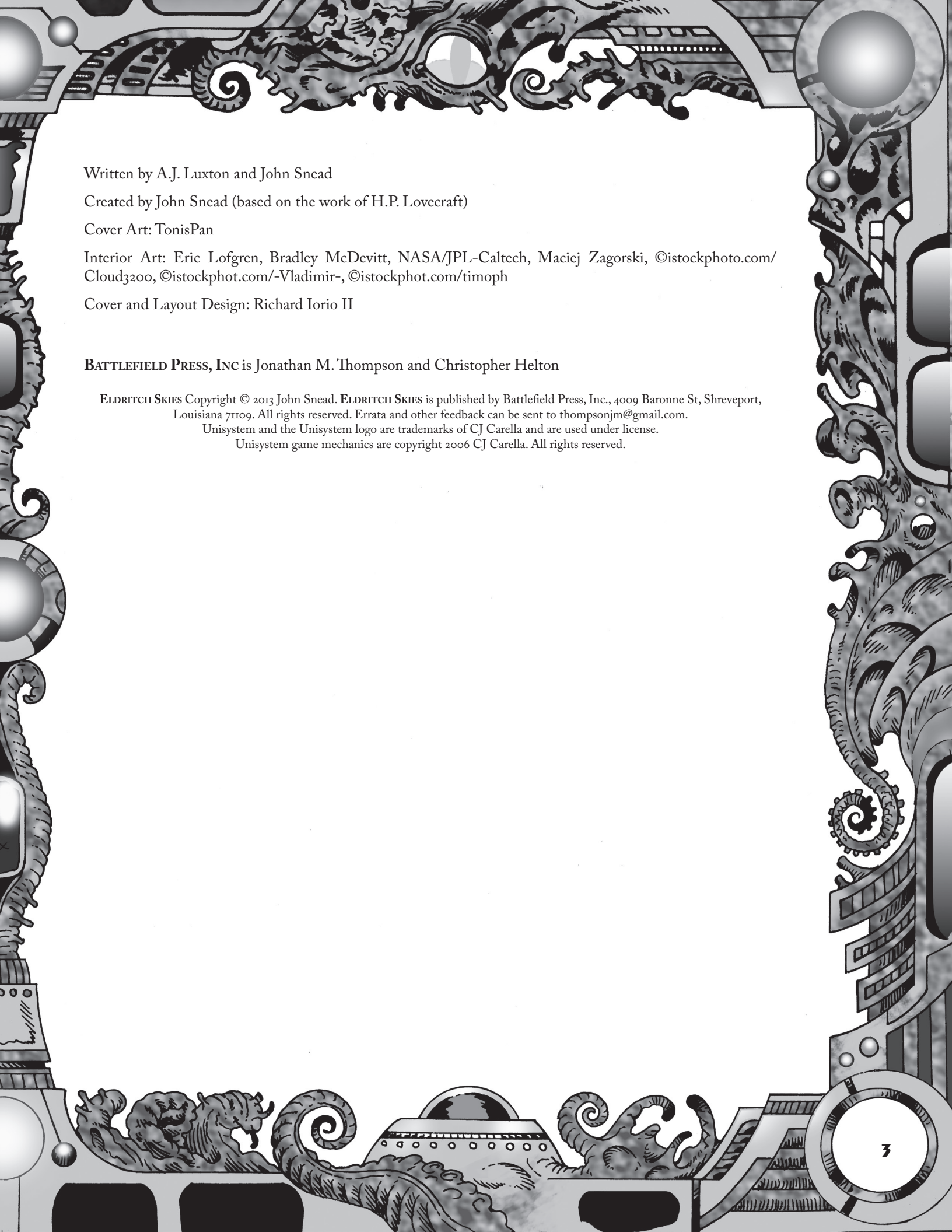
**Eldritch Skies**

**DISTANT VISTAS**



# Eldritch Skies

## DISTANT VISTAS



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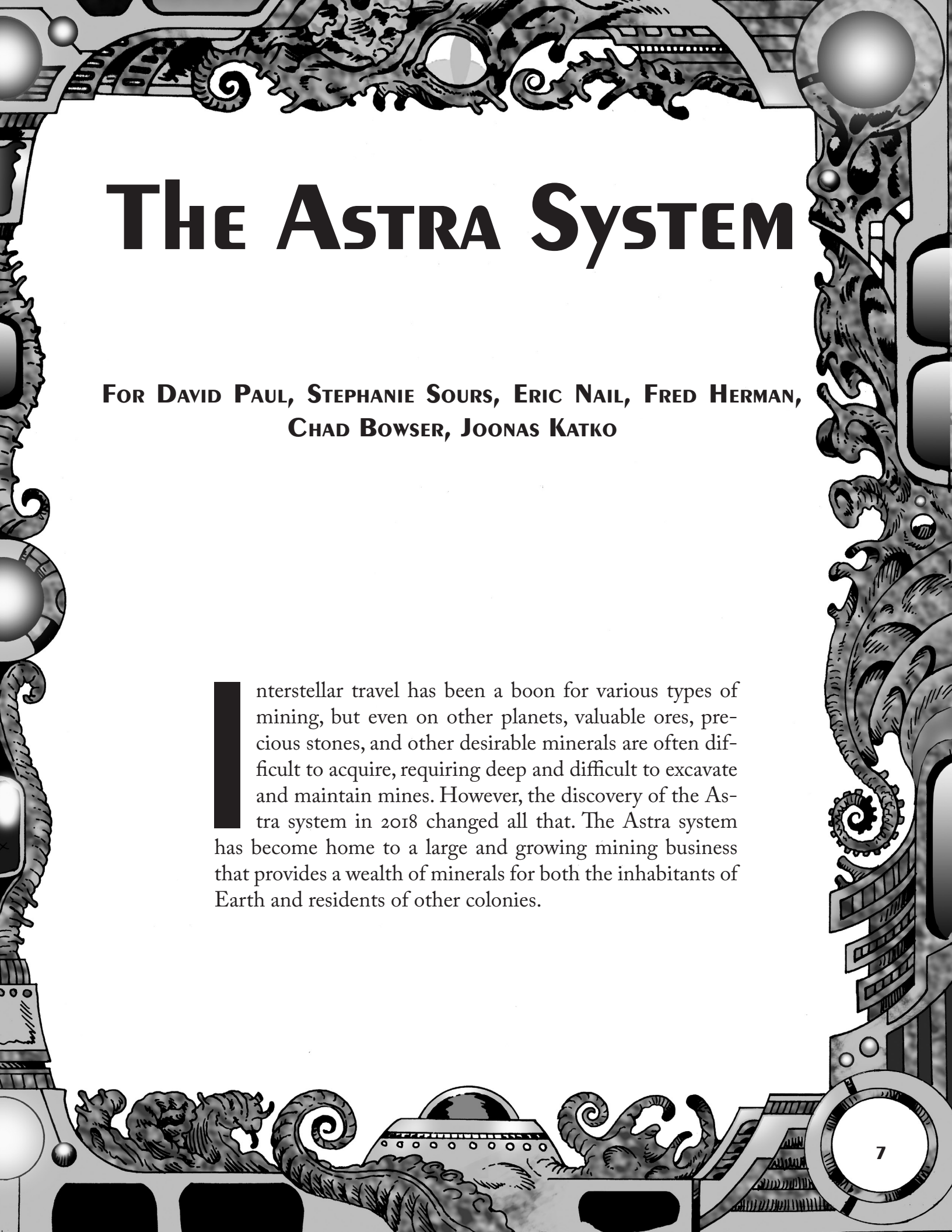
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A decorative border surrounds the page, featuring intricate mechanical designs like gears and pistons intertwined with organic, vine-like patterns. The border is rendered in a detailed, hand-drawn style.

# The Astra System

**FOR DAVID PAUL, STEPHANIE SOURS, ERIC NAIL, FRED HERMAN,  
CHAD BOWSER, JOONAS KATKO**

**I**nterstellar travel has been a boon for various types of mining, but even on other planets, valuable ores, precious stones, and other desirable minerals are often difficult to acquire, requiring deep and difficult to excavate and maintain mines. However, the discovery of the Astra system in 2018 changed all that. The Astra system has become home to a large and growing mining business that provides a wealth of minerals for both the inhabitants of Earth and residents of other colonies.



Astra has become such an important source of mineral wealth because it is not a world, but a dense and exceptionally rich asteroid belt that is the remains of an exploded world. 73,000 years ago, Astra was a lush life-bearing planet with a dense atmosphere and large oceans. Evidence suggests that Astra was home to several billion aliens with a highly advanced civilization. The inhabitants had recently opened a network of hyperspatial gates designed to link every major settlement on Astra together with large permanent hyperspatial gateways. This network experienced a catastrophic failure and shattered Astra in an instant. Instead of an explosion, this disaster somehow carved the planet into millions of small fragments and caused each of these pieces to move away from one another at high speed.

Today, the Astra system is most notable for having two asteroid belts. The outer belt is a standard asteroid belt located 3 AU from the system's star Morgan, it is moderately rich in a few minerals, but is otherwise fairly unexceptional and is similar to most other asteroid belts that human explorers have found. However, the inner asteroid belt is entirely unique. It consists of the fragmented remains of the once-inhabited planet Astra. While the inhabitants of Astra and all other life on this world were destroyed along with the planet, the asteroid belt which remains is an exceptionally rich source of ores, minerals, and gemstones.

This inner asteroid belt, known as the Astra belt is fairly dispersed, ranging from 0.6 AU to 1.2 AU from Morgan. The total mass of asteroids in the Astra belt is around 40% of the mass of Earth. In contrast, ordinary asteroid belts almost never have a mass of greater than 0.05% of the mass of Earth. In addition to its other virtues, the Astra belt has a mass that is almost 800 times larger than the solar system's asteroid belt. Astra seems to have had a mass 1.2 times that of earth, but the disaster which destroyed it blasted the majority of its mass either into its sun or entirely out of the Astra system. Only a portion of Astra's remains make up the asteroid belt that has taken its place.

Like any asteroid belt, the Astra belt is composed of millions of asteroids ranging in size from several meters in diameter to several hundred kilometers in diameter as well as many smaller particles. Most of the asteroids range between 100 meters and 10 kilometers in diameter. These asteroids are quite distant from one another. Unlike asteroid belts portrayed in many science fiction movies, the risk of hitting an asteroid, even while flying at high velocity is negligible. Even

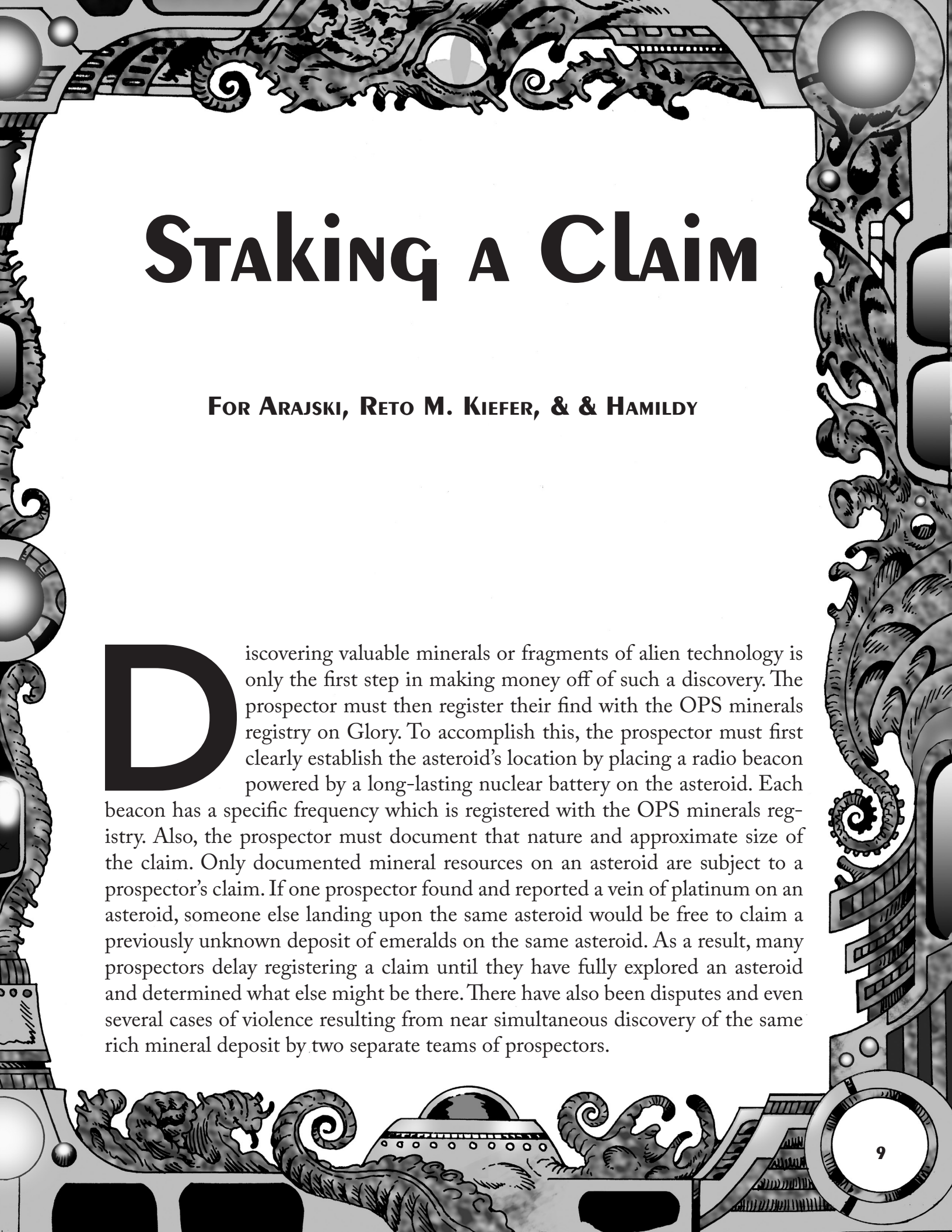
the dense Astra belt is largely a huge expanse of empty space lightly sprinkled with asteroids. However, while asteroids a kilometer or more in diameter are approximately 100,000 kilometers from one another in the solar system's asteroid belt, in the Astra belt, they are on average only 4,000 kilometers apart.

In ordinary asteroid belts, the minerals that make up the asteroids condense through gravitational attraction. The complex processes of melting and condensing needed to form the ores and metal deposits found on planets does not occur because the necessary water, heat, and pressure are not present. Minerals tend to be evenly distributed and are rarely concentrated. Also, many minerals, including almost all gemstones and a number of valuable industrial substances can only be formed in the heat and pressure found under a planetary crust.

In the Astra belt, all of the normally buried wealth of a large, mineral rich planet is free for the taking. A few small asteroids consist largely of enormous ore deposits, while others are huge fragments of quartz, granite, or basalt. Even the dense minerals which accumulated near the planet's core are now available for easy mining. Glory is by far the largest and most impressive asteroid in this belt. It consists of the remains of most of Astra's cooled core and was the first asteroid to be settled.

In the Astra belt, all of the veins of ores and gemstones which normally reside deep underground on a planet are freely available for the taking. Glory is only the most spectacular of many thousands of valuable asteroids. Prospecting in the Astra belt can be a time consuming process, as prospectors travel from one small asteroid to another in search of valuable minerals. However, the end result can easily be a large vein of high-grade ore, or even an asteroid containing large amounts of gold, rubies, or platinum.

The necessities of life support are also easier because there are a large number of asteroids composed of the water, soil, and other organics which made up the surface of Astra. Much of the water long since evaporated, but the outer rim of the asteroid belt does contain a significant number of icy asteroids. Also, some of the asteroids, like Glory were previously settled by Astrans who had colonized the neighboring world of Attis several centuries before Astra's destruction. Before they transcended, the Astrans from Attis set up their own mining colonies in the Astra belt, and some of their life support systems remain intact.

A decorative border surrounds the page, featuring intricate mechanical and organic designs. At the top, there are gears, pipes, and a large, stylized eye-like structure. The sides are adorned with vertical elements resembling tentacles or mechanical arms. The bottom features a row of mechanical components, including a large circular dial on the right and various pipes and gears. The overall style is reminiscent of a steampunk or industrial aesthetic.

