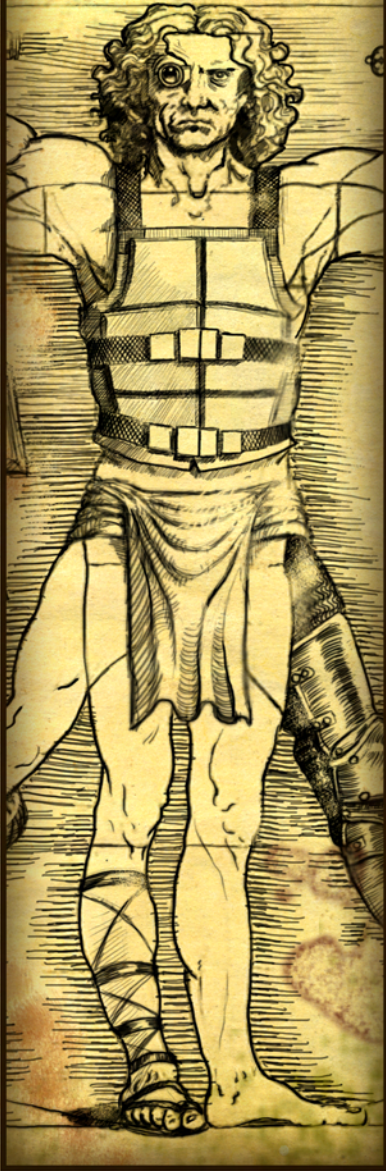


BASIC ROLEPLAYING

BRP

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#0384



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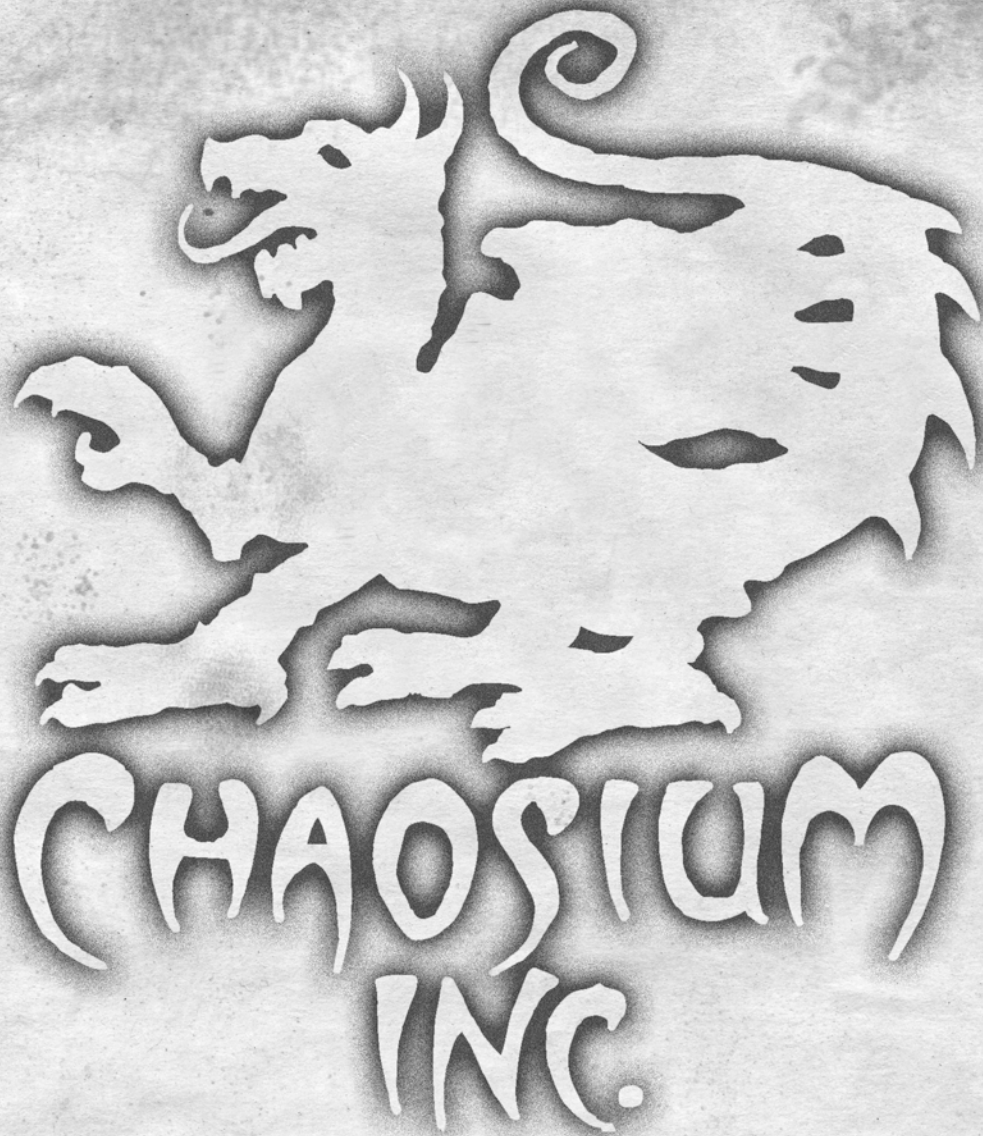
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FRACTURED HOPES



A Basic Roleplaying
Space Fantasy





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FRACTURED HOPES

A BASIC ROLEPLAYING SPACE FANTASY

by **CHARLES GREEN**

ART by **ALBERTO BONTEMPI & DAVID FRAMPTON**

F r a c t u r e d H o p e s

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The book you hold in your hands is an artifact. Not in the sense that it is something ancient, found in the ground and dug up, nor is it imbued with cosmic power. It is an artifact in the sense that it is a set of tools, and the use of these tools can produce some very interesting experiences. But, in order to get a good idea of what these tools can do, it's probably best to get to an understanding of what they are first.

Fractured Hopes is many things, but the most straightforward way of describing it is “a *Basic Roleplaying* Kitchen-Sink Space Fantasy game.” However, each of these terms is loaded, and we'll need to unpack the terms themselves to determine what they mean in this context.

Firstly, it's a game, in that the goal of its use is to be fun. It's also a roleplaying game, a term which has its own history and meanings. As a particular sort of game, a roleplaying game (RPG for short) says that the fun derived from the game is achieved through a particular set of actions, carried out by a group of people operating in concert. If you are an old hand at roleplaying games, you know what I'm talking about here. However, if this is a new thing for you, you might have a look at “What is Roleplaying” further down to get some insight as to what this delightful hobby is all about. But, in the short form, this is a game, and you're meant to have fun.

The term “Space Fantasy” has a whole bunch of associations packed with it, and a full unpacking would take more than I have space here to discuss. In brief, space fantasy is a blending of traditional fantasy elements with tropes borrowed from science fiction. Where good science fiction looks at the effects on the human condition that technological changes might bring about, space fantasy is much more concerned with the flashier parts of science fiction (such as force fields, rayguns or starships, for example). What technology that exists isn't based on “real” science, nor is science seen as the only way to solve problems. Mostly, technology exists to allow characters to do cool stuff.

Which leads me to the next term: “Kitchen-Sink.” In its longer form, this phrase is, “includes everything but the kitchen sink,” which is a way of saying, “includes everything you can think of, and then some.” In RPG terms, this means that gun-slinging desperadoes can rub shoulders with ancient wizards, and then go on a quest to stop the Monkey King from resurrecting an army of atomic-powered killer robots. It is a style of game that says, “anything goes; the only rules are the ones we choose for ourselves.”

The “Kitchen-Sink” approach is helped by the last term that we'll be discussing: “*Basic Roleplaying*.” This is the system that powers *Fractured Hopes*, and is a good match for the setting. With it, the players and the Gamemaster should be able to accommodate nearly every idea for an interesting character, within a few limits. Someone in the group will need to own a copy of this game, and have

Fractured Hopes

a decent working knowledge of the system. This person is usually the Gamemaster, although this isn't mandatory.

Therefore, the tools mentioned earlier are Fractured Hope's definitions. This is an open-ended game, which places only a few limits on the types of characters that can be created, operating in a world that is familiar enough to be comfortable, but fantastic enough to come bundled with strange creatures and a sense of wonder. Sound like fun? Just wait.

