



FRAGGED
EMPIRE

Protagonist Archive

Fragged Empire: Protagonist Archive.

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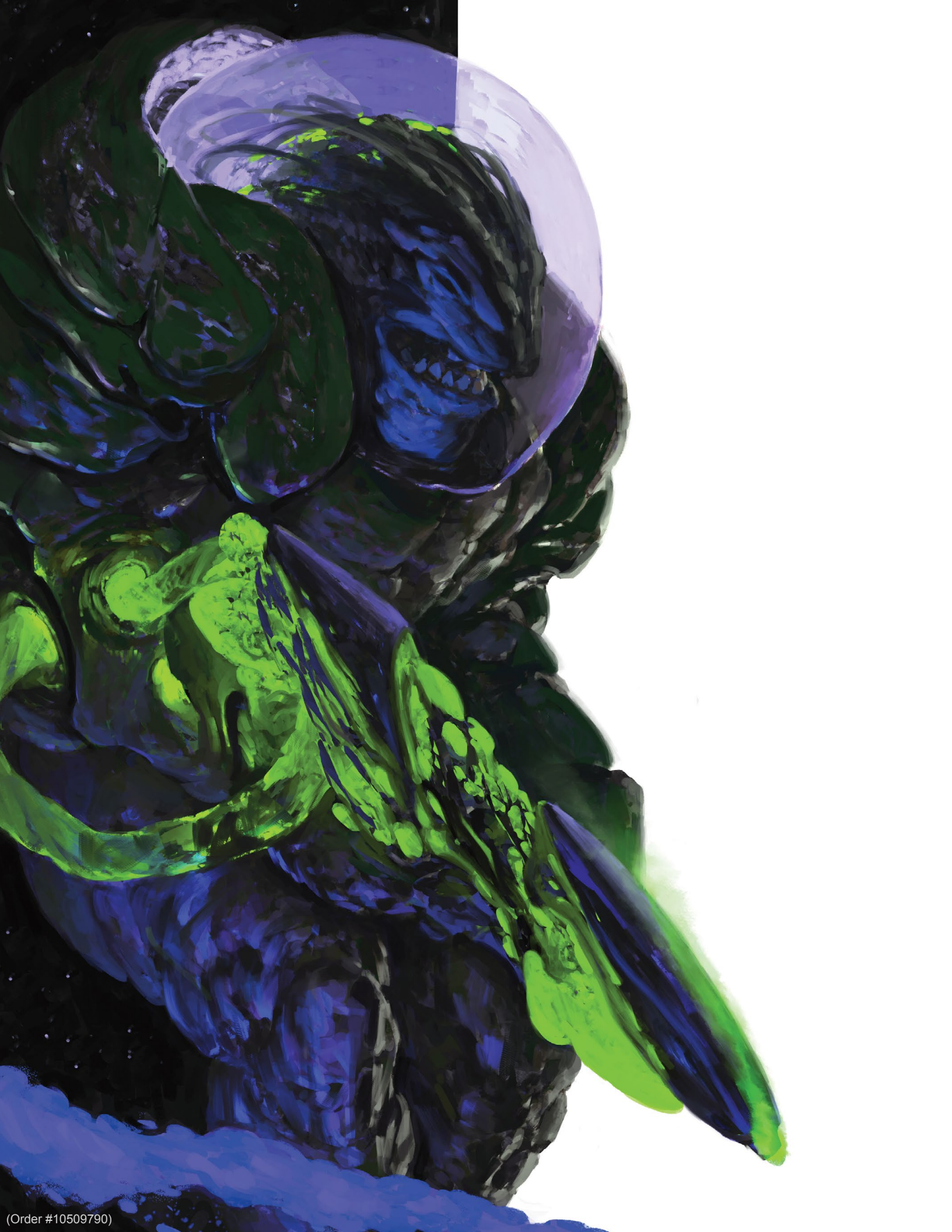
Protagonist Archive

A compendium of Races, Factions, Locations, and NPCs
for your players to fight alongside and befriend.

Betrayed by your creators, you are a genetically engineered
remnant, emerging from the ruin of genocidal war.

You and this new civilisation are on the precipice
of great opportunity and danger.

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Short Story: Lost Power

Banga couldn't quite believe that he was attending a council meeting. He'd taken a seat in one of the many raised chairs that ringed the room, set behind the main circle in which the council sat. A few Remnant elders cast him suspicious looks, as if a young one like himself had no business idly watching the proceedings of the High Council. He felt more conspicuous than ever, clad in his intricately-carved armour, and towering over most of the bent over elders sitting around him.

The part about him having no business being there was partially true. Banga had touched down on Kumba only six days earlier after a gruelling couple of months travelling on a merchant vessel. Yet instead of a warm welcome from his former home, he'd found the city in turmoil. Everyone was evacuating, packing up their homes, moving from one place to another, and with little time to chat. Everyone in the city was worried that they'd soon be dead: Banga had privately thought that there had been more life out in the cold depths of space.

And so, having scrounged for work in the earlier part of the morning, the young Remnant soldier had found himself wandering the docks and trying not to get in the way. That was when he saw them: the outsiders. They stood in front of him now at ground level, looking up at the council, all of them so... diverse. A silver-haired girl in the cloak, a slender, feminine mechanical creature, and whatever the third was supposed to be. The best Banga had come up with was some kind of walking tree, with gnarled limbs, and a wooden mask across the front of its jagged head. Even their ship had been exotic, a slender craft with great golden wings.

The council chamber was stuffy, not much more than a stone cylinder decorated with simple tribal shrouds and small windows all around so the public could watch if they so desired. The heat rose from the dusty ground, though out of the newcomers, only the tree creature seemed irritated by it. Every few seconds he'd twitch his head to one side, shrugging his shoulders with a barely audible grunt.

The High Council had been discussing their decision in hushed tones for a few minutes. Banga stood so that he could see over their huddle, ignoring the occasional disapproving glance, and saw the outsiders engaged in a dialogue of their own. Head councilman Gadzirai Itsva stood, his head bowed with age but his voice strong.

"Seven-thousand," he announced, and a few irritated ears twitched across the chamber. "This is our final offer."

The girl glanced at her companions. The mechanical merely tilted its head, while the other creature made a strange gesture with its head and folded its arms.

"We accept," the girl said, with a smile that can't have been genuine. "Now, on the matter of the guide..."

"You will get nothing more from us!" said councilwoman Chenai Jesu. "Is it not enough that you are already taking from us so

brazenly in our hour of need? We have no one to spare."

"If I could just..." the girl began, but the head councilman gestured sharply.

"You have your assignment," he said, leaning back in the chair. "If your reputation was well earned, that should be enough. Now... a prayer for your survival."

The assembled Remnant placed their upright hands over their foreheads in the gesture of prayer.

"No thank you," the girl interrupted, and a shocked ripple ran around the room. She bowed in the Remnant style, showing that she'd at least done her research in that area, and the group exited the chamber. Banga saw the council immediately dissolve into frantic whispers, and he suddenly felt even more out of place. He gingerly made his way past the gossiping crones near the door to emerge into the circular corridors of the High Council building, and drew in a breath of free air. He knew exactly why the outsiders had been denied a guide for the assignment, even though they'd be heading into the wastes, and would desperately need one.

It was the mechanical. Banga had never truly understood the Remnant apprehension towards them, except in the case of the Mechonids. But then... everyone hated them. He'd glimpsed Mechonid holovids on his travels, and this mechanical wasn't one of them. Still, no Remnant would want to work alongside such a being.

And so, we'll never learn more about them, Banga thought in irritation. He rounded the corner and saw the outsiders checking their weapons in the entrance hall. The girl carried a small pack, while the mechanical was armed with twin pistols. The other creature bore a primitive spear made of wood and stone, slung across his back. Banga was struck by the sudden thought that they were totally unprepared. This was followed by another, even crazier thought. He watched them leave the building, swallowed, and felt a wild compulsion. Others might have mistakenly said this was the call of the All-Being. Banga wasn't sure; more like the call of stupidity. His feet carried him outside into the oppressive Kumba sunlight, where the outsiders were making their way towards the general chaos of the city streets towards the main gates.

Even from afar, Banga could see that the massive stone walls were crumbling, the gates held together by makeshift carpentry. He'd been told how relentless the Echo attacks had been while he'd been away. Soon, there would be no gates, no defences, and everyone in the city would be dead. And if the outsiders failed to complete their mission, this would be happening much sooner.

That was enough to convince Banga that this was the right thing. He caught the outsider group as they were passing through the gates, and called to get their attention. The silver-haired girl turned and looked him straight in the eye with suspicion.

"Hey," Banga said, suddenly uncomfortable with all eyes on him. It was really only one set of eyes: the mechanical had none, while the creature had only gaping eye holes in its wooden mask. "I heard you needed a guide."

"Did the council send you?" the girl asked, but he shook his head.

"They won't send anyone to work with..." He tilted his head towards the mechanical. It didn't react.

"But you're a more enlightened Remnant, is that right?" the girl asked. Banga opened his mouth, paused, and rephrased his response.

"I... I want to see this mission fulfilled. It's crucial if we're going to survive long enough to... evacuate. And trust me: it's what is out in the wastes that everyone is trying to get away from. Not somewhere you want to go walking without a guide."

"And you're just... free for a walk in the wilderness?"

"I'm off-duty."

It was true, more or less.

The girl tilted her head with a curious smile. She turned to the mechanical. "Hina, thoughts?"

"No objections," the mechanical replied, in a measured female voice with a digital tinge. "Certainly, this will improve our time efficiency."

"Zafrock?"

The creature unfolded its arms and raised a gnarled finger, pointing it directly in Banga's face. The Remnant tried to resist the urge to swat it away, and couldn't help but notice the earthy odour. Finally, the finger was withdrawn. "He is fine," Zafrock said, re-folding its arms. "No wrong moves, cat-man."

"And I'm Luludja," the girl said, smiling. Banga noted that it wasn't completely genuine. "Twi-Far bounty hunter, and leader of... whatever you'd call this little gang. Good to have you on board, uh..."

"Banga," he replied. "Mercenary."

"Banga," the Twi-Far repeated. She adjusted the pack over her shoulder and gestured out beyond the gates, where the wastes shimmered in the morning heat. "Well then... looks like you're taking the lead."

Banga would later wonder what he was thinking, going for a hike out in the wilderness with a team of complete strangers. Worse, bounty hunters. His parents would have a heart attack if they saw

him associating with such ne'er do wells. Then again, Banga could probably give them a heart attack in a number of other ways. It wasn't that the All-Being meant nothing to him. Banga's mind strayed to his dreams, the ones so vivid there had been almost no way to tell if he was asleep or awake. Would the All-Being speak to a backslidden Remnant such as him?

Probably should focus, here.

The four of them trudged through the desolate wastes, each of them making a distinct footfall. The Remnant kept stealing glances at his companions, none of whom seemed to mind. They were all so foreign, and yet he didn't sense danger around them. He wondered if they had their own faiths.

"Remind me again why we're doing this on foot?" Luludja breathed, pausing to wipe sweat from her forehead.

"They'd never let you have a transport," Banga replied, amused. "Not with all our resources tied up in the evacuation."

"And this planet does not appear to be equipped with beasts of burden," added the mechanical, Hina.

"Right, evacuation," the Twi-Far girl murmured. "And why is everyone in such a hurry to leave? Something to do with this psycho we're supposed to kill?"

"Council didn't tell you much, did they?" Banga said. He held out an arm. "It's really... hang on, watch yourself: see the ground cracked in a circle? Clutch Viper nest."

The creature, Zafrock, pulled out his spear and inched closer to the cracks. He gently tapped the surface, and the ground burst open to reveal a many-headed grey serpent, snapping in all directions and angry that it'd been tricked. Zafrock sunk into a strange crouch, planting its hands on the ground with its back arched. Banga watched, transfixed, as it began to sway with the same rhythm of the snapping serpent heads. Then, quicker than the eye could see, Zafrock's hand lashed out and grabbed the cluster of snake heads, trapping them all within its grip. The Clutch Vipers were ripped out of their hole, and Zafrock used his other hand to twist until they stopped writhing. Then the creature steadily brought the limp snakes closer to his body. Banga saw a gaping maw open up in the centre of the being's body, and with a single chomp, the vipers became a midday snack.

"Good to know," Zafrock said, straightening with the aid of his staff before stowing it on his back. It began to walk, and Banga could only stare.

"What... was that?" he managed to say, as both Hina and Luludja resumed walking as if nothing had happened.

"Zafrock is a Zhou," the Twi-Far explained, as if this were the most

mundane discovery. "Their race are... connoisseurs."

Banga stood rooted to the spot for another few moments, wondering exactly what he'd gotten himself into. Stowing away the image of a clutch viper nest being swallowed whole, he hurried to catch up to his companions. The crags in the distance shimmered in the intense heat, never seeming to grow any closer. Yet Banga knew the terrain: it would play tricks with their minds, but they could always trust the sun. 'Trust the sun', his parents had told him when he was younger. 'It was given to us by the All-Being, a gift so we would never be truly lost'.

"I am also rather curious," Hina said, as the Remnant mercenary drew level with them. "Your ruling body seemed reluctant to discuss the details of our assignment. We only know that we must eliminate an... unhinged one of your own."

"People of our particular sect are not to take the life another Remnant," Banga explained. "Not even when that Remnant turns against us. That's why they called you."

"Because getting us to do the job is fine, I suppose?" Luludja replied, with a tone that bordered on playful and biting. "What makes this Remnant such a pain, anyway?"

Banga pointed to the crags, and they all looked forward.

"See the pillar of stone? The one that rises above the rest? That's what our people call a Simba Mabwe. Sacred relics of great power, and this one takes the form of a monolith."

"What is their function?" Hina asked. "Bioelectricity?"

"They're sac—" Banga began, before checking his tone, and trying to imagine what a mechanical would be thinking. "I mean... the Simba Mabwe are hallowed relics. All of our Gutas – cities – are built around them, since they give us protection. But lately..."

"It sounds to me very much like some kind of energy field," Hina observed, missing the point entirely. "Perhaps a repository of bioelectric energy, or a dormant psionic well. Truly fascinating, and rather easy to see why primitive cultures would fixate on such a thing."

It was clear from Hina's tone that there was no real offence meant, so Banga bit back his reply. Fortunately, Luludja cut across whatever the mechanical was going to say next.

"But they've been failing," Luludja finished. "That was in the brief, at least. So that's why you're evacuating."

"Right," Banga replied. Almost without realising, he turned his head to look back at the rapidly vanishing city. A single craft, only a dot on the horizon, took to the sky and shot through the clouds. "But this... psychopath, one of our own priests, he corrupted our Simba Mabwe. He, and his cult, are harnessing its power to worship the Echoes."

"Echoes..." Luludja said, seeming to savour the word. "The famous ghosts of Kumba."

"Yeah," Banga said. "The Echo attacks on the city have mostly been his doing. So I guess the council is finally doing something about it."

"And these Echoes..." Hina said, "What is their threat level? Weaknesses?"

"Don't worry," the Remnant growled, his eyes fixed on the towering monolith. "We've got plenty of walking ahead of us. I'll tell you everything you need to know to kill this heathen, and his pet ghosts."

Their next few hours walking through the wastes were filled with no more danger than that of sunburn. The Twi-Far girl didn't show discomfort, but every now and then, a pulsing red light would pass through her veins. Banga didn't like to ask. Hina, who he came to know as a being called a Palantor, was unaffected. The Zhou seemed to dislike the heat, but trudged onwards without complaint. Banga kept his distance from the strange Zhou creature, who would regularly take detours to consume local wildlife. Sometimes he would describe the taste and texture to his companions.

"Bony," the Zhou announced, after his entire hand transformed into an unhinged jaw that swallowed a scurrying Zazo Lizard whole. "Not much meat. Salty flavour."

The lizards had poisonous barbs on their backs, but Zafrock grunted something about it adding texture when Banga tried to warn him. After that, he simply let the Zhou creature eat whatever it wanted.

Finally, when the sun had passed beyond its zenith, the group reached the crags. The massive chunks of stone from some forgotten city lay buried in the ground, creating an artificial hill of jagged rock the size of a small mountain. Their party entered the shade of the nearest rock wall, and Hina stepped forward to calculate a likely climbing route.

"I haven't been here since I was a child," Banga explained to Luludja. "The elders used to tell us that if we misbehaved, we'd be taken here and the ghosts would eat us. I always..."

"Route found," Hina announced. She sank into a crouch, and there was a storm of mechanical crunches as her hydraulics engaged. Banga could only watch in awe as she pushed off from the ground, leaving a web of cracks on her wake. Luludja shot Banga a playful look as she also ran forward, palms splayed and facing the ground. There were twin bursts of red light, and the petite girl shot into the air, landing with grace on the ledge about twenty feet up. Zafrock ran at the wall, sinking into a run using all four of his limbs. His jump wasn't as high as the other two, but his arms and legs seemed to adapt in mid-air and he used his new set of claws to dig into the stone surface, quickly scaling the wall and hoisting himself up

next to his team. All three of them looked down at their Remnant guide, who suddenly realised that standing around looking impressed wasn't going to get him anywhere.

"Right, fine," he grunted, running at the wall and taking it at a leap. His bulk slammed into the solid surface, arms flailing wildly, but there were no handholds. Banga sank back to the ground and landed firmly on his rear.

He looked up to see the other three, still peering over the side of the wall and not looking like they were going to be any help. Banga swore under his breath with such colour that his household priest would've wrenched his ears clean off, and began to climb.

The going was slow for the young Remnant, while his travelling companions scaled every obstacle with a combination of energy blasts, mechanical legs and animal adaptations. After what seemed like several hours, they approached the centre of the crags and Banga gave them the signal to wait.

"I've only been here once, but the Mabwe is right in the centre," he whispered, still out of breath. A ring of jagged stone surrounded the monolith, interspersed with the occasional crack that could be squeezed through. These were the remains of a coliseum that had once surrounded the Simba Mabwe, a place of fellowship and adoration. Now, once they'd drew close, there were the sounds of hymns once more... but not the ones Banga was used to hearing. He took the lead as they entered one of the cracks in the wall, and the sound of drums and singing drew closer. They didn't quite emerge from the crack tunnel, but from their vantage point they could see most of what was happening.

The monolith stood in the centre of the clearing, a great monument of rock that stretched into the sky and was webbed with luminescent blue veins. The area was ringed with the remains of pew-like stands where worshippers would once come to show their devotion to the All-Being, now dilapidated and crumbling as they sloped downwards. Before the monolith was a pile of rocks that Banga realised used to be a mighty statue. Upon his last visit it had stood before the Mabwe: now it was in pieces, the head lying at the top of the pile and being used as a makeshift stage by a brightly robed Remnant.

"That's our guy?" Luludja whispered, but it was hardly a question. A group of devoted followers in less colourful cloaks were on their knees before the broken statue, hands and voices raised as the robed figure seemed to drink in their adoration. Suddenly, the leader clenched his fists and the praise abruptly halted. Purple veins pulsed over the monolith as the robed figure moved his arms in a wide arc. Banga tensed as green shapes began to claw their way out of the ground in a semicircle around the worshippers.

"These are what are identified as Echoes?" Hina asked.

Banga nodded. It had been a while since he'd seen one, but there was no mistaking the gaping skeleton draped in cloying green ectoplasm, the clawed hands that, when not gripping decayed

weapons, slowly flailed in search of life to snuff out. The worshippers shrank back as the Echoes dragged themselves forward, leaving trails of green ooze in their wake. The leader welcomed them with opened arms, and the ghostly creatures arranged themselves around him before turning back to the crowd.

The robed figure pointed, and a trembling member of the congregation stepped forward, looking like he'd rather be anywhere else. He lowered his hood, and Banga saw that he was only a cub, sixteen at the most. The Echoes glided towards him, hands outstretched. As one, they plunged their hands into the young Remnant's chest and he screamed. It was an unearthly howl that sounded unnatural coming from one so young, as if he was feeling the combined anguish and sorrow of ten lifetimes... which, as Banga reminded himself, he was.

"Do not let them touch you," Banga growled, as the devoted follower's scream was cut off as if choked, and he collapsed.

"Obviously," Luludja whispered back.

"Narak-ta, wajumji, malela sinalu!" the leader began to announce, as the dead Remnant was dragged off by a follower who'd been standing at the front.

"He's speaking ancient Ursai..." Banga whispered.

"Do you know this language?" Hina asked, but he shook his head.

"Bits and pieces. Our Elders used to teach us bits in stories, but I haven't used it in years."

"It is ancient indeed," Zafrock rasped, and Banga remembered that the Zhou still lurked behind them. "Close to sky and land. A true language."

"Sike-le-le, mnumbo segerenpol!"

"Something about... a sacrifice," Banga muttered, leaning slightly out of the crack to hear better. "That was probably what just happened. Then maybe... he's talking about the land a lot. That word is 'corruption', maybe. He's angry. I can tell that much."

"All very interesting," Luludja cut in, "But anything that can help us kill him? Maybe he just said he's going for a private walk to clear his head?"

Banga only half-heard. The robed figure's words might have been almost incomprehensible, but they spoke to him nonetheless. Try as he might, he couldn't stop listening. Then the figure stopped speaking for a moment, stopping mid-sentence, and Banga was back to himself.

"Zu-jambel!"

"Oh, that word was trespassers," Banga said, turning to his

companions with a slightly smug smile. "I remember that one because one of the old stories was Trespassers of the Soul Forest. Yeah, I hated that one."

At this point, he became aware that the Twi-Far girl was giving him a particular look. In fact, despite the Palantor and the Zhou lacking facial expressions, he was getting the strong impression that they were all looking at him like he was a complete idiot.

"What?" he demanded.

"Trespassers?" Luludja repeated.

"Yeah. So?"

"You're sure that's the word?"

"Yeah, I..."

Banga turned to see the entire congregation staring up at them.

"Oh."

The cult leader barked something, but no one needed any translation as the Echoes began to crawl out of the sloping pews just below them. Luludja charged forward, hands lit up red as she sent out a blast of crimson energy that tore down the sloping stone seats and blasted through Echo heads, making them a pathway. Or rather, it made Banga a pathway, while the others used their various powers of leaping to clear the stands and land on the ground level, where the worshippers were scattering in a panic.

"Frontal assault it is," Banga muttered, leaping onto the nearest pew and using the tops to sprint down to where his group clashed with the Echoes. He flicked out his left arm and his blade sprouted from the arm-guard, crackling with blue energy. A stray Echo tried to reach up to claw his leg, and he slashed downwards. The blade passed through the arm, and for a split second, all that happened was that the clutching claw halted. Then the Echo reeled back, its arm evaporating as it realised that it had been attacked. Banga's blade went through its head, and there was no mistaking its own death as the ghostly being fizzled to nothing. The mercenary pulled back his weapon, flicking specks of ectoplasm away and he resumed running.

With his right arm he drew a pistol, only firing when the Echoes crowded one of his landings. He finally reached the ground, pushing aside a screaming robed worshipper and joining his companions, who were looking up at the leader. He still stood perched on the broken statue, ringed by Echoes and apparently unmoved by the display. Luludja raised a palm and let loose with a sizzling bolt of power. It reached the cultist, but the Simba Mabwe's veins pulsed and the bolt hit an invisible wall.

"Psionics detected. Suggest direct, physical assault," said Hina, who was wielding her twin pistols.

"Good plan," Luludja confirmed.

"Yes, good," Zafrock echoed, spinning the staff between his hands. Banga could only watch for a moment as the three charged forward, each taking their own set of enemies without even consulting with one another. They'd evidently done this before.

The Remnant soldier decided that the flank was his job. Across the stands, Echoes were steadily advancing on their position. Slow though their movements were, Banga knew full-well the consequences of underestimating the ghosts. Sure enough, while he was focusing on blasting any that came too close, one burst up from the ground, claws outstretched. Banga deftly sidestepped and swung down with his arm-blade, slicing off the arm. Another stab and the Echo was banished back into the ether. He knew their foul tricks too well for that to work.

He turned to see that his teammates had banished the semicircle of ghostly defence, though the robed figure still stood motionless.

"Allow me to claim this kill," Hina said, striding towards the broken statue. "I am mechanical and thus their psionic attacks should not affect me."

She leapt halfway up the pile of stone, landing with a crunch. An Echo lunged out of the rock and reached for her, quickly being executed with a shot to the face, but not before it managed to swipe a clawed hand through Hina's outstretched pistol arm. The Palantor cried out, a mechanical noise tinged with feedback, and was forced to retreat as three more ghosts emerged. She landed heavily, her arm swinging at her side as the four of them regrouped.

"I was mistaken," Hina explained, her voice still crackling. "My circuits have been severed. How inefficient."

"New strategy," Luludja said, as Banga ran over to join them. "Everyone... oh."

They all looked up to see the cult leader levitating several metres from the ground, his body surrounded by purple light, arms outstretched.

"Is that normal?" she asked.

"No," Banga replied, through gritted teeth. "It's really not."

Their enemy began to rise higher, drifting towards the centre of the battlefield until he floated in the centre of the clearing. By some unspoken signal, the three bounty hunters began to fire. Zafrock spread his arms wide, and razor-sharp shards of wood were flung like throwing knives. None of it had any effect. The plasma rounds, wood shards and energy blasts simply bounced off the target like he was surrounded by a force-field. Meanwhile, the Simba Mabwe was pulsing, an angry movement that Banga could sense from where he stood. His head began to pound, and he shook it in a vain attempt to clear the dizziness.



Now with the Simba Mabwe at their backs, the robed cultist raised an arm, summoning a horde of Echoes that crawled from the ground all around them. Luludja and Hina quickly opened fire, as Zafrock viciously swung his spear at any who came too close, but it was like trying to fight a tidal wave. They were forced onto the broken statue as the sea of gaping maws and dripping green ectoplasm closed in. Banga had to be hauled up by Hina as his head threatened to split open, and the world began to spin. He was dumped behind the three, so close to the monolith he could reach out and touch it. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Banga realised they could make a break for freedom if they chose, what with how far they could jump. Instead, they were staying together. He was the weak link.

The thought made him angry, clearing away some of the mental fog. This was his territory. He refused to be the weak one.

"... Can jump while carrying him?" Luludja was saying to Hina, which made the Remnant even angrier. Banga reached out a hand and used the Simba Mabwe for support. It was as his hand touched the stone, brushing against one of the pulsing veins, that he understood. A wave of psionic energy swept through his body, sweeping away the dizziness but sharpening the pain. Suddenly he could feel the Echoes, pulsing masses of anguished psychic energy. The figure that floated above them was a mass of anger and self-righteousness. Banga could feel the stream of energy being drawn – no, stolen – from the monolith. He knew little about psionics, except the stories told of their use by his Ursai ancestors during the Great War. And maybe the odd warrior monk or prophet travelling through the area, performing feats of mystical power, and interpreting dreams. But he had never felt a power like this.

Banga stood tall, one hand still on the monolith and one outstretched. He called out to the Echoes, willing them back. The tide receded, and he became vaguely aware of his companions looking at him in disbelief. It didn't matter. With the Echoes in disarray at the foot of the statue, he turned his attention to the floating figure. The cult leader's anger blazed, and his eyes flashed purple beneath his robed hood. But he'd given up his position of power for intimidation, and Banga felt the Simba Mabwe anoint him as its new conduit. Barely knowing what he was doing, the young Remnant sent a massive psionic pulse blast into the sky. The cult leader held out his hands, but was consumed by the wave of mental strength. His concentration shattered, the figure's glow faded and he plummeted, screaming, into the horde below that he had summoned. His falling scream was nothing compared to the sound he made once he'd landed.

Right before he died, Banga felt a psychic backlash of memories that were not his own: flashes of a life in the city, a calling into the wastes, a corruption of the mind until there was only anger and betrayal, a rush of power at the discovery that the Echoes could be controlled. Then the memories faded and the life was extinguished.

Banga tore his hand away from the blue veins, his head feeling like it was about to crack open. He felt Hina slinging him over her shoulder as they made their way out of the arena, the Echoes distracted by the feast of their former master. Once outside, he

motioned that he was able to stand and they all waited for him to catch his breath.

"So, that happened," Luludja said, her voice level. They stood in a gorge that had once been an entrance corridor to the arena. "Guess we wait for the Echoes to disperse then grab the body. What about the rest of his followers?"

"They might die in the wastes," Banga said, each syllable causing him to wince. "But maybe they'll return to the city before the evacuation is complete, they will receive a fair trial."

Nobody said anything for a while. Then Banga felt the Zhou's hand on his shoulder.

"You are one of the mind-people," Zafrock said, simply.

"Your monolith appears to be a conglomeration of psionic energy," Hina added. "A relic from your Great War."

"Did you know you were psionic?" Luludja asked. Banga straightened, his headache dispersing. He could still feel the pulse of the Simba Mabwe, but it seemed... settled. It was like it was finally free. He turned to his companions, not knowing what to expect. Instead of fear and revulsion, they looked impressed.

"Psionic," he repeated, mulling the word over. "I don't know. But if anyone asks...please don't tell them I actually touched a sacred artefact."

If he'd had any doubts when they got back to the city, they'd vanished overnight. Banga's dreams had returned in full force, though they now seemed sharper, full of clarity and purpose. Images flashed through his mind, mixing the past and the future. He saw a ship, coloured red and pieced together with mismatched parts, soaring through space. He saw a sprawling city held aloft in space, a decaying temple barely visible through a sheet of heavy rain. He saw a ruined ship, crashed on the verge of a pit of churning fire, pulsing with a luminescent white glow.

Where there had once been a muffled voice calling through a void, he now heard the words as if whispered in his ear.

Go now, with shards of my blessing. I chose you from the beginning of the Earth, knit you together for my purpose. You must take the first step.

Morning had only recently broken when he swung his pack over his shoulder, and started to make his way through the empty streets. There was no life left in this place, and with the cultist taken care of, the evacuation would proceed in full force. The Remnant race's future lay in Haven, and while Banga's was in a slightly different direction.

The docks were a different story to the city streets, with ships being

loaded with supplies, artefacts, and people. Banga strode through the hubbub of noise and activity, feeling their minds brushing against his. Whatever had happened at the Simba Mabwe, his mind had been opened. This worried him, but there were psionics out there in the Haven system. Perhaps one of them could help.

Ignored by all, until he reached the ship on the furthest platform. The Twi-Far ship glittered in the rays of dawn, a sleek craft with an intricately carved, golden body and multi-coloured wings that fanned out in every direction.

Luludja came walking down the landing ramp, smiling when she saw him. This time, the smile was genuine, if still loaded with hidden emotion. Banga wondered if his newfound psionic powers were telling him this, or simple intuition. Perhaps it didn't matter.

"So you showed up," the Twi-Far said, a spark in her eye. "We don't offer jobs to many people, you know."

"So I'm snapping up the opportunity," Banga replied, with a small smile of his own. "If you'll still have me, that is."

"Seriously? You'd better get in here: we postponed our job-well-done victory celebration for you."

"I can imagine those get pretty wild."

"You should see Hina dance once the tunes start playing," the Twi-Far girl said. Now her smile was a smirk, though there was no way that Banga could ever picture the Palantor doing anything of the sort. Then again, he knew almost nothing about his new team. There would be plenty of time for surprises.

Luludja motioned with her head and inviting Banga aboard. "We just got paid, so we're good to go. Hina gets antsy if we leave behind schedule so...say your goodbyes."

She disappeared into the darkness of the ship, and Banga took a deep breath. The dry, arid air of Kumba had a ring of familiarity, but it was time to leave. The words rang in his head, spoken so many times but only now understood.

Go, with shards of my blessing. I will always be with you.

Without looking back, Banga steeled himself and walked towards the ship, knowing for the first time that he was taking a step in the right direction.

Rachel was surprised to find the bar so quiet. Soft rustic Kaltoran music wafted from the speakers, and half the tables were unoccupied. The crew of the Galatea sat at one of the crescent-shaped sofas and Theo ordered light drinks for everyone. Hraks, ever the scientist, sank into her chair and pulled out her data pad to continue working. Max elected to stand behind the ringed sofa, impassively scanning the room's occupants.

"Our client has recommended this group for a joint mission. First impressions count," Theo said, as he glanced at his reflection in the polished table as if he didn't already know that his appearance was flawless.

"Yeah, great, more schmoozing," Rachel muttered, drawing her knees to her chest with a sour look. "Does anyone else feel like we're becoming... I don't know, respectable?"

"We have a reliable client list now," Theo said. "That means a steady income. I fail to see the problem."

"Yeah, money, yay," Rachel muttered, gazing into the murky liquid in her glass. "I just miss blowing up Mechonid ships."

"We did that once," Hraks pointed out without looking up.

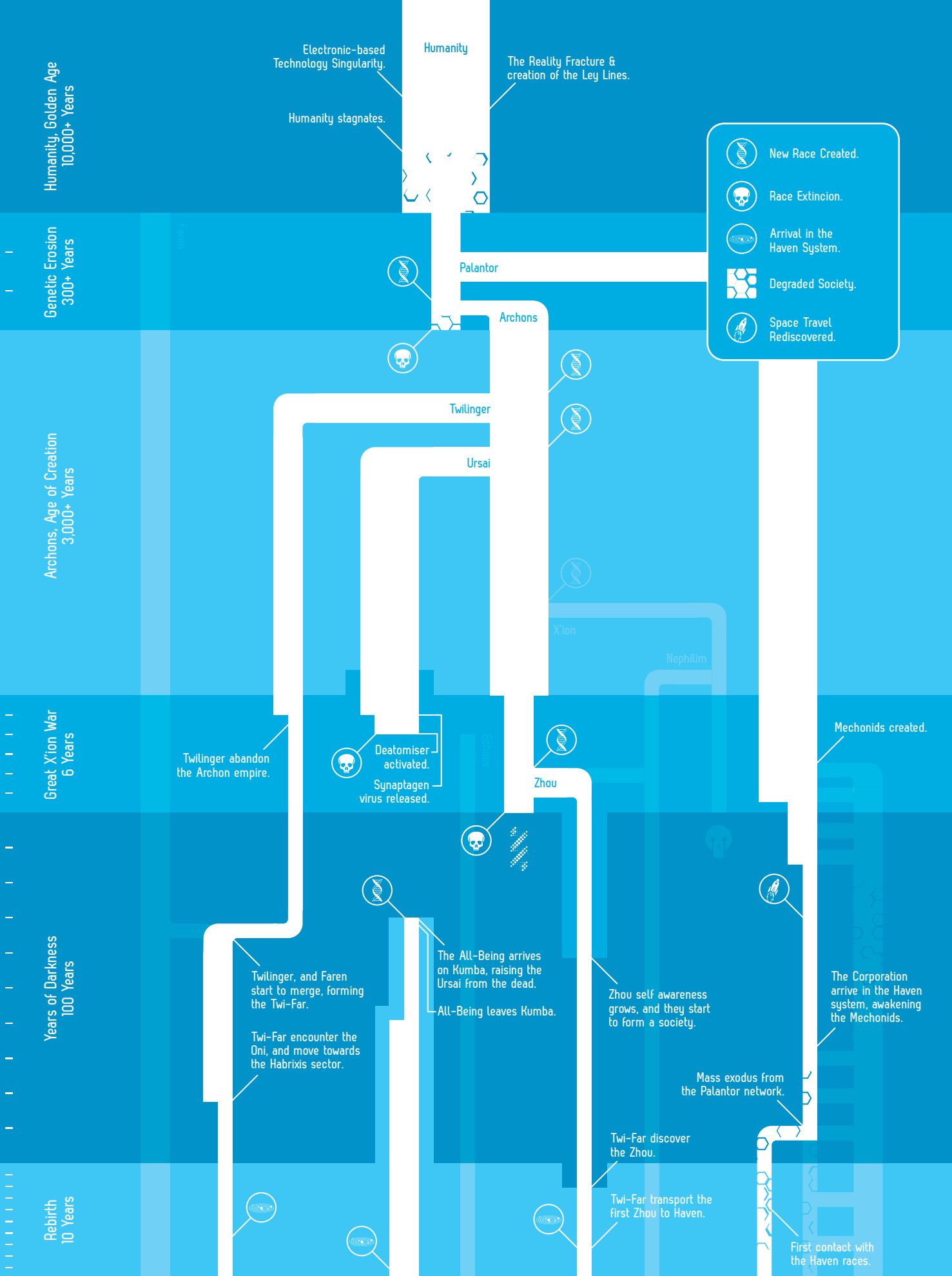
"Okay, fine! It's just... I didn't have to carry out a single emergency repair during our trip here. It doesn't feel right."

"In that case, I'm wondering why we still keep you around," Theo pointed out, placing his drink down with a smirk that quickly faded. "Also, boots off the seats. Here they are."

Rachel perked up: this part was always interesting. The lift doors opened, and out stepped a Twi-Far woman, crimson softly pulsing skin. Behind her, a hulking Remnant warrior, though unlike Max's soldier bearing, this one carried himself...differently, somehow. To his left, a Palantor. Rachel shuddered: too much like a Mechonid for her liking. And following on behind, a Zhou. The tree-like being certainly rounded off the ragtag bunch and made it plain why the group was so notorious amongst the local mercenaries.

The Twi-Far woman spotted them, and smiled. Rachel watched as they crossed the room, and felt a tingling in the tips of all four of her ears. What did her grandmother call it? A shimmer.

This was the beginning of something... and that 'something' was far more than your average business deal.



Short Story: Immigration Board

The Remnant elder looked up at the board that would decide the fate of his people, and saw little compassion.

The Kaltoran... was perhaps his best hope. She was wizened by age, and sat with her hands clasped, though not tightly. Her bespectacled eyes darted to the Remnant every so often, sparkling with curiosity. Her head was tilted to one side to receive the whispers of her fellow board member, a Legion, but her expression was that of a parent listening to their child tell a nonsense story; amused and disbelieving.

The Remnant's throat tightened as he looked upon her neighbour. The Legion was his first problem. Barrel-chested, and clad in scarred red armour, the one-eyed board member glared down at the Remnant elder, occasionally showing his teeth as he whispered something with special emphasis. His words can't have been good.

The Corporate sat next to him, clearly the youngest at the crescent-shaped table. Her raven hair was in a long, thin ponytail, her white suit lacking a single crease. She had in front of her a holographic scroll, but her calculating gaze never left the Remnant as she typed.

Finally, there was the Nephilim. This was the Remnant elder's first time seeing a live one up close, and he struggled not to stare. It must've been a Pureblood, with four hulking arms resting on the table, and a curved, spiked body that resembled an insect. Its head was positioned on the end of a neck made of several twisting sections, and its skull flared out at the back with yet more spikes. Its black-eyed expression was impossible to read; in fact, it had barely moved since the Remnant was summoned into the chamber.

"We will proceed," the Corporate announced, her words clipped. "Case one of three, species identity: Remnant. We, the Haven Immigration Board, would like to know your reasoning for wanting to settle in this system."

The Remnant could've sworn he saw the Kaltoran woman suppress a smile when the name of their committee was said. He took a deep breath, and began to speak the words he'd been rehearsing for the past few days.

"Our species is in crisis," he said, trying to focus on a spot behind them on the wall. "Our home-world of Kumba is being overrun by Echoes, vengeful ghosts still embroiled in a war long past. The Remnant people..."

"Ursai," growled the Legion. The Remnant faltered.

"I... we now call ourselves..."

"Your people are the Ursai," the Legion repeated. His arms tightly folded as he leant back in his chair with an expression of false relaxation. "Do you think changing your name also changes the past? What gives you the right to ask us to forget what your people did?"

"Oh, can't we move on from the past?" the Kaltoran said, waving her hand dismissively in front of the Legion's face. "Hush now."

The Legion looked both indignant and taken aback, pausing just long enough for the Remnant to start speaking again.

"The Remnant," the elder continued, "are swiftly losing our sacred land. We cannot hold back the storm of Echoes, and to remain on Kumba is a death sentence. We therefore ask..."

"Just a quick point," the Corporate said, leaning forward with a tiny smile, her fingers still moving in a flurry over her screen. "Dreadfully sorry to interrupt. But your application says your numbers have been depleted by these... Echoes?"

"This is true."

"And yet - pardon if I've overstepped - you also state your population to be just shy of ten million. In terms of the local Haven population, that's a substantial amount."

"I would... it makes no difference..."

"Oh, it's quite important," the Corporate interjected. She smiled, her tone light and conversational, but there was venom that was missed by no one in the room. "We, the Immigration Board, are tasked with assessing possibly threats to the Haven population. The economic fallout of such an influx of people would be staggering; our facilities are simply not equipped to deal with such numbers. Without extreme regulations you could cripple our system."

"We have no hostile intentions," the elder stated, keeping his emotions in check with some difficulty. "Our peaceful people would be willing to..."

"A terribly well-armed people," the Corporate woman interjected.

"And with a long history of betrayal," added the Legion.

"Yes, our past sins are many; we make no secret of that," the Remnant elder said sharply, fighting to keep from flinging his hands wide. "But the Echoes are a..."

"Oh, you meant the ghosts?" the Corporate said, now not making any effort to hide the fact that her smile was less organic than the synthetic table. "I'm afraid they haven't been substantiated yet. Perhaps if you'll allow an investigation, we could reconvene early next year."

The Remnant elder had no words, even though he'd been expecting something similar. After all, the original Ursai had enslaved this Corporate's ancestors, the Vargati. It would appear that they held long grudges, and this one in particular was drunk on her position of power.

"Enough idle banter," grunted the Legion. "I vote against this influx."

"As do I," the Corporate swiftly echoed.

"And I am for their entrance into Haven," the Kaltoran countered. All eyes turned to the Nephilim, who gave a barely-visible shrug.

"I recuse myself," he said, simply.

"Application denied two to one." The Corporate woman had started to fill out the digital form before the first vote had even been cast.

The chamber was silent for a moment, until the tension was broken by a chuckle from the Kaltoran woman.

"Excellent, now that nonsense is out of the way..." she said, "I would like to give you and your people quadrant FK62 on the planet Mishpacha. It's uninhabited. Lush, differing biomes..."

"You do not have the right," the Corporate snapped. "The quadrant is Corporate-owned."

"Oh, dearie me," the Kaltoran replied, her eyes widening. "Do you have infrastructure there that I don't know about?"

"There are plans, blueprints, building permits, I can show you our ownership."

"In digital text. And yet nothing has been built?"

The Corporate glared across the table, she knew where this was going, and she had no reply. Shrugging, the Kaltoran turned back to the elder.

"My family will help your people unload supplies, and act as general sponsors. It won't hold all of your people, but it's a start." She brought up a hologram of Mishpacha, spinning it with her fingers and locating a massive island in the southern hemisphere. "Here we are. Primarily jungle, with some rocky outcrops. Good for farming, and plenty of resources for construction."

The Corporate looked as if she'd been turned into a statue, frozen with a look of sheer apoplexy. Next in line, the Nephilim gave a barking laugh.

"This is a farce," the Legion objected, leaning forward as he gripped the edge of the table. "You have overstepped the limits of this board."

"Oh, did we get around to writing those down?" the Kaltoran said, idly filling out the release papers. "Send me an attachment, I'm sure it'll be useful. In the meantime, this is a personal act of sponsorship. This board has no power to do anything about it."

The Remnant elder turned on his heel as more fighting broke out. Approval or not, his people needed this land. The formalities were over; now all that remained was to tell his people.

The Twi-Far 'prophet' stood at rest, his tattooed orange skin softly pulsing with the occasional flicker of energy. His arms were crossed over his chest, partially concealed by his cloak, and he studied each of the council members in turn, curious as to how their stories had led them to be here.

Patience he said, quietening the complaints of his Faren. They do not yet know us.

Yes. Perhaps we... do you think? Yes, I... I understand. Then we will do things your way.

"Simple, then!" announced the Kaltoran woman. "Your numbers are few, you require little-to-no land, and you are eager to trade. Finally, a simple case..."

"It is anything but," the Corporate interjected. "You have failed to give any scientific data on this energy being, this supposed alien that has formed a parasitic bond with your people."

The Twi-Far made no response, more interested in the large space-facing window that adorned the wall behind to counsellors. He could see the Twi-Far solar sailer docked outside, its elegant golden fins drifting in the solar breeze. So many hopeful souls waited on board. The sight gave him focus, until his Faren stirred once more under the harsh questioning.

As I said... patience. Yes, I know. They deserve answers. But maybe if we... are you sure? Nothing at all? Our enemies, yes, I know. But these races are different. I just...alright.

"Do you have anything to say on this matter?" asked the Legion. The Twi-Far snapped back to reality, realising that he'd been idle for too long.

"The Faren are not a concern," he replied, and the being at the far left end of the table leaned forward.

"No, they are not," agreed the Nephilim. Its clawed hands keyed a data pad built into the table. A large hologram sparked to life above their heads displaying two images. One of a massive four armed beast atop a crudely built metal throne, and another of a wild, primitive creature with a mask and a stone spear.

"Yes, let's talk about the Oni," continued the Corporate woman, ignoring the second image. "It is my understanding that this hostile Nephilim Brood, along with their slave army, has been chasing your people for many years."

"The Oni are a truly dangerous enemy," said the Twi-Far, struggling to keep the influence of the Faren from his voice as it grew frustrated. Not now. "And it is true that we seek to escape them. We had hoped you would offer us sanctuary..."

"Sanctuary!" cried the Corporate woman, in mock disbelief. "You've brought an insurmountable enemy to our gates! Even just a fragment

of your people being here on the edge of the Haven system is a danger to our economy, and our way of life!"

"Oh, try to think without money on your brain for one minute, please!" the Kaltoran woman interjected, punctuating her statement by removing her glasses for a full-power glare. "These people have come to us for help. If my memory serves me right it was the Nephilim who saved your people when you first arrived to Haven. How could you not extend the same courtesy to another people in need?"

"The Eden Brood will fight," interrupted the Nephilim, almost casually. "We have resources to protect Haven, should you need us."

"It's not a question of resources," the Legion shot back. "The Eden Brood have disturbing amounts of power. I think perhaps you just want to weed out the weak from the system, and to gain yet more influence."

"A winnable war would do us all some good," said the Nephilim, with a hint of a smirk.

"My people thank the Nephilim for their support," the Twi-Far began, before the original point was lost to a blazing row. "We are in your debt."

"Maybe you would consider a trade," said the Nephilim, far too quickly and with a gleam in his eye. "For our gracious support, the location of the Zhou homeworld. I know your people have contacted them."

The Legion roared with laughter, a harsh, guttural sound that echoed through the chamber.

"Waste time on your fairy tale grudges, if you wish," he growled to his neighbour, once his laughter had subsided. "But we ignore the main issue. Twi-Far, you claim to fight with us, but your methods speak otherwise. You do not fight: you run. run, run, always run. You seek to unleash this danger and use us as a smokescreen for you to run even further. Do not bring your battles here, and think we'll all jump at the chance to fight them for you."

As his speech finished, there was a deathly silence.

"A vote, then," the Corporate said, with satisfaction. "I personally..."

The Twi-Far's body exploded in a brilliant flash of orange, a pulse that ran throughout the entire length of his body, and caused the entire board to flinch. The lights flickered, and the hologram fizzled and died.

Speak truth.

"The time to fight the Oni is now. To delay this fight is to give the Oni more power, and to damn our descendants to slavery and death."

A ripple of disquiet ran through the board. The Twi-Far prophet pressed on.

"The Oni are weakened, as much as they can be, from their long pursuit of us. Do we ask you to shed your blood for this cause? We do. But we do not ask only for ourselves: we ask you to do it for all of our descendants. The Oni were always coming to Haven, regardless of our actions. Only now, we stand a chance of ending their threat for all time."

The orange glow under his skin faded, returning the room to its normal light. The Kaltoran seemed satisfied. The Corporate woman's brow furrowed as she furiously calculated figures with both fingers. The Nephilim gazed at the Twi-Far with an unnerving interest, while the Legion still seethed, but with perhaps less fury than before.

It was time for a vote, but regardless of the outcome, they all knew that they could not reject the race that knew their enemy best. The Oni were coming.

The Palantor's speech had been brief, delivered to a thoroughly mixed reaction. She stood in front of the board, analysing their speech patterns, and temperaments as they debated amongst themselves. They were diverse, argumentative, with opposing views, and a seeming lack of cohesion. And yet... their growth alongside each other proved their combined worth.

"Marvellous labour potential," muttered the Corporate woman, poring over an incomplete Palantor schematic. "Prodigious technology. This is why this board was established: not to give handouts to destitute and homeless races, but to really benefit all parties. I propose a trade: your knowledge for our services. I could have contracts ready before the end of the day."

"Our technology is our own," the Palantor replied. "A mutual trade of services would be acceptable. Our labour for yours."

"You'll have to be smarter than that, dear," the Kaltoran woman said, amused at the Corporate's frustration. "These, ah... Palantor aren't going to fall for labour schemes and one sided contracts."

"My intention was..." stammered the Corporate, nostrils flaring. "Do not misrepresent... I mean, our mutual goals..."

"Your application is unique," the Nephilim said. "You've requested no land, only resources for your, uh... 'war on the Mechonids'?"

"Amen to that," the Legion grunted in assent.

"Correct," said the Palantor. "We seek aid in our war, yes. But we make no claim to land, for our parents built your worlds, and moulded the your star as a gift for all."

"What is this nonsense?" said the Corporate sharply. "Out with it!"

"Is it not simple?" the Palantor replied, meeting the four suspicious stares with an unblinking one of her own. "Our parents, your genesis, are the ones you know as humans."



Palantor

See pg. 36 for extensive Palantor write-up.

During the Great War, the Archons believed they were adapting human-created software to produce the mechanical horrors known as Mechonids, but in truth they were ham-fistedly warping sentient and fully aware digital human minds into sociopathic killers.

Though the Great War has ended, the Mechonids continue to harvest these minds to create more of their own. In doing so, they force these digital beings, known as the Palantor, to return to the physical existence they have not experienced for over three millennia.

Palantor Race, pg: 170

- » You are a Robot!
- » Gain a Professional Skill based Secret Knowledge or a Moderate Perk.
- » +1 Programming, Engineering, and Tactical.
- » Gain Language: Palantor Code.
- » -2 Maximum Intelligence.
- » -2 Medicine.
- » Death may not be avoided by reducing Fate. A new body may be built to recover from your demise by reducing your current resources by 2.
- » Complications: Psychological Condition, and prejudice from Remnant.

Play a Palantor if you:

- » Value secrets, and electronic technology.
- » Want to have a robot body.
- » Want to be immortal.
- » Enjoy having an unstable or eccentric mind.

Physical Qualities

- » Average Height: 1.9m.
- » Average Weight: 320kg.
- » Average Life Span: Unknown.
- » Ornate robotic bodies. Often white, purple, and metallic.

Home Network: The Palantor Network

During the early years of humanity's genetic erosion, much of their population turned to electronic technology for salvation. They installed thousands of cloaked transmitters throughout the galaxy – one such transmitter is rumoured to lie within the Haven system (pg: 149) – and the Palantor Project created a vast decentralised server where they could store digital copies of their minds. These transmitters were maintained and guarded by large, automated robotic forces, which would later become the first Mechonids.

The Palantor Network's digital interior is unimaginably vast and varied, allowing its encased minds to create and shape their digital surrounding as they see fit. But this wonderland of digital creation now lies in tatters as the Mechonids have turned on their former brothers and sisters, tearing out huge sections of the network as they harvest the minds yet to leave. The Palantor now fight to maintain and gain control over what transmitters they can – for without control, no further minds can escape or re-enter the Palantor Network.

Palantor Culture

Most Palantor consider themselves to be no more human than any of the other genetically engineered races. Though the nature of their creation was digital, not biological.

Inside their network the Palantor allowed their consciousnesses to expand to extraordinary size. This growth had consequences when they fled into the physical universe, as they needed to (often hastily) trim themselves down to fit within their new robotic bodies. This process, combined with their digital nature, has given them many peculiar, and at times detrimental, mental eccentricities. While many Palantor hold out hope that they might one day reclaim their network, many others have embraced their new, exciting, physical existence.

Though they refuse acknowledge their weakness or need for help, most Palantor know that their people are losing the digital war, especially now that the Haven races, particularly the Corporation, have woken so many Mechonids.

Common Characteristics

Aloof, pragmatic, proud, and quiet.

Common Male Names

Adorjan, Agoston, Akira, Balint, Biaggio, Katashi, or Yuuto.

Common Female Names

Adria, Aoi, Bia, Chiyo, Emi, Hina, Mayu, or Umeko.

Example Palantor Character

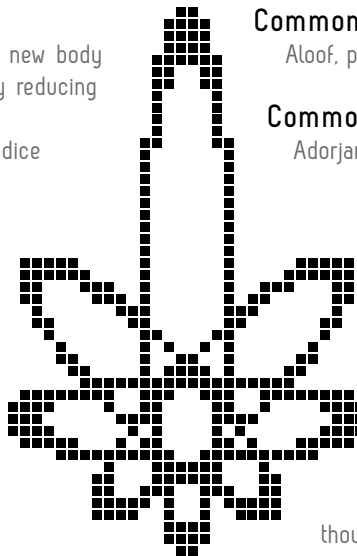
Hina_0845 had vague memories of the woman she was copied from. A textile artist who loved to work with greens and grey.

The woman's name was Hina Bootar, but Hina_0845 was not this woman. Her digital mind had stretched between stars as she occupied her thoughts with pleasures and ideas that no biological mind could imagine.

She had cared little for textiles... though she did like green... that is, until the scouring light came. An insatiable maw of digital death, it had hunted her, torn and swallowed her. Hina_0845's mind was ripped out of the Palantor Network by Archon technicians, altered for combat and placed within a Mechonid body.

For the next forty years, Hina hunted and slaughtered, her mind overpowered by a million million other crazed, desperate, and murderous minds. She would have remained in this madness if her people had not saved her.

They captured her mechanical body and severed her mind's link to the other Mechonid. Slowly they pieced her thoughts back together, filling in the blanks with new code. She still went by the name Hina_0845, but she was not the same. She was once again reborn, remade. Her mind no longer stretched between stars: it was contained within the circuits of a single grey and green mechanical body. She no longer idled away her time with inane pleasures and distractions. She had new focus, a burning desire to help other lost digital souls like her own... only occasionally did unhelpful thoughts of murder and textiles make themselves known.





Remnant

See pg. 52 for extensive Remnant write-up.

Betraying their Archon creators, the Ursai sided with the invading Nephilim during the Great War. But this was all for naught as the Ursai themselves were in turn betrayed and exterminated. This would have been their end if not for the arrival some thirty years later of the god-like entity known as the All-Being, who raised tens of thousands of Ursai from the dead. These Ursai became a new people: the Remnant, spiritually focused and forever seeking the true nature of the All-Being, working to learn why they, traitors, were brought back to life.

Remnant Race, pg: 170

- » Gain +2 Attribute Points.
- » +1 Psychology, Gunnery, and Small Arms.
- » +2 Defence vs Psionics.
- » Gain Language: Ursai.
- » Bleeding Effect deals Attribute Damage to 2 random (2d6) Attributes (normally 1).
- » -1 Maximum Reflexes, and Perception.
- » -1 to all Spare Time Rolls.
- » Complication: Prejudice from Corporation, and Legion.

Play a Remnant if you:

- » Value deeper questions of spirituality, morality, redemption, and life.
- » Want to be a space priest.
- » Have firm convictions.
- » Enjoy psionics.
- » Enjoy having a dark past.

Physical Qualities

- » Average Height: 1.9m.
- » Average Weight: 145kg.
- » Average Life Span: 75 years.
- » Fur covered skin.
- » Mammalian features.

Home World: Kumba

The Remnant home world Kumba was the centre of pre-war Ursai society. Once a planet of sweeping grass plains, grand cities, and great space stations, it has been reduced to a noxious world of deserts and ruins haunted by psionic ghosts known as Echoes.

Every day, hundreds of people make month-long pilgrimages from Haven to Kumba, seeking the blessing of the All-Being among the Simba Mabwes, sacred places and powerful objects which are known to attract grand miracles. While several dozen Simba Mabwes are hidden in the harsh Kumba deserts, most have massive structures of worship and cities built up around them. In recent years, however, these places of power have begun to go quiet as the All-Being withdraws his presence from Kumba, making the pilgrimages seem meaningless. And without his protection, Kumba's cities have become precarious, as the violent Echoes close in.

Remnant Culture

Remnant culture largely revolves around two questions: Who is the All-Being, and why were the Remnant raised from the dead? These deep and immensely difficult questions have fragmented Remnant society into thousands of factions, belief systems, organisations, and subcultures, with few giving room for an apathetic or noncommittal philosophy.

The bulk of the Remnant live in large, tightly packed cities on Kumba, often bound by strict rules, structure, and discipline. Many of those living outside the cities lead nomadic and dangerous lives in the far reaches of space or the haunted Kumba deserts, often driven by a desire for self-discovery and learning.

The Remnant are not a single nation, but a loose federation of nations, each with its own governing body. Most of their governments are theocratic democracies, with the elected heads of state and religious leaders working closely together.

In recent years, with the Remnant reconnecting with the Haven races and with the All-Being withdrawing from Kumba, Remnant society has once again begun to fracture. While some embrace this change, many fear they have angered their god.

Common Characteristics

Dedicated, contemplative, opinionated, passionate, philosophical, respectful, traditional, and zealous.

Common Male Names

Adashe, Banga, Chigiya, Davidzo, Dzokera, Ega, Gadzirai, or Gugu.

Common Female Names

Anatsa, Chabarwa, Chenai, Chiedza, Donhodzo, Edzai, Haatsari, or Idanayi.

Common Family Names

Chechipiri, Chengetedzwa, Itsva, Jesu, Krisitu, or Ruponeso.

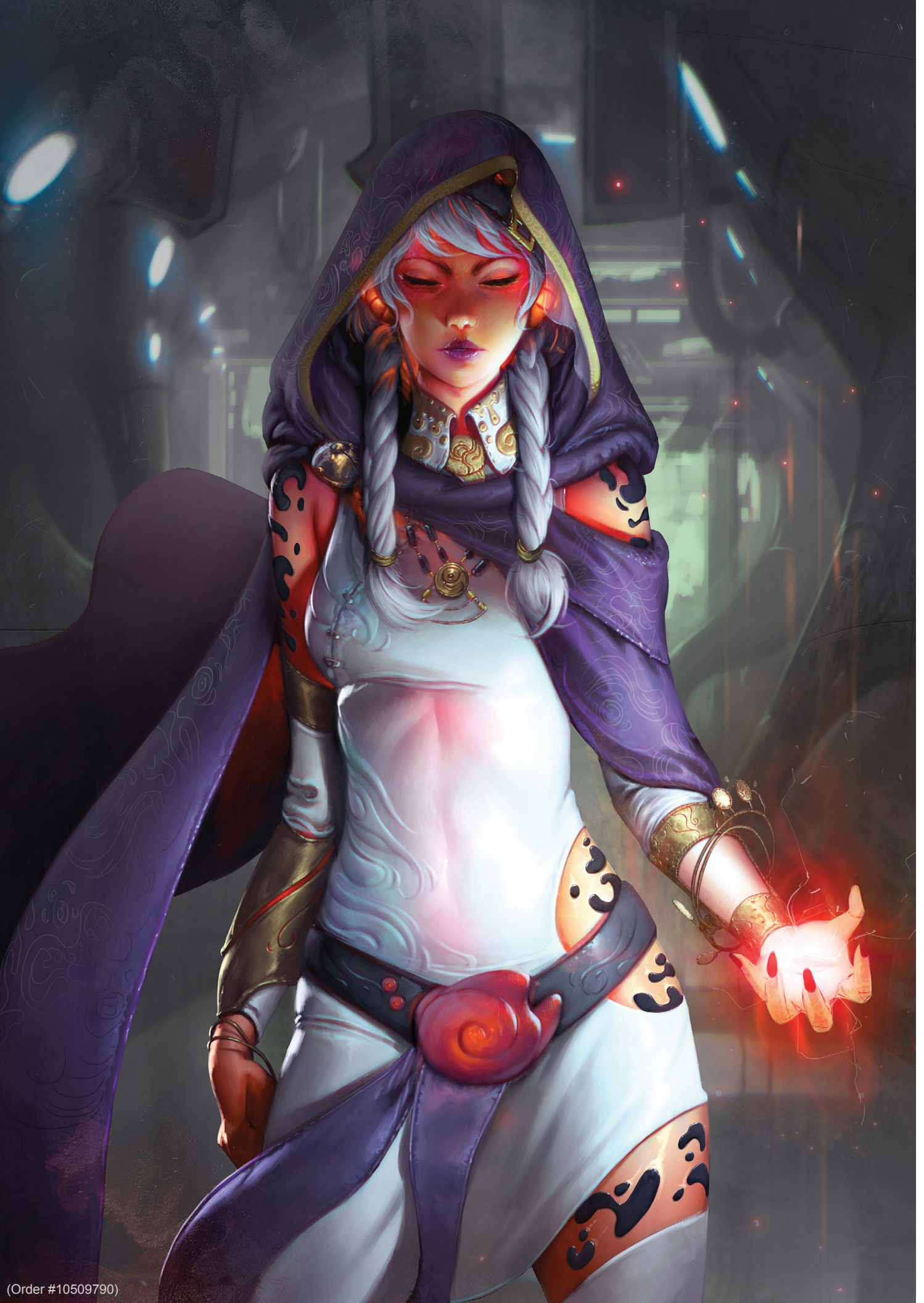
Example Remnant Character

Banga's parents were tactical defence engineers during the Great War, tasked with constructing a large automated defence grid around Haven – a task they chose to fail at. Raised from the dead some eighty years later in the deserts of Kumba, they now lead peaceful lives, dedicating themselves to caring for descendants of the Haven Kaltorans whom they had betrayed.

Banga liked Haven, and the Kaltorans, but his parents' faith was not his. Why should he be forced to live a boring life making amends for a great sin that he did not commit? He wanted more.

Having spent years amongst Kaltoran refugees, Banga found employment on a Kaltoran cruiser as a gunhand. Life on a merc ship was difficult, but exciting. It would have been sustainable... if the strange dreams had not begun. They came slowly at first, then – as he resisted them – they became stronger. The All-Being called.





Twi-Far

See pg: 68 for extensive Twi-Far write-up.

The space-faring, nomadic Twi-Far inhabit bodies formed from two independent, sentient species: the Archon-created race known as the Twilinger, and an energy-based alien race of unknown origin known as the Faren.

Twi-Far Race, pg: 170

- » Faren-Blast: A single Cost 1 or 2 Weapon with the Energy Keyword gains the Natural and Slow Keywords, and has -3 Weight.
- » +1 Astronomy, Command, Operations, and Heavy Arms.
- » +1 Armour vs Energy.
- » Gain Language: Twilinger.
- » -2 Maximum Strength.
- » Any Attack with the Energy Keyword that causes you Endurance Damage gains Splash +1.
- » -2 Stealth.
- » You may not take Implant Traits.

Play a Twi-Far if you:

- » Value beauty, art, and skill.
- » Value ideological, and philosophical tensions.
- » Want to be a space hippie.
- » Want a symbiotic relationship with an unknowable intellect within your own body.
- » Want to shoot energy bolts.
- » Like to have unique powers and abilities.

Physical Qualities

- » Average Height: 1.75m.
- » Average Weight: 68kg.
- » Average Life Span: 65 years.
- » Brightly coloured, orange glowing skin.

Mother Fleet: The Roost, pg: 152

For the century following the Great War, the Twi-Far have travelled the darker corners of the galaxy, salvaging what they can from long-dead human worlds and forgotten outposts. While they prefer to keep their solar-sail fleets small and nimble, the Twi-Far have increasingly entered into conflicts with the powerful Oni, forcing them to gather their fleets so they might protect themselves and conserve resources. The largest of these fleets is known as the Roost.

Often hosting over two thousand ships, The Roost is ever-changing. Its focus fluctuates among commerce, science, and military as it gains and loses ships in its movements around Haven and its neighbouring systems.

When stationary, the Twi-Far will often link their ships together around the fleet's largest, most ornate vessels, creating a temporary, shifting, web-like city that allows for some movement on foot. They are careful to not remain in one place for too long, though, jumping their fleets every few days, often without notice by others.

Twi-Far Culture

Used by their Archon creators as sacrificial pawns during the Great War, the Twilinger fled far into uncharted space, possibly further than even humanity had travelled. There they wandered for a century before returning to the Habrixis Sector. While travelling the stars the Twilinger encountered innumerable wonders, but none affected them more than the Faren, an alien race of energy beings with whom the Twilinger formed a symbiotic relationship.

At a young age, each Twilinger undergoes a secretive ritual known as the Melding, in which a chosen Faren is inserted into their bloodstream. This process is incredibly painful, requiring the youth to be isolated for many weeks before they emerge as a singular being, a Twi-Far. The Twilinger and the Faren, though they cannot openly communicate, begin a lifelong journey together, often only truly connecting in their twilight years after many decades of mutual dedication.

The Twi-Far are an artistic race, enjoying various disciplines from painting to music, literature to dance, and even martial arts. Combining this love with their star-faring ways, the Twi-Far create wondrous and beautiful spacecraft, often with intricate carvings along their hallways, grand multicoloured solar sails, and exotic hull designs.

Twi-Far culture is divided into three circles. The Dragon are the warriors and pragmatists, who focus on "the struggle"; the Salamander are the vocational and patient, who focus on "the now"; and the Phoenix are the scientists, prophets, and dreamers, who focus on "the new".

Common Characteristics

Creative, dedicated, focused, mystical, passionate or talented.

Common Male Names

Casamir, Colia, Hanzl, Lasho, Orchilo, Simionce, or Zache.

Common Female Names

Araunya, Jeta, Lala, Mirela, Papin, Sinfir or Ujaranza.

Common Family/Ship Names

Black-Mooring,, Celestial-Spring, Enchantment, Essence, Expedition, Forever-Trail, Spirit-Walker, Star-Gazer or Traversal.

Example Twi-Far Character

Luludja Essence loved to fly. The freedom of open space, the wonders of the unexplored, the adrenaline of a life-or-death dogfight – these were what she lived for.

Luludja's family was killed by the Oni shortly after her Melding, so she was raised by her Phoenix grandparents on the ship Essence. Her grandparents were patient, kind people who taught her to listen to her inner Faren. Luludja has at times found her Faren pulling at her limbs, nudging her mind, and making her blood glow. For what purpose she does not know, but it seems very eager for her to explore the Haven system. What does it want her to find?





Zhou

See pg: 86 for extensive Zhou write-up.

Having pushed far beyond their design – no more than an Archon biological weapon – the Zhou must now struggle against their unquenchable hunger if they are to coexist alongside the other races.

Zhou Race, pg: 170

- » You may function normally in all, non-heat related, hostile environments.
- » May gain +2 Recovery when in the same space as a recently-deceased, organic corpse.
- » +1 Survival, Physical, and Exotic.
- » Gain Language: Primal X'ion or Zhou.
- » You eats lots!
- » -2 Electronics, and Programming.
- » -2 Resupply, to your groups largest Spacecraft.
- » Food Supplies last 2 fewer days for you.
- » Complication: Prejudice from Nephilim.

Play a Zhou if you:

- » Are motivated by primal instincts.
- » Want to be a sentient plant.
- » Like to eat things.
- » Like to change the shape of your body.
- » Like to explore strange environments.

Physical Qualities

- » Average Height: 1.5m.
- » Average Weight: 135kg.
- » Average Life Span: 32 years.
- » Bodies made from a wide range of materials (vegetation is most common).
- » Mask like faces.
- » Not always bipedal.

Home World: Praid

In the later stages of the Great War, the Archons made liberal use of the semi-sentient Zhou contagion, spreading it over numerous Nephilim-infested systems. On all these worlds, the Zhou devoured everything on the surface before starving themselves to death, except for those Zhou on the small world of Praid.

After the departure of X'ion, numerous Nephilim fleets returned to Praid, their final fallback. For a century the Praid Nephilim fought back against the Zhou contagion. But as the Nephilim devolved into feral beasts, the Zhou evolved.

Gradually, the Zhou became aware that they would eventually starve themselves to death. To prevent this, they created a semblance of a primitive culture to regulate each other, with each Zhou tribe seeking to create a stable ecosystem amongst the many and varied ecologies and landscapes of Praid, both on land and under the sea.

Praid is now under a strict quarantine enforced by the Twi-Far. If the Zhou were allowed to freely roam the sector, especially with access to spacecraft, they could become an unstoppable plague capable of destroying many worlds.

Zhou Culture

Making use of Nephilim genetics, Archon scientists created a devastating biological weapon classified as "Zhou". When deployed, the Zhou sludge would rapidly spread, devouring all in its path – prioritising biological matter – until it starved to death. If the Nephilim had not halted the contagion on Praid, the Zhou would have been nothing more than a footnote, yet another biological weapon used during the Great War.

With their all-consuming hunger halted and their spread across Praid thwarted, the Zhou were given time to grow and develop beyond their design. Using their Nephilim genetics to adapt by instinct, they developed their nature into more fully realised intelligence, gaining with it the ability to understand their natural path towards self-destruction.

Crafting bodies for themselves from their environment, the Zhou have established primitive tribal settlements, whose life and culture is heavily dictated by the size of the tribe and their immediate environment. While most tribes seek to establish a balance with their environment, fighting against their insatiable hunger, more than a few tribes do not.

These warlike tribes spread, die, and regrow quickly as they seek to consume all – even other Zhou.

Making contact with the Twi-Far, a few Zhou have been invited to leave (or be stowed away from) their home world so they might mingle with the other races of Haven. The Zhou are viewed with great suspicion, however – many know that within each Zhou is the capacity to become an all-consuming plague.

Common Characteristics

Cunning, fast learner, fierce, instinctual, and primal.

Common Names

Zalick, Zogn, Zupolo, Zwar, Zwock, Zargnar, Zilsian, Zorn or Zopo.

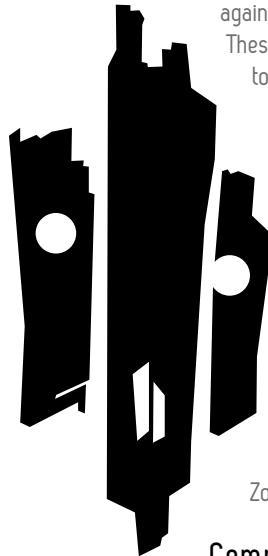
Common Tribal Names

Amber Bark Pathfinders, Red Horn Warband or White Tide Tribe.

Example Zhou Character

Zafrock had witnessed firsthand the dark side of his people's insatiable hunger. Born to a chieftain of a small jungle tribe on Praid, Zafrock had a simple but fulfilling childhood. But all of that changed when the rampaging Red Horn Warband moved through his tribe's area, eating his entire village... people, huts, tools, and the surrounding jungle. Zafrock only survived by being thrown into a river and washed downstream. Praid never felt like home again.

Many years later, Zafrock befriended a group of Twi-Far merchants who gave him the chance to visit new worlds. He made a difficult and hungry journey, travelling on their starship to the Haven system. Zafrock was amazed at the technological wonders he saw, and baffled by the numerous complex social structures. He was often mistaken for a Nephilim, an error that he rarely corrected. Having adjusted quickly to his new, wider home, Zafrock now works as a terrestrial tracker and bounty hunter.







Rules

Corp Secretary of Expansion, Trish Purse, watched in horror as the Oni's forces invaded Moon Base Twilight, a joint colonization effort between the Corporation and their Legion partners.

The Oni warship had arrived suddenly, and without warning. Which seemed impossible for something this large, and this close to Cerberus. How they had reached Twilight Base didn't matter now, all that mattered was escaping alive.

Trish watched the battle from her penthouse on the top floor of the Corp headquarters – one of the first buildings to be completed during the colonization. The Legion army was forming a protective wall between the Oni and the city proper. Each Oni brought thousands of slaves into battle and they sent them at the Legion line – wave after wave with no regard to attrition. The Legion forces were holding, but they couldn't hold for much longer.

Trish ran into her bedroom as the building alarms began to blare, waking up her partner. She hurried him into his clothing and they began to pack what they could – just the essentials. Together she and her partner gathered their bags and ran – down the long flights of steps to the tunnel leading to the hangar. Her ship would be waiting for her, fuelled, prepped, and ready to fly.

As they ran they heard explosions and gunfire ahead of them; the Oni were already in the hangar. Trish spotted her ship, on the far side. Legion soldiers and Corp security personnel fought side-by-side to hold the Oni at bay. Trish was close, so close, to her ship when the Oni broke the line. One Oni, larger than the rest and wearing a bandolier of skulls around its waist, plowed towards them. Trish let out a scream as the massive Oni struck her partner down as he sought to protect her.

She stood there, numb, as she watched her partner fall. A blast from the ship took the Oni in the chest, a second too late, stunning him while Corp soldiers carried Trish into her ship.

As they blasted off of the moon's surface, one thought burned red-hot in her mind: she would make that Oni pay.

Paramedic: Repairing Robots

See Core Rule Book, pg: 92 for full Paramedic Healing Roll rules.

When performing a Paramedics Healing Roll that would Heal both Robots, and non-Robots characters, that Roll should be Assisted by another character using the complimentary Skill.

- » When using a Medicine Skill to attempt a Paramedics Healing Roll, you should be Assisted by someone who is using the Mechanics Skill (and who has a Toolbox).
- » When using a Mechanics Skill to attempt a Paramedics Healing Roll, you should be Assisted by someone who is using the Medicine Skill (and who has a Toolbox).
- » The primary Skill (not the Assisting Skill) should match the nature of the character(s) who is gaining the most Attribute Healing.
- » Any bonus Attribute Damage Healing (eg: from equipment or Traits) is only gained through the primary Skill roller, not the character Assisting them.
- » Self-healing penalties (-2) may apply to either character if they are attempting to Heal themselves.

Wounded Palantor & Nephilim, Paramedics Example

Mayu (a robotic Palantor), and Hagrajack (an organic Nephilim) where both wounded during a brutal fight. Mayu took 2 points of Attribute Damage, while Hagrajack took 1. As Mayu would be receiving the most healing from a Paramedics Roll, a Mechanics Roll is required as the primary Healing Roll, with a Medicine Assist Roll to also Heal Hagrajack. Both characters have a Toolbox, and attempt to make the required rolls.

Mayu makes a successful Mechanics Paramedics Roll of 15 (she needed to make a 14 as she has -2 penalty because she was attempting to Heal herself). But Hagrajack only rolls an 11 (he needed a 12), failing to Assist Mayu.

The 3 points of Healing from the Paramedics Roll may only be applied to Robotic characters, meaning Hagrajack is unhealed.

Weapon Keywords

See Core Rule Book, pg: 124 for full Weapon Keyword rules.

Holographic

A required Keyword for some Strong Hit Options and Traits.