# STAKING A CLAIM

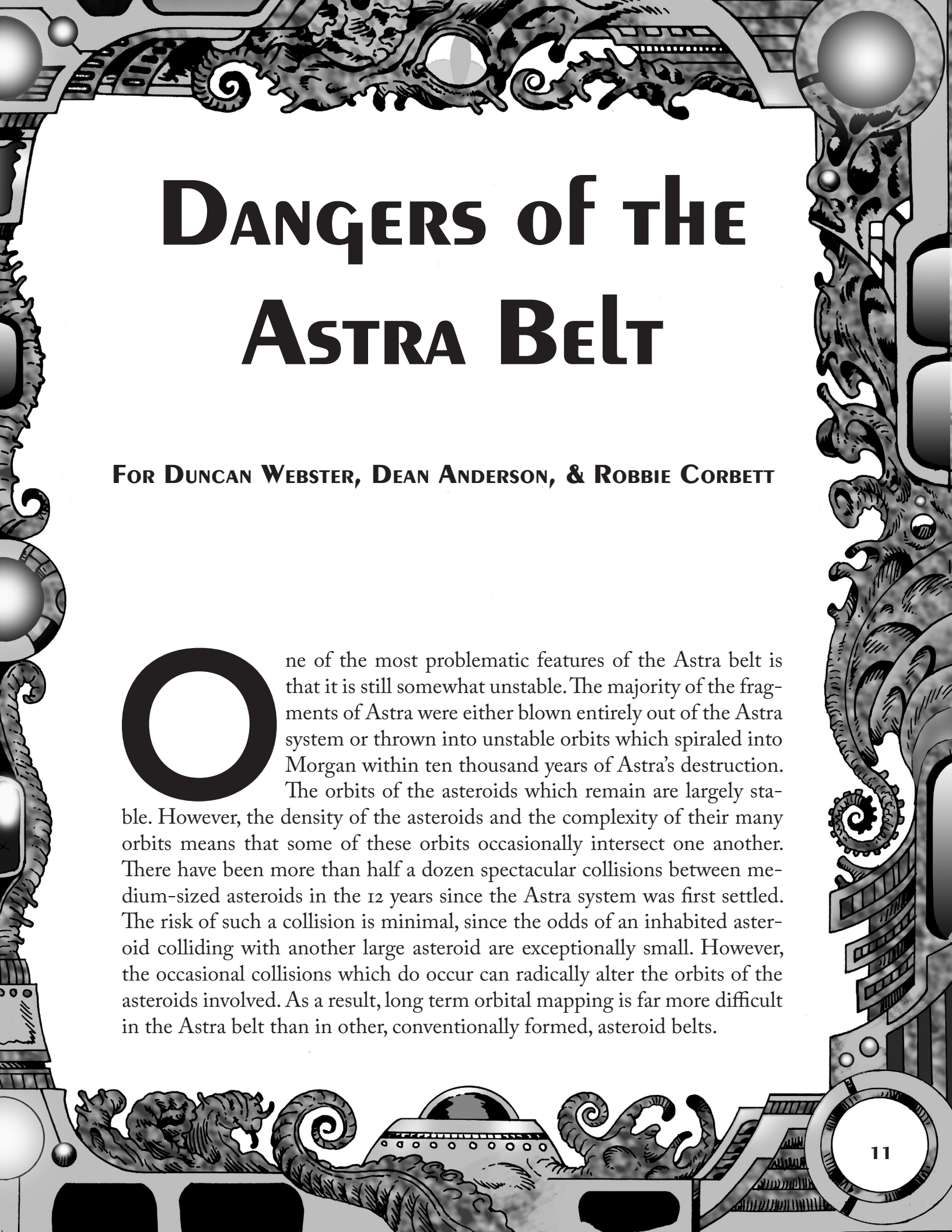
FOR ARAJSKI, RETO M. KIEFER, & & HAMILDY

**D**iscovering valuable minerals or fragments of alien technology is only the first step in making money off of such a discovery. The prospector must then register their find with the OPS minerals registry on Glory. To accomplish this, the prospector must first clearly establish the asteroid's location by placing a radio beacon powered by a long-lasting nuclear battery on the asteroid. Each beacon has a specific frequency which is registered with the OPS minerals registry. Also, the prospector must document that nature and approximate size of the claim. Only documented mineral resources on an asteroid are subject to a prospector's claim. If one prospector found and reported a vein of platinum on an asteroid, someone else landing upon the same asteroid would be free to claim a previously unknown deposit of emeralds on the same asteroid. As a result, many prospectors delay registering a claim until they have fully explored an asteroid and determined what else might be there. There have also been disputes and even several cases of violence resulting from near simultaneous discovery of the same rich mineral deposit by two separate teams of prospectors.

Once a claim has been discovered and filed, what happens next depends upon the size and nature of the claim. If the prospectors have found Astran artifacts, fossils, or any other exceedingly fragile and valuable objects, they typically sell the rights to one of the various scientific teams in the system. Some prospectors have the necessary patience and training to recover such artifacts on their own, but most prefer to leave this sort of meticulous work to well-trained experts. Prospectors who find gemstones, a vein of valuable metal, or some similar mineral resource usually mine it themselves and sell it on Glory.

Some of the larger finds can take several trips, but few are big enough to require extensive mining efforts. If the prospectors discover an especially rich and large vein of ore or a large deposit of a mineral that is of only moderate value, most decide that instead of spending large amounts of time and effort mining deep into an asteroid, they will sell the rights to one of the three large mining companies working in the Astra system. These companies each maintain a single small dragon-fly drive spacecraft that is outfitted for use as a mobile mineral extraction and processing facility. These vessels mine and process large claims and then transport the ore or gemstones back to the solar system.





# DANGERS of the ASTRA Belt

FOR DUNCAN WEBSTER, DEAN ANDERSON, & ROBBIE CORBETT

One of the most problematic features of the Astra belt is that it is still somewhat unstable. The majority of the fragments of Astra were either blown entirely out of the Astra system or thrown into unstable orbits which spiraled into Morgan within ten thousand years of Astra's destruction. The orbits of the asteroids which remain are largely stable. However, the density of the asteroids and the complexity of their many orbits means that some of these orbits occasionally intersect one another. There have been more than half a dozen spectacular collisions between medium-sized asteroids in the 12 years since the Astra system was first settled. The risk of such a collision is minimal, since the odds of an inhabited asteroid colliding with another large asteroid are exceptionally small. However, the occasional collisions which do occur can radically alter the orbits of the asteroids involved. As a result, long term orbital mapping is far more difficult in the Astra belt than in other, conventionally formed, asteroid belts.

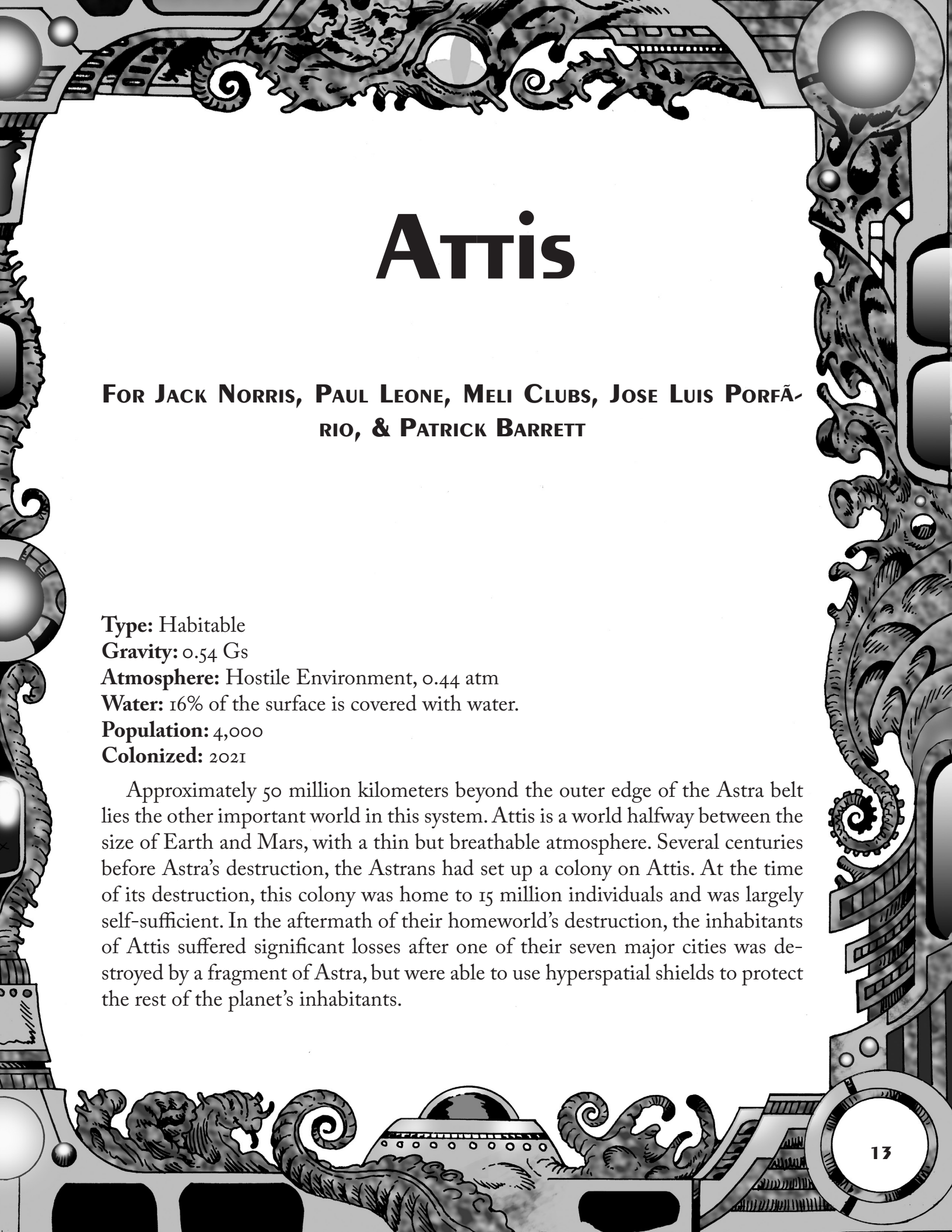
In addition, the periodic collisions create a large amount of dust and small debris, which makes navigation through the densest portions of the Astra belt somewhat dangerous. Morgan's stellar winds eventually blow most of these small particles out of the system, but collisions continue to create more. Although large asteroids are thousands or tens of thousands of kilometers apart, bodies between one centimeter and one meter in diameter are more common and are too small and too numerous for their orbits to be charted. As a result, the risk of a collision with one of these small fragments is relatively high. All ships traveling through the Astra belt are equipped with long range radar and automated proximity alarms. Ships typically need to dodge at least one object between 1 and 10 cm for every 5,000,000 kilometers that they travel. In addition, small mining camps of asteroids are almost always dug into the asteroid or covered with several meters of rubble in order to minimize the risk of punctures by small particles. Exposed structures can expect at least one impact capable of breaching a normal hull two or three times a year. However, structures buried under a meter or more of asteroid material are safe from all but the largest and rarest impacts. Such impacts are only likely to occur once few centuries.

There are also stories of prospectors discovering dangerous pieces of functional hyperspatial technology or even ancient artifacts containing hyperspatial creatures caged in sorcerous enchantments. Since prospecting began in the Astra system a decade ago, several ships have been destroyed by impacts with asteroids, and four others have simply vanished. Some prospectors believe that these vanished spacecraft were destroyed when their crews discovered a hyperspatial creature or a working piece of dangerous technology. In addition, one team of prospectors accidentally released a flying polyp from an ancient warded cavern that had survived Astra's destruction; the flying polyp killed one of the prospectors and damaged their ship before it vanished.



## INHABITED WORLDS OF THE ASTRA SYSTEM

The planet Attis and several large asteroids now have permanent settlements. Although Glory is by far the largest settlement, starships from Earth regularly land on all of these settlements. The total population of the Astra system is approximately 33,000, of which 24,000 live on Attis, Glory, or Cigar. 10,000 of these residents are asteroid prospectors, and the remainder work for the large mining companies, are researchers investigating Attis and the Astrans, or work as support personnel.



# Attis

**FOR JACK NORRIS, PAUL LEONE, MELI CLUBS, JOSE LUIS PORFÁ-  
RIO, & PATRICK BARRETT**

**Type:** Habitable

**Gravity:** 0.54 Gs

**Atmosphere:** Hostile Environment, 0.44 atm

**Water:** 16% of the surface is covered with water.

**Population:** 4,000

**Colonized:** 2021

Approximately 50 million kilometers beyond the outer edge of the Astra belt lies the other important world in this system. Attis is a world halfway between the size of Earth and Mars, with a thin but breathable atmosphere. Several centuries before Astra's destruction, the Astrans had set up a colony on Attis. At the time of its destruction, this colony was home to 15 million individuals and was largely self-sufficient. In the aftermath of their homeworld's destruction, the inhabitants of Attis suffered significant losses after one of their seven major cities was destroyed by a fragment of Astra, but were able to use hyperspatial shields to protect the rest of the planet's inhabitants.

Over the course of the next 1,000 years, the population of Attis grew, until it numbered almost half a billion, and their technology also continued to increase. After 2,000 years, Attis was completely terraformed and had a dense atmosphere and large seas. Then, 9,000 years later, 11,000 years after the destruction of Astra, the inhabitants of Attis transcended and became inhabitants of the most distant reaches of hyperspace who have no contact with the physical universe. This process left the natural world undisturbed, but in a few hours, all of the Astrans, and almost every inhabited city simply vanished, leaving regions of barren soil that was devoid of all artifacts and all traces of the Astrans.

Today, Attis' biosphere is in the process of returning to its natural state as the Astran's terraforming efforts gradually fail. The air is thin, but breathable and the hardy local life continues to struggle to survive. However, the percentage of oxygen is only 17% and there is a 2% concentration of carbon dioxide in the air. As a result, strenuous activity is difficult for anyone without the pressure support augmentation and even with this augmentation; the increased carbon dioxide makes living on this world somewhat uncomfortable. Headaches and mild drowsiness are the most common symptoms, but spending time in areas with poor ventilation can be quite dangerous. As a result, there are no plans to open Attis for colonization, unless someone discovers the secrets of the Astran's terraforming efforts and can make Attis more habitable.

Attis is now home to almost a dozen large and well-funded archeological teams, as well as close to a thousand independent treasure hunters, paleotechnologists, and explorers. Although all of the cities that were inhabited at the time of the Astran's transcendence vanished, there are more than ten thousand years worth of previously inhabited cities and towns, as well as a handful of isolated villages, vacation homes, and similar locations that were in use when the Astran's transcended and which remained intact. Most Astran technology is incomprehensible, and the more than 60,000 years since they vanished has also rendered almost all of it completely inoperable, but every explorer and researcher hopes to find an exception.

## COLONIES

There are four large settlements on Attis, each of which is located next to one of the larger and most intact Astran cities. Two of these settlements are named Spire



and Bridge after impressive features of the Astran cities they are built next to, the other two settlements, Morrow and Chakravarti are named after the pair of OPS explorers who first set foot on Attis. Bridge is the largest of these settlements, with a population of almost 1,200. In addition to the 3,100 people living in one of these four settlements, there are also almost 900 additional researchers and prospectors who live in mobile habitats or small settlements all across the planet. The OPS has put up the standard network of communication and weather satellites, allowing residents of Attis to easily keep in touch with one another. However, travel between settlements can be difficult during the periodic dust storms, some of which can cover an area more than 2,000 kilometers across and last more than a week.

Each of the four cities consists of a large pressurized dome, with pumps and filters which reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide to comfortable levels. In addition, hydroponics tanks using specially engineered algae increase the concentration of oxygen to 25%, allowing all residents to breathe comfortably. Because of the planet's relatively dense atmosphere, pressurized trucks and airplanes can operate normally, and most transport and travel between settlements makes use of long-range jets with pressurized cabins. There is also a small space station around Attis that is designed for plasma drive and dragonfly drive spacecraft. Known informally as Heaven, this station has a permanent population of approximately 200. Heaven also houses half a dozen space planes, which are used for both transport between Heaven and the four surface settlements, and also as a method of extremely rapid transport between settlements.