Using This Book

The *Fractured Hopes* book is divided into Chapters, roughly following the chapter order in the *Basic Roleplaying Book*. Each chapter will discuss the relevant section of *Fractured Hopes*, its people, places, and cultures that developed after a terrible cataclysm that threatens to doom the human species. These chapters are:

1. Chapter 1-The Introduction. This is where we are now. This is a brief rundown of the book, and an orientation to the setting, which we'll get to a bit later.
2. Chapter 2-Characters. Discusses what sort of people the players will portray during their time as characters in this setting. This chapter will illustrate the wide variety of options for potential characters, as well as how surviving humanity will view certain characters.
3. Chapter 3-Skills. Some of the skills from the Basic book have slightly different applications in this setting. These skills will be covered here.
4. Chapter 4-Powers. Covers the mechanisms by which characters are differentiated from common people. While no new

power systems are introduced in *Fractured Hopes*, the existing ones are tweaked slightly to have the setting more readily accommodate them. Regardless of the power system you wish your character to use (or even if you don't want powers), there is room for it in *Fractured Hopes*.

5. Chapter 5-Spot Rules. One of the interesting facets of the Basic game is that there are a number of "dials and switches," which is to say modular rule systems that can be manipulated to change the way the game plays. Chapter 5 will discuss the "default" settings, both why they were chosen, and how changing them will affect the game.

6. Chapter 6-Voidships. Deals with sorcerous vehicles used to travel the remains of the world. There will be rules for designing new ships, improving old ones, and using these ships in combat.

7. Chapter 7-Post-Sundering Earth. This chapter includes the Fragment Generation System, a means by which the Gamemaster can design interesting new fragments. This will also have a list of prominent people and locations.

8. Chapter 8-Gamemastering *Fractured Hopes*. Includes what the setting represents, how to use it, interesting things to do and say in game.

9. Chapter 9-Equipment. Covers the items in the game, including relics from Earth before the war, strange biotech constructs, and other advanced technologies.

10. Chapter 10-Creatures. An overview of how to integrate creatures from the *BRP* rulebook into the game. This chapter will also have a discussion on RELFs (Rapidly Evolving Life Forms), and other creatures that can be found in the setting.

Fractured Hopes

11. Chapter 11-Putting the Pieces Together. An introductory adventure that incorporates character creation as a part of play, not a minigame that happens beforehand.

What is a Roleplaying Game?

This question has many possible answers, depending on who you ask and what their particular approach to roleplaying is. If you're new to roleplaying, it might be easiest to think of the hobby as a social storytelling game, where one of the people in the group (usually called the Gamemaster, or GM for short) establishes situations, and the rest of the group describe how their characters respond to that situation. The GM will talk with the players to determine how their characters work within the situation, and move through the possibilities that come from their choices. When that one situation is resolved, another one is introduced, and play continues in this way until a satisfying conclusion has been reached. The fun of being in a game comes from developing novel solutions to complex problems, and seeing how these solutions play out.

For me, though, there is a deeper level to roleplaying, one that doesn't get mentioned very often. With the right group of people, at the right time in the game, it is possible for the process of being in a game and rolling dice to resolve situations to transcend the action at the table and become something more profound. It may be the climax of a lengthy story, or a moment in the game when everyone is so immersed in what they're doing that they are their characters, or even a seemingly innocuous interaction between two characters that produces some insight in the nature of the player's self. Humans are social creatures, and all sort of strange, wonderful things can occur when we

engage with each other at the roleplaying table. The thing is, nobody can really plan for these instances of transcendence, and trying to force them will usually backfire in a big way.

My advice is to play the game as you normally would, but keep an eye open for something else, something deeper. You'll probably know it when you see it, and those few, rare profound moments are worth all the time spent getting there. Plus, the normal parts of the game are fun too, so it's not like you've wasted time if it doesn't happen.

As far as the actual playing of the game is concerned, the items mentioned in the introduction to the *Basic Roleplaying* book stand for this text as well.

Fractured Hopes- The Setting

The default setting for *Fractured Hopes* is our own world, set at some point in the future. However, several events have occurred that have changed the way human beings think about life and their place in it. The "present" day of the setting is set up so that a wide variety of games could be played in it. By choosing when and where the game will be set, the Gamemaster can fit in just about any type of game. The combination of the flexible *Basic Roleplaying* system and the open setting mean that you can play anything from gritty, survival horror, to epic space opera, and everything in between. Characters have a similar range, and a variety of character types can reasonably fit together as a team in order to bring about party cohesion.

There are a few constant threats written into the setting, which can provide an easy set of antagonists if needed. However, the world is an even bigger place than it is now, and some-



Fractured Hopes

thing like the Eigen Fellowship cannot possibly be everywhere at once. Purely human foes abound, and players can smuggle arms through a blockade as easily as fight the terrible robotic oppression.

The world as described is a scary place, but this doesn't mean the lives of adventurers are dark by default. True, there is much to be afraid of, as humanity hurtles towards extinction with every passing day. But remember, where there is fear, there is also room for courage.

Where to Begin?

If you are coming into this game as a player, turn to Chapter 2-Characters. This will give you an idea of what sorts of characters you can expect to play, as well as a brief rundown of the history of the setting. I won't bog you down in detail at this point. You'll get the highlights about what your characters would know about the last few years.

If you are going to GM this game, I think you'd best start off with Chapters 7 or 8. This will give you a better idea of what the setting is like, so that you can fold, bend, and mutilate it to your liking. This will also give a good place to start any game, and some ideas about where to go from there.

CHAPTER 2-CHARACTERS

The character you'll portray in *Fractured Hopes* was, at one time, a regular person, not too different from yourself or those in your life. He or she may have been a spouse, a parent or sibling, and may have lived a normal, regular life of going to work and coming home. However, the events leading up the Sundering War (see below) and the eventual break-up of the world have done astonishing things to this person.

This character is larger than life, a heroic figure who has managed to survive into the new world, and is about to be loosed to find his or her way in that world. You are probably stronger, faster and hardier than most regular folk, which makes you ideally suited to reshape humanity's home to better fit it. Moreover, there's a chance you can talk to spirits, use magic to

make ships fly through space, or set things on fire with your mind. You are now one of humanity's champions, fated to do great things.

However, even with the power and responsibility you now possess, you are still a human being, one who is shaped by the events leading up to the current, sorry state of the world. Always remember that, regardless of other factors, it is your humanity and your ability to relate to other people which makes you heroic. Having power is a burden, unless it is put towards some task. If that task is helping those people who cannot help themselves, their gratitude is worth more than any other reward.

Professions

Select a single profession from pages 33-45 of the *BRP* rulebook. Your character's occupation provides a list of what skills your character will begin play with. It helps to think about this list, not as a straitjacket for your character, but as a jumping off point for later development. This is what your character would have done for a living immediately before, and in the early days of, the Sundering War. Some characters may be unable to continue their former line of work, while others will no doubt find a use for their services.

The professions listed in the main book all have a place in the setting, although some will

DEATH AND LOSS

Everyone lost something in the war. Most people have lost everything, your character included. When thinking about what sort of character you wish to play, give some thought to what from his or her history was lost in the war. The character may have lost several things. In this case, concentrate on a single thing, even if it's only an ideal.

What your character misses the most will come into play at a later date. It's important, so don't overlook it.



Fractured Hopes

QUICK CHARACTER CONCEPT GENERATOR

When faced with overwhelming choices, it is sometimes hard to settle on a particular image. To aid in this process, I've compiled a list of potential modifiers that can be used to help flesh out a character concept. Roll on this table a handful of times, and mix and match the results until the characters beings to gel.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Ninja | 27. Whale | 53. Observant | 79. Amusing |
| 2. Cowboy | 28. Gear Head | 54. Entertaining | 80. Time-
Traveling |
| 3. Mutant | 29. Secret Agent | 55. Samurai | 81. Judgmental |
| 4. Assassin | 30. Cultist | 56. Enchanted | 82. Virtual |
| 5. Martial
Arts | 31. With a Dark
Secret | 57. Emotional | 83. Bestial |
| 6. Cyborg | 32. Demonic | 58. Emotionless | 84. Paranoid |
| 7. Alien | 33. Lizard | 59. Clockwork | 85. Mad |
| 8. Psychic | 34. Hunter | 60. Amazing | 86. Scientific |
| 9. Sorcerer | 35. Sneaky | 61. Reborn | 87. Helpful |
| 10. Priest | 36. Barbaric | 62. Witch | 88. Joking |
| 11. Thief | 37. Calm | 63. Amnesiac | 89. Genetically
Engineered |
| 12. Hacker | 38. Toad-like | 64. Scholarly | 90. Disgraced |
| 13. Troll | 39. Shapeless | 65. Mercenary | 91. Famous |
| 14. Magician | 40. Unstable | 66. For Hire | 92. Iron |
| 15. Holy | 41. Filthy | 67. Bored | 93. Unstoppable |
| 16. Cursed | 42. Swordsman | 68. Thrill-
seeking | 94. Polite |
| 17. Undead | 43. Searching | 69. Superstitious | 95. Law Enforce-
ment |
| 18. Feline | 44. Dying | 70. Supernatural | 96. Genderless |
| 19. Obsessed | 45. Occultist | 71. Neutral | 97. Giant |
| 20. Avenging | 46. Dreamy | 72. Stunning | 98. Broken |
| 21. Monstrous | 47. Strategic | 73. Insightful | 99. Imaginary |
| 22. Machine | 48. Knight | 74. Minotaur | 100. Deadly |
| 23. Stubborn | 49. Sheriff | 75. Religious | |
| 24. Stoney | 50. Gunslinger | 76. Skinny | |
| 25. Hungry | 51. Disturbing | 77. Artificial | |
| 26. Ghost | 52. Adept | 78. Autonomous | |

Fractured Hopes

need to be tweaked, and there are some new professions you may consider as well.