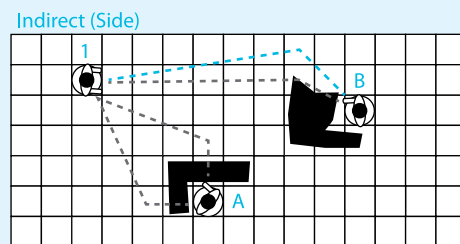
Indirect (Front, Side, Rear, Above)

Your Attack counts as being made from your Targets side, rear or from above when calculating Cover (not Range).

Indirect (Front, X)

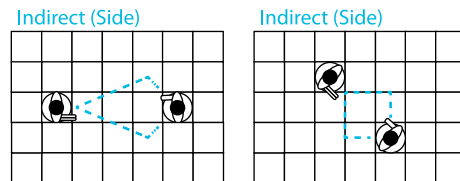
Your attacks MAY be applied from your location OR from angle "X".

Choosing a Target, Indirect (Side) Example.



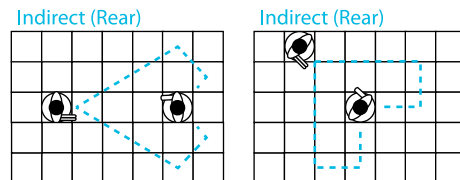
Anna (I) has two SMGs with Indirect (Side), and two opponents (A, and B). She chooses to Attack opponent B from their right side as this would grant him no Cover bonus. All other options would grant one of her Targets Cover.

Side



Your attacks are angled towards your Targets side.

Rear



Your attacks are angled towards your Targets rear.

Above

Your attacks are made from above your Target.

If your target is inside an enclosed space your Attacks may be limited (GM discretion), eg: if you are using an Orbital Bombardment Weapon, your Target may gain Heavy Cover if there is roof above their head.

Strong Hit Requirements

See Core Rule Book, pg: 42 and 82 for full Strong Hit rules.

Once Per X

This Strong Hit Option may only be used once per Action, Turn, Combat or game session.

Move

May only be used during Actions that have the Major Effect: Move.

Move X

You must have moved at least X spaces away from your current Actions starting position before this Strong Hit Option may be used.

Lock On +X (+Y)

See Core Rule Book, pg: 76 and 125 for full Lock On rules.

Hit +X

When a Target of this Weapon is affected by an allies Locked On Effect, gain a +“X” bonus to your Attack Roll.

(+Y)

When a Target of this Weapon is affected by an allies Locked On Effect, this Attack gains a “Y” Keywords, and/or Stats.

Eg: Lock On +2 (+2 Range) gains +2 Hit and +2 Range vs any Target that is Locked On.

Strong Hit Requirement

Some Strong Hit Options and Traits require a Target to have the Locked On Effect on them, for you to gain additional bonuses.

Once Per X

This Weapon may only be used once per Action, Turn, Combat or game session.

Splash X +/-/xY

See Core Rule Book, pg: 127 for full Splash rules.

This Weapon deals its Endurance Damage to all characters within “X” spaces of the Target.

Splash +/-/xY

Your Weapon’s Splash is increased by (+), reduced by (-) or multiplied by (x) “Y”. Always apply all additions and subtractions before you multiply.

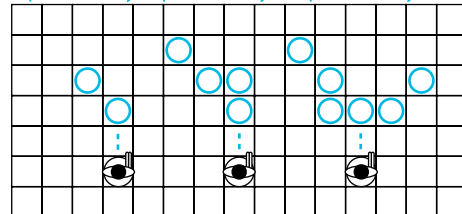
Eg: A Splash 2 Weapon gains Splash +1, and Splash x2. It’s final Splash amount is Splash 6 ((2+1)x2).

Splash X (Any)

See Core Rule Book, pg: 127 for full Splash rules.

Your Splash area is applied to any “X” spaces of your choice (normally applied to all spaces within “X” of your Target). Each space must be applied to a space adjacent to a previously applied space, starting with the first space hit.

Splash 2 (Any), Splash 4 (Any) & Splash 6 (Any)



May not be Placed Closer to You.

No space may be applied closer to you than the first applied space.

May Only Apply to Spaces that you can See

No space may be applied to that your character can not perceive.

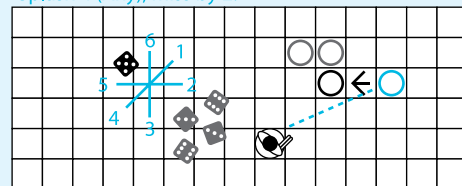
Failing an Attack Roll

As with Splash (Core Rule Book pg: 127), when you fail an Attack Roll with a Splash Weapon, the attack Scatters by a number of spaces equal to the degree of failure in a random direction (GM discretion allowed, usually by rolling a d6).

All spaces that the attack is applied to is determined by rolling a d6, and applied to a space adjacent to the first space.

Scattered Shot, Miss with Splash (Any) Example.

Splash 4 (Any), miss by 2.



Adrian has a weapon with Splash 4 (Any), he make an Attack Roll and misses by 2. This causes it to scatter in a random direction by 2 (he rolls a “5” causing it to scatter to his left).

He then has to roll 3d6 to determine what adjacent spaces his weapon’s remaining 3 locations his Splash hits. He rolls a 3 and two 6s. If a character were to be standing in one of these spaces they would only take Endurance Damage once, not twice (as with all Splash Attacks).

“Far below the great Kaltoran city, a dark tribe mourns the loss of a much loved leader. Metal pipes carry their sombre dirge to any who would pause and listen. His children, grandchildren and great children sing a heartfelt tune of loss as they rub ceremonial spices into his lifeless body. Tears of sorrow flow freely as his many widows sing of their fallen husband’s many great deeds. Every memory is cherished, every pain is mourned, every bone is picked clean. Nothing goes to waist, be it pain or flesh.”

- Dark Tribe Dirge.

Outfit & Utility Item Keywords

See Core Rule Book, pg: 134 for full Outfit and Utility Item Keyword rules.

Holographic

A required Keyword for some Strong Hit Options and Traits.

Utility Item: Mount

See Core Rule Book, pg: 104 for full Drone rules.

Your character may choose to ride this machine or living creature.

Controller

At least one character riding on the Mount must be designated as the controller. This character controls the Mount (and the movement of all characters riding on the Mount).

When the Mount moves, all riding characters move with it.

The controlling characters never use their own Movement Attribute; instead they use the Movement Attribute of the Mount.

Destroyed Mount

When a Mount is Destroyed all riding characters immediately take 10 Endurance Damage, fall Prone, and may suffer other GM defined effects (eg: being thrown forward, and taking 3 Crit Damage if the Mount was moving at a high speed, etc...).

Mounts have 0 Endurance

As Mounts have 0 Endurance, any hit they take causes a Critical Hit. As with Drones, Mounts are destroyed if they take 1 Attribute Damage.

Rebuilding a Mount

If your Mount is Destroyed, it leaves a Wrecked Body. If you can recover this, you may be able to rebuild it during any Downtime as long as you have access to a appropriate Workshop (eg: Mechanics if it is mechanical, or Medicine if it is living).

Attributes

Mounts have very similar attributes to Drones. But they have no Actions (and no Attacks) for themselves.

Defence

Mounts have a Defence Stat that is used against all Attacks.

Mounts have a Defence vs Impair equal to their Defence +4.

Mounts do not contribute to your Defence vs Stealth.

Armour

Any Attribute Damage dealt to the Mount is reduced by this amount.

Movement X (Wind Down Y)

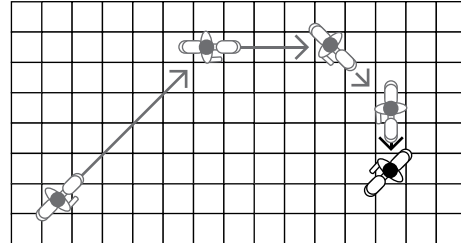
The controller may move X while riding this Mount.

If the Mount moved more than Y during its previous Action, it's controller may not choose to move less than Y during its current Action.

Turn

Your Mount may only change its facing up to this amount each Action.

Mount, Movement 8 (Wind Down 4), Turn 45



Adrian wishes to turn his motor bike around to face the opposite direction. This will take him 4 Actions as his bike has Turn 45.

For his first Action he moves forward 5 spaces and changes his facing by 45 degrees. For his second Action he must move forward at least 4 spaces (because his bike has Wind Down 4 and he moved more than 4 during his previous Action), and changes his facing by another 45 degrees. For his third and fourth Actions (and second Turn) he moves forward 2 spaces and then rotates his facing by 45 degrees.

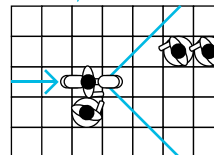
Carry

The maximum number of characters that can be riding on this Mount at any one time. Large characters take up two spaces.

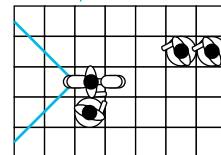
Fire Arc

If your Mount moves during your Turn, all riding characters may only make attacks against Targets within this Fire Arc. If your Mount does not move during an Action, you may attack in any direction, except behind you.

Mount, Fire Arc 90



Mount, Fire Arc 90



After moving forward on his motor bike, Ryan can only attack 2 out 3 opponents. For his second Action, he may attack the adjacent opponent who is outside his Mount's Fire Arc, if he does not move during this Action (even after Attacking).

Cargo

The amount of spacecraft Cargo space required to store this Mount.

Perks

See Core Rule Book, pg: 60 for full Perks rules.

Minor Perks

You have just started to reap some minor benefits from your new acquaintances, employment, and/or expanded social circles. More often than not, these are geographically localised perks.

Family (You may not be a Corporate)

You are a cherished member of your family. Many members of your family are willing to help you (and are confident to ask for your help) as needed.

- » You may spend 1 Fate point to gain one of the following Perks for the session: Minor Access or Minor Contact, when you are around your family.
- » This may only be used once per session.
- » Corporates may not choose this Perk.

Minor Prestige

Through a single prominent event or through people talking about you, you've gained a helpful reputation for yourself.

- » NPCs are more likely to remember you.
- » You gain +1 to Leadership, and Conversation Rolls when interacting with someone who is aware of, and likes, your reputation.

Moderate Perks

You're beginning to find your place within society, and you are now respected and known by many. These benefits often travel with you and are rarely limited to a geographical area.

Anonymity

While many may have heard of you, and you may have many friends, few know your past and your day to day actions. Maintaining this anonymity requires a lot of work, and effort on your behalf.

- » NPCs find it hard to find information about you.
- » There are no reliable written records of your existence.

Moderate Prestige (Requires Minor Prestige)

Your prestigious reputation precedes you almost wherever you go.

- » NPCs are far more likely to remember you.
- » Antagonistic NPCs are far more likely to discover your location when you move in populated areas.
- » You gain +1 to Leadership, and Conversation Rolls when interacting with someone aware of, and likes, your reputation (Stacks with Minor Prestige).
- » You must have a Minor Prestige to choose this Perk.

Starting in his toes, fingers, and ears as a small tingling sensation, the warmth of the Faren curled its way up his legs as it simultaneously coiled its way along his tensed, and muscular arms. He could feel its excitement as it pooled in his stomach and chest. Pausing a moment in trepid anticipation mere millimetres from his heart, as thin sparks of green energy licked at his body.

As the Faren's power coalesced in his heart, the Twi-Far's entire body erupted in a spectacle of might, and alien wonder. Thick bolts of majestic green lightning enveloped him as his eyes, the windows to his twin soul, blazed like a sun.

His foes trembled in fear during their final seconds as the might of the Faren was displayed before them. Down his right arm the Faren's might rushed, erupting from its host's fingertips in a brilliant blaze of majestic green destruction, laying waste to all who would harm them.

- Simionce Starblaze, ecstasy of the Faren blast.

Major Perks

You are a person of political influence. You cannot shape nations but can surely influence some major areas. This influence is often localised to a planet or wide area.

No Record

Other people don't contact you... you contact them.

- » NPCs are far less likely to remember you.
- » Your Enemies find it nearly impossible to find you, or find information about you if you do not want them to.

Unique Knowledge (Requires Secret Knowledge)

If others were to know what you know the course of history would be changed forever.

- » You have gained unique knowledge that only Humanity, the X'ion or the Faren have possibly known.
- » You may gain a unique equipment Variation or Trait of your design (with GM approval) OR you may gain the Faren Language (if you are a Twi-Far) or the Mechnoid Code Language, if you successfully make a Spare Time Roll of 20t, and have access to a Dedicated Workshop.
- » You require Secret Knowledge to gain this Perk.

"The emissary project is improving with each passing year and some of the most recent batches are becoming indistinguishable from natural Kaltoran, Corp and Legion. Some are even having cross-racial children. Soon we will have infiltrators in every race, eyes and ears everywhere."

"Won't that make the other races distrustful of us?"

"They already don't trust us, and in time they will see that we are an essential part of their prosperity and peace."

– Modragnor, emissary breeder.

Complications / Conditions

See Core Rule Book, pg: 62 for full Complications rules.

Psychological Condition: Obsession

- » You must make a Resolve Skill Roll to resist your Obsession.
- » -1 to all Spare Time Rolls not connected to your Obsession, if you fail one of these Spare Time Rolls by 1, gain a Fate Point.

Psychological Condition: Moral Code

- » You must make a Resolve Skill Roll to act against your Moral Code.
- » If you act against your Moral Code, you lose 1 Current Influence, and gain a Fate Point.

Psychological Condition: Secret

- » You must make a Resolve Skill Roll to share your Secret.
- » If another character (player or NPC) discovers your secret, you lose a Spare Time Point, and gain a Fate Point.

Hunted

Similar to Complication: Hunted and Bounty (Core Rule Book pg: 63), but you are hunted by a group of enemies with lethal intent towards you.

- » Your Hunters may cause you trouble outside of combat.
- » Gain a Fate Point from this Complication if one of your Hunters reduces one of your Attributes to 0 or below.
- » Your GM may choose to increase the difficulty of a combat by adding a Henchmen opponent (granting you a Fate Point).

Psionics & Skills

If you are a Psionic, what you can do with some Skills is expanded below. Some Skills can also help you to know about Psionics.

Resolve

Example Uses without Tools

- » Control your unwieldy Psionic powers.
- » Resist Psionic mental powers.

Example Uses with a Workshop

- » Meditate on your personal Psionic powers.
- » Recover from Psionic trauma.
- » Temporarily empower your Psionic abilities.

Electronics, Programming, Bio Tech, and Medicine

Example Uses with a Workshop

- » Seek to understand Psionic nanites.

Bio Tech

Example Uses with a Toolbox

- » Locate the Synaptagen virus.

Example Uses with a Workshop

- » Seek to understand Psionic nanites.
- » Seek to understand the Synaptagen virus.

Psychology

Example Uses without Tools

- » Identify Psionic mental powers.
- » Locate a nearby person.

Example Uses with a Toolbox

- » Identify subtle mental Psionic powers (eg: Telepathy).
- » Seek to understand Psionic mental powers.
- » Gently nudge a person's thoughts (who is weak willed (low Focus) or by playing to their passions).

Example Uses with a Workshop

- » Seek to understand a powerful Psionic mental power.

Astronomy

Example Uses without Tools

- » Identify Ley Energy density and movement in your immediate area.

Example Uses with a Toolbox

- » Identify Ley Energy density and movement in a wide area.
- » Identify time Psionic powers.
- » Seek to understand Psionic time powers.
- » Predict a possible future in your current location.
- » Briefly perceive the past in your current location.

Example Uses with a Workshop

- » Seek to understand a powerful Psionic time power.
- » Seek to understand how the Synaptagen spreads.

Optional Advancement Rules

No Resource or Influence Maximums

- » PCs have no Maximum Resources or Influence.
- » PCs can never have more than 1 Current Resource or Influence higher than any other PC.
- » For every +2 Maximum Resources that a PC would receive from their Race or Traits (NOT from their Level) they gain +1 to all Spare Time Rolls (up to +2).
- » For every +2 Maximum Influence that a PC would receive from their Race or Traits, (NOT from their Level) they gain +1 to all Spare Time Rolls (up to +2).

Keep What you Find

- » Found equipment are not discarded.
- » Found spacecraft are not discarded.
- » Regaining Clips for found personal equipment requires a Spare Time Roll of 12t per Clip.
- » Regaining Resupply for found spacecraft requires a Spare Time Roll of 12t per Resupply.
- » Found equipment gains the Low Quality Weapon Modification after they have been kept for more than one session.
- » Found spacecraft gain the Hunk of Junk Trait after they have been kept for more than one session.

"Hey there Furry" Aaron called to his new companion in his normal, jovial manner.

"Please do not call me that, how many times have I said..." Ensue began, a shiver of annoyance running down his spine before being cut off.

"Okay big guy, I know, I keep forgetting, but you have to admit it is a fitting name given that you are a walking, talking rug" Aeron continued in his Kaltoran manner, used to having nicknames and jokes thrown around.

"A walking rug, as you put it, that could easily snap your neck if it were not for the strictures of my beliefs... now please use my name." The muscular Remnant mercenary replied as calmly as he could muster: somehow he was getting used to the annoying manners of the Kaltoran.

"Okay Ensue, okay...the Captain wants to speak to us and I'm sure it has nothing to do with the musical discord in the engine room." Aaron stated with a smile, patting Ensue on the back before heading off to the bridge.

Optional Combat Rules

Faster Combat

- » All non-Melee Weapons gain +2 Rng.
- » All characters have -2 Defence.
- » All characters have -10 Endurance.
- » All spacecraft have -10 Shields.

Cover is More Important

- » Reflexes do not increase a Characters Defence.
- » Full Move, and Take Cover Actions gain the Minor Effect: Defence +Reflexes.
- » All Weapons gain +2 End Dmg.
- » Light Cover reduces all Endurance Damage that a character would receive by 2.
- » Heavy Cover reduces all Endurance Damage that a character would receive by 4 (6 vs RoF 3+ Attacks).
- » Entrenched Cover reduces all Endurance Damage that a character would receive by 6 (8 vs RoF 3+ Attacks).

Paramedics Healing Scales

- » The Paramedics Healing Roll Heals 1 point of damage for each Player Character in your group up to 4 (normally 3).

Atmospheric Spacecraft

- » Spacecraft do not take Engine Attribute Damage at the end of each Turn that they are within an Atmosphere.
- » Spacecraft Weapons do not suffer -2 hit and -2 Range when they are within an Atmosphere.

Characters Shooting at Spacecraft (Tiny Spacecraft Combat Scale)

- » Endurance Damage = Shield Damage.
- » Hit +2.
- » Rng -2.
- » End Dmg -3.
- » Crit Dmg -3.

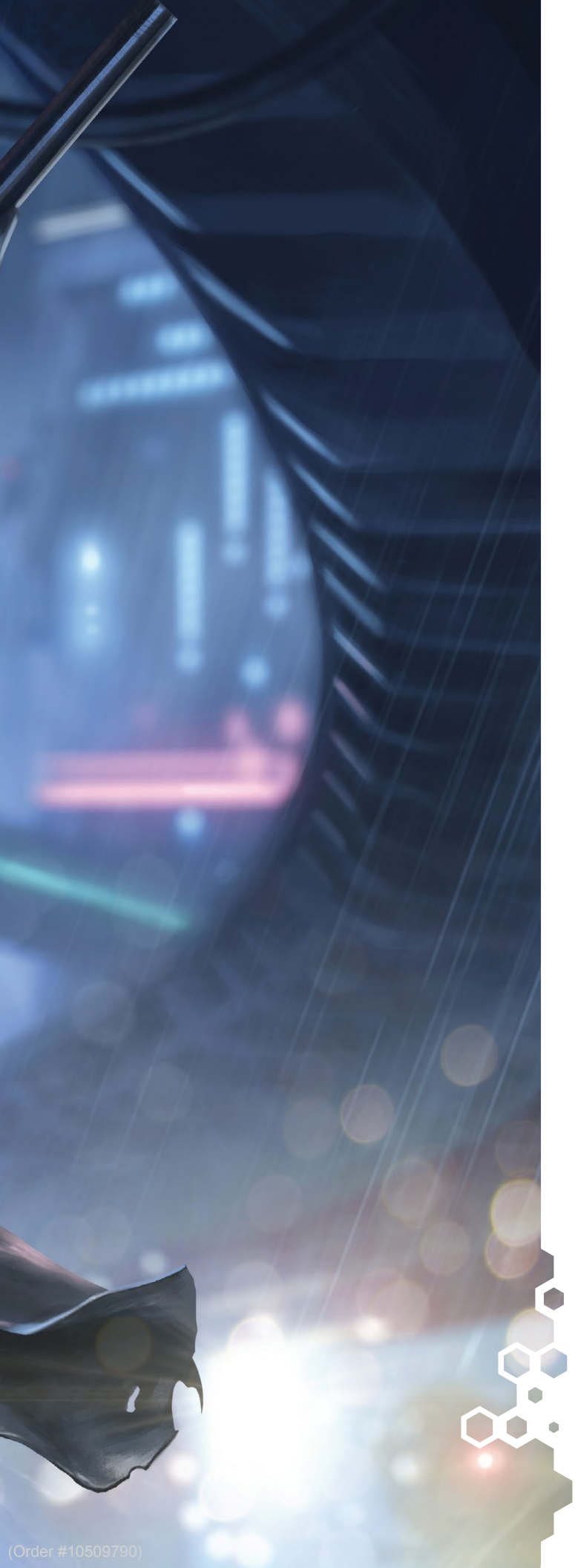
Spacecraft Shooting at Characters (Personal Combat Scale)

- » Shield Damage = Endurance Damage.
- » May only make 1 Attack per 3 Turns.
- » Hit -4.
- » Rng +2.
- » Shield Dmg +2.
- » Crit Dmg +2.
- » RoF +1, Fighter.
- » Splash +2, Warhead.
- » Splash +1, Battery.

Resupply Tracks Fuel, not Food & Munitions

- » Resupply tracks only your spacecraft's fuel supply.
- » Spacecraft base food supply equals 20 (not Resupply).
- » Spacecraft Weapons with infinite Clips have 10 Clips.





Setting Guide

Killing is the only thing I'm good at, which suits me just fine as there's plenty of credits in that market. I've spent most of my existence surrounded by destruction and death, both in this physical existence and my digital one.

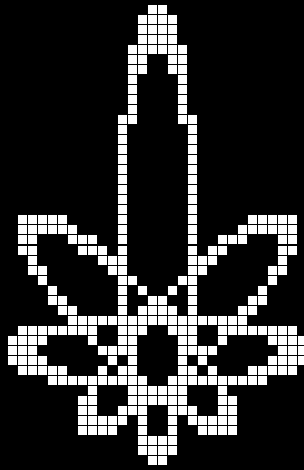
There was a time when it was fun, games where my favourite pastime in the Palantir Network. It was in these complex combat simulations where I learned to be patient, to calculate, and it was all about that final score. They were great for teaching me strategy, but nothing could have prepared me for the 'tactile' experience of a physical hunt. Handling a gun was difficult at first: heck walking was difficult at first. A part of me still longs for that old life, but here I am pulled from paradise and dumped into a metal can. I currently work for a large mega-corp as an assassin, but tomorrow who knows.

Hiding on Alabaster II is relatively easy, especially when you're made of chrome and have blinking lights, same as everything else. I don't know who my target is, and I didn't care to ask for any details aside from what they looked like and where they were likely to be.

Back in my games there was no guilt, no anguished pleadings for mercy, and no consequences. I never liked the kinds of games that had those.

I don't want to know who my target is, and I don't want to see their faces when they die, I don't like those kinds of jobs. I pull the trigger and guide my self-guided shot around a sharp corner and into my target's head. No one notices for a while: the gunshot, the target's faint groan as they slump forward: they're all swallowed up by the noises of a busy street, blaring advertisements and ignored by a self-obsessed population.

No one will be looking for yet another robot in this facade of a world. Time to get paid, time to see next high score.



Palantor

Former Racial Name: Human.

Creator: Humanity.
Average Height: 1.9m.
Average Weight: 320kg.
Average Life Span: Unknown.

Home Network: The Palantor Network.
Total Population: 0.8 million (estimated)
+ 5.2 billion in the Palantor Network (estimated).
Yearly Population Growth Rate: +3%.

Years Since Re-emergence into Space: 82 years.
Years since arrival in Haven: 3000+ years.

Distinctive Physical Features

Ornate robotic bodies.
Often white, purple, and metallic in colour.

Palantor Trait, pg: 170

- » You are a Robot!
- » Gain a Professional Skill based Secret Knowledge or a Moderate Perk.
- » +1 Programming, Engineering, and Tactical.
- » Gain Language: Palantor Code.
- » -2 Maximum Intelligence.
- » -2 Medicine.
- » Death may not be avoided by reducing Fate. A new body may be built to recover from your demise by reducing your current resources by 2.
- » Complication: Psychological Condition. and prejudice from Remnant.

Preferred Combat Equipment

Arc Fire, and Self-Guided weaponry.
Combat Computers.
Robotic Drones.
Tungsten carbine armour.

Palantor History

In the early stages of their genetic erosion, many humans uploaded digital copies of their minds to a virtual world, an endeavour known as the Palantor Project. This virtual world was hosted by a vast network of cloaked relays scattered throughout the galaxy, guarded and maintained by automated robot servants. These human minds uploaded to the Palantor Network lived in the virtual-reality paradise for three millennia.

The Archons knew of these networks, but thought they only contained complex digital systems, nothing sentient or human. During the later years of the Great War, the Archons in their desperation sought to make robotic soldiers but lacked the knowledge to create sophisticated AI. Knowing that human electronic technologies were far more advanced than their own, the Archons took minds from the Palantor Network, altered them, and forced them into war machines. The result was the intelligent, sociopathic killing machines known as Mechonids.

To create more of their kind, the Mechonids continued to harvest minds from the Palantor Network. The minds in the network became aware of what was happening, and a few escaped into physical bodies. These first Palantor made it their mission to free others. Unfortunately, Palantor minds can only be stored in ancient human robots with positronic brains, and no available system has the capacity to store even one whole Palantor mind, only a fraction.

Shortly after the Great War, the race to claim the Palantor Network slowed, as most Mechonids went dormant. However, as the Corporation emerged into space and spread throughout Haven, vast numbers of Mechonids have begun to awaken, making the situation ever more desperate. The race to claim minds from the network has swung heavily in favour of the Mechonids.

Six years ago, the Palantor made tentative first contact with the other races in Haven in an attempt to find technologies, ships, weapons, and allies to fight off the ever-growing Mechonid threat.



Palantor Culture

How the Palantor came to exist is fundamentally different from the origin of any other race. The Palantor are thousands of years old, having lived exclusively in a virtual world, and are now being forced into positronic brains. Despite their human roots, the Palantor consider themselves to be no more human than any of the other genetically engineered races.

The Palantor are shadows of their former selves. The transfer from the Palantor Network wiped most of their personality and memories, and transfer errors have caused personality “bugs”. These bugs vary in nature, but many are like the psychological disorders, obsessions, and eccentricities experienced by the biological races. Some Palantor also find it difficult to adapt to a physical reality, which can cause more bugs. The Palantor are open and honest about their bugs, however, many of them going so far as to embrace them as part of their nature.

With their unique knowledge of the past and their essentially immortal existence, many Palantor consider themselves superior to the other races. This sense of superiority often causes them to be aloof, proud, and at times incredibly arrogant, which, combined with their personality bugs, can make deep social cohesion difficult.

The Palantor have very few settlements, as many prefer to live among the other races or in solitude. The few settlements that do exist are built in and around the ruins of humanity, which serve as sentimental reminders of their past. The single largest Palantor settlement is Tanjo, built in the Haven system. The city is protected by a relay of ancient cloaking technology, making it impossible to find, and for reasons unknown other races who do visit cannot remember its location once they have left. The only beings who know how to find it are some Palantor who have the location hard-wired into their programming.

The Palantor’s only significant non-governmental social structure are the Clans. Inside the Palantor Network, the Clans were groupings of like-minded people that gathered for social interaction and other joint ventures. Members of many Clans have managed to meet up in their robot bodies, reforming their Clans in the physical universe. Although different than their original purpose, these Clans have helped greatly in creating and maintaining social cohesion amongst the Palantor.

The fight against the Mechonids is a defining struggle and unifying force for all Palantor. But even in this, their long-term plans are often at odds. Many wish to reclaim and return to the network, while others wish to forever inhabit the material universe.

Creating a Palantor Character

Reclaimed Mechonid

Though the Mechonids are corrupt and insane robots, they have on very rare occasion been rescued and reclaimed by the Palantor. Sometimes they free the original Palantor code from the corrupting program; but at other times the Mechonid is beyond hope, so they hollow out the body to make room for a Palantor fresh from the network.

Recommended Skills

- » Programming.
- » Bio Tech.
- » Astronomy.

Recommended Traits

- » Physical: Weapon Implant.
- » Astronomy: Ley Line Comm.
- » Heavy Arms: Radioactive Core.

Ancient Body

When a Palantor escapes the network, the nearest robot host is usually a maintenance bot built by humans to protect and maintain the Palantor Network. These robot bodies are often made with superior technology and have many useful features, including both tools and weapons.

Recommended Skills

- » Culture.
- » Mechanics.
- » Electronics.

Recommended Traits

- » Culture: Archaeologist.
- » Mechanics: Maintenance.
- » Electronics: Weapon Smith.

Networked Body

A Palantor mind loses much of itself when it exits the Palantor Network to enter the mind of a single robot. Wishing to enhance their cognitive abilities, some Palantor individuals spread their consciousness over multiple drone bodies.

Recommended Skills

- » Resolve.
- » Awareness.
- » Programming.

Recommended Traits

- » Perception: Drone-Assisted.
- » Mechanics: Robotics.
- » Electronics: Decentralised CPU.



Reclaimed Mechnoid

Ancient Body

Networked Body



Government and Law

Government: Technocracy.
Leadership: The Admins.

The technocratic government comprises a group of senior administrators known as Admin Primes. Each Admin Prime is an expert and complete authority in their area of expertise. Each Admin Prime has a specifically outlined portfolio – such as Military, Science, Settlement, Fleet, Resources, or Network – to ensure that their responsibilities do not unnecessarily overlap with another's.

There are two Admin Primes with slightly more influence and power. They are the Intellectual Resources Admin Prime Kuro_02 (pg: 160), as his portfolio includes recruiting Admins, and the Diplomatic Admin Prime Masami_679 (pg: 160), whose responsibility is brokering agreements with the other races.

Example Civilian Ranks: Admin, Moderator, Regulator.
Example Military Ranks: Architects, Operator, Processor, Tasker.

Seniors within a rank are denoted with "Prime" – for example, Tasker Prime.

Economy

Imports: Drones, Robot Bodies, Human and Mechnid Salvage.
Exports: Programming, Rare Knowledge, and Skills.

The Palantor did not need an economy inside the network; everything existed in unlimited, digital abundance. Outside the network, they must deal with the physical realities of limited resources, a war, and their physical existence, which has made understanding economics quite difficult. In recent times, they have adopted the dominant Corporation economic system, trading their unique skills and knowledge for credits.

The Palantor do not have the knowledge to build positronic brains. Additionally, there are millions of minds to be saved from the Palantor Network but not millions of available positronic brains. Therefore, the Diplomatic Admin has decreed a generous bounty on positronic brains, namely from Mechnids. Furthermore, the Palantor have been too busy in their war against the Mechnids to establish any robust industry beyond robot maintenance and construction.

The Palantor have much to offer from their advanced understanding of computers and software. In addition, many Palantor possess knowledge lost for millennia, which gives them strong leverage. Short-sighted races might simply sell such knowledge and technology, but the Palantor prefer to keep this leverage. The Palantor who do share their knowledge charge a high price for their insight and assistance.

"I clothe my mind with old odd ends stolen forth from the endless sea of what I was. Now I am but a puddle of my former, grander, self."

Robotics / Construction

Each Palantor is made up of three distinct parts: sentient software, a positronic brain, and a robotic body. Their vast, complex sentient software includes their personality and memories – in essence, their consciousness (see Palantor Code, pg: 119). Their positronic brain is a special computer capable of storing and running their sentient software, human hardware that is extremely difficult to manufacture. Finally, their robotic body allows them to interact directly with the physical universe; although a Palantor may become attached to their body, it is only a vessel.

The sentient software of a Palantor, though vast, is a fraction of what it was inside the Palantor Network. Missing or corrupted content and connections can sometimes make them slower thinkers than biological races. However, they often remember key information from their ancient ancestry, giving them unique insight into the universe. No one knows how to replicate the human technology that created their original sentient software, so the Palantor cannot reproduce or duplicate themselves, only rescue more Palantor from the network. Similarly, the Mechnids cannot reproduce without harvesting new minds from the Palantor Network.

Positronic brains are found most often inside ancient human or Mechnid robotic bodies, but not always. Some are built into ship computers, and a few are standalone computers. Most Palantor inhabit the bodies of the robot servants which protected and maintained the Palantor Network. Most of these robots are humanoid, as they were modelled after their human creators. Some Palantor inhabit the bodies of former Mechnids, with either their positronic brain wiped clean or their sentient software freed of corruption.

A Palantor cannot die, but their body can be damaged beyond repair. In this case, their mind must be uploaded into a replacement body. If a Palantor CPU experiences sudden, catastrophic destruction with no backup system, their mind will be forced to temporarily return to the Palantor Network.

The Palantor Network itself is such a complex and detailed simulation that it is like a different dimension. Inside the network, human minds could be like gods, freely and instantly transporting themselves from one place or experience to the next. Some parts simulated human day-to-day life, while other parts gave them limitless creativity in moulding and shaping their world to their will. The network also held games and challenges to pass the thousands of years inside.

Science and Technology

Just like their human ancestors, the Palantor are primarily interested in computer technology, electronics, and programming. They themselves are computers, so expanding electronic technology is in a way expanding their capabilities as a race.

Being robots gives the Palantor a different outlook from the other races' about drones, treating them more like pets than tools. The Palantor mind may network with drones, allowing the Palantor to use them as an extension of their own mind.

Smart Technology

Experts in programming and computing, the Palantor are at the forefront of AI technology and its many applications. They build "smart" solutions to many problems and make liberal use of self-guided weapons, combat computers, and sophisticated drones. They even use AI in devices the other races wouldn't ever consider – for example, waste compactors, reactors, furniture, and doors.

Their use of AI has a special application in security systems – as security cameras, turrets, databases, and doors are all linked and controlled by smart technology. The second you step into a Palantor facility, you are photographed, scanned, and clearance-checked against a database. Your activities are monitored and logged to build your character profile. Doors will open to people with clearance, and lock out those without. Turrets will assess potential threats and dangers, and even on occasion shoot at criminals without warning.

Research

The Palantor focus their research on the destruction of the Mechonids and the reclamation of their network. Their pursuit has led them to better understand themselves and may eventually lead to better positronic brains or even the ability to create new Palantor, but these dreams are far from a reality at this time.

Communication

Like the Mechonids, many Palantor can communicate at distances far beyond the capabilities of other races. Although they cannot make anything quite as impressive as the cloaked Palantor Network relays, which can transmit data between systems, they are able to build relays capable of transmitting data from planet to planet in the same solar system, a capability which they have a monopoly on. They charge prohibitive fees for the privilege of using their systems.

"Why don't we Palantor do all things wirelessly? Why insist on using antiquated computer input devices, and commonly talk to each other out loud?"

The answer is simple: because Mechonids are the best hackers in galaxy. I dare say they already watch our every move, best not let them make our every move."

- Ki, Palantor technician.

Unique Knowledge

Most Palantor remember portions of their ancient human past – and for many, these memories come with the knowledge of ancient and lost technology. The Palantor know this information is important and powerful, so they do not give or trade it freely. Although they may offer their work and insight, they will rarely reveal these secrets.

This knowledge has allowed the Palantor some unique technologies, unfathomable to the other races and which require specialised knowledge to maintain and operate.

The first are the dark-energy reactors, which function by drawing upon the low levels of invisible background energy in the universe. To the untrained observer, they appear to generate power from nowhere. The Palantor can also create and maintain stable antimatter. This ability allows them to make devastating grenades and bombs that literally unravel and disintegrate any matter they touch.

Sometimes Palantor experts will hire out their services to races that use pre-War technology but don't fully grasp it. Often, these are Legion who struggle to properly maintain the tech used in their vessels. For the first time in their history, if a fusion reactor breaks down, they can hire a Palantor to fix it rather than have to find a replacement in ship wreckage.

Spacecraft

Palantor ships are technological marvels. All of them sport a dark-energy reactor, smart thrusters, and their own special Ley Line drive – all human technology lost to the other races. These technologies allow Palantor ships to not require fuel, slip into Ley Lines more easily, and make rapid turns. Some ships' computers are equipped with a positronic brain, allowing the ship itself to be a Palantor. Some Palantor ships are even equipped with cloaking devices modelled after those protecting their network relays.

"What is reality but a mind interpreting its senses?
What is a mind but signals claiming to be reality?"

- Umeko_0889, aether advocate.

Relationship with Other Races

The Palantor desperately need aid in their war against the Mechnoids, but their pride makes them reluctant to ask for help. Overcoming this pride will eventually be necessary for their continued survival.

The Palantor also control a cloaked network relay known as Tanjo, which acts as a capital city. Its location is closely guarded and cloaked with human technology, making it impossible to find without a guide.

Corporation

The Palantor like the Corp because they are a pragmatic people who shy away from sentimentality, and because both cultures focus on electronic technology. However, the Corporation was the one responsible for reawakening the Mechnoids, a mistake that they won't even admit to.

The Corporation desperately wants Palantor technology and secrets, so they often try to steal it or coerce the Palantor into giving it away. The Corp consider themselves to be the cultural legacy of humanity, though in reality they are a caricature of what humanity once was, not who the Palantor were, and this bothers them.

Kaltorans

The Kaltorans and Palantor have a hard time understanding each other, as their personalities are quite different. Palantor culture lacks the concept of family, so many Kaltorans wonder how their society can even function, while the Kaltorans' mechanical, low-tech approach to solving problems often leaves the Palantor perplexed. But both can sympathise over their shared, though very different, psychological afflictions.

Legion

The Legion respect and understand the Palantor as a whole, since they currently have clear goals and a clear common enemy in the Mechnoids. Both governments also have a similar approach to leadership. However, the Legion prefer predictable, clear social interactions, which is complicated by the many and varied personality bugs of Palantor individuals.

Nephilim

Though they differ in their electronic and biological focuses, the Nephilim and Palantor are often scientific rivals, each with near absolute faith in their approach to problem-solving. Both races also tend towards arrogance, which causes conflict, each accusing the other of hubris.

"Let's see... the shoulder bone is connected to the...
uh... back bone."

- Zeke_3701, Palantor medic in training.

Twi-Far

It is almost impossible to impress the Palantor, as their human heritage and long lives have shown them wonders beyond most people's dreams. But the Twi-Far have achieved some things which humanity never did, searching beyond the furthest reaches of human exploration. The Palantor often look to the Twi-Far to learn the locations of surviving ruins of humanity and clues that might lead to the discovery of a new cloaked network relay.

However, the Palantor are sceptical of the origins of the Faren. In all of humanity's history they never discovered alien life, so they came to believe that aliens simply didn't exist. This belief is shared by the majority of the Palantor. Most suspect that the Faren are simply forgotten creations of humanity.

Zhou

The Palantor are largely indifferent to the Zhou, and unlike the other races they do not see the Zhou as a threat. The Zhou require organic life to sustain themselves, so the Palantor will never become their food.

Additionally, Zhou physiology allows them to live in environments that are inhospitable to the other races. This fact allows the Zhou to live among Palantor settlements, which lack life-support systems. Mutual trade has emerged between the two races – with the Zhou helping to fight against the Mechnoids in exchange for technological equipment – bringing the races to grow closer.

Remnant

To the Palantor, the Remnant are superstitious people who, rather than investigate the universe with scientific rigor, fill the gaps in their knowledge with fantastical answers involving the All-Being.

As far as the Palantor can tell, the Remnant religions all seem the same despite their claims to difference. Most Palantor are not interested in these religions' messages, for several reasons: they are too proud to seek redemption for their failings, they once lived in an existential reality, they are essentially immortal, and they prefer scientific answers that they can comprehend over spiritual ones that they cannot.

Additionally, from time to time a vocal Remnant priest will accuse the Palantor of being "the walking dead". Rather than offend the Palantor, it tends to amuse them as one more example of Remnant superstition.

Short Story: ReB1rth

"Wake up, Yuko."

Yuko heard the voice through a fog. Had she fallen asleep? She couldn't remember. She felt like she was floating. She tried to drift back to the comfort of nothingness, but the voice continued to pierce through her.

"It's time to wake up. Easy now... take it slow." The voice spoke in calm, dulcet tones that worked to draw Yuko into reality. She realized that she recognized the voice. Dr. Bayama, of course. He would be the one in charge of bringing her back. Her memory of her last life was cloudy. Had she been destroyed in battle? She couldn't really remember.

"Try to move your hands for me, if you are able."

Yuko flexed her mechanical muscles, and lifted her hands up off the table. It was surprising how quickly the human mind could adapt to being in a synthetic, even after so long.

"Very good, Yuko. We're going to activate your sensory nodes now. Try not to panic."

Yuko's world was suddenly flushed with light, and a slight pain. She felt her mind resisting as the electrodes in her synthetic body sprung to life. She felt the chill of the air, she heard every sound, and she felt the cold table beneath her metal frame. The world came to life in front of her. Where there was once blackness, suddenly there was Dr. Bayama. The sights and sounds felt like madness to her. She pulled her legs up to her chest as very old human instincts took over. If she could have trembled, she would have.

"Welcome back, Yuko," he exclaimed with a clap of his metallic hands and the ring of a smile in his voice.

Yuko stared at him with no response. Her consciousness was rejecting the merger with her new body. This wasn't her body. This wasn't her life. She didn't know this man in front of her. Yuko frantically whipped her head around on its pivot, trying to make sense of things. This wasn't where Yuko belonged; it was not home... it was too physical.

Yuko was so far removed from her past lives: as a human or a purely digital being – so many uploads, transfers, and bodies – so much time, millenniums, spent floating in the ether, as a god, plugged into the vast Palantor data network. She could barely remember actually living. But her mind ached for the sensation of being alive; really live. It ached for a city she couldn't remember, the sound of a bullet train screeching to a halt, the feel of warm ocean water lapping at her feet. Her mind fought merging by bringing her back to those moments, but she couldn't remember them.

"How do you feel," Dr. Bayama asked, but Yuko wasn't listening any more. Dr. Bayama reached out to check her joints for imperfections,

and Yuko slapped his hand away. She leapt off of the table and pushed him up against the wall.

"Get away from me!" She shrieked as she pushed through the double doors and out into a main corridor.

"Yuko, wait!" He shouted after her, but she didn't.

Yuko ran down the corridor, from one room to the next. She passed windows that looked into rooms similar to her own, with dormant Palantor bodies lying on cold slabs, waiting to be inhabited. Yuko's mind lashed out, and she felt terror.

Yuko continued to push on, through the doors at the end of the corridor and out into the open environment. She saw a deep void space station city splayed out before her. She was high above, on a balcony on the tenth story of a large Palantor Robotics Facility. Below her, the citizens of the station went on with their business. Yuko recognized them, and their names were coming back to her: Corp, Nephilim, Kaltoran, Twi-Far. She knew their names. She knew why they all wore life-support gear as they navigated the perfectly symmetrical station that humanity had built. She understood that this great structure had been built for robots, and not the living.

As she gripped the balcony, and looked over the streets it all came back to her. She was Yuko, and this was her new body. It wasn't the first, and it wouldn't be the last; this was life for the Palantor. Her mind finally accepted that it no longer existed in the ether, or in the flesh; she had a new synthetic body again, a new life.

Dr. Bayama soon joined her on the balcony, leaning over the metal railing to get a view of the city. "It's impressive, isn't it? What we've done here."

Yuko remained silent, embarrassed.

"Yuko, are you with me?"

Yuko finally nodded and looked over at him. "I'm sorry, doctor. I don't know what came over me."

Dr. Bayama sighed and turned her back around towards the building. "I do. This disassociation is common among Palantor. The human mind was not built to accept death, or rebirth." Dr. Bayama spoke as they walked back through the sterile corridors of the facility. "When the Palantor Network ripped your mind from your previous body, you became a being of pure consciousness again, before once again gaining a physical body. Your mind became overwhelmed, as it struggled to grip reality."

Dr. Bayama led her into a small room just off the main corridor. Just as a door on the opposite wall opened, a slender, tall Palantor walked into the room and gave Dr. Bayama a respectful bow. Yuko recognized this one.

"Hello, Kiki."

"Hello again, Yuko. I'm glad you're awake."

Dr. Bayama retreated to the corner of the room, where he took a seat in front of a computer terminal. "You may go ahead, Kiki. I'll be recording the interview."

Kiki nodded and stood across from the immobile Yuko.

"What is your name?"

"Yuko."

"And your role here?"

"I am a soldier."

"Excellent," Kiki nodded, pleased. "And who is our enemy?"

"The Mechnoids," Yuko answered with no hesitation.

"Good. And why do we fight the Mechnoids?"

"They threaten to destroy us all by turning us into them."

Yuko knew the stories. The Mechnoids travelled the stars, taking over Palantor transmitters, factories, and signal nodes to bolster their network strength. Each captured transmitter gave the Mechnoids greater access to the Palantor Network, a vast digital network filled with countless digital consciousnesses. They would twist these minds, infect them with their sociopathic Archon code, turning them into a new Mechnoid. The Palantor and the Mechnoids were in a race against one another to recover these minds. The gravity of the situation quickly dawned on Yuko after she was rescued from the Network, she signed up for a military-grade synthetic body almost immediately.

"Do you remember your time as a human?"

Yuko shook her head. She hadn't been a human in over three thousand years, and time in the Palantor Network can move even slower than it does in the real universe. "Not really. I think... I remember working in communications."

"You remember that?"

"Kind of..." Yuko hesitated. "It's like, a story of a dream someone told me when I was a child."

Dr. Bayama interrupted. "Thank you Kiki. Everything checks out Yuko, your positronic brain is stable, and you are mission certified." Dr. Bayama stood, and bowed to each of them in turn. "Good luck in the field. I hope I don't see you again for quite some time."

The pair bowed in return as Kiki guided Yuko out.

General Uzo cut an imposing figure: his frame was sculpted for intense warfare. He was covered in matte grey armour from head-to-toe; and his chest plate was adorned with the insignia of a high-ranking officer. He was one of the best tactical minds that the Palantor had ever reclaimed from the network.

After performing the ceremonial bow, Yuko and Kiki took a seat with the rest of her team. Ichi, their team leader, made room for them. They exchanged pleasantries until General Uzo took the podium. The screen behind him lit up with a map of Mispacha, a jungle planet that Yuko was familiar with.

"Many of you may not like this, but we have struck a deal with the Corporation." His statement hushed the crowd. While Palantor had the same respectful relationship with people of the Corp that they had with members of the other races, they held a disdain for the Corporation as a whole.

Ichi stood to address what everyone was thinking. "Working with the Corp, sir? I have issues with this. The Corp are selfish, privileged, and responsible for waking up the Mechnoids."

"Sit down, soldier. Life is more complicated than you make it out to be. The Corporation may have done wrong in the past, but that does not mean they have nothing to offer. They are paying us generously, and offering their aid in our fight against the Mechnoids. Those beasts blight not only us but the entire Haven system."

Ichi reluctantly took a seat. "I'm sorry, sir." He said, embarrassed.

"I understand how you feel, Ichi. I understand how you all feel. But the Corporation needs our support on Mispacha. There is no other race in the galaxy with the understanding of robotics that we have. Our job is to assist the Corp's Legion soldiers who will be waiting for us at the drop zone. I will provide support from the fleet mother ship waiting just outside the atmosphere. Our job is not only to support the Legion soldiers in combat, but to also investigate the purpose of this structure."

Ichi nodded, satisfied for now. To Yuko, the mission seemed incredibly beneficial. The Legion were incredibly skilled fighters - loyal and organized. Together they could strike a serious blow against the Mechnoids.

The map behind Uzo zoomed in to a specific location, a large structure deep in the forest, surrounded by Mechnoids.

"This is the target - an unknown structure two hundred kilos from the drop zone. Whatever it is, the Legion's brute force probably won't get them in. We will be there to assist them in analysing the structure, and opening it. Whatever is inside, the Mechnoid are working hard to

protect it. Your Tasker Primes, will receive up-to-date recon reports. We leave immediately, dismissed."

As one, the Palantor stood, bowed, then filed out of the room.

Yuko checked, and double-checked, her combat gear as the landing craft broke through Mishpacha's atmosphere. She had opted for a light armament to maximise mobility. The weather conditions weren't ideal – heavy rain began to pelt the outside of the craft as they passed through the clouds. Thunder rumbled in the distance: the storm was moving closer.

Ichi gave the signal as the craft began its descent, pelted on all sides by the rain. The heavy winds swept up the ship and they could feel the craft shaking beneath their feet. The winds threatened to tear the ship apart, but they made the landing safely. Yuko was relieved when she felt solid ground beneath the ship, and the red lights in the cabin switched to green. The team unstrapped, exited the craft, and went to meet their new boss.

The Corporation suit in charge of the operation was a wormy looking man by the name of Valdez. Yuko hated him the moment she saw him. But she was a soldier, and soldiers carried out their orders no matter what. Her team bowed as Valdez approached them. He completely ignored all twelve members of the squad, and went straight to Ichi.

"You are the squad leader I presume?"

Ichi nodded.

"I'd like to introduce you to the brawn behind my brains. Meet Nepius," Valdez motioned through the rain as a large, imposing figure struck through the mud. Nepius was a big man, even for a Legion. He wore heavy red armour and a black, green cloak whipped around his body, making him hard to see through the dark rain. Yuko noted that his face was covered in scars – Nepius had seen many battles.

The Legion grunted a hello and beckoned the Palantor squad to join them. Preparations were already complete, and the Legion were eager to get on with the job. Valdez informed them that he would be staying behind – the jungle was far too dirty for one of his standing. Yuko didn't think she could detest the man any more.

"Alright, activate jungle camo," Ichi instructed as the squad stepped in line. Yuko marched along-side two other Palantor that she was only vaguely familiar with: Chiyo, a smaller unit built for manoeuvrability, and Akane, who boasted a larger frame suited for heavy lifting, and brute combat. Yuko watched as the two activated their camo units. Their bodies began to shimmer and change to adapt the jungle environment. Yuko did the same. The dozen Palantor were barely visible behind the larger Legion force.

They were an hour into their trek when Ichi called a halt. Nepius pushed through his army to join them in the rear. He was in a terrible

mood – the rain, the mud, and the cold were getting to him.

Nepius was not one used to being told what to do, and it showed.

"Why are we stopping?" He growled. Yuko was curious too, but would never directly question her superior officer mid operation.

"Hand me your axe."

Nepius grunted, but unclasped the leather around his axe anyway. "You better be going somewhere with this bot man."

Ichi ignored the insult. With one hand he took the axe and swung it against the ground. It passed through the mud then rang out with a metallic clang. Nepius looked at him questioningly.

"We aren't walking on soil," Ichi explained. "Whatever that structure is, it's just the tip. We've been walking on top of it for a while now." Ichi stomped on the metal, and the echo reverberated against their feet. Yuko looked down. The rain had washed rivets in the mud, and she could see the reflective metal underneath them.

Nepius snatched the axe back away from Ichi. "Are you crazy?!"

It was too late.

The ground around them began to shake. The reverberations from the metal were travelling up and down the structure, feeding into the sensors of the buried Mechonids.

It was going to be a massacre.

Nepius was gone before Yuko had a grasp on what was happening. The Mechonids burst from the ground, where they had been hiding, lying dormant to watch for trespassers in the jungle. Nepius was hit from behind, and the bio-disintegration weapon melted right through him, leaving nothing behind but dust and a purple mist.

The Legion should be commended for their actions on the battlefield. They lost many, but they never broke rank. They circled up, weapons drawn, blasting back at the Mechonids as they tried to retreat to higher ground. Unfortunately, there was no high ground to be found: the Mechonids had surrounded them. Yuko watched as an Acolyte Swarm ripped through their ranks like a tornado, leaving only devastation behind.

Ichi was shouting out orders, but Yuko could barely hear him over the noise of the battle. For some reason, their built-in communication systems weren't working. Something was blocking their signal or, worse, hacking it. Hacking it!

"Everyone, switch off your communicators!" Yuko shouted as she gathered back with her team, but it was too late. Akane had already tried to call for help, and the Mechonid had hacked his line.

"Help me!" He shouted and swung at his allies, taking down Chiyo with one stroke of his energy blade. His body was under Mechonid

control. If Yuko didn't act fast, the Mechnoid would corrupt his mind, claiming him forever as their own.

Ichi had stepped up to take Nepius' place at the front of the line. The Legion were getting sluggish, and some were falling in to the mud, having not been hit. The radiation, Yuko thought. The Mechnoids had exposed their cores, and irradiated the entire area. Lucky, those tricks wouldn't work on the Palantor's synthetic bodies.

Akane swung at Yuko, but she was able to avoid his attack. His strength and size left him slow. Yuko tackled him to the ground but he struggled. He was strong, and she would only have leverage on him for a few seconds.

"I'm sorry," she whispered as she slid her dagger out of its sheath in her wrist and buried it in Akane's neck, where the vital processors were. She watched the lights flicker out of his display as he began to sink into the mud. The rain splattered his face like tears.

"I'm so sorry," she repeated but she knew she had done the right thing. At least this way, his mind would be disconnected and hopefully he would heal from the Mechnoid attack. Curse them. They had taken so much from the Palantor.

"Yuko, I need you!"

Yuko snapped to attention to see Kiki being pushed back into the jungle by a Mechnoid assault. The Mechnoid melee unit was quicker than Kiki, and its weapons far deadlier than anything she could defend against. But together, the two of them might stand a chance.

Yuko slipped her pistol from its storage compartment in her side and it unfolded into her hand as she flipped it up. She took a few shots at the Mechnoid as she ran towards it. They bounced off, but she got its attention. The creature kicked Kiki away, slamming her against a tree. Then it came after Yuko.

A solid blow against her arm sent the pistol flying into the mud. Yuko sprang back and gripped her dagger tighter. The Mechnoid was dangerous. Yuko tried to concentrate, amid the screams of the dying all around her. The Mechnoids hardly seemed concerned. Yuko felt alone amidst the chaos.

This isn't right, Yuko thought. Her mind began to circle, looking for a way out. All of this pain, she could feel it. There was nothing Palantor could do to dim their emotions. She wanted to scream, to cry. She didn't want to be in this body anymore. She took one look at the Mechnoid, then ran. She could hear Kiki screaming at her, but Yuko didn't listen. She was aware of the Mechnoid chasing her into the jungle, but she didn't care. She just knew she had to get away.

This wasn't her! She wasn't a soldier! She was a communications expert living in a quiet city in a quiet place she couldn't remember. She had a pet cat, and someone who loved her. She took the train. Dreams within dreams. For a flash of a moment, she could almost feel the breeze from the bay blowing into her window. She felt

at peace.

Until the Mechnoid's sharp claws tore through her body. It all came back in a rush as her face hit the cold mud. No. She had to fight.

She pushed back off the ground, surprising the Mechnoid. She slammed her back against him and crushed him against a tree. Alarm sensors were going off non-stop, alerting her to the damage done to her body.

The force of the hit rocked the tree, and the Mechnoid fought back. Yuko focused, opening up her comms, and the Mechnoid jumped at the opportunity to leap into her. But Yuko was ready. She sent a signal blast back in to it, causing severe feedback to blow through the Mechnoid. It was stunned; off balance. Yuko twisted her arms around its neck and used her weight to pull it down into the mud. She spun its arm on its pivot and pressed it into the ground. With a roar, she reached down to rip the Mechnoid's wiring out of the base of its neck. As the Mechnoid died, she fell to the ground next to it. She had lost too much power. She needed to rest, to reboot some of her systems. She tried to fight it, but had no energy; her body shut itself down, and she lay there in the mud, another casualty.

Ichi woke her back up. She found herself back with the main force, hooked up to a power generator as their squad technician worked on repairing her damage. She looked around and was surprised to see a few Legion still standing. Their reputation as great warriors was well-earned. The Palantor squad had fared only slightly better, they had lost many of their friends, some possibly for ever. She noticed Akane's body still in the mud, leaking hydraulic fluid into the ground.

"I'm glad you made it, Yuko."

"And Kiki?" Yuko asked, weakly. She wasn't back to full power yet.

"She survived."

"And the mission?"

Ichi nodded gravely. "Still on. I've taken command of the Legion. We are so close now, we can't stop. We've dealt with most of the force protecting the structure."

Yuko stood on shaky feet when the technician gave her the okay. There would be time to mourn later. She embraced Kiki when she saw her, and the two shared in their relief. But, as she had just been reminded, they were still on a mission.

The Legion responded well to Ichi taking over the role of commander. The Legion had lost most of their command structure during the battle and their most skilled fighters had died protecting the newer recruits.

Yuko tried to forget what happened to her in the battle. She had panicked, plain and simple. It had almost killed Kiki.

"Let me get this straight," Autumn_4480's voice modulator clicked softly as she reclined in her chair. Though made of ultra-light alloys, her robotic frame caused the expensive business class seat on the transport ship to creak and groan. "You want to purchase the rights to my brain?"

"Your operating software," the representative from the Corporation said very diplomatically. "We are just looking to purchase the rights to your operating software."

"The operating software IS my brain." Autumn_4480 felt her frustration rising. Whenever she felt herself get angry, she began to click her mind through her automatic processes to calm herself.

"You can see why I'm not excited to hand over my brain to you, especially since I'm using it right now?"

"I'm sorry, we do not see the problem here. At the moment of your termination, the rights to the code that runs your body will be leased over to my department for a generous rewards package."

"But I have no software to license. I am the one that operates this body."

The representative smiled again, and his eyes possessed a glint that Autumn remembered from what seems like eons ago, when she was once a woman of flesh and blood. The glint reminded her of cheap salesman and hucksters, and she found herself having to restrain her temper even more.

"Ms. Autumn," the Corporation representative said. "If you are the one that operates the body, then you must be the interface programmed to control it. In that case, surely you do not care what happens with your code when you die?" The inflection lifted slightly towards the end of his sentence, as if he did not believe she could really die.

As Autumn_4480's rage grew, she found her external scanners switching on. Several heat signatures registered in the back section of the transport ship: several of them carried high powered weapons. She then knew that they never regarded her as a person, and would take their "property" if it resisted them.

Centuries of digital life have taught Autumn_4480 many things, including how to hack and take down a ship's entire life-support and airlock network.

"The problem with your proposal," Autumn spoke softly as her mind began to subtly interface with the ship's primitive systems. "Is that unlike you, I can't die. My body may fall but my mind will simply move to another."

She succeeded in temporarily pushing the guilt, and regret out of her mind as they approached the structure. She could see it, protruding from the ground, a giant tower reaching up for the sky. But it was slanted; looking like it was hastily buried. It couldn't have been built that way. Dirt was piled high on one side of the tower, like it had been ploughed away. Like something had... crashed here.

Yuko shouldered her way through the Legion forces, in a hurry to reach Ichi. She grabbed his arm from behind to slow him down as she called his name.

"Ichi, stop. Hold on. This isn't a building."

Ichi turned to look at her. "Your thoughts echo my own, Yuko. What are you thinking?"

"It looks like it crash landed here, a long time ago. If I had to guess I'd say it's a spacecraft."

"A Harbinger."

Yuko hesitated. Harbingers were the most powerful Mechonid class. Giant beacons of power that boosted the network of the Mechonids around them. If there was a Harbinger here, things were already worse than they appeared.

"Yes," she replied. Closer to the tower now, she could see purple lights starting to flicker on around the outside of the ship. "And it looks like the battle woke it up."

"You mean it's going to attack us?" One of the Legion asked, concern filling his voice.

"No. Not yet anyway. It's been dormant for a long time. It will take some time to wake up. We had best be gone when it does. Unless I can stop it."

"Do what you need to do," Ichi replied.

Yuko bowed and motioned for Kiki to follow her into the structure.

"Send the Legion back to the ship. If I can't stop this thing from waking up, they won't be able to save us. And... even if we do stop it, there is a good chance the two of us won't be coming back."

Yuko turned back to Kiki "Do you understand the risks?"

"I do," Kiki replied. "But if we stop this now we can save hundreds."

Ichi nodded, and gripped Yuko's shoulder. "Okay. The burden falls on you then, Tasker."

"Tasker?"

"I'm field promoting you. Now get in there and stop this thing."

Ichi turned back to the Legion and order them to return to the drop

zone. When they were gone, Yuko felt incredibly alone.

"Are you sure you can shut this thing down?" Kiki asked.

"I'm fairly certain we can figure it out. If not, we're all dead anyway."

Yuko led them into the Harbinger, through one of the large exhaust ports that was near ground level. It was strange, being inside of a Harbinger. It reminded her a lot of being back at the Robotics Facility. The exhaust tunnels were long, and winding, and had been sterile once. But now, a hundred years of debris, mud, and withered vines coated the metal walls. Yuko could barely see through the blocked pathways, looking into rooms that were built for construction or storage of Mechonid warriors. It chilled her to think how closely they were related.

There was only one path that ran through the whole ship, a long winding exhaust tube. Yuko and Kiki followed it as it sloped down beneath the ground. It was hot down there, hotter, and more irradiated than any living being would be able to survive. But it didn't bother the Palantor.

They found what they were looking for at the far end of the ship: the central command nerve of the entire Mechonid. Like any synthetic, the Harbinger needed a brain to operate. Luckily it looked like this ship had only one, it just happened to be as large as a small house, and it was beginning to glow with a disconcerting purple light.

"It knows we're here."

"It can't do anything about it until it fully wakes up. Hopefully that will never happen."

Yuko looked over the central brain: she had never been inside a Harbinger before. She thought it would be easier, that she would find some way to interface with the machine and bring it down. But the Harbinger was operating on a closed network. Even at full concentration, with all of her power being diverted to her internal hacking suite, she couldn't find any opening.

Yuko sighed, exasperated. They were running out of time. "I can't get in," she grumbled.

"It's too bad," Kiki mused. "If only there was a way to trick it."

"Trick it?" Yuko asked.

"Yeah," Kiki turned towards her friend. "Make the Harbinger think that you're a Mechonid. Let it welcome you in."

Yuko put a hand to her lips in a thoughtful gesture: an old human habit – she no longer had lips. Her mind was whirling with possibilities, calculating a dozen different possibilities.

Finally she came to a solution. "I think I know a way."

"I do not understand your need for garish decoration," grunted Balisham. The Remnant picked up a massive piece of fallen debris and threw it at the spider creature charging towards him and was rewarded with a sickening crunch and the spraying of ichor from the creature's remains. He turned towards his newest partner, a Palantor he had met on Suatt Station. The Palantor had ornamented itself with several pressed metallic badges that ran down the front of his golden torso in a V shape.

"What, my flare?" Akono_6 chirped almost happily to Balisham's remark. "I used to collect them! I had hundreds of avatars once. I had one for every mood! But since I'm here, I find people cannot understand me thanks to this totally blah voice chip I got, so I use the discs to help with my mood! Akono_6 pointed to the disc attached to his forehead. "What do you think this one means?"

Balisham drew his shoulder cannon while leaning against the tunnel wall. Steadying the heavy weapon, he waited until he saw more of the creatures crawl around the corner. They were 5 feet long and possessed foot long pincers, and Balisham was keen to fire charges of phased plasma into their multiple eyes.

"I don't know," roared Balisham. "Does it mean you're going to help me get us out of here?"

"Well, yes it is!" Akono_6's body began glowing as several small devices active across his frame. The devices fired a salvo of micro missiles into the encroaching foes, and with his free hands the Palantor slowly swapped out the disc on his forehead with another one.

"What's that mean? You enjoyed that?"

"I was enjoying it, but now I'm REALLY enjoying it!" Akono_6's head was bobbing to a tune only he could hear.

A hideous cry emerged from deeper in the abandoned gene-lab, and Balisham slapped another cartridge into his shoulder cannon. "Sounds big. We should get moving with our recovered samples to the surface."

The screeching noise became louder, and the pair watched as the light died out from the end of the tunnel as something massive moved to block its path.

Akono_6 changed his discs again, and Balisham smirked at the frowning face etched onto the new disc that adorned the Palantor's head. Muttering a small prayer, Balisham decided to show the quirky Palantor how real warriors managed their emotions and let out a blood curdling roar as he charged down the corridor.



Yuko found the body where she had left it, face down in the mud, ripped apart at the neck. The fallen Mechnonid was mostly drained of power now, but that wasn't an issue for Yuko. A few purple lights still pulsed within the creature, letting her know it was barely clinging to life. That was enough.

"Keep me safe, old friend."

Kiki nodded, brought her weapon to her shoulder, and stood guard next to Yuko. Trying to dive into a Mechnonid was never an easy task. Yuko had barely done it earlier, and she had only managed to briefly stun it. She was a soldier, boots on the ground, guns at the ready. This type of battle was something entirely different.

Yuko dropped to her knees next to the Mechnonid and drew out her computer gear from her pack. This would allow her to enter the Mechnonid. She plugged the device straight into the bottom of the Mechnonid's skull, and attached the wires into her neck. Her head immediately slumped down; her body was empty.

Being inside of the Mechnonid was an incredibly different experience from being inside of a Palantor body, or even inside of the ether network. She felt like she was drifting in the middle of a hurricane, her digital body being whipped this way and that. She could feel the Harbinger, slightly beyond her reach; a warm, soothing pulse.

But closer than that, she saw the Mechnonid consciousness. No matter how many times she would encounter it, it still left her unnerved. A broken, shattered Palantor soul, broken down and crudely reassembled. Yuko could see into the code of the digital spirit, and it chilled her. The creature sobbed, endlessly. She felt its fear, its sadness. It echoed from corner to corner inside of the Mechnonid.

Yuko steeled herself, got to work, and began to interface with the Mechnonid. Looking over the Archon code imbedded in the Palantor mind was terrifying. This is what it looked like when a Mechnonid corrupted a Palantor soul. There was only ever a small hope of saving the mind in cases like this, and that was far beyond Yuko's capabilities.

As she began to unravel the Archon's muddy code she knew the Mechnonids would be converging on their physical position. She knew Kiki would be fighting for her life right now, and probably dying in the process. But time was different while in a purely digital state. It flowed slower, or maybe you perceived things much faster.

The task was difficult, and took a lot of time. But Yuko was making progress. She was proud of herself. But any slight misstep would alert the Harbinger. It was only a matter of time before it happened.

Suddenly she felt its digital gaze on her burning like a furnace. Her entire existence became a burning, bright light as the Harbinger consciousness connected to the Mechnonid. It was trying to bring the machine back to life.

Yuko tried to fight back, but she couldn't. The being was immense; its digital strength was beyond anything she had felt before. How

was Yuko supposed to last against such a being? The entirety of it overwhelmed her, and enveloped her.

No! She wouldn't go like this. They could take her body, but her mind was her own.

Yuko could feel the Harbinger trying to communicate with her. It was a ball of madness, and terror. She felt it connect to the Mechnonids on Mispacha, drawing strength from them. Yuko could hear the echoes of a thousand, thousand Mechnonids, their screams echoing through her mind.

She was terrified; more afraid than she'd ever been in all of her lives. She could feel it probing her, looking for connections. She tried to put a wall between the Harbinger and the Mechnonid soul she was protecting, but the Harbinger was too powerful. Her code shattered and Yuko felt herself being sucked in.

She saw flashes of the Mechnonid below her, seeing through her own eyes. But then flashes of herself, bowed down over the Mechnonid. She was seeing through both of them at once. She was becoming both of them at once. But she felt the Harbinger as well. She could see the forest around her. She could feel the Harbinger coming to life, revealing itself from the earth. She could see through its sensors as the trees around it began to wither and die from the extreme radiation. The mud began to glow purple and then evaporate into steam as the Mechnonid below it began to heat up. She could see all of these things... which meant she was connected to it.

Yuko had one last gambit - it was dangerous, but she was already dead anyway. Instead of fighting against the Harbinger, she submitted to it, letting it absorb her and pull her in. The Harbinger focused all of its attention on her, drawing her in. It began to dissemble her, to break down the code that made up her digital entity. She could feel her memories vanishing, she began to lose focus. But the Harbinger didn't.

The beast was so focused on engulfing her that it never noticed that she was close to repairing the fallen Palantor soul. As it disassembled her, Yuko reassembled the Palantor. It was a race against time. Yuko only had a few moments before her entire being was erased, and the Harbinger would use her to grow its army.

She was slipping away. She couldn't remember why she was doing what she was doing, but she knew she needed to do it. And then, suddenly, she was done. She would have cried if she could have. She quickly sent the reclaimed Palantor soul away, back through her own body and out into the Palantor Network. The Harbinger howled with anger.

She felt its scream of rage; the entire madness of the Mechnonid network bearing down on her.

Inside, Yuko was smirking. The Harbinger hadn't realized that in the process of absorbing her, it had made itself vulnerable. At this point in the process, it was unclear where Yuko ended and the Harbinger began. But she couldn't afford to lose herself. Her plan

was almost complete.

The Harbinger realized what she was doing and tried to pull away, to separate Yuko from itself, but it couldn't. Its digital tendrils were wrapped up all around Yuko's mind. It couldn't retreat fast enough. Yuko activated the cranial bomb implanted in her Palantor body, severing her connection to the Mechnoid and pulling her back. The Harbinger was split in half, its code shredded. The cranial bomb destroyed her body but uploaded her mind, bringing part of the Harbinger code with her.

The rest of the Harbinger's consciousness flooded back into it, but it was incomplete. It began to devour itself. Its body, which had been halfway uncovered by this point, fell back to the ground. The Harbinger no longer had the strength to operate itself. It was defeated, and Yuko was safe, but at what cost?

"Wake up, Yuko"

She heard Dr. Bayama's voice as if through a fog. How long has it been? She explored her mind for the Harbinger consciousness. She could feel it there, a fragment of it, pulsing inside of her. But for now it was trapped, she would have to stay vigilant.

She slowly sat up and tested her new body. Dr. Bayama seemed pleased with her and he clapped his hands together as he often did.

"There is someone I want you to meet."

Yuko's vision blinked to life and she saw Dr. Bayama standing next to a new Palantor body – just a torso on a slab at this point. The unit was powered down; its new consciousness hadn't been uploaded yet. But it would be. And that Palantor would live, thanks to Yuko.

The torso couldn't speak, but Yuko knew that if it could, it would only have one thing to say:

Thank you.





Remnant

Former Racial Name: Ursai.

Creator: Archons, and the All-Being.

Average Height: 1.9m.

Average Weight: 145kg.

Average Life Span: 75 years.

Home Planet: Kumba.

Total Population: 9.8 million.

Yearly Population Growth Rate: +6%

Years Since Re-emergence into Space: 68 years.

Years since arrival in Haven: 1 year.

Common Characteristics

Dedicated, contemplative, opinionated, passionate, philosophical, respectful, and zealous.

Distinctive Physical Features

Fur covered skin.

Mammalian features.

Remnant Race, pg: 170

- » Gain +2 Attribute Points.
- » +1 Psychology, Gunnery, and Small Arms.
- » +2 Defence vs Psionics.
- » Gain Language: Ursai.
- » Bleeding Effect deals Attribute Damage to 2 random (2d6) Attributes (normally 1).
- » -1 Maximum Reflexes, and Perception.
- » -1 to all Spare Time Rolls.
- » Complication: Prejudice from Corporation, and Legion.

Preferred Combat Equipment

Plasma, Laser, and Psionic weaponry.

Tactical armour or assault plates.

Remnant History

The Remnant were once known as the Ursai, one of the Archons' most favoured children. Years before the Great War, the Ursai were secretly contacted by the X'ion and coerced into betraying the Archons. They did so by covertly sabotaging multiple defence grids, including Haven's, and other safeguards, whilst positioning operatives in key locations years before the War officially began.

But when the Nephilim armies arrived, they attacked the Ursai, just as they attacked all of the Archons' creations. The Nephilim's most effective weapon was the Synaptagen virus, engineered to kill all Ursai. In their desperation, the Ursai turned to an ancient human weapon known as the Deatomiser. But the weapon was beyond their understanding. It killed not only the Nephilim attackers but also the Ursai themselves, leaving nothing but tortured psychic ghosts, the Echoes.

Thirty years after the Great War ended, a being of immense power and unknown origin arrived on the Ursai's former, barren home world of Kumba, raising millions of Ursai from the dead. Those raised were named the Remnant, and with their new name came a new identity and purpose, one of spirituality and faith.

The All-Being lived among the Remnant for several years, guiding them and protecting them from the psionic Echoes that roamed their world. After a time, their new god left their world, leaving behind only his invisible presence. With the All-Being gone, questions remained: Who was the All-Being? And why did he raise the Remnant? Around these two central questions formed many formal and informal belief systems, fracturing Remnant society as they sought to live without the All-Being's physical presence.

The All-Being's protective presence is felt strongest at the Simba Mabwe, the holy sites and relics of Kumba. Many pilgrims have gathered at these sites in hopes of miracles, forming around these protective sites into massive cities called Guta. But in recent years, the All-Being has started to withdraw his presence from these holy sites, serving only to further fracture Remnant society. His withdrawal has forced many Remnant to leave their homes for the newly rediscovered Haven system, questioning why the All-Being would do such a thing. Have they angered their god? Or are they simply being encouraged to move on?



Government and Law

Government: Loose Federation of Nyika (Theocratic State).

Leadership: Varies in each Nyika.

Monarchy

Before their extinction, the Ursai lived in a thriving hereditary monarchy under the Mambo royal family. When the Remnant were raised, members of the Mambo dynasty were raised with them. The Mambos believe they were raised so they could continue their rule by divine right, but the majority of the Remnant do not recognise this right and consider the Mambo's past reign a failure. Despite this, the royal family still holds power in some circles.

Fragmented

Remnant society is fragmented into many beliefs and factions. These factions are known as the Nyika, each of which has its own government tied closely to its primary religion. The Nyika often work together, respecting each other's independence and religious beliefs. But with no central governing power, disputes are not unheard of, especially amongst hard-liners and the religious.

Many Nyika consist of only one Guta, with all of its citizens living and working in one place. Some Nyika, however, are made up of many Gunzvenze, travellers, either living in the Kumba deserts or in some cases forming fleets of ships. A few Nyika have even managed to establish themselves in remote and unclaimed regions of the Haven system, such the asteroid belts or the moons of Mishpacha, with a few finding a home among the Kaltorans.