# Glory

FOR WILLIAM STOWERS, MIKE LAFFERTY, NICK BATE, HARRY KANSEG,  
& RUNE BELSVIK REINÅs

**Type:** Hostile (Safe in the domes)

**Gravity:** 0.11 Gs

**Atmosphere:** none (0.9 atm in domes)

**Water:** none (20% in domes)

**Population:** 15,000

**Colonized:** 2020

Glory is one of the densest celestial bodies of its size known to geologists. It is composed almost exclusively of metals and metallic ores. While it is primarily made of iron and nickel, it also includes a large number of valuable trace minerals such as cobalt, tungsten, titanium, and a truly enormous variety of long half-life radioactive elements. In short, Glory is a solid chunk dense metals. Because of its high density, Glory has a surface gravity of slightly over 1/9th Earth's gravity.



Glory is also both the largest asteroid in the Astra belt and the most populous. With a diameter of close to 500 kilometers, Glory is the only asteroid that is largely spherical. Currently, 15,000 people live on and in Glory. In large part this population is made possible by the fact that the Astrans terraformed it. Approximately two thousand years after the destruction of Astra, the Astrans who had survived upon the terraformed world of Attis came to Glory to mine it. The Astrans continued to live and work on Glory for almost seven thousand years, before returning to Attis. During this time, they only mined a small fraction of this asteroid's mineral wealth, but they constructed several large habitation domes that have endured far better than their terraforming efforts on Attis.

Eleven huge domes that are between 30 and 150 kilometers in diameter cover the surface. Made of a transparent, living plastic that is exceptionally tough and rapidly heals all damage, these domes are connected to one another by underground tunnels and simple but sturdy airlocks. The domes have now become home to the humans working on Astra.

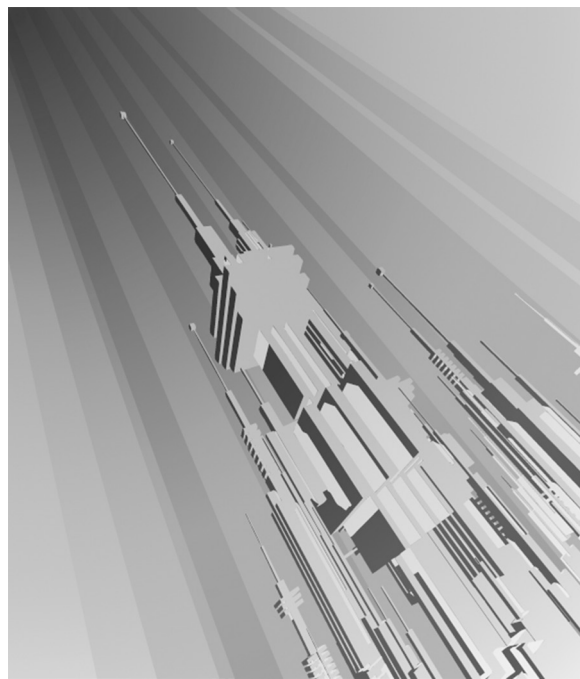
Inside these domes is an environment with air pressure equal to 90% Earth's and a thriving ecosystem of plants and small animals. Because life in the Astra system is unrelated to life on Earth, Astran plants and animals provide humans who eat them with nothing more than empty calories and a few minerals, but unlike most alien life, they are edible, if also lacking in several important vitamins and amino acids. In addition, the air and water is safe. To help make Glory more habitable, miners have imported extensive hydroponic equipment to allow them to produce their own food.

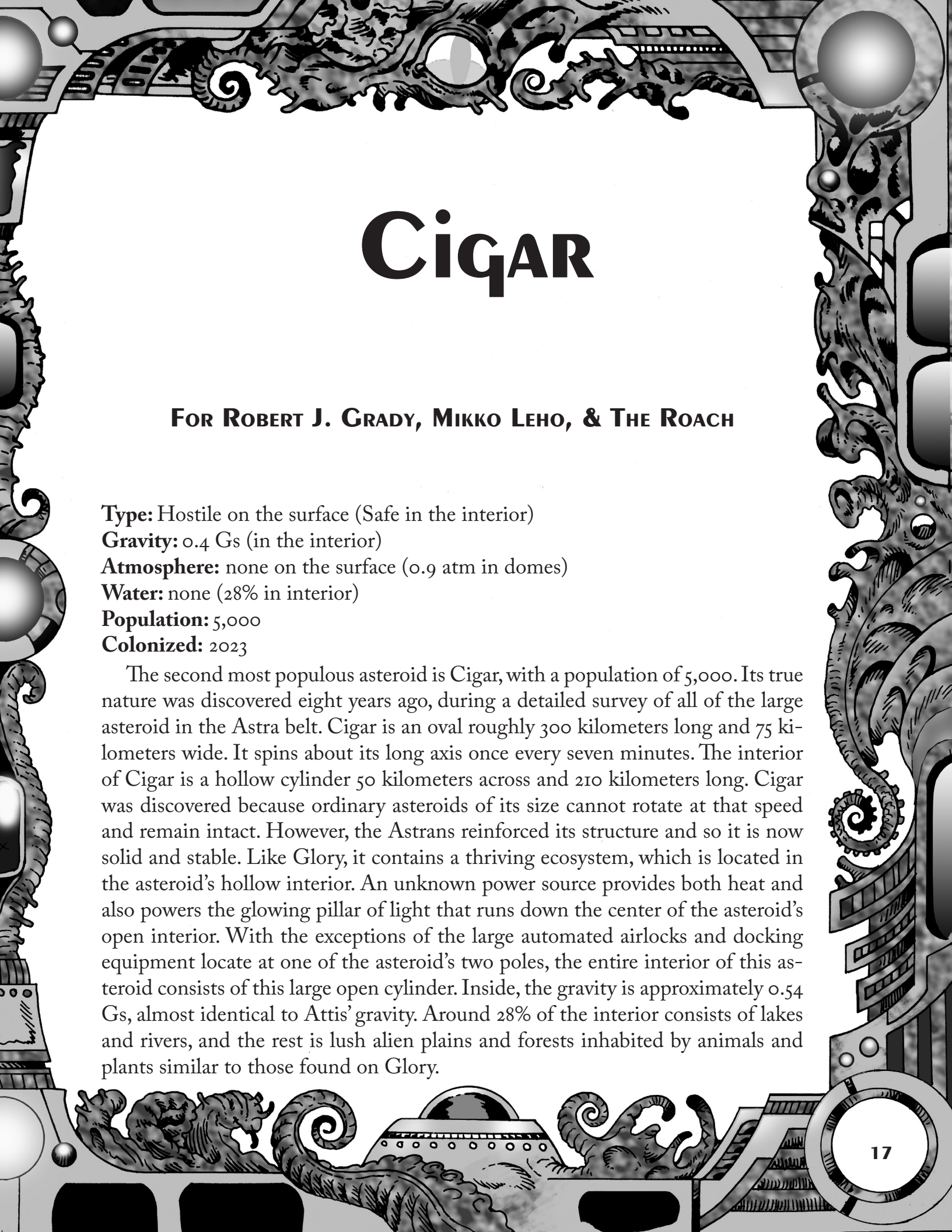
Careful examination of Glory reveals that it has suffered no impacts with asteroids larger than a few millimeters in diameter since the Astrans constructed their habitat domes. Most researchers believe that the Astrans constructed some sort of subtle but powerful device to deflect the orbits of asteroids that might collide with Glory and that this device continues to function. However, no one has found this device and the Astrans also removed almost all evidence of their presence other than the closed ecosystem of the domes.

Because it consists of most of the planet's core, Glory is rich in heavy elements, especially radioactive elements like uranium. However, apart from a few rich deposits of radioactive elements, in many ways it lacks the concentrated wealth found in other smaller asteroids. The gemstones, ores, and veins of metal found in

the remains of Astra's crust or mantle are not present on Glory. Also, most of the heavy elements present on Glory are mixed into the large mass of nickel-iron that makes up the majority of this asteroid. As a result, the mining performed on Glory largely consists of expensive and time consuming extraction of some of the most valuable elements from the asteroid's interior.

Glory is the system's primary spaceport as well as the location where most of the prospecting spacecraft come for supplies, repairs, and recreation. However, few prospectors work on Glory. Most of the inhabitants either provide goods and services for the system's thousands of prospectors, work in the metal refining factories that make use of the minerals found on Glory, or help supply and maintain the large mining vessels that are sent out to work especially large finds of metals, gemstones, or other valuable minerals. Unlike the plasma drive prospecting vessels, these mobile mining vessels are small dragonfly drive spacecraft which can swiftly fly to any point in the Astra belt and which use their drive field to protect them from impacts by small asteroids.





# CiGAR

FOR ROBERT J. GRADY, MIKKO LEHO, & THE ROACH

**Type:** Hostile on the surface (Safe in the interior)

**Gravity:** 0.4 Gs (in the interior)

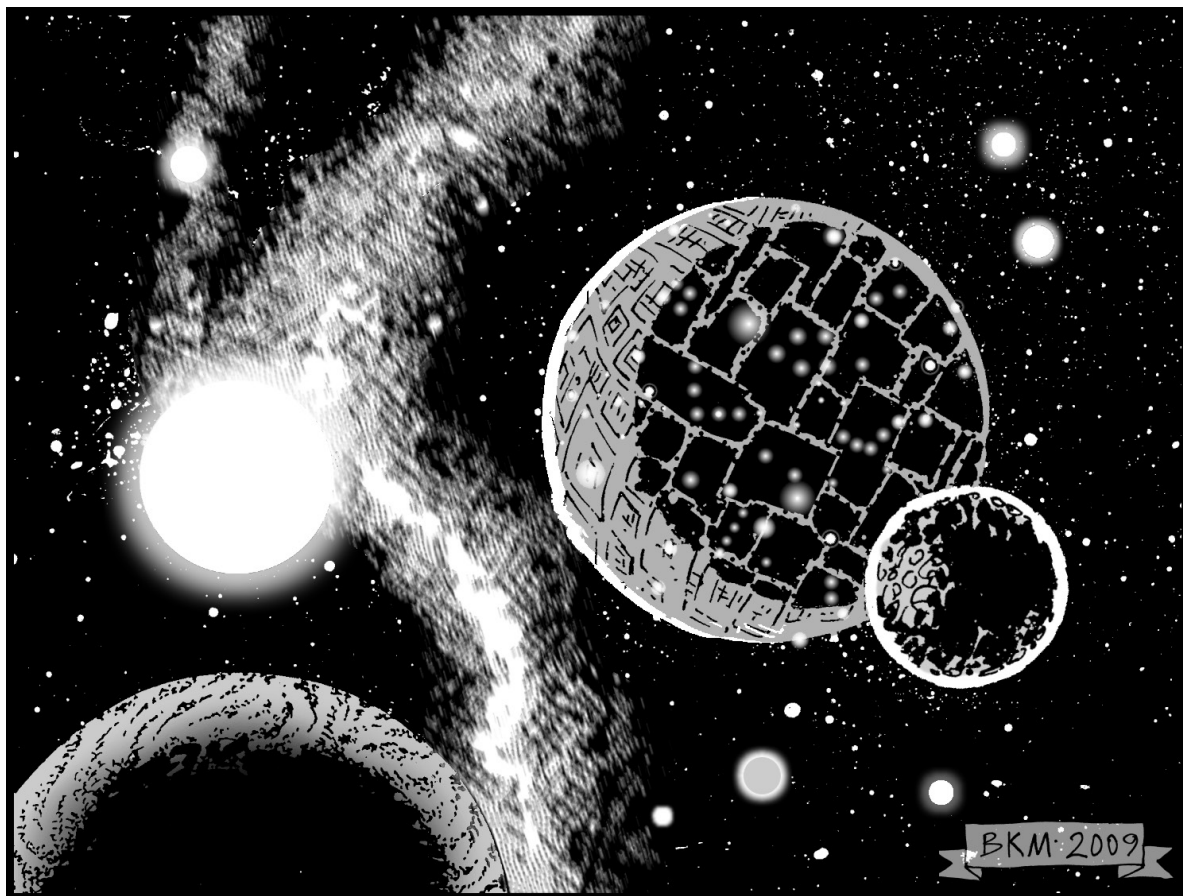
**Atmosphere:** none on the surface (0.9 atm in domes)

**Water:** none (28% in interior)

**Population:** 5,000

**Colonized:** 2023

The second most populous asteroid is Cigar, with a population of 5,000. Its true nature was discovered eight years ago, during a detailed survey of all of the large asteroid in the Astra belt. Cigar is an oval roughly 300 kilometers long and 75 kilometers wide. It spins about its long axis once every seven minutes. The interior of Cigar is a hollow cylinder 50 kilometers across and 210 kilometers long. Cigar was discovered because ordinary asteroids of its size cannot rotate at that speed and remain intact. However, the Astrans reinforced its structure and so it is now solid and stable. Like Glory, it contains a thriving ecosystem, which is located in the asteroid's hollow interior. An unknown power source provides both heat and also powers the glowing pillar of light that runs down the center of the asteroid's open interior. With the exceptions of the large automated airlocks and docking equipment locate at one of the asteroid's two poles, the entire interior of this asteroid consists of this large open cylinder. Inside, the gravity is approximately 0.54 Gs, almost identical to Attis' gravity. Around 28% of the interior consists of lakes and rivers, and the rest is lush alien plains and forests inhabited by animals and plants similar to those found on Glory.



In addition to having more than 30,000 square kilometers of space in the interior, there are also countless tunnels leading off from the interior habitat into the depths of the surrounding rock. With diameters ranging from three to five meters, the inner four kilometers of rock surrounding the habitable area is riddled with thousands of tunnels, some of which intersect in rooms as much as 30 meters across. Only a fraction of these tunnels have been mapped, and while the interior of Cigar is entirely devoid of Astran artifacts, a few dozen have been found in the tunnels, including the remnants of what appear to be Astra living spaces for especially eccentric or reclusive Astrans.

There are rumors of ancient hyperspatial gates constructed in Cigar's tunnels that lead to other asteroids, Attis, or perhaps some destination outside of the Astra system. So far, these gateways are only rumors. How-

ever, in the past five years two people have vanished while exploring Cigar's tunnels. The tunnel walls are too thick for radio to be used for more than a few hundred meters, and telepathy and automated search drones have not been able to locate either of the vanished explorers.

Landing on Cigar is somewhat complex. The Astran's build an elaborate docking station at one of the asteroid's poles, where spacecraft can land, and the crew can walk to an airlock into the asteroid's interior. However, landing elsewhere on the asteroid is effectively impossible, since the centrifugal force of the asteroid's rotation is sufficiently high to throw any person or spacecraft that was not firmly anchored to the surface off of the asteroid.

## OTHER ASTEROIDS

FOR STEFAN OHRMANN

Glory and Cigar are by far the two largest life-bearing asteroids discovered in this system, but they are not the only ones. Two other hollow, life-bearing asteroids have been discovered. One is 70 kilometers in diameter and the other is 20. Both asteroids are irregular in shape and contain a large roughly spherical hollow inside. In the larger asteroid, this hollow space is 30 kilometers across, in the smaller asteroid it is only eight kilometers across. These asteroids rotate quite slowly, and the interior gravity in the larger is 0.1 Gs, and 0.02 Gs in the smaller. Three other asteroids that once contained inhabited interiors have been found. In one, the machinery helping to keep this life alive failed and the interior is now full of toxic air and ancient death. The other two were struck by another asteroid and both cracked open sometime in the last 60,000 years.

## TREASURES OF THE ASTRA BELT

FOR NEAL DALTON & CARL CONGDON

The Astra belt possesses vast and often highly concentrated mineral wealth. Glory contains an incredibly vast amount of heavy metals. In addition, portions of Astra that were once closer to the surface contain large deposits of gemstones and a variety of other rare minerals and metals.