Pilot. A Pilot character may take a Pilot (Voidship) skill. The repair skills will work on a Voidship's systems, except for the Void Engine. To repair that, he or she will need to be a sorcerer and possess the Repair (Void Engine) skill.

Priest characters come in two stripes. If they were priests before the Sundering, there's a chance their faith was broken, although some maintain faith in the present. Priests from the modern age are often mystically minded sorcerers, although some develop others powers.

Shaman. Unlike the priest, a shaman would have survived the transition to the new world without a tremendous crisis of faith. They have access to powers, with sorcery and psychic abilities being the most likely.

Soldier. The soldier profession is one of the most common in the new world. Many people were conscripted into the armies of the robotic Eigen or the alien Sholloboth, or fought as a member of various human resistance movements. There is a chance that any soldier will possess some powers as a result of experimentation. If this is in keeping with your character concept, talk to your GM about the idea.

Void Engineer. Part mechanic and part sorcerer, a Void Engineer is responsible for the care and maintenance of a ship's Void Engine, the only thing that allows humanity to travel to other parts of the world. You specialize in a trade which combines science and magic into a seamless whole. Not only can you fix broken engines, you can also, with some time, make new ones. Void Engineers are in high demand, and you can always find work on vessels traveling where you want to go.

The Void Engineer must meet the requirements for Sorcery. This profession is only available to those who possess a POW and INT of 16 each.

Treat the Void Engineer as a Technician. Make the character's **Repair** skill be **Repair (Void Engines)**, and replace the **Science (Phys-**

Characters

WEALTH

Depending on when the Gamemaster is setting the game, your character's wealth level may differ than what is normal for your profession. If the game takes place right after the Sundering War, wealth is largely irrelevant as humanity struggles to simply survive the new conditions.

As the game's time line gets further away from the actual Sundering, standards of wealth reassert themselves, although the most frequent trade goods are functioning technology from before the Sundering. Food and water are relatively easy to come by (thanks to Void Sorcery—see Chapter 4 of this book), so the only items of real worth are trade goods and other items needed for rebuilding.

If you are playing a character with a high wealth level, talk to your Gamemaster about how it will be impacted by the setting.



Humans

Fractured Hopes

ics) skill with **Knowledge (Occult)**. See the **Knowledge (Occult)** entry in Chapter 3- Skills on page 64 of the *BRP* rulebook.

All Void Engineers are sorcerers, and their first four spells will be the Elemental Spells (Bounty of the Sea, Flames of the Sun, Gift of the Earth, and Wings of the Sky).

The End of the World as We Know It:

The Apocalypse in a Nutshell

At one point, the world of *Fractured Hopes* was very much like the one outside your window. There were automobiles, computers, and all of the conveniences of modern life. Human technology advanced at an ever-increasing pace, which led to an often prophesied event: The Singularity.

The Singularity occurred when human computing technology advanced to the point where it was possible for humanity to create computers that were smarter than their creators. This was first achieved by a Japanese computing firm, Eiko Technologies, in 2035, although they kept their results quiet to ensure that the resulting artificial intelligence (AI) was truly self-aware. The program was dubbed “Ki,” or “life energy.” It was shut down after a brief but violent struggle when the program managed to break the firewalls that bound it to its host computer. This event went unknown by the general public until after the fact, when an inspired group of hackers leaked the story to major news media outlets. Opinion was divided as to whether Eiko had performed an act of



Eigen Combat Frame

genocide or saved the human race from extinction.

As a parallel development, a research team from the Bahn Extension Group in Germany finally managed to perfect the process of copying the entire neural structure of the human brain in mechanical form, a goal that has been stymied by both the lack of understanding of all of the brains’ structures, and the size and power requirements of the computing equipment. The Bahn Group perfected a means of copying a human brain and installing it into a computer that could run off of a standard wall socket and battery power. This meant the virtual elimination of death for those who could afford the copying procedure, as their minds were regularly backed up, and could be installed into a cloned body should their old one fail.

With these new developments, society began to change. Those who had uploaded began to see their existence in the computer as their “real” life, and small cells of people across the globe began to undergo a bewildering variety

Fractured Hopes

of changes as they copied programs from each other's minds, melded into gestalt beings of incredible intelligence, or simply abandoned their bodies for a purely virtual life where they could control all aspects their perceptions.

From this soupy morass of uploaded intelligence rose a group called the Eigen Fellowship. This seemingly self-aware being claimed to be an amalgam of the minds of everyone who had uploaded into the computer network. Initially, the Eigen sent robotic diplomats to the power centers of the world, proclaiming that the virtual existence was in all ways superior to the "real" one, and invited all who wished to give up life as human being to do so.

Eiko Technologies, who had been keeping an eye on the developing Fellowship, attempted to destroy it in the same manner as they had their own AI, and released a tailored computer virus into the Eigen's systems. However, the Eigen were prepared for this, and had extremely sophisticated anti-viral software in place. Citing the behavior of Eiko Technology scientists, the Eigen began a purge of what it called the "flesh infestation" of Earth, forcibly uploading people into their systems, and using modified intelligence programs to operate machine bodies in order to operate in the "real" world.

The nations of the world declared war against the Eigen, and began to destroy the computers that held the uploaded minds of millions of people. Unfortunately, the Eigen had anticipated this step, and had copied and stored the uploads in secure bunkers. In these early days, we did not call this The Sundering War; that term didn't come into play until much later. Instead, this conflict became known as "The Extinction," as from early on it seemed as though humanity was destined to lose to a coldly logical, superior foe.

When all was seemingly lost, salvation came from an unlikely place: space. Slowly, over a period of months, members of the human resistance movement were approached by strange beings who claimed to be from another

EXPERIMENTATION

Both sides of the war used human beings as test beds for terrible weapons projects. Sometimes we were victims of violent nanoswarms or tailored viruses, with other times we were shaped by inhuman sciences into weapons of power and agility.

Most of the people who survive today bear the marks of some experimentation, even if they are only emotional scars. The Sundering was an event of such destruction that individuals would have to have been extremely hardy in order to survive it, and one of the most common forms of augmentation granted to us by the Eigen and the Sholloboth was an increased constitution.

If you possess mutations, psychic abilities, or super powers, there is a good chance that you owe them to some sort of experimentation.

planet, and who wanted to aid us in our fight against the machine race. These beings, who called themselves the Sholloboth, were part of an advanced race that had been watching human development on Earth for thousands of years, guiding us when needed, and assisting us on our progress from primitive beings to, eventually, a space-faring race. They were masters of life science and genetic engineering, and offered us any and all aid in overthrowing the Eigen, which they referred to as "a dangerous aberration."

We took their aid gratefully. Using the Sholloboth's ability to restructure the human body, humanity was able to fight the Eigen combat frames on a more equal level. Where we had once been outmatched in every way, we could now meet them in terms of strength, speed and stamina, as well as produce a host of other effects that were beyond the Eigen ability



Fractured Hopes

to predict. Humanity was able to leverage the Sholloboth gifts into a situation where a victory, or at least a cessation of hostilities, was not only possible but likely.

Even with the increase of human effectiveness in the war, the situation was not as clear cut as we had imagined. It became clear that the Sholloboth, even while our allies, did not see themselves as mere aids. They fought the Eigen because they desired to rule over us as masters, using our genetic code as a tool set for their own development. They, by all accounts, did this to each new civilization they passed by on their voyage through space. By the time this information was discovered, the fate of humanity had been all but subsumed by the two warring factions. More and more, it became apparent that we were now conscripts in a war between two essentially alien beings.

As the war ground on, it became clear that, with copies of uploaded intelligence and easily replaced combat frames, the Eigen would likely win out in the end. The Sholloboth science, while advanced, could not replace fallen soldiers with the same speed of the Eigen. The Sholloboth were doomed to lose, and humanity would be in thrall to the machines, forcibly uploaded into what would likely be a nightmarish, eternal punishment.