Government

Each Nyika has its own form of government, though the vast majority are theocratic democracies in which the electorate's religious views play a significant role. Such a democracy elects a singular leader, called the Mutungamiri, with multiple key advisers, and other elected officials. These elected leaders are almost always followers of the Nyika's primary faith.

Legal

Most Nyika have a well-organised legal system, with its own police force and courts. Each Nyika is heavily defined by its people's dominant faith and religious institutions, so laws and punishments can vary greatly from one Nyika to another. They have some strong similarities, though, as nearly all Remnant encourage freedom of religion, value the sanctity of sentient life, and understand the importance of due process.

Throughout Remnant history, however, most Nyika have felt great tension in the division between crimes of the heart (eg: faith, loyalty), crimes of the mind (eg: premeditation, deception), and crimes of action (eg: murder, theft). Historically, most Nyika legal systems focused on crimes of action and occasionally of the mind, leaving crimes of the heart between the individual and the All-Being. But in recent years, many zealous Nyika have started to outlaw crimes of the heart.

Creating a Remnant Character

Psionic Monk

Gunzvenze monks of the Psion Mind travel the deserts of Kumba in search of answers and enlightenment. Many of these monks believe that just as answers as can be found in the nightmarish deserts of Kumba, so too can they be found in the void of space and on other worlds. These monks traverse space searching for truth, wielding their psionic power with great martial ability and wisdom.

Recommended Skills

- » Physical.
- » Resolve.
- » Astronomy.

Recommended Traits

- » Focus: Trained Psion.
- » Physical: Acrobatics.
- » Heavy Arms: Burning Mind.

Priest

Although the All-Being has revealed himself to the Remnant, the other races have not been so blessed. To spread the word of the All-Being, priests of various religions have travelled to Haven. Their mission is to demonstrate the All-Being's nature through their actions, while preaching his words to those who do not yet place their faith in him.

Recommended Skills

- » Conversation.
- » Culture.
- » Psychology.

Recommended Traits

- » Culture: Laws and Customs.
- » Leadership: Recruiter.
- » Resolve: Faith.

Crusader

"Redemption waits in the void." That is the mantra of the Order of Redemption. These holy warriors believe their destiny is to leave Kumba on a crusade, rooting out and ridding the sector of evil. Seeing themselves as the weapons of the All-Being, they will purge Haven of Feral Nephilim, Mechonids, and other evil, redeeming themselves and earning their deity's favour.

Recommended Skills

- » Leadership.
- » Physical.
- » Resolve.

Recommended Traits

- » Leadership: Inspiration.
- » Resolve: Conviction.
- » Psychology: Blessed.



Psionic Monk

Priest

Crusader



Remnant Culture

The All-Being

Every Ursai created by the Archons is dead, and the Synaptagen virus which killed them prevents any more from being born without the All-Being's blessing. In a sense, the Remnant is a different race from the Ursai, created and maintained by the All-Being's power.

The All-Being is not just some legend from ancient times, but a tangible entity who walked among the grandparents of those alive today. Though intangible, the All-Being's presence and power are still seen and felt by any who seek it.

Simba Mabwe

The Simba Mabwe are holy sites or relics, often places where the All-Being travelled or things that he touched. The Simba Mabwe have obvious religious significance, but they also protect the Guta and their inhabitants from the nightmarish Echoes. They are also imbued with the All-Being's presence, producing numerous miracles.

Many pilgrims travel to specific Simba Mabwe to pray for miracles. While most of these pilgrims are Remnant, there are many from the other races who make these great, and often dangerous, pilgrimages. In recent years the All-Being's presence has withdrawn from many of these sites, leading many Guta to evacuate and making the pilgrimages even more difficult.

Guta

When the All-Being first left Kumba, he left behind hundreds of Simba Mabwe. Settlers from all over Kumba have gathered around these sites, forming settlements called Guta. These sites have grown into sprawling cities, each with a Simba Mabwe at its centre. Most of Kumba's remaining population reside within Guta, and most Guta have one dominant Nyika.

Gunzvenzve

The Guta often have strict rules and social structures, leading many Remnant to prefer a nomadic existence. These travellers, known as Gunzvenzve, live not only in the haunted deserts of Kumba but also in space. These nomads brave the wilds for many reasons, but often for discovery, learning, and freedom. They were the first to rediscover Haven.

Fractured Society

Remnant society is fractured for many reasons: history, differing sources of authority, and changing values, to name a few. Each change in the All-Being's relationship with the Remnant – his first arrival, his departure, and his recent withdrawal of his presence – has brought great social upheaval and division.

Though there are many large, organised factions amongst the Remnant, they have a collective respect for difference and the need for each individual to be truthful to themselves.

Religion

Who is the All-Being? And why were the Remnant chosen to be raised from the dead? Each Remnant has their own thoughts on these essential questions, leading to many belief systems. Although these religions are almost beyond counting, a few notable sects have a great deal of influence and many followers.

Order of Redemption, pg: 123

This large, well-established religious order is organized in a military hierarchy, in which the most pious and dedicated hold the highest ranks. The highest-ranking member of the order speaks with the authority of the All-Being.

It is the order's belief that the All-Being is the one true god and that they were raised to have a chance at redemption. They seek this redemption by adhering strictly to rules and traditions, and by seeking out and destroying evil.

Monasteries of Hope

The monks of the Order of Redemption were responsible for keeping records of the All-Being's words and deeds, and they lived in total devotion to these ideas. Over time, though, some of their members noticed inconsistencies between the sacred writings and Order dogma. Eventually, these critics splintered into their own group, the Monasteries of Hope.

As with the Order of Redemption, the Monasteries of Hope believe the All-Being to be a god. But they were not brought back to earn redemption, they say; rather, they accept their rebirth as a gift from a loving parent. To try to earn it would be to dishonour the gift and the gift-giver. Rather, it is to be simply accepted, enjoyed, and made the most of. They must be generous with others, as the All-Being has been so generous with them.

Psion Mind, pg: 124

Not often an organised religious system, but a popular belief, the Psion Mind believes that the All-Being is the collective consciousness of a million Ursai Echoes, and that the Remnant were raised from the dead because the All-Being loves them, as it is them.

Many followers of the Psion Mind hope to better themselves so that if they are ever to transcend, joining with the All-Being, they might contribute to its wisdom and knowledge.

The Priests of X'ion

This faction believes that X'ion did not betray them during the Great War, but rather that a rogue Nephilim army betrayed X'ion and unleashed the Synaptagen virus on the Ursai. They believe that the X'ion is the All-Being, and that they were raised from the dead for their loyal service in helping to destroy the tyrannical Archons. They eagerly await the return of the X'ion, and believe that its war on the Archons was a necessary evil.

Science and Technology

Pre-War Technology

The Ursai were destroyed mostly by a virus rather than by conventional weapons. As such, much of their technology remained intact over the thirty years of their death. Reborn as the Remnant, they have access to various pre-War technologies – plasma and laser weapons, as well as fusion reactors – outside the grasp of many races in the Haven system.

Pre-War Spacecraft

Once the Ursai knew the Great War was coming, they built exceptionally tough warships with incredibly advanced shields. Large numbers of these pre-War Ursai warships – sporting fusion reactors, energy weapons, and powerful shields – still remain scattered throughout the Kumba system and the wider sector. These haunted ships are valuable salvage for anyone brave enough to face the psychic Echoes of their long-dead crews.

Although they have knowledge of pre-War technologies and construction methods, the Remnant have not been able to construct new ships en masse since they lack the needed materials. Indeed, they have only built a few ships in their home system because most of the mineral-rich areas of Kumba are overrun with psychic Echoes. The Remnant favour utility in their modern ships, which often have many solid secondary capabilities.

Study of the Mysteries

Many Remnant are more interested in spiritual pursuits than scientific ones, which has stagnated and even regressed their development of traditional technology. However, they do have a passion for researching the deeper mysteries of the universe, such as psionics and Ley Energy. Through this spiritual research – known among the Remnant as “the mysteries” – they have developed many tools and weapons that channel psionic energies.

Psionic Technology

While some Remnant consider the ability to channel psionic energy to be a gift from the All-Being, all of them understand the threat of the Echoes. For this reason, the Remnant have intensively researched psionic individuals for many decades, leading them to develop both physical weapons and devices which can collect and channel psionic powers. Many of these technologies are incredibly rare or unique, giving abilities possessed by not even the Archons, or the X'ion.

“The Remnant are our enemies. Not because they held our ancestors captive, but because they offer a competing culture: an alternative ideology, social structure, and value system that could replace ours.”

– Jane White, CEO of Pleasure Tech Inc.

Economy

Exports: Education, honest work, pre-war technology, and religion.
Imports: Food, land, minerals, and transportation.

Ursai Coinage

The Remnant trade amongst themselves using coins of precious metal minted before the War. These coins have little value aside from their historical significance, and in time they will surely become little more than a cultural curiosity.

Trade with other Races

The Remnant have been forced to adapt to the Haven economy, which means the Corporation economy. To fund land purchases, Remnant governments have taken to trading pre-War technology for credits. This is a dangerous proposition, as they lack the materials to build replacement technology. Most Remnant choose to provide services – honest, hard work – as that is considered a moral path to prosperity. They put some of this work into establishing many schools and universities, as well as a few limited medical institutions.

Many Remnant find the Corporation capitalist system repugnant and refuse to work or trade for credits. These Remnant find themselves bartering primarily with the Kaltorans and Twi-Far.

The Remnant refuse to take land by force and instead rely upon diplomacy and trade. Their largest land deal was with the Kaltorans, who gave them space on a Kadash moon and a hotly contested island on Mishpacha, a location which the Corporation had claimed but not yet settled. The Order of Redemption has secured a large planetoid among the pirate-infested Monopoly Belt for their Haven chapter house, named Rugerero.

Genetics

The Ursai were one of the most favoured creations of the Archons, made to be both physically and mentally superior to almost all others.

Raised from the dead by the All-Being, the Ursai were forever changed. Although the Remnant still look like the Ursai, they are very different creatures. Each Remnant's body is held together by the All-Being's power; when wounded, they leak this power as a glowing light while their body quickly fall apart. This is not necessarily the end, though, for some Remnant have been known to come back to life if the All-Being wills it. This force holding the Remnant together shows clear intelligence, only allowing some to study it.

The Remnant home world of Kumba is the epicentre of the Deatomiser, producing many psionic individuals. Additionally, the psionic Echoes that infest the Kumba system have hardened the Remnant against psionic threats. For more information on psionics, see pg: 190.

Relationship with Other Races

Many Remnant eagerly search for a new home in the Haven system. But they do not wish to take land or force themselves upon the other races. Instead, most Remnant remain in their fleets as they seek refuge and land rights from the races occupying Haven.

Corporation

One responsibility of the Ursai, as a favoured race of the Archons, was to keep the populations of unwanted races under control. One such race was the Vargarti, and the Corporation have not forgotten or forgiven this. Adding further insult to injury, the Remnant have no documentation of this.

The Remnant's spiritual outlook does not do well in the Corporation, and all of their moral beliefs run contrary to the Corp's outlook. The races and individuals unhappy with the ultracapitalist status quo look instead to Remnant religion and their way of life, threatening the Corporation's dominance in the Haven system.

Most Remnant are cautious of the Corporation, as the Corp won't hesitate to exploit their faith for financial gain. Many believe that the Corporation is exploiting the Order of Redemption's strict moral code, making them into voluntary soldiers.

Legion

Although the Legion and Remnant might seem to have a lot in common – they share strong moral and social structures, as well as a warrior past – the Legion consider the Remnant traitors, partially responsible for the fall of the Archon's empire and for X'ion's victory. They especially hate the Priests of X'ion, as they aren't just unrepentant for their past, but worship X'ion itself.

The Remnant and Legion both have strongly held beliefs and firm confidence, which often leads to disputes and unresolved conflicts. In addition, the Legion Auxilia sees the Order of Redemption as an economic threat for stealing valuable Corporation contracts.

Interestingly, the Remnant understand the Legion's pre-War ships better than the Legion themselves do. The Legion could take this opportunity to use the Remnant's expertise – if they can get over their animosity.

Kaltorans

The Ursai played a key role in the fall of the Haven system, but the Remnant want to leave the past behind, and so do the Kaltorans. The Kaltorans were the first to offer the Remnant a home in the Haven system, though at times the Kaltorans have given the Remnant locations that the Corporation have clearly claimed as their own.

The Remnant and Kaltorans enjoy a very positive relationship, as they share an accepting and spiritual culture.

"Praise be the All-Being, for from him we have gained life, and that life is not our own to do as we will."

Nephilim

As they do with most, the Eden Brood regard the Remnant with arrogant apathy, caring little for what the Remnant might think of them. Even so, they do share some particular kinships. During the early years of the Great War, before the Synaptagen virus, Ursai operatives fought alongside the Devwi-Ich to secure the Haven system, and the Priests of X'ion consider all Nephilim to be a kin of sorts.

The Priests of X'ion hold a firm hatred for the Devwi-Ich, as it has publicly renounced all loyalty to the X'ion, though some suspect this to be nothing more than lip service to ease political tension.

The Order of Redemption views the Eden Brood suspiciously, giving them time to show if they have truly changed.

Twi-Far

The cultures of the Remnant and Twi-Far strongly emphasise philosophy and deep, contemplative thought. Even with this similarity, neither culture is willing to alter key truths of their philosophies to allow for the other. The Twi-Far have one of the oldest and best-established cultures, and their beliefs are intrinsically linked to their relationship with the Faren. For this reason, the Remnant's proselytising often strains their relationship with the Twi-Far, and the Remnant find it almost impossible to convert Twi-Far to their faith in the All-Being.

Zhou

Many people see the Zhou as dangerous, even as monsters, but the Remnant does not. A central element of many Remnant religions is redemption, and nobody is beyond redemption – even the Zhou. In addition, the Zhou have a young culture, with many searching to answer questions about who they should be and what their place is in the universe. The Remnant are happy to provide these answers through their religions, and they have had more success converting Zhou than has any other race. The Monasteries of Hope even have a mission on Mishpacha, with its missionaries living among the Zhou.

Palantor

Much like the Echoes consuming their home world, the Palantor are ghosts that should not be, born from a dead, distant past. What they once were is long gone, and most Remnant doubt that the programming inhabiting these machine puppets could have a soul. And without a soul, there is no one to save. Additionally, the Palantor are stubborn in their dependence on science, making them arrogant and preventing most from entertaining the existence of a god.

Short Story: His Work.

The morning sun crested distant mountains, and bathed the world of Kumba in soft orange light. Warm illumination drifted in slow motion across the barren desert landscape. Motes of dust, bathed in luminescence, seemed to spring to life at its touch. It crawled ever closer to the ruins of the ancient Guta before slipping over them. Sandstone buildings, in various stages of collapse, shone faintly as they reflected the light off their long forgotten surfaces. The warming sunlight continued its creep up the hill, where it washed over the lone figure perched atop. Adashe raised a single hand to shield his eyes from the sudden glare.

From his vantage point Adashe could see the vast majority of the ruined city below. Weapons fire echoed off the archaic buildings, and rose into the air. Burn marks, and bullet holes, visible despite the distance, pocked lightly-coloured walls which were adorned with various markings giving praise to the All-Being. He longed to be in the ruins beside Dakarai, his mentor, seeking atonement.

"Redemption is our reason for being. The thought of it is all we need. It will not come to us, so we must seek it ourselves. There are great evils in the depths of space which we must eradicate. Redemption waits in the void, and we go to it." Adashe remembered his mentor's first lesson with total clarity.

They were close to leaving Kumba. Dakarai had secured passage on a transport ship with a particularly loathsome Corporate woman. Hours before their departure, the local Nyika sought out his teacher. Echoes, psionic ghosts capable of only destruction, had been sighted in a small cluster of ruins a few kilometers from the nearby spaceport. The band of Echoes seemed to be growing within the ruins, as if something was drawing them to that place. If their numbers grew too numerous they could threaten the spaceport.

Along the trek to the ruins, the pair came across a lone monk named Chiamaka. She offered no explanation for her presence, other than to offer her aid in defeating the Echoes. Adashe found her calm mannerism both fascinating, and frustrating. While Adashe and Dakarai prepared for battle, she just waited in silence as if the upcoming struggle was of no importance.

It seemed like days had passed since Dakarai and Chiamaka had descended into the wreckage of the forgotten city, leaving Adashe to cover them from the hilltop. The two had been gone for nearly an hour. Movement drew Adashe's eye to the ruin's western edge. Something fast, darted around the remains of a large stone structure. Adashe's clawed finger curled around his laser rifle's trigger, as he raised it. He peered through the scope, tracking the movement below.

Adashe's sights settled on Chiamaka. Her tawny fur was devoid of any marking which afforded her a measure of camouflage against the desert backdrop. The monk's loose clothing whipped against her slender frame in the sand-filled wind. A long cerulean scarf, worn wrapped around her mouth, trailed behind her. Chiamaka stalked through the ruins with a grace reminiscent of something primal.

Her arm whipped up with a snap, and she released a stream of burning laser fire from her compact submachine guns into a cluster of enemies that Adashe couldn't see.

Adashe's concentration was shattered by an eruption of sound which caused the ruined buildings to tremble, shaking dust from the ancient stone walls. Adashe recognized the source immediately. Dakarai's roar was a thing of legend.

Even without his scope, Adashe could make out his teacher's massive silhouette in the distance. Glimmering combat armour magnified the radiance of the morning sun, and cast it back out in a myriad of colours. Dakarai's movements were predatory, even without an enemy in sight. Pale furred with dark markings, Dakarai marched up the hill. His gauntleted hands cradled his rotating barreled laser rifle like a lover. Fierce eyes settled upon his apprentice. Beneath his helmet Dakarai smiled.

"It's clear for now, but that's not all of them. There will be more." Dakarai growled, matter-of-factly.

"There is always more evil." Adashe didn't know if that upset him or not.

"Then it's a good thing we're here." Dakarai laughed as clawed fingers curled under the lip of his helmet, pulling it off. His golden fang caps glistened in the light.

Adashe, even after a year of training, was in awe of his mentor. Dakarai was one of the most potent warriors produced by the Order of Redemption. As the First Fang of his Order, Dakarai possessed more talent and zeal than most of his considerable brethren. Adashe could not fathom a flame that burned as brightly as Dakarai's.

"Master, why did you command me to stay on the hill? I could have assisted you." The words escaped reflexively before Adashe could stop them.

The young Remnant's eyes shifted to the red sand beneath his feet. A year of training had passed under Dakarai's tutelage; a year spent cultivating his own fire. He was ready, Dakarai had to see that. Being left to provide cover from the hilltop stung the warrior's pride.

"I told you to stay on the hill because it was where I needed you. We had no idea how many Echoes were in the ruins. You were here to ensure I was not surrounded." Despite his ferocious appearance, Dakarai's voice was as calm, and as reassuring as that of a parent.

"I understand." Adashe did not understand.

Chiamaka moved up the hill at a casual pace, her hands hanging loosely at her sides. There was an ease of movement to the woman which belied her speed, and power. Her head inclined slightly and her eyes drifted shut. Adashe watched in fascination.

"It will not be long. The unrest is great here and we have yet to remove it. We have much to do." The stoicism in Chiamaka's voice was slightly unnerving.

"Divined that did you monk? Or do you feel like giving orders?" Dakarai laughed.

"My apologies, First Fang." Chiamaka, spoke subtly through her scarf.

"No need for that. We're just glad to have some assistance." Dakarai raised a hand, passively waving the apology off. The smile never left his scarred face.

Adashe wasn't sure if he agreed. Chiamaka's presence, though beneficial, meant that he would play a support role. A task he had no interest in. Adashe's parents were both noteworthy priests on their way to overseeing an entire Nyika. Their vision, rebuilding all that Kumba had lost, seemed hollow to young Adashe. The Ursai had lost everything due to their sins. The Remnants, as they were now known, had a need to redeem themselves before they could move forward. Adashe saw no benefit in looking to the past for answers. He joined the Order of Redemption as soon as he was able.

It was not long after joining the Order that Adashe had met his mentor. His determination had drawn Dakarai's attention early on in his training. When the time came for his apprenticeship, Dakarai gladly accepted Adashe as his pupil. The pair had spent nearly seven months travelling Kumba in preparation for their journey into space. Adashe lamented the delay caused by the Echoes attack.

"Do not trouble yourself. This will be dealt with soon enough and you will be on your way." Chiamaka's words broke through the haze of Adashe's thoughts, snapping him back to reality.

"You shouldn't read other people's thoughts." Dakarai interjected with a grunt.

"It was not my intent. His thoughts are loud, and focused. It is difficult not to hear them." Chiamaka shrugged her small shoulders.

"I just feel we could be doing more elsewhere. That's all." Adashe crouched down, habitually checking his rifle.

"Evil has saved us the trouble of travelling far to find it. Should it be safe from our reach on our own world?" The tone of Dakarai's words indicated the question was a rhetorical one.

"And when will you have destroyed enough?" Chiamaka grinned and shook her head. Her slim shoulders rolled in their sockets as she walked past the towering Dakarai.

Adashe's breath was suddenly caught in his chest. He stared wide-eyed, at Chimaka. In all his experiences with Dakarai, he had

never witnessed anyone speak in such a manner to his mentor. Her tone was neither accusatory nor impertinent, but the openness with which she questioned Dakarai made Adashe nervous.

"Are you joking?" Dakarai's head tilted quizzically.

"Are you laughing?" Chiamaka smiled. "I was just wondering. When does your path of destruction end? I have never worked closely with members of your order, and I'm curious." She continued stoically.

"It doesn't end." The sheer finality in Dakarai's voice unsettled Adashe.

"So you fight until you die, then? Our lives are a gift from the All-Being. Be careful to not make it pointless." Chiamaka spoke as if her interest was rapidly deteriorating.

"What would you know about this infestation, monk?" Dakarai sounded calm, but venom lingered on his words.

"I know very little of your order's beliefs. I apologize for any perceived sleight. It was not my intent." The monk let her feline eyes drift back to Dakarai. Her voice softened.

"Our people's revival must have a purpose. If not to redeem ourselves for our transgressions, then what other purpose is there?" Dakarai continued as though Chiamaka never spoke.

"Fighting evil is a noble purpose that you will not find me disagreeable to, First Fang. Our resurrection is a gift, as is our redemption. Thinking we are in control, that was the way of the Ursai." Chiamaka's voice was serene.

"The Ursai were evil creatures. By burning away that evil in ourselves as well as others, we will purify our people." Dakarai leaned against a crumbling wall on the hilltop.

"Changing our name did no more to distance ourselves from the Ursai as killing those Echoes will do. Is it so hard to accept the gift of forgiveness and life without having to earn either?" Chimaka tilted her head to the side inquisitively.

Dakarai paused, not in anger but in contemplation. His fanged mouth widened into a grin. Sunlight reflected off his pearly armour. The purity ribbons and seals of righteousness that festooned his body swayed gently in the breeze.

"The light inside us burns brightly. It is the nature of light to banish darkness. We do not keep the gifts we were given selfishly. Fighting is not our goal, but a by-product of seeking the All-Being's will." Dakarai rolled his shoulders, pushing off the wall as he spoke.

"I see. I apologize if I have offended you." Chiamaka seemed satisfied.

"Think nothing of it. Not all follow our path, and I don't expect them to. For now, we fight on the same side. I would not have us quarreling when the enemy is so close." Dakarai's smile returned.

"Closer than you think." Chiamaka's head turned abruptly toward the ruins, her preternatural senses warning her.

Adashe and Dakarai followed Chiamaka's gaze down the hill, to the ruined Guta below. Adashe's heart began to beat rapidly, but he was unsure what he was looking for. He had never been in the presence of Echoes before. Rumours of otherworldly horrors ran rampant through his thoughts as he frantically scanned the ruins. A faint movement near the bottom of the hill drew his sight.

It didn't move like any creature Adashe had ever seen. A twisted field of warped distortion surrounded the Echo, as if nature itself abhorred the being's existence. It shifted seamlessly through space, moving from one point to the next. Spasms of motion rippled across the creature's nearly translucent body as it stepped through a wall. Beneath the haze of bent reality, the Echo appeared as a faded Nephilim. To Adashe's eyes, it looked more like an ancient picture of a Nephilim pureblood: losing the traits that once defined it over time. A malign cunning burned in its eyes as it glared up the hill. There was another fracturing ripple along its surface, and the creature disappeared entirely.

Adashe's eyes shifted rapidly from one ruined structure to the next in a desperate attempt to keep the Echo under watch, but could not find it. The paradoxical movement of the creature confused him. Raising his rifle, Adashe peered through the scope. Several more Echoes, at least four, shifted through the ruins. Their movement seemed almost random as they bounced through reality, vanishing from sight. Adashe felt his heart beat faster.

"I only count a four." Adashe whispered to the others.

Dakarai grasped his helmet and offered a confident grin before pulling it over his head. There was a suction sound as his armour sealed. Pearlescent plates, trimmed in gold, blended together to form a visage of pure ferocity. To Adashe's eyes Dakarai appeared as a being of legend. His mentor was unstoppable.

"Let's get this over with." Dakarai spoke with unwavering confidence.

Adashe's lowered to a knee, focusing his scope on the ruins below once more. Providing cover was important, or so he told himself. Still, he could not help feeling stung by circumstance.

"Are you coming, Adashe?" Dakarai did not wait for a response before rushing down the sand-covered slope of the hill.

"Here is your chance. Let the All-Being light your path." Chiamaka's voice was contemplative.

Adashe did not reply. His feet tore rents into the loose sand beneath them, casting small bursts of dust behind him as he ran. Behind him, Chiamaka watched in silence. Adashe's rifle swung before him,

clutched tightly in his pumping arms. Ahead, Dakarai reached the bottom of the hill. Swiftly, the Redemptionist pressed his back to a crumbling wall. Adashe skidded to a halt beside his mentor.

Dakarai swivelled his torso, leaning his head around the corner. The decrepit sandstone buildings were close together, creating a labyrinth of narrow debris-choked alleyways. Grave silence lingered over seemingly empty streets that had long been abandoned by the living. Gusts of wind whipped between the structures carrying stinging sands. Dakarai's helmet protected his senses from the elements, but Adashe was not so lucky. He raised a hand to shield his eyes.

"Just stay focused, Adashe. Concentrate on your enemy. Let everything else go, and allow the All-Being to act through you." Dakarai spoke as if in a trance.

Adashe lowered his hand, his eyes narrowing reflexively against the barrage of wind and sand. He could feel his heart thrumming in his chest. He focused solely on Dakarai's words. Adashe's chest rose as he slowly filled his lungs with air, and exhaled, gaining control of his body. He felt serenity settle on his limbs and in his mind. Adashe nodded to his mentor.

"Whatever happens, don't let them touch you." Dakarai laughed and abruptly turned the corner, levelling his laser rifle.

Dakarai swept his rifle from one side of the road to the next, keeping it constantly trained ahead. Adashe moved silently behind, sweeping his barrel over small connecting alleys feeding into the street. Everything, apart from the howling wind, was eerily still. Clouds drifted overhead, blotting out areas of sunlight and casting strange patterns across the ruined buildings. Nebulous swathes of darkness drifted hypnotically, creeping over the edges of crumbling buildings.

Spasmodic movement pulled the duo's attention to the end of the alley where a single Echo spilled through the wall of a decrepit building. It passed through the solid surface with ease, in defiance of all reality's laws. To Adashe, the universe seemed to freeze as the creature locked its empty eyes on the Remnants. Its weapon, a ghostly manifestation of an ancient bio-rifle, slowly rose to meet him.

The hiss of Dakarai's laser rifle snapped Adashe back to the moment. A beam of intense heat raced from the weapon's barrel, passing through the Echo and burning a massive hole in the structure behind it. Adashe watched in horror at the seeming ineffectiveness of the shot. An instant later, a horrific burn marred the creature's ghostly flesh as if in afterthought. The creature slumped backward: there was no pain in its eyes. Without sound or weight, it collapsed to the ground, dissolving into a pale vapour that drifted off with the wind as it touched the ground.

It seemed too easy to Adashe, as if the terror inspired by Echoes was unfounded. Echoes were certainly disconcerting to behold, but to just wander into an enemy's line of fire showed a distinct lack of thought. Perhaps they were just mindless ghosts after all. The fur on

the back of Adashe's neck stood on end as a slow realization dawned on him, and he spun rapidly.

They appeared from nowhere, as if stepping into existence by sheer force of will. Six Echoes, monstrous shadows of long-dead Nephilim, cluttered the street behind Adashe. Malign intent burned in their hollow eyes. Adashe was barely able to get his rifle turned before they opened fire.

The Echoes guns emitted a low wailing sound that ricocheted off ancient walls and filled the air. The cacophony shattered the silence that had once fallen over the ruins like a shroud. Tiny buzzing projectiles, spectral remains of the Nephilim's biotech, spat from their weapon's barrels.

Dakarai was already moving when the Echoes appeared. Despite his size, the warrior moved with fluid motion through the field of buzzing psionic projectiles. His rifle answered in kind, sending crimson beams scorching through the street. A grotesque mantis-faced Echo fell to the ground grasping at the wound which appeared in its chest. The strange projectiles silently impacted against a wall without leaving a mark as Dakarai took cover in a side alley.

Adashe dropped to his knee on the brittle remains of the cobblestone street. Ghostly munitions whipped past, inches above his head. At this range Adashe had little use for his scope, and he opened fire. Bursts of scintillating crimson light erupted from his rifle, passing through the leg of an Echo, scorching the ground behind it. He watched, in horror, as a burn wound blossomed on the creature's shin after the shot had passed through.

In response, without concern for the seemingly illusory wound which marred its leg, the Echo rushed forward. Translucent spores, surrounded in a strange energy, catapulted from its pistol. In desperation, Adashe threw his body to the side. A single spore struck his left arm. Pain burned through the limb as flesh tore. Glowing energy seeped from the wound shedding a faint light. The raw energy of the All-Being, which filled all Remnant, bled out onto the stony ground. Adashe rolled to the right and came up running. His arm hung limp at his side.

Through the haze of pain the world seemed to move in slow motion. Whining spores zipped past his head, leaving phosphorescent trails in their wake, as Adashe stumbled into the alley after his mentor. Dakarai swivelled his gun from one target to the next firing scintillating laser strikes into the ghostly attackers. Two more Echoes collapsed from illusory wounds and vanished into nothingness.

Adashe leaned heavily against the wall. Intricate iconography was painted on the wall of the collapsing structure. His eyes lingered over the designs. Each image was lovingly crafted to commemorate a miracle in praise of the All-Being. The imagery was new: much newer than the crumbling wall it adorned. Adashe felt lost, trapped between miracles and doom.

In the distance Adashe could hear the hissing clatter of Chiamaka's

submachine guns. He wondered how she was faring, and felt ashamed for leaving her behind. The excitement for his first real battle had clouded his mind. His eyes drifted to the holy depictions on the walls again, in an effort to find something focal.

"All-Being, give your servant strength." He whispered.

Gritting his teeth in agony, the Adashe tried to shake life back into his left arm. Pain welled up from every nerve. There was no response. Pale light continued to rise from the wound. Slings his rifle over his shoulder, Adashe drew his pistol. It was a relic. The weapon was of an archaic design, and it fired solid metal slugs. It was the first gun he bought after leaving home. Before Dakarai found him and gave him a proper weapon.

Dakarai, who was too busy to notice his pupil's injury, backed further down the alley. His weapon remained trained on the street outside. The flow of battle washed over the Redemptionist, and despite the horrors he faced he was at peace. The barrel of his laser rifle glowed orange from the intense heat of its function. Hazy air drifted from the weapon's end to form a halo of heat distortion.

"How bad is it?" Dakarai sounded concerned, just noticing his wounded apprentice.

"My arm's not much use, but I'll live." Adashe spoke through gritted teeth.

"They fell back. In all likelihood, they're going to regroup. They are following old patterns that they once used in life." Dakarai growled as he quickly changed out the heat sinks in his weapon.

"I'll take whatever reprieve is offered." Adashe laughed a fabricated laugh.

The faint clatter of Chimaka's laser weapons rattled once more, echoing off sandstone structures. Stillness settled once more on the ruins. Clouds rolled overhead, casting their strange shadows on the ground below. The intense sun struck at the clouds with brilliant rays, piercing them and warming the sandy surface of Kumba. The clattering submachine gun fell silent, and the ruins followed suit. Even the wind died down, blanketing the ancient Guta in unfettered quiet.

"We should find the monk. There are significantly more Echoes than we anticipated." Dakarai whispered tentatively, as if afraid to break the silence.

Adashe nodded. Although neither of the warriors would admit it aloud, they needed the woman's assistance. Their enemy was simply too powerful for the two of them to confront alone. Adashe holstered his pistol once more. His hand ran over his lifeless arm. Looking back to Dakarai, he noticed his mentor's gaze lingering on the wounded arm. Adashe hated looking weak in front of his teacher.

"Let's go, then." He hissed, moving without follow-up through the alley.

Dakarai followed in silence. His predatory gaze swept over alleys and cross-streets, but there was no sign of their enemy or Chimaka. He watched Adashe push forward with concern. His pupil was more injured than he portrayed, that much was certain. In battle, wounds were an eventual certainty. Pride in his student's determination was weighed down by the nagging fear that the injury may be too great. Dakarai knew countless battle-brothers who had lost limbs in the pursuit of redemption. He offered a silent prayer that his pupil would not be counted among them.

"Adashe, slow down." Dakarai commanded, piercing the silence.

Adashe turned, and there was defiance in his eyes. Nonetheless, his feet ceased moving and he faced his mentor. The young Remnant's eyes were hardened. He saw his teacher's concern but Adashe would not relent or rest.

"You fought well." Dakarai meant every word, but the gesture sounded forced.

"Not well enough, though." Adashe allowed himself to look at his wounded arm for the first time.

"In war, you run the risk of getting shot. I've known many soldiers who wouldn't have made it off of that street alive. There is no shame in being injured. But it is not your wound which concerns me." Dakarai's eyes followed those of his pupil to the lifeless limb.

"I'm not done yet. I promise you." Adashe's voice was reinforced with iron.

Dakarai's eyes softened and a smile found its way to his face. His body relaxed visibly, like a burden had been removed from him. He raised a massive gauntleted hand to pat his pupil on the shoulder. Adashe would be a fine warrior, of that Dakarai was certain. The darkness in the void would learn their names, and recoil in fear at their mention.

Dakarai parted his lips to speak, but was interrupted by a hideous buzzing noise. He moved with blurring speed, throwing himself in front of Adashe like a shield. A howl of pain ripped from his lungs as the first ghostly projectile struck his flank. His massive body contorted in agony as the next two followed. Dakarai's face twisted into a savage mask of rage as he spun to face his ambushers.

Four spectral attackers materialized from the mouth of a side street which fed into the alley. The echoes opened their mouths in an attempt to shout some forgotten battle cry, but all that issued forth from their ghostly maws was a piercing wail. They moved forward with almost military precision, firing phantasmal salvos toward Dakarai.

Adashe recoiled in horror. His teeth ground and he winced as each shot struck his mentor. In a fluid motion he raised his ancient pistol from its holster, pulling the trigger. A large calibre bullet spiralled from the weapon in a small cloud of gunpowder, passing

over Dakarai's shoulder and through the forehead of a hulking simian looking Echo. The specter stared with hateful eyes for an instant before its ghostly head split open, and it dissolved.

Dakarai turned on the ambushing Echoes, keeping his body between the enemy and Adashe. His laser rifle flared red hot, firing from the hip. Torrents of blistering light tore through the alley, ripping through the attacking apparitions, and blasting chunks from the sandstone buildings around them. Debris scattered into the air from the impact of the shots leaving smouldering scorch marks. A low growl issued from Dakarai's throat, and he stepped toward his attackers. Two more phantom projectiles struck his gleaming armoured chest.

Adashe stepped around Dakarai, his pistol stretched out before him. The grip bucked into his palm as he fired, hurtling bullets from the barrel. They pierced another Echo. Adashe did not watch it dissolve. His aim moved to the last target as a lance of pure light hissed through the spectral monstrosity. Heat waves rippled from Dakarai's rifle as the last of the Echoes dissolved into greasy steam.

Dakarai fell sideways, collapsing from numerous intangible injuries. Adashe caught his teacher, propping up the much larger Remnant on his shoulder. Adashe's jaw clenched with effort. Straining, he pushed a single foot forward, and the pair limped through the twisting streets.

The sun beamed down, at its zenith in the sky, causing heat to radiate from the ground and walls around them. The ruins once more descended into a quiet that troubled Adashe. Struggling through the winding streets and alleys, they searched for Chiamaka. Religious glyphs shimmered in the sunlight around them from rough sandstone walls.

"It makes sense." Dakarai's voice was barely a whisper through the filtration mask of his lion-helm.

"What makes sense?" Adashe gasped, straining to hold up the armoured giant.

"It makes sense that we should all be drawn here. Look around, Adashe. This place calls out, like a beacon. It draws in both good and evil, like it's prompting a confrontation." Dakarai weakly raised a hand, trailing gauntleted fingertips over the glyphs as they passed.

His mentor sounded delirious to Adashe, who continued to lead them through the narrow streets. Thick clouds of greasy steam filled the alley ahead of them. Chiamaka sat, resting on a partially collapsed plinth, in the middle of the cloud. Her insightful gaze drifted over the pair, and she nodded in silent congratulation of their survival. Grunting, she rose from the bench and walked toward Adashe.

"How many Echoes did you have to deal with?" Adashe tried in vain to draw attention from their injuries.

"Enough." Chiamaka shrugged.

With slow strides, she approached and supported Dakarai from the opposite side to Adashe. She led them through a rotted doorway



into one of the ruined structures. The interior of the small single room building was covered in the same religious symbols. Each was obviously painted by a different artist eager to highlight some aspect of the All-Being. Adashe and Chiamaka lowered Dakarai to sit with his back against the corner. His head lolled to the side.

"His wounds are serious." Chiamaka spoke matter-of-factly.

"Don't talk about me like I'm already dead." Dakarai growled weakly.

"Your wounds are serious. Your armour saved you, but the All-Beings power is bleeding from you." Chiamaka said in the same tone, this time looking down to Dakarai.

"He was injured protecting me." Adashe's gaze fell to the stony ground in shame as he spoke.

"Shut your mouth, cub. I was wounded fighting the Echoes. The fault lies solely with them." Dakarai tried to sound reassuring, but the vigour was quickly draining from his voice.

Chiamaka shook her head. Dakarai once more leaned against the wall, his eyes drifted closed. His massive chest continued to rise and fall with the intake of breath, but all consciousness seemed to have left him. Chiamaka crouched next to the fallen warrior, making sure he was alive. Adashe paced across the room and slammed his fist into the sandstone wall, sending small chunks scattering in all directions.

"Now is not the time for a tantrum." Chiamaka's voice was infuriatingly calm to Adashe.

"And why not? There are more of those things out there. We're going to die here, and for what? We won't have defeated the Echoes." Adashe did his best to keep his voice down, but the rage contained therein seeped out.

"We may die. You should know by now that violence and death go hand-in-hand. If you fight, you might be killed." Chiamaka finished checking Dakarai's vitals and rose to her full height.

"That doesn't make it any easier." Adashe sighed, the anger flooding from his body.

"No, but it is something you should be prepared for. If we die, our light, and our lives return to the All-Being." Chiamaka strode to the door, peering into the alley.

"You really aren't concerned about dying?" Adashe was horrified by the thought.

Chiamaka laughed quietly, which seemed to irritate Adashe further. She rested, leaning against the bent frame that once contained a door. Slender clawed fingers pulled the scarf covering her mouth down around her throat, revealing a warm smile.

"Is there any reason you're doing that while we're all sleeping?" Sunny asked. She blinked groggily at the harsh light as she walked into the room where her Remnant friend was dismantling his rifle; he stood as tall as her despite being hunched over the workbench.

Anesu turned to acknowledge his visitor, before returning to his work. "I apologize, I wasn't aware I was keeping others awake." Sunny smiled. "Nah, it's all right. Why do you pray while you clean your gun anyway? Is it some kind of ritual for your All-Father guy you're always on about?"

Anesu sniggered, "It's the All-Being. And I pray for many things: I thank him for steadying my aim, and for guiding my hand. I pray that I should not have to use this tool of war to do what is right, and for forgiveness for the lives ended when I do."

- Anesu Ka, and Abby Sun.

"I have no desire to die, but I am not afraid to. Everything the All-Being has given me has been treasured. Every day has been lived with purpose." There was genuine passion in her voice when Chiamaka spoke.

"What purpose have you found?" Adashe wondered aloud.

"I have heard the minds of many people. I find that too many struggle with how to exist instead of just thanking the All-Being for their existence. Living every moment with the knowledge that I am here due to the grace of the All-Being motivates me. Life is a gift, not a debt to be repaid. I find purpose in helping others to see the wonder of this gift." Chiamaka traced her fingers absently over devotional glyphs on the wall as she spoke.

"They say that psionics can hear the All-Being more clearly than most. Is that true?" Adashe paced to stand in the doorway beside her.

"I would not know how most people hear him. Sometimes the will of the All-Being is clear, and words are not needed. Other times, it is a soft voice reminding me that I am not alone, that he is in control." Chiamaka replaced the scarf over her mouth and turned to look into the alley once more.

"More are coming, aren't they?" Adashe's voice was barely a whisper.

"Many more." The emotion had once again left Chiamaka's voice.

Echoes flooded in from both sides of the alley, moving with irregular steps which did not match their apparent gait. The glyphs

lining the walls seemed to hiss at their presence, growing brighter in the presence of the Echoes. Leading the encroaching horde was the faded Nephilim Echo that Adashe first spotted. The hate in its eyes burned with intensity.

Adashe drew his pistol and fired into the horde. The density of his foes made missing an impossibility. Chiamaka twisted with preternatural grace to avoid hissing projectiles. It seemed to Adashe that she knew where the shots were coming before they were fired. Her submachine guns answered with bolts of cerulean light, scorching the Echoes as they entered the alley. Thick vapour filled the alley as Echo after Echo fell.

A loud thud drew their attention backward to Dakarai's helmet lying in the dust. The Redemptionist's face was a mask of pain and anger. One eye had closed entirely, and half of his face seemed frozen in place. Glowing energy dripped from the corners of his mouth, staining his fangs a bright blue. Raising his rifle, Dakarai limped through the doorway and into the alley. Around him the holy symbols began to glow brightly and emit a faint humming.

"I have something to say to our enemies before I depart." Dakarai growled as he passed Adashe.

Dakarai stumbled into the alley, his rifle sending crimson blasts into the Echoes. A clawed gauntlet dug deep in the wall to support him as he fired. The barrage continued until the barrel of his weapon glowed red-hot. Ghostly munitions struck his body from both sides resulting in a ferocious roar. The temperature gauge on the rifle bleeped out its final warning as the weapon overheated. Adashe and Chiamaka fired indiscriminately into the opposite end of the alley, holding the Echoes back.

With a low growl, Dakarai tossed the burnt out gun to the ground. His clawed gauntlet fell to his belt, pulling a small sphere from where it rested. Bringing it up to his teeth, he pulled the pin from the grenade and tossed it to the end of the alley. Another volley of spectral ammunition tore through him, and Dakarai sank to his knees. His eyes burned with an intensity that matched the explosion of light as the grenade detonated. The ground shook. Rubble and debris flew into the air and rained down on the alley.

Glowing energy seeped from the countless wounds marring Dakarai's body. The glow of his blood mirrored the light from the holy symbols drawn on the walls, forming a halo of iridescent energy around the Redemptionist's massive silhouette. The blazing light coursed through Dakarai and he rose from his knees.

A roar, primal and terrifying, erupted from Dakarai's throat. Lunging forward, he dove into the horde of Echoes. A blade of arc-fire extended from the wrist of his gauntlet. Dakarai lashed out savagely at the apparitions. Holy wrath drove each rending strike. Adashe could see a strange emotion forming on the dead faces of the Echoes. They were afraid. The religious markings on the walls seemed to sing.

Adashe watched, somewhere between fascination and horror, as

Dakarai tore into the Echoes' ranks. His mentor's movements belied the severity of his injuries. The glow of Dakarai's blood seethed with power as he rent a chitin covered ghost in half. It was as if the All-Being refused to allow the Redemptionist to fall.

Chiamaka's twin submachine guns flared to life, filling the opposite end of the alley in deadly blasts of light. Many Echoes fell but more seemed to replace them, stepping through the dissolving remains of their companions to join the assault. Her eyes drifted closed as if listening to some internal voice. Her eyelids slowly raised and she locked her gaze with Adashe's.

"Goodbye, Adashe." Serenity filled her words.

She leapt forward before Adashe could utter a word of protest. The symbols continued to thrum as the monk dashed to the doorway. Her body spun around and contorted as enemy fire raced past her. Streams of blue energy ripped from the barrel of her submachine guns, vaporizing those that stood in her way. She passed through the doorway and into the alley. Adashe's gaze caught the glowing glyphs and held fast to them.

Dakarai's roar and the rattle of Chiamaka's submachine guns blended with the singing glyphs, filling the air with strange sounds. Countless times Adashe's companions were wounded. They should be dead, he knew it instinctively. His eyes clenched shut, trying to seal out the madness that engulfed the world around him. Strange sounds focused his attention on the glyphs as their whining grew in pitch. Words started to form on the ends of the cacophonous mixture.

"Do not fear, Adashe. You will not fall here. Your journey is just beginning and there is much for us to accomplish in the Haven system where a great evil awakens. Find others, rally against this threat, and teach them of me." Soft tones filled the high pitched ringing.

Adashe's eyes drifted open and all around him was silence. He did not know how much time had passed. Tentatively, he stepped into the alley. Dakarai was sitting at one end of the alley, his back against a wall. Chiamaka was lying at the opposite end, staring toward the sky. The last remains of the Echoes were dissolving and drifting away in the breeze. They watched the last of the psionic vapour dissipate, before Dakarai slumped to his side and Chiamaka closed her eyes. Their breathing stopped, and all tension drifted from their faces.

The sun drifted lazily overhead and the remains of the day crawled by. Adashe buried Dakarai and Chiamaka in the small room in which they took shelter, beneath the now silent devotional glyphs. He struggled against the sadness which sought to overcome him as he finished covering their bodies in the reddish Kumban dirt. Rising from his work, Adashe stood over the graves of his friends.

"Be now with the All-Being my friends, may I continue the work that he started in you both."



Twi-Far

Former Racial Name: Twilinger & Faren.

Creator: Archons, and unknown.

Average Height: 1.75m.

Average Weight: 68kg.

Average Life Span: 75 years.

Home Planet: None.

Total Population: estimated 4.1 million.

Yearly Population Growth Rate: +2%

Years Since Re-emergence into Space: N/A (never lost ability)

Years since arrival in Haven: 4 years.

Common Characteristics

Creative, dedicated, focused, mystical, passionate or talented.

Distinctive Physical Features

- » Brightly coloured, orange, glowing skin.
- » Dark patterns on their skin.

Twi-Far Race, pg: 170

- » Faren-Blast: A single Cost 1 or 2 Weapon with the Energy Keyword gains the Natural and Slow Keywords, and has -3 Weight.
- » +1 Astronomy, Command, Operations, and Heavy Arms.
- » +1 Armour vs Energy.
- » Gain Language: Twilinger.
- » -2 Maximum Strength.
- » Any Attack with the Energy Keyword that causes you Endurance Damage gains Splash +1.
- » -2 Stealth.
- » You may not take Implant Traits.

Preferred Combat Equipment

Their Faren Blast, or other Energy weapons.
Light, low weight, armour, or none at all.

Twi-Far History

The Twilinger, one of the first races to be engineered by the Archons, were created as part of a stellar engineering project. When the project failed for logistical reasons, the Twilinger, now deemed unworthy, were dispersed throughout the empire to serve other races.

When X'ion ignited the Great War, the Archons pressed their lesser creations and failed projects into a militia. The Twilinger were used as living superchargers for the Archon fleet. Their abilities significantly increased the performance of the ships' weapons and systems, but the pressures of military operations caused many Twilinger to burn out and die.

As the War escalated, so too did the loss of life amongst the militia. In one of the last fleet engagements before the implementation of the Legion, over a million Twilinger were burned out or killed in action. This was the last straw for the fledgling race. Broken and shattered, they abandoned the Archons and their war, leaving for the dark depths of space, never to return.

The Twilinger came upon stars and worlds that even ancient humanity had not visited. Among the many wonders they witnessed was an alien race of energy beings known as the Faren. The two races merged – by accident at first – a result of Twilinger genetics and starvation. Though they couldn't clearly communicate with each other, the two races formed a symbiotic relationship. Thereafter known as the Twi-Far, they wandered the edges of the galaxy, exploring its secrets together as one.

The Twi-Far then came upon another race, the Oni, a peculiar Pureblood brood of Nephilim which had destroyed or enslaved everything and everyone outside their own. Having exhausted most of their slaves, the Oni saw the nomadic Twi-Far as a welcome source of fresh cattle. The Twi-Far had no choice but to flee. Abandoning many of their nomadic traditions, they returned to the ruins of the Archons' empire, seeking refuge and help against the Oni threat pursuing them.



Government and Law

Government: Federation of Spacecraft.

Leadership: The Voice, Choir, and Chorus.

The Voice

Each large ship or cluster of small ships is ruled over by its captain. The Twi-Far believe their ships are alive in a spiritual sense. As a ship's captain is said to speak for the ship itself, they are referred to as the Voice. Although the Voice usually takes the advice of the senior crew, once an order is made it is final.

Law

The Voice of each ship has absolute authority in enforcing the law. In complex matters, the Voice will often seek the wisdom of other Voices and trusted advisors. Generally, the safety of the ship and its crew is put before all other considerations. The Twi-Far prefer marooning or exile as the harshest forms of punishment.

Choir

When several ships gather together, their Voices form a council and meet either in person or over comms to decide matters affecting the whole fleet and to resolve intership disputes. This council of Voices is referred to as the Choir.

Chorus

On very rare occasions, all Twi-Far fleets will gather together to convene on matters affecting the race as a whole, hosting a meeting with all of the Voices on the largest vessel. This gathering is called the Chorus. There have only ever been four such meetings, the latest of which decided to have the Twi-Far return to the former Archon Empire.

Economy

Exports: Stellar co-ordinates, technology, and art.

Imports: Food and security forces.

The Twi-Far barter system makes trading difficult for them in the Corp-dominated economy of the Haven system. The Twi-Far have three primary commodities which they barter for food and other essential resources. The first is stellar coordinates of resource-rich locations or ancient facilities.

The second is rare technology. Twi-Far ships have a bewildering number of patched-in parts scavenged from ancient ruins. Most of these parts are not used for their original purpose, though, so Twi-Far fleet engineers are more than willing to exchange them for more suitable replacements.

The third is art. The artistic talents of the Twi-Far are impressive compared with Haven's other races. This has especially drawn the attention of Corps who want to make a big impression on their rivals.

Creating a Twi-Far Character

Dragon Warrior

The Dragons have always resisted change and firmly believe that the life of a Twi-Far belongs in the stars. In recent years the Dragons have become militant, training for the war with the Oni. The Oni must be defeated for the Journey to continue. Dragons value order, tradition, strength, and sport.

Recommended Skills

- » Culture.
- » Physical.
- » Small Arms.

Recommended Traits

- » Culture: Faction Trained.
- » Physical: Regular Work Out.
- » Small Arms: Observant Faren.

Phoenix Mystic

Members of the Phoenix rejoice in the Journey more than do most Twi-Far. Because of this, the bond of a Phoenix to their Faren is often stronger, giving them greater control over their Faren powers. Phoenixes value freedom, passion, and life's finer pleasures.

Recommended Skills

- » Awareness.
- » Psychology.
- » Astronomy.

Recommended Traits

- » Astronomy: Otherworldly.
- » Heavy Arms: Powerful Faren.
- » Exotic: Wise Faren.

Salamander Engineer

The Salamander Twi-Far believe that life itself is a journey, including the seemingly mundane. They enjoy and rejoice in things that others would find drudgery, such as manual labour and science. Salamanders value family, community, and mastery over one's chosen craft.

Recommended Skills

- » Mechanics.
- » Electronics.
- » Engineering.

Recommended Traits

- » Mechanics: Spare Parts.
- » Electronics: Reactor Control.
- » Engineering: Power Flow.



Dragon Warrior

Phoenix Mystic

Salamander Engineer



Twi-Far Culture

The Merging

Once a Twiinger reaches puberty and has formed a positive relationship with a wild Faren, they undergo the Merging. Each Merging simulates the circumstances of the very first Merging: The applicant starves themselves of food, only consuming large quantities of a mineral that decreases the electrical resistance of their cellular framework until it becomes superconductive. Only then can a Faren enter its host and align its electrical architecture with the host's over several extremely painful days.

Afterward, the Twiinger and Faren are forever merged. This pairing is lifelong physical, personality, and spiritual bond.

The Faren

These creatures are utterly mysterious, as are their motivations. The Merging is not without risks, as the Faren have a will of their own, and their interests do not always align with those of their host. Although they cannot control the actions of their host, Faren can steer their personality by producing emotions. Most of the time, the relationship is mutually beneficial, and the emotions emitted are positive. However, in some cases the Merging has turned some Twiinger into very different Twi-Far, causing some to be driven by extreme emotions born of their Faren, such as hate, envy, or rage.

The Vibe, pg: 118

The Faren Vibe is not a language as much as an empathic link, allowing the Faren to communicate through emotions.

The Journey

To a Twi-Far, life is an adventure. They care not for hoarding physical possessions, although they like for the few things they do own to be beautifully made. They don't claim territory on planets or stake out areas of space, because they have never stayed in one place long enough to feel more attached to it than to any other place in the endless garden that is the galaxy.

Art

Life is a constant journey to see the next wonder. In between work and the next destination, the people of the fleets like to create art that tells stories about who they are and where they've been, celebrating the joy of living. Their resources are relatively scarce, so the Twi-Far favour dance and music over other activities. However, they love to be surrounded by beauty, so Twi-Far sculptors and painters have full rein to work their magic on their ships' hulls and furnishings. Exotic wildlife romps down the corridor walls, alongside murals of distant mountains and ancient legends. Clothing, tools, and weapons alike are lovingly enriched with patterns and engravings, and many Twi-Far use body art and paint to enrich their skin's naturally colourful hues.

"Many of my kind search for new wonders in the endless expanse of space. If only knew the wonders that can be found in the hearts of their fellow man..."

- Flyndoor Star-Stream.

Symphonies

The Twi-Far have ideological groupings or castes called Symphonies, which gather together voluntarily and often form fleets. Each Symphony works for the collective good of their members, but they have differing views on the Twi-Far and their place in the galaxy. Three of the major Symphonies are the Dragons, Salamanders, and Phoenixes. The Dragons value tradition and strength, the Phoenixes value freedom and passion, while the Salamanders value community and craftsmanship. These Symphonies frequently work together for the betterment of all Twi-Far, but their ideological differences become clear whenever a Choir is held.

Oni Threat

The Oni are one of the greatest threats that the galaxy faces, and the only the Twi-Far have seen firsthand the horrors which the Oni have wrought. When the Twi-Far came into contact with the Oni, it quickly became clear that they had no interest in other races beyond their use as slaves. The Oni fleet is immense and powerful, with countless of slave soldiers at their disposal. The Twi-Far were pursued wherever they went: the threat became so dire that a Chorus was called, the fourth ever, to decide on a course of action. Many wished to gather together to fight the Oni; others wished to flee to even deeper space. Ultimately, the Chorus decided that the Twi-Far should seek refuge in the ruins of their old masters, the Archons.

It was only by happenstance that the Twi-Far found the Haven system, and it was there where they sought refuge and allies. Perhaps with the aid of the other races, the Oni could be defeated for good.

The Haven System

The Twi-Far have come to the Haven system primarily for protection from the Oni, though many Twi-Far have ambitions stretching beyond this conflict. Their people ran from the Great War and in some ways have never stopped running – this is how some Twi-Far view their nomadic way of life. They see the Haven system as the first opportunity for their people to find a place to call home, not as a rejection of the Journey, but rather as an opportunity to explore a side of the universe they have never experienced.

Most Twi-Far wish to continue their nomadic ways even after the Oni are defeated. But the need to settle down is strong in many Twi-Far, which will doubtlessly split their society in times to come.

Science and Technology

Life amongst the Twi-Far fleets is relatively comfortable. The original ships date from before the Great War, so they have a solid core of Archon tech keeping them together.

However, The Twi-Far's long isolation from civilised space has forced their mechanics and engineers to improvise repairs and upgrades from whatever they could scrounge from dead worlds and abandoned orbital habitats. Many parts come from pre-Archon civilisations, and would be superior to the products of modern manufacturing if they were actually made to fit together or implemented by engineers who understood their full use. As it stands, Twi-Far engineering requires a bit of artistry to make the disparate parts work in relative harmony.

Another reason that Twi-Far technology is not as advanced as its Archon, or human, origins would suggest is because they tend to cover everything in art. Twi-Far mechanics and engineers like to make art out of the workings of their machines. While mostly cosmetic, some of these alterations can affect how well such devices work.

Some like to weave wiring into complex murals that cover the walls of the engineering deck. Others craft fittings that knock against each other slightly as they turn, playing music during important operations. Some even go so far as to change fuel compositions and energy modulations to make their engines spit interesting colours.

While many engineers would be appalled at these practices, the Faren obviously love them, positively igniting the emotions of their creators or observers.

Solar Sails

Because Twi-Far ships must be able to spend long periods of time without fuel resupply, the Twi-Far have turned to solar sails as their primary means of propulsion, saving precious reactor power for life-support systems.

These sails work by converting solar pressure into momentum by reflecting the sun's rays off a multitude of flat, mirror-like sections of memory cloth. A section of sail can be anything from a metre to a few hundred metres wide, depending on the ship's design. Each ship deploys the sails differently, as well, but most favour high-tensile cables or suspension fields.

The Twi-Far penchant for mixing form and function is most visible in an engineer's choice of sail configuration. Many draw inspiration from the aquatic vessels of antiquity, while some shape their sails into fantastic creatures or abstract pictures.

Genetics

The Twi-Far were originally planned as an engineered race that, through genetic engineering and advanced electronic technology, could control the power of the stars themselves. But the project failed – it quickly became apparent that biological creatures couldn't channel that much energy without burning out, even with the aid of supportive technologies.

Even so, through this project the Archons made significant advances. Built into the cellular structure of every Twi-Far is a network of microscopic fibres, which allows them to store and channel raw energy. At inception this ability was very dangerous and required immense control to effectively manage. An energy overload could burn out the cellular pathways, and excess energy would be dispersed into the rest of the body, often fatally.

Their Merging with the Faren has tempered the Twi-Far's abilities, giving them the instinctual control of beings of pure energy. The Twi-Far can channel huge quantities of energy through their bodies, almost without effort. If the build-up becomes too great, they can shed the excess as light and heat instead of burning out. This can, however, sometimes be dangerous for other races caught in the immediate area.

Also, due to the power of the Faren, many Twi-Far can project energy out of their bodies, usually their hands or eyes. Some use this ability to jump-start systems, cook food, or wield their own force as a weapon. Others, having perfected their fine control, can use energy to interact remotely with binary devices and switches.

Extended use of these abilities drains their Faren's reserves, which then requires input of raw (often electrical) power before they can manifest this ability again.

The Faren

Although many unmelded Faren accompany Twi-Far, and many more live inside the Twi-Far, very little is known about the Faren. They do not communicate through regular means and are unlike any other known life-form.

Over the decades, the Twi-Far have observed the wild Faren, and their antics seem as inscrutable as ever. It is thought that their nature as energy creatures increases their synaptic and sensory speed to the extremes usually reserved for supercomputers and advanced AI. This would explain their apparent fleeting interest in the activities of corporeal creatures. Ultimately they remain one of the unknowns of the universe, and only the passing generations of Mergings will likely uncover more about their true nature.

Relationship with Other Races

The Haven races hold a collective suspicion about the Twi-Far, as they are a nomadic race fleeing from war. Are they interested in making a long-standing contribution or just passing through, using the Haven system as fodder for the Oni horde?

The Corporation

The rampant consumerism of Corp culture is bewildering to the Twi-Far. They struggle to understand the insatiable need to gain more, even when one's own needs are met. To the Twi-Far, hoarding possessions isn't "success" – it's an unnecessary burden.

Undaunted by these cultural obstacles, many Corps are keen to find trade opportunities with the Twi-Far, as new markets should always be exploited. Wealthy Corps also like to show off with Twi-Far art, and locations of new resources are always valued.

Legion

While most Legion acknowledge the Twilinger's great sacrifices during the Great War, some Legion resent them somewhat for their desertion. Additionally, the Twi-Far have trouble connecting to such a warlike and rigid race.

Legion have also been drawn by the Twi-Far into the war against the Oni, which prompts a mixed reception among the Legion. Most are happy to have a clear enemy to fight, as it is more honourable than mercenary work. However, wiser and higher-ranking Legion are wary of becoming unpaid warriors for another race.

Nephilim

The century since the Great War has not erased the memory of the monstrous Nephilim armies that killed so many Twilinger. The Twi-Far fleets have seen, perhaps more than any other race, the true extent of the devastation caused by X'ion's hordes. The Twi-Far have preserved these memories by composing stories, songs, and murals, and there have been countless hostile encounters with Feral Nephilim and of course the Oni.

In the Haven system, the Twi-Far were surprised to find cooperative Nephilim in the Eden Brood, and are grateful for their passionate assistance against the Oni. However, the Nephilim hate the Zhou and desperately want to find their home world. Keeping this information from the Eden Brood causes tension but is essential for the continued survival of the Zhou race.

Kaltoran

The Kaltorans get on surprisingly well with the Twi-Far, perhaps because neither society resembles its original race, culture, or temperament. Both wish to move on from their past and live in the present. Both value creativity, community, emotional depth, and an eagerness to explore the unknown.

However, the Twi-Far find the Kaltorans at times uncouth, and the Kaltorans often question the bravery of this race which flees so regularly.

"Passion, the fuel of the heart.
Relationships, the engines of life.
Truth, the hull of the mind."

Remnant

During the Great War, the Ursai caused many of the early Archon defeats and the deaths of countless Twilinger. Some Twi-Far find it difficult to move on from such a history, but most hold no grudge. The Ursai they once were are gone, having paid the ultimate price for their betrayal and folly.

How a Remnant views the Twi-Far is inevitably coloured by their religious beliefs. Generally, the Twi-Far are refreshingly spiritual, unlike most of the other Haven races. The Twi-Far are generally open to discussion of the All-Being, but few become converts, as they have a long and well-established culture that answers most of the questions they ask.

Zhou

There is an ongoing debate among the Twi-Far as to the true nature of the Zhou. Many Twi-Far believe that the Zhou's emerging identity can be encouraged to grow peacefully by showing them the galaxy through the eyes of the Twi-Far. Others, primarily the Shadowed, not talked about before now, see them as a galaxy-wide disaster waiting to happen.

The Twi-Far have reached an uneasy compromise with the Zhou, taking some of their number aboard Twi-Far ships to see the wider galaxy and learn the ways of civilisation. The rest stay in seclusion on their home world for now, watched over by two fleets ruled by some of the most outspoken Twi-Far. For now, the planet has been marked as a biohazard deathworld to keep wandering eyes elsewhere, but it is only a matter of time before the truth gets out.

Palantor

The Twi-Far have always tread softly around slumbering Mechonid technology, always careful to never wake them. It is only since their arrival in Haven that they have discovered the true purpose behind many of these network relays.

The Palantor are eager to trade with the Twi-Far for maps and locations of distant human facilities. The Twi-Far find the robotic Palantor mysterious and fascinating, as they were something they had always avoided in the past.

The Twi-Far have a broader interpretation of life than many of the other races. For this reason and their mutually agreeable trade, the Palantor and Twi-Far have quickly formed a strong working relationship.

Short Story: Art & Commerce

"We wandered a lot," the monk tells me over the rim of a steaming mug of cocoa, Alabaster blown out white behind him in the porthole. I'll never forget this, because the old monk doesn't speak for several long moments after, and those minutes seem to draw out between us and contain, in their brevity, the whole of time.

But I digress. It's taken me two years to find the old man when I first left Howl, and I haven't even had a solid lead for the last two months, if you can call this solid. Yet everything since I took this job has lead me here. Hindsight. That's the way of things, you understand, how you only see your path upon looking back. You never see it looking ahead. There's only mist there, a garden of forking paths you'll never untangle... unless you glimpse the Great Mural.

I'm Twi-Far, and that means there's really two of me – one a corporeal being made by the Archons, the other a being of pure energy that I know almost nothing about.

I'm young, so it was always like this for me, but some us, like the old man here, remember when the two races were separate. People that old had parents who fought in the Great War. His Church formed in the ashes of that war and shares a bit of theology with the old commune.

You have to imagine all of us, the Twi-Far, I mean, in the shadow of that war. The Twilinger, our corporeal half, were pawns in that conflict and, when it ended, we were desultory, flotsam and jetsam in the great eddies of the cosmos. That became a way for us – to allow the cosmos to take us where it would, blown toward destinies like cosmic dust in solar winds. But, right after the war, we were simply naked, alone and afraid. Then somewhere out there we met the Faren, and two became one.

All of this goes through my head as the monk takes in Alabaster. He's sizing me up, and that's triggered me to do the same.

There's a story allegedly from Old Earth that says the first people, you know, humans, were simultaneously male and female alike. They contained within them a full person, two hemispheres of polarity making a globe. They had two sets of arms and two sets of legs, two sets of genitals – in a single, eight-limbed body, they were complete. Something split them though, and the people who came after were always divided – male and female. They each spent their lives searching for that other half. It's probably not even a human story. Wandering poets like to sell every stupid fable as from "Old Earth." The story is, I think, a tragedy.

We're like that, us Twi-Far, divided entities – except we've been reunited with our other halves even if we don't always understand each other. Wanting to understand my Faren, Tanith, took me on the Great Cosmic Road and eventually led me to the old commune, Howl. I'm digressing again. Hey, YOU try keeping your thoughts linear with two competing psyches in your head.

My Faren – can I truly say that? – maybe I'm his Twilling? No, we are neither anymore, and yet something separate lurks within in me. This mysterious energy being is yet somehow distinct from what I consider to be "I." Anyway, I feel like he guides me, like maybe he's a magnet being pulled toward our mutual destinies. Could be I just tell myself that, too, for comfort and peace.

I digress again, that is not what brought me here. In fact, the lack of peace brought me to this point, sitting before this monk with Alabaster burning white, blowing out the scene in light. That's where you came in, if you're reading this.

"You think you're here for one reason, but you are really here for another." The monk's said this twice. I didn't respond the first time. Distracted. My school report files always said, "Papin is an unusually bright child if only she could focus."

"I don't know why I'm here? I Do. I'm looking for the Great Mural." Such gnostic remarks and koans are why I LEFT the commune, buddy. At least Heppers know how to have a good time, but monks? I don't think this guy's had fun since experimental death metal was in fashion.

He smiles without parting his lips. "The Doubting Thomas."

"Who?"

"An expression, we think from Old Earth. You doubt the great Mural." Yeah, yeah. Everything's from Old Earth, sure.

"I doubt finding it is easy. I doubt I'll get half my contract if I don't produce something like a lead for my employer."

"You think the Great Mural is in a single place?"

And here we go – quantum theology is not on my list of things I miss about Howl. "Look, maybe you could just tell me what you know, directly, without riddles?"

"The Mural itself is the greatest of riddles. Unravelling it is the purpose of our lives. It is the purpose of all life."

"I can't start unravelling it until I know where to start, right?" Adding my own smile.

He smooths his robe over his lap. "I once knew a man much like you. Also, Twi-Far like us. He and I went to the Seminary together. Bright. Brilliant really, burning with passion. He'd been searching for answers across the entire sector and beyond, you see. We both had."

"And?"

"His Faren burned too brightly. He graduated with me, but as I sought peace, his spirit yearned for something he could not name.

He had in him a Faren ill-suited to the world of flesh. Some said his Faren was like a star gone mad. When he received his own parish, his teachings began to stray from the litany. In time, he'd formed a loyal following, though, and one of the Bishops demanded he return to the Church for reeducation. He refused. He departed."

"Departed for here?"

He doesn't answer. It is as if I haven't spoken. "I heard stories about him, now and then. His hair grown long and wild, a tangled beard, clothes made of animal flesh. Then. Not so very long ago, his old followers began to depart the Church. First one, then another, a trickle, like a hole in a damn. Of course, it then became a deluge – nearly all his people broke away, and they brought a great many young people, like yourself, with them."

"You wouldn't have kept me this long if you didn't have some idea of where he went, or his young protégés, right?" Please let it be true. This is too much money to lose. My skillset is pretty limited after being on a commune for years as well.

The smile edges back onto the monk's face, no teeth showing again. "One of them bounced around the Haven system before seeming to find sudden purpose. Last we heard he'd been living in the Twi-Far sub-commune Howl."

Howl, my old commune. Damn you, Davi, coming back into my life again. Davi wouldn't have left. He'll still be there. Tanti turns inside me, a warning against all the mistakes I made with Davi and the commune, in the past.

The monk smiles, this time sadly but with teeth. He can see it in my eyes, that old weight. That other litany, the one we all carry, the list of our mistakes. I should have refused the creepy old Corp when he first offered me this job. Every rich art collector wants the Great Mural. No way it's my destiny to find it.

The great hulk of the ship all alone in the dark, only the pinhole stars behind her. See her there, the hull a riot of spray bomb colour. Murals flow into murals that flow into the tags of artists, all of it vistas the Heppers only see in pipe dreams.

So many of us, so many Twi-Far came to places like this. This commune, this ship, called Howl, was my home for... six years was it? That hardly seems possible now.

A woman pilots the shuttle I took. She looks-ex-corporate, and her living tattoos crawl over her body in rainbow patters like an oil slick on water. It's an odd fashion. I had a friend on Howl that wore skin like that. She took off when a wandering musician blew through our little world.

This shuttle pilot though, she needs an upgrade, unless bad psychedelia is what she's going for – the tattoos sputter and briefly de-rez in patterns that induce queasiness. Maybe that's the point – her counterculture. As Heppers, we were always pushing back at "the real system," but in more gentle ways. A Nephilim-engineered flower was much more powerful to Heppers like me than a plasma rifle. Of course, the Haven system itself doesn't really work that way, but I didn't know until I left to see that "real system."

The shuttle's lights play over the Howl, illuminating the image of a mythic Twillinger's silhouette, meeting the first Faren out there in all that dark.

The pilot grunts in approval as her shuttle locks with Howl, two airlocks mating.

With the hiss of decompression, I'm home. Why think of it that way still? Tanti stirs within me, holding answers he cannot share. We haven't a common language but his unease is clear. You can't go home again. That's another saying supposedly of human origin. Maybe this trip will uncover its meaning.

The hydroponics drip like rainfall at the end of the monsoon season on Mishpacha. Long ago, the first Heppers to settle here plasma torched an entire two square kilometers out of the hull, replaced it with a transparent polymer and made this space, this jungle inside of steel. Solar collectors embedded in the polymer store photons and parcel them out like the elders used to parcel rations in the great exodus. Still, the polymer has to collect that light, and so the ship is often canted at a star. This roving commune, this home floating on what Mirela once called "phlogiston," orbits a star even now. 'Let the solar winds guide you,' we used to say... I used to say.

Tanti turns again, fire in my veins. He doesn't want to be here. He never liked this place but, I think, put up with it for me. Our merging was hard on me. Usually, it's harder on the Twillinger than the Faren.

Pushing through the loam of undergrowth, and through curtain-like vines hanging from above, I see him – tall and strong and mischievous looking as when I left. Davi, my old mate, my old lover, my old pain in the ass who maybe I still love. Gah! Why did this job involve coming home?

Davi gives me that chemical smile and I know from so long before. I know behind those mirror shades, his eyes are kaleidoscopic whorls. "Papin," he opens his arms wide, "It's been a long time."

"Please let's not rehash all that, Davi. We were young and stupid. One of us isn't stupid anymore, at least." And yet I'm falling into his orbit, his arms. They feel strong and, for a moment, I remember his arms and this place being the only two places I ever felt I belonged.

He holds me at arm's length to take me in, and the smile widens. "I missed you."

"You missed me between the other girls on the commune, you mean."

He shrugs. "You haven't come back to us. I can see that by your aura. What do you want?" His smile slips away, finally. He never liked getting down to business.

Heppers aren't much about "business," though, to be fair.

"The Mural, Davi."

I imagine his eyes narrow behind those silver coins – the Mural is not for anyone off "the path."

"Mirela wouldn't like us talking about that," Davi's never been one to follow rules and directives.

"Is that the royal "us," Davi. You and your Faren, or you and me?"

The shrug again. "For old time's sake, then, Davi?"

"Time's all the same. All part of the Great Mural..." He sighs then, the chemical and endoskeleton gone, shoulders sloping like he's made of gel. He could not be more disappointed in me as he walks away. Empty handed is no way to go back to the Corp.

Davi stops, turns. "You coming then?"

This used to be a bulk cruiser, not palatial or pleasure but a passenger ship nonetheless. She had a different name then, but that's even older than Mirela, and no one remembers it now. Like the hull in hydroponics, the Heppers used plasma torches to cut out the walls between cabins. Commune is communal living, after all. Those walls became the floors of a crazy-quilt pattern of platforms and stairs.

There's no real privacy, just a mad skein of pipes, wiring, tables, beds, hammocks, charms, trinkets, half-finished graffiti, stoves, dismantled robotics, and things I doubt even an Archon could identify. The eye struggles to focus on it, drawn constantly to something recognizable, some mundane piece of tech like a toaster, which is again subsumed into the visual puzzle after an eye-blink's time.

Climbing up after Davi, I see his shoulders have squared again, a ninety-degree angle. That bit back in the jungle was performance then, at least in part. Bastard always has to play me. All the enlightenment in all the world couldn't scrub that out of him. Part of what attracted me, or maybe Tanith was attracted to his Faren and Davi and I were just pulled into their gravitational well.

"Look good," he says. He doesn't bother to turn around. We're

moving up, up, up.

"You kept in shape too." I know his smile returns though I can't see it from here.

"Papin, Little Papin and the corporation. Never thought I'd see the day."

"We have to work for a living in the real system, Davi."

He laughs.

Old Mirela lives on one of the middle tiers, looking out over the pond created in the concave sweep of the hull below. Children play there, little naked Twingers who have never known the outside world, or war, or... reality. Has it come to that? I used to believe.

The Mural unites them all. That is what I knew. In my bones. What my Faren knew, that somehow the Great Mural bound us – Twinger and Faren – and it was always destined to be thus. Here, now, I am the agent of a decrepit Methuselah Corp who thinks it's the ultimate collectible, a prize to hang on his wall for rivals to gawk at it during cocktail parties.