Also, because Astra split apart by exotic hyperspatial forces rather than having been destroyed by a vast explosion, some frozen remnants of Astran plants and animals remain intact and several hundred Astran artifacts have been recovered from various asteroids. While the bulk of the mining and exploration in the Astra system is focused on metals and gemstones, biological materials recovered from Astra are also of great interest. A sample that contained several dozen fish-like cave dwelling creatures frozen in a block of ice resulted in the creation of a new and powerful anti-viral drug based on a compound found in the skin of these fish like creatures. Although the Astran structures on Glory and Cigar contain abundant local ecosystems, their simple ecosystems were clearly far less diverse than Astra. It is clear that Astra was home to many creatures that were either not imported to

Attis, or were simply not used in the ecosystems they built on Glory, Cigar, or the other inhabited asteroids. Also, today only the hardest species survive on Attis

## THE LEGEND OF THE FORTUNE ASTEROID

FOR TRAVIS STOUT

The instability of the asteroids' orbits means that the process of claiming a small mineral rich asteroid can sometimes be difficult. When prospectors discover such an asteroid, they place a radio beacon on it while also calculating its orbit. If the asteroid impacts another asteroid, then its orbit can change, and this same impact may also destroy the radio beacon. As a result, a small but exceedingly valuable asteroid was discovered and then lost again. According to detailed analysis, this asteroid only 100 meters in diameter seemed to be almost 5% platinum and iridium by mass. Discovered in 2026 and informally named Fortune, the asteroid was lost after what is believed to have been a collision with another small asteroid that knocked out the radio beacon. Stories and rumors of someone rediscovering Fortune abound in bars on Glory, but so far these stories remain unconfirmed.

## ALIENS IN THE ASTRA SYSTEM

FOR OWLGLASS, DIRK REMMECKE, & STEPHAN SZABO

The Astra system is not merely known to humanity. The mi-go regularly visit to mine various resources in the Astra belt. Fortunately, there is a sufficient amount of material here to last both humanity and the mi-go for hundreds of thousands of years. Also, since the mi-go are more interested in living biological samples than in ones frozen millennia ago, their interest in this system is less than in various life-bearing worlds.

Occasionally human prospectors encounter mi-go. Most obey the laws restricting trade between the two species to licensed representatives subject to OPS oversight. However, the fact that encounters between humans and mi-go can be unnoticed by anyone else causes a few humans and mi-go to engage in various forms of illegal trade. A few prospectors have traded Astra artifacts or rich mineral deposits for mi-go devices or even hyperspatial implants.

There are also occasional rumors of flying polyps in the Astra system, but there has been only one documented encounter. OPS operatives who have looking into this incident believe that this flying polyp was likely imprisoned within a cavern deep inside a large asteroid and was accidentally freed by prospectors, but there is no proof about the this flying polyp's origin.

This system is somewhat outside of the regions of space inhabited by either moonbeasts or the yaddithi. However, the Astra system is close enough that either group could find it and would rapidly realize the value in this unique system. If a moonbeast ship discovered the Astra system, they would almost certainly begin capturing prospector ships, especially if the ship was carrying valuable cargo. Several moonbeast ships also might work together to attempt a raid upon Glory or Cigar.

The yaddithi would seek to mine the system exactly like humanity has started to do, but would also notice the presence of both humans and mi-go in the system. Most yaddithi would seek to avoid notice, which given their advanced ships would be possible. However, if the yaddithi begin mining here, a chance meeting between humanity and the yaddithi could easily occur in the Astra system. Directors interested in the yaddithi may decide that they have already begun mining minerals in this system. Perhaps a prospector ship or some other human spacecraft comes upon either a yaddithi vessel that has been damaged by an asteroid impact or the characters discover the remains of a yaddithi mining station that was recently vacated, as well as evidence that the yaddithi may soon return there.

## PLASMA DRIVE SPACECRAFT

### FOR ERIC EDWARDS

**Weight:** 25,000 (fueled, but without cargo) + 10 tons of cargo  
**Speed:** up to 50 km/sec (with fuel to decelerate), 65 km/sec if carrying less than 2 tons of cargo  
**Range:** Two Months  
**Damage Capacity:** 800  
**Armor Value:** 6  
**Toughness:** 4  
**Handling:** 3  
**Crew/Passengers:** 2/6 + cargo  
**Cost:** +5

Powered by a plasma rocket, this is the only pure space vehicle other than dragonfly drive starships in use by humanity. This somewhat delicate and slightly cramped craft has a maximum acceleration of 0.14 Gs, allowing it to land on and take off from any moon

or asteroid with a gravity of 0.12 or less. In flight, its normal acceleration is 0.02 Gs. These vehicles are most commonly found in the Astra system, where they are widely used from in-system transport and asteroid mining. They are also occasionally used by ultra-wealthy individuals in the solar system who use them for racing or tourism. Powered by long-lasting nuclear batteries, these vehicles use hydrogen as reaction mass and can operate in any low-G environment. Unlike the elegant dragonfly drive spacecraft, plasma drive spacecraft are unstreamlined open framework of girders with a roughly spherical habitation pod at one end, the plasma engines at the other, and liquid hydrogen tanks and cargo pods in between.

## SPACE POD

### FOR JASON MARKS

**Weight:** 120  
**Speed:** up to 4,000 km/hour (with fuel to decelerate)  
**Range:** six days  
**Damage Capacity:** 30  
**Armor Value:** 4  
**Toughness:** 3  
**Handling:** 5  
**Crew/Passengers:** 1 + 20 kg cargo  
**Cost:** +2

Effectively a miniature space ship, a space pod is a small oval pod with mechanical arms and a metallic hydrogen engine cable of an acceleration of up to 0.3 Gs. A space pod is an oval 2.5 meters long and slightly over 1 meter in diameter. They are used extensively for orbital construction around the Earth, on the Moon, and in the Astra system. Because they are not streamlined, space pods only function in vacuum and on worlds with an atmospheric pressure of less than 0.1 atmospheres. Space pods contain a life support system that can provide their single passenger with air, food, and water for up to six full days.

## KRISHNAMURTI

### FOR KAREN TOZZI & BARRY DEUTSCH

**Type:** Habitable  
**Gravity:** 0.61 Gs  
**Atmosphere:** Breathable, 0.71 atm  
**Water:** 59% of the surface is covered with water.  
**Population:** 350  
**Discovered:** 2028

Krishnamurti is the most recently discovered world

**Name:** Red Cap  
**Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 6, Constitution 4, Intelligence 1, Perception 5, Willpower 3  
**Ability Scores:** Muscle 16, Combat 16, Brains 8  
**Life Points:** 46  
**Speed:** 60  
**Special Abilities:** Enhanced Smell, Night Vision, Increased Speed.

#### MANEUVERS

| NAME    | SCORE | DAMAGE | NOTES          |
|---------|-------|--------|----------------|
| Bite    | 14    | 24     | Slash/Stab     |
| Claw    | 16    | 24     | Slash/Stab     |
| Dodge   | 16    | —      | Defense action |
| Grapple | 18    | —      | Defense action |

inhabited by Earth-derived life. It is a relatively dry world with a somewhat thin atmosphere. It's possible for anyone to adapt to life on Krishnamurti without special augmentations, but anyone not raised at high altitude or who lacks the pressure support augmentation can easily become out of breath until they have lived here for several months. This world is currently under review for colonization, but is not considered to be a premium world.

Most life on Krishnamurti is relatively slender and much of it is quite large, since the low gravity allows animals and plants to grow considerably larger than on Earth. However, life on Krishnamurti is also relatively familiar looking. While most worlds were seeded with life during the Cambrian and are almost completely unrelated to Earthly life, the elder ones brought life to Krishnamurti slightly less than 300 million years ago, during the early Permian. As a result, this life included primitive trees, as well as reptiles, fish, amphibians, insects, crustaceans, and many other familiar varieties of creatures.

With a thin atmosphere and the system's red K<sub>3</sub> sun, evolution on Krishnamurti has been relatively slow. Today, the land is home to a variety of large slender creatures that resemble mammals and reptiles. Tall forests and jungles cover the wetter regions, and scrub and brush blanket most of the land. Bipedes are common on Krishnamurti. The most dangerous are the red caps, bipedal pack hunting mammals the size of leopards. Red-caps resemble furry raptor dinosaurs and researchers regard them as a significant threat to careless visitors. Named because of the bright red fur on their heads, they have already killed and eaten one biologist.

## THE ROBOT CARVERS

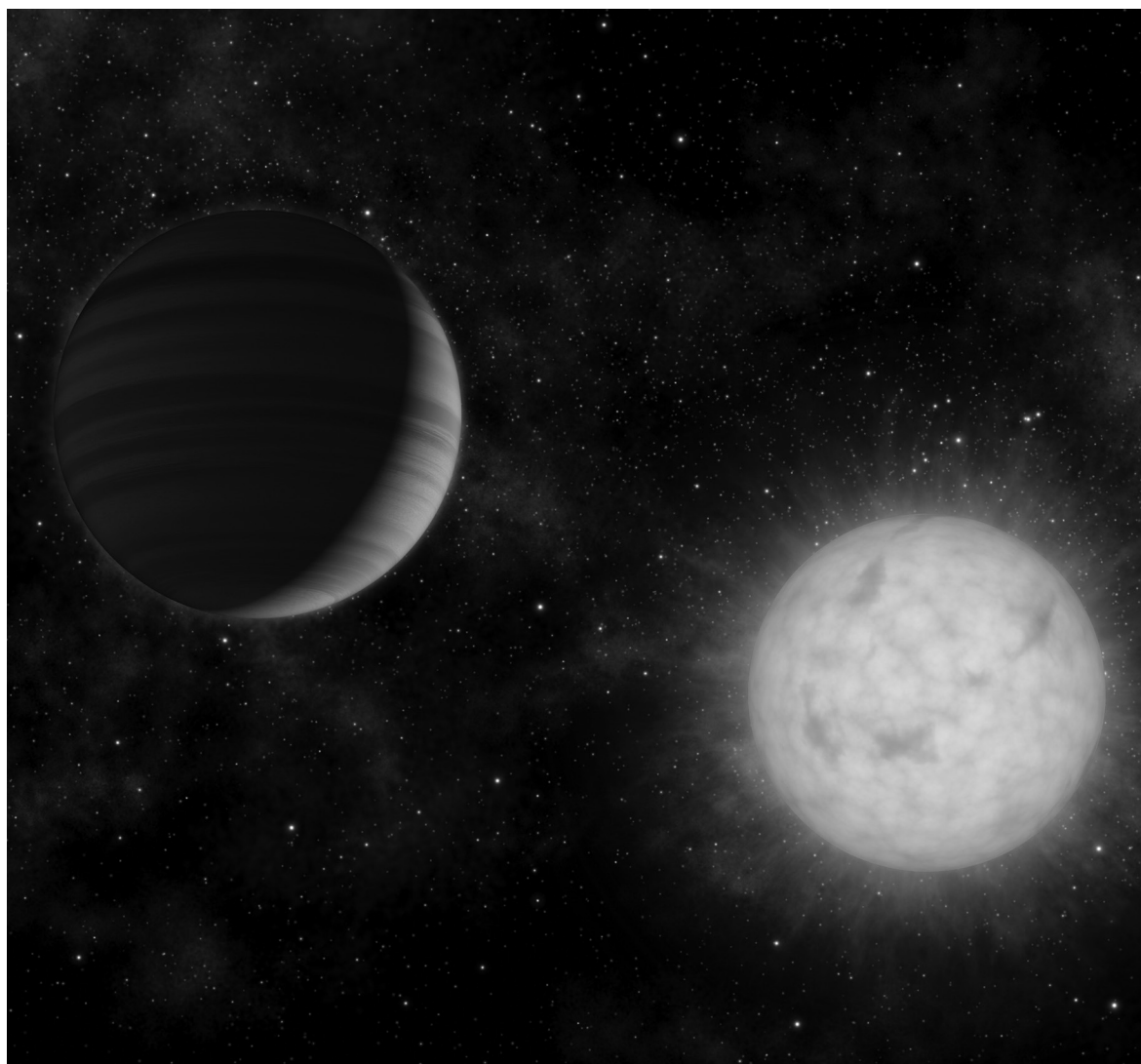
FOR JOHN MORROW, INDI COYOTE, & STEW WILSON

The most intelligent life on Krishnamurti are the flocks of social bird-like creatures similar in intelligence to some monkeys. This world has never been home to any intelligent species and there is also no evidence of any long-term colonization by any off-world species. However, it has clearly been visited at least once by an alien species. The top of one of the peaks in the equatorial Llaress mountain range is now composed of a solid block of a presumably synthetic material that is as hard as diamond. Some unknown process was used to transmute an entire basalt peak into this exceptionally hard substance. On a high wide ledge approximately 400 meters long and 11 meters wide a group eight alien robots are carving a complex relief sculpture on a flat space on the side of the peak. These robots have a vaguely insectoid appearance with three slender legs, five complex and specialized arms, and a hard, bright purple outer shell. Any attempt to interfere with the robots results in the robots all powering down and surrounding themselves with a powerful force shield.

The one attempt to remove a robot from this ledge resulted in the ninth robot's immediate self-destruction. Since that time, no one has interfered with the robots. Studies of the sculpture have proven that the robots have been carving for approximately 27,000 years. Work on the sculpture has progressed from left to right along a face of the mountain which has been polished mirror

smooth. The carving goes extremely slowly, with the robots completing less than two centimeters a year. The current theory is that the robots first began by slowly cutting off and polishing the peak and have only actually begun carving within the last 22,000 years. Researchers believe that the mural is nearly complete and contains a mixture of abstract scenes and written language. They also predict that within 30-120 years the mural will be complete. Most researchers believe that the robots were set to work creating some sort of monument or perhaps a work of art. However, one sorcerer and hyperspatial theorist who extensively studied this carving believes that it is the first step in performing an exceptionally powerful ritual.

In addition to the thin atmosphere, one of the concerns about opening this world to colonization is what might happen when this sculpture is complete, especially if the species responsible for creating this carving returns. So far, this carving is the only evidence of these alien's presence on Krishnamurti, but this world has only been studied for less than two years, and less obvious alien artifacts or constructs could easily have been overlooked.



## FENRIS

**FOR ZED LOPEZ, THOMAS LADECARD, JEFF PITTMAN,  
ERIC PRIEHS**

**Type:** Hostile (average temperature  $-120^{\circ}\text{C}$ )

**Gravity:** 0.93 Gs

**Atmosphere:** Breathable (if warmed) 0.8 atm

**Water:** 68% of the surface is covered with ice.

**Population:** 60

**Discovered:** 2026

Until approximately 110,000 years ago, Fenris was a living world with a thriving civilization. It was seeded with life from Earth almost 400 million years ago. Then, half a million years ago, another alien species introduced several thousand primitive hominids, related to the earliest Neanderthals, from earth to this world. Although human archeologists have not yet discovered this, these hominids were initially brought to Fenris by an unknown alien species who used them as mind-controlled laborers for an alien colony that was abandoned after only a few thousand years, leaving more than 20,000 hominids behind. Over time, these hominids evolved, adapted to their new home, and eventually built an industrial civilization.

Then, some cosmic catastrophe, or perhaps the intervention of one of the Great Old Ones destroyed the entire ecosystem. While exact cause of this disaster is not known, the result is clear, Fenris now orbits its sun in an elliptical orbit that varies from 5 to 6 AU, similar to the distance that Jupiter orbits the Sun. The available evidence indicates that the planet moved from its previously warm and habitable orbit to this frigid orbit in only a few years and that the inhabitants were powerless to stop it. Within a few decades, all life on Fenris has frozen solid, as did the surface of the seas. Today, the oceans are frozen to a depth of almost 2 kilometers. The ocean depths retain liquid water and life continues to thrive around hydrothermal vents, but life in most of the ocean became extinct long ago. Portions of the land are now covered with carbon dioxide snow, and all land-based life died off within 40 years of the planet being moved.