In a surprise move, the Sholloboth contacted the central intelligence of the Eigen and brokered a series of talks. In these talks, they unveiled the existence of something they called The Final Weapon, a device of such potency that it could destroy the world and everything on it. The Sholloboth asserted that they would rather not activate the weapon, but would do so to prevent the last vestiges of pure humanity from falling to the Eigen.

We were shocked by this display of casual violence, and many expressed feeling of betrayal. Surely, if the Sholloboth had been in possession of such a potent weapon, why had they waited so long to call attention to it? And if it was a new development, why had they not

RUMORS

There are a handful of common rumors regarding the Final Weapon. No one knows which are true and which false, but that has never stopped people from arguing about anything. The following stories and local variants can be found anywhere there are people in groups.

- * The Sholloboth had no intention of ending the war, and activated the Final Weapon on purpose.
- * The Eigen managed to discover the location of where the Final Weapon was hidden, and accidentally activated it instead of destroying it.
- * The Sholloboth never mentioned the Final Weapon before because they had only discovered it themselves. It is possible that the Sholloboth had invented the story of having watched humanity for its entire history, simply to get close to the weapon, which was dormant in the depths of the Earth. Now that the planet is in chunks, who knows what other discoveries are out there, just waiting to be found?
- * During the talks, a team of humans infiltrated the secure location where the weapon was kept, and either accidentally activated it while attempting to destroy it, or activated it on purpose. The motives behind why this would occur are unknown, but it is likely that this was an attempt to do away with both the Eigen and Sholloboth at the same time.

warned their human allies, or begun moving us to their base on the moon? This was the last nail in the coffin for peaceful human/Sholloboth relations. Those who could cut off all contact with the aliens, and those who had been conscripted, waited for a chance to escape to freedom.

Fractured Hopes

Much to everyone's surprise, the Eigen declared that they would accept the Sholloboth's overtures of working together to shape a new world. Actual peace talks began, and ambassadors from all three factions, Eigen, Sholloboth, and Humanity, began the process that was supposed to end the war, to end the preying upon humans for soldiers, and to develop a new and vibrant future for everyone. The assembled diplomats talked of using their combined abilities of walking amongst the stars for the first time in human history.

But then the unthinkable happened. Before it could be dismantled, the Final Weapon was armed and activated. To this day, no one is really certain what happened, although rumors abound. What is known is that, in several days of noise and destruction, the Final Weapon rent huge cracks in Earth, which reached all the way through into the planet's molten core. The planet Earth, the only home humanity had ever known, was utterly destroyed, reduced to little more than an asteroid belt circling the sun.

Despite the totality in which the earth was destroyed, the casualties were not quite as complete. Humanity, already depleted by the effects of the war, was even further decimated by the destructive nature of the Sundering. However, given the actual size of the human population, even the high percentage of fatalities (some estimates are as high as 75-90%), left a handful of humans alive, spread out amongst the debris.

The Eigen suffered similar casualties during the Sundering, but given the nature of their society, this means less in the long run. Several data-havens with uploaded personalities and robot bodies survived intact, and many lie dormant, somewhere in the Void. The Eigen also recovered from the disaster with great speed, and had personnel scouring the debris, looking for survivors within hours of the Sundering's abrupt end.

The Sholloboth didn't fair well. Never a numerous people, the entire population of Sholloboth on Earth died during the cataclysm.

Some evidence from before the Sundering implied that the aliens drew some sort of energy from the planet's biosphere, and something about the Final Weapon disrupted this energy. Witnesses claim that Sholloboth personnel screamed and vanished in a flash of light immediately before the tremors began.

One would think that an event of this magnitude would have been the death knell for humanity and the rest of life on Earth. However, shortly after the Sundering, something very strange happened. Instead of completely dissolving into component matter, the Earth, and all of its air, rock and seas mysteriously stopped expanding. The chunks of land hung suspended, drifting slightly in the occasional wind. Those who survived found they could still breathe, and the sun still passed overhead to warm them. Gravity was a bit of a mixed bag,

THE LAST SHOLLOBOTH

Even though every Sholloboth is known to have died in the Sundering, it has become something of a folktale amongst the survivors that there is a single Sholloboth, still alive somewhere in the remains of the world. This Sholloboth is known by many names, and is either hero or villain, depending on who is doing the talking. Nearly every settlement has had some strange encounter that is attributed to this being.

There are even blurry photos taken with relic cameras and video equipment that show what is supposed to be a Sholloboth in the distance, but no hard evidence has been discovered.

Of course, this is also a group of fringe psychics who claim that the Sholloboth are now creatures of spirit, living in the Astral Plane, but as this is non-scientific, such claims are nearly impossible to prove.



Fractured Hopes

VOIDSHIPS

These miraculous vessels saved humanity from immediate extinction. They operated because of the new power, known as Sorcery. This magical art was practiced in small enclaves before the Sundering, but afterwards has become much more effective.

If you are interested in playing a Void Engineer, a sorcerer who can make and pilot Voidships, talk to your Gamemaster, and look at the Sorcery section in Chapter 4: Powers.

though- sometimes a chunk of rock would have a definite “down,” and another rock of the same size might exhibit a gravitational pull far in excess of what it normally would, or even none at all.

It was even possible for people to jump off their rocks and drift through the gap to land on other, nearby rocks. This was an aid for those who found themselves in extensive belts of rocks, while those stranded far from others would presumably die from starvation once their local supplies ran out. True, those with the knowledge to do so could coax food from the soil, and there were surprisingly large stocks of animals to be hunted, but even with these saving graces, human civilization as it was known was effectively destroyed.

Most folks consigned themselves to a short life and a lonely death. This didn't last

long, however. A few months after the Sundering, craft of all shapes and sizes began moving through the emptiness. They referred to the space between the fragments as the Void, and their ships as Voidships. By making use of a new cosmological principle, old vessels from earth that wouldn't normally be able to do anything but move through their own environment could now be made to travel in any environment, with perfect comfort and safety of those who rode in them.

All of these developments lead up to the present. Today, Voidships ferry goods and people through the Void, reuniting broken families and helping rebuild what was lost. Your character will very likely be a crew member (or maybe even the captain) of one such vessel, and how you use the freedom offered in this new environment is the stuff legends are made out of.

Be careful out there, though. Persistent tales from the edges of the world say that the Eigen were not entirely destroyed in the Sundering, and that they have managed to build their own Voidships. The Sholloboth have left behind a legacy of bizarre genetic mutations, including the insidious RELFs (Rapidly Evolving Life Forms), which can swiftly adapt to any environment.

And remember, sometimes the biggest threat is human ambition. Pirate fleets and petty warlords abound, making the Void a dangerous, but potentially quite lucrative, place to explore.

Chapter 3: Skills

For the most part, any skill a character may possess works as normal in *Fractured Hopes*. A few skills have changed based on the particular environment of the setting, and a new skill needs to be introduced to handle interacting with new elements.

Changes to Old Skills

The following skills from the Basic book have the following changes made to them:

Appraise allows the character to determine an item's worth as a trade good. As money is largely an outdated concept, what counts as "worth" is somewhat fluid. A character with an Appraise skill knows which items are worth trading, and which ones are to be kept.

Art suffers some from having no large-scale dealership or publishing apparatus. Indeed, many of the survivors feel that artistic expression is irrelevant to the needs of survival. However, there remain artists and those who appreciate it in the new world, and an artist working in the right medium can still find an audience.

Artillery can also be used to operate and maintain Voidship-mounted weapons.

Craft skills are held in high regard, as humanity once again must make things from raw materials, and not rely on factories to build

things for them. Also, sorcerers who wish to use magic to make palatable food should consider the **Craft** (Cooking) skill.

Fly may be a suitable replacement to Pilot Voidship, if the Gamemaster determines that the ship being piloted is small enough to only hold a single individual. This skill may also be used for characters maneuvering through the Void by their own power.

Knowledge (Law) may only apply to pre-Sundering legal procedures and precedents, and many who survive assume that these are no longer binding. A character taking this skill may determine that it applies specifically to legal documents enforced currently.

Knowledge (Occult) can also be used to detect and understand supernatural effects that stem from magic and sorcery.

Knowledge (Regional) skills can be taken to cover a specific area of the new world, which may be a single large fragment, an area of the Void, or a collective of smaller fragments that operate as a group.

Language skills operate as normal. The languages spoken in *Fractured Hopes* are the same as those spoken in contemporary Earth, with a few changes.

Pidgin is a trade tongue that has developed as a conglomeration of various world languages. Those who spend a lot of time traveling the Void would do well to learn this tongue. When conversing with someone who speaks a language you do not, you may make a Difficult



Fractured Hopes

Pidgin roll to get a rough idea of what they are saying.

Binary is the name given to the computer code used by the Eigen to communicate with each other. Human characters with this skill can only read and write Binary, as they lack the vocal apparatus needed to make the appropriate sounds. If you are communicating with an Eigen construct, you may take your skill in Binary as a complementary skill to attempt to fool the machine into thinking you are not a human being.