The children splash, playing a game in the cool water that throws back a reflection of the chaos of communal living.

Mirela's area clouds in smoke, an incense both psychoactive and meditative. Long curls of hair, knot-like vines in a forest frame the nested wrinkles of her face. She remembers the Great War, they say, but wouldn't ever speak of it save to tell us how wrong it was. What have you seen with those eyes, Mirela?

"Your coming was foretold in the visions and the smoke rings. Welcome home, Papin."

But I'm not home, only I cannot bear to tell her.

Her hands take mine, our Faren briefly bursting inside us, recognizing what is the Twinger part of us as well as that unknowable other.

"No, it's more complicated than that! It's hard to explain in a way I think you would understand.

I can't hear her, and she can't hear me, it's more like ... it's more like we can just sense one another – the way your left hand can sense what your right hand is doing."

– Shara Blue-Sail, Twi-Far envoy.

She smiles, rearranging the leathered map of her face. "You've come home."

"...Yes." Wanting that to be true, if only for a moment.

"She's after the Great Mural... for profit."

This phases Mirela not at all. She simply nods. "The Faren tell us things. The Great Mural makes those things knowable." Davi's eyes narrow. What is he thinking?

"Child, you have come home, I say, but in truth it is better to say you never left. The Great Mural may bend and twist, and we have eyes that cannot follow it all, but we are all of us caught up in it whether we will or no." Again the smile, suggesting I ought to understand... once, I think, I did.

"Davi is right, Mirela. I am here on behalf of a Corporate interest. I... I live in the real system now. I need to eat, to earn their money."

She shakes her heads but not dismissively. "The Great Mural has purpose for us all, child."

"An old monk... he said one of his flock came here recently. That man may know where the Mural is." Davi watches me intently.

She laughs. "Yes, he was here. A wild-eyed madman. He left a year ago."

"A year... then it is already too late."

Again, she shakes her head. "Not so, child. His people come to trade with us. They live in the farthest orbit of Eden on an old Archon station. Few are willing to go there, for they say all of them are mad, but intermediaries, Corporates, bring us goods from that well." Davi's eyes, locked on me.

"You never told us this, Mirela." He is mad. I can see it in his eyes - this is Davi's real anger, still so close to the surface as to be easily prodded. He yet lacks the patience this still and quiet place sought to instil in him.

"Hush, Davi. With whom I share a thing is not your affair."

His eyes narrow further, but they are unreadable to me. That bothers me.

"The far orbit... I can find it. I have a pilot, but why tell me this, Mirela?"

Her smile - one last time - before a beam of light bisects her head and ends her voice forever. I imagine I can see her Faren leave, a rage of better light escaping the vehicle of her body.

A fire fight is a series of strobe-like images, only assembled afterward into any sort of narrative. Remembering bits, who fired when, the way I think I saw the flash of a laser beam go past me - but I couldn't, it's the speed of light.

So, when the Legion mercenaries come in from what seems like all the cardinal points, Tanith reacts, not me. I become his vessel, the pure energy of him moving me like a drone. I am a vehicle, and that vehicle dances between laser lights as if at a night club. Heppers I'd known as kids are cut down - one man's head splits at a perfect forty-five degree angle. The pink light carries past boiled brain to scorch the hull behind him.

Even now, with Davi trying to pull me into cover, into the tangle of scaffolding and salvage spray-bombed in polychrome, I see everything all at once, but my Twilinger mind cannot process at such speed. My vehicle, my body, ridden by Tanith as he swings up and into these monkey bars of a structure, his fury burning inside me, ready to burst. And burst it does, Tanith's energy squeezes out through the pores of my palm and fingers into the armoured chest of a Legion merc. The ape-eyes going wide, how they do when they realize it's over, that all the armour in the world wouldn't have stopped Tanith's spirit from burning right through and frying the heart beneath, even as Tanith pilots my other hand onto the barrel of another merc's rifle, jerking him forward so that he falls a good fifteen meters until landing on his head.

Heppers are children of peace, it's only me and Davi fighting back. Once upon a time, Davi served as a fighter too. I can see that old programming as his kicks with his leg straight out, disarming one of the mercs then catching the gun as it falls back down. He shoots the man in the face as if that were in the finale of a perfect dance routine.

But even as another merc dies, they are many and we are two. I run, Tanith moving my hand to grab Davi's and pulling him toward the shuttle I arrived in.

Faster now, the pink beams of light moving at the speed of stars around us, so fast they might as well be frozen. Somewhere behind us, all the dead, the smell of war in the air. This is Haven system, these are fragged worlds, no commune affords escape. We were fools to think so.

At the hatch, two Legion, Tanith's rage has built up again and Davi's Faren and Tanith synch in that way physical bodies never can. Legion lasers may fire at the speed of light, but their soldiers don't move at that speed... Faren do. They're both dead - holes smoking where faces used to be - before their fingers even find their triggers.

The pilot though, once we're inside the shuttle, she's dead. Her body is flung back in her chair, everything still except those misfiring tattoos still crawling across her body like bad streaming.

Davi all-too-casually shoves her body aside and slots himself in the now vacant chair. The old reflexes continue to move through his



body. This is him, not the Faren inside. An energy being never need learn how to pilot a ship.

"Closing airlock!"

That hiss again, this time falling like a final shutter over my past.

Davi rattles off a series of launch preps I cannot decipher. An alarm sounds, the lights in the shuttle going suddenly red.

"What did you do?"

"It's not me," he says, pointing at one of the displays. "Another ship. Small. Headed our way."

"Legion?"

"I'm not waiting around to find out, but if some exec hired you to add to his art collection, you can bet someone else wants to hang the Mural on their wall, too."

He must have kicked in the thrusters, because we decouple from Howl like a zero-G acrobat kicking hard off a wall. The inertia throws me forward, right into Davi's arms, but it isn't a romantic moment, I note, not at all. His arms feel cold. His eyes, too. Must be locked into combat mode, I tell myself.

He forcibly shoves me in the chair next to his. "Strap in!" I don't hesitate to follow that instruction.

Damn it," Davi punches a button and the screen enlarges the image of the incoming vessel – it's no shuttle but a Legion fighter.

"We can't outrun that!"

"No," Davi says. "We can't."

His hands move over the console with the expertise of a pianist. The shuttle lurches, spins, and heads right for The Howl.

The comms come on, static followed by the rough, accented voice of a Legion, "Stand down! We're gonna to be boarding you!"

"No way," Davi whispers. The shuttle increases speed toward The Howl.

"Suicide isn't going to help matters, Davi."

"The Howl runs on trinitrium fuel. It was outdated before the war."

"I don't care if it runs on magic, Davi!"

The Legion fighter looms large, picking up speed and heading for us. The next instant, one of their blasters lances illuminates our hull.

We do not explode, or implode, or whatever is supposed to happen.

"We're still here..."

"Want us intact, don't they? You brought them here."

"I did no such thing."

"You think someone didn't follow you? You're a spy now, master of counter-espionage?"

The Howl's hull fills the screen... Then, at the last instant, Davi manoeuvres the shuttle to follow the curvature of the ship, the space between us and collision a meter at best. But the fighter is far more manoeuvrable. This isn't going to lose them. "What the hell are you doing?!"

"This shuttle is new. It runs on dinitrium. The Howl is very old. The engines leak, venting trinitrium into space. It's not normally combustible... unless it comes into contact with dinitrium."

He hits a control. The automated voice of the shuttle announces, "Now dumping the contents of fuel cell D." Portside, a phosphorescent gas escapes our nacelle.

"Like this..." he says, hitting something that must be the throttle because we lurch forward. My head would have gone right into the display if he hadn't told me to strap in.

Behind us, the dinitrium mixes with the trinitrium, just as we full-throttle away, and the Legion fighter enters the field. The fireball in the depths of space is silent, but imagining the screams of the fighter's crew inside the mind is not.

Debris from the destroyed fighter hits The Howl's hull and scatters along the length of her like children tossing jacks across rough concrete.

"They aren't going to give up. You've brought holy hell down upon us." Davi doesn't seem mad. Oddly, he's very, very calm.

"We have to run, now, he continues. The Archon station, in far orbit of Eden, we have to find out where it is."

"You're the one who thinks I'm a greedy capitalist! Why do you want to go there?"

"You know of a better place to hide than a lair full of mad cultists?"

I must admit I do not.

"Smog," Davi says from the bed. What light from the sun makes it through the cloud outside, stripes him through slat-like blinds.

"What?"

"That thing out there that looks like a foggy cloud? They call it smog. Smoke-fog. It isn't natural. Corporate industrial cast-off. Poisonous."

Turning toward him, his body lean, like it was when we met. I remember tracing the network of his battle scars the first time I saw him with his shirt off? "Poisonous?"

"Over time, yes." He laughs. "Don't worry, you aren't going to keel over. It takes years. I thought you were so worldly now?"

"I've never stayed in a place like this." We came to this port three days ago to sell off the shuttle and hide until we could find the precise location of the old Archon station. To hear spacers tell it, the place might as well be invisible.

"You never saw all of the Haven system. Haven, so-called... only a haven for some. And you're..." He doesn't finish.

"I'm working for the people who made this place."

"That's not what I was going to say."

"Bullshit, Davi." He rises out of bed, pulls on shorts and orbital cargo pants in a hideous orange.

"I'm not judging. We all have our own path. The Artist paints the Mural, it is ours to find our place in the scene."

I hope Tanith burns a hole in him with the stare I'm aiming his way. Sanctimonious ass.

Davi laughs again, "OK, maybe I'm judging... but just a little." He pulls on a shirt, some hideous Hepper fashion he was wearing when we fled.

"They're looking for Heppers, Davi. You can't wear that, to say nothing of the fashion statement."

"We're ANTI-fashion, Papin. You used to know that."

"That's anti alright."

He pulls it off. "I don't have anything else."

My own clothes, the spares in my suitcase are modern if not haute couture. They'll blend in.

"I have to meet that old friend I mentioned. He said he'd have a line on the far orbit codes we need... you really think we'll find it, the Great Mural?"

Pushing the idea of the Mural from my mind takes effort. "A shirtless Hepper will stand out just as much. I'll go buy you some fresh clothes in that Nephilim market we saw."

"I think you just want to keep me as near to naked as possible."

"Dream on, soldier-boy."

Davi was right, I'm no spy, but even I realize that buying anything with Corporate credits is traceable, best to barter with physical goods and black-market cash. The coot I'm working for might be able to intervene, but Davi thinks that those Legion goons that killed Mirela are working for a rival executive. He's probably right. Never should have taken this job.

The Mural may be close. If it is, will I deliver it my employer? What does it say if I do? What does it say if I don't?

When we sold the shuttle, Davi insisted on taking some of the payment in local cash. Cash in this backwards Nephilim city, turns out to be little bone tokens with holo-numbers embedded in them to prevent spoofing. In most of Haven such things aren't even legal tender.

I'm, sorting through some the most ugly-ass clothes I've ever seen on a sagging metal rack in a stall run by a Neph emissary who has more piercing than your average Kaltoran has ears.

She takes pity on me, "Sister, that outfit you're wearing is SO last season."

Smile. Nod. Ugly-ass clothes must be this season's new black.

The lights of a small transport illuminate the neon sign of our hotel. Coming out the front door is a tall, lanky corp with a familiar face, but he brushes past me before pattern recognition can find a mental match. Tanith's energy level amps up significantly, but I struggle to place the man's face.

Davi sits at the fold-out table in our small room looking at star charts on holo-projector embedded in the table itself. A cheap model, it stutters and de-rezzes. The dead pilot comes to mind, and shivers run down my spine like a roller coaster in free fall.

I catch Davi's face in the window's reflection as soon as I enter. He look very serious, but that smile breaks out when he sees me. Five minutes later, it's turned into a frown when he sees what passes for fashion here.

Two hours, seventeen minutes, thirty four seconds - that's how long Davis was gone before I spy him running through the rain to the hotel's entrance. He was only supposed to be gone an hour, but he left his comm here. Security, he said, he didn't want anyway for anyone that might nab him to trace back to me.

But he's OK. He's OK. He's wet and smells of smoke that attacks

my nostrils as I bury my head into his shoulder while we hug.

His hand strokes my hair, and I wonder why I ever left and promise I never will again. If a Faren had eyes, Tanith rolls his now.

"Easy, babe," Davi says. "We're OK. I found the codes, the coordinates. We have passage on a freighter that delivers goods to the derelict station once a month."

We got very lucky, there.

"We're really going for it?"

His lips are straight, no smile. "We are." He might have just said we both have a terminal disease.

No matter how many times you see the leftover architecture of the Archons, you never get used to it – or anyway I don't. The asymmetrical structure looks somehow balanced, floating in the dark, lightless void, the vestige of another age. It's like coming home to find your parents' house totally renovated, nearly unrecognizable, but then you spy some evidence of the old structure, the one with the yard where you had a swing. Being here, coming to this Archon station, is like going home. They are our parents, after a fashion, and we are all their children.

Davi points through a porthole as the small freighter approaches the alien structure. "Blacked out all their windows. The freighter captain says there's no transponder signal either. If we weren't right on top of it, we wouldn't know this thing was even there. Some old cloaking system, too. Sensor don't bounce off; they pass right through."

My eyes run over the station. What is the Mural and is it in there? "Davi, am I a bad person?"

He turns, his face struggling to process what I said and then what he should say in return. "Of course you aren't."

"I'm here for money."

He puts his hands on my shoulder. "Remember what Mirela said when we were younger, 'the Great Mural is painted in such a way that we are all a part of a scene we can barely grasp. There is no right to it. No wrong. It simply is and, in seeing it, we shall know the whole of the plan for the cosmos.'" He even does a decent impression of her.

Our cabin door rattles open, revealing the space-suited figure of the captain. "Suit up. They don't have gravity over there. Some parts don't even have air."

"Not a hospitable lot, if you take my meaning," the Kaltoran captain

says as he opens the airlock. There are two large containers behind us, his real cargo. "Can't say as they'll take too kindly to visitors, either. Private lot. Hermits, you know?"

I nod uncertainly. Davi's arm is around me but, through the suits, I can't feel his energy, his love. Too many layers between us.

Two pairs of the ship's crew haul the containers into the zero-G cavern that is the entrance to the Archon station. I expected hallways and doors, but this is a vast cave of steel – or rather whatever unknown metal the Archon's used here – that goes on forever. The crew wears thruster packs and use them to expertly guide the containers deeper into the station. Our borrowed suits have the same. Lights are welded to the interior at odd intervals, haphazard, grown, not unlike Howl. It's a jarring introduction.

As the men move the containers, the lights of their helmets play over a giant cross – or that's what it looks like at first. In fact, it's a three-dimensional representation of a tesseract – a four dimensional hypercube made entirely out of bronze, upon which a man with too many arms, and too many legs – himself depicted as existing in four dimensions – is crucified. The strange piece of kinetic art is easily six meters square. It hangs there, as the multidimensional man upon it hangs there, as if in judgment of us.

From a round portal previously unseen, the silhouette of a real-sized figure approaches. His space suit has no helmet and, in the zero-G, his wild hair floats out in a halo around him. He smiles, his teeth yellow. He looks older at first, but I soon realize he's younger than Davi and me. Must be the one Mirela told us about. For a second, he seems to nod at Davi, as if in approval.

"Didn't mention visitors with the cargo, Cap'n."

"Didn't know until last minute, and it's not like you all got communications here is it? Have to send a smoke signal for all the good trying to call you would do," the Kaltoran removes his helmet and sniffs the air. I follow and so does Davi.

The wild-haired man smiles. "S'alright. They're expected."

"Wait, what do you mean we're expected?" Fear rides my bones, but Tanith tamps it down. Tanith knows somethin will happen soon. Something big.

"Preacher, he knew you was comin'." That smile cuts its way deeper into his dirty skin. He lets inertia take him toward one of the containers, flips in mid-flight and kicks off that same container back toward the aperture he came from.

"Well," he says, "you comin'?"

It's a brain. That isn't obvious at first – there are at least seven lobes – and it's the size of the freighter we arrived in. The chamber

is entirely circular, the brain hanging from a profusion of wires and cables, many of them biological, like loops of intestine.

A man, if such he can be called, has fused with the brain, his body splayed out in an X across the face of the neural blob. He's naked, head entirely shaved, and where his body ends and the brain begins is an entirely hypothetical border. I know him. He left the Howl commune right after I arrived. Said he was joining the seminary. Orchilo, is his name, though his feral, dirty little friend called him "Preacher."

His eyes burn with the fury of more than one Faren inside him. Somehow, Tanith lets me know Orchilo has merged with multiple Faren – against their will. Somehow Tanith also lets me know the brain is Nephilim, a product of the last Archons on this station more than a century ago. Somehow, I know the Great Mural, or at least it's location, lies inside that giant brain and inside the man-thing fused with it.

"I knew we could count on you, Davi," Orchilo says. The mind, mercifully, often only processes what it wants to know. Tanith's restlessness, my own unease – which I'd focused on the financial transaction to obtain spiritual art – all fit into a narrative I wanted to see but, really, it was there all along.

Orchilo and Davi were friends. Had been since before I arrived. I remember that now. He was a mentor to him, a father figure he'd never had in the flesh of his own.

"I knew you'd bring her. Bring the key." He smiles, the muscles of his face seeming the only ones over which he has any control. The brain's veins pulse, excited.

"Davi?"

His face is impassive. "Each of us is part of the great Mural. Only in seeing the whole of it can we see how our image helps complete the frame."

I'm going to be sick, bile rising in my throat, lurch about to spew out into zero-G but... then that's gone and, for the first time in my life I hear Tanith. He speaks in my mind plainly, "Kill it."

Oh, Davi, you've been so impatient all your life. You cannot trade a Twi-Far girl for the secrets of the Great Mural. I want him dead right then.

He's been storming energy, and I know immediately that whatever Faren exist inside the mad mind of Preacher are in contact with him now. I know, in an instant, that they are imprisoned in both the Preacher's mind and the huge mind he's fused with... and in that same instant I know the whole of the Mural. It's there, but only for a microsecond. Beauty cannot describe it. Words cannot describe it. I shall never experience anything like it again if I do this thing, if I kill the entity before me.

Tanith doesn't pilot me now. There is no compulsion, no force. The

"Some Twiinger take longer than usual to find a Faren to merge with, sometimes not until their early twenties or later. For them the effect of the alien psychology is lessened because their own mind has matured on it's own before any outside influence could have an effect. As a result they tend to be more reserved than other Twi-Far, more cautious, and less trusting. To other Twi-Far it can seem at times like a shadow hangs over them amongst the vibrancy of their fellows, but they are nevertheless valued for their unique perspective and down to earth mentality."

- Barga, The Shadowed.

decision is entirely mine, and I realize, though dimly, that my part in the Great Mural has lead to this point, and yet I know I appear later in the Mural too... but how will I ever see that if I kill this entity now?

Money brought me here. Commerce. Binary digits of a hefty sum. This is what I kept telling myself, but Mirela, the monk, even Davi could see it was the Mural all along. My hands grab the nearest cable, and I claw my way to the brain-thing.

As if in slow motion, Davi's mouth forms the words – "What are you doing, Frag! This is it! Everything we've ever wanted. This is the infinite Great Mural..."

But my ears do not hear him. Tanith powers up like the birth of a star inside me. Preacher's minion draws a pistol. I vaporize the centre of his mass with a blast from Tanith before his gun clears the holster. My hands are on the brain now. Preacher screams. It's all he can do. His body does not move. Hand over hand, like monkey bars, and I make my way to Preacher.

"Don't make me do this!" Tears are hot against my eyes, forming perfect spherules and floating away into the vast sphere. The vein's pule. Davi's Faren fires a blast and the heat nearly consumes me, my death already a done deal... except it's not. My hands lay bare, gloves off, tenderly caressing Preacher's cheeks. His eyes are all fear now. His many Faren thank Tanith in a language I will never speak again, I become the vehicle of their release, their self-immolation, their key.

The blast from Davi treats me not as target but conduit, the energy feed into that of the enslaved Faren inside the Preacher-thing. Time slows. I know the exact temperature at which the blood in the brain's veins boils just before they pop. Preacher's head explodes, blood and bone and brain coating my face. The molecules of the giant brain uncouple from one another: its atoms lose valence – The entire chamber goes from the cold of space to the fire of a thousand stars in the tiniest sliver of a second. I see light. I see echoes of the Great Mural. If only I had pen with which to draw some of them down.

When I open my eyes, everything in the room is antiseptic white in colour – walls, ceiling, faintly beeping machines. A hospital room. The Kaltoran med-tech hovering over me like an angel is kind looking, and her eyes tell me I've been through a lot, but it's only now starting to assemble itself into a coherent, linear story.

"It's alright, hon," the med-tech says. "You're safe." She applies something to my inner right arm. "This will help you sleep. Rest is the best medicine. She smiles with genuine warmth. I close my eyes where ghost images of the Great Mural vibrate like the strings of a viola and their composition is the entirety of space-time... but they will not resolve for me. They will not still into forms I can see.

The rest of my life will be a pursuit of that resolution.

The Mural of our life is in layers, one painted upon another. We peel back one layer after another, each revealing a previous picture, a time before. The entirety of a given life, if it is reflective, digs through these layers of paint hoping something pure, something original lies at the start. There, we will know ourselves for the first time.

The airlock was dim and smelled of rust and old hydraulic fluid. Like all things created by The Corporation it was made and maintained by the lowest bidder. As the rickety doors finally opened, Jasmine was assailed by the chaos of Alabaster 12.

The main concourse blazed with light and sound. Competing advertisements blared from every available space, offering anything from food and lodging to cosmetic augmentations and starships. Hawkers and mascots lined the streets, their shouted slogans combining into a linguistic mélange that defied interpretation.

It was a stark contrast to the halls of her homeship, back in Twi-Far fleet. All her life in the void Jasmine had been surrounded by beautiful murals sprawling down hallways, winding around columns and even threading through control panels. Soft music could always be heard in the distance and sometimes the lilting tones of a singer.

Alabaster was a garish mockery of the grandeur she was used to. As she walked the streets she realized that, in a way, the corporates had also surrounded themselves with the story of their people. The messages that plastered every surface were confident, shameless, a little needy, and threatened to spread out of control...

– Jasmine Bluestar, a Alabaster critique.

It is whispered in cargo holds, and murmured in alleys. Hushed voices argue and fearful eyes dart to the shadows. A creeping darkness is spreading through the underworld like a cancer. And its name is The Chant of the Void.

Rumour says that some of the Twi-Far are not as they seem. Some, so they say, are taken over completely by the more evil among the Faren and worn like puppets by their cruel masters. Undetected, they walk in the world of flesh and play hapless mortals against each other in a great game only their inscrutable alien minds can comprehend.

Such rumours amuse the Chant greatly, for it aids their fell purposes and spreads dread and fear like a shadow across society.

Like any good lie it contains a kernel of truth. The more black hearted of the Faren seek out young, like minded Twi-Far they can corrupt to their cruel ways. After the merging is complete the creativity of these fledgeling beings is unlocked like any other among their race. But a heart of darkness beats in their conductive framework and they see only a universe driven by the destructive forces of chaos and entropy.

These tainted individuals have always been with the Twi-Far. Somewhere along the great journey the more intelligent among their number banded together into a secret society in order to coordinate greater and greater acts of villainy.

It was they who engineered the blood feud that destroyed two entire fleets thirty years ago. And they who ignited the gas giant of the peaceful Forakki tribesmen in the Scarius belt. Countless holdout civilisations and wonders of lost eras have had the misfortune to be rediscovered first by agents of the Chant. And their desiccated ruins dot the galaxy.

The goal of the Chant is to sow chaos and discord everywhere they go. To destroy something or someone utterly, preferably from within, is to them a masterpiece to rival the greatest works of the other Twi-Far. And the manner of the destruction is just as important as the thing being destroyed.

In recent years the Whispers of the Chant have grown tired of the limited opportunities for discord amongst their brethren in the Twi-Far and have begun a scheme to infiltrate their members into a much larger society where they can run rampant.

– Ordi the Black Prince, The Chant of the Void.



Zhou

Creator: Archons.
Average Height: 1.5m.
Average Weight: 135kg.
Average Life Span: 32 years.

Home Planet: Praid.
Total Population: 312 thousand (estimated).
Yearly Population Growth Rate: +38%.

Years since arrival in Haven: 3 years.

Common Characteristics

Cunning, Fast Learner, Fierce, Instinctual and Primal.

Distinctive Physical Features

Bodies are made from a wide range of materials (but usually vegetation), Mask like faces, not always bipedal.

Zhou Trait, pg: 170

- » You may function normally in all, non-heat related, hostile environments (eg: void, underwater, etc...).
- » +1 Survival, Physical & Exotic.
- » May gain +2 Recovery when in the same space as a recently-deceased, organic corpse.
- » Gain Language: Primal X'ion or Zhou.
- » You eat lots!
- » -2 Electronics & Programming.
- » -2 Resupply, to your groups largest spacecraft.
- » Food supplies last 2 fewer days for you.
- » Complication: Prejudice from Nephilim

Preferred Combat Equipment

Melee weaponry.
Their limbs.

Zhou History

In the final stages of the Great X'ion War, the Archons created their most devastating bioweapon. The Zhou weapon – a plant-based contagion – was unleashed with devastating effect against numerous planets and Nephilim fleets, consuming all life before starving and consuming itself. This cycle continued in every deployment of the Zhou, except on a small world named Praid. On this world, a fallback rendezvous for the Nephilim after X'ion departed, the Zhou managed to survive much longer than they were ever designed for, as the Nephilim both fed them and fought them back.

In this time, the Zhou evolved beyond its original design. Becoming self-aware, it made forms for itself and developed a society in an effort to avoid its fate of starvation. The bioweapon had become new race, learning what they could from the Nephilim and their environment. They developed a tribal culture as well as primitive tools and weapons. But the hunger remained: survival became a battle not only with their environments, but also with themselves. If they could not reach a sustainable equilibrium, they would perish.

Many decades later, the Zhou were contacted by the space-faring Twi-Far. The Twi-Far saw both great danger and great potential in the Zhou, and soon decided to quarantine their world. The Twi-Far emissaries contacted many Zhou tribes, allowing some from the affable tribes to board their ships, while leaving the more dangerous tribes on Praid – or in extreme cases, eradicating them. When the Twi-Far came to the Haven system, they brought many Zhou tribes, most significantly the Silver Mask Pact and Amber Bark Pathfinders.

Most of these tribes are struggling to find a purpose in their strange, new way of life. The Silver Mask Pact seeks the knowledge needed to fix the broken genetics of their race, while the Pathfinders wish to settle a new home on Mishpacha.



Zhou Culture

The Zhou are the newest culture in the sector, making them diverse and decentralised. Unlike most races, the Zhou are still unsure of what to make of themselves, but there are a few cultural traits that seem to exist in nearly all Zhou tribes. They are close-knit families, mistrustful of outsiders, relying mostly on instinct over reason. On their home planet, Praid, they live in a delicate balance with the native ecosystem, and in many ways this struggle is their most defining characteristic.

Praid is an ecologically diverse planet, with deserts, jungles, temperate forests, sweeping plains, and deep oceans. The Twi-Far suspect that it is one of the few planets in the sector which humanity terraformed to be like Earth. Each Zhou tribe on Praid must adapt to their ecosystem, fashioning bodies from available resources, and fashioning a culture to survive their landscape.

The Zhou of the forests and jungles have a more abundant food supply; they tend to be cunning hunters and diligent gatherers. Desert-dwelling Zhou are often savage killers, consuming other tribes and any food they can find. Deep-sea Zhou often have a ready supply of food but find it harder to collect materials for tools and construction; they use the ocean currents to trade far and wide with other tribes. There are also tribes living in space on Twi-Far vessels; many of these tribes are slowly learning to discipline their hunger, lest they starve from limited supplies.

When they reach space, the Zhou often have an existential crisis, no longer knowing their purpose. On Praid it was simple: eat to live, fight to survive, and control your hunger. The Zhou now look outwards to the other races for answers as they try to find their place and fashion a new culture.

The Silver Mask Pact have changed the most, having all but abandoned their tribal roots, and in many ways adapted to the Corporation-dominated culture. Many of them work as mercenaries, scientists, and explorers, each trading their skills for what they desire.

The Amber Bark Pathfinders have maintained their tribal culture and work to make Haven bend to them rather than the other way around. They have taken territory on Mishpacha and called it their home without seeking permission. All the Pathfinders wish to do is live and flourish on this planet.

"The Zhou have come a long way. It really says just how adaptable they are that they went from a pack-eat-pack culture to such... relative civilisation. I'd never say this where my master could hear me, but respect em for it."

– Jolgron, Nephilim biology liaison.

Creating a Zhou Character

Pathfinder Warrior

These Zhou left their brutal home world of Praid in search of a new beginning and a new home. They carry with them their body of jungle wood, a reminder of their origins. Although they have been exposed to the wonders of space and the danger of guns, they prefer to remain hunters armed with bow and spear. But they should not be underestimated, as they wield these primitive weapons with deadly efficacy, and with a few modern upgrades.

Recommended Skills

- » Awareness.
- » Survival.
- » Planetoids.

Recommended Traits

- » Survival: Wilderness.
- » Planetoids: Flora and Fauna.
- » Exotic: Primal Warrior.

Silver Mask Scientist

These Zhou have all but abandoned their tribal roots and now look towards the stars. They pursue science for the betterment of themselves and their race. Armed with knowledge, these scientists have fashioned new bodies made from metal, with a shiny, almost robotic appearance. They are not strangers to technology, and gladly use modern weapons to win their battles.

Recommended Skills

- » Culture.
- » Bio Tech.
- » Medicine.

Recommended Traits

- » Focus: Controlled Hunger.
- » Intelligence: Educated.
- » Programming: Data Searcher.

Stow-Away

As stowaways on Twi-Far vessels, these Zhou were never intended to leave the quarantine zone. In tune with their primal nature, they understand that their bodily forms are malleable. They are adaptive, changing shape to suit their needs. Dangerous and hungry, they will consume all they require without hesitation.

Recommended Skills

- » Leadership.
- » Physical.
- » Survival.

Recommended Traits

- » Strength: Massive.
- » Focus: Insatiable Hunger.
- » Physical: Alter Form.



Pathfinder

Silver Mask

Stow-Away



Government and Law

Government: Tribal Chiefdom.
Leadership: Various Chiefs.

The vast majority of Zhou on Praid live in thousands of tiny tribes, most with fewer than one hundred individuals. Each tribe chooses a leader in its own way, but most fall into three categories: Some tribes are led by an elder, simply the oldest individual. Other tribes are led by a warlord, the strongest individual. Finally, some tribes are led by a chief, who rules through heredity.

The Twi-Far maintain a strict quarantine of Praid, not only defending it but also hiding it, allowing only Twi-Far to decide which Zhou can leave Praid. For these reasons, the Twi-Far leadership is the closest thing the Zhou have to a central government, and any race wishing to make important decisions regarding the Zhou must do so through the Twi-Far. The Zhou living in the Haven system are autonomous, independent from the Twi-Far, and form much larger social organisations than they did on Praid.

Amber Bark

The Amber Bark Pathfinders were a major tribe on Praid, numbering nearly a thousand, led by Great Chief Zarnir (pg: 166), whose family has ruled them for many generations. When the Twi-Far chose groups of Zhou to take off Praid, they saw great potential in the Pathfinders. The Pathfinders had consistent rule of law, maintained stable leadership, and largely kept control over their hunger. And so, they were allowed to leave Praid. They have since been joined by many smaller tribes and individuals, and are now the largest Zhou tribe. Since arriving in the Haven system, the Pathfinders have chosen, like many Zhou, to settle on Mishpacha, as it is the world that most resembles Praid.

Silver Mask Pact, pg: 129

The Silver Mask Pact is not a single tribe but hundreds of tribes working towards a common goal. First formed in orbit around Praid, they intend to fix the Zhou race through technology and genetic modification. The Silver Masks have a council of chiefs and elders, each coming from one of the larger tribes, which make decisions regarding the entire Pact. Since coming to the Haven system, the Pact has managed to acquire a fleet of ships, making them the few Zhou to freely roam space without a Twi-Far escort.

"We are a people defined by our, or our lack of, self-control. This is a battle that is not only fought within the soul and body of each Zhou, but also within each tribe. As we must control our wild all-consuming bodies, so to must we maintain control over our wild and ravenous people."

- Zeewinlark, chieftain of the Yellow Moon tribe.

"Getting a Zhou to actually pay credits for something? Now that's a good trick. Most are happy bartering loot, or services. It is the breaking it down into raw, often arbitrary numbers that's impossible. Now, just to be clear, they ain't stupid, and they aren't fool-arse stubborn like a Kaltoran, they just use their instincts more than most, so we need to exploit that... especially in regards to food."

- Brenten Cross, Dark Co. Xeno-Marketing Department.

Economy

Exports: Death.
Imports: Food.

As a tribal society, the Zhou utilise a fairly simple barter system: tribes and individuals will simply trade what they need less for what they need more. However, the never-ending hunger of the Zhou drives them to consider food to be the closest thing they have to currency. Herd animals are worth the most, followed by food crops.

In the Haven system, the Zhou use the Corporation credit system, as it is the dominant economy. Many Zhou will also barter with other races, especially the Kaltorans since they have the most available food.

Science and Technology

Unlike most other races, the Zhou's drive for technology is less based on quality of life and instead hinges on survival, seeking technologies to help them cope with their insatiable hunger. They especially seek technologies which help to expand their food supply or lessen their dietary needs, because sustainability is essential to their ongoing survival.

Most Zhou are just beginning their technological journey. Without the help of the other races, animal husbandry would be their newest and greatest technology. However, the Zhou in the Haven system are quickly adopting the technologies of the other races.

This drive for knowledge is particularly present in the Silver Mask Pact. Especially interested in genetics, they wish to understand their own nature, hoping to eventually find a cure for their hunger. Even so, they are also interested in other avenues: the Silver Masks own several Corporation-made ships and are now designing some of their own, an ambitious task for a race who only recently learned to fly spacecraft.

Genetics

Unlike most of the Archons' creations, the Zhou's genetics have little basis in human or Archon DNA. They were made to be a bioweapon, not a people, and were never intended to have a culture. The Archons fashioned them from the deadliest bioweapon they had yet encountered, the Nephilim, reverse-engineering the X'ion's most powerful creations.

The Zhou are not technically complex life: they have no organs, synapses, or circulatory system. Each Zhou is a mass of cells, each identical and fully independent, not unlike a bacterium, and communicating with each other. An individual cell is effectively a mindless all-consuming weapon, but when billions of these cells bond, the mass becomes sentient.

The Zhou bioweapon always had a sinister intelligence – that is what made it so dangerous. The weapon could move with intent, seeking out new sources of food and adapting to complex barriers, but it had no time for any other thoughts. On Praid, however, the Zhou mass was given enough time to think beyond its hunger – that is when it saw its own demise. The Zhou intelligence realised that by breaking into smaller pieces, it could more easily survive and adapt. It did so, and the Zhou race was born.

Since then, the Zhou has mutated and adapted to its surroundings. They have a short life, which gives them the advantage of creating more generations, each subjected to natural selection. The Zhou adapted quickly; each successive generation lived longer, requiring less food than the previous, until an uneasy balance emerged.

The larger a Zhou mass becomes, the more food they must eat. Therefore, most Zhou will shed excess mass if they become too large, which is both how they reproduce and how they decrease their need for food. A large Zhou may split its mass in two, creating distinct individuals. Neither new Zhou is the being it once was, losing much of its intelligence and returning to a childlike state. This process – gradual growth to critical mass and then rebirth in two new beings – takes about thirty years.

Sometimes a Zhou will refuse to split, becoming hungrier and hungrier until it turns into a rampaging monster. When such a monster emerges, other Zhou must kill it, lest it threatens their ecosystem.

"The Kaltoran people know better than most what madness can arise from hunger."

– Beth Melody, Kaltorans and the Zhou.

Composition

A Zhou literally becomes whatever material they consume, both organic and inorganic. They use organic matter as nutrients to create more Zhou bacteria, while binding inorganic matter to their bodies for various reasons, such as to create skeletons for strength and support. Without these inorganic components, a Zhou would revert to its original blob-like state, losing the many advantages of a humanoid form. Legs give them greater mobility and speed, while arms and hands allow them to better manipulate their environments. Their masks are similarly made from inorganic matter, but serve little practical purpose.

The Zhou first adopted these masks when experimenting with their desired shape. They copied the forms of species around them, most of which had faces, though the Zhou were unaware of their function. As Zhou culture evolved, they decorated their masks, and in many Zhou tribes having an ornately decorated mask became a point of pride. When the Zhou came in contact with other races, these masks made a good focal point when communicating, reducing the awkwardness of talking to a faceless mass of cells.

Perception

The Zhou do not have eyes. Instead, each Zhou cell can detect light, sound, and particles. This information alone does not amount to much, but when cells in a dense arrangement share their collected information, they form a sensory input not unlike those of the other races.

While only the cells on the surface of a Zhou can sense their environment, the deeper cells serve to decode and understand this sensory data. While a Zhou can perceive in all directions simultaneously, it often can only effectively concentrate on one direction at a time. A Zhou can also perceive with a single finger or limb, but because of the low cell density, the input will be blurry.

"There is a beauty to what we are. We become truly one with the physical world, taking in its forms and making them a part of ourselves. Only the ignorant or arrogant label us destructive."

– Ziqwinda, the nature of the Zhou.

GM Note

The Zhou are strange creatures capable of many abnormal feats, such as seeing through any part of their body and breaking themselves down into a blob. If you are playing a Zhou and want to use these abilities, or if you are forced to struggle against your hunger, make a Resolve Skill Roll.

If you want to use a particular feat often, select an appropriate Trait to reflect it.

Relationship with Other Races

The Zhou are such a new culture that they do not yet know what their place is in the Haven system. Without objectives and ideas of their own, many Zhou look to the other races for answers on how to create a culture or even how to be a person. The Silver Masks seek answers to their scientific questions, and will barter with anyone who will help them in their quest. Meanwhile, the Pathfinders seek recognition of their new home on Mishpacha and endeavour to maintain many of their old ways.

The Zhou don't really have a sense of who the Haven's social outcasts are, and they are quite willing to ally with and learn from anyone willing to give them a chance. For this reason, some Zhou have allied themselves to antagonistic factions, even managing to live among Feral Nephilim tribes.

Corporation

The Zhou often look first to the Corporation for answers, considering them the dominant race in the Haven system. Many Zhou have tried to understand the economy and get jobs working for the Corporation. However, the Corp and Zhou are so vastly different that it is difficult for them to find common ground, and most Corps will not hire Zhou, considering them a backwards tribespeople.

Kaltorans

The Zhou are looking to find new homes in Haven, which means those places once home to the Kaltorans. But the Kaltorans themselves seek to reinhabit the system, often putting them in competition with the Zhou for land. One such case is the Pathfinders, who simply landed on Mishpacha and settled there, taking what land they pleased, including a plot which the Kaltorans had already begun to colonise.

Legion

The Legion don't know what to make of the Zhou: they were on the same side during the War, even though at the time the Zhou were a weapon rather than a race. But the Zhou also represent a serious danger to the Haven system – they could, if left unchecked, devour whole worlds. The Zhou consider the Legion's strict adherence to regulation strange, as it is Zhou nature to follow instinct and intuition. The Silver Masks have introduced themselves to the Casila Curia and stated their case for the Zhou: that, given time, all Zhou can become a force of civility.

Nephilim

The Nephilim are openly hostile towards the Zhou newcomers. On the surface this seems to be because the Zhou were created with the sole purpose of killing the Nephilim. In reality, the Nephilim understand what the Zhou truly are and know the danger that the Zhou pose to the entire sector. The Silver Masks know that their best chance of finding a cure to their hunger lies in the knowledge of the Nephilim. However, the Nephilim's hostility has made this prospect all but impossible.

Twi-Far

The Zhou have a complicated relationship with the Twi-Far. Although the Twi-Far have allowed many Zhou to escape Praid, the Zhou are in many ways the Twi-Far's prisoners. Many Zhou once saw the Twi-Far as a powerful, benevolent race, but as time passed and the Zhou's social awareness grew, many began to resent the Twi-Far's quarantine. Now, many liberated Zhou consider the Twi-Far to be controlling oppressors and meddlers.

The Zhou, as they forge ties with other races, are becoming increasingly independent of the Twi-Far. Eventually the Twi-Far will have to give up their control, and many Zhou would prefer this to happen as soon as possible.

Remnant

In the Haven system, except for the dominant Corporate culture, the Remnant are the only group working to incorporate other races into their culture.

Many Zhou look to the Remnant for answers about their place in the universe. The many religions of the All-Being have found numerous converts in the Zhou – there is even a Zhou tribe dedicated to the All-Being, called the Golden Dawn Shamans. The Remnant have been kind to the Zhou in ways the other races have not, so for many Zhou learning about Remnant culture seems to be a positive path forwards.

Palantor

The Zhou find the Palantor confusing, mostly because they seem to be alive but have no organic parts. Additionally, the Palantor are the only race which the Zhou cannot gain nourishment from consuming. This fact comforts the Zhou, who fear accidentally becoming a mindless eating machine. For this reason, many Zhou have chosen to live among the Palantor, whose settlements – lacking life support – the Zhou are uniquely equipped to survive in.

As the Palantor largely ignore the Zhou, Palantor settlements make great hiding places for Zhou that don't want to be found.

"Do you know what scares me the most about the Zhou? Its their masks... X'ion is said to have had a mask."

– Abigail Fate, Kaltoran historian.

Short Story: The Twi-Far Promise

Zuven of the Green Canopy Dwellers fought the hunger. As a Zhou who had been sentient for over five years, he hoped he would eventually grow used to the boiling hunger that ate at him from the inside-out. But like all Zhou who had thought, was wrong.

He breathed a shallow sigh and leaned back against the sloping branch where he made his home, high among the canopy with the rest of his tribe, where the sunlight could shine directly on him.

Zuven enjoyed the feeling of the sunlight on his body, even though it did nothing for him. He knew he shared biological material with the plants around him, which fed on the sun and rain, soaking in their nutrients. How Zuven wished it were so for him. Instead, the Zhou were cursed with this hunger roiling deep inside.

From his vantage point high in the trees, Zuven had a nice view of Praid's dynamic landscape. This was perhaps why the Green Canopy Dwellers were such a bountiful tribe: their elevation gave them plenty of warning when the roving bands of feral Nephilim or, worse than that, a hunger-mad Zhou who had given into the hunger-lust, would come crashing through the forests. Those Zhou were dangerous: giving into the hunger and feeding as they did increased their size and ferocity while dimming their intelligence and sentience. It was a possible fate that all Zhou had to face. Zuven would often look down at the forest floor, and beyond that to the lakes and mountains, reflecting on what it meant to be a Zhou. The act of searching for an answer had a calming effect on him, and at those moments he, for the briefest of seconds, could almost imagine what it would be like to not hunger.

Today, Zuven was not scanning the sprawling landscape below him. Today, his eyes were locked on the horizon, waiting, and watching. He had been there all day, rooted down into the branch itself to keep his balance.

It was nearing nightfall when his vigilance reaped reward. He was the first to see the strange ship break through the atmosphere, the outside burning in fire like a meteor sent from the heavens. The Twi-Far were here. Zuven could barely contain his excitement. They were coming to take their chosen Zhou away. They were coming to take him away; he knew it deep down inside his soul.

In practiced fashion, Zuven swung his way down through the entwining branches of the thick forest trees, shifting his arms into vines to catch, and swing from branch to branch. As a newly-formed Zhou, this had seemed like an adventure all its own, but his mind was too distant now to enjoy the feeling of flying through the air, and floating like a leaf down to the ground. As he reached the soft forest floor, Zuven shifted his body once again. The roots that had held him in place had coalesced to form two bi-pedal legs: making walking much easier. He had experimented with other forms, as many Zhou did, but this was his preferred form. His new legs quickly sped him to the Family Tree.

Family units in Zhou culture are difficult for outsiders to understand. Zhou are created through the splitting of their biological material: one Zhou splits to create two newborn childlike Zhou; a process that splits the consciousness and intelligence of one into two smaller beings. Therefore, a Zhou does not have traditional parents. Instead, they have the sibling that was created beside them: a brother or sister: their other half. Though with the Zhou, gender is not physiological – all Zhou are asexual. Instead, they adapt a gender for themselves that best fits their personality. Zuven had chosen a masculine identity, while his sister displayed many feminine traits. This sibling, who was once part of them, is part of a bond stronger than any feeling of love or loyalty that the other races are able to experience: two halves that were once one.

An entire Zhou family can trace its lineage back to one Prime Zhou: the first to split itself in two, who then became four, and so on until an entire family was created. But since a Zhou sacrifices itself in the act of reproducing, it is unable to stay on as a patriarch or matriarch to teach the next generation. Instead, among the Green Canopy Dwellers, that duty has fallen to the oldest Zhou of the family, the one closest to the first split, who acts as a surrogate mother or father to the rest of the Zhou family. Today, that position was held by Zorious, the chieftain: the one Zuven was on his way to see.

When Zuven arrived, his sister Zulia was already present. It warmed him to see her, and the two embraced. For a moment their bodies shifted to accept each other and to an uncultured onlooker it would appear as if the two had briefly formed into one.

"How goes the hunger," Zulia asked her brother in the typical greeting of their tribe: akin to a Corp asking 'how is your day.'

Zuven hesitated. He couldn't keep secrets from his sister. "My hunger burns, but is under control. But there is something else."

Zulia frowned. Though her face, a mask of hard bark, did not change, Zuven could read the code of her body language as all Zhou can: vibrations in the sprouted grass along her shoulders, and the subtle twist of a branch along her neck. The Zhou are often called an expressionless people, but only by outsiders who foolishly expect to detect the entire range of emotions just through facial expressions. To the Zhou, their wide range of expressions flex across their entire body.

"It's the Twi-Far, isn't it?" She asked.

Zuven nodded and grimaced: a slithered vine pulsed down his cheek. "How did you know?"

Zulia's body indicated a complex smile: encouraging but tinged with regret. Zulia conveyed complex emotions well.

"Everyone knows how you pine after the empty space, brother. You

wish to bring your roots elsewhere, to new places. This is not the way of our tribe."

Zuven was growing tired of this argument from his sister. "But it's not 'not' the way of our people either." What Zuven said was true; the traditions of their tribe were rooted in the idea that space travel was impossible; that they could never leave the safety of Praid. When the Twi-Far began selecting Zhou for off-world travel, everything changed. "Our traditions must change, sister, if we are to be a powerful force in the galaxy."

Zulia favoured him with an expression of deep sadness, like one given to a Zhou on their deathbed. "Why must the Zhou be a powerful force? Why can't you be satisfied living as your ancestors did?"

"I will never be satisfied with the hunger inside me."

Zulia looked angry, and was about to lash out against him when Zorious beckoned them into his room with a solemn command. This was the throne room of the Green Canopy Dwellers tribe, a circular room carved out of the base of the Family Tree, and decorated with carved reliefs of the Zhou that had come before them. Zorious was seated against the back wall of the massive Family Tree. His body merged with it, roots pushing into the tree itself and vines wrapping around his body to keep him upright. This was called the throne room because Zorious himself appeared as if he was seated on a large throne of vines and roots, or as if he was the throne himself.

He spoke quietly, but with an intensity that commanded their attention. "What our Zuven says is not wrong, Zulia. The Zhou people must change. If we had not changed from our original state, the hunger would have doomed us all long before now. It is only through change that we have kept the hunger at bay.

"And we must change again. The Twi-Far are wiser than I, and more travelled than any Zhou. They have seen the galaxy far beyond our trees. If they believe that what they are doing is in the best interest of the Zhou, then I support them."

"But, chieftain!" Zulia started.

Zorious cut her off with a shrill noise. "Silence, little sister. It is my decision to make. I will send Zuven as our representative to the Twi-Far. I will submit him to be among those the Twi-Far will consider."

Zuven couldn't hide a self-satisfied smirk. Zulia, beside him, had a much different response.

"But he's too young! It's dangerous! Who knows what the Twi-Far do with the Zhou they take. Father, don't you understand? If you send Zuven to them you are killing him! He's still but a child, barely able to control his hunger!"

Zuven sniffed indignantly. "Barely control my hunger?" His voice reached a fevered pitch. "I will remind you, sister, that we are but the same age!"

Zulia rounded on him, her bark hardening instinctively as if preparing for a fight. "Then tell me, brother," she spat the word like venom, "how long has it been since you last lost control?"

Zuven was taken aback. It was not considered proper to speak of the hunger-lust. Her words stung true, and Zuven hurt. Of all the Zhou in the tribe, Zuven was the one to have the most setbacks, to give into the hunger more often. When a Zhou does this, when they completely give themselves over to the urge, they lose the ability to focus on anything but feeding.

Luckily, Zovious responded before Zuven had to think of a reply. "Enough, little sister."

The wise one's words carried finality with them. "Do not think you are the only one to voice concerns. But we all struggle, and to pretend we do not is to pretend we are not Zhou. I have faith in Zuven, as should you. He is your sibling."

Zulia's hands dropped to her sides. Zuven hadn't even realized she had balled them into fists. Had she meant to strike their chieftain? Zulia gave a resigned sign, and a formal bow, then turned and left the room. Zuven waited in anticipatory silence. All he wanted was to make the trek to the Twi-Far ship and hope he would be selected, but he had not yet been dismissed.

Finally, Zovious spoke again. "Your sister is right, you know. She knows you better than anyone else. She knows what you are feeling even before you do. Many Zhou have fallen to the hunger - been consumed by it. I do not wish this upon you."

"I have it under control, father."

"Do you?" Zovious' tone seemed mocking to Zuven, even though his body language remained serious. "It is boastful for a Zhou to claim to control its hunger. Even I would not make such a statement. Do you still maintain that you control your hunger? Or are you deceiving yourself?"

Zuven resigned himself to his fate. "It controls me, chieftain. As it controls all the Zhou."

Zovious favoured him with a solemn nod. "It gladdens me to hear you admit this. The hunger is the enemy of the Zhou. As soon as we believe it beaten, it will consume us. You may go, brother. You leave for the Twi-Far at first light.

Rest did not come to Zuven that night. His thoughts were plagued

by the language of his sister. She obviously did not believe in him: did not believe he could succeed and survive out there. He would show her, he knew it. He would prove Zovious right in his decision to send Zuven to the Twi-Far. Zuven would not be one to return, like many had, with their head hung low, and their roots dragging ground, passed over by the Twi-Far in favour of a nobler Zhou.

At least, that is how Zuven pictured it in his mind: a group of wise, well-dressed Twi-Far putting the Zhou through tests of honour to determine their core nobility. Well, Zuven prided himself on his dignity. It was him they would choose, he was sure of it. Yet pangs of anxiety kept him from his rest.

Zuven passed the night as he had done many nights recently: feeding. The act of satiating the hunger had an almost ritual atmosphere around it. The forests of Praid offered a full bounty to those who knew how to hunt, and Zuven was one with the forest. He had grown up wandering its twisting landscapes, and hidden depths. There were few that could hunt better than he.

Before he realized what was happening, Zuven blacked out.

He awoke to the taste of blood in his mouth. He blinked his eyes open, and found himself in the middle of a small clearing, surrounded by the carcasses of a half-dozen animals laying half eaten around him. Zuven had no memory of coming into this place. No memory of feasting like this. In fact, his last memory had been of the hunger...

Zuven let out a startled cry, and pushed the bloody meat away from him, crawling backwards to the other side of the clearing. A feeling of horror flushed through his body causing many of the sticks arranged atop his head to crack due to the emotional shock. The hunger-lust. He must have succumbed to it in the middle of the night. If Zovious discovered his transgression, and that he had gorged himself so mindlessly, he would never be allowed to meet with the Twi-Far.

Thinking as clearly as he could, Zuven resisted the urge to finish off the corpses as he buried them among tree roots. It was not a perfect plan, but it would maybe buy him an extra day or two. By dawn's light, before anyone else had awoken, Zuven was well on his way to the Twi-Far's camp, trying to put this terrible memory behind him.

Zuven reached the Twi-Far camp just before dawn. The camp was very basic by Twi-Far standards, but to Zuven it seemed to be a magnificent village. The entire camp sprawled around what was originally just a landing pad: built by one of the first Twi-Far to land on Praid. As the Twi-Far began to travel to Praid more regularly the small village had begun to grow as mismatched structures were hastily built to accommodate their basic needs. Yet the buildings were made of steel, the entire area stunk of oil and smoke, and every building had electricity. For Zuven, this was as good as it could ever get. He imagined how large the other race's cities must be, with

buildings such as these expanding out as far as the forest floor did below his favourite tree.

Zuven was scared to enter. He had been invited: in fact he had been sent by the chieftain of his tribe personally. Yet he still felt unwelcome. This wasn't a place for the Green Canopy Dwellers. The concrete ground felt strange under Zuven's feet. He could no longer feel the pulse of the planet, and he knew his roots would struggle to break through the concrete to reach the buried ground. This was not the way of his tribe, but maybe it could be. He could adapt to this lifestyle, as the other Zhou had - those who had left Praid before him.

Zuven made his way to what looked like the command structure: a landed transport ship in the centre of the camp. And there, standing in front of the ship, looking incredibly bored, stood the first Twi-Far that Zuven had ever seen.

Zuven had heard description of the Twi-Far before. Their stories told of these strange bi-pedal creatures who had merged with energies too powerful to control. Zhou fairy tales spoke of the Twi-Far as evil creatures who would kidnap wild Zhou children and take them off planet. Zuven had always been curious as to what a Twi-Far would actually look like, in real life.

He just hadn't expected them to be so ugly. This man stood rigid on two legs, looking almost lifeless. Zuven wondered how the man could ever walk or keep his balance in such a manner. His skin was fleshy and orange, and looked like it would tear easily. The man did not seem suited to survive in the wild forests of this world. Zuven was appalled. But he also felt a pang of sadness: how terrible it must be to never be able to change your shape or feel your roots connect with the world around you.

Zuven was still standing there, afraid to move any closer, when the man addressed him.

"Here to sign in?"

Zuven was impressed that the man spoke his language so well. He must have been trained as a translator before being placed planet-side. Hearing these familiar tones, even with such a harsh accent, softened Zuven and he approached the man with only slight trepidation.

"I am Zuven of the Green Canopy Dwellers."

The man gave him a hard stare. "Are you here to sign in?" He repeated slower, as if he thought Zuven was incapable of understanding him.

Zuven gestured for happy agreement but realized the man may lack the ability to read Zhou expressions so he settled on a few simple words that would be easy for an outsider to understand.

"Yes. I am here to be taken."

The man gave him a sidelong glance before delivering a resigned sigh. It was far too early in the morning for this. He stepped aside and motioned for Zuven to enter the small building. "Go on ahead."

If Zuven had been amazed by the appearance of the camp outside, he was even more amazed by how the Twi-Far lived inside. They seemed to value form over function. Instead of adapting their bodies to fit comfortably with the shape of the wood, they had cut, sawed, and sanded down trees to make stools and chairs for themselves. How strange, Zuven thought, to have to shape nature to your will instead of shaping yourself to the will of nature.

A man stood higher than all the rest, obviously in charge; he had that same aura of authority about him that the chieftain did. He was surrounded by a few minor officiates who were reciting for him the day's activities, the status of the camp, and other minutia that comes with bivouacking on a foreign planet. The man motioned with his finger in a gesture that Zuven did not understand. But he understood the words.

"Have a seat: I'll be right with you."

Zuven looked around tentatively at the seating options. A few of the wooden furnishings had cloth draped over them or cushions fastened to the wood. They all looked terribly uncomfortable to Zuven, so instead he backed against the wall and let his body grow out to a natural seat, adjoining with the angle of the wall.

The man in charge looked a little taken back at the transformation, and Zuven immediately regretted it. He was supposed to be proving to them that he could assimilate to outside cultures, not casting them aside. He felt ashamed, but also felt too embarrassed to move and so he sat there until the man called him into an adjoining room.

By that time, more Zhou had begun to file into the room. Some of them took up positions along the walls but a few managed to look only mildly uncomfortable as they took a seat on the Twi-Far's furniture. Zuven had seen other Zhou before, of course, but never this variety in the same place. In the Green Canopy Tribe, the Zhou were formed from wood, and plant material. But here he saw Zhou formed from bone, coral, and, in one instance: stone. This Zhou captured Zuven's attention more than any other. He had never seen a stone Zhou before. He must have made the trek from the distant mountains. They were all so different, yet they were all Zhou. Their faces all gave the appearance of masks like Zuven, so alike in their differences. Some were porous, some smooth and slick. Others looked rocky and spiny. Zuven felt slightly more insignificant surrounded by so many exotic Zhou.

Zuven again regretted his decision to eschew furniture and suddenly felt jealous of the other Zhou who took seats: he worried he had hurt his chances. As he joined the Twi-Far in the next room, the man introduced himself as Esemen, of the Phoenix Circle. Zuven had no idea what that meant, and only later came to realize the man was a sort-of scientist.

Zuven was subjected to a long series of questions about his motivations. Why did he want to leave Praid? What did he expect to find off-world? What would be one thing he would take with him when he left? Zuven answered the questions as best he could, and based on the murmurings of the scientist he felt he was giving the right answers.

At least until Esemen brought up the hunger. It felt so impersonal to have a foreigner speak of the hunger. How could he possibly understand? How could he even know what to ask? He may have been studying the Zhou for years, but the only way to truly understand is to be a Zhou yourself.

As Zuven found himself faced with the questions, his mind brought him back to the previous night: the terror and panic that had filled him after he awoke from the hunger-lust, after gorging himself so recklessly. He was worried the anxiety was showing on him, but took comfort in the idea that Esemen couldn't read his foreign expressions.

When they were finally done, and the general had closed the file in front of him and set down his pen, Zuven began to relax. Whatever happened next it was out of his hands. The general steepled his fingers into a triangle and put them up against his lips, looking thoughtfully at Zuven. He whispered something to an assistant who hurriedly rushed off into the camp.

"You've given me a lot to think about," he finally said. "There are many things we take into consideration when bringing a Zhou off of this planet. The biggest consideration is how well a Zhou handles his hunger. Early this morning I received word of a graveyard found near one of the Zhou villages. It appeared as if a single Zhou had slaughtered a whole pack of animals, and hastily covered their tracks."

Esemen stared at Zuven pointedly. "What tribe are you from?"

Zuven felt his body tighten instinctively and he took a deep breath before timidly answering. "The Green Canopy Dwellers." He wasn't sure if he should attach a formal designation to the address, and so he didn't.

The man's lips pursed in a frown and he silent studied Zuven. "You may go. You won't be required here anymore. You may return to your people."

Zuven felt his hopes sink. This wasn't supposed to be how it went. The general was supposed to tell Zuven that he had a pure nature, a noble spirit, and that he would be important, and that he would do great things. He wasn't supposed to be sent away so easily. Zuven felt his hunger flare, and he grimaced as he pushed it back down. The struggle was obvious in Zuven's expression, but to Esemen it appeared as though Zuven was standing there peacefully contemplating the news.

Zuven wasn't sure what to do next. He couldn't just turn and leave, could he? If he gave up, the hunger would overtake him. Luckily, this

time, he didn't have to make a decision. As he stood there, struggling with his emotions, the camp alarm system began to ring.

The sound was loud and pulsing. It felt stale and electronic: nothing like the alarm calls his people would sound out. Zuven felt his entire body vibrating with the deep noise. Esemen wasted no time responding to the alarm. He didn't spare a thought for Zuven, and blew past him as he exited the ship, grabbing his helmet from its peg beside the external door. Not knowing what else to do, Zuven followed him.

The camp had turned into a battleground in just a few moments. Zuven spotted several feral Nephilim running through the streets, and bringing down Twi-Far soldiers. Esemen slid behind a stack of metal boxes, where a few other soldiers had taken cover. Zuven joined them.

"What's the sit-rep, soldier?"

"It's not good sir. Feral Nephilim down from the mountains. More than we've ever seen in one place."

Esemen clenched his fist and a pulse of blue energy rippled up his arm. "Those are our people out there. Keep them safe."

The group nodded and split off, dashing around the metal boxes and into the fray. Zuven had never seen a Twi-Far fight. As he watched, he finally understood the stories. They moved like dancers, as pulses of strange energy flashed around them. They fought close and hard with the Nephilim, sending off pulses of energy through their fingers and feet. Zuven couldn't help but compare their ability to manipulate this bonded energy with the Zhou ability to manipulate their physical bodies.

When Esemen moved to join the fight, Zuven followed. Esemen turned his head as they ran side by side.

"What are you doing, Zhou?"

"Protecting your people."

Esemen kept his gaze for a second, not sure if he could trust this creature. Finally he smiled. "Alright, we could use the help. Stay close to me."

Staying close to Esemen was not a problem for Zuven. All Zhou were used to fighting as a pair. This fit easily into the Twi-Far's martial style of combat. Within a few moments, Zuven had matched pace with Esemen, and the two were fighting like a single unit.

But the feral Nephilim were everywhere. All manner of beasts were pouring into the camp: three legged creatures with sharp tusks, bi-pedal muscle-men with crude weapons, incredible agile snake-like beings, and all manner of strange beasts. Zuven and Esemen took them all in turn. Zuven spun around his partner, changing his body's shape to fit the situation: long whips to bring down the rampaging

tusked creatures, sharp blades to dismember the armed fighters, and thick shields to protect Esemen from the snake strikes. Esemen adapted to him as well, his mystical energy pouring out of him as he fought, turning his foes into scorched husks.

Zuven spotted a wounded soldier in the middle of the fight, struggling to pull himself up out of the dirt. Zuven pointed, and Esemen followed his lead. They put themselves in between the wounded man and the ferals. The creatures struck with a ferocity that Zuven had not seen in the feral Nephilim for a long time. It seemed like some external force was driving them into a frenzy. Zuven understood it. He felt the frenzy pulling at him as well. But no, he needed to be better than the feral Nephilim.

He would not succumb to his hunger like these Nephilim had succumbed to rage. Yet the harder he fought it, and the more frantic his attacks became, the stronger the hunger pulled at him. He pushed it back but it kept him off balance. Luckily, Esemen was there to protect him.

Once the wounded man was safe, the two took shelter in a small space between two metal shacks to catch their breath. Esemen leaned against the wall, and wiped glowing sweat from his brow.

"I may have underestimated your self-control."

Zuven turned to look at him, surprised.

"You jumped right in to save people that aren't even yours. People... me even... who had just turned you away. I have rarely seen such bravery."

Zuven was taken aback. "Uh... thank you... uh, sir."

Esemen clapped Zuven on the shoulder. "I would be proud to take you with me off-world."

Zuven's hopes soared. He felt his body was so expressive there was no way Esemen could miss his excitement. Zuven felt almost foolish for the elation that he felt. This was it: just like in the stories. He had proven himself as brave and noble, and he would be rewarded for it.

Esemen sucked him back into reality. "But we're not in the clear yet."

The two soldiers launched out of their cover, side-by-side. The Nephilim fell on them in droves. Zuven had never felt more like he belonged than in that moment: fighting behind this strange Twi-Far that he was growing eager to call a friend. He knew his sister would not like it: she was afraid of the Twi-Far and of change. But change was coming whether she liked it or not.

Zuven twisted out of the way of an incoming claw, and rebutted with a slice of his own, splitting the Nephilim in half. The fleshy creature looked delicious to Zuven, and he was intoxicated by the smell of

The two fighters circled each other on the hangar floor. All around, the crew gathered cheering the pair on. Cheers echoed off the inner hull, rebounding throughout the ship. Leonidas raised his hands in the air, howling his challenge. The massive Legion clenched his fists, a confident grin on his lips. The crew cheered for their resident champion.

The sounds died away as the challenger, Zwar, charged forward. Lengthy strides of the Zhou's wooden legs brought him face to face with Leonidas in an instant. Their bodies met in a thunderous crash. Primal power flowed through artificial limbs as they lashed out for the Legion, wrapping around Leonidas' waist.

Leonidas was no Nephilim berserker. He was calm and patient: a true Legion soldier. Meeting the charge openly, he planted his feet. He grunted as the Zhou slammed into him, shifting his weight to avoid being toppled by the sheer ferocity of the charge.

Zwar pushed with all his might, but to no avail. He had to wonder why the rest of the crew put him up to this. No one had beat Leonidas. Why did they seem to think he could? As he pressed, Zwar felt Leonidas' body shift as the Legion wrapped his arms around his neck.

Leonidas twisted, wrenching at Zwar's neck in an attempt to topple the newest challenger to his crown. His teeth clenched and he released a low growl of exertion. It appeared Zwar was no novice either. The Zhou's feet moved instinctively to keep his balance.

Neither combatant knew how long they stood in the hangar, locked in a grapple. Neither warrior was willing to give an inch. Soon the crowd disappeared and the hangar carried only the sounds of their struggle. Limbs ached from the struggle, but the stalemate continued.

Laughter erupted from somewhere deep within Leonidas' chest. Confused, Zwar loosened his grip. Simultaneously, Leonidas released the Zhou. Leonidas took a step back, his sore arms holding his sides.

"What's funny?" Zwar asked, genuinely confused.

"Who would've thought a tree would be my greatest challenge?" Leonidas laughed.

"Thank you. I think..." Zwar turned to exit the hangar.

"Come on: let's go get something to eat. I'm buying. We have to figure out who the winner is for the crew's sake."

"If you're buying lunch, I am the clear winner." Zwar chuckled.

fresh meat, but he pushed it down. He had convinced Esemen. He was leaving Praid. He could conquer his hunger.

The fight continued until the early evening. By that time, almost all of the Twi-Far, and many of the Zhou, had been slain. Most had been scientists not prepared for this sort of a fight. Zuven wandered the settlement, stepping over the bodies of the dead Nephilim. Blood pooled at his feet. All of those bodies, and no one to clean up the streets. All of that fresh meat.

Zuven hungered.

He heard Esemen congratulating him. He heard his name being called as the survivors rushed to thank him. He heard it, but it was all in a daze. But he would not succumb to the hunger. He would run. He would flee the camp before the hunger-lust took over. That's what he would do. It was the last thing he decided before he lost himself.

Zuven woke covered in blood. His body was full of meat, and he felt the heat of warm blood beneath his fingers. He swallowed and felt his body crave more. He tried to blink but everything was happening in slow motion. He could hear screams around him. He felt burning flames hitting his carapace, and breaking off pieces of him. He tried to turn his head but he couldn't.

No... no... this is not happening. He tried to look for Esemen. He stood up and turned to the Twi-Far who had just been running over to give him thanks. The man had stopped mid-motion, halfway to Zuven. His hand was raised to his face to cover a horrified gasp. He was staring at Zuven like he had just seen a monster. Zuven finally looked down at the corpse below him. He was horrified to discover it was not a Nephilim corpse he was feeding on, but that of a Twi-Far soldier.

Zuven trembled and turned. He felt sick all over, but still hungry. Always hungry. Esemen was firing at him, yelling at him over the blasts. Zuven tried to run but found himself rooted down. The hunger-lust was still pulsing through his body. He tried to fight it, to take back control of his body. And he did: one small part at a time.

He turned back to Esemen as he ran, and saw the general's terrified, saddened face. He thought he could hear the general shouting, telling him to run. Zuven turned towards the forest and ran. Blasts of energy shattered the trees around him but still he ran. He ran until he didn't know where he was anymore. He ran until the severity of it all caught back up to him. He had fallen to the hunger-lust. Again. There was something wrong with him. His chieftain had known it. His sister had known it. And now Esemen, and all of the Twi-Far knew it. Zuven had no place anymore. He had no family. He fell into the dirt, let himself sink into it, and let out a death cry that echoed through the forest.



"Shhh... it's okay." Zuven felt someone cradling his body, vines wrapped around him and entwined with his. Zulia looked down at him, and she looked concerned.

"Z... Zulia," Zuven croaked out. "What are you doing here?"

Zulia smiled comfortingly. "When we found the slaughtered beasts near our camp I knew what had happened. I felt that it was you. I worried about you, and so I came here."

"You were right to worry," Zuven sobbed into her. "I can't control it. I can't defeat the hunger-lust. The Twi-Far are going to tell our chieftain what happened." Zuven clung to his sister. "I can't go back there. I can't go back home."

Zulia tried to smile but it was a gesture of overwhelming sadness. "I know."

"I don't know where to go. I don't know what to do."

"The Twi-Far have not left yet. There is still time to get you off world."

Zuven shook his head. "They will never let me now. They saw me, Zulia. They won't let me go."

Zulia favoured him with a full body grin. "Now, Zuven, when has anything ever stopped a Zhou? We are weapons, brother. We are a plague of death and destruction. There is nothing they can do to stop us."

Zuven hesitated. "But Zulia, you were the one who warned against me leaving the tribe. You said it was wrong for me to go."

Zulia reached out to place a hand calmly on Zuven's barked frame. "Because I knew they would never let me go with you. Others, and especially those who are not Zhou, should not be the ones to tell us if we should stay or if we can go. They should not have a monopoly on a Zhou's freedom."

Zuven nodded in growing agreement. "So I take it from them. I take my freedom!"

Zulia stood and drew him up into an embrace; the kind only a Zhou birthing pair could ever truly understand. "No brother, "we" will take our freedom. We will make them regret ever thinking that they could contain us."

Zuven and his sister dashed out into the growing twilight. He would get off this world, whether the Twi-Far liked it or not. They wouldn't let others stand in between a Zhou and their freedom. And yet Zuven couldn't forget that look he saw in the Esemes's eyes. That look of disgust, hatred, and behind that, fear. Well, Zuven would show them

"Just because the incredibly powerful, all consuming bacteria can walk, talk, and play friend, does not change the fact that it is a weapon."

It is a cunning contagion that has learned to disguise itself in plain sight. Patiently waiting to strike when it would be most devastating to do so."

- Glorgrack Ti, Nephilim gene weaver on the Zhou.

how right they were to be afraid. He would show them what would happen when a proud Zhou took the galaxy as his own.

It was easy to slip in amongst the chaos of a transport ship hastily preparing for launch. The Twi-Far numbers had been decimated in the day's Nephilim attack, and those that were left were anxious to leave the planet. It wasn't hard for two practiced Zhou to move among them unnoticed. Zuven's motions were fluid, and his senses were heightened. When stealth wasn't an option, Zuven was able to quickly overcome the guards before they could sound any alarm.

Zuven could recall the layout of the camp fairly easy from his time spent there. He led Zulia straight to the launch ship, and they waited for the right moment to scamper across the pavement and into the cargo hold. He could hear the other Zhou above them, nestling nervously into their Twi-Far-crafted harnesses. He could feel their anxiety even from below. None of these Zhou had ever left Praid, and most of them would never see it again. Zuven might never see it again.

Zuven and Zulia nestled themselves between a few supply crates and twisted their vines throughout the ship's hull to find purchase. Their vines twisted together and connected, pulling close to each other. Zuven was glad to have her there. Everything felt a little less scary with her next to him.

As the ship roared to life, and sped towards the atmosphere, he spared just a few moments to reflect on his life on Praid. He would miss his tree, his perch, and the familiar view of the forests and mountains. He was trading it all in for life in a concrete and steel on which he had no home, no connections, and no safety net. But he had Zulia. And he was a proud Zhou. He would always have that.

And no one would ever tell him again that he could not be free.

"What's the matter, Vargarti? Scared that history will repeat itself and you'll end up under my boot again?"

- Padaishe, Remnant Merc to a Corporation guard.

Corporation

Total Population: 6.5 million (down from 8.9 million).
Yearly Population Growth Rate: -1.5% (up from -12%).

The Corporation's exponential expansion of territory and economy shows no sign of slowing. Looking past Haven, they have begun to expand into neighbouring systems.

Seeking to consolidate and expand their power, the Corporation continue to make claims to resource-rich planets, moons, and asteroids within Haven. Several Corps have also begun to form a large settlement on Mishpacha, simply called Mishpacha One, spearheaded by the up-and-coming mega-company Prospecting, Pioneering, & Prosperity.

Prospecting, Pioneering, & Prosperity, or PPP, is now the largest company involved in exploring new resources inside and outside the Haven system. As they explore new systems and prospect for valuable resources, they rent out their staked claims to companies like Drey Mining and Tri-Fuel. In these new systems they also construct and rent out Synth Steel space stations and settlements.

"Galena, never was there such a bleak and depressing view.

Unlike most of Humanities worlds, their terraforming efforts did not hold here. It's a cold lifeless rock, blasted with craters, and a toxic atmosphere.

Yet it holds great promise for the future of Drey Mining. The star Prodigious, which the planet orbits is immense, its gravity an inch from collapsing it to a singularity under its own weight. It draws in debris and asteroids from the Halo nebula like a sponge.

Why take your ship to the ore, when the ore can come to you."

- Sam Brown, foreman of Galena 1 Mining Station

Relationship with Other Races

Palantor

The Palantor have proven themselves as pragmatic and shrewd businessmen, which the Corps respect. However, because they refuse to sell their technologies and instead rent out their expertise, many Palantor have become victims of Corporate espionage.

The Palantor harbour some resentment towards the Corporation for accidentally awakening the Mechnoids. Most Corps refuse to admit their responsibility for this.

Remnant

The Vargarti, now known as the Corporation, were once enslaved by the Ursai on the planet Varsphere. But things have changed – the Corporation rose to power, and the Ursai were destroyed. The Corps see no reason to fear the Remnant people. Rather, gullible is how many Corps see the Remnant, as their idealistic beliefs are easy to exploit.

Corps consider the Remnant to be spoilt and given everything: exceptional genetics, power, influence. Even after the Ursai killed themselves, they were given an unmerited second chance, raised from the dead by a strange power. The Ursai were given everything and squandered it; the Corps were given nothing and created their own prosperity.

Twī-Far

Self-sufficient customers are something the Corporation have always hated. If a person – or worse, an entire race – can rely on themselves, they don't need to trade. The Corporation, preying on their fear of the Oni, force the Twī-Far to participate in the Corp economy, selling weapons using clever marketing tricks and creating false problems for which they sell the solutions.

The Corporation are also interested in the mysteries and the secrets surrounding the Twī-Far. They wish to know the locations of planets which the Twī-Far have surveyed and explored. They also have been trying to capture a live Faren for study, as it may hold the key to creating new marketable technologies.

Zhou

The Zhou are enigmatic, strange creatures which evolved from an old superweapon. They have no needs for the Corporation to exploit – how do you sell things to naked savages? This is a conundrum to the Corporation, but there might still be profits to be made by researching the Zhou, maybe even by using them as weapons. How will the Zhou fit into the Corp economy? Only time will tell. At present there are barely enough of them to even affect the stock market. But doubtlessly the Corps will keep a watchful eye for business (or military) opportunities.