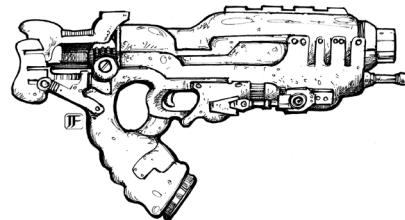
Today, Fenris' surface is lifeless and frozen, but all across it is evidence of a once verdant ecosystem and a thriving civilization of several billion human-like creatures. The civilization seems to have been almost as advanced as humanity is today, but with no evidence to suggest that the inhabitants understood hyperspace or hyperspatial sorcery. Amidst the frozen forests and fro-

zen animals are frozen cities. Archeologists in special vacuum suits designed for extended low temperature operation have been exploring these cities for the last four years and are working out both the history of this civilization and also how it ended. While more than 85% of the population died within a decade, it is clear that in some regions, the Fenrins survived for several centuries after their planet was moved, huddling together around nuclear power plants and growing plants in vast electrically-lit green houses. However, the extreme cold gradually weakened various materials and led to a series of minor failures that eventually destroyed all of the surviving settlements, as crop failures and mechanical failures led to freezing and starvation. The last surviving city appears to have died out no more than 400 years after the world froze.

### THE FENRINS

**FOR DAVE LeCOMPTÉ**

The Fenrins are not modern humans, but they are closely related, easily close enough to interbreed with humanity. They are moderately tall, exceedingly strong and sturdy humans with prominent brow ridges and long heads similar to those of Neanderthals. Unlike, aliens or hyperspatially mutated ab-humans, the minds and emotions of the Fenrins are comprehensible and familiar, and their physiology is nearly identical to that of other humans. Their most notable differences from humanity are larger than normal eyes that can see well in the dark. Fenrin characters are created exactly like humans, except that they all have +1 Con, and additional +5 Life Points, and a natural version of the Low Light Vision augmentation. However, they also all possess a 2-point Phobia about everywhere and everything from outside of their cavern and a sincere belief by the inhabitants of each cavern that they are the only intelligent life in the universe.



## THE DEEP CAVERNS

**FOR KEVIN MOWERY, HERB NOWELL, MICHAEL J TRESKA, LORIEN GREEN, & DIEGO D'OLIVEIRA GRANJA**

Since work on translating the Fenrin language is not complete and study of Fenris began only four years ago, researchers have not yet discovered that the Fenrins actually still survive. Knowing that life on the surface was becoming increasingly difficult, some Fenrins embarked on an ambitious plan to expand deep caverns located in regions where geothermal energy would keep the inhabitants warm for millions of years. These Fenrins also built nuclear reactors to provide power and light. A total of five caverns were constructed, of which two still survive. One cavern has a populations of 40,000, the other of half a million. These two small pockets of life have existed for the last 110,000 years, static and unchanging. Contact between these widely separated caverns was lost more than 90,000 years ago, as the fragile cables across the surface eventually decayed.

The smallest cavern has a population of 40,000, and become an exceptionally rigid and hierarchical society. All residents in this cavern belong to one of five hereditary castes and attempts at social mobility or any other types of rebellion or change are punishable by death. This cavern is also quite poor. The residents have adequate water, light, and electricity, but most metals must be scrupulously recycled and while food is relatively abundant, it also contains limited nutrition and consists solely of a single species of specially bred fungus. In addition, their ability to create medicines is very limited and the inhabitants of the cavern also understand that the vein of thorium they have been mining to fuel their reactor is running out, and that they will likely run out of power between 120 and 160 years from now, after which their colony is doomed. The inhabitants are currently attempting various dangerous mining projects in an attempt to locate more thorium deposits.

The other cavern has a populations of almost 500,000 and is somewhat less rigid and considerably less poor. The inhabitants of this cavern have a more varied diet, including a few domestic animals, and in both jobs are assigned based on aptitude and social need rather than ancestry. The smallest cavern has a technology similar to the 1920s, except for an understanding

of the nuclear breeder reactor that they maintain, while the larger cavern has technology equivalent to the early 1980s, with primitive computers, televisions, and many other modern medicines and conveniences. The larger cavern is also in no danger of running out of power.

However, in both caverns scientific and technological progress ceased long ago and none of the inhabitants have any knowledge of the rest of the universe. The Fenrins know that the tunnels leading up to the surface go to a strange dimly lit place that is lethally cold, but since all of these caverns were located far from any surface cities, any visitors to the surface only see a frozen wasteland. The inhabitants of all of these caverns have vague legends about once having come from the surface, but most do not believe them. To the residents of all of the caverns, any visitors from the surface would be considered demons, monstrous invaders, or perhaps some sort of ghostly spirit. Regardless of which group the Heroes gain access to, the Fenrins will react with a mixture of shock and horror at both the idea of off-worlders and of anyone living outside of their cavern.

If the explorers are not careful, their arrival could shatter the social order and perhaps even the entire culture of the Fenrin cavern they visit. The reaction of the inhabitants of the smallest cavern is likely to be considerably more hostile, unless the Heroes can provide food, medicine, food, thorium, or advanced technologies. If they do so, they could easily become the focal point for a popular uprising by the lower castes. The inhabitants of the largest cavern are far less desperate, and are almost certain to be less open to change because their situation is far less precarious, but are also less likely to be openly aggressive.

## BEEHIVE

**FOR STACY FORSYTHE, CHRIS WILLRICH, ALEX TORRES, ADAM BOISVERT, HANS ZURCHER, HENRY ULRICH, VALERIE KINMAN, LUKE MARTINEZ, HPLUSTCRAFT, RICH CANINO, & CARL OLLIVIER**

**Type:** Habitable + Safe

**Gravity:** 1.1 Gs

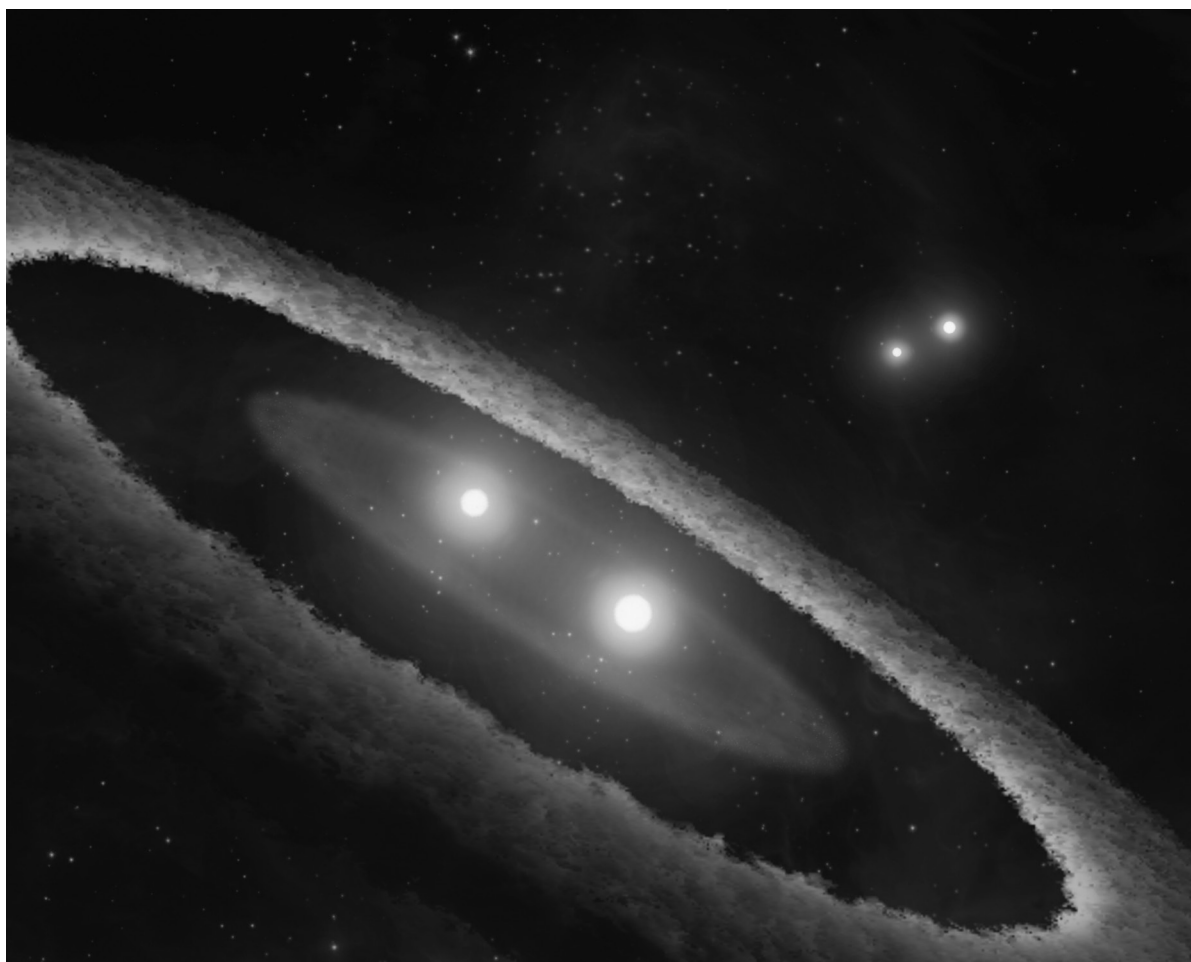
**Atmosphere:** Breathable 1 atm

**Water:** 71% of the surface is covered with water.

**Population:** 0 (200 in orbit)

**Discovered:** 2029

Life on this world is similar to that found on in the Astra system, and is the only other example of this type



of life that has been found. This life is the most human compatible of all alien life, which means that not only is it safe for a human to live on this world, humans can also eat the local food and while it lacks vitamins and many trace minerals, and several vital amino acids, it provides a ready source of calories and a few other nutrients. This compatibility proved extremely useful 32,000 years ago, when a group of several hundred humans who had escaped from the thrall of the serpent people civilization that controlled much of Eurasia fled pursuit by opening a gateway to an alien world. Like the humans of Galatea I, these humans brought seeds, domestic animals, and sufficient supplies to be able to make a life on Beehive.

Unlike the inhabitants of Galatea I, these humans eventually built an advanced technological civilization. Although they retained techniques for training and

using psychic powers, they lost all knowledge hyperspatial sorcery within a few centuries of their arrival. Almost five thousand years later, after their population had spread across the planet and developed an advanced civilization, their science learned to detect and manipulate hyperspatial energies. Their experiments soon resulted in a huge explosion that destroyed a major city and sent a vast quantity of dust into the upper atmosphere, causing the ice age that had been on the verge of beginning to rapidly become far worse. The humans and their civilization survived, but their overall standard of living dropped and hunger returned, as growing seasons became shorter and many regions became unsuitable for agriculture.

In response to this disaster, these humans came up with a novel response. Using a mixture of advanced electronics and psychic technology, they created a neu-

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring intricate mechanical designs like gears, pistons, and pipes, intertwined with organic, vine-like structures. The style is reminiscent of a steampunk or industrial aesthetic.

ral interface considerably more sophisticated than the modern psi-link. This technology was used to create incredibly detailed virtual reality worlds that became increasingly popular as the ice age grew worse. Over the next 500 years, many people began living in one of these virtual worlds full time. The inhabitants of these virtual worlds led rich and exciting lives where they roamed amazing vistas and experienced luxuries no longer available in the physical world. While they inhabited their virtual worlds, their bodies rested in nutrient tanks which kept them fed and in good health.

Soon, Beehive's population was divided between the people who lived in the physical world and those who lived in these pods, tended by machines and by a few tank residents who were willing to spend a small portion of their time teleoperating robots. Eventually, three quarters of the population lived in tanks, and the rest rejected this mode of life. Some who refused to live in the pods attempted to create a separate civilization that made the use of virtual reality illegal, other sought to escape their world in a more direct manner and began forbidden experiments with hyperspace.

More than half of the residents of one of these cities managed to leave for another world. Then, the pod-dwellers learned of these illegal experiments and sent an army of war robots to destroy all of these hyperspatial devices and kill everyone who remained. These same war machines protected the pod-dwellers for attacks by people who resented how much of the available resources these people took and by those opposed to the pod-dwelling way of life. Over the next four thousand years, the numbers of those who did not live in pods continued to decline. During this time, the ice age grew worse and robots and war machines operated by the pod-dwellers destroyed all technologies that might be used to harm the pod dwellers. By the end of this period, all of the remaining non-pod dwellers had died out.

Today, the pod-dwellers' virtual civilization has existed for almost 26,000 years and they have been the sole inhabitants of Beehive for more than 20,000 years. The pods have been refined to the point that residents live for almost 1,000 years. Children are created in artificial wombs and decanted into pods. With no more humans living outside the pods and automated machinery deflecting meteors and dealing with almost all other natural threats, the people living in the pods have retreated even further into their virtual reality worlds. Almost no maintenance needs to be done by pod resi-

dents teleoperating robots and this duty is regarded as strange and unpleasant drudgery by all by a very few eccentrics. Even these eccentrics never consider leaving their pods. All of the inhabitants consider physical bodies as strange and unpleasant things that they regard with a mixture of distaste and embarrassment.

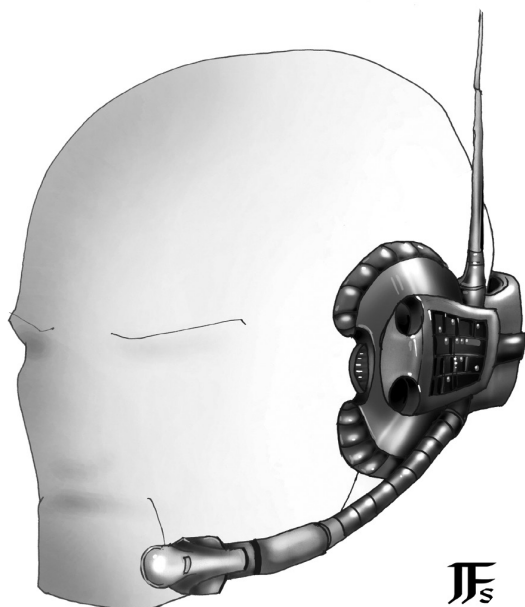
The ice age that precipitated the move into the pods ended approximately 8,000 ago and Beehive is now a warm and verdant world that mostly appears uninhabited. The only sign of habitation is on the central portion of one of the equatorial continents. This single habitation is a vast citadel almost 200 kilometers in diameter, that rises to a height of 400 meters. This citadel was created 16,000 years ago, when the six cities of the pod-dwellers were amalgamated into one location. This citadel is located on a geologically stable region, similar to Earth's Canadian Shield, which has existed in its present form for more than 300 million years, and is expected to remain stable for close to another half a billion years. The citadel's shape and large size is responsible for this planet's name.

The citadel contains the bodies and virtual reality pods of the planet's 1.1 billion inhabitants. Powered by nuclear fusion and recycling most materials, it requires little in the way of supplies. What it does require comes from automated mining robots and from several coastal stations that extract minerals from sea water. Large automated vehicles carry these raw materials to the citadel. The rest of the planet is uninhabited, although portions that were not scoured clean by the now vanished glaciers bear the ancient ruins of the inhabitant's previous civilization.

Beehive was only discovered a little more than one year ago. Explorers landed and attempted to explore the citadel. As soon as they got within 130 kilometers of the citadel, they were attacked by various automated defenses including a swarm of relentless and deadly robots and powerful particle beams. Three explorers were killed in this attack. Since that time, all exploration has been by means of drones and images taken by flying and orbiting vehicles. Drones more than 15 cm across are attacked at the same range, but smaller drones can approach within 100 meters of the citadel as long as they do not move at speeds faster than 20 kilometers per hour. The automated mines and mineral extraction stations are protected in an identical fashion. All potential threats are attacked with long range particle beams that do 40 points of energy damage (see **ELDRITCH SKIES**, p. 227) every shot and have a range of 130 km. Intruders will be subjected

to one shot per round. These particle beams can attack up to 18 separate targets simultaneously.

So far, all attempts to communicate with the robots and citadel dwellers have proven futile. However, psychics and drones have revealed the nature of the citadel. Archeological excavations on other continents and the edges of this continent have also shown that the inhabitants of the world are human, that they arrived on Beehive approximately 32,000 years ago, and that they had an advanced civilization that was at least partially destroyed by an ice age 27,000 years ago. However, the details of the life of the remaining inhabitants is unknown.