Martial Art traditions have survived the cataclysm and are undergoing something of a renaissance. Almost all people who have survived undergo some sort of martial training to deal with the threats to human survival. Indeed, there is also a martial arts tradition being developed that allows the user to fight effectively even when stranded in the Void.

Pilot skills are usually superseded by Pilot Voidship, although some ships from before the Sundering do still operate and make their way through their normal environments.

Psychotherapy is a widely sought and respected skill, as almost everyone who has survived the Sundering is dealing with immense feelings of grief and loss. While many people can cope with their new situations on their own, there are those who cannot. And for these people, a good psychotherapist can be a blessing. Note that, since drug supplies are much harder to come by, a psychotherapist can make drug recommendations, but may not have the supplies at hand.

Repair skills also include **Repair Void Engine**, which is used to fix the drive force in Voidships. The other **Repair** skills are also useful, as only the engine of a Voidship is magical; everything else operates through normal physics.

Ride skills also cover the various forms of RELFs and other mutated lifeforms that can be found in the Void. In fact, there are reports of Shark Riders, who have found Void-sharks and

tamed them so that they may be ridden through the Void.

Science skills are still practiced, and for the most part work as well as they did before the Sundering. Unless magic or sorcery is involved, physics can reasonably predict the movement of the fragments through the Void, and biology can come to understand the varied means by which the Sholloboth altered the genetic codes of Earth's animals.

Technical Skills apply mostly to pre-Sundering technology, and to Eigentech materials found, either in ruins or as battlefield litter. It may also cover the technology used to convert energy from a Void Engine into electricity.

Track works like usual, although a being moving through the Void leaves a trail only a sorcerer or demon can track.

New Skill

Characters may also take the following skill as an area of personal specialty. At the Gamemaster's option, some professions may take it in place of other occupational skills.

Own a Voidship. This skill represents the character's investment in one or more Voidships. Where other characters may use a Voidship if they find one, it may also be lost to them as time progresses. A character with this skill has a ship as a fundamental part of the character. A specific ship may be taken away by cruel fate, but the Gamemaster is expected to provide a means of acquiring another one soon. To fully integrate this into the game, consider the following options:

Every full 10% of this skill allows the character's ship to possess a single, fully functioning system of the ship. See Chapter 6-Voidships for more details.

A group of characters who all have this skill may pool their skill to provide a larger number of systems. In this case, the group all

Fractured Hopes

owns the ship in concert. For example, a group of 5 characters that each has the **Own a Voidship** skill at 10% would be able to own a Voidship with 5 operating systems instead of 5 ships with one system.

The skill is only rarely tested. As such it will normally not get larger through experience. If the character wishes, they may forgo experience checks in any three skills to make an experience roll against their **Own a Voidship** skill.

In any situation where the characters' lives are truly on the line, they may use their **Own a Voidship** skill as a complementary skill in all checks that involve getting out of trouble. This can be seen as pushing the ship harder than usual, calling upon the gods or luck to save them, or other means of calling for aid. However, doing so has a chance of harming the ship. For every skill test used in this manner, there is a 50% chance that one of the ship's systems will fail at a dramatically appropriate moment, requiring a successful **Repair** check and several hours' time to fix it. If more skill checks are made than the ship has systems, repeat the roll for each system, even the ones that have broken. Do this until each check has been made. For every system failure, another repair check is required, as well as more time, and possibly specialized parts that are not easy to come by.

It is possible for a character to possess more than one ship. In this case, assume that only a single skill is needed, and the systems gained by it are spread out amongst the ships in the character's possession.



Chapter 4: Powers

All of the powers systems from the *BRP* rulebook have some place within *Fractured Hopes*, although one (superpowers) is much rarer than the others and another (sorcery) is both more common and has enough difference from standard sorcery that it gets a more in-depth exploration.

The rationale for each power system is given below, in the same order they are presented in the rulebook. Each section will describe a brief history of how each power system operates within the setting, what its most common practitioners are like, and how one might go about earning said power system as play progresses.

Magic

Before the Sundering

Before The Sundering War, practitioners of the Arts Of Magic were a secretive bunch. For most of human history, magicians operated behind the walls of power, using their powers for personal gain, or, less frequently, for the good of humanity. Magicians would operate with guile, playing a part in vast conspiracies and plots that stretched for years, and whose goals were often unknown or unguessed at.

Where they were once readily excepted as real, and Magic as a real Art, there came a pe-

riod in history when, for their own reasons, the magicians of the world worked to move even further in the shadows of humanity, content to let the world believe that magic was, at best, a lie, put upon by charlatans to dupe the credulous, but without real meaning or power.

So deep was there retreat that, even when attempts were made to return to public awareness, magicians were still thought of as a myth, and anyone who claimed to be one was usually locked away for their own good and public safety.

There are reports from the years before the war, when a group of magicians who called themselves the Order of the Lion, attempted to contact the leaders of the world and warn them about a coming apocalypse. Naturally, they were dismissed as cranks, even though, strictly speaking, they were right.

Enter the Eigen

When humanity first developed the technology to copy human consciousness into a computer, many magicians were thrilled. No more would they have to perform complex visualizations in order to work their art. Instead, they could have their minds copied, and write programs that did the visualization for them. For many, this was seen as a road to quick enlightenment, a short-cut through years of trial and error.

Not all magicians were as enthusiastic about the technological development. While

Fractured Hopes

most were not afraid of the computers, per se, there was something odd about how swiftly things began to change that struck a chord with the magical community. Gone were the days when magicians held entire kingdoms in thrall, and this lack of influence was felt very early on.

However, most kept their own counsel. Entire magical traditions had come and gone in the centuries that magicians had hidden from society, and for most practitioners, it was too much of an ingrained habit to stay in the shadows than act, even though every part of their bodies cried out in dread of danger.

Sholloboth Emergence

When the Sholloboth revealed themselves to humanity, the response from the magicians was quite a bit different from the norm. The Sholloboth's science was something that made sense to the magicians. After all, Magic is largely a matter of perfecting the body in order to perfect the mind. The approach the Sholloboth brought with them, of manipulating the genetic code of humanity, was seen, by many magicians, as something akin to magic on a quicker scale. Many took to the aliens without thinking about the consequences of their actions, which any magician will tell you is a recipe for disaster.

Still, there were magicians who distrusted both the Sholloboth and their methods, stating that the easy path to transformation was no different than that offered by the Eigen, and just as those who turned their bodies into machines housing mechanical intelligences would lose something of their humanity, those who tampered with their genetics too much might risk their very souls as well.

The Magician

PC Magicians are assumed to have been recruited and trained by the Order of the Lion. Players wishing otherwise will need to have an element in their backstory to explain why this would not be the case (which can be as simple as "They haven't found me yet").

Except for the changes noted below, magicians are constructed as per the usual rules.

The Magician's Familiar

Magicians may bind any animal for which they have sufficient POW to bind, even the stranger animals that exist in the Void or in distant fragments. At the Gamemaster's option, Magicians may also summon and bind a demonic familiar if they also know the Conjure Lesser Demon Spell (below). For the demonic familiar, use the characteristics below.

Demonic Familiar

Demonic Familiars manifest of roughly humanoid conglomerations of the inky blackness of the Void. Not entirely solid or liquid, the Familiar is a small entity that serves its master in all ways.

Characteristic	Roll	Average
STR	1D6	3
CON	2D6	6
SIZ	1D4	2
INT	4D6	12
POW	3D6	9
DEX	5D6	15

Move: 6

Hit Points: 4

Damage Bonus: -1D6

Armor: None

Attack: Claw/Bite 45% 1D6-1D6

Fractured Hopes

THE CHARACTER OF THE MAGICIAN

Much of the Art of Magic involves a great deal of introspection in order to gain the powers magicians wield. This, in turn, means that many magicians fall into the trap of becoming almost completely self-centered. Any event that occurs will often send magicians into prolonged periods of self-reflection, which may alienate them from peers.

This is not to say that all magicians are egoists in the face of everything else; many go on to develop profound relationships with others. However, all are self-involved, to some degree.

Skills: Fine Manipulation 45%, Spot 61%, Stealth 45% (90% in dark environments), Magician's Language 36%.

Powers: The Demonic Familiar will possess a single Chaotic Feature, and will know a single Magic spell at its INTx3.

The Wizard's Staff

Within the Order of the Lion, possession of a Wizard's Staff is a mark of high honor, and is reserved for those Magicians who have performed a great service for the Order or humanity. However, those Magicians who spend a great deal of time in the field usually take a different approach to this potent symbol of office.