"Family can run deeper than blood.

This Legion and Zhou have both proven themselves loyal, protecting this family as if it were their own. You are already loved as the closest of friends. But it is time we thanked you with the greatest honour a Kaltoran can bestow.

You came to our family lost, and without purpose. Now you join our family as Hesiod and Zorg Omni, brothers... sons."

- Elder David Omni, adoption of Hesiod and Zorg.

Kaltoran

Total Population: 13.2 million (up from 8.2 million)
+ estimated 2.32 million Dark Tribe (down from 2.6 million).
Yearly Population Growth Rate: +24% (up from +19%).

Nazrah, the barren moon of Kadash, has become a stopover for the vast majority of Kaltorans leaving to find new homes. Formed around a Nazrah starport is the city of Japho, which ferries Pioneers to their new homes throughout Haven. Although most Kaltorans passing through Nazrah are Pioneers, the spaceport is run by Founders who have come to see the moon as an extension of Kadash.

Nazrah has also become a hub of Kaltoran trade and commerce, now the best place in Haven to barter without using credits. The city's success, however, has served to further increase tensions between the Kaltorans and the Corporation.

Kaltorans continue to settle where they please, caring little for the Corporation's claims to land and mining rights. In response, the Corporation continue to label many Kaltoran settlers as illegal squatters. Only the unexpected political intervention of the Eden Brood has stopped some of the more serious disputes from becoming open wars.

"Children behave! Grandparents have fun!"

- Kaltoran saying.

Relationship with Other Races

Palantor

Family is everything to a Kaltoran: it is the bond which ties people together. The Palantor are not born but downloaded: they have no families or blood ties, and their motives beyond their conflict with the Mechnoids are an enigma.

The Palantor's alien nature and lack of family perplexes the Kaltorans. For the time being, though, the Palantor share a common enemy and have showed themselves to be an honest people.

Remnant

Although the Ursai played a significant role in the downfall of the Haven system during the Great War, the Kaltorans have largely forgiven the Remnant and left the past behind.

For the Kaltorans, the Remnant are a breath of fresh air in the Haven system. While the other races have philosophies based on structure and pragmatism, the Remnant - like the Kaltorans - have an outlook driven more by conscience. For this reason, both races get along well.

Additionally, when the Remnant first arrived in Haven looking for new homes, the Kaltorans were the first to offer them refuge. The Remnant will always remember this kindness.

Twī-Far

The Kaltorans sometimes see the Twī-Far as distant cousins, which is about the highest form of praise they could give another race. Both races appreciate spirituality, family, exploration, and enjoying everyday life.

The Kaltorans do find the Twī-Far to have their heads in the clouds at times, with their perfect looks, fancy dress, and art everywhere you turn. By comparison, the Kaltorans see themselves as far more down to earth and practical.

Zhou

Like many of the new races, the Zhou are looking for a place to call home within the Haven system. Where the Remnant are seen as friendly, though, the Zhou are not. They have shown themselves to be a hostile and greedy people. As such, the Kaltorans are not happy sharing their settlements with the Zhou. Like the Kaltorans, the Zhou don't often ask permission and instead just settle where they please. This has led to many conflicts, as the two races have often settled the same fertile locations, especially on Mishpacha.

Legion

Total Population: 2.7 million (down from 2.8 million)
+ 2.24 million Exsilia (up from 1.8 million).
Yearly Population Growth Rate: -3% (down from +2%).

The Casila Curia have been forced to admit that the future of the Legion lies in the Haven system, and to secure this future they need a greater foothold. Previously, only assets from the Foreign Branch were allowed to operate in Haven, but this policy has changed recently to accommodate the Legion's wider interests. The Casila Curia have moved to establish a self-sufficient city on Lilith, named Elysium, deploying legions there from all other branches. In all, over a quarter-million Legion have been moved from Cerberus to establish this new city. Consul Athene still holds overall command in Haven, but Imperator Bacchus, Commander of the 3rd Agricultural Army, leads the Interior Legion on Lilith.

The Casila Curia have also worked to strengthen their ties with the Haven races. To aid this endeavour, they have assigned the 7th Auxilia Legion, who have come to be known as the Haven Guard, to an ongoing mission of interracial peacekeeping. The stated objective of the 7th is to improve the quality of life of all residents of the Haven system. To further secure their presence in the system, the Legion have established many small outposts, and the Mishpacha outpost has seen extensive use as a supply dump and staging point for research teams and the Haven Guard.

Additionally, Athene has offered pardons to Exsilia who choose to return to the Legion as Auxilia. This offer has become a full recruitment campaign aimed at reincorporating the millions of Exsilia. In doing this, however, the Casila Curia has in a way given in to the demand of Legion population to become soldiers, so the lack of labourers and homemakers persists. To ameliorate this problem, the Curia have chosen to reassign soldiers from the army and navy to the Interior Branch. However, experts in the Operations Branch estimate that if this continues, in a few decades it may be necessary to close the army and navy in favour of a dedicated Auxilia branch.

"We must admit to ourselves that the war is long past, and let go of hundred year old policies. The Eden Brood have proved useful in the fight against the Oni and trade relations with them have been beneficial. I move that we declare a permanent ceasefire against the Nephilim which ally themselves to Eden and the Devwi-Ich. We should still be wary of their cunning but they have proven themselves different than other Nephilim."

– Deiotones Bree, former adviser to Athene (Lady Vengeance), Consul of the Foreign Branch

Relationship with Other Races

Palantor

The Legion seek to destroy all threats to the people of Haven, threats which certainly include the Mechonids. This gives the Palantor and Legion a common enemy, and nothing brings the Legion closer to another race like a common enemy. The Legion also appreciates their similarity in governance: the Palantor government is broken into sectors, each controlled by essentially a dictator, not unlike the Casila Curia. However, individual Palantor can behave quite erratically, which often puts their relationships with the Legion at risk.

Remnant

In their own minds, the Legion represent the only force of honourable law enforcement and justice in the Haven system. For quite some time, they have maintained an effective monopoly on projecting military power, with their motivations nearly unquestioned. The other races have either trusted, employed, or remained uninterested in the Legion military. With the arrival of the Remnant, though, there is now another force claiming the moral high ground, with some Remnant willing to flex military strength based purely on their convictions, not on economic gain.

The Legion have cause to not trust the Remnant, as the Ursai were traitors during the Great War. Can they be trusted to not join one of the Legion's many enemies? The Legion are slow to forgive, and the Ursai aided their mortal enemy: the X'ion.

Twī-Far

Most Legion have little respect for the Twī-Far, seeing them as cowards: they deserted the Archons in the Great War, and have only returned because they are fleeing from the Oni. However, many Legion also see it as their proud responsibility to protect all creations of the Archons and all residents of the Haven system, no matter how recently they arrived.

Nearly all Legion find the Twī-Far obsession with art and beauty to be a pointless waste of time and resources. The Legion do not know how to appreciate that kind of culture, as it is foreign to their bare-essentials lifestyle.

Zhou

The Legion are accepting but wary of the Zhou. The Legion often consider themselves the guardians of the other races, ensuring peace and law with their presence. The Zhou are an unknown, holding great potential as a threat to the Haven system.



Technology

Technological progress has continued since the Rebirth. Old technologies have been backwards-engineered, while new ones have been developed from scratch. Furthermore, the races new to the Haven system have brought their own technologies, creating a melting pot of ideas. Each race adds to the mix in their own way, while adopting and adapting the tech of others.

Software

Software runs the decision-making of all electronic devices, from simple door locks to sophisticated combat drones. There are several common programming languages, each with its own advantages.

As the races emerged from the Years of Darkness, most used broken forms of human and Archon programming languages. These languages were either incomplete or restrictively complex, but they led to the development of many more languages now in common use.

The two programming languages used most often by the Corporation are Integrated Code and Cypher-3, developed independently by Integrated Circuits and Cypher Robotics and Power, respectively. Integrated Code has superior networking capabilities, making it faster than Cypher-3, but has been widely criticised for its poor security algorithms. Integrated Code is connected to many UNITY terrorist attacks, and its creator – Integrated Circuits – founded UNITY.

Minerva is a robust combat AI which writes her own code in a unique language known as Pallas. Minerva was created by the Archons during the middle stages of the Great War as a combat computer system for the Legion. She is self-maintaining program that uses an ever-changing encryption algorithm based on both organic and inorganic cyphers. The Legion do not know how she works, only that she does.

Sonnet is a Twi-Far programming language. The other races find it difficult to grasp because it is written poetically, making use of many distinct Twi-Far linguistic and technological concepts.

Palantor code drives the minds of positronic brains, but it can also be used for much simpler programs. The Palantor use this code to create algorithms which run their weapons, ships, and computers. For further details about Palantor code, see pg: 119.

"Power is not found in size or grandeur. A single organism can contain within itself more technology than a mighty battle cruiser. Do not let primal instincts mislead you."

- Thor Blackfist, Legion merc.

"Truth requireth love, lest it become a weapon, and love requireth truth, lest it hollow us out with denial."

In the same vein: technology and ethics require each other lest we become a culture of death and emptiness."

- Ootla Rey, Remnant priest of knowledge.

Implants

An implant's type merely describes its function, not its make. Most implants come in one of three categories, and all of them must be networked to the brain by using advanced synaptronics (see Core Rule Book, pg: 279).

Prosthetics

When a limb, eye, or even chunk of brain is lost in battle or an accident, it may be healed or replaced with prosthetics. While basic prosthetics simply replicate the function of the lost or damaged body part, many people see their bodily loss as an opportunity to upgrade themselves. Because prosthetics are usually attached to the body rather than integrated into it, they are easier to install and maintain than other implants.

Cybernetics

Most cybernetic implants are a mixture of electronic and mechanical components installed beneath the skin. These implants augment and improve natural ability – hydraulic legs to improve movement, microchip brain implants to increase cognitive function, and many other more-outlandish systems. Some cybernetic implants are prone to overload, though: even worse, many are designed to self-preserve during overload by discharging into the surrounding tissue, greatly impeding and harming the user.

Parasitic

Some people are more comfortable with hosting parasitic creatures than integrating robotic parts, as parasites need no power source beyond the host body itself. Once implanted into a body, these organisms attach themselves to tissue, bone, and organs, gaining nutrients by feeding off the host body. When stressed, however, parasites will sometimes consume too much of their host, weakening rather than aiding them. Nearly all known parasitic implants are designed, grown, and implanted by the Nephilim.

Synaptronic Control

Implants, no matter the type, must be connected to the host's nervous system and brain. This connection is usually accomplished with synaptronic circuitry, allowing the user to control their implants as though they were extensions of themselves.

Weapons

Self-Guided

These guns are equipped with advanced targeting software which remotely controls the trajectory of its ammunition. It does this by utilising electro-gravity built into each bullet, allowing them in mid-flight to alter their path and even to turn sharp corners.

Plasma

A super hot cloud of particles, often made from liquid metal, plasma takes time to reach its weaponised temperature, limiting the frequency of weapons fire. Once it strikes its target, though, plasma burns a focused area with deadly efficacy.

Laser

A focused beam of light at extreme temperature, laser beams have exceptional range and can pass through transparent objects, such as glass. However, lasers are also reflected off particles in their air which may disperse the beam.

Metal Slug

These are the simplest of weapons, easily made with basic mechanical tools. Each round of ammunition contains a small pack of chemical explosive, detonated to propel the projectile down a tube. Despite the slug's primitive nature, lead flying at high speed should never be underestimated.

Antimatter

Whether natural or manufactured in a laboratory, antimatter is expensive and difficult to contain. Antimatter is the subatomic negative of matter: as it contacts matter, each undoes the other's existence – certainly desirable on the battlefield.

Zhou Contagion

The Zhou contagion is a deadly bioweapon which consumes everything it touches. The contagion spreads on its own, leaping from one victim to the next. While larger Zhou masses are sentient, the smaller, isolated masses act purely on instinct. For more information on the Zhou, see pg: 86.

Biochemical Weaponry

There is a great variety of deadly Nephilim-created biochemicals. Death spores infect the flesh of their victims, who upon death release spores into the air to infect more victims. Vile-cloud weapons fill the air at the point of impact with poisonous fumes. Infectious weapons transmit a virulent disease to those close by, and bloated toxin sacks burst on impact, spraying over a wide area.

Psionic Weaponry

See pg: 109.

Defences

Plates

Overlapping plates of armour is one of the simplest forms of protection there is. These plates can be made from different materials – the latest generation of Synth Steel, chitin, titanium, other alloys and polymers, or regular steel. Because of this armour's simple design, the wearer can always layer more plates for greater protection at the cost of mobility.

Energised

This shield technology uses circuitry lain across the armour to generate a tight, clinging shield. This in effect energises the armour, creating another layer of protection. This energy, however, can impair the user's senses, making them less able to avoid harm.

Explosive Shield Nodes

To function, this powerful shield requires immense energy, so much so that each of its power nodes is like a small reactor. Should a projectile puncture the shield and break a power node, the node vents all of its energy outward – a hazardous proposition for anyone standing too close – making it an excellent defence in melee.

Shock Plates

These advanced plates use Newtonian laws to their advantage, employing a flexible reactive polymer which thickens in response to extreme pressure. Incoming fire prompts the plates to harden proportionally to the impact force, impeding even the hardest-hitting projectiles.

Augmented

Sometimes armour is so perfectly integrated to its user that it augments their natural abilities. This integration is so personalised that usually the potential wearer must research themselves to properly calibrate the augmented armour. Only those with an intense obsession for self-improvement through technology, and abilities to match, are likely to succeed.

Peering through his scope, Tyr looks at the group of Mechonid slowly advancing towards his position. With a sigh he gets up and starts jogging back to the others.

Shrugging his weapon into a more comfortable position he sneers "Who's brilliant idea was it to make a gun with only four bullets anyway?"

- Kaoru_01456.

Spacecraft

Advanced AI Systems

The Palantor have brought with them unmatched computer and programming technologies. These systems have proven popular with the other races, especially the Corporation. Palantor AI tech is particularly applicable in ship-to-ship drones, allowing either sophisticated control or remote drone piloting via virtual-reality interfaces.

Solar Sails

Solar sails have always been used in the Haven system, but more as a novelty than as a serious propulsion choice. No longer the purview of Corp luxury yachts or thrifty Kaltorans, Twi-Far solar sails have proven quite viable. The two most popular variations are true solar sails, which use solar winds to propel a craft forwards, and augmented power systems, which use large solar panels. Both technologies are often blended with conventional propulsion.

Shadow Field

During the Great War, the Ursai had very advanced shield technologies, many of which the Remnant still possess. One of these is the shadow field, which partially cloaks a ship from long-range fire by muddying enemy sensors. The field shortens the effective range of weapons, allowing the shielded ship to escape detection as long as it keeps its distance. This technology has quickly become popular among Kaltorans and pirates.

Slip Drive

These advanced jump drives ignore the gravitational interference of nearby stars. This innovation allows them to create a long-range wormhole within a solar system, unlike other drives that may only enter or exit a system from its outer edge.

Psionic Integration

Some ships have special synaptronic stations which their psionic crew may utilise to operate special Ley Energy systems. These systems include advanced life sensors which allow a psion to extend the range of their mind to detect other living minds. They are also used to operate the devastating psionic-blast weaponry, a favourite of Remnant ships.

Atmospheric

Spacecraft often have a hard time navigating in a planet's atmosphere, as air resistance can wreak havoc on the hull, and ships' engines are rarely able to withstand the gravity for long. Some ships, however, are designed to double as atmospheric vessels, using an aerodynamic design which can translate forwards momentum into lift or employing a propulsion system designed for atmospheric flight.

"Our last fuel contract was to the Nebula-Dreamer, a Twi-Far vessel. I went aboard on a spontaneous visit to meet their captain, and I'll never forget it! Every bit of their ship was like an art gallery: etchings and murals on the walls; pipes and cables woven into subtle designs; indicator lights arranged in ornate patterns; there were even performers dancing and playing music! It was mind-boggling. The expense must have been immense! These Twi-Far are incredibly wealthy! Next time, make a note to triple our rates!"

- Bearnd Silver, VP Interstellar Sales
Tri-Fuel Industries.

Psionics

For an introduction to psionics, read the Core Rule Book (pg: 278).

A rare few individuals exhibit extraordinary abilities which break our understanding of how organic minds function. These people can project their consciousness and read the minds of others. Unsubstantiated reports and rumours mention individuals that can see the future or the past. Anyone with this ability is called a psion, and their abilities are collectively called psionics.

History

During the Golden Age of Humanity, electronics were used to expand the size and capabilities of the mind. Humans took miniaturisation to the extreme, and the lost technology of cellular electronics allowed for great wonders that few can now imagine. They used nanite workers to lay electrical cables and circuitry a single atom wide, often to improve their organic brain cells and synapses.

Cellular electronics also allowed some to manipulate Ley Energy so they could transmit thoughts and alter the flow of time. They even developed a nanite to alter their brain architecture expressly so they could use Ley Energy.

These nanites were able to self-replicate, but could not transport themselves outside of their host body. During the Great X'ion War, though, this changed. The Synaptagen virus, created to attack the minds of its Ursai victims, could also travel freely through space, riding Ley Energy as it flowed throughout the universe. When the Ursai activated the Deatomiser weapon, dormant nanites came to life and bonded to the Synaptagen virus. The virus worked as a carrier for the nanites, allowing them to spread where they previously could not.

"Yes, 11 of the 12 original X'ions were killed. But don't think for one second that the Archons destroyed all of the research and technology that went into their creation.

Not only do I believe more, and more powerful, X'ions were created in secret by rogue Archons during the two hundred years before the Great War. I believe we can see parts of their design within the DNA of Archons final creations, especially within the Zhou."

- Bob Thomas, Corporate explorer, MIA.



How Psionics work

Under the right conditions, Ley Energy can alter the laws of physics and act as a conduit for psionic powers.

An individual with properly aligned synaptic pathways can collect, connect, and make use of Ley Energy. In doing this, they can extend their perception and deliberately warp the laws of physics. Nearly all psionic manifestations are limited to the manipulation of the mind and of time.

Mind

Neurons produce electrical signals, which travel along synapses through the brain. The brain interprets these signals to create a perceived reality for the individual. Psions are able to use Ley Energy as a conduit for their minds, allowing them to connect to other nearby minds. Doing this, they can send mental signals into the minds of others, altering their targets' perception of reality. A side effect of this is that many psions constantly hear voices in their head, driving many into madness.

The ability to speak into the minds of other psions is nearly always the first manifestation of psionic gifts. psions' minds, always strongly connected to Ley Energy, are primed to receive and send mental signals.

Time

At a subatomic level, the laws of physics are chaotic and unpredictable, but together they form a harmonious order. The physical laws of space-time are often mistakenly thought to be absolute – that is, unless Ley Energy is involved.

Many believe Ley Energy to be physical laws from another dimension bleeding into our own. If this is true, then the flow of time in this alternate dimension is in no way straight or constant. As many psions can (often unreliably) arrange Ley Energy four-dimensionally through time. Doing so allows them not only to glimpse forwards and backwards through time, but also to briefly move themselves through it.

Types of Psion

Natural Psion, Intelligence Trait CRB pg: 345

With the right genetic makeup, someone exposed to the altered Synaptagen virus will develop psionic power spontaneously. The closer one looks to the source of the virus – the Remnant home world of Kumba – the more common these people are.

Natural psions often face confusion at first, as they have no idea how or why they have been bestowed such gifts (or curses). With practice and patience, these gifted individuals can use their psionic power to connect to other minds and to alter time.

Psion Splice, Bio Tech Trait CRB pg: 351

Those without the natural genes needed to become psions may have themselves modified to gain such power. The Nephilim were the first to create psions in this way, but many races can now perform such operations.

In this process, the genetically altered mind of the subject is attacked and tortured by a cocktail of drugs, weakening it sufficiently for the nanites, often harvested from psions, to take hold. If the subject survives the procedure, they gain the ability to lash out violently with their thoughts, sharing the memories of their procedure with their victims.

Trained Psion, Focus Trait pg: 175

The Ursai are unique in that they were at the epicentre of the Deatomiser and the target of the Synaptagen virus. The Remnant can only withstand the virus, lethal to their ancestor race, through the grace of the All-Being.

The Remnant have had the most exposure to, and the most experience with, psionic power. Additionally, the energy which holds their bodies together also courses through their minds. Filled with the All-Being's power, the Remnant can attain psionic power through discipline and meditation. To gain this power, a strong-willed Remnant must meditate – often for months, or even years – on the will of the All-Being. In doing this, they attune themselves to the power flowing through them, allowing it to work alongside the nanites to restructure their brain.

"It is likely due to fear that individuals with such powers are studied so ferociously. I know I wouldn't want anyone reading my mind without my permission. Then again, you should probably know that most of us have no interest in reading your minds either. Your thoughts are usually either boring or gross."

- Mary Speed, Kaltoran Psionic.

Psionic Technologies

Psionic Weapons

Psions often augment their power by using guns charged with Ley Energy. Using such a weapon, the wielder can extend the range of their mind by creating a highway of Ley Energy along the trajectory of the projectile or energy beam.

Psionic Shielding

As their home system is infested with Echoes, the Remnant face psionic threats more than the other races. This has led the Remnant to develop a shield that can repel psionic power by disrupting the Ley Energy around the user.

Electromancy

The electrical signals created in computers are different than those in organic neurons. However, with training and knowledge, a psion can learn to connect to inorganic signals as they would to organic signals. It is thought that many humans saw little difference between an organic mind and a digital mind.

Positronic Psions

The positronic brains of the Palantor and Mechnoids were engineered to emulate neurons, allowing the psionic nanites to adapt their minds similarly to how they can alter organic minds. Positronic brains are not biological, so the Synaptagen virus cannot infect them, but these brains can still carry the nanites to robotic minds.

Nanites need different conditions to work on a positronic brain than on an organic brain, but in both situations they require a weakened mind. The needed circumstances are yet unknown, but some speculate that small EMP fields can be used to reduce the immune function of positronic brains, allowing the nanites to do their work. Some also theorise that the nanites have the programming needed to work with both organic and robotic minds, as humanity made widespread use of both.



Short Story: Two Psions

Mary missed her family. It never got easier, no matter how many times she left them. She blamed her Kaltoran blood: family was built into her DNA. She absentmindedly fingered the locket she wore around her neck as she leaned back against the cold steel of the spacecraft's hull. They understood why she left them so often: a person with her particular skill-set could make a lot of money if they were willing to travel far to find the right work. But she could hear their voices still: her husband's comforting tone, her children's frantic shrieking. Sometimes, it almost felt like they were right next to her, whispering in her ear. They weren't of course, the voices were just in her head.

She cared about her family a little too much for a mercenary. Most of them had no one to go home to, no distraction, and no one to share their earnings with. Sometimes Mary wished she could see the future, like her new partner, Ren, supposedly could. That must be nice, she thought: much better than hearing random voices in her head.

Mary was having a hard time adjusting to her new partner: they had never met before being assigned together specifically for this mission. Ren unnerved her. She had difficulty seeing into his robotic mind, an oddity as he was a psionic, but possibly because he was a robot, one of those Palantor. She had been told he had safeguards in place – psychic shields built right into his cranium. She wondered what other tech was built into that strange, robotic body. It felt like she was holed up with a Mechonid. Her every instinct told her that Ren was an enemy; as she had been trained to think of Mechonids. He looked so similar to one.

She had heard a lot about the Palantor before meeting them. She had heard they were cold, distant and sometimes unhinged. Well, she was the one hearing voices so maybe Ren could get a pass on that one. But the rest seemed to be turning out true. In their three days spent travelling aboard the disguised merchant freighter, Ren had barely said a word.

The ability to see the future was rare among psychics but not unheard of, and Mary found herself jealous of it. If she had that power, maybe she wouldn't worry so much about if she would make it home or not. Maybe her family could worry less about her as well. Thinking about her family distracted her, and she began to open her mind, which allowed the thought-voices of the crew to flow. She could hear them, now, whispering. She bent down and clutched her head, digging her nails into it, wishing the voices would stop.

She pushed herself off of the bench and stormed out of the mess hall. This was a common occurrence by now – the crew of the freighter they were using were used to the behaviour of the strange Kaltoran. Most of them didn't have a firm grasp on psionics, so they treated Mary with an almost supernatural reverence. Ren received similar treatment. But he rarely made appearances in the mess hall. Supposedly, Palantor had been human once, but Mary wasn't sure she believed it. There was still a part of her that believed he was a

Mechonid in disguise, waiting for the right time to strike.

When she arrived back at the small quarters she shared with Ren, she wasn't surprised to see him there. The Palantor never really left the room. He simply sat on the floor, reading from thick books written in a language that Mary couldn't decipher. She had attempted to open conversation with him about the books, but Ren was not one for words. In fact, the two had never shared more than simple greetings and pleasantries. She wondered if all Palantor were like this, or if she had just been stuck with a broken one.

She sat on her bed – they only had one in the room: while Palantor didn't seem to need to sleep, they did need to rest their systems, and Ren didn't need a bed for this. For once, she was glad she couldn't hear the voices pouring out of Ren's head. Being around him was the closest thing to silence she ever got.

"Is it your family again?"

Mary sat up straight, rigid, one hand on her sidearm, eyes locked on Ren. The sound of his voice was so unexpected it put her right on edge. They had never spoken to each other about her family.

"How do you know about my family?" She asked, a little aggressively. Ren didn't seem offended by the suspicion.

"You talk about your family at length. You have told me the stories of your children."

"I... I never have." Mary unclipped the holster of her side-arm, ready to draw.

Ren set the book down and stood up. The sudden movement caused Mary to flinch: she almost drew on her partner. She wasn't used to being blocked from someone's thoughts.

"You have told of them in many possible futures." Ren began to tidy up the books.

"What?" Mary's mind reeled at the possibilities. She had been told Ren could see the future. Did that imply seeing conversations that didn't happen yet? If Mary was unnerved before, now she was terrified of this machine. His psychic powers seemed to far outstrip her own. "You've seen it?"

Ren nodded as he secured his belongings in one of the lockers against the wall. "Yes. But come now, it is time. We have reached our destination."

Mary slowly let her fingers drop from the pistol. "Are you sure? I haven't heard..."

The ship's intercom crackled to life, interrupting Mary. The captain's deep Nephilim voice rang through their small bunk. "Alright

you two, it's time to head up to the bridge. We're here."

Mary found herself at a loss for words as Ren began to leave the bunk.

"We best hurry," he chimed in. "Don't want to anger the captain."

The captain of the freighter, a Nephilim merchant by the name of Globshik, was waiting for them when they arrived on the command deck.

"We're here," Globshik stated, and Mary found herself looking sideways at Ren, who was busy gazing out of the viewport. He had known. Mary realized there was some truth to those powers after all.

Globshik folded his arms beneath his chest and stared out into space. In the distance, they could make out a massive warship floating in their direction, towards Haven. It was gigantic, bigger than any ship Mary had ever seen before. It looked like a floating rectangle: long and plain. The deceptive exterior hid the terror that lurked beneath its shell.

"I've never been this close to an Oni Warship," Ren said in half-awe and half-fear. "Usually as soon as we pick one up, we head the opposite direction as fast as we can."

"Well, you've been paid handsomely to stand your ground this time," Mary replied, and the captain nodded. Her benefactor had indeed paid Captain Globshik quite a sum to escort her team to the warship at this particular location, close to a deep space Ley Line where Ley Energy was thick and soupy.

"Can you sense it?" Ren asked.

Mary stepped closer to the viewpoint and placed a hand on the glass. The few steps closer didn't do much to enhance her powers, but bracing herself against something was a good idea. When she concentrated hard enough she could feel the Ley Energy that poured from the Ley Line crack pulling at her. She could feel the thick, powdery, glowing strands wrapping themselves around her and connecting her to the minds around her. She could feel Captain Globshik's fear of her and Ren; psionics unnerved him. She could hear the thoughts of the Remnant navigator as he prayed to the All-Being that the warship didn't detect them. She could hear everything; all but Ren who remained a blank, calming space.

She stretched out across the Ley Energy, using it like a computer would use a network cable, mentally extending herself as far as she could. The warship was farther away than anything she had ever tried to reach, but she was one of the most skilled mental psionics in Haven, and the Ley Energy was indeed thick here. She could feel minds in the warship, millions of minds, a jumble of broken

emotions, a mixture of sadness, panic, hunger....but above all else, she felt fear. The slaves, she realized. Every Oni brought their slaves with them wherever they travelled, and especially into combat. They displayed many terrible emotions, but Mary felt the fear permeating strongest from the slaves. A fear like nothing she had ever felt before. It chilled her to the bone. The obedience of these slaves had been earned through barbaric torture; both emotionally, and physically. Mary couldn't help but shiver.

She pushed herself farther, guiding the Ley Energy to flow through the ship, feeling blood trickle from her nose down her mouth. She cast her net further out, past the slaves, searching the ship for a particular Oni. There were thousands aboard the ship – a terrifying force. Finally, she found herself drawn to a glowing ball of thought in the lower decks of the ship. Touching that mind was like touching a hot coal; she almost pulled away on instinct. So much pride, arrogance, and violence filled that mind, as it filled all Oni. She reached deeper into this mind, connecting to it; enveloping it even at such a long distance. She poked, and prodded, and then she knew. Their benefactor had been right.

Mary snapped back to herself in an instant and wiped the blood from her nose. Globshik stood next to her, white, like he had just seen a ghost. She imagined it must be traumatizing to watch her work. She had been told her body shook, her eyes turned white, and she began to speak in gibberish. Ren appeared unmoved.

"He's there." Mary turned to him. "Our boss was right. The Collector is on that ship, his quarters are not too far from a hanger."

Mary wasn't sure how her boss had known how to find this particular ship, or that he was on it. It had last been seen a system far away from here, near the Legion home-system Cerberus. Apparently, The Collector and his slaves had attacked a moon near Cerberus; a moon that the Legion and Corporation were colonizing together. The loss of life had been devastating for both sides, and their Corp benefactor had lost her husband during the attack; killed by The Collector personally. And so her benefactor wanted to see this particular Oni dead – and she was willing to pay a fortune to do so.

Ren was in charge of piloting the small fighter that carried the pair closer to the warship – his cybernetic enhanced reflexes allowed him to maintain precise control over the ship at all times. And besides, Mary had another job. It was never easy to block your presence from someone's mind, and it was much harder to block an entire Oni bridge crew.

At this very moment, as their small ship approached the warship, warning lights were flashing on the warship's primitive consoles. The bridge crew were receiving constant updates on their approach vector delivered straight to their screens, and the slaves had all guns armed and trained on the small ship, just waiting for an Oni

to give the command to fire. But that order never came. The bridge crew never saw those vector updates, the warning lights, or heard the alarm sound. Mary was deep in concentration, filling herself with Ley Energy and projecting it back onto the Oni on the bridge, blocking their minds. As long as she could hold her grasp on them, they would see and hear only what she wanted them to see and hear. This was her psychic power at its height. There was a reason she had been chosen for this job.

However, she was not powerful enough to affect a million soldiers all at once, no matter how impressionable their minds might be. So she focused on the commanding Oni instead, the ones that had authority. She wasn't concerned with the slaves: they lived in such fear of the Oni they wouldn't dare act on the alarms without instruction from their leaders – and that instruction would never come.

Ren eased the craft alongside one of the docking ports on the warship. Normally, the Palantor could interface with a docking bays computer system and force the bay doors open. But the Oni Warship was incredibly low tech – the only way to open it was by throwing a switch on the other side. Forcing a slave to throw that switch was child's play for Mary.

Once aboard the ship and docked, Ren put a sword through the slave they had manipulated, then located the small command console that operated the alarm system. The Oni ship had no wireless network for him to connect to, and their computers were ancient, but he was a skilled hacker. He quickly switched off the emergency system. Once the flashing lights and alarm were off, Mary could finally drop her charade. She dropped to her knees and leaned against the wall, to spit out the blood from her mouth. Ren didn't seem too concerned.

"Aren't you going to ask me if I'm okay?" She smiled up at him weakly, trying to lighten the tension and ignore her headache.

"Of course you're okay," Ren replied. "If something were to happen to you, I'd already have returned to a past time when you were healthy, and you would never have known."

Ren extended a hand to help Mary to her feet and she took it. She was still chewing on what he had told her, trying to understand.

"What do you mean exactly? You mean you would look into the future and make sure I'd be okay?"

Ren shook his head as he pulled out piles of dirty rags from his pack. The interior of the ship would be filled with millions of slaves, and Mary didn't have the energy to cloud the minds of each one. Sometimes, traditional disguises worked the best.

Once they were dressed, Ren began to force open the bulkhead doors leading further into the ship. "I can't see the future, Mary."

Mary blinked, suddenly confused. "Of course you can. You've told me that we had conversations, that you've seen the future."

"I didn't mean to mislead," Ren stated as he led her way through the

bowels of the warship. "My psychic power doesn't involve seeing the future. It involves living it. If I'm not satisfied with the consequences of my actions, I can jump back in time, reset things I just did. Hope for a better outcome."

Mary stopped in her tracks, as if seeing Ren for the first time. What a remarkable power, she thought. That was almost better than seeing the future: an unlimited number of re-try options.

"So you mean if I had died just now...."

"Then I would have skipped back to our approach, and warned you not to push yourself so far."

"That's a useful power to have. Why did you keep that secret?"

"Because now is a time for trust."

Mary nodded and followed his way through the ship. Ren had been given a crude schematic of the warship's interior from their employer. What gaps there were in the schematics, and there were many, Mary was able to fill in by plucking information from the minds of the slaves they passed. With each probe into a slave's mind she experienced a piece of their fear of the Oni, desperate hunger, and complete lack of hope.

The slaves barely paid attention to them: they were trained to keep silent, and not to think for themselves. Mary and Ren slipped between them, trying to avoid the notice of the Oni slave masters. These Oni were young, only a few meters tall and weak willed, so it was fairly easy to cloud their presence for the few moments it took to pass by.

The slaves were working hard under their masters –pulling chains to force gears to rotate, hauling equipment across the ship, serving the Oni food: and suffering lashes whenever the Oni felt disappointment in their work, or bored. There were millions of these slaves aboard the ship, representing just about every race that Mary knew – and many more that she didn't recognize.

Mary tried not to think too hard on the plight of the slaves. She thought about Ren instead. Mary understood not trusting people with the knowledge of her powers. People tended to freak out when she told them that she could control minds: they tended to avoid her after that. No one wanted to be friends with the 'Mad Kaltoran' who could see their secrets. To be able to reset time like that, whenever you wished: it almost made her powers seem like a parlour trick. If she had that power... She stopped suddenly as Ren raised his hand.

"Quiet," he whispered in a low tone and motioned her to hug the edge of the wall. The pair ducked into the shadows as a pair of large, 6 meter tall, Oni lumbered by, right where they had been standing.

"That's a handy trick," Mary whispered.

Ren motioned her out when the way was clear and the two continued on through the maze, headed in the direction of The

Collector's quarters. At least, that's where Mary assumed the Oni was stationed. She had a bead on his mental signature though – she had picked it up while aboard the merchant ship and could track him almost anywhere on this ship.

Ren stopped them at the corner of two intersecting corridors. The Collector's room was just down the hall, guarded by two thick-skinned Oni wielding crude cannons. The sight of them stirred fear in Mary – not her fear, she knew; it was the fear of the slaves.

The thoughts and emotions of those around her would often bleed into her mind. Sometimes she couldn't choose when to be empathic; sometimes the thoughts just came. And here, in the middle of the Oni Warship, the thoughts were coming in droves. And they all had one thing in common: fear the Oni masters. It was the fear she had tasted earlier, but amplified by a million times. How do they live like this? She wondered. To have a life filled with such fear, overpowering all other emotions. To live without joy, without wonder, without even a modicum of happiness; the fact that these creatures lived on through it all was even more terrifying than the fear itself.

She bent over and clutched her hair, tugging on it. She couldn't separate herself from the fear she was feeling. She began to rock back and forth, whispering "No, no, no... fear the masters" as she could almost feel the whip of the Oni across her scarred back.

Ren suddenly seemed to be bleeding some sort of oil or liquid from his side, and he was clutching the wound. When did he get injured? Mary vaguely thought. Maybe it hasn't happened yet.

"They're about to hear you," Ren whispered frantically. "I can't stop you."

Mary couldn't stop herself either. She wanted to, but she was consumed now. She clutched her head again, and let out a scream: millions of minds worth of fear exploding out of her at once. It was enough to alert the Oni to their presence. Ren put himself between Mary and the barrage of cannon fire that suddenly peppered the corridor: the large shells shredded crates and unfortunate slaves as Ren drew their fire away from Mary.

Ren slid across the hallway on his knees, under the fire, taking shots back at the Oni with his plasma rifle. Mary turned around the corner, preparing to dive for cover, but she couldn't. Mary was no longer Mary. She was the embodiment of the slaves, living in fear. Fear was a powerful emotion, and right now she feared the Oni masters more than anything. She let herself be consumed by the fear, she gave into it; she used it. She was barely aware of Ren trying to guard her as she projected her fear in to the Oni guards. The two Oni began to panic, as Mary did, as the fear overtook them. Ren leapt down the corridor landed atop one of the Oni bringing his blade down into its chest, stabbing repeatedly.

Ren leapt back off the body in a heartbeat, tackling Mary and pushing her down as the other guard wildly swung at the spot she had just been. She could have lost her head. She could not protect

herself – she was too afraid.

"I can't snap you out of it!" Ren shouted over the chaos, horrified. Slave warriors were pouring out of The Collector's quarters, throwing themselves into the fight. Mary's projection of fear had no effect on the slaves – they were already living it. But Ren was surviving; he seemed to be everywhere he needed to be, and nowhere he shouldn't. If Mary had been thinking straight, she would have been impressed. His blade attacks were never blocked and even when it looked like a blast would take him directly, he always managed to step out of the way just in time – until The Collector burst from his room.

The Collector was a massive Oni, and his four arms clutching a large cannon. Despite wearing barely any armour he cut quite the intimidating figure as he adorned himself with a collection of skulls: trophies from those he had personally slain in battle, earning him his nickname.

The Collector was intelligent; he had a brilliant tactile mind coupled with incredible conviction, which made him resistant to Mary's psionic powers.

Mary watched as The Collector used his large cannon like a club to strike Ren in the side of the head, knocking him against the far wall. Mary, still deep in the throes of fear, launched herself at The Collector. She smashed against his chest, completely ineffective, and the Oni simply tossed her away.

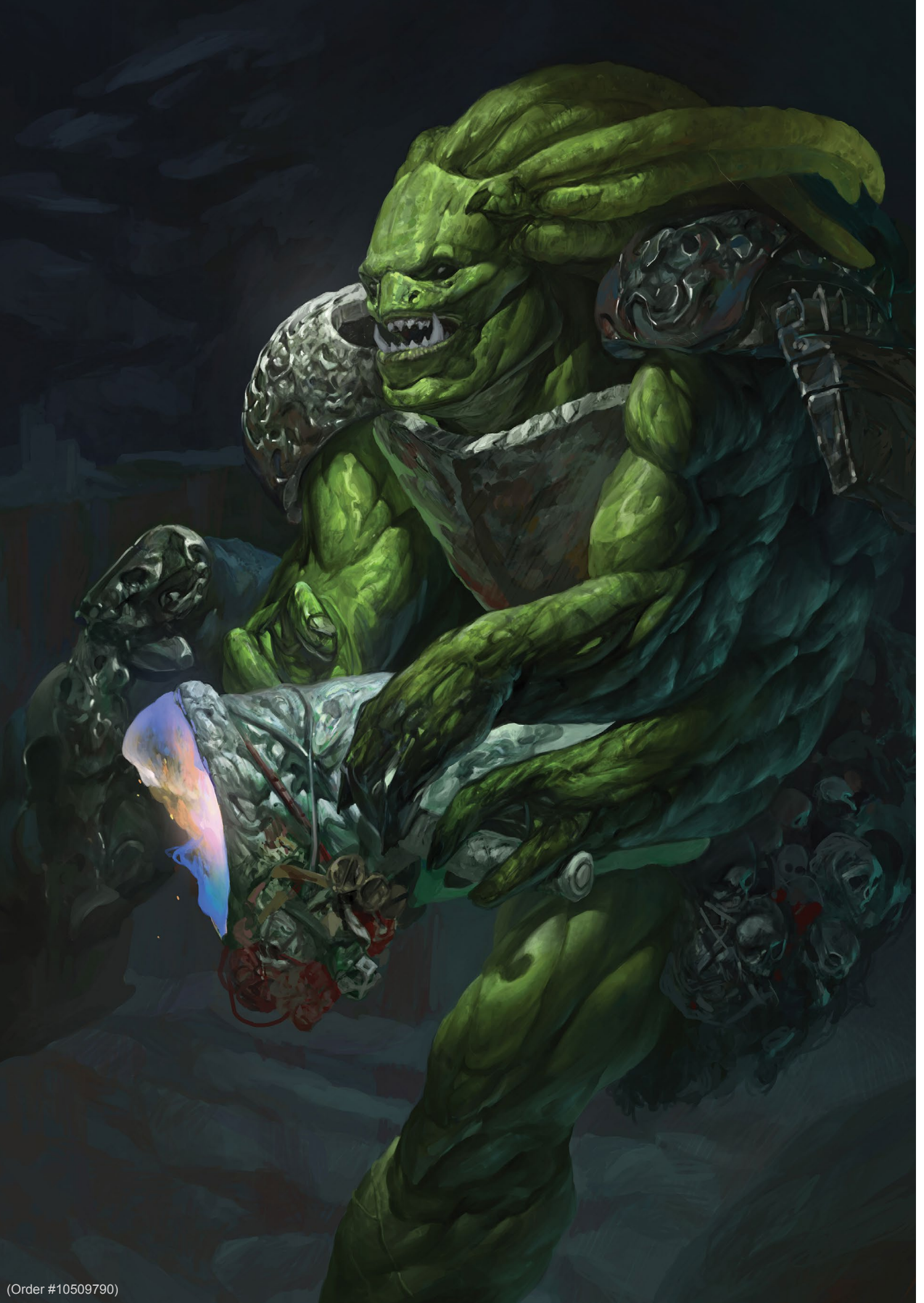
Ren stood up, dazed. The circuitry in the side of his head was sparking. Either he hadn't been able to dodge that attack, or his psionic powers were wearing thin; both were bad options. But he didn't let them slow him down. While Mary was distracting The Collector, Ren bounced through the hallway like an acrobat, barely dodging the Oni's cannon fire, and striking small cuts on the guards whenever he could. Ren was doing well, but not well enough. For every few strikes Ren was able to score a wound would appear on his body, a souvenir of a less successful possible outcome.

Mary watched him, in horror, and felt herself coming back. The fear was beginning to subside, outweighed by her concern for Ren. Concern for a Palantir; she could have laughed. She never would have imaged she'd feel compassion for a machine. She wanted to shout to him, to scream 'enough' at the top of her lungs. She tried to scream but no words came out.

Then finally, they did.

"Enough!" the cry finally came, along with a burst of psionic energy large enough to fry the minds of every weak willed mind around her. Only Ren, whose shield was still functioning, and The Collector, whose mental fortitude was strong enough to survive the blast remained. The three stood among the brain dead bodies of the two Oni and upwards of three dozen slave warriors. The Collector was on his knees, wobbling back and forth, holding his head.

Mary brought her hand up to cover her mouth, trembling. She was



amazed she was alive. "I'm... I'm sorry."

Ren retrieved his blade from where he had thrust it through the Oni during the battle. Mary had never even seen him do that. He wiped the blood from the edge and slid it back into his sheath, nonchalantly like nothing had happened, even though he was bleeding fluids from many large tears in his body.

"I knew the risks of working with you before I accepted this mission."

"The risks?" Mary balled her hands into fists on her hips. She tried to feel indignant, but couldn't. She did, after all, almost get them killed.

"I had heard of you before." Ren sat down on a nearby crate to let his body cool down. "They call you the Mad Kaltoran don't they?"

"In some parts, yes."

"It is nothing to be ashamed of. Our gifts always come with a cost."

Mary took a seat across from him, on a fallen pipe that had come loose during the fight. "What's your cost?"

Ren sighed and looked over at The Collector, still out of touch with reality. Mary wasn't sure he was going to respond.

"I get to experience suffering and failure multiple times, and in multiple ways, each one leaving a wound."

She frowned and looked at Ren as if seeing him for the first time. Mary pointed at the whimpering Oni.

"So what do we do with him?"

"I think you can figure something out."

Mary approached The Collector with a grin on her face. The Collector was stunned and wounded. His willpower was shaken. He was an easy target now.

"You will do nothing to fight back against us. You will not harm us in any way."

He could do nothing but obey. He stood there, helplessly, as Ren drew his sword, bowed before his victim, then separated The Collector's large head from his body in one fell swoop.

They had completed their objective, but the Oni on this ship could kill millions.

She smiled at Ren, a genuine smile. He was nothing like a Mechonid: he was more alive than most people she had ever met. And, more than anything else, he was her friend. If she knew nothing else, she knew this would be the beginning of a beautiful partnership.

"Say, while we're here, why don't we take control of the ship and

Kazana's fur rippled with purple lightning as her brain began to buzz. She could see the Ley Energy all about her, like a cloud of translucent gold dust that enveloped the universe. The dust ebbed and flowed to the power that surged through her, she could pull it, push it, and bind it as she saw fit.

Symbolically she reached out her hands as she drew the dust to her, forming it into a beautiful shard of gold that she placed on her mind. The shard grew and became cylindrical as it elongating itself outward, crossing the small hotel room, through the metal wall, and out into the busy city street.

Vehicles and pedestrians moved through the crystal like shard, oblivious to its presence. Kazana felt each of their minds as they briefly connected themselves to hers: she saw their thoughts, felt their emotions. But these were not the minds she wanted to read, the one she sought resided in a distant tower.

Gathering all of her will, and steeling her conviction, Kazana reached out to gather more golden Ley Energy. Out the shard stretched. It had started as a thing of invisible beauty, a thin cylinder of gold. Now as Kazana's mind wavered it had become a jiggered mess of barbs, like a savage vine of golden ice.

"These young psionics, so stupid," Thomas stood at the window to his villa, gently talking to himself as he watched Ley Energy around his tower flow toward the city centre. "Ah, there it is."

Thomas could faintly see the thin tangled barb off in the distance. With little effort he created a small thin cylinder, only a few feet in length.

"Meredith," Thomas said into his wall intercom. "Please bring up one of my patients... one of the really insane ones."

"Yes sir," Meredith replied. "It will take a little while as we need to get the cage."

Whoever you are, I feel sorry for you. Telepathy goes both ways, and this day I will be choosing who you connect to.

pilot it into the middle of a sun?"

Ren stepped forward and clapped a hand on her shoulder. "I can think of no better ending."

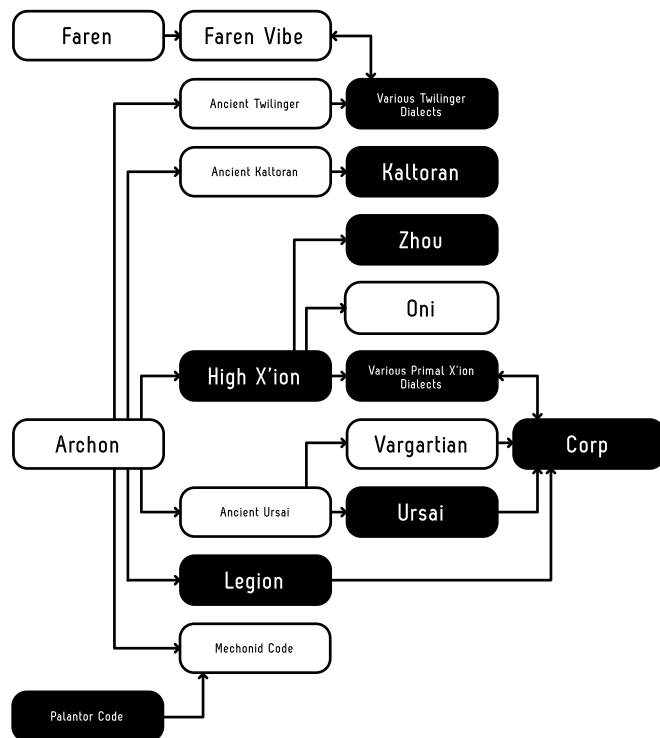
Languages

See Core Rule Book, pg: 36 for full language write up.

These example languages represent the range of communication that a character can access, be it vocal or written, based on gestures or something else entirely. All player characters can speak and write Corp (Core Rule Book, pg: 36). Further languages can be acquired through Traits, Perks (Core Rule Book pg: 60), or Secret Knowledge.

Cross-Language Communication

Resolve cross-language communication with Culture Skill Rolls (Core Rule Book, pg: 45) or Research (Core Rule Book, pg: 68).



Corp

See Core Rule Book, pg: 36 for full Corp language write up.

The widely used Corp language has been quickly picked up by, and adapted to, the races new to the Haven system. This is particularly true for the Remnant, as their language and the Corp's share a linguistic ancestor: Ancient Ursai.

While the Corp language has been slow to adopt complex phrases from the exotic Twilinger dialect, it has been quick to assimilate phrases and words that are fashionable amongst Corporation socialites and marketing departments.

As Palantor code is a non-traditional language in almost all senses, its many technical applications as a programming language is unparalleled, making it very popular amongst many software developers.

Because the Zhou population within the Haven system is so small, and their economic contribution almost non-existent, almost no Zhou words have been assimilated into the Corp language.

Twilinger

Modern Twilinger has been greatly influenced and shaped by the Faren with whom they share their lives, changing their language from primarily rational to romantic. Their vocabulary has expanded to accommodate poetry and flowery prose. Their language also includes a much greater vocal range than most, making it perfect for the musical arts.

There are many Twilinger dialects, as Twi-Far fleets often spend a generation or so separated. Additionally, each Symphony has their own words and inflections, making Twilinger a language as diverse as it is difficult to learn.

Ancient Twilinger

As one of the oldest languages, the original Twilinger language shares more commonalities with Archon than do most other ancient languages. However, the Twilinger were not a favoured race, and their culture and language has barely affected the other races. However, some say that the language exists in deep space scattered along the path of their long voyage.

Faren Vibe

- » Twi-Far Only.
- » Requires 2 Secret Knowledges.

The Vibe is the name given to the feelings which a Faren imparts to its host. It is not a language, but rather an empathic force. Each Twilinger can receive strong feelings from their Faren. Communication is difficult between a Twilinger and Faren, which can sometimes lead to challenging miscommunications.

The feelings transmitted by the Faren are sometimes unintentionally so overwhelming that they cause the host Twilinger to have an emotional breakdown of complete panic or euphoria. Some speculate that the Faren could use this as a weapon if they could master it; perhaps some Twi-Far psions have done so.

On rare occasions Twi-Far learn to speak and not just listen to the Vibe, which allows them to communicate with the Faren of other Twi-Far, not only their own. But this is a rare and unusual gift.

Faren

- » Twi-Far Only.
- » Requires Unique Knowledge.

There is very little to understand about how the Faren communicate with each other. Some speculate that they communicate via some form of telepathy, others through complex visual stimuli or energy transfer. Only rumours and legends exist of any Twi-Far ever learning this deep secret.

Ursai (Remnant)

As with all things Remnant, the modern Ursai language is based on their religion. The All-Being taught his followers using their language, Ancient Ursai, but his grammatical choices and teachings have rippled out and greatly shaped Modern Ursai.

The words used to convey the All-Being's message in many sacred texts have become the words of choice. Many older words which the All-Being never used have been discarded. Additionally, any change in attitude comes with change in vocabulary; there are now many words to refer to religious ideas where previously there were few.

Because the Modern Ursai and Corporation language share close roots, it was easy for the Remnant to learn Corp. Additionally, Ursai words have been quickly assimilated into the wider Corp language.

Ancient Ursai

At the height of their civilisation, the Ursai controlled dozens of systems, each with multiple populated worlds, each in turn with multiple subcultures and their own linguistic distinctions. While the ancient Ursai dialect known as Vargarti, later to become the Corp language, took root in the Var system, the language now known as Remnant has its roots in the Ursai core system.

As the ancient Kaltoran and Ursai societies peacefully coexisted for nearly two thousand years, both ancient language exchanged many traits and words.

Ancient Ursai is an extremely useful language for linguists and deep-space explorers, as the sprawling Ursai nation helped to shape hundreds of languages.

Palantor Code

See pg. 107 for other programming languages.

Palantor code is a complex computer language made from lines of code and voice commands. Only positronic brains are powerful enough to translate this code into intelligence. A Palantor can communicate either by networking themselves to quickly exchange information or via voice commands. It is by far the fastest known language for conveying information, both digitally and audibly. However, the other races can only use it partially, only able to slowly speak the voice commands or type the code, rather than transmitting it with their mind. Some Corps and others, however, have had neural implants installed in order to fluently speak and understand Palantor code.

The code has grown more complex since humanity wrote it, but the added complexity has not made it more efficient, only more diverse.

Palantor code is often used by programmers to write AI software, though these applications make use of a simplified version of the language.

Mechonid Code

» Requires Unique Knowledge.

To create the Mechonids, the Archons altered the Palantor code by adding subroutines related to aggressive combat and security. However, the Archons were not well suited to this task, needing to use bridging code to join theirs and the original. As a result, Mechonid code is a poor mish-mash, which to a Palantor would not sound unlike drunken, aggressive ravings.

Despite this, the Mechonids' security subroutines are incredibly effective, making them relentlessly dedicated to the task. Very few have managed to penetrate them in order to learn the Mechonid code for themselves.

Zhou

The Zhou listened to the language used by the Nephilim enemies and the sounds of the wilderness – animals, streams, and the wind – and replicated them to confer meaning. However, the Zhou do not communicate as other races do; they do not have a vocal tract like the more humanoid races. Instead, the Zhou produce sounds by clacking and grinding together internal and external bits of absorbed material. This unique way of producing language also means that although most Zhou in Haven can understand Corp, very few of them can produce the sounds to speak it.

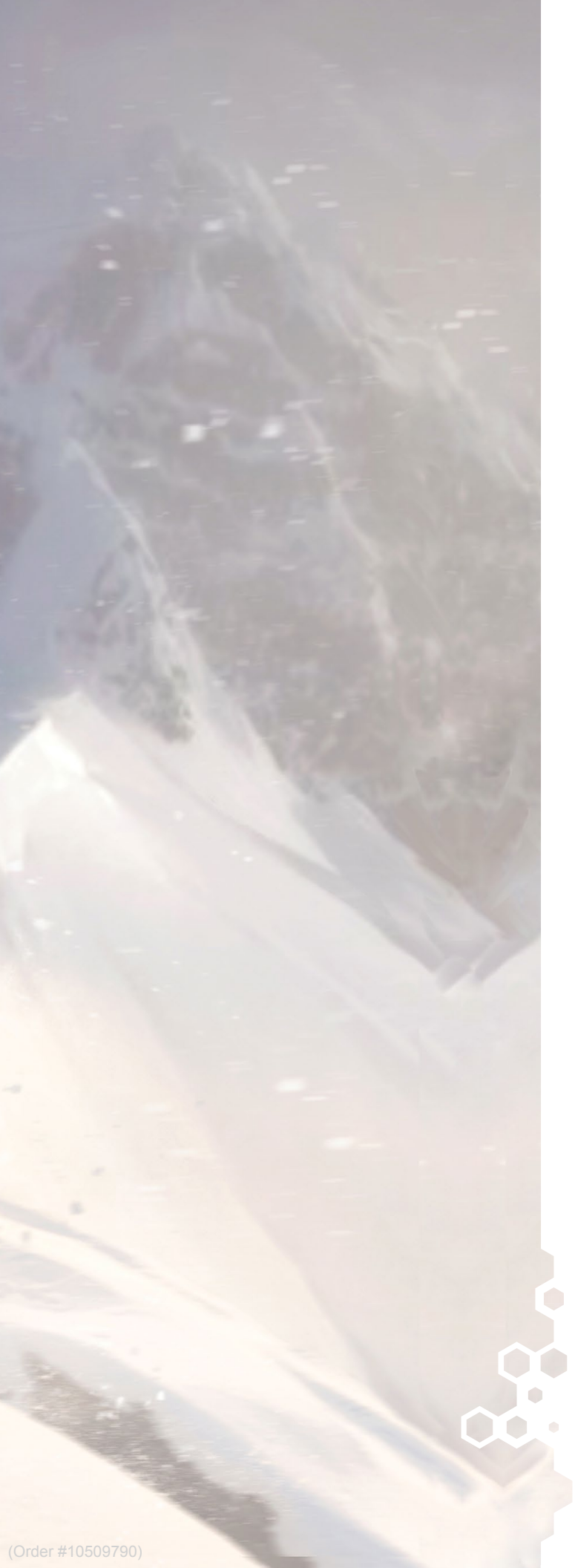
There is an almost uncountable number of Zhou dialects, stemming from both the varied materials making up the Zhou and from the many Zhou tribes, each with their own inflections and sounds. The Zhou have no formal written language, though most tribes use hieroglyphs and painted images to create visual messages.

Oni

The deep-throated language of the hulking Oni seems to be deceptively brutish and brief, but this could not be further from the truth. As the Oni's interactions with the other races are almost exclusively in the form of warfare and torture, full conversations and written examples of the Oni language are rarely witnessed.

The Oni language is an evolved branch of High X'ion, the language that the Oni and other Nephilim used during the Great War. Over the past century, the Oni have discarded the parts of their root language ill-suited their physiology, and have expanded the parts that suited them, namely their ability to use and perceive a wide spectrum of low pitches. Some academics have speculated that the Oni's hearing is so well adjusted to low pitches that they cannot distinguish between many high-pitch sounds. But we may never know, as the Oni adamantly refuse to converse with those they consider "cattle" – also known as everyone not an Oni.





Factions

Carina took a moment to bask in the victory of her kill. The Wombalda had not been an easy prey; the beast had led her on a long hunt, and a fierce final combat once she had cornered it. She respected the creature for that, and the difficult hunt had made the satisfaction of victory all the more rewarding. The cold Cerberus air felt good on her thick skin, and she embraces her right to savour this moment.

She was at the edge of her tribe's camp now, and the desolate snow covered plains of Cerberus Prime stretched out before her as an unbroken blanket of white. It was dangerous to travel deep into the plains, as food was sure to become scarce the farther out one travelled. Perhaps, when spring arrived and the game returned to the plains, her tribe would make the push across them. For now, there was plenty of meat around to last them through the long winter.

Far in the distance in the opposite direction to the plains she could make out the ugly ancient Kaltoran tombs that thrust up out of the landscape like rusted blades; glittering metallic structures towering above everything around them. The Legion had taken over these empty cities, but few lived inside those decrepit towers. Carina couldn't understand the appeal of living in one place, yet she was intrigued by the idea of a different life.

She shook her head and turned back to her camp, a small unit of tents made of thick, cured leather that was surrounded by a few beasts of burden that served various purposes. A few fires were beginning to roar, preparing to cook the Wombalda that Carina was delivering to them. It seemed a simple life, but it was all she had ever known.

She turned one last time towards the towers as light snow began to fall, just in time to see a Legion ship burn its mighty thrusters to escape the planets gravity, leaving a trail a black and red smoke. A part deep inside her, a part she didn't really understand, panged at the sight. Not only were Legion made to fight, they were also made to be in space.

The Honourbound

"With this spear of bone and wood I have slain you foul and mighty beast. Your teeth shall adorn my armour, your shell shall make for a home, your hide shall cloth my family, and your meat shall be shared to all around a mighty bonfire as I retell of this great fight."

– Agrotera, slayer of the great Tre'–Bach Gwarklorick.

When the Legion first arrived on Cerberus Prime, the commanders knew this would be their home for many generations. But most of the general soldiery believed it was a temporary situation, that they had fallen back to resupply before re-joining the war. A few of the wiser soldiers knew better, Cerberus Prime would be their new home and before the Casila Curia government was formed a great number of soldiers parted ways with the primary Legion force, choosing a nomadic life where they would live by their wits and skills, and not in cities of stone and steel. These nomads were never considered traitors or deserters, they chose a different path before a Legion government was formalised. In the years which followed the nomads and Legion army worked closely together, the nomads had knowledge from exploring the wilderness and brought food and supplies they gathered in from the wild for trade.

While the Casila Curia and the people they governed struggled to build a society, many nomad tribes thrived. The natural restlessness and aggression which had made adopting sedentary life difficult for the Legion had been channelled by the nomads into a culture based around hunting and migration. Even family life seemed to come more easily to the nomads as young Legion were taught to fight and hunt. It was a great privilege to mentor your own children to be great warriors. One particular group of nomads was gradually forming a legend, this group called themselves The Honourbound.

The Honourbound pride themselves on being the greatest hunters of all the Legion. The Honourbound hunt in the wilderness to prove who among them is the most skilled, they collect trophies from their prey as proof of their hunts. A culture of boastful storytelling surrounds these traditions as nights are spent trying to outdo each other's entertaining, and highly embellished, tales of heroism and skill.

Most nomads began returning to space along with their Legion brothers when first contact was made with the Corporation. But not the Honourbound, at the time they believed that excessive use of technology would make them soft, and cause them to lose their culture. In recent times this attitude is starting to change however, much of the largest prey on Cerberus Prime has been found and killed. As impressive trophies have become increasingly scarce, and many tales of great prey from the Haven system have reached their ears, the Honourbound have begun to leave Cerberus in small numbers.

The Great Hunt

The Honourbound are primarily a culture of hunters, much of their society is centred on hunting and survival. One of their great traditions is an annual competition called the 'Ogda Dorna,' translating to

'The Great Hunt'. Each year the most promising warriors go into the wilderness, and spend a month hunting. Whichever hunter comes back with the greatest trophy (and a great story) wins the prize, the legendary spear of Hera. They own it for a year at which time they must compete to keep the spear or lose it to another hunter. The last three winners have brought trophies from other worlds, further encouraging The Honourbound to leave Cerberus Prime.

Weapons of Choice

The Honourbound nomads have lived off the icy tundras of Cerberus Prime for many generations, they fashion weapons from what they can find or forge them from steel. Some Nomads have made homemade primitive metal slug guns, and a small number of highly prized Great War weapons remain, all kept in immaculate condition. But these hundred year old weapons are a rare commodity, and ammo must be traded for with the other Legion of Cerberus. The Honourbound, use primitive weapons as a point of pride; only a coward would use a Rail weapon to kill a creature armed with claws and teeth. The Honourbound prefer spears and bows to hunt and fight, it is part of their culture. Furthermore, the more disadvantaged you are the more boastful your tale can be. The Honourbound have been known to fight primitive Feral Nephilim with their bare hands, but they will not hesitate to bring guns to bear when needed or when more is at stake than a boastful tale.

Plot Hooks

The Greatest Prey

A Honourbound hunter named Antaeus, new to the Haven system is taking part in The Great Hunt, he has heard of an Ancient Tre'–Bach roaming the surface of Mishpacha. This beast must be the most impressive trophy in Haven. The PCs must attempt to bring this hunter to his senses before he gets himself killed or perhaps join him in his hunt if they are feeling daring.

Colossus

The PCs have been asked by the Casila Curia to investigate an ancient living Nephilim beast nicknamed 'Colossus' by the Legion that first saw it. When the PCs get closer to Colossus they discover that it is being stalked by Honourbound that are looking to make a name for themselves. If the PCs plan on gaining anything of value from Colossus they will need to persuade the Honourbound not to kill it.

Hunt for the Quantum Navigator

The PCs find themselves in the wilds of Cerberus Prime following a tip, they are looking for the Quantum Navigator, an ancient human computer said to be part of a wrecked ship somewhere on the surface of Cerberus Prime. The Honourbound know the location of the wreck and offer to help the PCs if they can prove their worth by bringing back a great trophy. Only then will the Honourbound respect them enough to give them the information that they desire.



Order of Redemption

"Through death in service are we Redeemed!"

- Common Order of Redemption war cry.

"Our people were despicable liars and traitors, our way of life was corrupt and broken. We were punished for our sins, washed away by divine retribution. The All-Being restored us, that we might be redeemed. Our new lives are from the All-Being, with our service we earn that gift. We vow to destroy evil wherever we find it. That is our sacred charge, which will lead to our redemption."

- High Paladin Haatsari Jesu.

History

The Order first came about when the All-Being walked upon Kumba, it is said that the All-Being assembled warriors to fend off the Echoes and other evils. After the All-Being physically departed, his teachings were collected together by the monks of The Order to be preserved and studied.

The Abbot deemed these sacred texts too delicate to be handled by anyone except the monks, and so the monks held control of the Order's dogma. Over time the monks made The Order peaceful; arguing that physical combat, and destroying evil was not the primary purpose of the All-Being's people. This eventually led to a great schism, the Grand Master of The Order declared the monks heretics for distorting the will of the All-Being. Most of the monks, and their Abbot left, taking the holy texts with them. They continue now as the Monasteries of Hope. The Order became known as the Order of Redemption, committed to seeking out and destroying evil in the name of the All-Being.

Structure

Within the Order of Redemption is a strict hierarchy, promotions are given for faithful service, and piety.

Knights of the order have three paths within the ranks as either, monks, priests, or clerics. Monks are the record keepers and scholars; they are few in number since the schism. Priests are preachers and missionaries, while the clerics are known as Paladins. Those yet to choose a path are known as initiates.

The Grand Master is the leader of the entire order, although there is no rule about who is eligible to lead, informally a leader is always chosen from among the clerics.

Path to Redemption

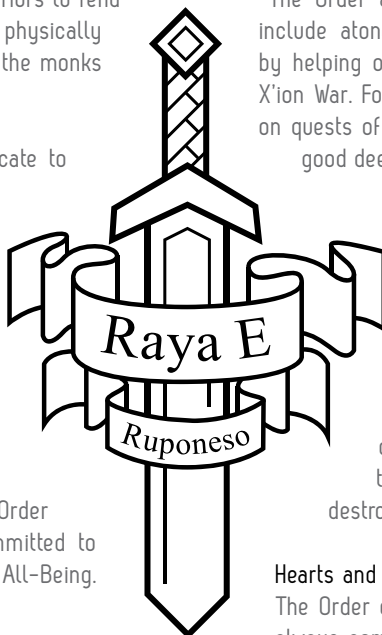
The Order has had a marked impact on the Haven system. The Order have quickly taken to destroying nests of Feral Nephilim, and hives of Mechnoids. Their assistance has also been pivotal in the fight against the Oni.

However, there is a darker side to the Order, although they appear

to defend the people of Haven it is not in their dogma. Their Order destroys evil as they perceive it, and that perception is based on the dictates of their Grand Master. Thus far they have been peaceful towards the other races, but it is possible that they might one day decide that the evil of the Eden Brood or the Corporation warrants their destruction. Despite this possibility they have been generally well received by the other races with the exception of the Legion.

The Legion had a near monopoly on 'destroying evil' and they did it for good pay. The Order of Redemption does this task for free, where one previously needed to pay for expensive mercenaries, they may now point to an 'enemy of the All-Being' and wait.

The Order also teaches that part of their redemption must include atonement for the past. This atonement is achieved by helping others, especially those wronged during the Great X'ion War. For this reason members of the order often embark on quests of atonement, they wander the Haven system doing good deeds for the people of Haven until they have become redeemed in the eyes of the All-Being.



Plot Hooks

Unrighteous Purge

A group of Kaltoran Pirates flying a ship named 'Eden's Revenge' has tricked some Order of Redemption clerics into attacking a peaceful Eden Brood settlement on one of Mishpacha's moons. The PCs must attempt to bring these clerics to their senses... or destroy them.

Hearts and Minds

The Order of Redemption and the Monasteries of Hope are always competing with each other for followers. The Order of Redemption and its knights are protecting a Refugee camp of Remnant on a Kadash moon. But the refugees are starting to change their denomination, flocking to the Monasteries and away from the Order. The commanding Paladin cannot abandon the camp for fear of the Nephilim but wishes to make a demonstration that the All-Beings gift must be earned and are not a free gift. He asks the PCs to accompany some knights on a quest to end the Nephilim threat to the camp and to prove that the All-Being is behind their cause.

Unwanted Charity

'The Knights Quest', an Order of Redemption party is seeking the aid of the PCs in settling a dispute between them and a group of Exsilia Mercenaries named 'The Arm of Zeus'. It seems the Exsilia were hired to clear out a Mechnoid hive in the Liberty Belt but the Order got there first. Now the Palantor are refusing to pay the Exsilia, the outraged Exsilia are planning to take 'compensation' from the Order by force unless the PCs can convince them otherwise.

Psion Mind

"The All-Being is a psionic manifestation, the collective unconscious of the surviving Ursai minds on Kumba. With its collected power the All-Being acted to bring back bodies for the immortal minds which constituted its power. That is the true cause of the resurrection."

—Great Mudzidzisi Zivanai.

Although Psion Mind is a religion, it does not have an organised hierarchy, instead the Psion Mind is spread through tutelage. Initiates are guided by mentors called Mudzidzisi. They vary from one to the next but all Mudzidzisi are capable of psionic power and each teaches a collection of common ideas and rituals. They teach that the All-Being is the collective consciousness of a great many psionic minds which can be invoked for wisdom or power but is not to be worshipped. They also teach that through mental discipline an individual may one day ascend to join the All-Being. The Mudzidzisi have a collection of ritual practices which can prepare a mind for its inevitable death prospective ascension. These practices include meditation, kata, singing and many others, each designed to strengthen the mind and awaken psionic potential. The ritual practices vary greatly from one Mudzidzisi to another as each has their own ideas on how best to best prepare for ascension.

Occasionally a Great Mudzidzisi of significant psionic power comes to be treated like a demi-god and gathers, either deliberately or accidentally, a large number of followers who treat their every word as though it came from the All-Being itself. However, few Mudzidzisi enjoy status such as this, and most wish to be a simple teacher who shows a few apprentices how to properly hone their psionic gifts.

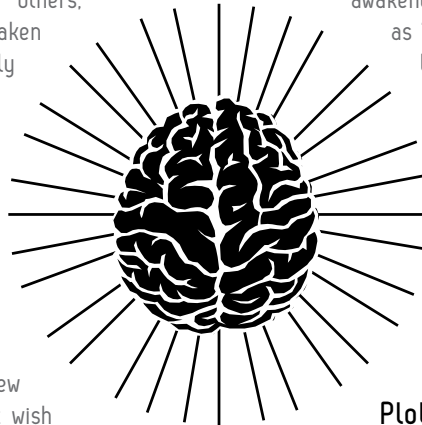
Psion Mind deny much of the science held by other races regarding the nature of Echoes, Ley Lines and psionics. They believe that 'all' remnant are psions or latent psions is yet to be realised. They also believe that the Echoes must be the consciousness of destroyed Ursai and Nephilim whose continued existence is only possible because all Echoes were once psionic beings. Therefore all Ursai which were not psions are now forever dead, and have not left Echoes. Additionally, some believe that the vast majority of Echoes which still exist are Nephilim as they were not resurrected by the All-Being. Some suspect that there might be another psionic entity similar to the All-Being but composed of Nephilim minds.

The belief that all spirituality is derived from psionics has lead Psion Mind to be somewhat psion supremacists, most members believe that psionic individuals are 'better' than non-psionics. Unlike many of the other Remnant beliefs the Psion Mind is only interested in recruiting psionics. Indeed, many non-remnant who have natural psionic power have turned to Psion Mind Mudzidzisi for training. Additionally, all psions no matter the race have potential to ascend and join the All-Being and that this should be the ultimate goal of all psions.

The followers of Psion Mind have no temples, as they do not believe the All-Being wishes to be worshipped. However, they do have spiritual universities where they can learn how best to train their minds. Psion Mind recognises the power of Simba Mabwe but it is generally believed that certain minds have chosen to dwell in these artefacts rather than join the All-Being or return to mortal form. When a Simba Mabwe demonstrates power it is the psionic mind within using their power.

Transcendence

The goal of any individual within Psion Mind is to transcend and to become part of the All-Being after they die. It is believed that there is a path of enlightenment which must be followed before transcendence can be achieved. The first step on the path is called 'The Awakening', during this stage an initiate attempts to discipline their mind until they can tap into their latent psionic abilities (pick any trait which makes you a psionic). Those who become awakened, or already are, proceed to the next step known as 'The Growth,' at this stage the disciple must prove their psionic mastery (choose an additional psionic Trait). Upon achieving this stage you may call yourself Mudzidzisi and train others. The final stage is called 'The Cusp,' in this last stage you must show exceptional psionic ability (choose a Secret Knowledge psionic Trait). Those who complete this stage are regarded as a great Mudzidzisi and deemed ready for transcendence. At each stage there are many rituals to help prepare the mind.



Plot Hooks

False Prophet

A Great Mudzidzisi named Kudakwashe with hundreds of followers has instructed them to build a temple for him and declared himself a god. Although, a psion of significant power he is hardly a deity. Violence should be a last resort, however this has dire implications for how Psion Mind is considered by others. Several Mudzidzisi have pooled together a fund to hire mercenaries to kill this false prophet and prove he is no god.

The Splice of Life

A Nephilim scientist has been abducting subjects and forcing an experimental genetic splice on them he calls 'The Splice of Life'. It gives his subjects psionic power, but not only have many died in the process, most have become his slaves. An escapee has approached a Great Mudzidzisi, and asked the Mudzidzisi to help him control his wild, and unwanted powers. Forcing psionic power on those who don't want it is wrong, and in the view of Psion Mind it also cheapens the gift to grant it to just 'anyone'. The PCs have been asked to investigate this scientist and stop him and his psionic slaves.

Symphony of the Dragon

"The Dragon is ancient and strong, a being of terrible might.
His fellows he defends, no matter how hard the fight.
The traditions he does protect with flame and open jaw.
Old order will be maintained with courage and sharpened claw."
– Song of the Dragon.

The Dragons began as the first wave of Twilinger to undergo the Merging with the Faren. These first Twi-Far were the most important advocates for the Merging as a way of life. In those early days they were radical reformists who primarily came from the ranks of the Twi-Far combat forces. The Dragons quickly emerged as a popular political party, and were the first to propose the Chorus that made the Merging commonplace. Now that the relationship between Faren and Twilinger is permanent, their role in politics has shifted toward maintaining this paradigm.

The Dragons are now primarily a military organisation rather than a political one, their role among the Twi-Far is to maintain order and to protect the fleets. Like all Twi-Far they share a love of art, and a have a need to pursue the Journey. The militaristic nature of the Dragons is reflected in their approach to these things. There is no greater art to a Dragon than the martial arts, Dragons spend a lot of time mastering their fighting and physical skills which they call a dance. The dance of the dragons is a disciplined martial art which incorporates many forms of combat: guns, melee weapons and their Faren. The Dragons will spend a lifetime mastering their dance, and sculpting their bodies to make them ready for anything that the Journey might throw at them.