Πs

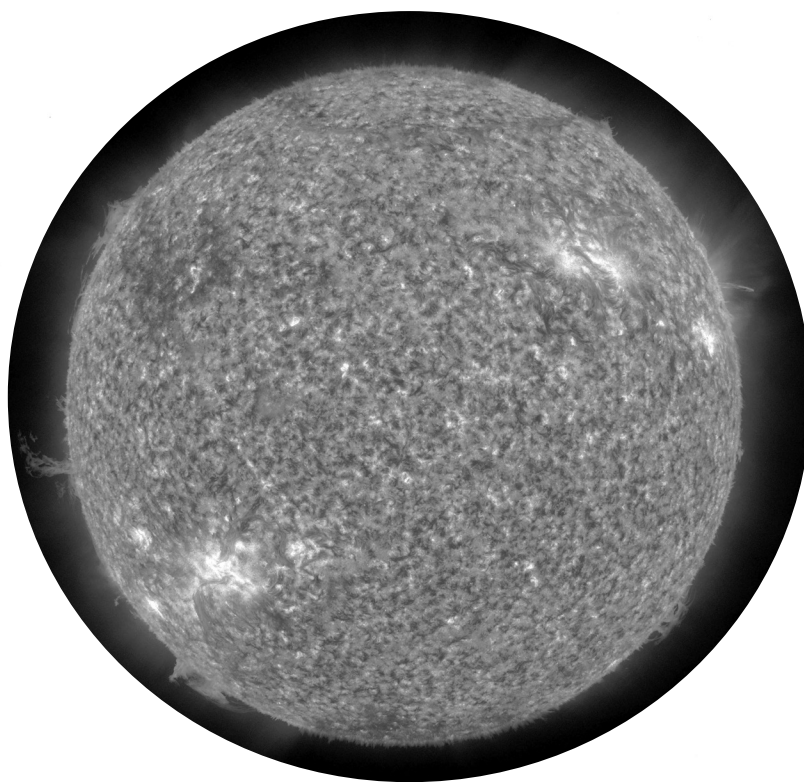
One option for further study is using a hyperspatial gateway to teleport inside of the citadel. Humans inside the citadel will not be attacked unless they attempt to damage anything or extract and awaken any of the residents from their pods. However, intruders who are not violent are certain to eventually be noticed by the few residents who spend some of their time teleoperating maintenance robots. These residents will

examine the visitors with a mixture of curiosity and disbelief. No one has lived outside of a pod on this world for 18,000 years, and the locals have only ancient stories and legends of people who walked freely about in the physical world.

Alternately, a few hundred kilometers away from the southernmost automated mineral refining station, explorers have just found the remains of a now abandoned city once inhabited by the pod-dwellers. This city was abandoned around 17,000 years ago, when the population began to amalgamate their pods into the remaining citadel. Some of the automated machinery remained intact, and is still functional. Recently, engineers examining it have determined that they can reconnect an intact telecommunications line running from this city to the citadel, which would allow explorers to enter one of the few intact pods and enter the inhabitant's virtual world.

Heroes who use the surviving virtual reality pods in this abandoned city would enter a fantastic world of variable physical laws. Here, inhabitants can teleport and shape-shift freely and where neural interfaces far more sophisticated than the psi-link allow people to share entire memories with one another or to temporarily join themselves into complex multiple minds of as many as three or four dozen individuals. The nature of the connection into the virtual world also means that the fact that the characters and the locals do not share a common language will be unnoticeable and that the heroes will be able to easily communicate with everyone they encounter.

However, this virtual environment can also create fictional virtual characters who are essentially active scenery, and most inhabitants will assume the heroes are such creations, until one of the explorers convinces some of the locals to actually examine them, at which point the locals will realize that the explorers are linked in from someplace outside of the citadel. The locals will assume that the heroes are from a city that was somehow cut off from the rest of the population for more than 10,000 years. Locals will also initially treat any suggestion that the characters are humans from another planet who normally do not live in pods as some sort of bizarre joke or affectation.



## SEPTAGON: THE WORLD OF THE SEVEN SUNS

FOR GREG STOLZE, NICK EDWARDS, JOHN THOMPSON, SKYTHERIN, DANA MYERS, & TREY PALMER

**Type:** Hostile  
**Gravity:** 1.13 Gs  
**Atmosphere:** Unbreathable (irritant, ozone), 1.1 atm  
**Water:** 78% of the surface is covered with water.  
**Population:** 900  
**Discovered:** 2026

Along with Giant, this system is one of the clear pieces of evidence of exactly how powerful the capabilities of technologically advanced intelligent species can become. Slightly more than five million years ago, the world of Septagon was an ordinary planet orbiting a

white F9 star. Through some odd chance of stellar geography, a white dwarf star traveling at more than 200 kilometers per second impacted this star. The result was an explosion almost as bright as a supernova, which created a large nebula, with a dim and unstable reddish star in the center. If this system had not been home to a species with exceedingly advanced technology, the stellar shockwave would have sterilized Septagon and humanity would only have found the charred husk of a world. Instead, the inhabitants used powerful and unknown hyperspatial technologies to shield and then move their world. Septagon now orbits its dim star

from a distance of almost five billion kilometers, more than the distance from Neptune to the Sun. At this distance, the star is no brighter than the full moon is on Earth and provides almost no warmth. To provide their world with light and heat, the beings that once inhabited this world created six miniature suns; the largest is roughly the size of Earth's Moon, while the other five are all approximately half that large. These miniature suns all orbit Septagon in a complex dance, with a pair of the smaller suns orbiting each of the two equilateral points of the orbit of Septagon and the largest sun. The last sun orbits the largest sun. The result is a complex interplay of daylight that varies in a rhythm that researchers believe duplicates the light from the original star, which used to be a somewhat variable star. This arrangement of suns also provides the planet with daylight that covers three quarters of the surface, so that night only covers one quarter of this world at any time.

Like Septagon's original sun, these artificial suns provide significant quantities of ultraviolet light, producing ozone concentrations in the atmosphere that

are equivalent to the worst mid 20th century smog. This ozone irritates visitor's lungs and causes headaches and chest pains in anyone who breathes this air for more than a few hours. Everyone who visits or works on Septagon wears a filter mask. These same filter masks also serve to keep out various allergens. Breathing unfiltered air or drinking unfiltered water on Septagon causes moderate allergic reactions to most humans, and all the native life is mildly poisonous. Septagon is one of the least dangerous hostile worlds, but it's also a world that will never be opened for colonization.

Slightly more than a million years after they moved their world, that inhabitants vanished – they either departed or more likely they either transcended or destroyed themselves, but regardless of what happened to them, they left no trace of their passage. However, the suns they created still shine. Astrophysicists who have examined this system believe these suns will shine for at least another 50 million years. Septagon also continues to be home to a large and thriving ecosystem. Examination of their artifacts reveals that the inhabitants, referred to as the septans, seem to have been radially symmetrical creatures with seven long, tentacular limbs that served them as both arms and legs. They walked on these limbs and used those they were not standing or walking on as manipulators.

One of the world's three continents now consists of a single vast and complex city, which is completely automated, self-repairing, and still running after almost four million years. It is a marvel of advanced technology with gravity control in common use. Instead of elevators, to get between floors there are large tubes between six and 10 meters in diameter which are in zero gravity. Researchers believe that the more daring inhabitants launched themselves and their cargoes from one floor to another. Of

course, the septans also knew how to control the elevators to cause the gravity fields to carefully move passengers and cargo between levels.

While much of the technology on Septagon still functions, it is also many tens of thousands of years beyond anything humanity is capable of building or even understanding. As a result, studying it can be fascinating, but also dangerous and only minor advances in science and engineering are likely to be gained. However, while most personal possessions seem to have been removed by the inhabitants when they transcended and most remaining portable devices have failed or are now dangerously unsafe, it's possible to find various useful devices in this city.

Unfortunately, the city is guarded by robots that attempt to stop vandals and thieves. Humans are free to wander around the city, but attempting to operate any devices except those in public areas (like the so-far incomprehensible elevator controls) summons one of the robot drones, as does any attempt to steal items, force open doors, or destroy anything that is not already damaged beyond repair. The drones first order offenders to stop in the septan language and then attempt to capture targets using zappers and grappling.

Targets who successfully flee and cease performing violence will not be pursued if they remain out of any drone's sight for at least eight minutes. If a drone successfully restrains an offender or renders someone unconscious, it takes the person to locked rooms, which they will not be able to leave without someone breaking into or out of the room. Originally the septan justice system dealt with these offenders, but now the drones simply leave them there. A few of these cells show evidence of having been violently forced open tens of thousands of years ago and others contain the mummified remains of alien intruders who died there, unable to escape.

**Name:** Septan Defense Drone

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Constitution –, Intelligence 1, Perception 4, Willpower –

**Ability Scores:** Muscle 14, Combat 16, Brains 8

**Damage Capacity:** 60

**Armor Value:** 10

**Toughness:** 5

**Speed:** 60 (flying)

**Special Abilities:** Spectrum Vision

#### MANEUVERS

| NAME         | SCORE | DAMAGE | NOTES          |
|--------------|-------|--------|----------------|
| Grapple      | 18    | —      | Defense action |
| Alien Zapper | 16    | 9+     | Bashing + Stun |

## SEPTAN DEFENSE DRONES

FOR STEVE DEMPSEY

These defense drones stay aloft some form of gravitic propulsion and are powered by an unknown and seemingly inexhaustible energy source. The drones are all somewhat flattened ovoids, one meter across and 60 cm thick. They contain a trio of zappers that can be extended from their underside and which can be aimed independently. If necessary, they can also extend up to seven jointed tentacular limbs, which are very strong and are used to attempt to restrain criminals. Each robot can lift and carry an additional 110 kg, and two or more can work together to restrain or carry larger targets. Anyone who explores this city finds many dozen crashed defense drones, most seem to have simply stopped working, but others appear to have been deliberately destroyed tens or hundreds of thousands of years before.

## THE REMAINDER OF THE PLANET

FOR MICHAEL OSTROKOL & KURT McMAHON

The planet's second continent, which is also the largest, is a vast wilderness preserve, where the world's animals and plants thrive. These animals share the same partially hydrostatic skeleton and flexible tentacles as the septans and several biological research teams are studying these creatures.

The third and smallest continent covers only 11 million square kilometers. It is now a single plain of barren and polished rock deeply engraved with a single complex design with seven-fold symmetry. These engravings are all smooth trenches that are three meters deep and 11 meters wide. At seven sites across this continent, which correspond to focal points of this vast design, there are huge geometric forms carved from unnaturally hard stone. Each of these massive obelisks is half a kilometer high and 70 meters across. All seven are covered in sigils and designs that can also be found in the vast city, in locations that resemble altars and meditation spaces that are located next to scientific and technical facilities. These obelisks are all altars are to Nyarlathotep. The inhabitants established communication and communion with Nyarlathotep and their communications with this entity are part of what allowed these aliens to transcend.

## TECHNOLOGY FROM SEPTAGON

A number of small technological items remain functional. At least some of these devices need not have been discovered before the Heroes find them.

### TELEPORT RINGS

FOR CHRIS DALGETY

This relatively common item is found in pairs. Each ring has an opening in it between 8 and 20 cm in diameter and is one and a half cm across. Touching a brightly colored yellow spot on either ring activates or deactivates both rings at once. Once activated, a shimmering field forms in the opening of the ring, and anything pushed into the opening of one ring instantly emerges from the opening of the other ring in the pair. If either ring is deactivated while something is passing between it, the item appears whole and intact inside the ring where the bulk of this item was. These pairs of rings only function if they are within 1,200 km of one another.

### BONDER

FOR C.S. MCKINNEY & FELIX GIRKE

This device is 10 cm long and 2 cm in diameter that tapers to a rounded point at each end. One ends is silver and shiny and the other is bright orange. Touching the orange spot while touching the bright end to two non-living objects that are in contact with one another fuses an area of up to 15 square centimeters of surface area of the two objects together. Only portions of the two objects that are currently touching one another are fused in this fashion. The bond created by the bonder is as strong as the weakest of the two materials and acts like the two materials have seamlessly become one. Reversing the device and touching the silver end while placing the orange end against a bond previously created by a bonder immediately removes this bond. One bonder can undo a bond created by another one. Bonders have no effect on any living matter and also do not affect dead matter like hair that is part of a living being. The bonder will not affect even the most alien living tissue and also has no effect on the exotic bodies of hyperspatial entities. Bonders work indefinitely and do not run out of power.

## COOLER

### FOR LAURA BURNS

This device is a grooved ovoid, 20 cm long and 8 cm in diameter. Touching both of the two yellow spots on this item and pointing it at a fire or an object that has a temperature of more than 100 C instantly puts out the fire and reduces the temperature of the object to 50 C. A cooler has a range of one and a quarter meters and can only affect an area 70 cm on a side. It also requires two full rounds to function and has no effect if moved off the area before the full time has elapsed. This device can be used to put out a portion of a fire or cool a section of a large hot object, but once it has been used, heat transfers and flames spread normally, so the location will swiftly become on fire or hot again. If used on a living being which is on fire, it puts out the fire, but does no harm the living being in any fashion.

## IRAM OF THE PILLARS

### FOR JAMES HOLDEN

Type: Safe

Gravity: 0.91 Gs

Atmosphere: Breathable 0.98 atm

Water: 83% of the surface is covered with water.

Population: 2,000

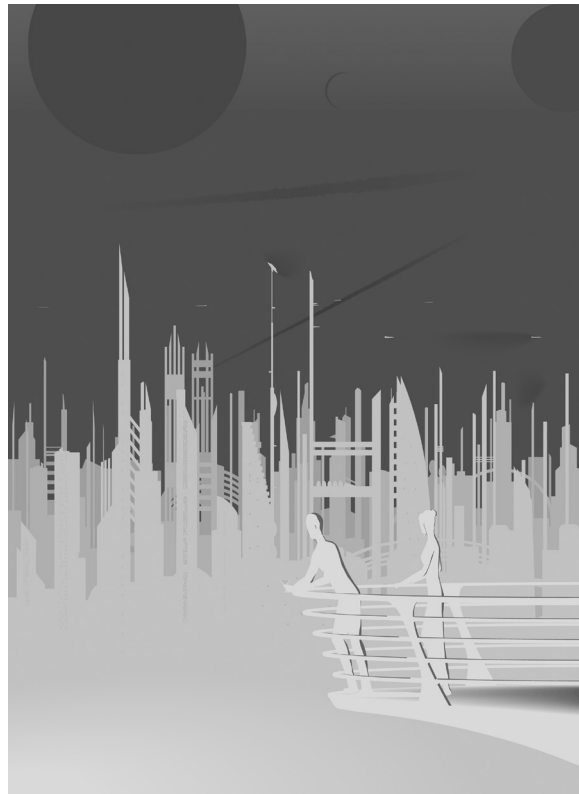
Discovered: 2028

Iram is a primitive world where life has only recently moved onto the land. It seems to have been seeded with life from another world approximately 200 million years ago, and while life is thriving, almost all of it is in the world's large oceans. On land, the dominant plant-like life form are low fern-like entities that are connected by a network of horizontal stalks. The largest of these plants covers more than 40 square kilometers of connected stalks and roots, that are in essence one single plant. Most life-forms on this world experience alternation of generations between a mobile animal-like form and a stable plant-like form. The plants bear fruit that turns into animals and the animals lay seeds that become plants. All animals on this planet have a strong aversion to eating the plants they came from, but freely feast on other plant species. The largest land-dwelling animals on Iram are six-legged creatures the size of large dogs that weight no more than 20 kg.

## THE "CITY" OF PILLARS

### FOR TRISTAN OBERON, MATTHEW BROOME, & DREW SOUTH

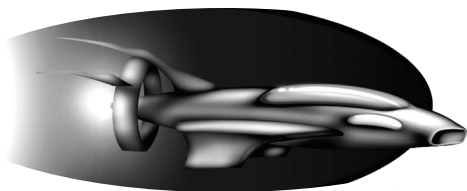
Iram has not given birth to an intelligent species. However, around four and a half million years ago, it was colonized by an alien species. These aliens lived on Iram for several hundred thousand years. Only traces remains of most of their cities. They only seem to have inhabited the largest of the planet's four continents, which is approximately the size of Africa. None of these traces would have been found without extensive surveying, which was only done because their last city remains largely intact. Most of the alien's buildings and relics were made from durable composites that are only slightly tougher than the hardest and most lasting materials used by humanity. Even these materials have suffered vast amounts of wear over the course of more than four million years. However, the alien's last city, dubbed Iram by the explorer that discovered it, was made from some unusual material that has withstood millions of years of weathering with only minor damage.