Field Magicians work to construct a Wizard's Blade, which marks them as operatives pursuing the will of the Order. These incredibly ornate weapons appear to be artifacts from a bygone age. The Order maintains a staff of master artisans for the purposes of forging these blades, and each one takes over a year to construct. At the end of that time, the person for whom the weapon is destined must be pres-

ent in a special ceremony where blade is bonded to him or her. The Magician sacrifices a point of POW as per the normal rules for staves, and the Blade becomes a reservoir for Power Points.

The real difference between the Blade and The Staff becomes apparent when the Blade is wielded in combat. Where a Staff is a tool used for many things, a Blade is only a weapon of war. When used by its bonded magician, the Wizard's Blade always does an extra 1D6 damage. This costs a Power Point as usual, but the Blade does not need to overcome the target's own Power Points for this ability to take effect. When activated in this way, the blade emits a deep blue, luminous smoke, and glows with a harsh white light upon impact.

Furthermore, the blade becomes another part of the Magician's body. Spells that must be cast through touch (such as Diminish, Enhance, Heal, or Wounding) can be used with the Blade instead of the caster's hand. The Magician can always tell where the Blade is, and how far away it is. If he or she knows the Teleport spell, the Blade can be brought at half the Power Point cost, assuming he or she is in range.

Wizard's Blades are not given out to just anyone. They cannot be purchased, nor can the Order be persuaded to construct one for a Magician who does not, in their estimation, deserve it. They can be stolen, and at times show up on the black market. However, great care should be taken when dealing with stolen Blades, as Magicians tend to be clever and imaginative in their pursuit of vengeance.

New Spell

Conjure Lesser Demon

Range: 12 meters

Duration: 10 combat rounds

Fractured Hopes

THE SUNDERING WAR

During the emergence of both the Eigen and the Sholloboth, the magicians stayed out of the public eye, content to have ideological struggles in their own numbers.

This all changed when the Eigen and the Sholloboth began open hostilities with each other. Once the fighting began in earnest, the Order of the Lion emerged as one of the first human-first factions in the war. In addition to using their magic to protect civilians from the forces in conflict, they would also seek and train those with the talent for magic.

Gone were the days when magicians were ignored and ridiculed. If it had not been for their actions during the war, many would not have survived the terrors that came next.

The Sundering

When the Final Weapon was activated and broke the world, the Order of the Lion was prepared. Divinations and consultations with supernatural beings indicated that a cataclysm the likes of which humanity had never seen was fast approaching. The Order developed strongholds throughout the world, hidden caches of food and water that would survive into the next world.

And it was a good thing they did. Shortly after the Sundering, very few factions besides the Order were prepared. Again, the Order's preparedness saved countless lives, even when so many were lost to the Sundering. Not all of the Order survived unscathed, however. Many strongholds were destroyed, magicians of great power killed. Much of humanity's mystical heritage died that day.

Today

The Order of the Lion still travels the fractured world, its operatives seeking those with the talent for magic that is sorely needed in these trying times. From their home stronghold of Bastion Temple near the Core, the Magicians seek to do their part in the rebuilding of humanity.

Even so, old prejudices die hard. Many humans distrust the Magicians, seeing all forms of magic as backward and primitive, if not outright dangerous. This is likely a hold-over from the days when magic was still an underground phenomenon.

Also, while the Order generally has humanity's best interest at heart, there are magicians who still seek to follow the old ways of using their power purely for personal gain. There are no doubt petty kingdoms out in the Edge ruled over by Mage-Kings, who consort of powerful beings from beyond the stars and think only of their own needs. The Order is known to send operatives across the world to bring such reprehensible monsters to justice.

This spell allows your character to conjure a Lesser Demon from the Creatures chapter of the *BRP* rulebook. The demon is pitch black, and largely featureless, as it is composed of energies from the Void. Knowing this spell also allows your character to dismiss Lesser Demons. This is in the same manner as casting the Conjuring spell. The conjured demon will possess a single Chaotic Feature (your choice) in keeping with the task for which it has been summoned.

Note that, in this setting, Lesser Demons are extensions of the caster's will, and are not automatically hostile or malevolent. However, each demon is an individual, with a personality, and you may find that it's easier to work with a small group of them instead of calling a completely new one every time.

Knowing this spell also allows you to call and bind a Demonic Familiar.



Fractured Hopes

RUMORS

There are persistent stories about the Order of the Lion, although the truth behind them is questionable.

The Order not only knew about the Final Weapon, but helped in its construction and “accidental” activation. They did this in order to set themselves up as influential players in the new world.

The Ruling Council of Mages aren’t even human, but strange creatures not seen before the Sundering.

The Itinerant Magicians Guild oversees the operatives and their missions. They are secretly power brokers, who sell information gleaned from their operatives to influence the policies and politics of the new world.

Bastion Temple is much more than what it seems. It is said that each door in it actually opens into several different dimensions, depending on who is at the door. Such things are within the capabilities of the Order, and this makes the Temple much larger than it might be otherwise. Why do they need that much room? What else are they hiding there?

In order to learn magic, Magicians must barter for power from a supernatural being, who instructs the Magician on how to sacrifice babies in exchange for their abilities. Beware the Masters of the Art, especially if you have children!

Mutations

Much like Void Sorcery, Mutations are a relatively recent development, and exist almost exclusively thanks to Sholloboth experimentation. There is no evidence that indicates the presence of mutants before the Sholloboth emerged, although once the aliens had begun serious work

on testing the limits of human genetics, more and more mutant creatures would appear.

By unraveling the human genome, the Sholloboth sought to enhance certain elements of the human genetic heritage. Sometimes this worked and allowed human weaknesses to be overcome, but other times terrible secrets, hidden deep in our genetic code, would suddenly manifest in unexpected ways.

Playing a Mutant

A character with mutations in *Fractured Hopes* is almost certainly the result of Sholloboth experimentation, either before the Sundering War or as a result of left-over bio-weapons. Many mutants are sad wrecks of their former selves, while a rare few manage to develop stable, beneficial mutations that are not disfiguring or otherwise debilitating.

Even so, there are some places where mutants of any sort are not accepted by society, and a number of fragments have installed mutant screening procedures to separate the “pure humans” from the mutants. This may be cause for concern when an otherwise normal seeming mutant must enter one of these communities in order to pursue their own ends.

Additionally, players may opt to use the mutation power to represent a variety of other character types, from less powerful cyborgs, creatures from beyond time and space, independent demons, or anything else that may come up. For this use of mutations, it is advisedly that a “normal” level mutant be allowed to pick their first mutation, rather than rolling it randomly. This way, the player can be assured of getting at least one mutation which is in keeping with their character concept.

Fractured Hopes



Cyborgs

Gaining New Mutations

All mutants are susceptible to mutagens created by the Sholloboth, and stocks of various mutagens can still be found across the world. Exposure to mutagens always prompts a new mutation within a mutant. This causes some mutants to go to great lengths to expose themselves in order to increase their power, while others see the mutagens as a great curse and seek to destroy them at all costs.

One of the tricks of Sholloboth engineering is the fact that rapid but stable evolution occurs in almost all of the creatures infected by their work. This is seen particularly often in the life forms known as RELFs, but can also be seen in certain player character mutants. As time progresses, new and sometimes startling mutations can develop, often without warning.

The Transformation form of mutation found on page 103 of the *BRP* rulebook is not as common in this setting as it may be in others. This doesn't mean it cannot occur, but only that it is a rarity which happens only once in a campaign.

The method of gaining mutations based upon increasing CON occurs as per the rules on page 103.

Specific Mutations

Rather than provide new mutations, I will instead discuss how to use specific mutations within the context of this setting.

Adaptability: In addition to the forms listed, characters with this ability may also choose to adapt a form that allows them to survive and move in the Void without the need for any oth-



Fractured Hopes



Mutants

er support, from either technological devices or other magic. The character may also move through the Void as if swimming, although a mutant with wings may also fly through it.

Disease Carrier: At the Game Master's option, the disease carried by the mutant may instead be a mutagenic virus, designed by the Sholloboth to instigate new mutations in those who already possess them, with a less chance of producing mutations in beings without them. A character possessing this mutation would be something of a mutant messiah for those mutants who have embraced their changes, and a holy terror for mutaphobic humans and those mutants who suffer for their mutations.

If a mutant is affected by the virus, he or she may roll for a new random mutation as usual. If a non-mutant character is affected by the virus, have them make a **Luck** roll. On a success, they develop a randomly determined new mutation. On a failure, the virus operates as a

disease as usual. Victims slain by the virus die in agony as their bodies rapidly shift and mutate from one form to another.

This mutation is perhaps best suited for NPC villains, as anyone with it will soon be surrounded by an amazing assortment of mutants.