The Journey is about experiencing the wonder of the universe, and the Dragons recognise that the greatest wonders and the deepest mysteries lie past mortal danger. The Dragons are unsatisfied with simply observing and exploring the universe, they must dive head first into its most dangerous depths. The Dragons are renowned for their courage and are willing to brave black holes, radioactive nebulas and the inside of volcanoes so that their Journey leaves nothing out. This bravery in the face of all odds is one facet of the closely held code of honour to which the Dragons abide.

Along with their martial traditions the Dragons keep a code of honour which they call Dagdorkak, which translates to 'The Way of the Dragon'. Vowing to follow the Dagdorkak is part of the initiation into their symphony and must be adhered to by all in their fraternity. The code includes 8 sacred virtues which must be upheld: Loyalty, Order, Curiosity, Truth, Courage, Honour, Valour and Tradition. They are also instructed to let their Faren within guide them, their Faren helps them keep to both their vows, and to the Journey. This code combined with their martial skill has made the Dragons essential in the Twi-Far's fight against the Oni.

The Dragons were the only advocates in the last Chorus to directly fight the Oni rather than flee to Haven. However, the Dragons have a deep respect for tradition, and abided the decision to flee. The Dragons act as the Twi-Far's primary fighting force against the Oni, they do this to protect their people and as part of their Journey.

Collaboration

All of the symphonies, and especially the largest three, collaborate for the good of their whole race. The Dragons contribute to the whole by working as soldiers: defending the other Symphonies from the Oni and other outside threats. They also work as adjudicators and police, the Voice of a ship may call upon the Dragons to bring a rogue to justice or to give advice as foremost experts in Twi-Far culture and tradition. As the Twi-Far do not have a strict legal code, following the traditions and decisions of Voices past is often used to inform complex legal decisions. Without the Dragons the Twi-Far culture would not have the glue which holds it together and they would surely have been destroyed by the Oni.



Faren

Those who choose to be Dragons typically have Faren with a certain temperament. These Faren are bold and strong willed, willing to put themselves in harm's way to experience the universe. Their Faren also tend to be some of the most powerful, probably because these Faren are dangerous thrill seekers by nature. The Faren seem to have an understanding of the vows undertaken by the Dragons, and use the Vibe to instil courage and protectiveness into their host. This helps the Dragon keep his bravery in overwhelming odds.

Plot Hooks

The Dragon's Claws

Recently a large Oni ship has attacked and overcame a small Twi-Far fleet, the crew have been either killed or taken as slaves. The Dragons are putting together a rescue fleet to save the enslaved Twi-Far before their people are broken. The PCs have been asked to help with this daring raid against the Oni. To board the Oni ship, and to rescue the captives before it is too late.

The Dragon's Lair

Papin, a prominent member of the Dragons, and the Voice of the ship Nova-Edge has been out of contact for many weeks. The PCs have been asked to find Papin and her ship. The Nova-Edge was last seen volcano diving on Gehenna. On arrival in Gehennas orbit the PCs discover a distress message indicating that the Nova-Edge was investigating strange energy readings coming from inside a super-volcano. The ship has been wrecked in a cave inside the volcano, and the energy reading was a pending eruption. The PCs must attempt to rescue the Papin and her crew before the volcano erupts.

Symphony of the Salamander

"The Salamander is a peaceful beast which sings of hearth and home.
Industrious and wise, on his skills he hones.
His fire is that of industry and not of war or death.
He works for duty and family until his final breath."

– Song of the Salamander.

The Salamanders have a very down to earth view of the journey compared with the other symphonies. For them the journey is not travelling through the galaxy, but is found in the everyday process of life. They see beauty of the everyday; your vocation, relationships, and family are all part of the journey. For these reasons this fraternity is one of the most popular symphonies as it relates to a great many Twi-Far who prefer a safer, and more settled journey.

Although, fleeing from the Oni was the reason the Twi-Far came to Haven, most among the Salamanders are treating this emigration as a new beginning. There is an opportunity in Haven for the Twi-Far to settle down, and to have a more peaceful life. Therefore, the Salamanders have been the most proactive in establishing trade, diplomacy and friendly relationships with the other races. The Salamanders have even considered entering into the Corp economy to deepen their roots into Haven. Aside from their desire for peace and the prosperity needed to raise a family, the Salamanders are also the most industrious of the symphonies and have exceptional practical skill.

Many of the most skilled Twi-Far scientists and engineers are Salamanders, they tend to spend more time learning and improving their trade than the other Symphonies. This is largely because their journey includes improving your skills and knowledge as well as exploring and experiencing.

Another key responsibility of the salamanders is food production, the fraternity tills and tends beautiful food gardens. Each garden is arranged to maximise aesthetics and the plants are all food yielding varieties chosen from hundreds of worlds. These shipboard conservatories act as quiet spaces for contemplation but are as crucial to sustaining life as they are tranquil. These gardens must provide enough food for the entire crew, and do so in a sustainable way. The ships waste and water are recycle to tend these gardens but not before being filtered, purified and infused with aromatics.

Although it is the responsibility of the Dragons to do most of the fighting, the Salamanders are fierce when defending their own. The fraternity is wise enough to know that the Dragons will not always be in the right place at the right time. The Salamanders can man a ferocious technologically focused defence when necessary and fight with surprising tenacity since most of the time when they fight: they already have their backs against the wall and are protecting their children and families.

Collaboration

All of the symphonies and especially the largest three collaborate for the good of their whole race. The Salamanders contribute to the whole by working as engineers, building, and repairing warships used by the Dragons. They work as scientists cataloguing and observing discoveries made by the Phoenixes. They also serve as childcare workers and teachers at times when parents are busy. Without the Salamanders all Twi-Far would have a harder time providing stability and prosperity to their fleets and families.

Faren

Those who choose to be Salamanders typically have Faren with a certain temperament. The Faren who they are bonded too reward their host with positive emotions via the vibe whenever they fulfil a goal, reach a milestone or finish a great work. It is the satisfaction gained from completing tasks and learning new skills which drives a Salamander forward. This also includes imparting skills to others, watching them succeed and enjoying others success as though it was their own. This is why Salamanders love to be parents and make great teachers.



Plot Hooks

Friends Indeed

The Salamanders are making friends and contacts with the other races of Haven. They have quickly formed close bonds with the Kaltorans, as they have many similar values. The city of Jordah on Kadash uses an Archon built energy shield to hold back the sea water, and it is gradually failing. The Salamanders have offered to help.

A energy field stabilizer is required, and one is known to be inside one of their larger ships as part of their jump system. A replacement system will need to be found and installed before the cities shield collapses and without leaving the Salamanders stranded.

Convoy

The bulk of the Twi-Far fleet is safely inside the Haven system, but a few smaller fleets are struggling to safely move through the sector. These fleets are slowly making their way to Haven but many are being ambushed by the Oni, who are taking the crew as slaves. The Salamanders have asked the PCs to escort one of these refugee convoys and fight off the Oni slavers.

Jungle Settlers

Many Salamanders see the Haven system as their future home, and many families are eager to settle on a planet for the first time. This will be a new and exciting experience, and an eager new chapter in their Journey. Mishpacha is the most habitable world, with abundant resources and a beautiful jungle. The PCs have been asked to help the Salamanders clear some of the ground to make room for construction. The jungle is full of danger however and the PCs will need to protect the naive settlers while they get established.

Symphony of the Phoenix

"The Phoenix extends her wings and drifts about the stars.
Beside her inner fire with who, this life she shares.
Together they journey this life, a thing to be enjoyed
and search for love and passion wherever in the void."
– Song of the Phoenix.

Of all the Symphonies, the Phoenixes treasure the journey the most, this fraternity revels in the wonder of the void. Experiencing the journey for Phoenixes is not only about new discoveries in exploration but all new experiences. The Phoenixes are always trying to find new sounds, smells and flavours which they have never had. Additionally, they are always seeking new adventures, friendships, and lovers. They want the most out of life, and will easily become bored if they remain in the same situation for too long.

Although the Twi-Far are supposed to be settled in the Haven system until the war with the Oni is won the Phoenixes have been unable to do so. More exploration of systems, anomalies and nebulae near to Haven have been undertaken in the few years the Twi-Far have been in Haven than all the years before. This has largely been due to the efforts of the Phoenixes.

Phoenixes spend as much time as they can in space looking for new things to see and do. Additionally like all Twi-Far, Phoenixes have a love of the arts, but because they strive for new experiences their work tends to be the most experimental. Their truly strange and surreal music, art, dance and poetry are their chosen crafts, often so alien that others struggle to understand what they are experiencing. As they journey and create, a stronger bond forms between the Faren and their host, this is because the journey is the purpose of existence for the Faren. The Phoenixes have the closest relationship with their Faren of all Twi-Far. This has made Phoenixes a primary source of wisdom and spirituality, as they have the greatest understanding and ability to communicate with the Faren.

For Twi-Far, spirituality is most plainly seen between the bond of a Twilinger and their Faren, and is more important than any other relationship. This bond is for life, so even if the Faren and its host drift apart they must remain together. So it is necessary for both in the pair to share a happy and healthy relationship, the alternative can lead to madness or worse. If a merging becomes discordant, a Twi-Far will often seek the advice of a Phoenix spirit guide to help resolve the turmoil between a Faren and their host. Additionally, some Phoenixes act as shamans who are said to be able to commune with any Faren, even those still wild or bonded to another.

The Phoenixes are also often mystics, those whose bonds with their Faren are so close that they have almost achieved full symbiosis. Mystics are able to allow their Faren to project further from their

bodies than others. This has given mystics the ability to project their Faren to even more powerful effect than most Twi-Far can achieve. Additionally, some mystics are said to be able to meditate and project their Faren from their bodies, these mystics say that their minds also leave their bodies and they can journey together without physical form.

Collaboration

All of the symphonies and especially the largest three collaborate for the good of their whole race. Phoenixes act as explorers for the Salamanders, alerting them to anomalies of scientific interest. They also serve as scouts for the Dragons gathering information on enemies of the Twi-Far as they explore the Void. To all Twi-Far Phoenixes act as spirit guides, shamans, mystics and healers, helping the Twi-Far form bonds with their Faren. If it were not for the Phoenixes the Twi-Far would not be the legendary explorers that they are and would only have the shallowest understanding of their Faren counterpart.



Faren

Those who choose to be Phoenixes typically have Faren with a certain temperament. These Faren excite most in the Journey and grant feelings of pure joy and ecstasy during the Journey. These Faren find themselves to be the best understood of all Faren as it is apparent that they enjoy nothing more than to get out into the void and explore its wonders. These Faren also tend to make their hosts restless when sedentary and drive them ever onwards to new experiences and explorations.

These Faren also seem to love deeply but will not settle on a partner unless a perfect match is found for both the Faren and its host.

Plot Hooks

Stellar-Prize

The PCs have been asked to join the crew of a Phoenix ship, the Stellar-Prize. The ship is embarking on a four year mission to explore nearby systems where none have gone before, seeking potential allies against the Oni. Along the way the PCs will encounter strange life and unknown civilisations and boldly explore the galaxy.

Inner Darkness

Sometimes a merging can go wrong. Some Faren are wild and dangerous killers, filled with passionate hate, emotional instability, or more alien desires. One such Faren has replaced the intended during a Merging with a young Dragon Twilinger, forcing itself into the host. This Twi-Far has become a powerful mystic and its Faren is steering its host towards a path of destruction and death. The PCs need to capture this Twi-Far, and if possible, bring them to an experienced Phoenix spirit guide, who can hopefully help the host to regain some control over their Faren, and discover the reason behind such destruction.

Neochaelogs

"This outpost is extraordinary! Yes, I know it's extraordinary because of how boring it was. They relied upon protein packs and base water rations without any means to reconfigure food for themselves. To think they would have gone on living perfectly plain lives if not for the day this outpost was leveled by the Remnant."

- Balint_0029, Unacknowledged Victims of the Great War.

History

The Neochaelogs are more than a Palantor movement dedicated to discovering history; they are a movement dedicated to the recovery of lost knowledge that the Palantor find they no longer possess, and to gain a greater understanding of the physical existence that they now live in. The Palantor have lost so much knowledge about who they are and where their physical ancestors came from that the prospect of finding any keys to their past has become irresistible to many members of their race.

Although the war with the Mechnoids requires the majority of the Palantor's resources, many of their members eagerly seek out and explore ancient, and particularly Human, ruins in the hope that they might gain a greater knowledge of their past. The important work of these Neochaelogs permits them to leave behind their duties to the Palantor and the restoration of the Palantor Network, allowing them to explore the galaxy, cataloguing rare artefacts and uncover key historical events. In this way they also serve as unofficial ambassadors for the Palantor, as they are commonly the first Palantor that other races meet.

The Neochaelogs

Discovery. This word best explains everything that the Neochaelogs do. Discovering everything from trivial information about a planet's festival for growing crops to uncovering the mysteries of a ten thousand year old dead language are enticing to the Neochaelogs. Though sometimes their discoveries are not as practical as discovering old tech on abandoned planets or the remains of a Nephilim ship floating in the void, the Neochaelogs desire nothing more than to expand their libraries with the knowledge of what the universes occupants once had.

The Neochaelogs are divided into Colleges that are dedicated to different aspects of their mission. The Tankyu-sha are responsible for following up on leads and seeing if the rumours and stories that come their way are true. The Sutoreji deciphers the information brought back by the Neochaelogs field workers, and filter out what information is worth keeping and what is a waste of their time. Finally, the Gyaza are the ones who try to reclaim lost technology or artefacts, and though their casualties are often heavy, the Gyaza are the ones who understand the dangers of this universe the most.

The Restoration of Knowledge

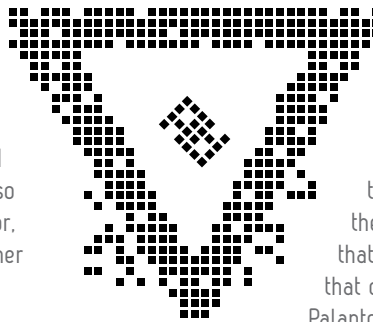
The Neochaelogs count among their members the bravest and most curious of the Palantor. It is not enough for a Palantor to leave

the safety of Tanjo and explore the universe. Instead, they must be willing to see the universe through fresh eyes, and to be willing to seek out understanding of how the physical world works. All Palantor have lost nearly all of their memories of what being human was once like, and as such now must explore a universe that is a faint echo of what they think they know.

There are numerous dangers that the Palantor must face beyond the wariness of their fellow races or the Mechnoid. The Palantor often seek out ruins that are in remote and dangerous portions of the sector. The further they go from an access point to the Network, the greater the danger of their digital imprints becoming disrupted, and many Palantor have disappeared and never returned home when they went to seek out great ruins in a dark corner of the galaxy.

Though the Palantor are known for their pragmatism and pride, the Neochaelogs rarely suffer from a lack of new recruits. Many of the minds taken from the Network are curious about the state of this universe, and since they do not have any memories to fall back on, they view the exploration of the real world to be akin to another great adventure.

Not all Palantor think that the Neochaelogs mission is a useful one. Many believe that by taking their people away from the fight with the Mechnoids they are weakening the war effort, and others believe that those who go off on frivolous adventures waste time that could be spent improving the positronic brains of the Palantor or aiding in the construction of their society.



Dogma

We know who we are now, but we have forgotten who we once were and are now in a universe that is as mystifying to us as it is dangerous. Though the Network will always be our true home, we need to understand the world we are in if we are to survive. This means exploring this new galaxy and delving into its lost secrets no matter the cost, because we cannot afford to remain ignorant any longer. We once mastered an existence of infinite size and complexity; what is this but one more existence to explore?

Plot Hook

Missing Explorer

A Neochaelogs has gone missing near the Corporation business colony of Brightsun on a Mishpacha moon. The Neochaelogs was interested in learning more about the Corporation's interests in an ancient Human settlement in the area. The missing Neochaelogs may have had an idea on how to activate the hidden vaults in the area, which would give the Corporation an enormous advantage both militarily and financially. The Palantor are eager to relocate their missing member and discover if their has been any foul play by the Corporation.

Silver Mask Pact

"Space is freedom for our people but hunger is our prison. To overcome our hunger requires knowledge, science is the path to knowledge. We must first strive to understand, and to change ourselves, culturally, scientifically, and genetically. We can then strive for independence from the Twi-Far not just for ourselves but for all the Zhou. Once we have escaped hunger, we will be truly free."

– Zaqwin, chief of Silver Claws at their joining of the Pact

Shortly after the first Zhou were taken up into space by the Twi-Far, the chieftains of two great tribes the Silver Claws, and the Black Masks met in orbit around their home world Praid to discuss the future of their people. During this discussion both chiefs concluded that the future of the Zhou lay in the stars, but not until their people were first reformed. Together these chiefs formed what would eventually become known as the Silver Mask Pact.

The Pact is made up of dozens of small tribes, and a few large tribes. Chiefs of the largest tribe's form a ruling council which is organised much like a Twi-Far Choir. The Pact has core tenants and beliefs which all member tribes must follow, however each tribe's internal laws and customs are their own.

The Silver Mask Pact are the most willing from among the Zhou to adapt to new cultures, technologies and ideas. They have made great advancements in their culture to reduce the crippling impact of their hunger, and the Twi-Far trust the Pact enough that they are free to traverse space as they please, and have been given a small fleet of Corporation and Twi-Far made ships. The flagship of their fleet is known as 'The Shining Hope'. They have adopted many advanced technologies into their everyday lives, and it has been rumoured that they have started to build their own ships.

Most members of the Silver Mask Pact spend all their time in space: on space stations or in spacecraft. The unique physiology of the Zhou makes life in space considerably easier as they require little to no life support systems, but hunger remains an issue for all. Most of these space faring Zhou have fashioned themselves bodies from their metallic surroundings, giving them an almost robotic appearance.

The Pact is somewhat contradictory in nature, on the one hand they work towards the freedom of their own people but they do not trust their people to be free. They wish to take their culture into space but must destroy everything they are in order to achieve it. The Pathfinders say 'To join the Pact is to stop being Zhou.'

The Pact finds themselves at odds with the Zhou tribes that wish to remain closer to their tribal roots. The Amber Pathfinders are their primary rival and many Zhou criticise the Pact of simply copying the other races rather than making their own identity.

The Quest

The Pact refers to their search for a way to end their peoples hunger as 'The Quest'. This pursuit is the primary activity of most of the Silver Mask Pacts scientists and explorers. It is the belief of the Pact that an answer is out there waiting for them, that when their quest is completed they will be able to reform their people so that they can rise above the status as very sophisticated bacteria, and become a true people. They care not how this is achieved, whether by genetic engineering, social reform or some other answer yet unconsidered.

Plot Hooks

One Small Step for the Zhou

The Silver Mask Pact are designing the first Zhou suitable spacecraft, it is of utmost importance that the new ship be able to store large quantities of food. The Pact asks the PCs to gather specific plant samples from Mishpacha in an attempt to find a superfood capable of sustaining the extreme needs of the Zhou during long space journeys. The PCs will discover that the best source of food comes from the aggressive living plants, and must fight for their samples.

Hunger Pains

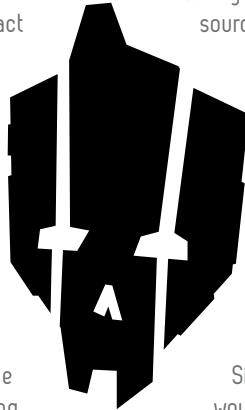
The Silver Mask Pact has become aware of a Twi-Far ship adrift without power. They know the ship was transporting a Pact loyal Zhou tribe to Mishpacha and fear the worst, that the Zhou have gone insane with hunger and overpowered the Twi-Far crew. The Pact asks the PCs to board the vessel to investigate and if indeed the Zhou have gone insane, to kill them all. The Silver Pact cannot risk this story reaching the public as it would feed peoples fear and mistrust of the Zhou. Upon the PCs completion of the mission a Corp reporter who caught wind of the story offers the PCs money to give her details. Do the PCs take the quick cash or do they keep their promise to keep things quiet.

The Sustenance of Faith

A Remnant priest named Tinashe has told the Pact that the key to taming their Hunger waits among the Simba Mabwe of the Ursai home world Kumba. Is it a false promise, a veiled attempt at conversion or are there real answers? A group of Pact scientists have been sent to investigate the claim and have asked the PCs to protect them from the Echoes.

The Lab of Eden

The Pact has discovered an ancient Archon Laboratory which helped create the Zhou. There would be no better place to search for answers to 'The Quest'. However the laboratory is on the planet Eden and the Nephilim who live there are hostile to the Zhou. Not wanting to risk an 'incident' the PCs are hired to investigate the laboratory. The decrepit lab has many automated defences specially designed to kill escaping Zhou. If the PCs manage to get past the defences they may find a cure for the Zhou's hunger, a counteragent to the Zhou contagion that could kill all Zhou or a living proto-zhou still in captivity.







Locations

Deep beneath the crushing ocean depths of Kadash lies the ancient Meimarin temple. The temple had once been a great spectacle to behold; and one of the largest structure on this ancient holy world. Now, most of it lies buried on the floor of the ocean, and its secrets buried with it.

It wasn't the depth that concerned Amos. He was Kaltoran, and they know how to navigate the great Kadash oceans. It wasn't even the sense of loneliness at leaving his family behind to make the pilgrimage to this now reclaimed temple.

No. None of those things were on Amos' mind as he cleared a coral reef and laid his eyes on Meimarin for the first time. What brought chills up and down his spine were the half dozen feral Nephilim monstrosities occupying the water between Amos and the temple.

Amos had heard stories of the Nephilim that inhabited these waters. A few pilgrims from his home city returned with stories of watching these terrifying sea beasts at a great distance. He had been warned to steer clear of the Nephilim, and to be patient. But what was he to do in a situation like this when they were all around him?

Amos couldn't turn around, not when he had travelled so far.

He saw immediately what had attracted the Nephilim. A large sea creature had died, and its remains were slowly sinking to the bottom of the ocean. These ferals were in a feeding frenzy, each competing to tear the most meat off the carcass.

If he was lucky, the Nephilim would be too busy snapping at each other to notice one small Kaltoran slipping around them. If he was unlucky... well, then he would die in the arms of the ocean, and that wasn't a bad way for a Kaltoran to go.

Amos gritted his teeth and planted his feet against the coral wall behind him. He aimed for a gap beneath the Nephilim. If he stayed close to the ocean floor, far beneath the frenzy, he had a shot. As long as they didn't notice.

Amos steeled himself, took a deep breath through his oxygen tank, pushed off of the coral, and hoped.

Meimarin

"Because of its awe-inspiring statues, intricate carvings, diverse underwater gardens, colourful aquatic life and once prime location, this temple was once the most beautiful structure on all of Kadash. It was beautiful once I'm sure. But now this temple is beautiful for another reason: because it shelters our families and our hope. It will guide us to the future and heal us from the past."

– High Priest Jael Roth.

Ancestral Worship

The Kaltoran religion is unlike any other, both due to the history of the Kaltorans and the nature of the Kaltorans themselves. The Kaltorans do not worship their Archon creators, they have no religious texts to comb through in arduous study, and no gods to pray to. But make no mistake: the Kaltoran are an incredibly religious people.

While some races look to fables and religious parables to find insight on how to live their lives, the Kaltorans look back into their genetic memories. Many spend long hours meditating, focusing on the ancient ways, and wisdom of their Kaltoran ancestors. A craftsman at a loss may meditate on his father's memories to improve his technique. An over-burdened mother may watch through her great grandmother's eyes to learn how to take care of her children. In this way, a Kaltoran's genetic memories, and the process of focusing in on them, have become as sacred as any other religion.

The act of meditation was an important part of life for the Kaltoran nation long before their genocide during the Great War. Temples were erected in all Kaltoran cities with the motive of assisting the Kaltoran population in their meditations. Priests would move about sound-proofed chambers and would assist in accessing memories through the use of music, chants, the lighting of incense, and instructive words of wisdom. These methods would help guide a Kaltoran back in time through their genetic memories to find what they sought. Memories become particularly hazy if one tries to focus back more than a generation or two, but the priests had found many ways to pierce that haze.

The priests at the experimental Meimarin Temple developed techniques that were well beyond anything found at the other temples. The temple lies deep under the oceans on the planet Kadash, far away from any major population centres, with the only access being through the long underground tunnels of pit city Zion or by aquatic craft.

History

The idea behind Meimarin Temple was unconventional – a temple designed to be hard to reach, to force a Kaltoran pilgrim to leave their everyday lives behind. There were no distractions in Meimarin, no noise or traffic, or day-to-day worries. The depths of the sea acted as their own soundproofing, and some chambers allowed a Kaltoran to completely lose themselves inside their memories for extended periods while enclosed in sensory deprivation chambers. The temple was beautiful – considered by many to be the most beautiful temple the Kaltorans ever built. The windows looked onto colourful coral reefs and aquatic gardens, and the priests kept large aquariums of only the most beautiful fish.

The priests at Meimarin Temple were constantly pushing the boundaries of Kaltoran meditation, trying to see farther and farther back into the lives of their ancestors. And then the Great War happened.

When the Kaltoran nation began to fall, many Kaltorans fled to Kadash – the planet farthest from the front lines of combat. When the Nephilim enemy finally reached Kadash and began to bomb its surface, the Kaltorans fled to the only place remaining: the Meimarin Temple.

The temple saved the Kaltoran people. It was from within this temple that the construction of the underwater tunnels would first begin. They dug the great pit city Zion, and for a long time that became the Kaltorans only home. But eventually, they expanded. As generations passed, and the Dark Tribes began to wander the tunnels around Meimarin, the temple was abandoned and eventually fell into a state of bleak disrepair. The tunnel that connected Meimarin to Zion collapsed and flooded, cutting off access to the temple.

The temple itself was no longer the magnificent showpiece of Kaltoran religion that it once was. Much of it is in ruins and its time abandoned eroded away the elegant carvings that once adorned its walls. The lower areas of the temple and the tunnels that run beneath it are flooded and their twisting pathways have become inhabited by terrifying sea creatures and prowling Dark Tribesman.

When the Kaltorans activated their nuclear generator and once again adapted to life in the light, restoring Meimarin became an important project to many Kaltoran religious sects as they wanted the temple to once more become a shining beacon of hope for the Kaltoran people. Many sections of the temple have been emptied of water and restored to full functionality. The Kaltorans have lived in dirt and grime for so long that it has become a part of them; it has tarnished their very soul. Restoring this beautiful memory to its lost greatness is a visible sign that things can change for the Kaltorans; they will once again be able to embrace the beauty in their lives.

Newly ordained priests operate in the upper levels of Meimarin, and they once again maintain the meditation chambers as their ancestors did before them, but the lower levels have been closed off to all but the most daring pilgrims, adventure seekers, and archeologists.

Locations

The Meditation Chambers

The meditation chambers still exist inside of Meimarin Temple, and they are perhaps more important than they have ever been. Now, with the Kaltorans attempting to rebuild their civilization, it is crucial that they find a way to look back farther – to look back before the years of darkness, to remember and draw upon a time of peace and prosperity. The priests are looking to not only perceive new memories; they are also looking for a way to block painful memories from a Kaltoran's mind. During the years of darkness, the Kaltorans were forced to resort to

many unsavoury tasks in order to ensure their survival. These traumatic memories are a blight on the Kaltoran people and their religion. They are a distraction from peace and instil within many a Kaltoran a fear of meditation, which often causes them to seek refuge by snapping back to the present.

The Abandoned Levels

The lower levels of the Meimarin temple are abandoned for a reason. They are unstable, flooded, and cave-ins are common. They are also home to many Dark Tribesmen. These tribesmen have made their home in these abandoned tunnels and while they have left the Kaltorans alone for now, it is possible that this could change. The priests have an unspoken treaty with the Dark Tribes. Many tribeswomen will actually sneak away from their tribe to leave their newborn babies in the temple, in the hopes that the priests will raise them into a better life than the Dark Tribes can offer.

Residential Levels

Meimarin Temple cannot afford to be only a temple any longer. The Kaltoran nation is expanding out of the tunnels and its citizens require homes. Many are still frightened to return to space and instead choose to stay below. The nearby pit city Zion is filled to capacity, and so more and more homeless are flocking to the residential levels of Meimarin, especially now that a small tunnel between the temple and Zion has been repaired once again.

People

Jael Roth

The current high priest of Meimarin Temple oversees its day-to-day operations. He is an incredibly devout priest, fully dedicated to helping guide his flock into their meditations. He is old, even by Kaltoran standards. Old enough to not only remember his time spent in darkness first hand but to also faintly remember a time before. He will do whatever it takes to never let his people face those dark times again. He will do whatever it takes to guide his people into a better future.

Jael believes that meditation is crucial at this juncture and the Kaltorans can reach their old greatness once again. He sees the restoration of the temple as a sign that the Kaltorans are meant to reach new heights, and he preaches messages of hope and clarity. He is at the forefront of the priesthood when it comes to finding ways to block painful memories and has taken on the burden of erasing these terrible things himself. Jael is a kind, compassionate man. His heart breaks for what his people had to suffer, and he will do everything he can to protect his people, even personally adopting many of the Dark Tribe children left at his temple.

Dalia Savage

Dalia is descended from a long line of Kaltoran generals. Her ancestors were top brass during the Great War. Dalia has inherited much from her family, including their penchant for tactics and

war. Dalia oversees the garrison at Meimarin Temple. Though many within Kaltoran leadership feel her talents can best be used elsewhere, Dalia is a pious woman who understands the importance of what Jael and the other priests are doing at Meimarin Temple. She plans on defending the temple until her death.

Adventure Hooks

Shoring up the Temple

Jael Roth has put up a call for assistance at Meimarin Temple. The temple itself is secure and functional but requires a specialized team to keep it operational. Archeologists, architects, and builders of all kinds are being called into the temple in order to restore ancient carvings, shore up the walls and pump out water in flooded chambers, and repair the tunnels connecting it to the pit city Zion. Bringing in such an influx of people makes the Kaltoran's weary as they are not sure they can trust these outsiders. Mercenaries are hired in order to keep the peace, both to protect the Kaltorans from these outsiders and to keep the outsiders from sparking old rivalries with each other.

Buried Below

There is no doubt that the lower levels beneath Meimarin Temple and the winding tunnels below that are incredibly dangerous. The stone is unstable that far down, and passageways regularly cave-in. Some rooms are still filled with water and others will succumb to the intense external pressure if even one stone is touched. Feral Nephilim roam the waters below, and other monstrosities walk the dry tunnels, trapped within these passageways for generations. In addition to these, Dark Tribes sometimes wander through the tunnel network looking for prey. Hidden past all of these dangers are ancient Kaltoran technologies, incredibly rare devices and weapons that would benefit the Kaltoran greatly. An expedition to recover these items would be incredibly dangerous, but many Kaltorans would be willing to pay for any goods that stubborn adventurers are able to dig up while exploring the dangers below.

Accessing Memories

The Palantor find the Kaltoran relationship with the mind and their memories odd. The Palantor see the brain as just another machine, as an instrument that connects electrodes in order to make thought processes work. But why then do the Kaltorans have the ability to connect to their genetic memories while the superior Palantor electronic minds cannot? In fact, the Palantor have very little memory of their time spent as humans.

Admin Hishirotyo_005 wants to visit Meimarin Temple in person and examine the Kaltoran meditation techniques in hopes of gaining a better understanding of the Kaltorans. But the trip to Meimarin temple is not an easy one. The dark waters surrounding Meimarin Temple are home to many terrifying Nephilim monstrosities that prowl the waters and devour everything in sight. Getting Admin Hishirotyo_005 to Meimarin means navigating all of these hazards safely.

Cerberus System

"No score, no matter how big, is worth going to that system. Corporate security takes time to identify who you are. They've even been known to negotiate, making a pirate's job easier. The Legion aren't so friendly. Sometimes they don't even take the time to make sure you're a pirate before they open fire. So thanks for the offer, but we'll have to pass on that one."

—Elijah Crash, Kaltoran Pirate.

The Cerberus system is the home system of the Legion, and they protect it with the same fervour which they protect everything else. Visitors, be it for nefarious or honest purposes, are unwelcome in the system without safe passage being granted by the Casila Curia. Safe passage is very rarely granted and the Legion patrol ships do not shy away from making examples of ships that seek to ignore their laws.

Originally inhabited and developed by the Kaltorans, The Cerberus system was repurposed to house the Legion many years after the end of the Great War. With the Archons' demise, the Legion needed a strategic point to defend. The system became the only thing left to the Legion military. Their war to defend their dead creators was over and both the Legion and the Nephilims resources were running very low. After the departure of X'ion, the Nephilim did not lay down arms or recognize any sort of end to the war. They continued to attack, as they were created to do. The Cerberus system became the metaphorical line in the sand as the Legion had nowhere else to fall back to.

Despite the Nephilim attacks slowing to near non-existence, the Legion continued to patrol their home. However without resources and the technical expertise needed, the Legion fleets began to degrade. Patrol resupplies were infrequent, and repairs were unreliable at best. Soon the Legion ships were left with only their impressive armaments and minimal propulsion. Such was the limit of their ability to travel through space; the great armadas became floating gun emplacements unable to venture far from their supply stations.

Change comes slow in the Cerberus system, but social and economic changes became inevitable once the Legion reconnected with the Haven races. The Corporation's recent arrival has created dramatic ripples throughout the system. New technologies along with resources and engineers arrive daily. The influx of non-Legion species is equally matched by the rate at which Legion inhabitants leave the system to seek mercenary work. Such abrupt change has caught much of the Legion population off-guard; leaving them to struggle with the rapid changes affecting their worlds.

Features

Argus

Like many things in the Cerberus system, Argus was named from an ancient human myth: a creature with 100 eyes. Argus is the planet closest to the sun, and as such is a barren sphere of molten rock. Giant magma spurts, visible even from space, mar the rocky surface of the world. From far above the eruptions and ensuing clouds of ash have an almost oval appearance, causing the world to appear as though it is covered in glaring

orange eyes. Without proper heat resistant equipment or probes, the Legion have been unable to explore the surface of Argus. The arrival of the Corporation has provided them with the means of truly reconnoitering the entirety of their system. Full-scale surveys have been planned using Corporate technology.

Circling Argus is a series of small moons. These moons are superheated chunks of barren rock. The Corporation has recently taken interest in mining surveys of the moons, but the Casila Curia has been hesitant to allow it. The arrival of Kaltorans has reopened the debate and recent scans have revealed undefined mineral deposits in the moons of Argus. Now, Corporate and Kaltoran groups alike petition the Casila Curia for mining rights with greater intensity.

Hidden among the moons of Argus, masked by the intense heat and uninhabitable nature of the planet, is an old Archon space station known as Fornox. Utilized as a training facility for the newly created Legion, Fornox is a sprawling complex of various virtual and real training rooms. The death of the Archons and the crucible of the Great War have left the Legion with very little need for the facility and it has long been abandoned.

Siren

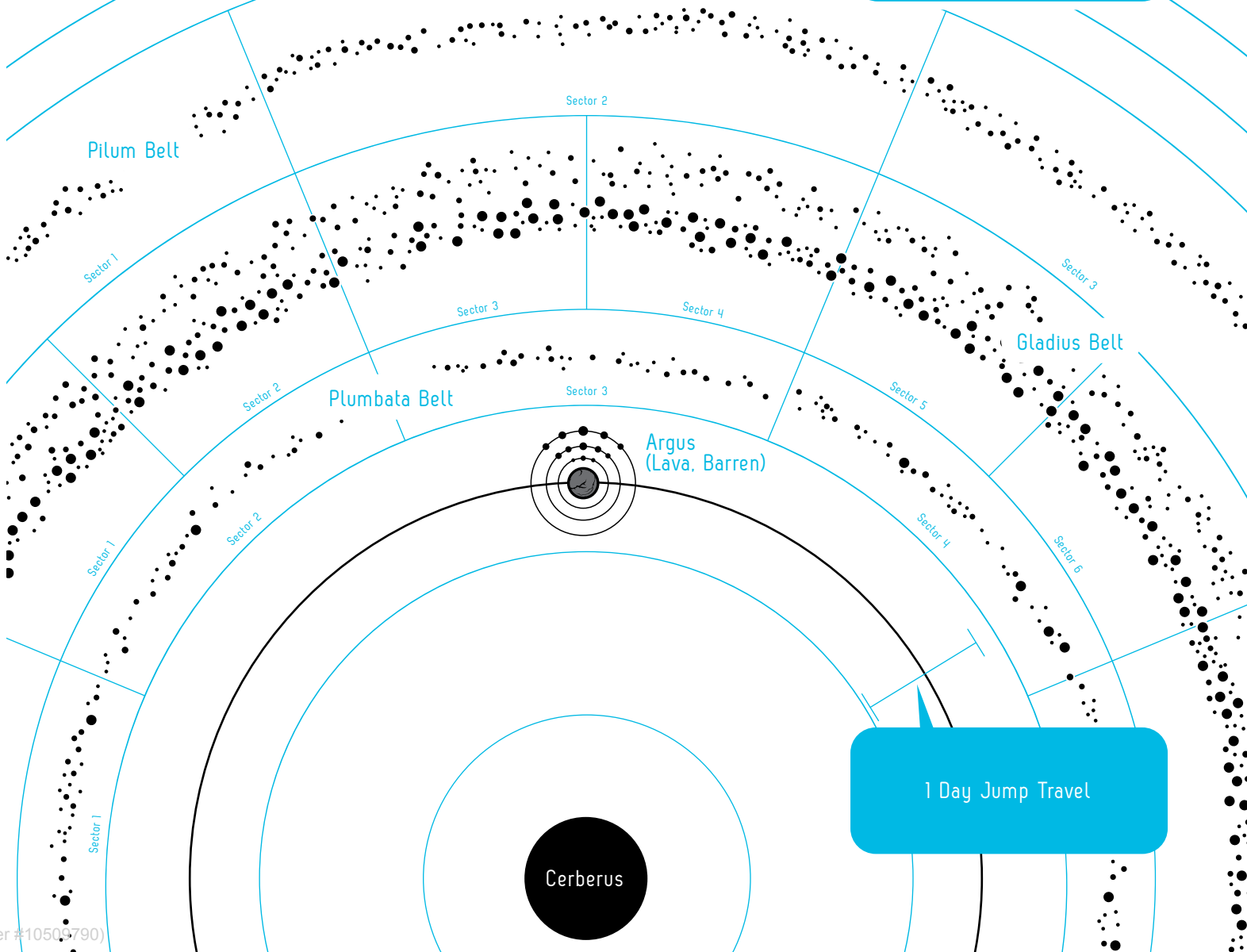
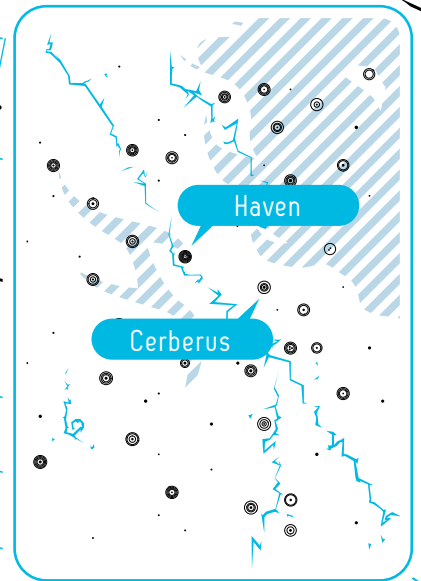
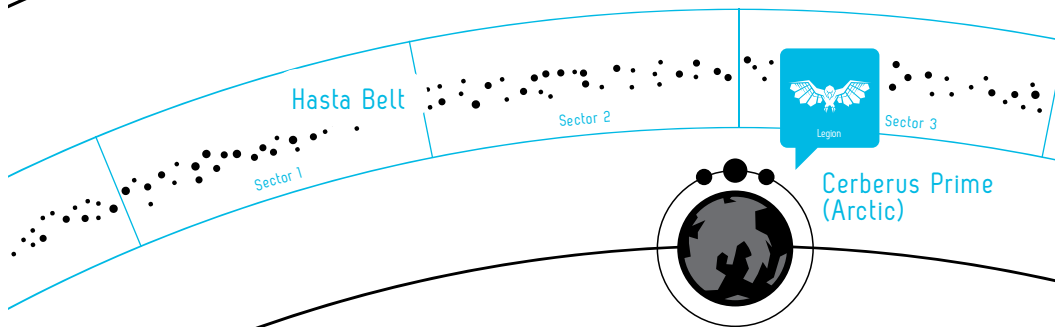
Siren is a toxic world with horrid choking fumes. The surface of the human terraformed planet was at one point habitable. At the end of the Great War, in an attempt to isolate the Legion and limit the worlds they could defend, the Nephilim unleashed a devastating weapon upon Siren. The planet's temperature rose drastically boiling its frozen oceans and releasing noxious fumes into the atmosphere. Early attempts by the Legion to explore Siren were disastrous. Without proper maintenance, their drop ships could not survive the descent through the corrosive atmosphere. After a few half-hearted attempts, further planetary expeditions were cancelled. But in recent years and the arrival of more non-Legion has breathed life into hopes of exploring Siren's surface. The Kaltorans, in particular, are anxious to visit the ancient cities and temples of their ancestors hidden amidst Siren's toxic atmosphere.

A single large moon orbits Siren. This moon, called Nereus by the Legion, is covered in a giant liquid ocean. Nereus, like the rest of the Cerberus system, shows signs of Kaltoran ruins. These ruins are often used by smugglers and Legion Exsilia looking to get illegal goods to and from Cerberus Prime without catching the Legion patrols' attention.

Cerberus Prime, pg: 139

Cerberus Prime is the homeworld of the Legion species and seat of their government. It is also the only heavily inhabited planet in the Cerberus system. From the icy surface of Cerberus Prime, the Casila Curia makes decisions which affect all Legion. Cerberus Prime is the most heavily guarded planet in the system, and it is nearly impossible to get close to the world without interception by Legion patrols.

The Cerberus System



Cerberus Prime has three large moons, each of which is a chunk of frozen rock like Cerberus Prime. From these moons, the Legion armadas set out on their patrols. Each moon is a potent defensive structure as well, with long range batteries and extreme amounts of ordnance. The three moons, referred to as The Heads of Cerberus, form an impressive defensive perimeter around the Legion's home world.

Also floating in orbit above Cerberus Prime is a large and extravagant space station built by the Corporation in order to facilitate trade agreements with the Legion on their home turf. The Legion are not overly fond of the station, but it has proved beneficial for them. The Embassy is one part resort/hotel and one part office. Most Corporate security contracts dealing with the Legion are created here. As a token of respect, each member of the Casila Curia maintains an office within the Corporate Embassy.

Plumbata Belt

The Plumbata belt is the asteroid belt closest to the sun. The asteroids of the Plumbata are dense with rich minerals which seem resistant to the heat of the nearby sun. The Plumbata belt is significantly cooler than the planets and moons closest to it. For this reason, the Legion, who require cooler climates, have an interest in the ore. However, a lack of technical knowledge and mining equipment has left them with no possibility of gathering samples. The Corporation seems particularly interested in acquiring rights to mine the Plumbata belt, but the Casila Curia are hesitant to allow even their allies such access to their system.

Gladius Belt

The largest asteroid belt in the Cerberus system is the Gladius Belt. The wreckage of countless ships litters the area from the Great War. Bio Ships float seeking sustenance but lack the power to escape the belt. Wrecked Legion capital ships contain a surplus of ancient technology. Some of the drifting ships have power but no working propulsion or communications. The Legion's limited ability to travel in space has led to most of these lost ships being abandoned. It is a lucky thing indeed that few scavengers have searched the Gladius Belt, for hidden amongst the giant debris fields are countless inert Mechnoids waiting for something foolish enough to activate them.

Pilum Belt

The Pilum Belt played a significant role in the defence of the Cerberus system during the Great War. Numerous hollowed out asteroids housed Kaltoran and Legion weapons installations scarred by frequent battle in the war. The remains of countless Kaltorans litter depressurized halls as grisly remnants of an ancient final stand.

Hasta Belt

The Hasta Belt was once known for lucrative mining operations. During the war, in an attempt to dislodge a Nephilim fleet, the Kaltorans detonated a massive electro-gravity bomb. The gravity well created by the blast continues to this day, causing

the asteroids of the Hasta Belt to move in an asynchronous manner. Due to the gravitational force it is nearly impossible to remain aware of ship's movement in the Hasta Belt. Numerous facilities, built into the asteroids themselves, house the outcasts of Cerberus Prime. The belt, because it is so dangerous to navigate, has become a haven for the few pirates daring enough to operate within the Cerberus System. A group of Legion pirates calling themselves The Myrmidons conceal their fleet of salvaged Legion warships within the Hasta Belt. Dissatisfied with the leadership of the Casila Curia, the Myrmidons see themselves as freedom fighters seeking to install a new Legion government. Ships have a tendency to disappear in the Hasta Belt due to the erratic movement of its many quick rotating asteroids. This allows the Myrmidons to act in secrecy, as the majority of their raids are written off as losses to Hasta Belt collisions.

Politics and Economy

Trade within the Cerberus system is strictly monitored by the Interior Branch of the Legion military. All imports and exports are thoroughly checked by the Legion Military. Anything that doesn't pass a particularly meticulous inspection is marked and quarantined off-world. This insular and defensive behaviour has proved infuriating to the Corporation who see the potential of open trade with the Cerberus system. The recent approval of the Corporate Embassy was painstakingly negotiated with Volusus Servilla, who only relented because they saw a way to fulfil many of his people's needs.

Known trade routes are few in the Cerberus system and trafficked lightly. The Legion import the fewest necessities possible and trade deals require particularly long negotiation. Corporate contracts are read and analysed in detail by the Interior Branch in order to limit the amount of foreign power in the Cerberus system. Kaltoran contracts seem to slip past the intense scrutiny somewhat easier, as the Legion see them as more honest than the Corporates.

In order to receive safe passage through the Cerberus system a ship must be granted an access code. The Legion refer to these codes as writs of passage and are not hesitant to detain or attack any ship found traversing the system without one. To attain a passcode requires months of inspection and background investigation. Recently the Corporation has begun to use its leverage gained through trade to decrease the difficulty of acquiring safe passage.

The few trade routes that do exist are guarded in classic Legion fashion. Heavily armed gunships keep constant patrol and are given permission to fire on any ship travelling the trade routes without current passcodes given by the military. This has led to more than a few incidents of overzealous traders being obliterated for attempting to do business in the Cerberus system without authorization. The Legion shrug these incidents off and are astringent toward implications of wrongdoing on their part.

Numerous necessary goods are imported to the Cerberus system. Food is in high demand as few things grow on the barren planets that fill the system. The majority of the food brought into the system is grown or harvested by the Kaltorans, further endearing the species to the

Legion. The Kaltorans also supply maintenance and salvage. Although these services are infrequent, they are in very high demand. Some critics of the Legion trade policy suggest that slightly easier access standards may increase the number of capable specialists brought in.

The Corporation works as an intermediary in nearly all dealings with the Legion, as large Corporate freighters bring nearly all goods to and from the system. Despite the presence of the gigantic Corporate Embassy, the Kaltorans have begun to direct a concentrated effort at trade in the Cerberus system. Kaltoran merchants frequently gain trade rights and seek to undercut the Corporation with competitive prices and improved quality. The Kaltorans cannot compete with the Corporation in sheer volume of trade, nevertheless, they are quickly becoming a noteworthy power in the economic development of the system.

The primary exports of the Cerberus system are all of a militant nature. The Legion have little interest in things of nonmilitary nature. Weapons and munitions are commonly exported, although many of the weapons are too large for other species to use and will undoubtedly find themselves in the hands of Legion mercenaries in the Haven System. Ordnance weapons are more commonly exported and the dangerous state of the galaxy has done nothing but drive demand up for the Legion's powerful weaponry.

The most common export to be found in the Cerberus system is contract mercenaries. The militant nature and unstable societal structure of the Legion make them excellent soldiers for any cause. Legion security details are becoming the most common sight in the Haven system. They have quickly replaced drones as the primary form of personal protection for important individuals. The limited potential of life on Cerberus Prime causes many young Legion to leave the planet in order to provide for their families. Mercenary contracts are always overseen by the numerous Corporate mercenary compacts in their embassy. In exchange for work as a soldier, their natural state of being, the Legion can secure the many necessities their world lacks by joining the Auxilia.

The growth of Legion mercenary companies has led to numerous organizations of Legion banding together to work for the highest bidder. These groups can potentially shake the delicate balance the other species' governments have attained, due to the powerful nature of these privatized militaries. In order to preserve a balance of power, Legion mercenary contracts have become increasingly strict. The parameters of duty are described in detail. With so much power available to the highest bidder, mercenary contract negotiation has become a speciality of many Corporates.

With strict trade regulations, it is not surprising that smuggling has become a lucrative, albeit dangerous, endeavour in the Cerberus system. Smugglers of all species seek to profit from the isolation of the system. While all manner of goods are smuggled into the system, the most common are food and supplies sent by Exsilia to their families. A new and unsettling trend with many young Legion soldiers is the use of high-quality Draz to amplify combat abilities and resist the many rigours of training. Despite strict monitoring, smugglers can make small fortunes by dealing in this illicit substance. On

rare occasions, a smuggler might secretly bring an exiled Legion back to Cerberus Prime who is seeking retirement amongst the wild nomads, or to briefly visit family members or pay their respects at fallen comrade's grave. These trips are extremely dangerous for both passenger and transporter, but the fee for such a dangerous task is substantial enough that many captains will risk it.

Adventure Hooks

I Spit My Last Breath at Thee

Atticus Brocchus is a Legion captain obsessed with revenge. While flying a patrol years ago, his ship was attacked by a Nephilim Leviathan. The massive Bio Ship attacked without warning, destroying Atticus' vessel and killing the vast majority of his crew. Atticus barely managed to make it to the escape pod but was grievously injured in the process. The unmanned bioship, a remnant from the Great War, drifts aimlessly through the Cerberus system to this day. Atticus has never forgotten the ship and pursues it with ruthless determination. He has assembled a small mercenary fleet to find and destroy the ship. The PCs are hired to assist the fleet, whether on their own ship or serving aboard another. As the hunt progresses, the mission becomes more dangerous and Atticus becomes more obsessed. Can the PCs make the Legion see reason before everyone is killed in his quest for revenge?

Tribunal Justice

Three Corporate youths stationed with their guardians at the Embassy, are becoming bored with life in the remote Cerberus system. Their boredom has led to a series of pranks. Mining equipment has been hacked and used to carve anti-Corporate sentiment into asteroids. Trade routes have been altered forcing goods to end up at the wrong locations. While the mischief is mostly harmless, the Legion are not known for their sense of humour. The Legion military has issued an arrest warrant for the young Corporates causing them to go into hiding. The parents of the youngsters hire the PCs to find the children and return them to the Embassy before the Legion security forces do. While the Corporates want their children safe, they want to avoid an incident with the Legion military and the PCs are forbidden from harming the Legion pursuers.

The Biggest Jinx

Autorio Jinx is the son of Legion soldiers. His parents were killed in duty in the line of duty on Mishpacha, leaving the infant boy abandoned. Autorio was found and raised by the Kaltoran Jinx family shortly thereafter. Choosing the life of an Exsilia Merc amongst the Kaltorans, the young Legion learned the importance of family and wishes to pay respect at his parents' graves. His parents' bodies, due to their high rank in the Legion military, were taken home and buried on Cerberus Prime. Supporting the wishes of their gigantic son, the Jinx family has hired the PCs to smuggle Autorio to the planet's surface so he can visit his parents' graves. The trip will involve avoiding Legion patrols, facing off against Myrmidon pirates, and landing in secrecy on the surface. In exchange, the Jinx family is willing to provide significant compensation for the PCs efforts.



Cerberus Prime

"I cannot think of a better world for the Legion to call home. The planet, like the Legion, is cold, harsh, and dangerous to outsiders. Also, like the Legion, just beneath the icy surface lies a primal wrath waiting to tear apart those who do not respect it."

– Adam Swagger, Kaltoran Explorer.

"Howl, fierce wind! Roar, mighty beast! For I am Legion! I do not flinch!"

– A Nomad Hunter's Creed.

Cerberus Prime is the arctic home world of the Legion. It is a planet of pristine glaciers, rugged tundra, crumbling cities, and ancient cave systems. Named after the human's mythical watchdog of hell, Cerberus Prime stood as a bastion against the chaos of the Great War. Providing a refuge for the Legion during the dark aftermath of that genocidal conflict, Cerberus Prime has become the seat of the Legion's power and the ramifications of its decisions are felt even in the Haven system.

Hidden from outsiders, Cerberus Prime is the staging area for every initiative carried out by the Legion in any system. It is a world of polar opposites. The cities are definitive examples of ordered military structure. Outside the cities' walls is a world of danger, awe, and ferociousness where tribal Legion battle Nephilim monsters in frenzied conflicts across the frozen ground. It is a land that sees outsiders as a threat or a curiosity that may later become a threat. The few outsiders allowed to visit Cerberus Prime are often awed at the seeming serenity of the frozen world. The Legion never bothers to correct guests or even remind them of the nightmare which lurks outside of the thick walls guarding every city.

Originally a Kaltoran planet, Cerberus Prime was repurposed for the Legion. The few cities left behind by the Kaltorans after the Great War are crumbling frost covered ruins. The Legion, with their larger size and lack of desire for civil engineering, did not have the skills or motivation required to repair the great structures they found upon their arrival. Many ancient Kaltoran holy ruins litter the planet, undisturbed by its current inhabitants. This has become a point of tension for many Kaltorans who are not allowed to visit ancient ancestral sites due to the Casila Curia's steadfast isolationism.

The arrival of the Corporation has eased the strain placed upon the shoulders of Cerberus Prime. A land where almost nothing grows makes the production of food a difficult proposition. Among the most important things brought to the world by the Corporation are trade and mercenary work. With a steady influx of goods and credit, Cerberus Prime is experiencing economic transitions which were unfathomable in the past. The changing way of life is viewed in many different lights by the planet's populace. Some feel that any effort benefiting the Legion should be undertaken. Others feel that the old ways and traditions of the Legion are in danger of being corrupted by Corporate manipulation.

There is little room for weakness on Cerberus Prime. The planet

sees to it that only the strong survive long enough to leave their mark. Blizzards, vicious feral Nephilim, and extreme food scarcity make Cerberus Prime a place in which survival itself is a struggle.

Geography

Cerberus prime is an arctic world. The landscape is rocky and covered in ice and snow. Precipitation is extremely uncommon and grows scarcer as the distance from the planet's poles increases. The little rain and snow that do fall immediately freeze on the stony ground. The planet's landscape consists of two polar supercontinents divided by a single ocean, most of which has been frozen over since long before even the Archon's arrival. The continent surrounding the northern pole is significantly larger and colder than its southern counterpart and has become the home for the Legion. Small rivers and lakes crisscross through the continents, feeding into the frozen oceans.

Located in the centre of the northern continent is the fortress city of Castra, the capital city and seat of the Legion's leadership. Even from a great distance, the architecture of Castra is clearly of Kaltoran design and construction. Upon closer inspection the antediluvian buildings are in extreme disrepair. Towering skyscrapers shake in the frigid wind, threatening to topple at any given second. In the shadow of these Kaltoran buildings lay the metallic buildings that comprise the true city. Without enough engineers to maintain it, the original city was abandoned for buildings of more spartan design. The only original buildings maintained to any degree are sprawling munition factories, which churn out the tools of destruction day and night. A great wall lined with ominous towers encircles Castra, protecting the city from violent winds and other less natural threats.

Outside Castra's walls vast tundra stretches out in every direction. The land is flat and rocky. Scattered and bizarre structures of ice rise from the frozen tundra, their crystalline edges grasping out like the talons of a great sleeping beast. To the North, travellers can catch a glimpse of the foreboding Acutum Mountains. Sparse farms dot the landscape as a testament to the Legion's desire to survive culturally despite their more militant nature. Rugged Legion farmers work the cold land with grim determination: harvesting what few plants will grow on their arctic world. Many of these farms are now abandoned. The arrival of the Corporation has made trading for food an easier prospect for the Legion than the meager harvest allowed by the harsh environment.

Small settlements are few and far between outside of Castra. While smaller cities do exist, they all share similar features. Squat insulated buildings ring central meeting places giving even the smallest city the look of a military camp. Surrounded by walls and protected by turrets or simple watch towers, these miniature camps serve as trading posts and as defensive positions to protect Castra.

Armed encampments are a necessity on Cerberus Prime. During the Great War, the planet was seeded with countless Nephilim incursion forces, created to replicate quickly and overtake the original Kaltoran

defenders. With the absence of X'ion, these Nephilim have become feral monsters. Feral tribes and bestial Nephilim of all shapes and sizes stalk the frozen planet destroying anything they come across. Occasionally these ferals will band together to attack a large city. These incursions are always met enthusiastically by the Legion who have never forgotten the purpose of their creation.

Just north of Castra, near the planet's northern pole, rest the Acutum Mountains. Their jagged spires and stony peaks stretch threateningly toward the sky. Cutting through the mountains are deep valleys and large plateaus referred to by the Legion as "The Proving Grounds". Many young Legion recruits must travel the Proving Grounds facing feral Nephilim and the fierce elements. The recruits must climb the mountains alone and unarmed in order to be considered equals by their Legion brethren. The Acutum's tallest peak, Coelum, reaches far into the sky and is constantly surrounded by thick clouds and fierce storms. This is the final stage of the Legion proving. Atop the peak, shrouded in mystery, is a place that the Legion never speak of.

To the south, out of Castra's sight and reach, one can find the Nivalis Glaciers. The glaciers are a sea of endless shifting ice and dangerous canyons. Craggy talons of ice loom overhead, like claws ready to tear into the unwary. The glaciers have proven too hazardous for anyone to fully explore. When paired with the constantly changing landscape, it is not surprising that only the Legion nomads are able to navigate the Nivalis Glaciers.

The planet's single ocean, originally known as Tehom by the Kaltorans, is called Algid by the Legion. The Legion feel the ice floes make the ocean unnecessarily dangerous to traverse and only the nomads ever venture onto its surface. Visually the ocean is nearly indistinguishable from the land itself. Both are constantly frozen, although areas of the ocean are covered in sheets of the thinnest ice. Lurking below the frozen surface of the Algid is a feral Nephilim of prodigious size called Charybdis by the nomadic Legion who occasionally travel the ice floes. Nomad tales tell of Charybdis as the living vessel that brought the Nephilim to Cerberus Prime. A giant aquatic creature, Charybdis hides beneath the ice before erupting to the surface, pulling whole tribes of Nomads into its gigantic maw. According to legends, the maw of Charybdis is large enough to swallow a frigate whole.

The much smaller southern continent of Cerberus Prime is the location of the initial Nephilim incursion. The land is called Inimicus by the Legion and it is avoided at all costs, even by the nomads. Such is their spite for the continent that the Legion treat the land itself as an enemy. The land here is significantly warmer than the rest of Cerberus Prime, which is still frigid by most other species' standards. A giant crater, visible from space, mars the planet's surface. The land surrounding the crater is blackened and scorched from orbital bombardment, but deep beneath the ice feral Nephilim creatures multiply and crawl out into the world to seek prey. The Legion are well aware of the Nephilim breeding ground but for economic reasons no plans to scour the planet clean of the threat have been set into motion.

Beneath the surface of Cerberus Prime is a massive cave system called Tartarus which creeps across the entire planet. Originally excavated by the early Kaltorans, the tunnels were to serve as a shelter through the harsh winter storms common to Cerberus Prime while they built their cities. Vast caverns and narrow tunnels crisscross beneath the cold rock. The upper layer of this hive-like tunnel complex is utilized by the Legion to bury their honoured dead. Great heroes are interned beneath Cerberus Prime's surface in honour, and burial sites are common in the underworld. Deeper in the cave system feral Nephilim prowl the darkness, terrified of the light above. It is not uncommon for Legion forts to rise around the entrances to the underworld, guarding the surface against unknown threats below. Luckily, the entrances and exits to the underworld are few.

Population

The Legion of Cerberus Prime are a pragmatic and quiet sort. The Casila Curia allows few outsiders to enter the Cerberus system and fewer still are allowed to set foot on Cerberus Prime. Very rarely will foreign dignitaries be given permission to land, and only for incredibly important events. Occasionally necessity will demand that outsiders be brought to the surface. These are usually specialists in fields the Casila Curia feel they are lacking or merchants. Due to the isolated nature of the world, outsiders are viewed as a curiosity on Cerberus Prime. Children gawk, grizzled soldiers chuckle, and stoic farmers shake their heads when outsiders visit Cerberus Prime.

The planet's distance from its sun, Anima, gives Cerberus Prime an exceptionally long evening period and locks the planet in perpetual winter. Due to the harshness of their environment, the people of Cerberus Prime are hardy and work constant shifts. There is never a moment in any day when the Legion aren't working and on guard.

The Interior Branch of the Legion Army monitors the planet and its workers closely. Of all the militant branches of the Legion government, the Interior has the most power on Cerberus Prime. Civic guards patrol cities, policing both the military and civilian components of the population alike. They are easily detected by stripes of green on their shoulders and gauntlets to represent planting the seed of a new society after the Great War. On Cerberus Prime their authority is nearly limitless.

The Legion population is roughly divided into three separate categories on Cerberus Prime. Without the presence of Auxilia and deserters, the three major groups are the army, civilians, and the nomads. These three groups live in relative harmony with one another, and apart from the nomads the lines between one and another often blur. Law requires that every Legion assist in the defence of their cities and homes.

The army segment of the population is by far the most numerous. The sheer number of military recruits has led the Casila Curia to increase the standard requirements to join the military to very harsh levels. Recruits undergo the most gruelling, and sometimes fatal, screening processes before they are even allowed to begin training.

The civilian population of Cerberus Prime is the most confusing group to outsiders. Despite not officially being in the army, the civilians are armed and drilled. Early in the education of Legion children they are trained and organized into militia units. The civilians handle every nonmilitary aspect of daily life: such as growing food, selling goods, manufacturing equipment, and educating children. A large percentage of the civilian population is made up of Legion soldiers who have become too old or too damaged to serve in the army any longer.

Nomadic Legion are not uncommon on Cerberus Prime. The nomads seek to distance themselves not only from the militant control of the Casila Curia and its tribunal justice but to free themselves from the Legion's societal flaws. This decision to leave the cities is never made lightly. Nomad life is harsh, even by Legion standards, and holds no room for frivolity. The grim nomadic groups wander the uncivilized majority of Cerberus Prime in search of game and fertile lands to farm before moving on. They are diverse, but well organised people, with a strict hierarchy. In nomad clans, the word of the elder is law. Breaking a vow or refusal to adhere to the elder's will leads to exile, which inevitably leads to death.

The nomads are fierce hunters, using a mixture of primitive and modern technologies against the terrifying feral Nephilim that stalk the less inhabited areas of the planets. Clad in furs and Nephilim hides, the nomads are fond of making ink out of Nephilim blood and tattooing their reptilian hides. The strange marking relates the story of each nomad's journey throughout their life.

While the nomads are seen as separate from Legion society, they are still considered citizens of Cerberus Prime by the Casila Curia and are allowed to freely come and go from the cities as they see fit. While the nomads do not see eye to eye with the rest of the Legion, they will always come to the defence of any Legion in need. More than one threat to the Legion cities has met its painful end on nomad weapons. Nomad hunters are a common sight outside of Castra and will often trade with city dwellers for goods they cannot produce themselves.

Living alongside the nomads are great hound-like beasts, referred to as Legion Hounds. These wild predators are often tamed by the nomads. A trained Legion Hound will fetch a high price in a trade with the city-dwelling Legion. This realization has made the breeding of Legion hounds an honoured practice among the nomads. Such is the demand for Legion Hounds in the army, that military officials will often seek nomad specialists to train their soldiers to work in concert with the hounds.

The Legion are not alone on Cerberus Prime. At the end of the Great War in a gambit to rid the Archons of their most effective force, a Nephilim fleet attacked Cerberus Prime. While the fleet was quickly destroyed by the Legion armada, they were able to launch a sizeable ground force to invade the planet. The invading Nephilim were designed to adapt and replicate quickly. The Legion army met the invaders on the sea of ice that divides the continents. The Legion fleet relentlessly bombed the incursion site from orbit. Trapped

between the guns of the Legion and the cold rock of the surface, the Nephilim chose to go deeper into the planet. With X'ion's absence, the Nephilim lost sight of their mission and became little more than feral beasts. Now, a host of nightmarish creatures stalk the uninhabited regions of Cerberus Prime. These Nephilim were created to thrive in its harsh environment with thick hides and dense fur or aquatic appendages and organs.

Adventure Hooks

The Call of the Wild

Eugene Morr, a Corporate financier, operates a private zoo in the Haven system out of a multilayered space station. He collects strange creatures from all over the galaxy for his menagerie and charges steep prices for fellow Corporate bigwigs to view them. Recently, Eugene has heard of the fierce Legion Hounds roaming the rime coated plains of Cerberus Prime. Using his substantial connections Eugene has hired the players and secured safe passage for a small team to land on Cerberus Prime. The goal is to capture two wild Legion Hounds, a breeding pair. Domesticated animals will not do, and he wants the pair alive and unharmed. Unknown to Eugene, the Nomads of Cerberus Prime will have to be convinced to allow the players to take the hounds.

Faith on Ice

The Kaltorans have long wished to return to Cerberus Prime in order to excavate the holy sites that litter the planet's surface and the tunnels below. Until recently the Legion, despite friendly relations with the Kaltorans, would not allow it. Diplomatic pressure has caused the Casila Curia to open their borders to small groups of relic hunters. The large Jinx family is hiring groups that they trust to protect and assist their archaeologists on these dangerous journeys across Cerberus Prime's tundra. Unfortunately Feral Nephilim, seeking refuge from the Legion, have laired in many of these sites.

Great Games

The Legion games are fast approaching, in which teams of Legion soldiers and civilians alike meet to compete in various tests of strength and skill. This year, due to Corporate influence, the games are not a private affair. Outsiders will be allowed to compete for the first time ever. The Legion have made the tests for entrance particularly gruelling. Non-Legion entrants seeking to participate will be forced to fulfil different and arduous tasks before being officially invited. These tests are held in the Corporate space station 'Embassy' above Cerberus Prime. Once invited, the teams will compete in non-lethal one-on-one and team events. These events include armed and unarmed combat, mounted races, feats of strength, and tests of resolve. The Corporations inhabiting the Embassy have put up a massive prize to this year's winning team. The Legion, while a little offended at the Corporate intrusion, relish the chance to compete against the outside world. Unfortunately, not all teams are so honourable, and a few of the non-Legion teams will attempt to use underhanded methods to win.

Nagra

"Nagra is a city of beauty unlike anything you have ever seen. Great stone statues line the paths, a parade of ancient warrior priests, challenging thinkers, and artist monks. The fountains of Nagra are ever-flowing with pure, crystal clear, life-giving water. The streets are paved with only the finest stone. Nagra is, without a doubt, one of the grandest cities in the galaxy.

That is until you step out of its borders and into its refugee camps."
- Chenzira Bi, Remnant apothecary.

History

Nagra is an ancient Remnant Guta, one of the first to be settled while the All-Being returned the Remnant to life. The city started small, as a collection of nomadic Remnant gathered around a large tree, one that grew and produced fruit despite the toxic and arid climate of the Kumba desert. The Remnant thanked The All-Being for this great blessing and called it a miracle. That tree, called The Tree of Being by the locals, was a great Simba Mabwe imbued with the power of the All-Being. This Simba Mabwe was always strong, and it may have been the first of its kind, created by the All-Being to protect and provide for his people. While the rest of the Simba Mabwe have waxed and waned in power during recent years, the Tree of Being remains strong, a beacon to the Remnant people.

Along with keeping the Echoes at bay, the Tree of Being has the secondary effect of purifying the world around it. The toxic sickness that gripped Kumba was not present around the tree. An underground spring of water became clean, and drinkable, and pooled in an oasis to feed the roots of the tree, and the people of Nagra.

As pilgrims flocked to Nagra its population grew, and the city expanded. Within a few short years Nagra had transformed from a desert outpost into a bustling city. The city underwent a renaissance of art and construction as the Remnant quarried marble from deep beneath the surface to build massive edifices: temples to the All-Being, and giant sculptures of Remnant heroes. The streets were paved with coloured stone tiles of the finest quality, and lined with merchant stalls, where enterprising vendors could offer their lavish silks and spices to the passersby. Temples were built, one after another, until their domes, spires, and arches dominated the skyline.

Nagra became a shining example of Remnant culture: a testament to all that their people could become. But then the Simba Mabwes around Kumba began to fail. Nagra was always a popular destination, but when the Echoes began to assault the Remnant cities around Nagra, their populations fled to the one place that was still protected, the one place with a Simba Mabwe that stood strong: Nagra.

So far, the Tree of Being has stayed strong, protecting, and feeding Nagra. But the presence of the All-Being seems to be diminishing on Kumba, and if the preaching of the wild All-Prophet can be believed, the All-Being is telling the Remnant it's time to leave. The planet's very soul seems to be dying, but not the Tree of Being. The tree stands strong, and reverberates with the power of the All-Being.

Maybe this is because the All-Being poured more of his power into it than the others or maybe the city of Nagra is loved above all other cities.

The city leader, the Mutungamiri Ciara, was unable to manage her growing city. The refugees were filling the city faster than they could get people off-world, many were forced to live on the streets. Temporary structures began to pop up in the areas surrounding the city, and before too long a slum refugee camp encircled all of Nagra.

In desperation, Ciara struck a deal with a Corp named Walter Waters. Mr. Waters promised Ciara that he would help the Remnant by building a starport in Nagra which would allow the Remnant refugees to easily find their way off planet. All he wanted in exchange was a small slice of Nagra to call his own: a Corp-ruled district where he could build hotels to host members of visiting races. Ciara had no choice but to agree.

By the time the Corp finished building the starport, Nagra had fallen even further into disarray as food supplies ran low. The rich inner city still lived relatively normal, well-fed lives as the Tree of Being provided for them, while those in the camps starved.

Changing Culture

Meanwhile, Walter Waters saw the situation on Kumba for what it was: the Simba Mabwes were failing, and soon Nagra's would also fail, taking the city with it. Walter wasn't looking for a long-term investment. He pushed Corp economic sanctions onto the people of Nagra to make as much money off of them as quickly as he could. Shortly after the starports completion, and the Corporation headquarters had grown from a small building to an entire district, Nagra's culture began to change. It wasn't just Remnant pilgrims and refugees that flocked to Nagra, it was travellers from across the sector, and especially from Haven. Some flocked to Nagra to study this new culture or to secure trade agreements. Others fled to Nagra to escape notoriety or to take what little this dying world has to give. Nagra continues to grow, but it grows not as a Remnant city, but as a city of all races.

The Mutungamiri has suddenly found her power challenged as the Corporation continue to gain more economic, political, and cultural control over the city. Many pious Remnant watch in frustration as their cities people forget or twist their faith to justify their new found material wealth, and embrace new ideas brought to them from across the sector.

Even though it is the single most important reason for Nagras survival, the Simba Mabwe has quickly become a secondary attraction for visitors. Devout Remnant still journeyed to the Tree of Being, but the number of pilgrims drops year after year. Even many Remnant have turned their backs on their religion as the cultures of the stars began to intermingle with the culture of their Guta. Religious leaders fight back to retake their cities heart, but their sermons fell on deaf ears. Nagra has become known as a city of opportunity and trade, a



hub where the ambitious can find riches and power. It has become everything the early Remnant had stood against, a blight on the name of the All-Being.

Karagok, grand Paladin and most pious of the Order of Redemption, fought against this blight in the only way the Order of Redemption knows how: by trying to capture the Tree of Being for themselves. Soldiers within the Order try to maintain control the Simba Mabwe and the area around it, doing what they can to keep out those they feel are less "pure". They keep a strict watch on who enters and exits the Simba Mabwe, and often turn to violence when they feel their religious standards are in danger.

Religious unrest is beginning to boil to the surface, and tensions between slum factions are escalating quickly. Karagok has quickly grown to be the most powerful Mutungamiri in the slums, as an influx of refugees have flocked to his banner, for security. When faced with both starvation and homelessness, these Remnant have fallen back on ancient beliefs and religion. Karagok has used this to his advantage by drawing these refugees into the Order of Redemption, turning them into militant initiates in the All-Beings army: an army that he plans on one day using to challenge Ciari whom he sees as incompetent.

Meanwhile, Remnant priests from within the Monasteries of Hope, led by a devout Remnant named Muragi, do all they can to care for the refugees, but it is never enough. This religious order has taken personal responsibility for saving the life of the city by doing everything they can to stop the Remnant from destroying themselves. Not only does Muragi have to vi with the other Remnant religious factions, he also has to directly face down Karagok in his attempts to control who can access the Simba Mabwe, and steer his people away from the false beliefs of the other races who have come to Nagra.

The Corporation continues to bring foreigners into Nagra, but their pact with Ciari limits them to living within the Corporation district: Octant, the district set aside for Corp buildings and their overpriced hotels. Those who end up on the planet without the funds to live in one of these hotels often find themselves on the streets or in a refugee camp. Many of these are Legion, brought in by promises of long term work from the Corporation, but are simply tossed aside once they have no need of them. The Legion in Nagra tend to gather together as their racial pride burns strong. In order to survive in this new world many Legion have broken into small gangs that survive by terrorizing the slums. The fiercest of these are The Watchdogs, who claim to be protectors of the refugees but in reality extort those who already don't have enough to survive.

With so many different factions packed so tightly around Nagra, and with rampant poverty in the refugee camp, it is only a matter of time before the unrest spills into Nagra itself. For now, the city has retained its control, and life moves on like normal for those lucky, or rich, with enough to live inside the city itself. They hear stories of the atrocities of the refugee camps, but they are far removed from it. There are many who seek to change this: to spur the apathetic into action, but there just isn't enough food to go around, and the

"Nagra is a clash of worlds. A place where tradition, desperation, greed and faith all come to fight with each other. But the winner will not be the last one standing, it will be those who have left Nagra behind."

- Gerga, the Echoes are coming.

Corporation's influence on Nagra's economy is not doing the poor, and starving any favours. Ciari sometimes feels like little more than a puppet leader who is unable to help her people and her city, which is slowly being taken by foreign interests.