This city or construct seems to have been built approximately 5,000 years before the aliens departed and consists of 343 pillars, each of which is a cylinder approximately four kilometers tall and 120 meters across and they are arranged in a seven sided polygon. All but two of these pillars are still intact. One of the damaged pillars was shattered into small fragments around the time the aliens departed from Iram. The other pillar is one of the outer row of pillars and somehow snapped in half slightly more than half a kilometer from the ground. This pillar seems to have been broken slightly less than half a million years ago. Study of this fallen pillar reveals that it is hollow and contained more than one thousand floors, most of which were three meters high.

The artifacts from inside this broken tower are exceedingly weathered, in addition to having been badly damaged by the tower's fall. Those that are more intact seem to have been a mixture of exotic art and objects of daily life. These relics also provide the only knowledge of the aliens who built these towers. They were radically symmetrical with seven long, tentacular limbs that served them as both arms and legs. They walked on these limbs and used those they were not standing on as manipulators. These beings were recently discovered to have been the septans, who evolved on Septagon.

Unfortunately, the fallen towers are the only ones that researchers have been able to study, since all of the towers are made from materials too hard for even a diamond-tipped drill to penetrate and so refractory that even a laser or a plasma cutter cannot damage them. Tests on fragments of the towers reveals that a nuclear blast would easily breach a tower, but at the cost of destroying both the towers and their contents. The towers are also warded against all forms of hyperspatial scrying or intrusion. For now, Iram's towers remain one of the many enduring mysteries that humanity has encountered. Any researcher who finds a way to enter even a single tower will gain great acclaim and stands a chance of finding wondrous artifacts and great knowledge, depending upon why remains inside of the sealed towers.



## THE SEPTANS

FOR LAIEL SHEPHERD & MAX KAEHN

The septans are a relatively minor species that currently inhabit four worlds somewhat near Septagon and Iram. However, these worlds are all further from Earth than either Septagon or Iram and have not yet been discovered by humanity. The septans originally evolved on Septagon and approximately six million years ago had developed an advanced technological civilization. The septans seemed to be another civilization destined for stasis until they discovered that a white dwarf star would crash into their sun. Over the course of the next 10,000 years, the septans moved their planet to a safe distance from their sun, created six artificial suns, and established colonies on more than a dozen other worlds. This burst of activity also both attracted the attention of Nyarlathotep and as a result helped to cause the septans to begin to both colonize other stars and also to begin readying themselves for an attempt at transcendence.

The septans on the world of the seven suns transcended slightly more than four million years ago, and the septans on Iram returned to the world of the seven suns to transcend with their fellows. Septans on four of their colony worlds did not transcend. One of these colonies destroyed itself a million years later, two of the remaining three are now entirely static civilizations, and the last of the three is a typical examples of civilizations that rise and fall and which may someday either transcend or utterly destroy itself. This last septan civilization recently rose from the ashes of its last collapse and re-discovered interstellar travel 600 years ago. These septans are currently exploring the galaxy, and humans may contact them soon.

## THE VASCONCELOS ORBITAL

FOR JEFF BOLES, JEFF CHAPIN, WAYNE COBURN,  
& JOSE LACARIO

Type: Safe  
Gravity: 0.81 Gs  
Atmosphere: 1.7 atm  
Water: 60%  
Population: 500  
Discovered: 2027

This unique artificial object is a donut-shaped artificial planet 250,000 km in diameter, with a cross-section

**Name:** Septan Explorer

**Motivation:** Discover new worlds

**Species:** Septan

**Contact:** 2

**Hyperspatial Exposure:** 1/1

**Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Constitution 4, Intelligence 4, Perception 3, Willpower 3

**Ability Scores:** Muscle 14, Combat 15, Brains 14

**Life Points:** 40

**Speed:** 30

**Drama Points:** 0-2

**Special Abilities:** Extra Arms, Infrared Vision, Psychic Sensitivity, Regeneration, Temperature Tolerance

#### MANEUVERS

| NAME         | SCORE | DAMAGE | NOTES             |
|--------------|-------|--------|-------------------|
| Dodge        | 15    | —      | Defense action    |
| Laser Pistol | 15    | 24     | Bullet damage     |
| Strike       | 16    | 14     | Bash              |
| Grapple      | 18    | —      | Resisted by Dodge |

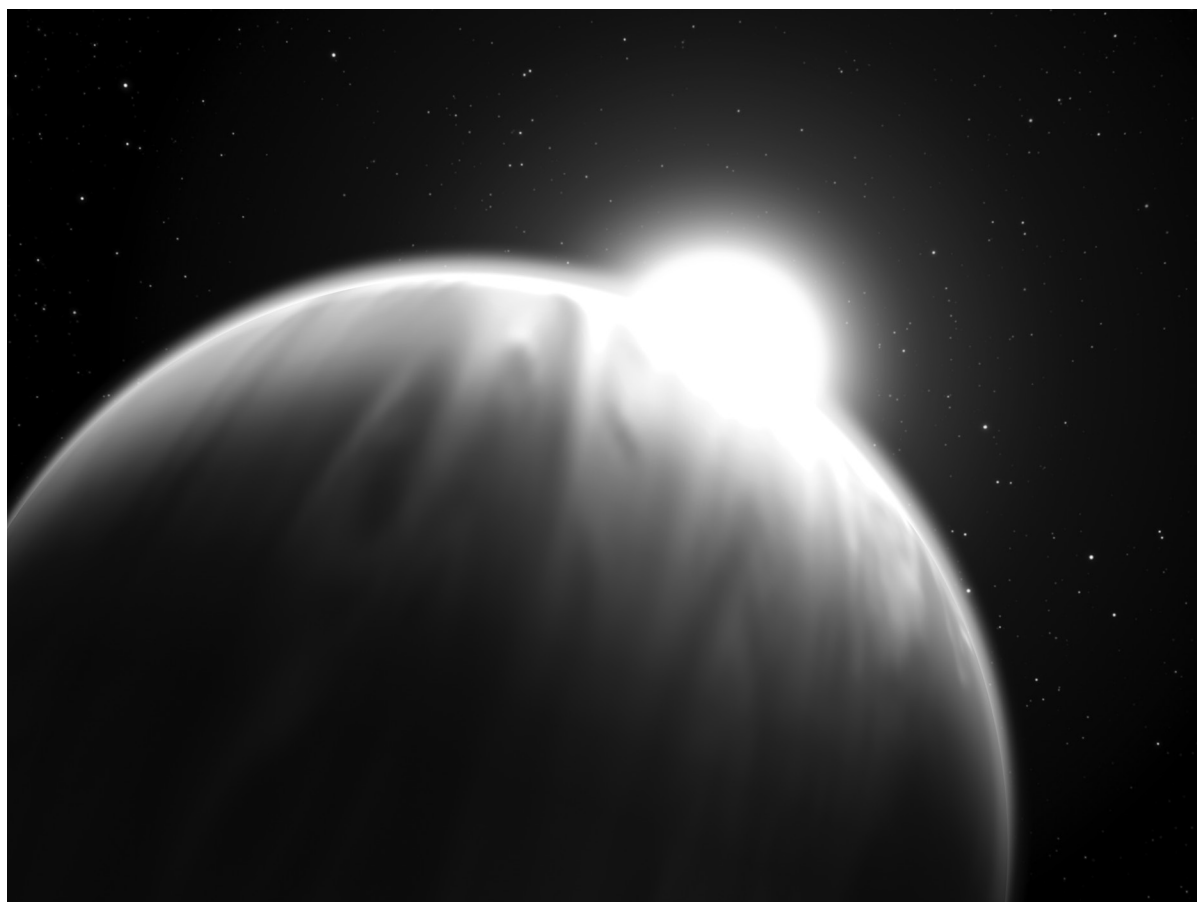
of 8,000 km. It has a breathable atmosphere and both the air and the water are safe for humans. The biology is sufficiently alien that humans eating local plants or animals gain no nutrition from the left-handed sugars, but are also unharmed by the experience. This construct orbits an orange Ko star on the edges of a small interstellar dust cloud slightly less than 300 light years from Earth. The star has three planets, one large and one small gas giant, and an inner rocky planet similar to Mercury, but there is no evidence that it ever contained a habitable planet or any native life. However, the presence of the gas cloud means that this construct is impossible to detect by telescopes, especially since the gas cloud lies in the upper portion of the galactic plain and the bulk of the cloud is between the lower portions of the galaxy and this star.

The Vasconcelos orbital has several unique properties. The most obvious is that no hyperspatial technologies, including both hyperspatial sorcery and dragonfly drive engines function within 63,000 km of the object's surface. The first vessel to visit this world only narrowly avoided being stranded when it approached too close to the orbital and the drive suddenly failed. Fortunately, the vessel had sufficient velocity to allow it to drift beyond the range of the unknown field that negates all hyperspatial energies, where it was able to restart its engines. Since that time, all exploration of the Vasconcelos Orbital has been using unscrewed rockets and crewed space planes and starships remain at least 90,000 km from the orbital.

Closer study also revealed that within 7,700 km of the planet, some forms of unknown field interferes with all radio waves. Signals from the large radios on space planes cannot travel more than approximately 30 ki-

lometers, and personal radios are reduced in range to around 500 meters. This same interference also affects both telepathy and all forms of coherent light, meaning that psychic powers and lasers also cannot be used to send messages from the surface into orbit. As a result, this unusual world has been mapped exclusively by distantly orbiting satellites, automated drones that record their data and then return to a distant orbit, and also by OPS crews who explore this world using space planes.

Both the fact that the orbital is very difficult to detect, and that it is shielded against hyperspatial energies and psychic powers has led most researchers to conclude that the species that built this construct built it so that they could hide. However, the nature of these beings and whether they still inhabit this artificial world is unknown. The surface area of the orbital is approximately one hundred times that of Earth, and both maps and reconnaissance flights have so far found nothing except a thriving ecosystem and ancient ruins of advanced cities. There is no evidence that the inhabitants became extinct, but also no sign that they remain on this world. One of the most popular theories about their disappearance is that they have simply become even better at hiding on this vast and difficult to investigate world. Some researchers believe that the inhabitants have moved underground, others believe that they have developed some form of invisibility cloak or camouflage to cause their cities to appear to be uninhabited sections of the surface. The fact that that the orbital might already be inhabited has eliminated any plans for colonization, but the Vasconcelos Orbital remains a mystery that the OPS continues to investigate.



## ADVENTURE SEEDS

### IN THE SHADOW OF LAKE HALI

FOR ROB BOYLE, RAPHAEL PÄBST, MEREDITH PATTERSON, BRYCE LYNCH, ALEX COYNER, RICK NEAL, & JOHN THOMPSON

This adventure should only be used after the Heroes have encountered the Hastur psychic infection at least once, and preferably several times. This adventure also provides only one possible origin for the Hastur infection. Directors are free to come up with other alternative origins as they see fit.

The characters visit a research base on a newly discovered world so far only called RL261. This base is home to 20 archeologist and technicians who contacted the OPS because of what they recently discovered. This world is home to earth-derived life, and was once home to an ancient inhuman civilization that transcended more than half a million years ago. It is an exotic world filled with the remnants of strange technologies, including a towering pillar covered with strange carvings that stands six kilometers high and a lake filled with faintly glowing mist, inhabited by small fish that fly by means of hydrogen-filled gas bladders. Although it is habitable, and also a possible colony site, it is also filled with potentially dangerous wonders, many of which are intact despite their great age. Also, this world is not an easy place to live, since most of these artifacts use advanced nanotechnology that automatically repairs any damage, and this same nanotechnology protects and maintains various prominent natural features including several large rocky cliffs and most major waterfalls. Almost 10% of the world's land area cannot be altered, since it returns to its previous state in a few hours, or at most a week or two. The inhabitants of this world seem to have been tailed reptilian-like bipeds with four arms and a sturdy carapace as well as an internal skeleton.

This world also has ruins that are considerably more recent and are obviously of human origin. These humans seem to have inhabited RL261 for around eight thousand years, at the end of which time they all seemingly vanished. Despite the fact that the most recent ruins are almost 17,000 old, the evidence of death and destruction is clear. There was a single large human city on this world, with a population of several million people, surrounded by extensive farms. The remainder of the planet

seems to have been uninhabited, although there is evidence of what look like research stations near various items made by the previous inhabitants. Every inhabited structure was destroyed slightly less than 17,000 years ago, and all of these buildings seem to have all been destroyed in a single day. There is also evidence that much, or perhaps all of the population died at the same time.

The Heroes learn all this from the report on this world and the progress the researchers have made so far. However, when they arrive on the world, the researchers are nowhere to be found. Their camp is empty and in obvious disarray as if some had grown angry and destroyed much of the laboratory equipment.

The base's computer records remain intact. The language used by the previous human inhabitants was similar to the one used by the first settlers on Galatea I and has recently been translated. Much of the surviving writing is on diamond hard obelisks and monumental stone plaques that tell the glories of this world's immortal and vastly powerful rulers. However, other records survive in the ruins of the vast and elaborate palace at one edge of the city, a few miles from a vast mist-lake. In these human's ancient language, the city was Carcosa, and the lake was Hali. The research base's computers contain detailed translations of the epic histories recorded on the various stone plaques. Anyone who studies these translations at length is at risk of succumbing to the Hastur psychic infection.

The entire research team now suffers from the Hastur infection. They have all left the research base and moved into the ruins of the palace, on the edge

#### THE PLANET

Type: Habitable  
Gravity: 1.04 Gs  
Atmosphere: 0.92 atm  
Water: 81%  
Population: No humans, 1.5 billion Zehr  
Discovered: By the Heroes

of Lake Hali. The team now seems like actors in a play, except the play is all about jealousy, betrayal, and murderous plots. Several researchers are currently planning to murder one another and one researcher is contemplating an elaborate ritual suicide. Any Heroes who suffer from the Hastur infection immediately join this play. Those who do not will be treated by those who are affected as servants and may gain information from the infected. Observing the infect-

ed can provide useful information, but if not carefully watched and then restrained, some of the infected may kill one another or themselves.

Infected individuals only recover if separated from each other and taken at least 20 kilometers from the city of Carcosa. Unfortunately, all of the researchers have temporarily become psychic and each of them have gained three or more psychic powers, including several who now possess the Illusions psychic ability and two who possess the Hypnotic Command psychic ability.

In addition to observing the researchers, using the Dho-Han Ritual to view the past or psychometry to study the human artifacts can be used to reveal the truth about the human civilization that was here. These methods can also be used to observe the various rulers, whose names the researchers (and any affected Heroes) have now taken (see the secret history of the planet for this information). This information can be used to lure some of them to locations where they can be subdued. If the Heroes can subdue and remove at least half of the researchers, the other ten prove to be too few to sustain the Hastur infection, and they will all collapse. However, this only happens if the Heroes have subdued and isolated both of the two individuals who now claim to be Aldones, the Yellow King and Queen Cassilda, who each possess both the Illusion and Hypnotic Command psychic powers.

**The Secret History of the planet:** 25,000 years ago, around the same time that the refugees from a Saharan city-state fled to Galatea I, a group of several hundred powerful sorcerers and psychics fled pursuit, along with several thousand cultists and followers. They found this world to be exceptionally inviting and settled in the regions that had not been rendered immutable. The sorcerer-psychics ruled the rest of the population as god-

kings and queens and engaged in various byzantine political games. Using bodies taken from the populace, the rulers made themselves effectively immortal. The rulers used their millennia long lives to study sorcery and also to examine the strange artifacts that littered their new world.

Eventually, they thought they had learned enough to transcend. Using a mixture of their own sorcery and scavenged technology, these rulers constructed a vast ritual, which resulted in the rest of the populace dying via a mixture of suicide and murder and which was supposed to cause the rulers to all transcend. The ritual was not entirely successful and resulted in the rulers' transforming into partially transcended entities that now replay their intrigues and murders in the minds of other humans who touch their hyper-spatial daydreams. The rulers of this world essentially became the Hastur infection.