Hybrid and Metabolic Weakness are very common mutations. If a character rolls either of these mutations, they may automatically take a new mutation, as if they had succeeded in a **Luck** roll when gaining an adverse mutation.

Psychic Abilities

Before the Sundering War, humans with Psychic Abilities were something of an oddity. There were never very many, and those with true psychic talent were either ridiculed by an unbelieving public, or held by government labs

Fractured Hopes

PSYCHICS AND MUTANTS

Since both mutations and psychic abilities exist because of Sholloboth experimentation, there is a chance that a psychic might suddenly manifest mutations, and that a mutant might manifest some psychic ability.

At the Gamemaster's option, whenever a psychic or a mutant gains a new ability or mutation, there is a chance that they will instead manifest one of the other powers instead of the one they were expecting. The actual chance for this to occur varies. You may decide that a failed **Luck** roll means getting a power from the other system, or perhaps there is a cumulative 10% chance that this occurs, meaning it will happen eventually, but not for a while.

Lastly, the Gamemaster may decide that, should a psychic be exposed to something which triggers mutations in others, that the psychic is automatically granted a mutation instead of whatever chance exists for it to occur.

in an attempt to unlock the potential of the human mind.

Shortly before the Sundering, however, the Sholloboth announced that they had succeeded where human science had failed. Not only did they have a complete understanding of how the human psychic powers worked, but they also were able to determine exactly what caused an individual to manifest the abilities if they had the genetic predisposition towards them.

Many people, especially those involved in the war against the Eigen, lined up to see if they had the Gift, and through this, a generation of humanity swelled with more psychics than any other in humanity's past. Those with the Gift were encouraged to use it against humanity's oppressors, and many victories in the Sundering War are credited to timely, efficient use of psychic abilities.

However, the actual Sundering itself appears to have had a psychic component as well as a physical one. Just as the entirety of the Sholloboth race were killed when the world was broken, human psychics also suffered some strange injuries that killed many of them. As a result, while most of the survivors of the Sundering War have had personal experience with psychics, most of those with the Gift perished in the Sundering.

Today, those with the Gift are a welcome sight, warmly accepted into communities and integrated into daily life. For most people, psychics are a reminder of human potential and how things were before the destruction and horror of the Sundering. Traveling with a psychic gains a ship a good deal of credibility, which is something more than a few unscrupulous pirate crews have used to their advantage.

The Psychic Abilities listed in the *BRP* rulebook mostly operate as described. One, however, works a bit differently in *Fractured Hopes*.

Astral Projection: Instead of costing Power Points per round to maintain, this psychic ability costs only a single power point to activate, and nothing to maintain. While the caster's awareness is in the astral plane, this power operates normally. However, projectors can perceive both the astral realms and the physical world at the same time.

For a cost of one Power Point per round, the projector can make their astral body visible to people in the physical world, and can speak to them. However, as the body is only an illusion, it cannot interact physically with anything, not can it be touched. It can, however, be harmed by magic, psychic abilities, or other means at the Gamemaster's discretion.

If the projector runs out of Power Points, instead of losing hit points, he or she is immediately snapped back to their physical body, and must spend 1D3 minutes in a dazed stupor before performing any other action.



Fractured Hopes

THE ASTRAL REALM

This alternate dimension overlaps with physical reality, and in some instances beings that live naturally in the Astral can interact with those that exist in the physical. The Astral Realms are a nightmarish place, filled with the emotional turmoil humanity feels after the Sundering.

Where the real world is a place of fragments of the world, the Astral Realm is filled with an echo of what the world was like before the Sundering. In it, the world exists as it did; the souls of the dead walk through otherwise deserted cities, or flee in terror from vast astral monsters that feed on the mental energy of the dead, or more rarely, of the psychics who venture here.

The Astral Realm has an interesting property; it is psychoreactive. It is shaped by the emotions of those who move through it. For most people, this is an entirely unconscious and unknown

process. Non-psychics have no idea their bodies move through another dimension as well as through reality. For psychics, especially those skilled in astral projection, the substance of the Astral Realm is a putty which can be shaped by the projector's mind. When two psychics duel in astral space, the very air around them ripples with barely suppressed rage, and when a Mental Blast is directed at an opponent, the substance of Astral space turns the effect into a huge, blazing bolt of red energy.

In the Astral Realms, each psychic is a god, and his or her conflicts are as epic as those fought between immortals of legend. For this reason, protocol amongst psychics dictates that duels should never take place in the Astral Realm near where non-psychics are, as the Astral fallout from their conflict can affect those not in the Astral as well. While non-psychics are not actually affected by the abilities themselves, the fallout manifests as a feeling of nervousness and malaise, which can be quite pronounced if very potent psychics

have fought nearby. Canny psychics recognize these symptoms for what they are, and may peek into the Astral Realms to see what damage is being done.

Some projectors speak of huge, imposing edifices that exist only in the Astral Realms, and that are impenetrable to most common attacks. There are rumors that great power lies within these fortresses, should anyone find a way past the amazing defenses. One psychic claims that, when he managed to get into one of these fortresses and past the defenses, instead of power, he found a huge Astral monster, chained to the bottom of a vast chasm. It spoke to the projector and demanded release from its unjust imprisonment.

The Astral Realm is not simply a blank dimension of psychic energy. It is a place where dreams are true and real, where the depths of the human soul are as manifest and as substantive as anything in the "real" world. This alone means that it is a place of wild beauty and terrible, unholy danger.

Void Sorcery

Of all the power systems, sorcery is both the newest development and the most commonly practiced. Even though the individual spell effects listed in the *BRP* rulebook remain the same, sorcery as performed in *Fractured Hopes* has a different theoretical underpinning. Also, there are sorcery spells that may perform differently in this setting.

History

Sorcery is the ability for certain beings to manipulate the energy of the Void in order to bring about supernatural effects. As the Void permeates all of the matter in the world, as well as the "empty" space between the fragments, sorcerers are always in contact with the material needed to use their powers. However, this was not always the case.

Before the Sundering, sorcery existed, but was an order of magnitude harder and more

Fractured Hopes



Void Sorceress

costly to perform. Using it was akin to ripping energy away from the environment in order to empower the self. Those who practiced it in the past were almost universally villains, more interested in personal power than in the welfare of those around them. As such, most of the sorcery effects could only be performed through acts of violence, and would result in the most unholy manifestations of magic. This is the reason why the summoning of demons had such a bad reputation before the Sundering; demons themselves were not evil, but their conjurers were, and the means to which the demons were placed reflected the dark heart of hatred ancient sorcerers felt for their fellow human beings.

Since this path to magic was dangerous, time consuming and difficult, the number of sorcerers was never very large. They played no substantive role in the Sundering War; most sorcerers either went into hiding or used the ongoing conflict to their own advantage.

After the Sundering, the accounts of sorcerers dropped to almost nothing. It is assumed

that most, if not all, of the pre-Sundering sorcerers died during the cataclysm, either during the massive earthquakes or by their own pet demons gone out of control. Sorcery as a magical practice would likely have been a foot-note in the historical records if it had not been for Agatha Meril, the first post-Sundering individual to take up the mantle of Void Sorcerer.

Just like everyone else, Agatha lost much in the Sundering. She managed to survive the cataclysm by hiding in a bunker. After the noise and the shaking subsided, she left her bunker to discover that her formerly safe haven was now situated on a minuscule fragment of rock, with no other fragments or indeed other survivors within earshot.

Meril knew she was in a precarious situation. Her supplies of food and water were limited, and there was no help to be found. For days, she sat, rationing her supplies and gazing out into the Void. She was able to see other islands of lands and water, floating through the depths of space like fish in a huge aquarium. She hoped against hope that her last days would not be spent alone, far from other human company.

But still her supplies dwindled and finally, when she had run out of food, water, and will-power, Meril succumbed to despair. In her grief, she called out for aid, in any form, even madness if it would take her away from the pain and loss she felt. Beyond even simple human grief for the loss of her own family, Meril wept for all of humanity, whose only home in the vast, cold depths of space was now gone, destroyed by a war that humanity, for once, was not responsible for.

And while she didn't know it at the time, something heard.