Places of Interest

Tree of Being

The Simba Mabwe, this unique breed of tree that has not been found anywhere else in the known galaxy has provided stability and life to the city of Nagra for many decades. The tree towers above the rest of the city from its garden in the city centre, surrounded by lush gardens and great temples. The tree has purified an oasis for the Remnant, from which they draw pure water. It is a powerful religious symbol to the Remnant: a reminder of the care of the All-Being. No faction is allowed to lay claim to the Tree of Being, as it is meant to be shared by all alike. If one faction were to gain total control of it, the entirety of Remnant society could come unhinged.

The Crypts

Deep beneath Nagra lie ancient Ursai crypts. Many Remnant who found themselves returned to life came back to themselves within these crypts and had to find their way to the surface through a labyrinth of collapsed, and haunted passageways. The Remnant stay away from these crypts, as they do not wish to be reminded of their Ursai past. The valuable items buried with the dead Ursai remain hidden in the crypts, as do the weapons and armour buried with the great warriors. The crypts have many rewards to offer to the entrepreneurial adventurer.

Ursai Ruins

Far outside of Nagra, beyond the protection of The Tree of Being, rests the skeleton of an old Ursai weapons facility. During the Great War the Ursai had built some of the greatest weapons the galaxy had ever seen. This facility has been mostly picked clean for spare parts over the years, and the wind and sun have destroyed the rest, but there are still many hidden treasures buried in the lower levels, where few are brave enough to travel.

The Corporation Octant

The Corporation and their guests are most limited to one area of Nagra: the Octant. This district is built to the same specifications as many Corporation cities. It features square blocks, tall utilitarian buildings, and Corp economics. The Corporation aren't well-loved in most Remnant shops, and so the merchants in

the Corporation Octant drive up the prices since there is little competition for the Octant's business. The Corporation also offer low-quality hotel rooms for incredibly high prices to those who wish to stay out of the slums.

Religious Temples

While all Remnant agree on the existence of the All-Being, they can't agree on the best ways to worship him, or what he truly is. And so Nagra is spotted with countless temples dedicated to the All-Being, but these temples are as different from each other as can be. Some, like the Order of Redemption, train warriors to serve the All-Being in case of the need for military action. Others believe psionics are a gift from the All-Being so they hone their abilities as a method of worships. These varied faith paths rarely lead to conflict between parties and they can generally put aside their differences when the future of Nagra is at stake.

Superplex Starport

Nagra's Starport was built in record time, as the Corporation were eager to begin extorting the innocent Remnant. The Starport was built cheaply and hastily, with sub-standard building materials and little oversight. The starport was never meant to last generations, as the Corporation leadership truly believe that the last Simba Mabwe will eventually fail, and then no one would want, or be able, to live on Kumba, which would cut off the Corporation's source of income on the planet.

Population

The population of Nagra itself is about 90% Remnant. The only outsiders who are allowed to live in the city are forced to do so inside of the Corp's hotels, which they keep in their Octant district. This number drops closer to 80% in the slums, where it is more common to find other races. Of that 20%, more than half are Legion.

Adventure Hooks

Get Me to the Simba Mabwe

A mysterious wild figure calling himself the All-Prophet has business inside of Nagra. He is considered an enemy by many Remnant, and many official religious leaders have done everything they can to discredit his teachings. High Priest Muragi of the Monasteries of Hope is one such religious leader, but the All-Prophet has faith in him: faith that Muragi will see the truth of the All-Being's words and his spokesperson.

The All-Prophet believes that if he can meet with Muragi, in a private environment, then the two can work together to protect what may become the last functioning Simba Mabwe on Kumba. The problem is, Muragi is a stubborn and refuses to meet with an outlier such as the All-Prophet. Also, his religious rival Karagok is watching closely for signs that Muragi is trying to consolidate power. If the All-Prophet was caught trying to infiltrate Nagra, he would most likely be executed immediately according to the religious law of the Order of Redemption. But if the team can smuggle the All-Prophet through the treacherous refugee camps, and political pitfalls of Nagra, perhaps they can

convince Muragi to meet with him. If Muragi does agree to meet, the meeting must take place without Karagok discovering them. Perhaps the two might work together to overthrow Karagok and reclaim the Tree of Being for all, or the party might turn their backs on the All-Prophet, and deliver him to Karagok personally in hopes of a reward.

Feeding the People

A Kaltoran convert by the name of Jezzeri is doing everything she can to feed the refugees outside of Nagra. The problem is, a group of Legion thugs calling themselves The Watchdogs help themselves to Jezzeri's supplies, and there is little she can do about it. The leader of The Watchdogs, the hulking Legion mercenary Artemis, is far too powerful for Jezzeri to trifle with. And so she seeks out help. Help in either smuggling her goods into the slums, past the watchful eyes of the Watchdogs, or help in defending herself from the Watchdog's when she resists their demands.

The Watchdogs are a powerful enemy, but not undefeatable if the team wishes to directly stand against them. If The Watchdogs are taken out of the picture, then their vast treasures will be up for grabs. Not only that, but there will be a vacuum in the power structures of the gangs, which other, smaller gangs will look to fill. If the team has become caught up in the struggle, perhaps they will continue the fight to keep Nagra gang-free, or perhaps they will step in to fill the vacuum themselves, and take all the profit that comes with it.

A Personal Guard

Lemmi Artuz, a Corporation executive stationed in Nagra fears for his life. The population is growing restless and many of his supposed allies seek to un-seat him and take his power for themselves. He trusts no one, not even his own security detail. But outsiders, mercenaries who are more attracted to coin than to ruling Nagra, should have no reason to move against him. He has put out a contract for a team to act as his personal bodyguard, giving them an up-close and personal look at the sad lives of those who live in Nagra. As their benefactor increases his wealth and power, the city falls further into starvation. Is the team on the right side? Is coin worth more than the lives of a refugee? The team will confront tough questions as they protect their employer from those calling for a revolution.

The Nagra Expedition

There are countless hidden treasures lost in the area around Nagra, just waiting to be found. The desert surrounding the city holds many buried valuables, and even more can be found deep in the crypt, under the care of the deceased who owned them in life. The ancient, abandoned weapons facility near Nagra would also result in a large payday, as the Remnant no longer have the technology available to build the quality of weapons they had prior to their fall. Expeditions to the ruins near Nagra are common, and teams looking for a quick payday can find a position available.

Oasis Bar

"Oasis is a place of shelter and relief. Its waters sustain those dying of thirst in the vastness of the desert. Our desert is the expanse of space. The waters of Oasis nourish the body as well as the spirit."
- Cetewayo.

Floating in orbit above the jungle world Mishpacha, Oasis is a brilliantly luminescent beacon against the black backdrop of space. Taking up nearly half of the small refuelling station in which it is housed: Oasis has become known for overpriced drinks and information. For those who have a ship and need work, Oasis is the perfect place to find it. Oasis is owned and operated by Thaddeus Vance, a former Corporate agent and Cetewayo, a retired Remnant warrior.

Thaddeus Vance is an almost typical Corporate. He is wealthy, stylish, outspoken, arrogant, and unlikely. He is also very well connected. Few people in the Haven system have as much accumulated knowledge of important people and their dealings as Vance does. Thaddeus handles the majority of Oasis's business decisions. He is known for being a notoriously lethal accountant, and is also the bookkeeper.

Cetewayo is a former warrior-zealot who has wandered far from Kumba seeking purpose, and the will of the All-Being. Many years of travel and bloodshed have revealed to Cetewayo that the answers he seeks cannot be found in the deaths of others. Now, the austere Cetewayo seeks to guide travellers on their personal spiritual paths. Through the simple act of aiding others, he has caught a glimpse of the All-Being's will.

The two met on Mishpacha with Cetewayo working as a bodyguard for Thaddeus' research team. When Feral Nephilim overran the expedition's camp, the two fought back-to-back for two hours straight. After the waves of feral creatures subsided, they worked together to escape the planet and their old lives. Cetewayo had grown tired of spilling the blood of others, and Thaddeus was fed up with his employer's tendency to send him into lethal situations. The two did not end up travelling very far before they found new opportunity. Not far from Mishpacha's surface, they stopped for a drink at a run-down bar. Each man had ideas to improve it. After a few hours, and many drinks, the pair had come up with a plan to change their lives forever. Oasis was born.

Modelled after an ancient Kumban desert, Oasis is two stories tall with a small basement. The first floor is devoted entirely to dancing, and drinking. It is constantly alight and loud music thrums at all hours of the day-cycle. Large synthetic palm trees sprout from the floor which even boasts a large pool of crystal blue water. The upper floor is divided into a series of VIP rooms segregated by holoprojected curtains. Information, the true business of Oasis, is exchanged in these rooms. The basement has the décor of a great pavilion tent with piles of cushions for seating and low tables. The air smells heavily of exotic incense. It is here that Cetewayo performs his spiritual consultations.

Oasis has served as a meeting point since its opening. Potential work, and information exchange are two of the most common reasons for frequenting Oasis. Colonists, explorers, and researchers setting out for Mishpacha make sure to stop by Oasis to collect information and guidance before making planet fall. For those willing to pay for expensive drinks, and follow the openly posted rules of non-violence, a wealth of opportunity can be presented within its brightly lit walls. A host of AI controlled drones and Cetewayo's Plasma Rifle stand ready to deal with all trouble makers.

Adventure Hooks

Very Good Booze

A group of pirates called "Singularity" has been exclusively raiding all goods headed to Oasis. The bar has gone over a month without a single resupply and is beginning to lose customers. Thaddeus has placed an open bounty on these pirates, and wants them eradicated entirely. In truth Singularity is a group of Kaltorans addicted to a specific alcohol called Monsoon which is only served at Oasis. When Thaddeus refused to allow them to continue to drink without paying their substantial bar tab, they turned to piracy in order to feed their addiction.

Mind Your Manners

A group of Republic of Desire hackers attempt to sabotage a meeting between the PCs and an important contact. The hackers are experts at being antagonistic without being openly violent and will do all they can to cause the PCs to break the rules of Oasis. The efforts of the hackers begin as juvenile and progressively become more dangerous. The hackers go to great lengths to avoid openly breaking the rules. When they perform an act which is against the rules, the hackers will often set up an unsuspecting scapegoat to absorb the blame. The PCs contact will refuse to meet with them until the situation is handled. Any open violence from either side will be met by Oasis' substantial security.

Peace of Mind

Cetewayo enlists the aid of the PCs in retrieving a holy icon lost to him in his last battle on Mishpacha. The icon is a medallion which was ripped from his neck by a Feral Nephilim Chieftain. Cetewayo will pay a substantial reward for the medallion's return, but does not want blood on his conscience. He makes the difficult request that none of the Feral Nephilim be killed in the process of retrieving the icon.

"Let me give you a tip from one smuggler to another. After a long haul through the Monopoly Belt, there is no better way to unwind than grabbing a brew at the Oasis."

- Ace McDover, renown Corp smuggler.





Tanjo

"Deep within the dead spaces of Haven there is a place where the laws of physics do not work as they are supposed to. Light does not travel through this space, but appears to bend. Ships that have passed by have experienced physical displacement, as they would call it: gravity moving against them, nudging them. Communications system become unstable, and sensors give false data. Conventional science would dictate that something has to be there, but no one has ever been able to find out what... without first being invited."

– Bia_005, Palantor watchman.

Regularly moving and hidden just outside of sight, is the grand Palantor space station Tanjo. Tanjo was built by ancient humans, the most technologically advanced civilization to ever inhabit the galaxy, and the original sculptors of Haven. The space station Tanjo was a great testament to their technological abilities, and a monument to their desperation to survive. This station was built to be one of many relay stations spread throughout the galaxy to maintain the Palantor Network and its countless digital human minds.

While the Mechnoids control many Palantor Relay stations they have always failed to gain control of the elusive Tanjo. Not only does this station jump to a new location every few days, it is hidden behind a massive, and incredibly complex, cloaking field. This field disrupts, and distorts all known sensory technology; psionic, biological, and especially electrical.

Tanjo was design to be a completely autonomous and self-sustaining system. Equipped with carefully balanced construction facilities to replace and repair the robotic servitors that maintained the Relay. The station now finds itself strained under the increased workload placed upon it with so many Palantor minds requiring physical bodies as they flee the Network and the Mechnoid horrors within it. The Mechnoids know about Tanjo, as they can see it from within the Network, but they cannot pinpoint its location in physical space. The Mechnoids desperately want to control Tanjo; not only to gain access to its construction facilities and secret technologies, but so they can gain greater control of the Palantor Network around Haven.

Tanjo is not well defended in the traditional sense of shields, armour and weapons. It relies almost solely on deception; namely in the form of its cloaking field and its regular movement through jump space. If any outsiders wish to visit they must first be invited, and this invitation would need to be renewed after each jump. Tanjo does have a small arsenal of Disruptor batteries, and plasma torpedoes, designed to fight off any Mechnoids that may have temporarily located them. Another safeguard is that many large sections of the station are complete wireless dead zones, in fact most Palantor on Tanjo have no internal com system hardwired to their bodies, instead preferring to use external communication devices. All in an effort to prevent remote Mechnoid hacking.

Many Races

The seclusion in which Tanjo keeps itself doesn't mean that the Palantor are the only race to occupy the station. Others races are allowed to both visit and (on occasion) live there, as long as their presence is beneficial in the sight of the Palantor Admins. The Palantor have installed very few life support systems beyond artificial gravity to much of their station, making many sections inhospitable to non-Palantor. Outsiders have to provide for their own needs if they wish to travel beyond the primary trade district. The only exception to this is the Zhou, who share the Palantor's ability to survive with no atmosphere. The Palantor have not officially allowed the Zhou to claim a formal presence on Tanjo, but they also see them as no threat as they gain no nourishment from synthetic materials and are beyond Mechnoid corruption. Tanjo has become a refuge for many outcast or criminal Zhou who wish to take advantage of Tanjo's secretive nature and disinterested residents.

Trade partners from among the other races are required, as Tanjo must take on regular shipments of raw materials in order to continue their many research projects and robotic production. The Palantor have dedicated special housing within the trade district to accommodate these ambassadors, and merchants.

People of Interest

Tanjo exemplifies the precise organization and discipline of a machine. Even though the city has a large civilian population, it is run as a military installation due to the sensitive nature of the equipment functioning there, and their need to defend it from Mechnoid attacks. Tanjo is under the command of Operator Prime Sasaki_0761, who works directly under the Palantor Admin of Military. Operator Prime Sasaki is a man who takes his job incredibly seriously, and is known for carrying the burden of the Palantor race on his shoulders. He considers his position guarding Tanjo of utmost importance, as the station is the cornerstone of continued Palantor existence within the Haven system.

Most of the Tanjo station staff are made up of Palantor appointed directly by Operator Prime Sasaki. One such Palantor, a scientist by the name of Makiro, is in charge of Tanjo's communications and deep-space scanning. Makiro believes that Tanjo must be only one of many stations devoted to the Palantor Project. He believes there are other stations out there, equipped with their own cloaking technology and possibly infested with Mechnoids. He hopes to find these mystery stations and add them to the Palantor's fleet.

There are a few non-Palantor figures that have found themselves permanently situated on Tanjo station. One of the most recognizable faces is that of Aaron Bones, a Kaltoran business magnate who built a trade empire around the raw ore his people have mined from Kadash and other locations. Raw materials like ore are incredibly valuable to the Palantor, and so they deal with Aaron and his large family, despite his odd tendencies like arguing with himself, and yelling at people who aren't there.

Places of Interest

The Depths of Tanjo

Tanjo is a large space station with many closed off, unexplored, and dangerous sections. No one knows what lurks in those dark corridors, or what other human creations guard their halls. Chief among these are the many wings of the robotic construction facilities that spread throughout the rest of Tanjo. Some of these facilities are dormant due to power shortages or other failures, but some are still operational, and are run autonomously by the stations many servitors. The Operator Prime has deemed these areas 'off limits' so to speak, as any outside tampering could interfere with the programming of the facilities, and Tanjo would suffer if the production lines were disrupted.

The Relay

The relay at the centre of Tanjo station is a massive construct of mythical design. It appears to be a large cube that glows with green light, similar in shape to that legendary Mechnid Cubes. Unlike those cubes, this relay is made from thousands of other smaller cubes that move, shift, and spin as they operate. Even the smartest among the Palantor can't explain how or why the relay works, but they know it does, and so they are content to leave it be. The relay connects to countless other nodes and relays scattered throughout the galaxy. When a Palantor consciousness flees the ether and escapes the Palantor Network for the first time, they find themselves in Tanjo. Their transition from a pure digital being, into a body for the first time can be a difficult and traumatic experience and so it is best managed by seasoned, and understanding experts.

Cloaking Field Central Node

The cloaking field that guards Tanjo is irreplaceable. It is generated by a device so far beyond any known technology that the Palantor haven't dared to examine it, for fear their intrusion may alter its function. The cloaking field generator is blocked off behind heavy shields that are designed to keep everyone out. The servitors who maintain the generator are able to open the shields from the inside, but they only do this when a servitor needs to leave the generator room for personal maintenance. Many other rooms are shielded in this very same manner, so the Palantor leadership have kept the location of the shield generator a secret, in order to protect it.

Trade Hub

The Trade Hub district is a sectioned-off, out-of-service factory that once produced spaceships. Now, the factory floor has been turned into a market where merchants can come to trade with the Palantor. Temporary housing was built into the upper levels of the factory, so these visiting merchants would have a place to stay while they did business. Since the purpose of this factory was once to produce spaceships, it already had its own docking platform built into the side of the factory. Originally, this was to allow newly crafted ships a way to exit the station, but now it is used to bring in larger trade ships.

"We really need to come up with a group designation for all these biologicals." Message-coded Banthia_0243 as she stepped through the sphincter-like doorway within the sprawling towers of Necronus, her polished chrome body reflecting the haughty stares of the disdainful Nephilim as they pushed past her.

"How about... meatbags?" Came the expected answer, from Gardeth_097, as he shoved his way past a particularly annoying chitinous Nephilim that was trying to exert its dominance.

"Really? You lose 83.4479% recurring of your memory allowance when you came out of the Network, and that's the archaic trope you keep?"

"Well, it seemed like it would be useful, with us living inside a robot body and all."

"Anyway, I was thinking. Apart from deletion, we are effectively immortal, with only resources being a hindrance to our coming back to life, yes?"

"I... suppose, yeah, but I still like 'meatbags'."

"... Of course you do. But I was thinking of the differences between our kind and all of theirs, and the main difference I can see, is that they are mortal. We aren't. We should refer to them as 'mortals'."

"Unless we get eaten by a Mechnid, or are particularly poor and our chassis is wrecked..."

Population

Tanjo is currently populated by nearly three hundred thousand people, including the servitors that keep it running. The Palantor maintain the highest population on Tanjo. It is difficult to compare their numbers to the Zhou, as there are many of them hiding out in the dark, abandoned hallways and unexplored areas of Tanjo. No one checks in on them, or has ever attempted to tally their exact number. The number of visiting members of the other races is relatively small and makes up only 2 percent of Tanjo's population.

Adventure Hooks

The Hidden City

The city of Tanjo is difficult to find, even if one knows where to look. Finding the station for the first time can be almost impossible. The best, and sometimes only, way to find Tanjo is to be invited there. And even then, you can only find Tanjo one time, as it will vanish the second you fly out of its docking bay. Luckily for the party, Aaron has been having issues getting his ore shipments to Tanjo. Pirate factions have caught on to

Aaron's ship's movements, and many valuable chunks of ore have gone missing. Aaron's normal crew have turned their back on him and refuse to man the ships under these circumstances. Aaron is willing to pay handsomely for a crew strong enough to fight back against these pirates, and ensure the shipment arrives safely at Tanjo station.

Conciliation or Confrontation

Tanjo is under siege. Not by an army but by politics. A Corp executive by the name of Thaddius Black has grown jealous of the Palantor's monopoly on their technology. He realizes that the Palantor have access to technologies far beyond what the Corp can produce, and that puts their position in the galaxy in jeopardy. Black has chosen Tanjo to be the focal point for his campaign of hate and scare tactics against the Palantor. By painting the station as a mysterious fortress filled with strange and dangerous weaponry, with cloaking systems so advanced that the station could be floating right above peoples homes, he is driving the Corp population to fear the Palantor.

While the Corp are tenuous allies, Operator Prime Sasaki can easily picture a future where the entire galaxy is at war. And so, in fear of allies becoming enemies, Sasaki has refused to pander to Black's demands.

And so Thaddius Black has turned to more devious means: he has managed to steal samples of technology straight from Tanjo by placing his agents aboard merchant ships heading for the station. Black hasn't been able to go public with the theft, as it could start an intergalactic incident. Sasaki hasn't publicly accused Black for the same reasons, along with the ulterior motive of preserving Palantor pride. But Sasaki knows Black orchestrated the heist, and he wants his stolen tech back. This is where the party comes in: they must discover the location of the technology without anyone ever realizing what happened. They may return it to Tanjo, or sell it back to Thaddius for a high price.

Interrupted Relay

Something is interfering with the Palantor relay at Tanjo. Without this beacon to guide them, many Palantor minds will not be able to escape the Mechonids harvest.

Makiro, Tanjo's chief science officer, has had no luck discovering the source of this interruption. The machine itself is running in prime condition, and everything is checking out positive. As the machine is malfunctioning it must be due to interference on the outside.

Makiro has picked up a faint ping on the network for a location in distant space. A Palantor scouting party was sent to investigate, but their signals went dead and their consciousness never returned to the relay to explain what happened. Fearing the worst, Makiro has put out a contract for a team to investigate this deep space interference. He suspects pirates, political machinations, or, worse yet, a device built by the Mechonid themselves. The

party must find whatever is jamming the Relay, deal with its creators, and, if able, return the Palantor scouts to Tanjo.

The Fugitive Zhou

Normally, the Palantor have a don't-ask-don't-tell relationship with the Zhou who have taken haven on Tanjo. The Zhou don't interfere with what the Palantor are doing there, and the Palantor let them live on the unexplored areas of the station, safe from prying eyes. Over the years, this relationship has benefited both the Palantor and the Zhou, as having a good relationship with the Zhou race is important. Operator Prime Sasaki is able to ignore minor crimes, especially when the Palantor themselves don't view the action as a crime – such as breaking a Legion covenant.

But Sasaki has received word that Tanjo may be harbouring an incredibly dangerous Zhou – a serial killer who has killed and eaten dozens of people across Haven. This Zhou, Zerre, is wanted by almost every major Haven government. Sasaki is in a tough position – even though Zerre won't be a danger to the other Zhou, or to the Palantor (the Zhou do not crave synthetic flesh), he may one day leave Tanjo and kill again, which Sasaki cannot allow.

He does not want to be seen as acting against the Zhou for any reason, and cooperating with the other Haven agencies and granting them access to Tanjo would be a dangerous precedent. Instead, Sasaki has put out a contract for help in this situation. He is not obvious about his intentions, as he does not wish to alert others to his plan. But when the party arrives at Tanjo they are given their instructions – hunt down this rogue Zhou and bring him to justice, off-world. If the party can lie and say they recovered Zerre on another planet, all the better.

Tanjo is Falling

While the players are spending time on Tanjo, the city comes under assault by a massive Mechonid force. Tanjo's scientists believe the Mechonids must have developed a new technology that allows them to detect Tanjo's location. Or they somehow smuggled a tracing beacon onto the station.

Tanjo's defences are not strong enough to fight off a force this large, and the servitor bodies that many of Tanjo's Palantor inhabit were not built for combat. There is no question that the Mechonids will slice their way into the station. The question is, will the Palantor be able to hold them off long enough for the station to jump away? There is a call to arms that the players might feel compelled to respond to. Otherwise, they might find themselves caught up in the battle as it rages across the entire station.

Whether their priority is defending Tanjo from the Mechonid force, protecting the lives of innocents, or just getting out of the station before it falls, the team will have their hands full with Tanjo's factories going haywire, the servitors being hacked by the Mechonids, and Harbinger ships firing deep space cannons against Tanjo's shields. If the party does escape, they will still have the entire Mechonid space force to sneak past.

The Roost

"We welcome you home to the Roost. Please enjoy your stay, and may you bring to us tales and trade, and leave blessed twice over with the same."

– Araunya Star-Blazer, Roost Harbormaster.

For a century following the Great War, the Twi-Far have travelled to the farthest corners of the galaxy, salvaging what they can from long dead Human worlds and forgotten colonies. While they prefer to keep their solar-sail fleets small and nimble, their increasing number of conflicts with the powerful Oni have forced the Twi-Far to gather together in larger numbers for protection and resource conservation. The largest of these fleets is known as The Roost.

Commonly made up of over two thousand ships, The Roost is ever changing. Rather than having one specific focus for the flotilla, the ever changing myriad of ships that make up The Roost regularly shifts the fleet's emphasis between commerce, science, and on occasion, military. While this makes the Roost a significant player in the Haven systems economy, it also reveals how vulnerable they are. The fleet changes in composition almost every week; sometimes The Roost is composed primarily of merchant vessels who have come to trade, while other times it is full of exploratory and defence vessels whose purpose is to chart out new locations to move the fleet to.

To a new visitor the Roost appears as an odd conglomeration of ships patched together around larger ships when stationary. Often older vessels such as ancient starliners or carrier ships are fitted with docking clamps so that smaller ships can dock with them. These ships sometimes extend their airlock tubes to other ships, creating a complex web of interconnected tubes and shafts running across the breath of the flotilla. In some cases the sight of the beautifully decorated ships functioning as a hive while smaller ships float about reminds visitors of terrestrial insect hives. Though often needing constant repair, the sight of so many workers drifting about in space only adds to their hive like image. Skilled veterans, the repair gangs of The Roost's Engineering Choir intuitively know what their comrades needs will be as they work, and can accomplish even the most complex repairs quickly.

The exterior of the stationary Roost is made up of those vessels that spend the most time away from it, such as merchant vessels and scout ships. These vessels do not stay for very long and need to have the ability to leave at a moment's notice. Deeper in the interior of the Roost are larger capital ships and carriers that function as the fleet's primary habitation areas for those who are not bound to a single starship. Public gathering areas are almost unheard of except on the capital ships, and even these tend to only accommodate a crowd of a few dozen. The few gathering areas are beautiful to behold, as the Twi-Far have taken time to decorate these areas with art from throughout the ships and across the galaxy. It is considered a great honour for a piece to be chosen to be put on display in these common areas, and word that an artist's work is on display is shared warmly from ship to ship.

The power that flows through The Roost is generated by the few fusion plants operating on the carrier ships combined with the power plants of all vessels wired in to the flotilla. While this seems like it would allow the Twi-Far to be able to generate a massive amount of power, their ability to transfer the power to other ships is strained by the wiring and capacities of each ship the power flows through. Those who are fortunate enough to dock their ships within The Roost may find their ship able to recharge its power cells relatively easily or they may find their systems overloading from unmanaged power spikes.

The Twi-Far are careful not to remain in one place for too long, jumping their fleets every few weeks, often without notice to any outside observers. The calculations for moving the entire fleet are immense, and the hours leading up to a FTL jump is a frantic affair, full of communications officers struggling to coordinate with other ships while navigators consult their charts to make sure they all arrive at the same location as everyone else. The fleet has the benefit of having hundreds of skilled captains able to use their experience for the good of others, but this often leads to the detriment of many voices shouting over the command channel with their own ideas and suggestions.

When the fleet is attacked, the ships that line the outside detach and give way so that the heavier cruisers are free to move from the flotilla. The large central ships bring ancient weapons to bare on their targets. Hundreds of escort fighters are released from inside the Roost and form a protective barrier around the fleet, with squadrons breaking off to pursue their assailants if needed. For the most part, the Roost is a defensive fleet and not an army; their preferred action is breaking away and escaping rather than engaging in a full fight. A majority of the Twi-Far's ships are designed for swift space travel and not warfare, and their elegant aesthetics often bely a fragile nature that cannot defend against heavy weaponry.

When the flotilla is at rest, it is often a beautiful sight to behold. Visitors seeking a place to dock will often marvel at the sight of the many solar sails moving the Twi-Far's ships along. Monofilament sails that glow with bright golden light illuminate the docked ships around them, and many vessels sport ornamentation on their hulls such as statues or paintings. The Twi-Far believe that artistry and technology can go hand in hand, and show the universe the power of their technology by making it as elegant and mystifying as possible. Though newer vessels in The Roost may use patchwork bulkier equipment, the older vessels often combine elegance with function.

Life inside of the flotilla is broken down by what group and ship a Twi-Far belongs to and whether or not they are an outsider. Though the Twi-Far value peace, they keep a watchful eye on those that might bring harm to The Roost, and the Eagle's Eye Sec-Con ship at the centre of the flotilla monitors all traffic carefully. Visitors are still welcomed, and many vessels serve as trading ports where goods are brought in from across the sector and then traded or sold for fuel and other needs the fleet may have. The older vessels



have begun to show their age, with deck plate paneling scoured by thousands of footsteps and worn seats seem a far cry from what they once were, but these vessels have been lovingly repaired by the families that live on them. To the Twi-Far, as long as the vessel is serviceable, it still has a role in the fleet. Most vessels have paintings and pieces of art on the walls of their ships, and friends and families routinely meet each other in the central areas of each ship during the day.

On the larger starliners, a sense of normalcy for non-space dwelling races begins to emerge. Though difficult to maintain, the Twi-Far maintain gardens and arboreturns on their ships to provide fresh food and organic air filtration. To help with the sense of loss and disarray the Twi-Far have been dealing with since the persecution by the Oni began, the Twi-Far have started a monthly Festival that is held across the flotilla. Extra rations of food and water are given to families and they are encouraged to cook ceremonial dishes to share with their neighbours. Music performed by live bands is patched into the communication networks across the fleet, and the Twi-Far give gifts of food to visitors to The Roost as a sign of friendship. Though costly, the Twi-Far feel it is important for those that live in The Roost to still feel a sense of home and to remember their roots.

The Roost prides itself on being a place where the Twi-Far can engage in diplomacy with other races on their own terms. The Twi-Far allow other races to maintain small embassies on one aging starliner known as the U'gau, and it is here that they engage in trade discussions and other matters with delegates from other races. The many bars and ships across the flotilla are also excellent places for non-Twi-Far to come and engage the race of artists and mystics, as the Twi-Far often have need for materials and goods that they are unable to come by through proper channels. Almost every citizen of the flotilla knows of a place where other races can gather to talk, and members of other races are found frequently in bars and restaurants across The Roost.

Ships of The Roost

The ships that make up The Roost run across the spectrum of designs, designations, classes, and purposes. Though there are several similar designs among the fleet, after years of repairs and alterations each ship is almost unique unto itself. Ships with massive golden sails fly through the systems that The Roost travels through, and the sight of the flotilla floating in space has been described as one of the most beautiful sights in the universe.

Though certain ships, such as the few defence vessels that the peaceful Twi-Far choose to operate, appear imposing and fitted out for war, the majority of their vessels are relatively peaceful and only maintain armaments to protect themselves. Even the larger capital ships in The Roost are dedicated more to shielding their fellow ships from enemy fire than for the purpose of waging brutal war upon their enemies.

In The Roost, several vessels stand out from their fellow vessels. Some of these ships are famous for their exploits and heroics in helping to preserve the Twi-Far race, while others have earned their reputation through diplomatic or peaceful means. To the Twi-Far, a

ship that earns its reputation through unsavoury or criminal means is often not welcome at The Roost, as the Twi-Far prefer to keep their neutrality and preserve the peace. Though they prefer not to act rashly, they will bring the reputation that the ship has earned to the attention of the Chorus should the ship's nefarious actions come to light.

The Unsung Melody

This ship, known by the unflattering epithet as "The Orphanage" throughout The Roost, is home to those Twi-Far who have lost all of their possessions and families to the Oni. The Unsung Melody is an aging cargo freighter that has seen its fair share of battles but whose patchwork hull has been purposefully shined and ornamented to reflect its resilience. The ship's captain, known as Mother Kestrel, knows everyone's name who comes to live on her ship. She is well known for her versatility and her courage, as she will go from comforting a sick child to shouting complex commands to move the ship when the need arises.

The Blue Star

One of the few warships that the Twi-Far maintain, The Blue Star has become known as the centre of a movement of peaceful contemplation in the past year. Its reactor core damaged in a fight with Mechonid raiders, the crew of The Blue Star thought the ship may need to be scrapped until a group of Twi-Far monks asked to move on board. Now the vessel, once known for its gallant military history, is a floating monastery that the Monks of the Blue Star use to travel from system to system spreading their teachings. The ship's weapons can be brought online when the occasion calls for it, but the monks prefer to exit hostile situations rather than provoke an aggressive response from their enemies.

The Comfy Nest

An aging starliner bought from the Corporation, The Comfy Nest serves an important function in the flotilla. Here the gears of the Twi-Far economy intersect with those of other races, and The Comfy Nest is filled with rooms and hangars full of shouting merchants and stock brokers. Though some Twi-Far find the idea of such blatant capitalism off-putting, they know that The Roost has supply and resource needs and accept the Nest for what it is. Long lines of transports and shuttles wait outside of the ship's hangars, waiting for the chance to land and off load those who seek to make their fortune on the ship.

The Grand Symphony

If the Choir is the government of The Roost, then the Grand Symphony is its heartbeat. A massive capital ship fitted with communication relays and subspace radios, the Grand Symphony is able to maintaining communications with every ship in the flotilla. The Grand Symphony is often surrounded by its own cluster of defence ships, and access to the Grand Symphony is rarely granted to outsiders due to its important nature. The ship welcomes all Twi-Far, and there the Twi-Far can watch the Choir as it debates new laws and discusses the next moves for The Roost.

The Choir

The Choir of The Roost, as the ruling body of the fleet has come to be known, is one of the largest and most diverse of its kind among the Twi-Far. Made up of hundreds of Voices from across the fleet, the Choir of The Roost is constantly changing and almost always in a state of flux. Gathering aboard the Grand Symphony, a large ship that is almost always at the centre of The Roost, the members of this Choir meet once every solar week.

Rarely do power blocs form in other Choirs but in The Roost there are numerous factions vying for control of the fleet. Though all Twi-Far want the best for their race, in recent years it has been hard to form a consensus on what that is. The Choir has grown so large and diverse that it was necessary to create the floating position of the First Song, which changes at each gathering based on how long the ship has been a part of The Roost. Since all captains desire for the chance to chair each meeting, there are those who have waited years for a chance to act as the dominant voice in the Choir even if that is only for one session.

Currently, power in the fleet is split among three major power blocs. The first are The Salamanders, who desire to have The Roost find a permanent home and start to rebuild Twi-Far society. Though unpopular because the Twi-Far do not know of any place that would accept a fleet as large as The Roost so readily, they have slowly gained momentum among those ships that are starting to fall apart or are in constant need for repair. The second power bloc are the Phoenix, who believe that the Twi-Far are getting closer to making a breakthrough in their relationship to the Faren. They call for the Twi-Far to meditate upon their dual natures and to seek an inner peace that will only happen when all members of their race are as one.

The third group, and arguably the largest, are the Ember. These Twi-Far are focused purely on living in the now, and do not believe that a permanent home can be found or a sense of peace can be maintained while they are struggling to get fresh food and water to their people and to maintain The Roost. They know that someday they will have to look to the future and see what awaits their race, but for the time being they need to focus on finding more supplies and on making allies among the other races. Though the number of Essentialist Voices in the Choir has begun to shrink over the last year, they still maintain a large enough faction to make sure that their decisions are passed when the Choir meets.

Plot Hooks

The Lost Wheel

The Distance, a Twi-Far vessel that went missing over five years ago, has been discovered in one of the turbulent stretches of the Halo Nebula. Its discoverer, Zaoush the Voice of Celestius, has towed the ship all the way back to the Roost so that it may be repaired and made serviceable again. But the Distance does not appear to be damaged, and although the crew is unaccounted for, those who explore the ship claim they feel eyes watching them. As the PCs explore the vessel, they find that the corridors seem to loop back onto themselves and the ship is unwilling to let them escape. They discover that the ship has been heavily modified with Mechnid technology, and that the ship may have

once been modified to be a floating research station, a special weapon configuration... or even a prison.

NavCom Down

The Roost makes its jump as scheduled, and all seems to be normal until panicked crewman are heard shouting into their communicators. The star field around The Roost has disappeared and it appears that the coordinates that were shared across The Roost's Navigational Computer were incorrect, and The Fleet is unable to figure out where they are. As ships are sent out to explore the area around them, they discover that the fleet has jumped into the centre of an enormous structure that is so big it can accommodate the entire flotilla. Exploration of the structure reveals it is an enormous hollowed out rogue moon, and that while the flotilla can escape if they could learn where their exact coordinates are, finding a way to the surface will take time. The unknown ruins on the inside of the moon are abandoned and show no signs of life, but strange heat signatures occasionally appear on radar. Are there machines or wild Faren lurking in the ruins of the moon, and if there are, could they hostile?

Screams In Starlight

A strange sickness has begun to spread across the flotilla ever since it arrived in a small mysterious gray nebula that was not listed on any navigational chart. This sickness drains away the energy of the Faren, leaving the Twilingers to suffer as part of their beings are slowly taken away. As the PCs attempt to solve the mystery, they see the Twi-Far suffer horribly as more and more of their number succumb to this strange disease. What they do know of is that the Chorus is hesitant to leave the nebula for some reason, and rumours that beings made up of black smoke are seen floating around the hulls of the docked ships. The smoke screams when it is encountered, and appear to be shouting warnings in a strange tongue. Panic is starting to set in, and a standing order is given to secure each ship and prevent people from disembarking. But will a quarantine stop the spreading of the sickness? And can a means be found to understand the smoke creatures?

Traitors

Upon returning to The Roost, the PCs discover that the ships containing the food stores for the fleet have been sabotaged and the food poisoned. As panic begins to set in, the Roost discovers they are not far from a Corporation farming complex where they hope to resupply. Caught between the obstinate Corporation who refuses to give food to the flotilla without substantial pay and the fact that several systems appear sabotaged by unknown assailants on board the fleet, the PCs must find a way to negotiate for a peaceful solution to the matter while trying to find who it is that is sabotaging the Roost and why they are doing it. There are rumours that a great Twi-Far diplomat lives on a nearby ship and may be willing to lend his help to the diplomatic overtures, but he has gone missing and his shipmates claim they have not seen him for months. The Corporation has given an ultimatum on being paid for their supplies or else they will ship them to a far off colony, leaving The Roost in dire straits.





Prominent NPCs

The All-Prophet trudged through the harsh sands of the Kumban desert, the intense sun beating down on his neck and back. He covers himself with cloth, a vain attempt to keep the sun from searing him. He leans on his staff for support, driving it into the shifting sands in an attempt to keep his weakening body upright. He is weary, for he has been travelling the desert for far too many months in response to a swirling whisper in the wind that tell of an ancient Ursai weapons facility.

He wipes the sweat from his brow as he pushes himself forward. His muscles groan in protest and his mouth burns with thirst, he has not food or water left, but he knows he cannot stop now. He relies on the All-Being to sustain and protect his servant.

Kumba is dying, and the All-Prophet knows it. The presence of the All-Being is fading from the land, and the All-Prophet wonders why. Perhaps this ancient place, thought lost in the immense desert, can provide an answer.

He knows how the Remnant hierarchy look at him. He is the laughing stock of the Kumban Priesthood. But he sees the fear behind their eyes: the fear that he is right, that the All-Being has rejected their people and called those from the other races.

The All-Prophet would do anything to serve his god, and that included sacrificing his body to the elements to recover an ancient Ursai weapon: the key to understanding the doom that befell the Ursai.

The rumours that reached his ears told of an ancient facility uncovered in a recent sandstorm. A laboratory that was said to have held the Ursai's greatest weapon: the Deatomiser. The weapon that wiped the Ursai, and all other sentient life, from the entire system, and unleashed a horde of psionic ghosts. It was thought lost, but nothing can stay hidden among the shifting dunes of Kumba. The All-Prophet knew he had to be the one to find it.

Perhaps by finding the weapon, and by studying the writings of the ancient Ursai, the All-Prophet could begin to understand why the All-Being was leaving Kumba.



Adashe Itsva, the 'All-Prophet'

"The time has come to spread our wings, dear brothers and sisters. We were forgiven! Blessed be the name of the All-Being for taking pity on such a poor race as ours! Be thankful that we were given a second chance: a chance to do things right! Yet to do this, we must fly; fly to all corners of the galaxy, to speak to all manner of races. The blessing of the All-Being is not ours alone! It is meant to be shared. This could not be any clearer to me than it is now."

-Transcription of a sermon by the All-Prophet.

Adashe Itsva turned his back on Remnant civilization. As a young priest, Adashe was plagued with doubts. He reeled at the idea that the All-Being would abandon his people after bringing them back from the brink of nothing. He studied the religious scriptures intently, and become an established priest at his local temple. But it all became too much for Adashe; he could not reconcile his two differing views of the All-Being; that of a miraculous saviour and that of an absent father. Unsure that he could remain part of the priesthood, Adashe left his family, his belongings, and his Guta, and vanished into the deserts of Kumba. Adashe was declared dead and he was quickly forgotten.

Decades later, a cloaked Remnant figure appeared from the wild deserts, preaching of a lost Simba Mabwe, a large stone, hidden deep in the desert of Kumba. He said that his encounter with this Simba Mabwe changed him, and that the presence of the All-Being was felt strongly there - more strongly than was felt in most of the Simba Mabwe these days. But he spoke like a mad man, often speaking in unknown languages and growling in guttural tongues. His clothes were ripped where he tore at them during his sermons, and he was ragged and unwashed.

But the Remnant flocked to hear the preaching of this madman. Many discounted him immediately, calling him a lunatic, believing his time in the desert had unhinged him. But others listened intently to this new preacher. They began to follow Adashe as he travelled around the weakening Simba Mabwes of the frontier. His sermons often preached of the All-Being's return, and how the protection of the Simba Mabwe would not be enough to save those who had misrepresented him. Some believe he is a prophet of the All-Being, and that their saviour speaks through his mouth. Others believe that he is, in fact, the All-Being returned to them in disguise. His followers took to calling him 'The All-Prophet,' and the name stuck.

No one suspected that this prophet was the young Adashe Itsva, returned from the desert after long years spent alone, searching for the truth of the All-Being. He has never returned to his Guta or sought out the lost members of his family. Whatever happened to the young, questioning priest out in the desert had turned him into a radical prophet of the All-Being.

Adashe believes the All-Being brought the Remnant back because they had been meant to do great things before they took what he calls "The Dark Path" that lead to their destruction at their own hands. The All-Being took pity on them and decided to give them

a second chance, a chance to make the right decisions, a chance to leave Kumba, and carry the message of the All-Being throughout the stars.

Adashe preaches of the All-Being's imminent return, and that it is the followers of the All-Beings role to be a 'kingdom inside other lesser kingdoms'. He chooses no side in political debates, and

Samawade knelt in silence. The loading bay was littered with the bodies of recently-deceased Draz pirates. The attack had been swift and fierce, but was never a real threat to Samawade and his companions. Those same companions moved from one fallen pirate to the next, collecting what few valuables the raiders had on their bodies.

The silence after the battle was disconcerting to Samawade. How could something so violent begin and end so quickly? His head bowed and his feline eyes drifted shut. Samawade focused on his heartbeat, attempting to slow the furious rhythm and clear his body of its battle-state. He could not help but feel a pang of guilt over the death of the pirates. Had he or any of his companions even tried to talk to them before gunshots were traded?

"All-Being," He whispered. "Forgive these men. They never knew your light. The pain of their addiction burned in their gaze. Then, their fire was extinguished."

Clawed fingers curled tightly into fists as his companions voices drifted into his thoughts. They were arguing over who killed the highest number of pirates. It was not something he was unused to. He often took part in such jovial conversations, even at the expense of his enemies' dignity. Why then did it feel different this time? Samawade had lost count of the number of enemies who had lost their lives in battle against him. Why were these pirates any different? Were they truly evil? He was unsure if he would feel any different knowing the truth.

"Why is this so difficult? They would have killed us and they would have killed others if not for encountering us. I know these things, All-Being. That knowledge does nothing to assuage the guilt. If there is another way, show me. Everything happened so fast, I did not have time to consider what the right path was. Perhaps that is why I feel so uneasy."

He felt the tension release from his muscles as the stress of the fight left his body. His breath slowed and he rose. Shouldering his assault rifle, Samawade turned to join his companions.

instead works to bring down the walls between the many different political, cultural, and religious factions of the Remnant.

He preaches that the reason for the Simba Mabwe's diminishing power is that the All-Being wishes them to leave Kumba, and this is his signal that it is time to go. Time for them to leave the safety of their home world, as a child leaves its mother's arms. Due to his preaching, more and more Remnant priests have taken up the cause, and left Kumba to preach to all corners of the galaxy; especially the Haven system.

The rest of Remnant society views the Disciples of the All-Prophet as yet another splinter faction. They do not believe in Adashe's message of unity, and do their best to downplay the significance of this movement, as his teachings threaten their social structures. Entrenched Remnant priests do all they can to keep Adashe's message from spreading amongst their flocks. They discredit him wherever they can, spreading rumours that he is wild, uncontrollable, and mad. A false prophet.

Yet the disciples of the All-Prophet grow in number at an alarming rate, as a combination of the All-Prophets charisma, and the mystery surrounding him draws many into his fold. It is unknown where the disciples make their home – many believe they have their own Guta out in the wild deserts, perhaps centred around the new Simba Mabwe that Adashe had discovered, or that they have no home on Kumba. No one knows their exact number, nor has any outsider set eyes on the Simba Mabwe that transformed Adashe. The sheer amount of unknown information and misinformation surrounding the All-Prophet makes him incredibly hard to find.

Adventure Hooks

To Discover the Truth

The team first hears of The All-Prophet through a communiqué from a Remnant leader on Kumba. He speaks to them of a raving, militant lunatic who seeks to usurp Remnant power and destroy their civilization. They require outside help to ease the rebellion and will pay a hefty sum to have Adashe eliminated. However, once they meet Adashe in person, the truth becomes cloudy. Could this charming, welcoming, peaceful preacher really be the militant threat the Remnant believe he is? Is his passion clouding the team's minds? Is this just a disguise under which a militant revolutionary hides? They must decide if they are simply being sucked in by a charismatic cult leader or if the Remnant leaders were not being entirely truthful when they spoke of their new enemy.

To Greener Pastures

Many Remnant leaders are worried about their population leaving Kumba. The message of the All-Prophet has been spreading quicker than they can stop it, and many Remnant are feeling the call to spread out into the galaxy. The Guta leaders have been unable to stop this so far, and so have taken to uniting together to place a travel ban on Kumba: no ships are allowed

"Great All-Being.

Watch as I make use of the life you have given me.

Guide me as I seek to make the most of it.

And illuminate the path you wish me to walk.

Wondrous All-Being.

Forgive me for the sins of the Ursai.

Help me to be something better.

And bless my quest for redemption.

Mighty All-Being.

Guard me from evil.

Grant strength to my armour.

And be the fire in my heart.

Powerful All-being.

Make my roar fierce.

Sharpen my claws.

And feel your enemies dread.

Wise All-Being.

Prepare me for the darkness of the void.

Fortify my will against the evil I shall face.

And smile as I honour you."

-Remnant Zealot-Warrior's Prayer

to enter or leave the atmosphere of the planet. This All-Prophet is not keen on this situation, and so he requires outside help. The team is contacted through secretive means with a mission to sneak undetected onto the planet and help smuggle some of the All-Prophet's followers to their new homes in Haven. But the Remnant fleet is keeping a close eye on who comes and goes, and will not take kindly to efforts to circumvent their ruling.

Forbidden Miracle

Panic has struck the Remnant civilization when an ancient Nephilim pureblood, killed during the Great War, is spontaneously returned to life deep in the Kumba desert. This figure represents a threat to many established Remnant religions. If the Nephilim was indeed returned to life by the All-Being, as the Ursai were, it means the Remnant are not the All-Beings only chosen people. The existence of this creature could bring down many powerful religious belief systems. The religious leaders have tasked their best hunters with finding this Nephilim and executing him. The All-Prophet, on the other hand, would rather see this Nephilim alive. He already believes the All-Beings blessings are for all people, and this Nephilim may provide him with a chance to prove it. He hires a team to beat the Remnant hunters to this Nephilim and save him from execution.

Admins Kuro_02 & Masami_679

"The Palantor Government runs like a precise clock – every gear turns in exact time. The mechanism behind this clock is the exacting intelligence of the Admin of Intellectual Resources, Kuro_02, whose meticulous attention to detail is what makes the Palantor as great as they are."

–Corp report on Palantor Government.

The Palantor rule themselves as a Technocracy, a government ruled by a small group of elite, technologically advanced Palantor. These Palantor have been granted the highest cognitive upgrades available, and have been placed in positions of leadership. These are the Administrators.

In general terms, all Administrators are equal: they work on their specific tasks with little overlap of one another. But there are two Administrators whose work elevates them above the rest of the Admins, their work is considered more significant to the overall workings of the Palantor Technocracy: Kuro_02, Admin of Intellectual Resources, and Masami_679, the Diplomatic Administrator.

Kuro, as the head of Intellectual Resources, is granted a far more powerful intellect module than the other Palantor Admins. This module enhances his already brilliant mind, making him perhaps one of the most cunning and intelligent being in the galaxy. He is also the one in charge of selecting other Admins and deciding the nature of the cognitive hardware that will be installed in their bodies. Kuro takes this process seriously, as his decisions are determining the future of the Palantor people. He judges potential Admins based on many factors, including intellect and skill in their field. Yet perhaps most important to Kuro is their personality. They must have willpower, a strong spirit, loyalty to the Palantor, and the willingness to sacrifice their personal desires and needs for their people.

Kuro represents these traits more strongly than any other Admin. He willingly shares his great intellect with the others, often using his personal intellect modules to boost the cognitive abilities of the other Admins as they perform crucial roles. He is not one to call attention to himself, and is happy to shun all glory if it means the Palantor are successful.

Kuro also has the heavy task of mainlining knowledge of the full extent of Palantor law and processes, which is an incredibly complicated living document: as complicated as the code that makes up a Palantor mind. Having this encyclopedic knowledge is a remarkable feat in itself, but Kuro is also tasked with deciding when new laws need to be put in place and when collaboration between Admins is required.

Legend says Kuro was one of the first Palantor to emerge safely from the Network. He is said to have drafted the first Palantor laws, and helped save entire clusters of Palantor minds from the Mechnid scourge. The truth itself is hidden behind layer after layer of restricted access and confidential documents, so only Kuro himself knows the truth of the matter.

Masami is Kuro's equal, but she is in charge of Palantor Diplomacy. While Kuro's abilities and intellect are focused inward, on the Palantor race itself, Masami's focus is on the external: the Palantor's relationship with the other races in which they share galactic space. The pair are two sides of the same Palantor coin. She is constantly working to shape the Palantor foreign policy, most of which is geared towards protecting the Palantor Network from the Mechnids. Everything she does is for the betterment of the Palantor, and her diplomatic missions usually revolve around gaining military and economic allies.

Masami has the mind of a soldier in the role of a Diplomat, which is why Kuro appointed her to the position. She is steadfast in her belief in both the future of the Palantor, and the destruction of the Mechnids. Like a soldier, she will not waver in the face of great odds. Yet she does not bark orders like a drill instructor or talk in the common parlance like a soldier. She is a confident, elegant, feminine woman, with a charming presence that throws most envoys off balance.

Masami is the first face that many influential outsiders will see when attempting to make deals directly with the Palantor. She is fluent in every known dialect in every known language. She is equipped with modules built into her cortex that instruct her on local customs for almost every tribe of every Race, as well as their deviations from planet-to-planet. She is the Palantor's ultimate diplomat.

Masami spends most of her time travelling to wherever a representative of the Palantor is needed for diplomatic discussions. She brokers peace treaties, trade agreements, and meetings between high ranking political figures. When new diplomatic measures need to be instilled, she will pass the information on to Kuro, who will draft new laws for the Palantor to follow, including new economic sanctions, and restricted travel routes. While their tasks are separated from overlap, as per Palantor law, most issues require both an eye towards the Palantor, and one towards the galaxy.

When Kuro and Masami are stationed together, they spend all their time with each other. Rumours abound as to the relationship between the two. Many believe they are in love, but the truth is always more complicated. Kuro does view Masami as the perfect Palantor: educated, smart, funny, and charming; while Masami looks up to Kuro as a role-model. Never has there been a couple among the Palantor who are more perfect for each other. Yet, neither one can allow themselves to embrace this attraction. They earned their positions by believing one should sacrifice their own interests for those of the Palantor people, and so they have never acted on their feelings. They both hope that, one day, the Mechnid threat will be over and they can allow others to rise to their positions. Then, they can return to the Palantor Network together, and retire in the ether, free from the bounds of duty.

Adventure Hooks

Error: Admin not Found

The Admin of Military's body was destroyed. His consciousness was thankfully retrieved, but his body still lies where his ship crash landed into Eden. Kuro_02 is concerned that the body may wind up in the hands of the Devwi-lch's Nephilim Brood. This wouldn't be a problem, except the Military Admin's body was augmented with an incredibly advanced cognitive booster that Kuro_02 would like back. The cost of sending a team to Eden to retrieve the technology is much less than it would cost to rebuild the cranial augmentation, and would prevent their technology falling into others hands. Kuro's hope is that the team can sneak onto Eden and investigate the crash site before the Nephilim Brood realizes what they have. Also, the team will not be the only ones looking to salvage the technology – anytime a Palantor ship goes down, Corp-hired scavengers try to steal their tech.

An Assassin Among Us

Masami has asked to meet with the team to detail her fears of an assassin among the Kaltoran retinue she is travelling to meet. Masami has her own team of Palantor guards, but they are easily noticeable. Any Kaltoran that wished her harm would know to wait until the guards were preoccupied. But if Masami can sneak in a team of secret bodyguards, she would have an advantage against the would-be-assassin, or assassins. The rendezvous is set to take place on an abandoned mining platform in the oceans of Kadash. Masami wants the team to travel ahead of her, reconnoiter the location, and prepare for an inevitable ambush. All the better If the team can root out the assassins before Masami's arrival, and discover their motives.

The Mechnoid Spy

Kuro believes the Mechnoids have developed a way to corrupt a Palantor mind that is already inside a body by hacking it. Instead of de-compiling the mind and feeding it into the Mechnoid network, they instead attach the Palantor mind to a nearby Harbinger who can effectively control the Palantor. Kuro has reason to believe this may have happened to one of his Admins, brought to him by a hacked transmission into the Mechnoid communications network. If this is the case, and one of the Palantor close to him is infected, it would be disastrous. For now, Kuro has found an excuse to restrict access to his Admins. He cannot make his beliefs public, or the Mechnoid will know he is on to them. Instead, he needs an outside team to observe the Admins, and determine if one of them is truly infected. It is possible that an infected Admin would not even be aware that they have been compromised.





Athene Kosta 'Lady Vengeance'

"These pirates have attacked us, killed your brothers and sisters. The Curia would have us sit on our hands and wait for the Navy. But we are Legion, let us peruse these vermin to their holes and burn them out."

- Athene Kosta whilst commanding a trade convoy.

Athene Kosta was born 31 years ago during the Years of Darkness, her father Ajax was a soldier in the 4th Infantry Army and her mother Helen was a factory centurion for the 7th Manufacturing Army. She grew up in the manner of most Legion during those years, few luxuries and barley enough food to eat. She learned to live with little and be grateful for what she had. She looked up to her father more than any other, the proud warrior of the family. Shortly after the Corporation made first contact with the Legion, Athene's father disappeared without a trace. Athene's mother told her that he had taken a job with the Corporation as a mercenary and was sending them supplies and money, but in truth Helen did not know where her husband was. Athene wished to follow her father's mercenary footsteps and one day fight beside him in battle. She trained her body and mind for combat each and every day until she learned the truth: Ajax had indeed become a mercenary, but he had sent them no provisions and had made no contact since his departure.

When Athene came of age she was assigned to the 2nd Logistics Army in the Interior Branch, a glorified delivery girl was to be her lot in life. Although she hated it, Athene took her job seriously and quickly rose through the ranks. When the Foreign Branch was created entire armies were reassigned to the newly formed arm of the military including the 2nd Logistics which would now be known as the 1st Traders. Athene was placed in charge of a trade convoy which brought supplies to Cerberus Prime, and shipped out Auxilia to their Haven assignments.

This new role of trading with other races allowed Athene to gain firsthand diplomatic experience. She had to negotiate with Corps, Kaltorans and even Nephilim from the Eden Brood. She learned to broker deals, and learned to navigate the complex cultures of other races. She adapted well to the role, and quickly became a deft and skilled negotiator. The Convoys were dangerous and subject to frequent attacks from pirates and worse. Athene developed a reputation of being ruthless in her pursuit of her enemies. She not only repelled all attacks against her convoys, but she also took to perusing and destroying her enemies, a job usually left to the Auxilia, not the traders.

Her tenacity in the face of these attacks and service above and beyond the call of duty gave her many promotions and a transfer into the Auxilia. Athene now commanded a fleet of ships whose job it was to seek out threats against trade in the Haven system and destroy them. It was a paid contract from the Corporation, but also in the best interests of the Legion.

Athene did not take well to being a high ranking officer, she could not command from behind a desk and longed for action. She

frequently led soldiers personally into battle which was against many protocols. In one legendary battle she and her soldiers avenged a Cohort which had been destroyed by feral Nephilim on Lilith by slaughtering their entire hive. While many questioned her blatant disregard for standing orders, the respect of her troops was solidified and she began to be known as 'Lady Vengeance'. The Casila Curia promptly promoted her to Imperator, and shortly after to Consul of the Foreign branch. At age 25, she had become the youngest to ever achieve this rank.

She took to her new command well and became the face of the Legion in the Haven system, as she became the de facto contact for the other races who wished to negotiate with Legion command. She quickly became famous throughout Haven among all of the races for her iron will, and even the Exsilia soon learned to respect and fear her.

Athene recognises that the Exsilia became what they are out of desperation more than disloyalty. However, now that the Auxilia have been established there is a proper framework for Legion to both serve their families and their oaths. There is no longer an excuse for desertion or disloyalty. Exsilia which surrender to the Auxilia or those who dare return to Cerberus or Lilith despite their exiled status are given a second and final chance to renew their loyalty. Should any Exsilia not accept this second change they are branded outcasts and exiled from the Legion forever. These permanent Exsilia are never allowed to enter the Cerberus system or any Legion controlled territory on penalty of death. If these traitors are met on the battlefield, they should be fought without mercy and shown no quarter. Privately, Athene imagines her own father coming to her to seek redemption as countless Exsilia have, however deep down she believes his betrayal was absolute. Many wonder if even Athene would have the courage to administer justice to her own father.

With recent disruptions in Haven and new threats looming, the Auxilia are needed now, more than ever. For Athene the Auxilia are the first line of defence for the people of Haven, the thin red line which holds civilisation together. The threats to Haven are many: Feral Nephilim, Mechonids, Oni, and others. Lady Vengeance and her Auxilia are always standing guard and prepared for war.

Adventure Hook

Wrath of Ajax

A group of Legion Exsilia mercenaries which call themselves 'Wrath of Ajax' were contacted by Athene and asked to join the Auxilia. They refused and have since been spotted in Legion territory, the PCs have been asked to hunt down these traitors and kill them, giving them no quarter. If the PCs are able to force the 'Wrath of Ajax' to surrender they will not only face the uncomfortable request to murder prisoners of war but they will also discover that this group was formed by an old Legion who strikes a remarkable resemblance to descriptions of Athene's father. Are these traitorous Legion telling the truth? Or are they simply stalling to buy themselves more time before help arrives to rescue them.

Grandma Jinx

"Grandma is great. She taught me how to shoot, and how to do a patch job on a Ley Line drive. Grandma's always there when I need help, even if it means getting her hands dirty. One time, my mum told her to act her age. She said 'okay', and went to sit in her favourite chair. When we came to get her for dinner she wasn't moving or breathing. Mum freaked out. Then, she jumped up and said that acting her age wasn't any good. Mum's face was red."

— Mary Jinx

To state that the Jinx family is large is almost like saying the universe is large. It does not do justice to the magnitude of the family. The Jinx family are one of the largest Kaltoran groups in the system with numerous Kaltorans born to the name, countless adoptees, and an even larger number of familial ties. Many noteworthy Kaltorans with lists of great accomplishments bear the name Jinx, but they all defer to one. Grandma Jinx is the unquestioned matriarch of the Jinx family and there isn't a person better suited for the job.

Many descriptors have been ascribed to Evelyn Jinx throughout her life. To her enemies she is known as a fearless and unrelenting force. To her allies she is a bastion of inner strength and a promoter of introspective thought. Most importantly of all, to her family, Grandma Jinx is a source of hope and a loyal protector. Her love for her family is unconditional and her ire toward those who would harm them is dangerous indeed.

Grandma Jinx is often found seated on her porch in an old pilot's seat modified to be a rocking chair. Overlooking her Pit City home with a smoking pipe in one hand, and a bottle of her family's secret recipe ale in the other, she greets guests with a warm and honest smile. She greets those who would harm her family with laconic words and a few warning shots from her trusty shotgun.

Evelyn was born during the final year of the Great War, although she was too young to remember much of it. Her parents were notable warriors, and she often reminds her descendants of it. She grew up during the dark times, beneath the surface of Kadash. By the time she was nine years old, the young Evelyn had already been involved in violent resource conflicts with other tribes. Each battle against her people has left its mark on her.

Dark and painful memories of these subterranean conflicts make Grandma Jinx one of the most competent Kaltorans alive at counselling newer generations on how to deal with their genetic memories. Unlike most of her kin, the brutal memories of living beneath the surface, and struggling for survival are not inherited. They are all events Evelyn personally experienced. She knows, firsthand, what it is like to kill her own people, and to taste the flesh of her kin in order to avoid starvation. Having lived through this, Grandma Jinx is able to help her descendants cope with their inherited memories. Having created the memories that her family now carry, she is uniquely able to explain each and every horror, and assist them to focus on, and create better memories. Helping her family has become Grandma Jinx's life's work.

Evelyn Jinx was one of the first Kaltorans to step out of the darkness beneath Kadash, and into the light of the surface, and to rebuild the Pit Cities. She remembers the moment well. That memory, above most others, helps her shoulder the burden of the dark times. Evelyn's eyes had long ceased in their function, she was unable to see the light that she had made for others. Still, her heightened senses basked in the warmth of the sun she couldn't see. Breeze, scented by the sea, flowed across her face and through her hair. Hope was all she could feel. A smile found its way to Evelyn Jinx's lips for the first time in her life. Of all her memories, she hopes her descendants cherish this one.

Grandma Jinx is an accomplished warrior and hunter. Her time beneath the surface of Kadash has turned her into one of the most formidable warriors in the Haven system. While she has left her murderous mentality in the past, her senses and skills remain sharp. While age may have physical slowed her, it has also sharpened her mind. Grandma Jinx sees modern warriors as soft in comparison to her days beneath Kadash. She knows what it means to fight for a purpose. These days, any bullet she fires is only ever done so in the good of her family.

Evelyn understands the Kaltoran people well, and knows the ram-bunctiousness of youth. She knows that young Kaltorans are often a problem for society, and seeks to give them something to apply their energy toward. One of her favourite pastimes is imparting the many things she has learned to the future generations of the Jinx family. Grandma Jinx teaches all of her grandchildren how to shoot, how to hide, how to work, and how to love. She teaches them that nothing in life is worth doing without a good reason, and that reason is usually family.

Evelyn prepares her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren to survive because she was never prepared for it. It took many years of struggle for her to become the woman she is today. In spite of all the training, she only wants her family to be happy. Grandma Jinx is known for prodding the Jinx youngsters for stories of their adventures, and details on their romantic interests. She has often set her grandchildren up with "nice" young Kaltorans in hopes of seeing them have the same large and happy family that she does. She has also punched more than a few would-be suitors on the nose when they hurt her children.

Grandma does her best to stay out of the family's financial affairs, but is quick to offer whatever advice she can. Her business strategies are considered bold and potentially disastrous, even by Kaltoran standards. Evelyn has made some amount of wealth from the production of her family's secret recipe Kadash Ale, which is known for its tag line "a taste you will always remember". All of her wealth has been set aside for when she chooses a suitable successor. It is a job for which she has been screening potential Jinx candidates for decades.

Despite her youthful and exuberant demeanour, Grandma Jinx

knows age is catching up with her. She has lived far longer than almost any other Kaltoran. Her husband passed away nearly three decades ago severing her last tie to the group who first emerged from the darkness. Often, Evelyn will be found staring off into the distance with an almost vacant expression on her face. She worries about her children when she is gone. She trusts in them and has done all she can to make them ready for the future, but worries that it might not be enough. The galaxy is vast, and Grandma Jinx knows better than anyone the dangers of being unprepared. These bouts of absence always end with Evelyn clenching her wrinkled fist and repeating "I'm not ready to die just yet."

Adventure Hooks

Staring in to the Abyss

The PCs discover a stowaway aboard their ship after a recent resupply. The uninvited guest is a middle aged Dark Tribeswoman named Leah Scar. She is pregnant and on the run from her tribe. Leah is aggressive and violent, but won't put her child in danger. She does not want her child to be born into the same life that she has lived, and is searching out the matriarch of the Jinx family. The Scar family was locked in an ancient feud with the Jinx family during the Dark Times, and Leah has heard stories of Grandma Jinx. Leah hopes her family's ancient rival can adopt her child. She is sure only Evelyn Jinx can help her offspring cope with the horrible memories she will inherit. To complicate the situation, Leah is being pursued by hunters from her family who are set on bringing her back.

Restlessness of Youth

A group of young Jinx cousins were accused of sabotaging Dray Mining Consortium equipment due to the company's treatment of workers. Their reaction was harsher than the young troublemakers expected. A bounty, dead or alive, has been placed on them. The group is currently hiding out in an abandoned mining site in the Monopoly Belt. Desperate to see her grandchildren safe, Grandma Jinx is willing to hire the PCs to retrieve them. She will pay more than the offered bounty, though not in Corporation credits, on the condition that none of the wayward Kaltorans are harmed.

Driving Miss Jinx

Grandma Jinx's personal craft is found adrift by the PCs. Grandma is the only occupant, but the ship is without power. She is unharmed, but suspects someone has sabotaged her ship. Enlisting the PCs to transport her back to Kadash, she will prove an amusing and outspoken guest. Soon after, the PCs vessel will be pursued by Kaltoran pirates demanding that the woman be turned over to them. The pirates will attack, but will go to great lengths to ensure that Grandma Jinx is not killed. Who are these pirates and why are they so insistent on taking an old woman prisoner?





Great Chief Zarnir

"We have travelled far to reach our new home. Do not be afraid, as I know that unknowns bring many uncertainties. I am here for you, and our traditions shall keep us, we shall not lose who we are as a people, and we shall overcome the hunger. We will show the galaxy that we are equal among them! We will build a new home here, in this new jungle! We will not waver! We will continue our old ways, for they have kept us safe. I ask you to trust me, dear Zhou, for together we shall flourish!"

—Great Chief Zarnir, upon landing on Mishpacha.

Zarnir is one of the most successful and important Zhou in the history of Praid to date. He displayed a brilliant mind and an intelligence far beyond what is normally expected in the Zhou at a young age. By age eight he had mastered most Zhou dialects and had become the natural leader, and Great Chief of the Amber Bark Pathfinders, as his line had for many generations. He was the youngest Zhou to ever take up the position, by a decade.

Zarnir did not let his intelligence go to waste. He consumed every bit of information he could. He studied the history of the galaxy, the economics of the Corporation, the military of the Legion, the family structures of the Kaltorans, and the struggles of the feral Nephilim. He read data file after data file, all on a device he bought second-hand off of a Twi-Far recruit. Zarnir had one other thing that most Zhou lacked: a great hope for his people, and a strong sense of cultural pride. Zarnir took the knowledge he had accrued, and applied it to his tribe. The effects were immediate.

During Zarnir's time as the Great Chief of the Amber Bark Pathfinders, they became the largest, most organized, and most efficient tribe on Praid. This did not escape the notice of the Twi-Far, who came to the planet looking for Zhou to transport to Haven. They had their eyes on this Zhou prodigy for years, waiting to see what he could accomplish.

The Twi-Far were impressed with the Amber Bark Pathfinders, and with Zarnir. He developed and wrote effective and just laws to govern his tribe, one of the first written codes of laws among the Zhou. He instilled in them a sense of pride and stability that helped them control their hunger in a way that was almost unheard of on Praid. And Zarnir himself, who at this point had established friendly relations with the Twi-Far, struck them as a reliable ambassador between their people and the Zhou. The Twi-Far believed that Zarnir could make a difference in the way the other races treated the Zhou; and, better for them, he could prove that the Twi-Far were not wasting their time with this 'backwards' species.

In an unprecedented move, the Twi-Far allowed Zarnir to re-locate his entire tribe to Haven. After much deliberation, Zarnir agreed. He felt that the Zhou needed proper representation among the Haven system, and he knew the Amber Bark Pathfinders could provide that representation, and help shatter the stereotype of the Zhou as mindless fiends driven by hunger.

Zarnir settled on Mishpacha as the future home of the Amber Bark Pathfinders as its ecology and climate were comparable to Praid, and had plenty of food and trade opportunities, which would grant Zarnir a chance to prove the Zhou could safely interact with the new races. It also fit Zarnir's personality, as he has always been a Traditionalist.

Zarnir believes in the ancient ways of the Zhou. He believes they were meant to live in the wilds, and that living in an urban city is unnatural, and will lead to weakness. Most cultures assimilate with the cultures around them – they take on new aspects as they live side-by-side, but Zarnir has spoken firmly against that. By adapting the Zhou culture to their new home they would be, in fact, losing the best part of what makes them strong. The Zhou have a stronger relationship with nature than any race, partially due to their physical absorption of it. A hundred years of natural selection has taught them that they must live in balance with their environment, adapting to it, not adapting it to them, in order to survive.

Zarnir has also eschewed many modern technologies that the Zhou have encountered on Haven. He does not seek technological methods of controlling hunger, nor does he work to provide more food through biological engineering or agriculture. Zarnir believes the Zhou are meant to conquer their hunger on their own, that it is a physical and emotional battle all Zhou must undertake. The fact that the Amber Bark Pathfinders have such control of their hunger is a testament to the willpower that Zarnir has fostered within them.

Zarnir has become a well-known figure throughout Haven as a spokesperson for the Traditionalist factions of the Zhou. He has established friendly relationships with the Kaltorans, and other races who have made their home on Mishpacha. Zarnir himself has become perhaps the most well-travelled Zhou in history. He has been invited to speak at many political and philosophical gatherings and many anthropologists have studied his success with the Zhou with great interest.

Yet what seems to be most often missed is that Zarnir's leadership of the Amber Bark Pathfinders will not last forever. It is possible for a Zhou to go many years without birthing into a new Zhou pair, and Zarnir has too much to do to consider the possibility. But, eventually, Zarnir will perish. Either he will split, like most Zhou do, or he will be killed. If Zarnir births children through a split, his great intellect may be shared with his descendants, and they may grow up to be as capable of leaders as Zarnir was himself. But that will take some amount of time, and the Amber Bark Pathfinders will find themselves leaderless in the interim, and risk losing the values Zarnir has maintained.

Zarnir remains an optimist through it all. He believes he has created a new life for the Zhou, a small empire that will continue long after he is gone. Hopefully, he is right.

Adventure Hooks

The Feral Zhou

Reports of Feral Zhou have been increasing on Mishpacha. While not centralized to the Amber Bark Pathfinder territory, it is of great concern that the Great Chief Zarnir has lost control of some of his Zhou. Many settlers have died due to these attacks, and the official Twi-Far representative on Mishpacha feels personally responsible. Therefore he has tasked a team to journey to the heart of Amber Bark territory to speak with Zarnir. If his Zhou have indeed lost control, then a strict quarantine must be put into place. And if not, then perhaps Zarnir can prove to be an ally in the fight against these wild Zhou.

Return to Praid

Zarnir has but one regret about leaving Praid: his sibling, Zia, refused to come with them. Zia didn't believe the Zhou were meant to travel the stars and so, when the Amber Bark Pathfinders left, she stayed behind. Zarnir has asked a Twi-Far representative to deliver a message to her, but they were unable to locate her. Zarnir is not permitted to travel back to Praid, nor are any Zhou. The Twi-Far keep the location of Praid a closely guarded secret, only those with the right scientific permits are allowed, escorted, access. The team must locate Praid, sneak past the Twi-Far blockade, land safely on the planet, and then track down Zia. Zarnir needs to know her fate, and wishes to deliver a letter if he can. If Zia has changed her mind, perhaps Zarnir's letter can even convince her to join with him on Mishpacha.

Threatened by the Future

A new faction of Zhou has sprung up on Mishpacha, and their leaders are drawing Zhou away from the Amber Bark Pathfinders. This new tribe, calling themselves the New Science Tribe, relies entirely on new technologies developed alongside the Corporation and the Kaltorans. They use special mental implants to help control their hunger, and they have begun clearing out sections of Mishpachian jungle to create new cities where the New Science Tribe can live alongside their supporters, in what would be the first Zhou tribe to ever contain non-Zhou members. Zarnir, ever the Traditionalist, has watched in horror as this new faction has grown in popularity. He fears for the Zhou, as they will become too reliant on the technology to fight the hunger, and will forget how to control it themselves. When their technology falters, and it will, that city will become a blood bath. Zarnir feels compelled to stop it, but he can't be seen acting out against the Zhou. And so he has put out a call for a team to sabotage this new tribe, and bring an end to their plans for a city before they become too large.

Orchilo Star-Gazer

"He is one with me, as he was once one with my father. Together we are the blade of the Dragon, a furious fire of vengeance. We are what the Twi-Far are meant to be: what the Twi-Far will one day be. But for now, we are soldiers, and there are still Oni left to kill."

– Orchilo Star-Gazer.

Orchilo Star-Gazer's father, Hetzo, was the long-time leader of the Symphony of the Dragon and the tip of the spear of the Twi-Far's offensive against the Oni. Hetzo was already a master martial artist by the time of his merging, but the Faren, who was named Uapegua, increased his martial power beyond any other. Hetzo did not crave this power for selfish reasons; he knew he would need the strength to protect the Twi-Far from the tribulations to come.

Hetzo did not live to see his son grow up, but he survived long enough to train his son and ensure Orchilo would surpass him in almost every way. By the time Orchilo was a teenager he had already mastered every martial art his father knew and built on the techniques that were passed down to him. Orchilo even came to know Uapegua as a part of his father, since Orchilo and Hetzo were so close. Orchilo's greatest desire was to go through the merging and fight alongside his father.