### GHoul HUNTING

FOR MATT McELROY, JAY PETERS, CHRIS JAROCHA-ERNST, & CAT DAVIDSON-HALL

This scenario is best used after the Heroes have had a least one scenario where they discovered and had to hunt down murderous ghouls that were becoming too dangerous. After they have previously dealt with several dangerous ghouls, the Heroes encounter a group of highly skilled amateur ghoulish-hunters. These ghoulish hunters are well-trained, dedicated, and efficiently organized. While the OPS does its best to keep knowledge of ghouls a secret, since ghouls do occasionally kill people, the OPS tolerates amateur ghoulish hunters, as long as they avoid endangering civilians, agree to help keep the existence of ghouls a secret, and only hunt ghouls that venture out of the ghoulish's tunnels to hunt humans.

This group is composed of around 28 men and women, all of whom either know someone who was killed by ghouls or who were previous attacked by a ghoulish. The members of this group refer to their organization as The Sunrise Group, and are secretive, well armed, and very interested in working with the OPS to help deal with dangerous ghouls. The members train regularly, and all of them are skilled in both hand to hand and gun combat. The characters should encounter members of The Sunrise Group on the Heroes' second ghoulish-hunting mission, where the Sunrise Group hunting team proves to be valuable allies. If the Heroes follow OPS protocol and investigate the Sunrise Group, they uncover an organization that looks much



⌘s



like it seems – dedicated humans who hunt dangerous ghouls that prey upon the living.

Unfortunately, the members of this group have a hidden agenda that could prove disastrous. The members of The Sunrise Group are not merely dedicated to hunting down dangerous ghouls; they want to exterminate the entire ghoul species. The OPS must regularly deal with amateur ghoul-hunters who want to indiscriminately kill ghouls, but most are either obviously mentally disturbed or are merely one or two angry and desperate people whose motives and goals are obvious. The Sunrise Group has been planning their attack for more than two years, when a ghoul killed a man who was the husband of one of the first two members and the brother of the other. The goal of The Sunrise Group is to make a devastating attack on the local ghoul population, while also trying to organize similar attacks in other major cities across the world. So far, they have recruited people with similar ideas in half a dozen other cities and have continued to add to their number in the Heroes' home city.

However, in the course of this highly discreet recruitment effort, the members of The Sunrise Group have inadvertently contacted someone who is a human servant to ghouls. This individual is posing as a would-be ghoul hunter on-line in an effort to discover active threats to the ghouls. The human servant recently learned that the members of The Sunrise Group are planning to attempt to kill as many ghouls as possible in a single highly coordinated world-wide effort, and that they are well aware that this action will provoke retaliation by other ghouls. In response to these attacks, the members of The Sunrise Group plan to publically reveal the existence of the ghouls at the time of these attacks, in an effort to both try to protect the populace from retaliation and also to start a genocidal war between humanity and the ghouls. At this point, the Heroes are in the position of either violating OPS regulations and aiding these people, with the risk that they might start a war that could devastate humanity, or the Heroes could be forced to infiltrate and arrest people whose goals they may sympathize with, but who are nonetheless endangering humanity.

### THE ANCIENT SHIP

FOR ADAM CROSSINGHAM, STEFAN OHRMANN, AND KEN FINLAYSON

The third moon of Nod, a large gas giant in the Eden system, is actually a huge and ancient starship. 400,000

years ago, this ship was damaged in a battle between two rival alien species. The crew escaped in life pods and the ship was left derelict. Today the 2 kilometer in diameter ship is covered by a 100 meter layer of ice and dust. The thickness of the ice and its proximity to Nod's radiation belts have so far prevented its discovery. It is currently recorded as a small icy moon of somewhat low density. Any ship which had cause to land on or otherwise closely examine this moon might determine its secret, but so far no one has engaged in detailed exploration of a small and seemingly unimportant ball of ice.

The majority of the ship is intact, and the radiation leak which caused its evacuation has long since dissipated. Over 20% of it even retains a breathable (if somewhat stale) atmosphere. However, the ship also maintains minimal power and any attempt to enter the ship could easily activate its automatic intruder defenses. Character may find this ship by accident when exploring this moon, or perhaps something causes the ship to begin activating. It is too old and too damaged to fly, but once it becomes partially active, it can generate artificial gravity and lights. Its internal defense systems consist of doors to high security areas that affect anyone attempting to force them as if they'd been hit with a zapper, and also a dozen aging defense robots that respond to any attempt at unauthorized use of portions of the ship that are still under power. Use the stats for the defense robots on Septagon (see above), except that if the robots themselves are attacked or the intruders do not immediately cease attempting unauthorized access to the ship, the robots' zappers begin firing deadly particle beams that have the same chance to hit, but instead do 19 points of bullet damage.

Inside the ship, characters may find a few useful alien artifacts, as well as navigation and control screens that display ancient electronic records and star-charts, including images of the confederation of 11 different star systems that the crew of this ship used to defend. Some of these worlds were destroyed in an ancient war, while others had their civilization reduced to ruins and most of their inhabitants killed. The crew of this ship and the inhabitants of these worlds were the same as the original four-armed inhabitants of RL261 from In the Shadow of Lake Hali. Their civilization was destroyed by an exceptionally warlike civilization of septans that destroyed itself soon afterwards. The inhabitants of RL261 had already transcended when the war between its remaining colonies and the sep-

tans occurred. During this war, all of the colonies were destroyed or badly damaged.

The star-charts on this ship can lead explorers to a previously unknown habitable world containing ruins of this civilization, as well as another habitable world where these same creatures have struggled from near extinction and now have a civilization on the verge of space travel. If desired, the Heroes exploring this ship can find a life pod that was never used, and if all of the Heroes enter it, automatically launches itself to one of these two worlds, or perhaps to RL261 (which could be a way to introduce the above adventure on that world).

### A NEW WORLD

FOR MARC DE JONGE & KARL MAZURAK

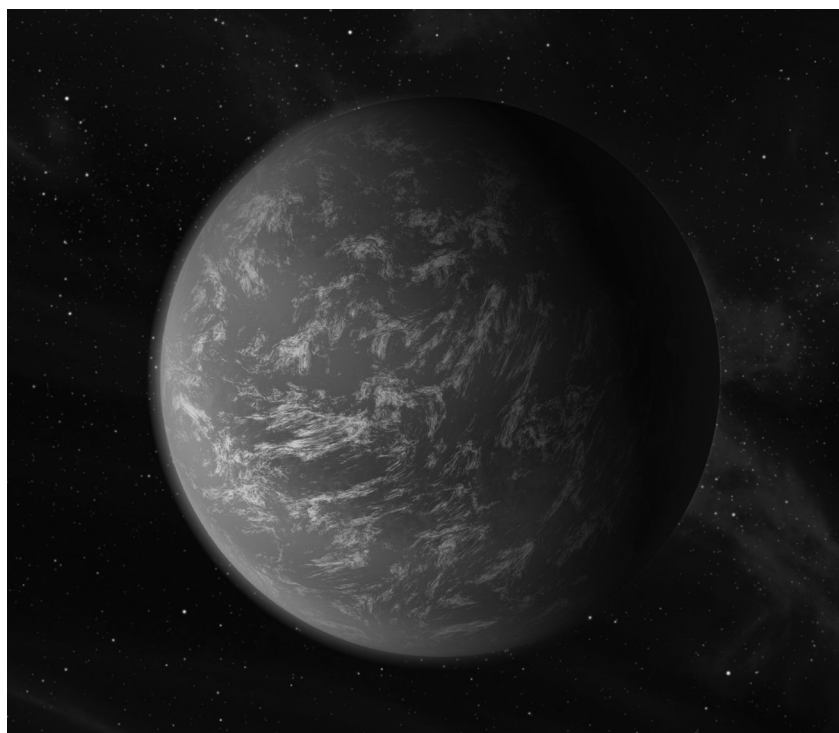
In The Ancient Ship adventure seed, the Heroes may discover the location of several previously unknown worlds with earth-derived life, or they might even be unwillingly transported to one of these worlds via one of the ship's life pods. Alternately, researchers on RL261 (from In the Shadow of Lake Hali) might discover ancient records of these worlds. Most of these worlds contain only ruins, and a few are now charred and lifeless balls of seared rock and glassy plains. However, one contains the descendents of colonists from RL261 whose civilization was destroyed and who are

now beginning to rebuild.

From orbit, this world clearly suffered some terrible disaster. Almost a third of the land area now consists of broken rubble mixed with shining glassy slag. These vast lava fields have been eroded and now a few lichens and mosses grow on them, but even almost half a million years cannot disguise the devastation this world once suffered.

The remainder of the world clearly contains an earth-derived biosphere, with green plants visible as both forests and plains. The world consists of a wealth of islands as well as 11 small continents between the size of Australia and South America, including two pairs of continents that are connected by narrow land bridges. Three of these continents are now almost entirely lifeless slag and lava and large areas of this same devastation cover almost half of two other continents.

Like Krishnamurti, life here was taken from Earth during the early Permian, and looks relatively familiar, with trees, insects, reptiles, amphibians. This is a world where the local version of dinosaurs never went extinct. Warm-blooded birds and bird-like dinosaurs dominate the land. Instead of fur, most large animals have brightly colored feathers, and the largest herbivores are lightly feathered vaguely reptilian-looking creatures several times the size of elephants.



**Name:** Zehr Researcher

**Motivation:** Understand and create new technologies

**Species:** Zehr

**Contact:** 1

**Hyperspatial Exposure:** 1/1

**Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Constitution 3, Intelligence 3, Perception 2, Willpower 2

**Ability Scores:** Muscle 12, Combat 13, Brains 12

**Life Points:** 34

**Speed:** 21

**Drama Points:** 0-2

**Special Abilities:** Extra Arms, Natural Armor (4 points of armor), Night Vision, Psychic Sensitivity

#### MANEUVERS

| NAME    | SCORE | DAMAGE   | NOTES             |
|---------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Dodge   | 13    | —        | Defense action    |
| Zapper  | 13    | 8 + stun | Bash damage       |
| Pistol  | 13    | 18       | Bullet damage     |
| Strike  | 14    | 9        | Bash              |
| Grapple | 16    | —        | Resisted by Dodge |

## THE BRIDGE

### FOR BARD BLOOM & STARDANSR

Relics of the ancient civilization are easily visible from orbit. The most obvious is a huge enclosed bridge made from nearly indestructible material that stretches 1,300 km, across a 900 km wide sea between two continents. This bridge is a flat-bottomed tube, one kilometer wide and high, supported on 800 meter high pylons that rise up from the land and from islands in the sea every 200 kilometers. This vast bridge was once one of this world's largest cities, and stretched 3,400 kilometers long, connecting four separate continents and half a dozen islands in between. Most of it is now in ruins, and the portions that remain no longer have power or antigravity trains that connect the various portions of this vast city. However, using unknown sources of power, large elevators in five of the seven pylons still function. These elevators still allow easy transport between the ground and both the interior of the bridge and the top surface of the tube.

Despite its ruined condition, this city is still inhabited. Windmills and solar cells on the top surface of the bridge now provide power for several large cities, with a total population of more than 4 million. Some live in the ancient buildings that rise from the bottom of the tube, others live in newer buildings constructed

on some of the many ledges along the sides of the tube. Today, the city is connected by elevators and trains powered by electricity. The only working remnants of ancient technology are the strange glossy stone-like material used in the construction of the tube and of the buildings in it. This substance automatically regulates the temperature and provides light. Farms and fleets of ships from islands that are connected to the bridge provide food for the inhabitants. The bridge is the capital city for one of the two largest nations on this world, as well as the single largest remaining collection of functional ancient technology. One of the major industries in this city is attempting to understand and reverse engineer these ruins.

## THE ZEHR

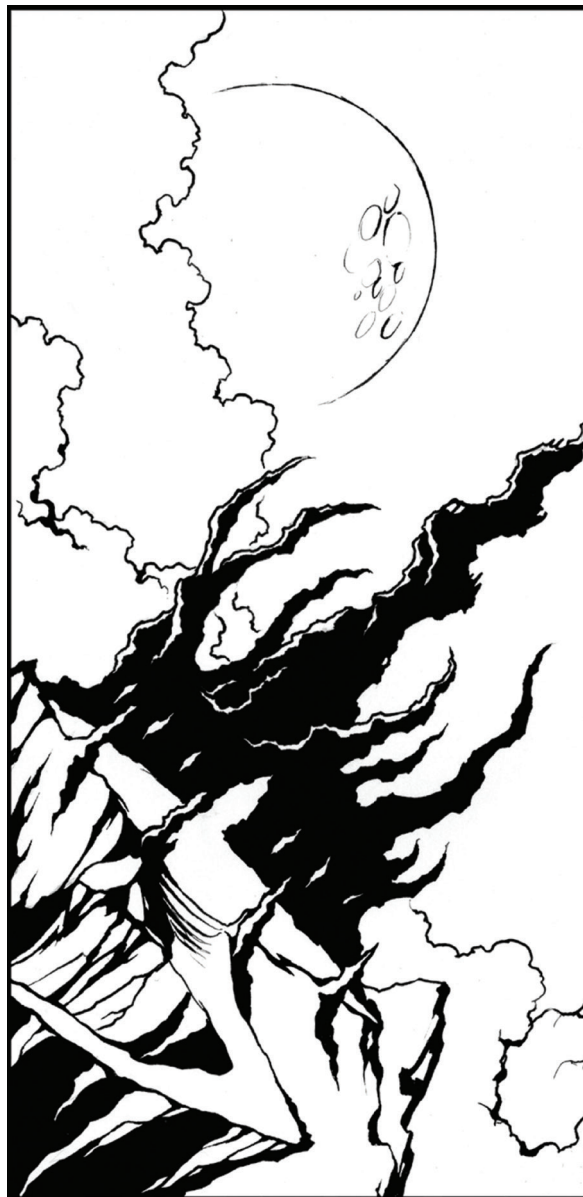
### FOR OMER AHMED, PETER ARONSON, & CHRIS GUNNING

This world is home to a billion and a half intelligent beings. Calling themselves the Zehr, the inhabitants of this world know from old stories and from their own research that they are not natives of this world. They are a species about as warlike and territorial as humanity who have sent automated probes and a few crewed missions

to nearby worlds in their star system, but who have build no colonies on other worlds. They also have had no contact with any alien life, beyond incredibly ancient legends of strange creatures who destroyed the civilization of their long-ago ancestors. The Zehr are divided into four nations. The largest nation inhabits one of the pairs of continents connected by a land bridge, while the most advanced nation holds the two continents connected by the vast and ancient bridge described above. This nation has the best access to the technology of their ancient ancestors. Almost half of one of these last two continents is nothing by slag and lava. Tensions are relatively high on this world, and both of the previously mentioned nations have small stores of nuclear weapons. Humans, with significantly more advanced technology could help unify this world, or they could plunge it into a small but devastating nuclear war.

#### **PHYSIOLOGY**

The Zehr are tailed reptilian-like bipeds with four arms and a sturdy carapace as well as an internal skeleton. Their skin is smooth and a bit like that of an amphibian, but they do not need to remain moist. Their skin also changes color slightly to match their emotions. They are grey-green when calm, blue green when happy or interested, and become a brighter yellow green when angry or afraid. They have weapons similar to zappers, as well as chemically propelled projectile weapons equivalent in size and damage to Earth firearms, except that these weapons use a binary explosive that is stored separately from the bullets and is combined to cause the explosion that propels the bullets. Most Zehr are psychic, but very few possess anything beyond psychic sensitivity, and they regard all other psychic powers as exotic and strange.



Picking up where the *Eldritch Skies Rulebook* left off, *Dark Vistas* expands the universe with new options and new additions.

Covering such topics as mining, to exploring strange new systems, between these covers are mysteries that reach to the very core of humankind's voyages to the stars.

Written by A.J. Luxton.

*Eldritch Skies* created  
by John Sneed

Based on the work of  
H.P. Lovecraft



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