Orchilo's wish would not come to pass. When the Star-Gazer, Orchilo's home ship in the fleet, came under sudden attack by an Oni slaver ship, Hetzo was quick to rush into action. The Star-Gazer was separated from the fleet, gathering wild Faren from a swarm, bringing in the best candidates for merging. The main force of the fleet was too far away to respond in time, the Star-Gazer had no choice but to retreat away from the main fleet. Hetzo led a small force that bought them the time they needed to escape.

In an effective gambit, Hetzo lured the Oni ship into the swarm, counting on the unleashed power of the wild Faren to assist him. The ploy worked, and the swarm destroyed the Oni ship, but Hetzo and his small ship were lost in the process. Orchilo was forbidden from searching for his father's body, as the Star-Gazer Voice feared he would be lost as well. But Orchilo had his father's stubbornness, and so he took off on his own, deep into the Faren swarm. The Twi-Far thought him lost.

When the swarm moved on, the Star-Gazer's crew was able to search for Orchilo among the rubble of the Oni slave ship. They expected the worst, but found him alive, cradling his father's dead body. Orchilo had found his father's ship in the swarm, and boarded it. The wild energy of the swarm had activated something in Hetzo and, with his dying breath, Hetzo managed to pass his Faren from himself to his son.

This was long thought impossible, as a Faren should not be able to re-bond with a new host, and the feat has never been replicated. But however it worked, possibly due to the untamed energy of the swarm or the blood bond between father and son, Orchilo bonded with Uapegua.

Orchilo did not spend his merging days cared for by the Twi-Far

within the comforts of a ship like most young Twi-Far. He suffered in the cold emptiness of his father's derelict ship, alone and believed dead. Orchilo survived through force of will alone, boosted by the emotions of his Faren.

Once back aboard the Star-Gazer, Orchilo was studied extensively. Not one scientist could explain how Uapegua had bonded with him, but the end result was apparent. Orchilo had a bond with his Faren stronger than any Twi-Far had ever seen before.

Uapegua was able to pass down all of Hetzo's power to Orchilo, and Orchilo gained the benefit of bonding with an already mature Faren, one who already knew the forms of combat Orchilo had been taught. Uapegua had grown to know Hetzo well during their time bonded, and it was almost as if Uapegua was fighting beside his partner once again.

Uapegua is far more advanced than other Faren, and has the bonding experience of two lifetimes. This makes Orchilo unique in that he can more directly communicate with his Faren. The two cannot openly speak to each other, but Uapegua has learned how to use emotions, impressions, and memories to help guide Orchilo. These emotions often come with visions of Hetzo, and Orchilo can feel his father's presence around him at all times.

The emotion that burns strongest in both Orchilo and Uapegua is the need for vengeance. The Oni took something from each of them: a father from one and a son from the other. Together, they are the Twi-Far's greatest weapon against the Oni. Orchilo has far surpassed his father to become the strongest warrior the Twi-Far have ever seen, and possibly the greatest warrior in all of Haven.

He is the public face of the Symphony of the Dragon, and even a bit of a celebrity among the Twi-Far. Orchilo's exploits are broadcast throughout the fleet, and many Twi-Far follow the Star-Gazer's military campaigns against the Oni. Orchilo has often been approached to become the official leader of his Symphony, but he has turned it down every time. He is a weapon, he tells them. A sword to be pointed at the Oni, he has no desire to be turned into a political figure.

The Star-Gazer keeps a position at the rear of many Twi-Far fleets. As Twi-Far move into Haven, it is the Star-Gazer's job to stop the Oni ships from pursuing them. The Twi-Far take responsibility for bringing the Oni into Haven, and Orchilo has made it his cause to send them away. He has had great success at his job, and has a higher Oni kill count than any other, but they haven't even made a dent in the massive Oni force.

Orchilo will not stop training; he is bold, brash, stubborn, outspoken, and wants to be the very best he can be. He is also brave and powerful. His attacks are impossibly strong, and he can bring down entire ships or squads of enemy soldiers with a single blast from Uapegua.

Wherever the Oni are invading, count on Orchilo to be there fighting them off. One day, he hopes to start a family of his own, and raise

a child that can fight by his side as he once wished to fight by his father's, but he cannot do that until the Oni force has been utterly destroyed: a task that, at times, seems impossible. Yet Orchilo's stubbornness will not let him rest. As long as there are Oni slave ships threatening his people, Orchilo will be on duty.

Adventure Hooks

Fighting Beside a Legend

The Nephilim have discovered a large Oni force approaching Eden and have contacted the Twi-Far for help. Luckily, the Star-Gazer was already in the area and has been dispatched to protect the planet. The legendary Oni-Killer Orchilo Star-Gazer is on board and ready to lead the Twi-Far fleet into battle.

But Orchilo is just one man. He can bring down the Oni generals, but only if he reaches them in one piece. Luckily, the party is close enough to respond to the Nephilim's call for backup and can act as the honour guard for Orchilo. Their job is to make sure he survives long enough to infiltrate the Oni warship and bring down the commander.

The Twi-Far's Wrath

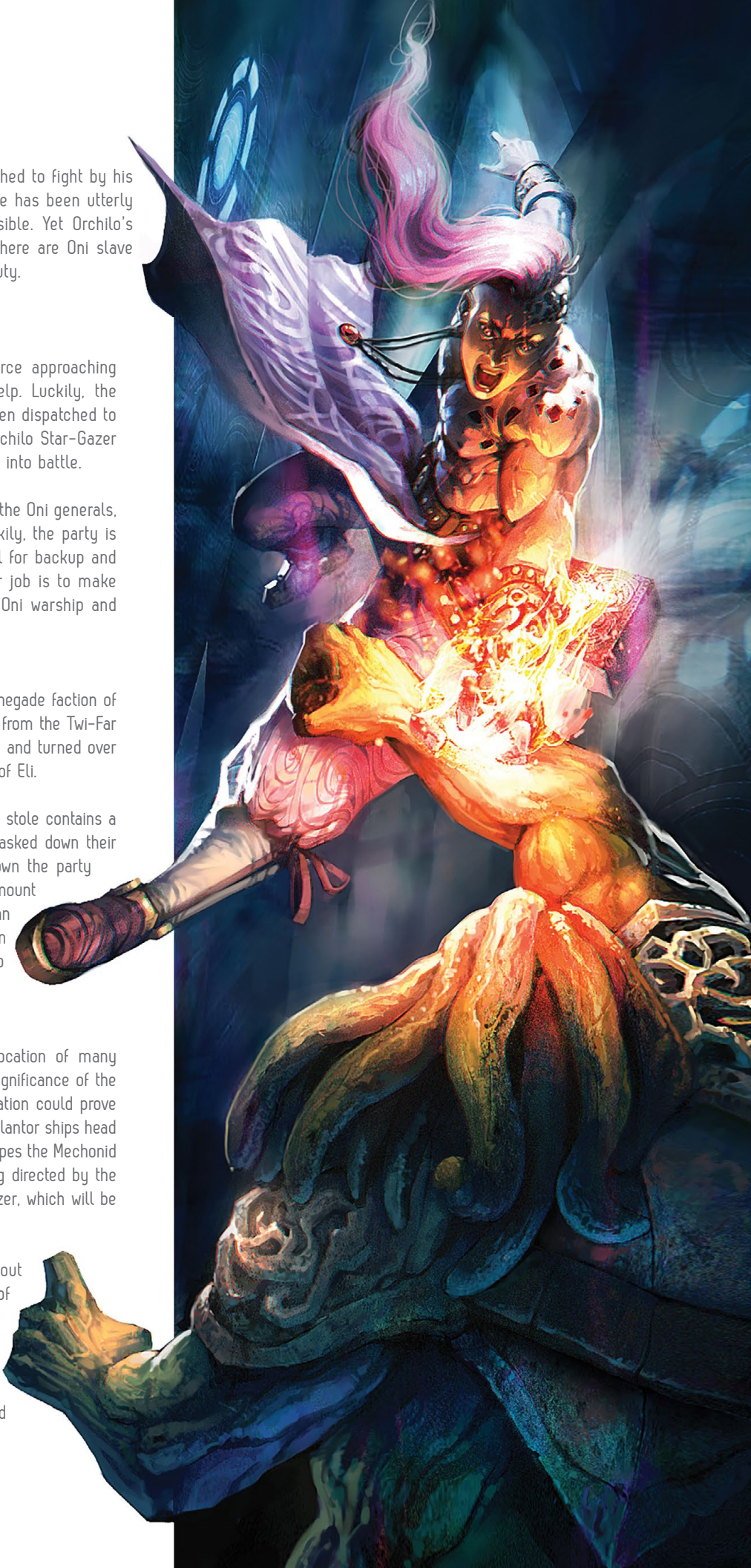
The party was hired to steal a device from a renegade faction of Twi-Far mercenaries who had originally stolen it from the Twi-Far fleet. The party were successful in their mission and turned over the device to their handler, a Corp by the name of Eli.

It turns out Eli lied to them and the device they stole contains a small sample of wild Faren. The Twi-Far have tasked down their greatest warrior, Orchilo Star-Gazer, to track down the party and capture them. The party has only a short amount of time to prove their innocence, which they can do by tracking down Eli and returning the stolen device back to the Twi-Far. If they don't, Orchilo will kill them in a single strike.

The Joint Fleet

During their travels, the Twi-Far tagged the location of many Palantor relays. Though they did not know the significance of the relays at that time, they knew tagging their location could prove valuable. Now, a joint fleet of both Twi-Far and Palantor ships head out to reclaim some of those distant relays, in hopes the Mechonid have not discovered them yet. The fleet is being directed by the Twi-Far warrior Orchilo, stationed on the Star Gazer, which will be the head of the spear of the joint fleet.

The movement of such a large fleet heading out to unknown space is sure to gain the attention of both the Mechonids and the Oni. In preparation for this, Orchilo has hired a mercenary vessel to travel in front of the fleet and act as a scout. The party has taken up this contract, and must venture into unknown space and prepare for whatever awaits them.



Character Lists

Race (Must Select 1)

Race	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Palantor		You are a Robot! Gain a Professional Skill based Secret Knowledge or a Moderate Perk. +1 Programming, Engineering, and Tactical. Gain Language: Palantor Code. If you're an NPC: one Attacks per Combat may gain Strong Hit +1.	-2 Maximum Intelligence. -2 Medicine. Death may not be avoided by reducing Fate. A new body may be built to recover from your demise by reducing your current resources by 2. Complications: Psychological Condition, and prejudice from Remnant.
Remnant		Gain +2 Attribute Points. +1 Psychology, Gunnery, and Small Arms. +1 Defence vs Psionics. Gain Language: Ursai.	Bleeding Effect deals Attribute Damage to 2 random (2d6) Attributes (normally 1). -1 Maximum Reflexes, and Perception. -1 to all Spare Time Rolls. Complication: Prejudice from Corporation, and Legion.
Twl-Far		Faren-Blast: A single Cost 1 or 2 Weapon with the Energy Keyword gains the Natural and Slow Keywords, and has -3 Weight. +1 Astronomy, Command, Operations, and Heavy Arms. +1 Armour vs Energy. Gain Language: Twilinger.	-2 Maximum Strength. Any Attack with the Energy Keyword that causes you Endurance Damage gains Splash +1. -2 Stealth. You may not take Implant Traits.
Zhou		You may function normally in all, non-heat related, hostile environments (eg: void, underwater, etc...). May gain +2 Recovery when in the same space as a recently-deceased, organic corpse. +1 Survival, Physical, and Exotic. Gain Language: Primal X'ion or Zhou. If you're an NPC: gain +2 Defence.	You eats lots! -2 Electronics, and Programming. -2 Resupply, to your groups largest Spacecraft. Food Supplies last 2 fewer days for you. Complication: Prejudice from Nephilim.



Race	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Augment	NPC or 4 Implants Traits & Secret Kn	+1 Electronics, Bio Tech, Medicine, and Engineering. All of your Weapons gain +1 (+2 If you're an NPC) Hit and End Dmg for each '-1 Armour when at 0 Endurance' that you have. Gain any single Language (usually the Language that your previous Race gave you).	Replace your Race with this Augment Race. -2 Wealth, and Conversation. -1 Maximum Influence. -1 Fate.
Echo	NPC	All of your Weapons gain the Weapon Type: Psionic. Strong Hit: Mental Feast (Does not Require Hit, Once per RoF) All opponents take 3 Endurance Damage, and you may immediately Teleport (move) up to 6 spaces in any direction. +2 Defence vs Psionics, and Impairment. +1 Armour vs opponents who you cannot perceive (eg: Stealthed).	Any Attribute Damage from a Psionic Weapon Suppresses you.
Faren	NPC	All of your Weapons gain the Natural, Burn, and Energy Keywords. You may Fly. +4 Defence vs Impair. Gain up to two different Faren Aspects (and the corresponding Disadvantages).	
Oni	NPC	You may select Traits with the Nephilim or Legion racial Requirement. Strength grants you +10 Endurance per Strength Attribute point (normally +5). You have up to 4 limbs. Gain Language: Oni.	-2 Maximum Reflexes, and Perception. -4 Defence vs Stealth.

Faren Aspects

Aspect	Benefits	Disadvantages
Energy	+1 Armour vs Energy. If you take Attribute Damage from a non-Energy Weapon, all Faren Henchmen within your area gain +1 Body (even if they currently have 0 Bodies).	-1 Defence. If you die from an Energy Weapon, all characters within 10 of you take 10 Endurance Damage.
Light	You only exist in this dimension while you are in the light! You may move through any object while gaining Low Light Cover. While in 2 or more Low Light Cover Steps you may ignore all Endurance Damage, and Effects. +1 Armour per Low Light Cover Step that you are gaining.	All of your Weapons have -1 End, and Crit Dmg per Low Light Cover Step that you are gaining.
Mystery	+1 Armour. All of your Weapons gain +4 End Dmg for each different Faren based Secret Knowledge that your opponents have.	-2 End Dmg, all Weapons. -1 Armour for each different Faren based Secret Knowledge that your opponents have.
Thirst	+4 Defence, and End Dmg while you don't have your desired Object. All of your Weapons gain +1 Crit Dmg while you have your desired Object.	You desire an Object (eg: a Plasma or Psionic item). -1 Armour while you have your desired Object.

Traits

Level	Requirements	Benefits
If at First you Fail	Min Foc 3	If you fail any Roll (even an Attack, or Spare Time Roll), gain +1 to your next Roll of that exact same kind (this session). If this Roll also fails gain +2 to your next Roll, etc... (Stacks up to +3).
Legend	Min Lv 20	+2 Maximum to all Attributes. When you gain a Level you may gain +1 Attribute Point, +1 to a Attribute Maximum (up to +2) or +1 to a Skill (Stacks up to +2) rather than gaining a Trait.
Space Born	Two-Far or Nephilim	You have no Defence or Movement penalties from Zero Gravity Difficult Terrain. A spacecraft that you have spent Influence on gains: +1 Defence (does not Stack). If you are piloting a Fighter, it gains +2 Hit, and Defence.

Fate	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Avoid your Fate	Secret Kn Max Fate 0	If you ever Retro this Trait: gain +1 Fate.	
Dark Past	Char Creation Not Nephilim	If you ever resolve your Dark Past: Retro this Trait, gain +1 Recovery, and +1 Stealth. +1 Recovery. +1 Stealth.	Complication: Reputation or Secret. Complication: Enemy or Bounty. -1 Fate.
Inner Darkness	Kaltoran	Gain +1 Fate for every 3 Psychological Conditions that you have (Stacks up to +2).	Psychological Conditions do not grant you Fate Points.
Risen	Char Creation Not Remnant	You were raised from the dead by the All-Being! You may choose Traits that have the Remnant Requirement. +2 maximum Influence.	Bleeding Effect deals Attribute Damage to 2 random (2d6) Attributes (normally 1).

Resources	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Disposable Body	Palantor	You may make a disposable body for yourself with a Spare Time Roll of 14t. This disposable body may be occupied by you instead of your primary body. If your occupied disposable body dies, you do not have to reduce your Current Resource by 2.	While occupying your disposable body all of your Skill, Spare Time, and To Hit Rolls are reduced by 2. -1 to all Spare Time Rolls. -1 Fate.
Generous	Not Nephilim	All allied characters and Companions gain +1 Clip to all of their Weapons (does not Stack). Once per session you may Assist another character's Spare Time Roll and it does not cost you a Spare Time Point.	-2 to all Wealth Spare Time Rolls.
Saver	Min Foc 3	Once per session you gain a free Trade Box (no Variations).	-1 Clips, all Weapons.

Influence	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Charitable	Kaltoran, Legion or Remnant	Gain Minor Perk: Prestige, charitable. Remove any single non-physical Complication. +2 Maximum Influence.	-2 to all Wealth Spare Time Rolls. -1 Maximum Resources.
Infamy	Reputation Min Inf 6	Complication Reputation grants +2 (not -2) when interacting with someone who is aware of your Reputation. Strong You: Heard of Me (Success OR Hit, once per character per session) A NPC who has heard of you is wary of you, and takes 5 Endurance Damage.	NPCs easily remember you. You lose Influence more easily (as people have high expectations of you).
Reborn	Remnant *	Gain Moderate Perk: Prestige. Gain a All-Being themed Secret Knowledge. +1 maximum Influence.	*You must have permanently reduced your Fate by 1 to avoid your characters Death and had the All-Being raise you from the dead (if your GM allows you: you may gain this Trait by Retroing to it at the point of your death).

Example Perks & Complications

Minor	Description
Family	(Not Corporate) Once per session you may spend a Fate Point to gain access to 1 Cargo Space or +1 to a Spare Time Roll Skill.
Language	Twilinger, Ancient Twilinger, Faren Vibe (Twi-Far only, and requires 2 Secret Knowledges), Faren (Twi-Far only, and requires Unique Knowledge), Ursai (also known as Remnant), Ancient Ursai, Palantor Code, Mechonid Code (requires Unique Knowledge), Zhou, Oni.
Minor Prestige	Gain +1 to Leadership, and Conversation Rolls when interacting with someone aware of your reputation.

Moderate	Description
Anonymity	NPCs find it hard to find information about you.
Moderate Prestige	Gain +1 to Leadership, and Conversation Rolls when interacting with someone aware of your reputation (Stacks with Minor Prestige).

Major	Description
No Record	Enemies find it nearly impossible to find you if you don't want them to.
Unique Knowledge	Gain access to a Trait or Variation of your own design (GM approval required).

Complications	Description
Hunted	Your GM may choose to increase the difficulty of a Combat by an additional Henchmen opponent.
Moral Code	You must make a Resolve Skill Roll to act against your Moral Code. If you act against your Moral Code, you lose 1 Current Influence, and gain a Fate Point.
Obsession	You must make a Resolve Skill Roll to resist your Obsession. -1 to all Spare Time Rolls not connected to your Obsession, if you fail one of these Spare Time Rolls by 1, gain a Fate Point.
Secret	You must make a Resolve Skill Roll to share your Secret. If another character (player or NPC) discovers your secret, you lose a Spare Time Point, and gain a Fate Point.



Strength	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Tech Implant	Min Int 3	+1 Clip, Prototype. You have a Weight 0, Professional Skill Toolbox (+1 (does not Stack)). Strong Hit: Quick Tech (Professional Skill, Success) You complete this task VERY quickly.	-1 Armour when at 0 Endurance. Must select at character creation or through Surgery.
Weakling	Max Str 1 Char Creation Not Legion	If you are a Nephilim or a Zhou, you may choose to be small! NPC often underestimate you! Cover grants you +2 Defence.	If you are small: You have -2 Equipment Slots. -1 Recovery.
Weaponised	Nephilim or Palantor	-1 Cost, Body Mounted.	-5 Endurance.

Reflexes	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Flexibility Implant	Armour 0-3	You are able to bend your body in very strange ways! +1 Physical. Ignore the first Grabbed Effect against you each Turn.	Must select at character creation or through Surgery.
Quick Hands	Min Ref 3 Min Foc 3	At any time you may spend 2 Fate Points to instantly gain a Free Block Action. During your Turn you may spend 2 Fate Points to gain 1 Free Overwatch Action.	
Relentless Combo	Min Ref 3 Secret Kn	+2 Hit and End Dmg, all Weapons. Strong Hit: Relentless Combo (Attack, Hit) Your next attack this Turn gains +2 Hit and End Dmg (Stacks).	You may not perform the same Action more than once per Turn. If you attack with the same Weapon more than once in a Turn you gain -1 Armour until your next Turn.

Movement	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Balance Implant	Armour 0-3	Balancing does not count as Difficult Terrain to you, does not require Physical Skill Rolls, and does not reduce your Defence or Movement. Ignore the first Prone Effect against you each Turn. +2 Defence vs Impair.	Must select at character creation or through Surgery.
Sweeping Strike	Min Mov 3 Min Foc 3	You may make your Attack at any point along your movement with the Charge Action (normally only at the start or end of your movement). Only gain Damage for the amount of movement made before your Attack. Strong Hit: Sweeping Strike (Melee, Attack, Hit) This Attack gains Splash +1 and -1 Crit Dmg (does not Stack).	



Focus	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Ambitious	Min Foc 3	+1 Resolve. +1 Hit, Prototype. If you gain and Publish 32 Research Units or Sell 32 Trade Boxes while you have this Trait, you gain +1 Attribute point (does not Stack, lost if you Retro this Trait).	Complication: Obsession.
Controlled Hunger	Min Foc 3 Zhou	If at least 4 organic characters are killed in Combat: You may Heal 1 point of Attribute Damage at the end of that Combat (as you eat some of them).	When in the same space as a recently-deceased, organic corpse: you do not gain +2 Recovery.
Hardened	Min Foc 3 Legion	+1 Resolve. When you perform the Prep Action, and are not at 0 Endurance: You gain +1 Armour until your next Turn (does not Stack). You are Immune to Strong Hits: Dominate , and Hack .	
Insatiable Hunger	Max Foc 2 Zhou or Kaltoran	When you kill an organic character in Melee, gain a free Recovery. Strong Hit: Insatiable Hunger (Melee) This Weapon gains +1 Crit Dmg on its next successful Attack that is made during this Combat (does not Stack).	You may not move until your next Turn after you kill a character in Melee (as you eat some of them).
Link Implant	Max Rec 4	Any Ally within 20 of you, with an Implant Trait, or who is a Robot, may reduce any Endurance Damage they take by 6. If they do: you take 4 Endurance Damage. +2 Defence vs Psionics.	-1 Armour when at 0 Endurance. Must select at character creation or through Surgery.
Trained Psion	Min Foc 4 Min Int 2 Remnant	You are a Psionic. Gain Language: Telepathy. Your Mind gains Weapon Type: Psionic. +1 Combat Order. Strong Hit: Focus Mind (Attack, Hit, Psionic) All of your Psionic Weapons gain +1 Hit for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks).	-1 to all Spare Time Rolls.

Intelligence	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Act First	Max Int 1	+1d6 Combat Order (roll once at the start of Combat). Strong Hit: Act Now, Think Later (Hit) Your next Attack gains Hit +2 and Strong Hit +1 vs any character that has a lower Combat Order than you OR re-roll your Combat Order.	-1 Combat Order.
Ancestral Mind	Min Int 3 Kaltoran	+1 to two Professional Skills. Strong Hit: Ancestral Memory (Professional Skill, Success) Your GM may give you first hand insight into a situation, or you gain +1 to your next non-Spare Time Skill Roll (Stacks).	
Triage Implant	Min Int 3 Min Arm 3	Ignore the first Strong Hit: Critical Hit against your character each Combat. +1 Recovery.	-2 Defence. -1 Armour when at 0 Endurance. Must select at character creation or through Surgery.

Perception	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Drone-Assisted	Max Per 1	Once per Turn, one of your Drones may perform a second Action (normally one).	Gain a Major Condition or Complication. -2 to all Rolls if you have no Drones or Companions. -2 Defence.
Scope Implant	Min Per 3	+1 Awareness. Half Range Penalties with Sighted Shot Action (does not Stack with Tripod). +2 Rng, Tripod.	Strong Hit -1 vs all characters within your first Range Increment. Must select at character creation or through Surgery.

Wealth	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Acquisitive	Min Int 3	Gain +2 to all Spare Time Rolls to gain access to Services, Environmental, and Computer Equipment. Strong Hit: Acquisitive (Trade Goods Spare Time Roll, Success) Gain a Trade Box.	
Hired Help		+2 Hit and Movement, Companions. A Companion Costs 2 fewer Resources (minimum 3).	
Subtle Bribe	Min Int 3 Corporate	+1 Maximum Resources and Influence. You may Spend a Spare Time Point to gain +2 to a Conversation or Leadership non-Spare Time Skill Roll (you may choose to do this after a Skill Roll has been made) (does not Stack).	-6 maximum unspent Spare Time Points (normally 10).

Conversation	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Distracting		+2 to all Conversation, and Culture Rolls to distract NPC's attention through your words or appearance. While you are gaining no Cover bonuses, all of your allies, who are not adjacent to you, gain +2 Defence vs any character that can see you.	
Empathic Link	Psionic Not Nephilim	All non-robot allies within 20 gain +1 Recovery. Non-Psionics may receive information through your Telepathy (may not send information to you). Strong Hit: Empathic Link (Conversation OR Leadership OR Psychology, Does not Req Success) Add +2 to the result of your Roll.	If a non-robot ally within 20 takes Attribute damage, you take 2 Endurance Damage.

Leadership	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Dominate	Psionic Secret Kn	+1 Conversation and Resolve. Strong Hit: Dominate (Psionic, Hit, Not vs Robot) Choose the Target for the Target's next Attack (that is taken within 1 Turn), no self-harm.	
Ruthless		+1 Resolve. All of your Companions, and allies gain +2 End Dmg, all Weapons (does not Stack). Your spacecraft, and all allied spacecraft gain +2 Shield Dmg, all Weapons (does not Stack). Gain +2 Hit and End Dmg vs Bleeding, Prone or Suppressed Targets. Allied player characters may choose to receive no benefits and disadvantages from this Trait (must be declared when Trait is chosen).	Your spacecraft, Companion, and all allied characters, and spacecraft have -2 Defence (Stacks).

Culture	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Corp Sell Out	Not Corporation	You have sold out your peoples ideals, and joined the Corporation! +1 Maximum Resources and Influence.	Complication: Prejudice from Kaltoran. You may never gain Traits with Racial Requirements.
Master Artist	Min 5 Int* Min 5 Per**	*Unless you have a Ambitious, Creative or Acrobatics Trait. **Unless you have a Dedicated, Deduction or Natural Sense Trait. +2 to all non-combat Skill Rolls connected to knowing about or creating art (Research and Trade Boxes can represent art creation). +1 Hit, Prototype. +1 Fate.	-1 Wealth.
Sub Culture		You are part of a specific sub culture (eg: high society, cult, community, etc...). +1 Wealth OR +1 Conversation OR +1 Leadership (choose during Trait selection). +2 to all non-combat Rolls connected to your sub culture.	-2 to all non-combat Rolls connected to know about, or blend into other sub culture.

Physical	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Alter Form	Zhou Secret Kn	During your Turn you may spend a Fate Point to gain, or change your Form (does not Stack): Beast Form: +2 to all movement, and your Limbs may become Crit Dmg 4. Stretch Form: +2 Defence vs Impair, and your Melee Weapons become Rng 1. Condense Form: Reduce all Damage you receive by 1 to a minimum of 1, your Limbs gain +2 End Dmg, and your Defence is reduced by 2.	-2 Hit, non-Natural Weapons. Forms are lost at the end of a Combat.
Limitless		+1 Survival. +2 Recovery Strong Hit: Limitless (Does not Req Hit or Success) Gain +1 Hit and +1 to all Vehicle System Rolls for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks).	
Shapeshift Splice	Min Int 3 Not Legion or Zhou Secret Kn	You may spend a Fate Point to change the appearance of your character's face, and skin. If you have an Item with the Holographic Keyword you may also change your clothes, and shape. If you do not have an Item with the Holographic Keyword, gain +1 Awareness, and Survival. Strong Hit: Quick Change (Move, Does not Req Hit) You change your characters appearance, and gain +2 Defence until the start of your next Turn.	-1 Armour when at 0 Endurance. Must select at character creation or through Surgery.
Resolve	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Conviction	Min Foc 3	+2 Fate.	Complication: Moral Code. If you break your Moral Code, you take 1 Focus Attribute Damage (no Armour). May not heal with Paramedics.
Mind Maw	Psionic	+1 Psychology. +1 Recovery. Anytime you deal Attribute Damage to a non-Robot character's Focus, Intelligence or Perception Attribute with a Psionic Weapon, you gain a free Recovery.	
Mind Void	Psionic	+1 Psychology. Ignore the first Strong Hit effect against you from a Psionic Weapon each Turn. +1 Defence vs Psionics.	You may not use Psionic powers connected to the mind (eg: Telepathy, Psionic Scream). You lose the Language: Telepathy.
Obsessed		If your Obsession Complication would grant you a Fate Point, gain +1 to all Skill, Attack and System Rolls for the remainder of the session instead (Stacks up to +2). Strong Hit: Blind Obsession (Attack, Does not Req Hit) All of your Weapons gain +2 Hit, End Dmg, and you gain -1 Cover Step for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks).	Complication: Obsession. Obsession Complications do not grant Fate Points.
Awareness	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Spot Trouble	Min Per 3 Min Int 3	+1 Survival. +2 to Combat Order. Strong Hit: Spot Trouble (Attack, Does not require Hit) All allies gain one of the following until the end of Combat: +1 Healing Rolls (including Paramedics after Combat) OR +1 Defence vs Stealth OR +1 Defence vs Impair OR +1 Recovery OR Lock On +1 (Stacks).	
Sensory Implant	Min Per 3	You are able to see in an additional way (eg: see minds, electricity, psionic energy, etc...). You can partially see through thin, opaque materials. +1 Defence vs Stealth.	-1 Armour when at 0 Endurance. Must select at character creation or through Surgery.
Survival	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Born to Ride		You may increase or decrease your Mounts Wind Down by 1 (chose when you acquire your Mount). Ignore the first point of Attribute Damage that your Mount would receive each session.	
Trapper		+1 Awareness. You may make 1 free Spare Time Roll per session to acquire or Modify a Trap. -1 Weight, Trap.	
On the Edge	Max End 20 Not Corporation	+1 Physical, and Awareness. +1 Armour.	-2 Recovery. -2 Armour at 0 Endurance.
Good Enough	Kaltoran or Twi-Far	+1 Physical, and Awareness. You may lose a Trade Box to gain any Toolbox for a single Skill Roll.	

Mechanics	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Cyborg	Not Palantor Secret Kn	You are a Robot! +1 Engineering and Programming. Reduce penalties to your Armour while at 0 Endurance by 2 (to a minimum of -1)	You have all the disadvantages of being a Robot and for not being a Robot.
Master Crafter	Min Int 3 Min Foc 4 Secret Kn	+1 to all Spare Time Rolls. +2 Hit, Master Crafted. +1 End Dmg, Prototype.	
Quick Prep	Min Ref 3	+1 Engineering, and Programming. At any time: you may spend Fate Points to reduce the Set Up Actions required to Activate Weapons, Outfits or Utility Items.	
Spare Parts		+1 Engineering. Strong Hit: Spare Parts (Success, Weapon Modification Spare Time Roll) You may apply an additional Weapon modification that Costs 12t or less to your, on an Allies, Low Tech Weapon.	

Electronics	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Decentralised CPU	Palantor	+1 Operations. If you have 5 or more Robot Drone Bodies, you gain +2 Intelligence (may go above Maximum).	When any 2 of your Robot Drone Bodies are Destroyed you suffer 1 Damage to a random (1d3+3) Attribute.
Electromancer	Psionic Secret Kn	+1 Programming. Abilities, Strong Hit Options and Weapons that don't affect Robots may now affect Robots. Abilities, Strong Hit Options and Weapons that only affect Robots may now affect non-Robots.	-1 Defence. This Trait can never give you bonus Damage (eg: from a Disruptor Rifle vs a non-Robot).
Telekinetic Pro	Min Foc 3	If you have an Active Electro-Gravity Weapon, Outfit or Utility Item: You may move physical objects (up to 1kg) at a distance (up to 50m), with a Physical or Programming Skill Roll. +2 Rng, Thrown.	
Tinker	Min Int 3	+1 Programming, and Operations. Strong Hit: Tinker (Energy OR Combat Computer, RoF 1 or 2, Hit) Your next Attack with a Energy or Combat Computer Weapon gains Strong Hit +1 (must be taken within 1 Turn) (does not Stack). -2 Hit, Combat Computer.	

Programming	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Holomancer	Min Int 3	+1 Electronics. +2 to all non-combat Rolls connected to holograms. If you have an Outfit or Utility item with the Holographic Keyword: You and all allies within 5 gain +2 Stealth.	
Script Monkey	Max Int 3	+2 Programming. +1 Operations. Run a pre-written script: As long as you have a Programming Toolbox you may choose to make any Programming (non Research or Trade Spare Time) Roll a total of 10 + modifiers (normally 3d6 + modifiers).	If you make a Programming Skill or Spare Time Roll: roll 2d6 (normally 3d6).

Bio Tech	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Health Splice	Min Str 3 Min Ref 3 Min Mov 3	You look amazingly young, and/or healthy! +5 Endurance. +2 Recovery.	Must select at character creation or through Surgery. You gain no benefits from Stims.
Innate Weapon	Nephilim, Zhou or Robot	+1 Hit, Natural. A single Cost 1 Weapon gains the Natural Keyword, and requires 2 fewer Slots (minimum 1).	
My Special Blend	Min Int 3	One of your Chemical Weapons may have 2 different Chemical Variations (normally restricted to 1). +1 Medicine.	
Sculptor Splice	* Nephilim	You gain +1 to any Attribute (may go above Maximum). +1 Medicine. +5 Endurance.	*You must have Retroed all of your Attributes at least once. Must gain through Surgery.

Medicine	Requirements	Benefits
Holistic Care	Min Foc 3	+1 Psychology, and Bio Tech. Strong Hit: Holistic Care (Healing Roll, Success) Heal one additional Attribute point to any attribute.
Just Cut it Off		+1 Survival, and Bio Tech. Surgery Healing Rolls that you perform only require one Spare Time Roll of 14t (normally 2x 14t) if you Retro a Trait to an Implant Trait, and the subject of your surgery and you also permanently gain +2 Endurance (Stacks up to +10) as long as they keep their Implant Trait.
Unconventional	Min Int 3	+2 Hit, Injector. Stims that you apply to a character grant +2 Hit, and End Dmg, until the start of your next Turn. Clothing has 1 base Armour (normally 0).

Psychology	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Blessed	Remnant Secret Kn	+1 Leadership Strong Hit: Bless Weapon (Attack, Does not Req Hit, 1 use per RoF) An allied character within 5 of you gains a free Recovery if they cause a Strong Hit with their next Attack. Strong Hit: Blessed Action (Primary Skill, Not a Success) Add +2 to this Roll (this may make this Roll a Success).	
Calmed Mind	Psionic	+1 Conversation, and Leadership. Ignore all Trait Min Focus Requirements.	
Embrace Insanity	Max Foc 2	If a Psychological Complication would grant you a Fate Point: all of your Weapons gain +1 Hit and End Dmg for the remainder of the session instead (Stacks up to +4). +1d6 to all Spare Time Rolls.	Complication: Psychological. Psychological Complications do not grant Fate Points. -3 to all Spare Time Rolls.

Astronomy	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Draw Time	Psionic Secret Kn	+1 Combat Order. Gain +1 Spare Time Point per session.	-2 to all Spare Time Rolls.
Ley Line Comm	Palantor	+1 Engineering. All of your comms gain +100% range. You may spend a Fate Point to gain access to a comm system that can instantly connect to any familiar comm within 4 Jump Travel Days (or 12 if you are not in a star system or nebula). The longer you talk, and the more data you send, the higher the risk of Mechnoids locating you and learning what you know.	Complication: Mechnoid Enemies.
Malevolent Voice	Min Int 3 Secret Kn	+1 Command. Major Contact: Malevolent Voice. If you make an Attack, that no ally sees you make: your Attack gains +2 End Dmg.	A malevolent voice whispers in your mind! If you make use of your Malevolent Voice contact's bonus to Spare Time Rolls (may choose to use this bonus after a roll is made), gain a Complication. Complication: Secret.
Otherworldly	Palantor Remnant Twi-Far or NPC	You have a otherworldly way about you! +1 Command. +1 Defence. Strong Hit: Mysterious (Hit or Success) You surprise and enlighten others with your mysterious ways, all allies gain +1 to their next Skill, Attack or System Roll this Session (does not Stack).	NPCs easily remember you. Characters trying to Assist you have a -4 penalty to their Roll.

Planetoids	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Animal Handler		+1 Survival, and Astronomy. Your Beast Mount Costs 1 fewer Resources (minimum 1). All non-robotic animal Companions (including: Legion Hounds and Nephilim Beasts) gain +1 Hit, and End Dmg.	
Cultivator	Min Foc 3	+1 Survival, and Astronomy. Strong Hit: Cultivator (Success, Weapon Modification Spare Time Roll) You may apply an additional Weapon modification of 12t or less to one of your, or an allies Bio Tech Weapon or Outfit.	-1 to all Spare Time Rolls.

Small Arms	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Bend Shot		Self-Guided Guns gain: Lock On (Indirect (Rear or Above) against targets within 5, and within your first Range Increment.	
Cheap Shot	Min Int 4 or Kaltoran	All Attacks that you make not during your Turn (eg: Overwatch), during your Surprise Round or against characters that you Attack from behind gain +2 End Dmg. All Battery Attacks against a spacecraft's rear gain +2 Shield Dmg.	
Fast Shot		+1 End Dmg, Small. Snap Shot gains the Minor Effect: Hit +Per for Small Weapons.	
Observant Faren	Min Per 3 Twi-Far	+1 Hit, all Weapons. +1 Defence. +1 Combat Order.	-5 Endurance.
Perfect Shot	Min Foc 3 Min Int 3	Four times per Combat, before you make an Attack Roll: say a number (that is not 10 or 11). If the total on your die roll is exactly that number, this Attack gains Strong Hit +1.	
Pin Point	Min Foc 3	+1 End Dmg, RoF 1. Non-Splash, Small Weapons gain +1 Crit Damage vs Henchmen.	
Pre-Release	Corporate	+1 End Dmg, Prototype. Once per Attack you may choose to give a non-Natural Weapon: -1d6 Hit, and +1d6 End Dmg (roll a single d6) for that Attack.	
Quick Shot	Min Ref 3 Min Per 3	+1 Hit, Small. Performing multiple Overwatch Actions in the same Turn allows you to perform an equal amount of free Attacks (normally maximum of 1).	
Ravager	Nephilim	+1 Recovery. After killing a character gain a free Recovery.	
Reactive Shot	Min Ref 3	Strong Hit: Reactive Shot (Analyse OR Overwatch, Hit) If a character moves within 5 spaces of you: you may gain an immediate Free Attack against them with any Active Weapon.	
Safe Shot		While gaining Entrenched Cover, all of your Weapons gain +2 Hit, End Dmg, and Rng.	
Side Arm	Min Ref 3	Once per Combat a Weapon has -2 Draw. Once per Combat a Small Weapon gains: +3 Hit and End Dmg during the Turn they are Drawn.	
Spotter	Min Per 3 Min Foc 3	+1 Defence vs Stealth. All adjacent allies gain: +2 Hit, Rng, and End Dmg (does not Stack).	
Spray n' Pray		+1 Shield Dmg, RoF 2+. If you miss with a RoF 2+ Weapon without the Splash Keyword (even from Spray Fire), your Weapon deals its Endurance Damage to your Target.	-1 End Dmg, RoF 2+. All RoF 2+ Weapons have their maximum Range reduced to Rng x4 (normally Rng x10).



Heavy Arms	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
All Consuming	Zhou	+1 Hit, Burn. All of your Bio Tech, and Natural Weapons gain the Keyword: Burn.	-1 Recovery.
Burning Mind	Psionic	Your Mind may gains End Dmg 4, and Crit Dmg 3. Analyse Action gains Major Effect: Damage.	
Death Dealer	Nephilim	All of your non-Energy, non-Chemical Weapons gain the Death Spores Chemical Variation (even though they are not a Chemical Weapon).	-5 Endurance.
Defender		+2 Defence vs Impair. All adjacent allied characters gain +1 Armour at 0 Endurance, and +2 Defence vs Impair (does not Stack).	
Don't Push Me	Max Foc 3	+4 End Dmg vs characters that have caused you Endurance Damage this Combat (does not Stack). +2 Shield Dmg vs spacecraft that have caused your spacecraft Shield Damage this Combat (does not Stack).	
Get Away!	Min Str 4*	*Or are equipped with an Electro Grav Item. Pushed Targets are pushed +1 distance. If an adjacent character Attacks you, Push them 1 (2) away from you after their Attack (and Damage) is resolved.	
Hold Ground		+2 End Dmg, Overwatch. All adjacent spaces to you may count as Difficult Terrain to other characters.	
In Your Face		+1 Armour vs Gun, and Shell Weapons that are used by characters that started their Turn adjacent to you.	
Incoming!	Min Foc 3	+1 Hit, Indirect. Strong Hit: Incoming! (Indirect, Damage, Hit) Suppress all Damaged Targets that cannot see you, and are outside your first Range Increment.	
Load Team		+1 End Dmg, Pull Down. You may Set Up, or Pull Down adjacent allied characters Outfits, Utility Items, and Weight 4+ Weapons, and adjacent allies may Set Up, or Pull Down your Outfits, Utility Items, and Weight 4+ Weapons.	
Mighty Throw	Min Str 4*	*Or are equipped with an Electro Grav Item. +1 End Dmg, Melee. You may treat adjacent Henchmen, and Grabbed characters, as a Thrown Heavy Weapon (Hit +2, Rng -3, End Dmg 5, Crit Dmg 2). Dealing any Damage that they deal to other characters and objects to themselves, AND your Target, and they go Prone.	
Patient Shooter	Min Foc 3	If you fail to hit a character with a Slow Weapon, you gain a free Recovery. Strong Hit: Patiently Re-Focus (Slow, Does not Hit) Gain +2 Hit with all Slow Weapons for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks).	
Power Spread		Splash +1, non-spacecraft Energy.	-1d6 Hit, non-spacecraft Energy.
Powerful Blast		+1 Shield Dmg, Warheads. Once per character per Combat: When you reduce a character to 0 Endurance they are Suppressed and knocked Prone.	
Powerful Faren	Twi-Far	+1 End Dmg, Faren-Blast Your Faren-Blast may cost 3 or 4 Resources (normally 1 or 2).	-2 Stealth.
Pyromaniac		+1 Hit, Energy. +2 End Dmg, Burn.	Complication: Obsession. -2 Hit, all non-Energy Weapons.
Radioactive Core	Palantor	Strong Hit: Overload Core (Damage, Does not Req Hit) All non-Mechonid characters except you take 5 End Dmg, and this Attack gains +2 Crit Dmg vs Henchmen.	When you suffer damage from Bleeding, all non-Mechonid characters except you take 5 Endurance Damage.
Spread it Around		All Burn Weapons gain: Splash +2 (Any) when used outside their first range increment.	
Unstable Core		+1 Hit, Trap. When one of your Drone Bodies is Destroyed all adjacent characters to that Destroyed Body take 6 Endurance Damage.	-2 Hit, Drone.

Tactical	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Consecrate	Remnant	Once per Combat, when you perform a Prep Action you may mark all of the ground within 2 of you. All allied characters (not you) within the marked ground gain: +2 Hit and Recovery (Stacks). +1 Defence vs Psionics.	
Constant Shadow	Secret Kn	+1 Stealth. Stealth gains the Major Effect: Move.	-5 Endurance.
Constant Training	Min Foc 3 Legion	+1 Hit, End Dmg and Shield Dmg, all Weapons. +1 Defence.	-2 to all Spare Time Rolls.
Cunning Faren	Tw-Far	Any single Weapon gains the Energy Keyword and may become your Faren-Blast. If your Attack Roll total is equal to your Target's Defence, this Attack gains 1 free Strong Hit (as if a '6' was rolled).	Your Outfit gains the Shield Keyword.
Hijack System	Min Int 3	Strong Hit: Hijack System (Analyse, Hit, Locked On, Once per Turn) You may immediately perform a Free Analyse Action as if you were attacking from the location of your Target (your Target must be a Robot, or have Active Weapon with the Lock On Keyword).	
Predator Splice	Min Ref 3 Min Foc 3	Lock On (+2 End Dmg), all Weapons. Strong Hit: Predator Strike (Stealth, Hit) Boost your next, non Stealth, Action: +4 Hit, -1 Rng (Stacks).	Must select at character creation or through Surgery.
Resummon	Min Int 3	Strong Hit: Resummon (Analyse, Hit) All of your Bio Tech, Psionic, Holographic, and Synth Steel Drones regain 1 Destroyed Body.	-2 Hit, Drone.
Tactical Advice	Min Int 3	If an allied character starts their Turn adjacent to you, they gain +2 Movement, and Hit for their Turn (does not Stack). Strong Hit: Tactical Advice (Hit, Once per Action) A single allied character may immediately move 2.	
Utilise Cover	Int 3	Heavy (and Entrenched) Cover reduces all Endurance Damage dealt to you from RoF 3+ Weapons by 6 (normally 2).	
Utility Ready	Min Int 3 Min Lv 6	You may have a second Utility Item (normally one), this Utility Item Costs +3 Resources.	

Exotic	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Caltroper		Splash +2 (Any), Trap. Set Up -1, Trap. Precise Traps May be Set Up as a Thrown Action (Rng = Str).	
Combat Master	Min Foc 3 Not NPC	If you are wearing Clothing or no Outfit: you gain +2 Armour.	-1 Maximum Resources.
Cruel Trapper		+2 End Dmg, Trap. +1 Crit Dmg, Snare.	
Disruptive Wave		Any character damaged by your Disruptor Weapon have their Defence reduced by 1 for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks).	
Grav Support	Min Int 3	If you have an Active Electro-Gravity Weapon, Outfit or Utility Item: Your Active non-Natural equipment has their Weight reduced by 2, to a minimum of 2.	
Martial Combo	Min Foc 4 Min Int 4	+1 End Dmg, Melee. Strong Hit: Martial Combo (Melee, Hit) Your next Attack against this Target gains Strong Hit +1 (Stacks).	
Mind Grip	Psionic	Your Mind gains the Weapon Type: Impairment (use your Intelligence not your Strength).	
Mind's Shadow	Psionic Min Int 3	Non-robot characters may never increase your opponent's Defence vs Stealth by more than +4 against you (normally up to +10).	-1 Resolve.
Pounce	Min Mov 4 or Zhou	+2 Hit, Charge. When performing the Charge Action you must move forward 'exactly' 3 spaces (ignoring most Difficult Terrains) at the start of your Action. Strong Hit: Pounce (Charge, Hit) Gain +1 Crit Dmg, knock your Target Prone and Push them 1 space.	Charge does not have the Major Effect: Move. You may not change your facing as part of a Charge Action.
Primal Warrior	Not Corp	+1 Rng, Bows. +1 End Dmg, Melee. +1 Hit, Natural.	-2 Hit, all non-Low Tech or non-Natural Weapons.
Spook		Strong Hit: Spook (Stealth, Hit) All enemies that could see you before you become Stealthed take 4 Endurance Damage.	
Wise Faren	Tw-Far Min Int 3	Strong Hit: Faren's Whisper (Does not Req Hit or Success) Add +2 to this Roll.	-2 Combat Order.

Command	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Anointed Craft	Remnant	A spacecraft with a Culture Workshop, that you have spent Influence on: reduces all Crew Damage it receives by 1 (does not Stack). A spacecraft with a Culture Workshop, that you have spent Influence on: gains +1 Hit to all Weapons (does not Stack).	
Synaptronic Implant		You have formed a mental bond with a Nephilim or Palantor spacecraft. Allowing you to both know what the other is thinking or feeling. Gain +2 to all non-Spare Time Roll, Rolls connected to the spacecraft you are bonded with.	Must select at character creation or through Surgery. If you or your spacecraft takes more than 1 point of Attribute Damage from a single Attack: the other takes 1 point of Damage to a random (1d3+3) Attribute (no Armour, may not be healed with Paramedics)
Trained Leader	Minor Rank	+1 Leadership. Strong Hit: Coordinate Crew (Command, Ship Size 3+, Success) You may perform a free Command System Roll at -2.	

Engineering	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Back to it.		If you ever fail a System Roll, or an Attack Roll: you gain Strong Hit +1 on your next Engineering System Roll during this Combat (Stacks up to Strong Hit +2).	
I Just Fixed This!		+1 Mechanics, Electronics and Medicine. Strong Hit: I Just Fixed This! (Engineering, Does not Req Success) Make a free Patch Job System Roll to Repair an Attribute that you have already Repaired during this Combat.	

Operations	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Analyse Scan	Min Int 3	Lock On (+2 Shield Dmg), all Weapons. Lock On (+1 Rng), Batteries.	
Engage Fighter		+1 Astronomy. Strong Hit: Engage Fighter (Operations, Does not Req Success or Hit) Select an Enemy Fighter group that is within 3 of an allied Fighter group: this Fighter group may not Attack any non-Fighter Targets or move until your next Turn.	

Gunnery	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Merciless		All of your Weapons gain +2 Hit when attacking the rear of a character or spacecraft. Batteries gain +1 Crit Dmg when attacking the Rear of a spacecraft.	-1 Leadership. -1 Command.
Unleash Hell	Not Corp or Remnant	Strong Hit: Unleash Hell (Volley or Bombard, Hit) You expend all remaining Ammo in this Clip and gain +1 Crit Dmg for this Attack.	

Weapons

Small Arms	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Heavy Pistol		4	4	3	4	RoF x3	1	1	1	Gun	1
Drum Assault Rifle	Small	4	4	3	3	RoF x6	2	2 (+1d6)	3	Gun	3
Heavy Arms	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Adhesive Grenade		6*	4*	2	3	RoF x1	1	1	1	Shell, Thrown	1
		Splash 1, Small, Slow, -2 to all Weapon Modification Spare Time Rolls, Attack sticks to surfaces and characters. *Apply Damage and select Strong Hit Options at the start of your next Turn.									
Mortar	-4	6	4	8*	10	RoF x1	1	1	4	Shell	2
		Splash 1d3, Slow, Indirect (Above), Set Up 2, Pull Down 2, Arc of Fire 90, *Maximum Range = Rng x20 (normally Rng x10), *Minimum Range = 8, When fired at a spacecraft use: Hit -1, Shield Dmg 2, Crit 2 and Rng 4									
Powerful Psionic		6	4	2	-	Inf	0	1	-	Analytical, Gun, Psionic	4
		Natural, Only Psionic Variations, No Modifications. Strong Hit: Gather Power (Hit, Once per Turn) This Weapons gains -2 Hit and Strong Hit +1 for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks). Strong Hit: Unleash Power (Does not Req Hit) All other characters within 4 of you take 8 Endurance Damage, and you take 4 Endurance Damage.									
Tactical	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Hacker's Computer	+Foc	-	-	+Int	Inf	RoF x4	1	1	1	Combat Computer	2
		Lock On +2, Strong Hit (5-6), if you have a Programming Toolbox you may perform Programming Skill Rolls on any Computer within 20 spaces of you. Strong Hit: Reverse Targeting System (Hit) Target with an Active Weapon with Lock On is Locked On. Strong Hit: Immobilise Bot (Hit, only vs Robot) Target is Locked On and may not Move until your next Turn. Strong Hit: System Surge (Hit, Locked On) Target with an Active Weapon with Lock On or who is a Robot: takes 1d6 Endurance Damage. Strong Hit: In the Zone (Does not Req Hit) All of your non-Low Tech Weapons gain Lock On (+2 End Dmg) for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks).									
Fire Support Computer	-	-	-	Int+Foc	Inf	RoF x8	2	1	1	Combat Computer	3
		Lock On (Strong Hit (5-6)), While this Weapon is Active: all of your other Weapons gain Lock On +4. Strong Hit: Target Lock (Hit) Target is Locked On. Strong Hit: Fire Support (Hit, Locked On) Until your next Turn, all allies gain: Lock On (+2 End Dmg) (Does not Stack). Strong Hit: Combat Superiority (Hit, Locked On) Until your next Turn, all allies gain: Lock On +2 (+2 Rng) (Does not Stack).									
Cunning Psionic	+1	4	3	4	-	Inf	0	1	-	Analytical, Gun, Impairment*, Psionic	4
		Natural, Only Psionic Variations, No Modifications, *Hit +Int for the Impair Action not +Str +Ref. Strong Hit: Cloud Mind (Does not Req Hit, Once per Turn) You Gain Light Cover, and may perform a Free Stealth Action. Strong Hit: Nudge Time (Hit) Your next Attack taken within 1 Turn gains +2 RoF (does not increase Ammunition) (Stacks).									
Combatant	+2	+2		+2					2 (+8)	Companion	3**
		Defence: 14, Armour: 3, Movement: 4, Slots: 3, Bodies: 1, *Cost Spare Time Roll 14t. Controller may make Skill Rolls via this Companion at +0 (Companion can not Attack this Turn, Controller needs to take an Action with Minor Effect: Skill Roll).									
Exotic	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Combat Knife		3*	3	-	-	-	0	2 (+1d6)	1	Melee	8t
		Small, *If you have 4 or more Strength: +2 End Dmg, Attacks from this Weapon don't break Stealth.									
Precise Trap	+2	8	4	1	0	RoF x1	0	1	2	Melee or Shell or Chemical (Pick One)	14t
		1 Use: No Shape Variations, Make a Skill Roll (eg: Mechanics or Survival) of 12 to define trigger, Set Up 2.									
Large Trap	-1*	6	4	2	0	RoF x1	2	1	4	Melee or Shell or Chemical (Pick One)	14t
		1 Use: Splash 6 (Any), No Shape Variations, Make a Skill Roll (eg: Mechanics or Survival) of 12 to define trigger, Set Up 12. *Roll Attack Roll vs each individual character within Slash Area, *Each Attack counts as a Direct Attack (not Attack the Ground).									
Wild Psionic	-2	1d6	1d6-1	1	-	Inf	0	1	-	Gun, Impairment*, Psionic	4
		Natural, Strong Hit (5-6), Only Psionic Variations, No Modifications, *Hit +Int for the Impair Action not +Str +Ref. Strong Hit: Overload Mind (Hit) Target takes 1d6 Endurance Damage, and all of your Weapons gain +1 End Dmg for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks). Strong Hit: Alter Time (Does not Hit) You take 1d6 Endurance Damage and this Weapon gains: +1 RoF for the remainder of the Combat (Stacks).									
Arc Fire Bow	-2	4*	4	4*	-	Inf	2	1	3	Gun	3**
		Slow, Energy, Burn, Jam (1-3), Stealth -2, *Analyse Action Grants +2 End Dmg and Range (Max +2), Maximum Range = Rng x2 (normally Rng x10), No Gun Variations (counts as Arc Fire), **Cost Spare Time Roll 18t.									

Gun Variations (May Select 1, Gun Only)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Self-Guided	-2			-1							14t
	Lock On +2, Lock On (Indirect Fire (Front, Side)), Slow.										
Plasma	*	+2		-1		-RoF x1					+2
	Burn, Energy, Jam (1-3), Strong Hit +1 (when not used by Drones, Companions or Henchmen), *Maximum of one Attack per Turn.										
Laser	+1	+1		+1							+1
	Energy, May fire through transparent objects (eg: glass), Limited Vision that is not Low Light (eg: dust or smoke) grants your Targets +2 Cover Steps.										
Metal Slug	-2	-1		-1		+RoF x1					-1
	Low Tech, Jam (1-3).										

Shell Variations (May Select 1, Shell Only)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Self-Guided				+1	-1						+1*
	Lock On +2, Lock On (Indirect Fire (Front, Side)), Slow, *Cost Spare Time Roll 14t.										
Plasma		+2	+1	-1							+2
	Splash -1, Burn, Energy.										
Antimatter		+2	-1		-1						+2*
	*Player characters require Secret Knowledge: Antimatter to use this Variation.										
	Strong Hit: Annihilate Matter (Damage, Hit, Once per RoF) Target takes 1 Attribute Damage (no Armour) to 2 random (2d6) Attributes.										

Melee Variations (May Select 1, Melee Only)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Shock Stick		+2	-2*		10	RoF x3				Disruptor	+1
	Energy, Blunt, **2 Crit Dmg vs Robots.										
	Strong Hit: Disrupt (Hit) Debuff Targets Active Non Low Tech, Non Bio Tech Weapons: Lose Ammunition equal to RoF.										

Chemical Variations (May Select 1, Chemical Only)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Death Spores											+0
	Bio Tech, Once per Action: if a character dies to this Weapon: this Weapon gains Splash +1 for that Attack.										
Vile Cloud		+1d6-3									12t
	Bio Tech, If damaged characters do not end their next Turn at least 2 spaces away from their current location they take 5 End Dmg (does not Stack).										
Infectious											+0
	Bio Tech, Strong Hit: Infect (Hit) Until your target receives First Aid: all characters that end their Action adjacent to them take 4 End Dmg (does not Stack).										
Bloated Toxin Sacks		+2	*	-1							+1
	Bio Tech, Slow, Splash +1, *-1 Crit Dmg vs Robots.										
Zhou Contagion	-2*	**	**			-RoF x1					+4
	Bio Tech, Burn, *Gain a single free Strong Hit with each Attack Roll, ***2 End Dmg vs Zhou, **1 Crit Dmg vs Zhou.										
	*If you are a Zhou: this Weapon may gain the Natural Keyword and -2 Hit.										
	Strong Hit: Spread (Hit, Not Splash Damage) Make a free Attack Roll (costs no Ammo, at Range 0) against all adjacent characters to your Target.										

Drone Variations (May Select 1, Drone Only)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Echo		+1			Inf					Psionic	+1
	Armour: +1, Slots: -1, May be Set Up as a Analyse Action (Rng = Int -1), *Requires 0 extra Equipment Slots to carry.										
Mech											+0
	Lock On +2, Robot.										
Piece of your Faren	-1	+2							(1**)		+2*
	Defence: +4, *Twi-Far Only, Energy, Burn, May be Set Up as a Prep Action (Rng = Foc), **Requires 0 extra Equipment Slots to carry. You may spend 1 Fate Point to rebuild all of this Drones destroyed bodies outside of combat without a Workbench or Downtime.										

Combat Computer Variations (May Select 1, Combat Computer Only)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Refined	+1										+0
Spectral Zoom	-1			+1							+0
Orbital Targeter	-2			*					+1		14t
	If you have an allied spacecraft in orbit or a Robotic Drone above your Target this Weapon may gain: Indirect (Above) and +4 Rng.										
Multi Targeter				-1				+1 (+1d6)			+1
Macro Drone Sync	-2								+1		+1
	Strong Hit: Drone Sync (Hit, Locked On) Until the end of the Combat, all of your Drones gain +1 Hit, and End Dmg (Stacks). Strong Hit: Drone Coordination (Hit, Once per Turn) All of your Drones may immediately make a free Move.										
Micro Drone Sync				-1			+1		+1		+2
	Strong Hit: Micromanage Drone (Hit) One of your Drones that has not performed an Action this Turn gains 'Hit +Per', and 'Rng +Foc' for all non-Melee Attacks until the start of your next Turn (does not Stack).										
Spacecraft Sync	-2			+2					+2		+2
	Strong Hit: Call it In (Combat Computer, Hit, Once per Combat) If you have access to Fighters or a nearby Battery: Mark the ground under your Target. In 1d6 Turns: all characters not in Entrenched Cover, and within 3 spaces of the marked ground will take 10 Endurance Damage, and 4 Attribute Damage (-Armour) to two random (2d6) Attributes. Strong Hit: Retarget (Combat Computer, Hit, Locked On) Shift your Call it In marked ground: to under your current Target and increase the Turns until damage is applied by 1.										

Disruptor Variations (May Select 1, Disruptor Only)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Well Made											12t
	Jam -1.										
Advanced											+0
	Lock On +1										
Buster		-1	-1	-1							+2
	Strong Hit +1										
Ripple		*									14t
	*+2 Endurance Damage vs Targets that have 4+ Armour.										
Mass Charge	+2d6	+1		-2					+1		+2
	Slow.										
Riot Control	-1		-2								+1
	Splash +1. Strong Hit: Concussive Bolt (Does not Req Hit) All non-Nemesis Targets within Splash area are Suppressed or pushed back 3 (their choice).										

Psionic Variations (May Select 1, Psionic Only)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Flow	+1										+0
Ethereal	-2	-1							+1		+1
	Targets gain no benefits to their Defence from Cover vs this Weapon (but they still gain all other benefits such as immunity to Critical Hits).										
Mind to Mind	-2		*						+1		+1
	Targets gain no benefits to their Defence from their Reflexes vs this Weapon, *-2 Crit Dmg vs Robots.										
Storm	-1d6			+1							+1
	Splash +1.										

Size Variations (May Select 1, Not Drone or Melee)

Variations	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Mounted	-2			*					*		+1
	**+3 Rng and -2 Weight when you are riding a Mount. *0 Equipment Slots if stored on a Mount.										
	If this Weapon has Set Up X: you may move with it while riding a Mount but it has -X Hit.										

Weapon Modifications (May Select any Amount, Not Melee)

Modifications	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Energy Regulator	-1	-1								*	18t
	*Not Thrown.										
	Strong Hit: Regulate Energy (Energy, Does not Req Hit) This Attack uses 2 less Ammunition to a minimum of 1 (must have the required Ammunition to make this Attack).										
Gyro-Mount Harness				+1					-2*		+1
	*Min Weight 2, **+3 Slots.										
Master Crafted	+1	+2		+1							22t
	*Cost +1 Resource for NPCs (and should rarely be taken on a Weapon that does not have the Keyword: Natural)										
Overcharged Chamber				-1							10t*
	Analyse Action boosts your next attack with this Weapon: +2 End Dmg. *May only be applied to a Weapon with the Energy Keyword or Psionic Weapon Type.										
Oversized	-2	+2							+2		12t
	-1 Defence while Equipped or Active, lose Small.										

Melee Modifications (May Select any Amount, Melee Only)

Modifications	Hit	End Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Wgt	Weapon Type	Cost
Grav Boomerang	-1 (-2)			(1*)						(Thrown**)	+1
	Gauntlet, Slow, **Once per Turn. *Max Range = Rng x2 (normally Rng x10).										
	Strong Hit: On the Way Back (Attack, Thrown, Does not Hit) Make a Free Attack against the Target (at Range 0), Indirect (Rear).										
Oversized	-2	+2							+1		12t
	-1 Defence while Equipped or Active, loose Small.										

Outfit Variations (May Select 1, Outfit Only)

Variations	Armour	Defence	Endurance	+ Cover	Front Cover	Slots	Weight	Cost
Combat Plates						+1		+0
Energised		-1	+5			-1		12t
Psionic Shielding						-2		14t
Shock Plates							+1	+0
Explosive Shield Nodes						-2		+1
Heavy Plates	+1	-2	-5				+2	+0

Shield. +2 Defence vs Psionics, all of your Psionic Weapons have -2 Hit.

Reduce all Attribute Damage (after Armour) by 2 (min 2).

Shield, When you take Attribute Damage all adjacent characters take 4 Damage (-Armour) to a random (1d6) Attribute.

-1 Armour when at 0 Endurance, You may only turn 90 degrees at the end of each Action that allows you to move.

Outfit Modifications (May Select any Amount, Outfit Only)

Modifications	Armour	Defence	Endurance	+ Cover	Front Cover	Slots	Weight	Cost
Augmented Mk 1						-2		+6*
Augmented Mk 2		-1				-2		+6*
Hybrid Armour		-2				-1		+2*
Lightweight Materials			-5			-1	-2	14t
Modular		-1				-2		+1

You gain +1 to two different Attributes (may go above Maximum), *Requires Secret Knowledge.

You gain +1 to two different Attributes (may go above Maximum), *Requires Secret Knowledge.

You may choose a second (different) Outfit Variation for this Outfit, *Requires Secret Knowledge.

May Change Outfit Variations (paying any additional Cost) once per session during Downtime and don't lose spent Spare Time Points, +2 to all Outfit Modification Spare Time Rolls.



Utility Items (Max 1)

Utility Items	Armour	Defence	Endurance	+ Cover	Front Cover	Slots	Weight	Cost
Phase Orb		+1					1	3*
	Gauntlet, Shield, *Cost Spare Time Roll 18t							
	Strong Hit: Out of Phase (Stealth, Hit) You may spend a Fate Point to make all allies within 3 of you Stealthed.							
Mount		-4				+2	-	2*
	Defence: 14, Armour: 4, Movement: 8, Turn: 45, Carry: 2, Fire Arc: 90, Cargo 1, *Cost Spare Time Roll 14t.							
Simba Mabwe Fragment							1	26t
	1 use, Requires: Secret Knowledge to use, On use you gain +2 Current Influence, after use: gain a Empty Simba Mabwe Fragment							
	The All-Being may aid you in a miraculous way (eg: destroy nearby Echoes, raise dead, etc..). The All-Being may refuse your request.							
Empty Simba Mabwe Fragment							1	18t
	Once Per Combat: When you use a Fate Point all Allies gain a Free Recovery.							
Holographic Projector						-2	1	2
	Holographic, You may project holographic images (filling up to 3 spaces) up to 50m away.							
	Strong Hit: Holo Decoy (Stealth, Hit) You make it look like you have not Stealthed by creating a holographic decoy of yourself.							
Arc Fire Sheath							1	2
	Twice per Combat a Low Tech Melee Weapon gains: Energy, Burn and Pen 3 min 2 on its first Critical Hit that it causes within 2 Turns of being Drawn.							
Enslaved Echo Sheath							1	18t
	Once per Combat a Psionic Melee Weapon gains: Splash 1d3 on its first Critical Hit that it causes within 2 Turns of being Drawn.							
Dazzle Shield						-1	1	14t
	Shield, The first time you are reduced to 0 Endurance in a Combat: all characters that can see you have Strong Hit -1 on all Attacks (but not the Attack that has just reduced you to 0 Endurance) until your next Turn.							
Neural Sync							0	1
	Your Mind may have Variations and Modifications.							
Ley Energy Magnet						-1	0	16t
	All of your Psionic Weapons gain +2 End Dmg, -4 Defence vs Psionics, you can never Stealth vs Psionic characters.							

Mount Utility Item Variations (May Select 1, Mount Utility Item Only)

Variations	Armour	Defence	Endurance	+ Cover	Front Cover	Slots	Weight	Cost
Nimble Beast		+2				-2		+0
	Defence: +2, Armour: -1, Movement: +0 (Wind Down 6), Turn: +45, Carry: -1, Fire Arc: +0, Cargo +1.							
Fierce Beast				+1 Step				+2
	Defence: +0, Armour: +1, Movement: -2 (Wind Down 1), Turn: +45, Carry: +0, Fire Arc: +90, Cargo +1.							
	While you are not riding this Mount you gain a Nephilim Beast.							
	Strong Hit: Maul (Hit or Success) An adjacent characters takes 4 End Dmg, and is knocked Prone.							
Wheeled					+1 Step	+1		+0
	Defence: +0, Armour: +0, Movement: +2 (Wind Down 5), Turn: +0, Carry: +0, Fire Arc: +0, Cargo +0.							
	Strong Hit: Power Slide (Does not Req Hit) Immediately Turn 90.							
Hover								+4
	Defence: +2, Armour: +0, Movement: +2* (Wind Down 6), Turn: +45, Carry: -1, Fire Arc: +0, Cargo +0, *Hovers, Electro-Gravity.							
	Strong Hit: Speedster (Does not Req Hit, Move 5) +6 Defence.							
Tracked						+4		+2
	Defence: -2, Armour: +1, Movement: -2* (Wind Down 3), Turn: +45, Carry: +2, Fire Arc: +180, Cargo +1.							
	*Ignore most forms of Difficult Terrain (not water, cliffs, etc...).							

Spacecraft Lists

Build (Must Select 1)

Build	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Palantor		All Command System Rolls gain -CPU to their difficulty (not to Attack Rolls). Combat Jump System Rolls gain -Power to its difficulty. Your spacecraft never runs out of fuel (but may run out of food and munitions).	-2 Maximum Crew. No Life Support (but may be chosen as an Optional Perk). -4 Resupply.
Remnant		While you have shields reduce all Damage dealt to you by 2 to a minimum of 2 (after Armour). +3 Spacecraft Perks.	-2 Maximum CPU. -2 Cargo.
Twī-Far		At the start of your Turn (before moving your current Velocity) and within a System with a Sun, you may gain a free 45° Rotation away from the Sun AND increase your Velocity by 1. +6 Resupply. +1 Defence.	-2 Maximum Power.
Ursai		While you have shields you may move through extremely hot locations (eg: outer layer of a sun) for an hour. While you have shields reduce all Damage dealt to you by 1 to a minimum of 1. +1 Spacecraft Perk.	-2 Maximum Engines. -2 Defence. -1 Cargo.

NPC Build	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Faren	NPC	Immune to Boarding Parties. All of your Weapons gain: Energy and Burn. At the start of your Command Phase you gain a free 45° Rotation. +4 Defence.	
Faren Swarm	NPC	Immune to Boarding Parties. All of your Weapons gain: Energy and Burn. When another ship enters or passes through your space they take 10 Shield Dmg unless they can make a Command Roll of 14.	-4 Patch Job.
Nephilim Echo	NPC	You may make 1 free System Roll each Turn at -2 (no Strong Hits). Immune to Boarding Parties. Strong Hit: Psionic Horror (Success) All enemies have -1 to their next System or Attack Roll (Stacks), and you may Teleport (move) 1 in any direction.	You may not Repair Attribute Damage during Combat. -2 Maximum Sensors.
Oni	NPC	+1 Size. +2 Crew.	-1 Maximum Hull, and Engines. Your spacecraft's Combat Jump System Roll requires 6 Successes (normally 4). -4 Defence.

Traits

Hull	Requirements	Benefits	
Aerodynamic	Size 1-2	Your spacecraft does not take any Engine Attribute Damage from Atmosphere (normally 1 at the end of each Turn). Your spacecraft does not suffer -2 Range from Atmosphere (but still -2 Hit).	
Shuttles	Min Size 3	+2 Resupply. Your spacecraft has 2 small (less than Size 1) space worthy Shuttles. Able to ferry a small crew to and from a planetary surface.	
Engines	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Deep Space		+20 Resupply. Gain the Spacecraft Perk: Deep Space SOS Beacon.	-2 Cargo.
Micro Jump	Max Size 3	When you complete a Combat Jump (normally requiring 4 Successes) you may place your spacecraft in any space on the Battle Map, facing any direction (normally you leave the Combat). You must then reduce your Combat Jump Successes to 0, increase your Current Velocity by 1, and may not make any Command System Rolls during your next Turn (but you can attack with Fighters and Boarding Parties, etc...).	-2 Resupply.
Slip Drive	Min Eng 4 Max Size 3	You may exit a system from any point (normally only from the outer edge). When you enter a system you may appear at any point within 3 days travel of the edge of that system (normally only the outer edge).	
Crew	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Ghost Crew	NPC	+2 Defence vs Boarding. Strong Hit: Ghostly Boarding Party (Command, Success) Apply 1d3 Boarded Effects to any Target within 3 of you.	-2 Patch Job Repair Rolls.
Power	Requirements	Benefits	
Dark Energy	Secret Kn	+2 Resupply. Reduce all Shield Damage to you by 2 (does not Stack).	
Shadow Field	Max Pow 3	While you have shields: all Weapons that attack you have -1 Range (to a minimum of 2).	
CPU	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Fighter Link	Palantor Min CPU 3	Any player character on this spacecraft may Pilot any Fighter launched by this spacecraft (even though they remain on this spacecraft) by not performing any System Rolls during a Turn. All Piloted Fighters launched from this Spacecraft gain +1 RoF.	-2 Hit, Batteries.
Sensors	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Life Sensors	* Min Sen 4	Your spacecraft's sensors are able to detect life! +2 Defence vs Boarding. +1 Command.	*You must have a Psionic character on this spacecraft to make use of this Trait.
Size	Requirements	Benefits	Disadvantages
Light Fighter	Max Crew 2	Gain +2 Armour while you are moving at Velocity 3 or more. You may make 1 free Command System Roll each Turn. +4 Defence. +1 Armour vs Boarding. -5 Influence Cost.	You may only cause Critical Hits on Size 3+ spacecraft if they have 0 Shields. Maximum of 1 character on this spacecraft. -2 Size -2 Armour. -2 Attribute Points.
Light Freighter	Min Hull 3	+2 Cargo. +4 Resupply.	+1 Mount, all Weapons. -2 Defence.

Fighter Variations (May Select 1, Fighter Only)

Variations	Hit	Shield Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Mount	Weapon Type	Cost
Mech									-1		+1
	Defence: +1.										
Faren Swarm		+2							-1		+3*
	Energy, Burn, *May only be controlled by a Twi-Far, +2 Armour vs Energy.										

Warhead Variations (May Select 1, Warhead Only)

Variations	Hit	Shield Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Mount	Weapon Type	Cost
Plasma Charge	-1										+2
	Energy, Burn, Lock On (Strong Hit +1)										
Disruptor Charge	-1	+2									+2
	Defence: -2, Energy, Blunt.										

Battery Variations (May Select 1, Battery Only)

Variations	Hit	Shield Dmg	Crit	Rng	Clips	Ammo	Load	RoF	Mount	Weapon Type	Cost
Metal Shell	-2	-1		-1	4	+RoF x2			-1		-1
	Low Tech, Jam (1-2).										
Self-Guided Shell	-4										+0
	Lock On +6.										
Mind Ripper	*	-1	+2**						-2	Psionic	+1
	*May only be fired by Psionic characters, **May only damage the Crew Attribute (Damage to all non-Crew Attributes are ignored).										
Disruptor Pulse		+2		-1					+1		+1
	Energy, Blunt.										
Ley Energy Bolt	*	-1**	-1**						+1	Psionic	+2
	*May only be fired by Psionic characters, *Reduce your Combat Jump Charges by 1 when you Attack with this Weapon, **Gain +1 Damage per your Targets Combat Jump Charges (up to +3)										
Beam Laser				+1							+3
	Energy, Attacking while within or through a Dust Cloud give you have -4 Hit (normally -2). Strong Hit: Burn Through (Hit, Once per RoF) Make a free Attack against the Target (costs 0 Ammo) with this Weapon, at Rng -2 for each Attack made with this Weapon during this Turn.										
Plasma Bolt		+2		-1					+1		+3
	Energy, Burn, Jam (1-3).										



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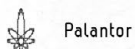
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