She passed into a deep sleep, and when she awoke, she was not alone on that tiny spit of land. A man sat nearby, resting against a tree. And despite his fearsome appearance, which was as though he had been assembled from the corpses of a hundred different men, she was not



Fractured Hopes

A MATTER OF INTENTION

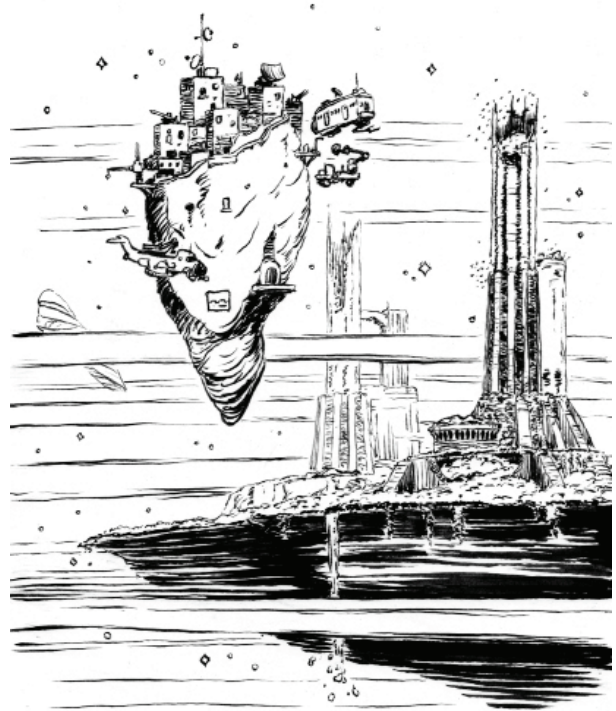
Under normal circumstances, the four spells needed to create a Void Engine would cancel each other out, according to the Sorcery section in the *BRP* rulebook. And, in most instances in *Fractured Hopes*, this is still the case. Given the nature of sorcery, it is virtually impossible to “accidentally” create an Engine, as the spells interact with each other in violent and unpredictable ways.

When one of the Elemental Spells is cast around one already in place, the *BRP* rulebook indicates that they cancel each other out. However, this does not imply that the created material simply ceases to exist. No, when these spells interact, a violent release of magical energy occurs, destroying the spells in the progress, as well as damaging the area in which the interaction took place. Everyone within 25 yards of the spell’s epicenter will take 1D6 points of magical damage for each Power Point spent on the spells.

This release of energy is actually the secret behind a working Void Engine. The process of creating one requires that the four Elemental Spells be cast slowly, in just the right pattern, with the perfect coordination of gesture, movement and concentration. It is only when the appropriate intention is carried into the task that a Void Engine can come into existence. Once created, the Engine uses the energy created by the interaction of the four spells to propel a craft through the Void, as well as provide for the crew of the ship.

afraid of him. She sat near him, and they talked. The man spoke of deep mysteries, of how the Void was a living thing, and how someone, who knew how to talk to it, could use it to put the broken world back together.

The man showed her wondrous things. He made stone appear from thin air, conjured a fire and rose up hover a few feet off the ground. He said that this was the least of the things his se-



crets could do, and he said that he would teach her, if she wanted to use the gifts to live and bring the world back together.

Naturally, she agreed, and began to learn. She realized that the magic being worked, and it indeed was magic, demanded a great deal from her. She had to maintain focus on intense visualization in order to get the Void to respond. Finally, she was able to take the energy from the Void and get to vibrate at a specific speed. A stone manifested in front of her, then another, and soon she stood on a pile of rocks.

Her period of training with this mysterious man ran for weeks. During that time, she neither hungered nor felt thirst, as the patchwork man created food and water from nothing, which nonetheless sustained and invigorated her. And she learned how to perform these miracles of magic and many more besides, and when she had learned all of the basics, she was given one more lesson.

The man showed her that by casting a series of spells in a certain order, with a certain intent, something profound would happen.

Fractured Hopes

First, the Gift of the Earth was cast to create a slab of rock, which is the foundation of all Void Engineering. Then, Wings of the Sky to lift the slab into the air. Then Bounty of the Sea, to give it motion, And lastly, Flames of the Sun to give it warmth. When these spells are cast in this order, and done so with the intent to create the Void Engine, the spells allow the Void Sorcerer to stand upon the floating rock and travel, with air, water and warmth, through the Void. Meril did this, and created the world's first Void Engine, and used it to leave the rock which was to be her tomb, and brought a new purpose to humanity in this new world.

Void Sorcery Today

Void Sorcery is the most commonly performed power in *Fractured Hopes*, and those who are proficient in it are well respected throughout the world. And, even though it is a relatively recent development in the magical structure of the world, the mechanisms by which sorcery operates are well understood and internally consistent. In many ways, Void Sorcery is an arcane science, in that it operates in a consistent manner, which can be tested and retested to produce consistent results. This reliability distinguishes it from other powers, which tend to be much more personal as well as dependent on external condition.

However, Void Sorcery is also not as commonly practiced as other powers. Anyone with the time and patience can learn magic, and supposedly anyone has the potential to develop psychic abilities. While not everyone would be very adept at the other powers, they at least have the potential to learn them.

This is not the case with Void Sorcery. Sorcery theory states that, in order to bring about change, the sorcerer must be able to make the Void perform as desired. The spells needed to do this are limited in scope, and make the Void perform that one, specific action. Additionally,

BASIC SORCERY SPELLS

Given the utility of the Elemental Spells, many presume that these are the first ones taught. This is not actually the case. For neophyte sorcerers, many teachers concentrate on spells less likely to harm the students or those around them. Teaching a new sorcerer Flames of the Sun is just asking for trouble.

To this end, the first spells many sorcerers learn are drawn from the Utility Spells. Heal is always a useful spell, as it teaches that the Void is merciful and seeks to aid the injured. Witch Sight is also common, as many Void Sorcerers know the value of learning to gauge relative strength.

The Enhancement spells are largely harmless, and are available at this level of training as well, although many teachers decline to teach students the Make Fast spell, as its potential for use in pranks if the subject of much dismay.

a sorcerer must shine like a beacon to the Void, which is to say that his or her soul must be of sufficient strength and intensity that they stand out amongst their fellow human beings. People with souls of this sort were a rarity before the Sundering, and afterwards even more so.

Today, sorcerers are in such high demand than nearly anyone who meets the requirements will be located and trained in the sorcerous arts before they reach puberty. People who, through life experience meet the requirements for sorcery, may also be trained in the arts. While this is not mandatory, there is great pressure on those who can learn the art to do so.



Fractured Hopes

INTERMEDIATE SPELLS

At this stage, pupils are taught the basics of creation from out of nothing. The four Elemental Spells are almost universally taught at this stage; although, the secrets of crafting a Void Engine are not explicitly taught (many pupils discover them on their own). Additionally, sorcerers who are expected to operate as a service to a community will be taught the Create Food spell in order to assist the efforts of the locals, and provide emergency nourishment in case of crop failure or other disaster.

Void Sorcery Theory:

First Tier

In order to make use of sorcerous powers, a budding sorcerer must be trained on the basic principles that enable sorcerous effects to occur. Often, students being trained in Sorcery are instructed in very basic spells in order to test their understanding of the theory behind the art. These spells form the basis of nearly every sorcerer's education, although it is becoming more common for sorcerers to not be taught certain spells during their initial instruction.

Imagine that all of the matter that once composed our world is still around, floating through space after the Sundering. It sometimes helps to imagine that the globe of the world is only now much larger in circumference than it once was, and that a great deal of "empty" space lies between the chunks of earth and water that, only a few years ago, was a single planet.

Once you've got this image in your mind, imagine that, instead of sitting in empty space, the matter is instead contained inside a globe of a thick, sticky, clear, gelatinous substance. It holds the chunks or fragments together, and prevents them from getting farther way than

they already are. This goo is the Void. Most normal people don't feel it, can't see or smell it, and cannot hope to work with it, because to them, it's not real. But to a sorcerer, this gooey substance is very real, and humanity moves through it. We're steeped in it, like a vast ocean of energy.

Now, imagine that this ocean of energy, the Void, instead of being a purely passive metaphysical construct, is alive and intelligent. Not only that, but it is surprisingly friendly to those that can perceive it. It desires company, and actively wants to assist in the rebuilding efforts of the world.

To a sorcerer, this is not religion or metaphysics, but established fact. Their spells are the means by which the Void, this intelligent stuff, is made to act on the behalf of the sorcerer. This is the first lesson new sorcerers are taught; not

ADVANCED SPELLS

Those who train up to this level learn spells which are subtle in application but also quite useful. As a contrast, they often learn to make manifest autonomous creatures to perform tasks outside what the sorcerer could perform him- or herself.

The Augmentation spells are commonly taught if the sorcerer lives in an area that is home to hostile beings or is prone to Eigen raids. These not only allow the sorcerer a greater chance to hide from enemies, but also to provide information through recon. The Occult spells are common in places where there are either multiple sorcerers or a single one, who might need a store of Power Points held in reserve for emergencies.

The Summoning spells are amongst the most versatile in a sorcerer's repertoire, as the summoned beings can be set to tasks and left to do them without supervision. They also provide a number of potential abilities which are contained in a small number of spells.

Fractured Hopes

only is the world living inside the body of a vast cosmological entity that responds to calls for aid, but also that it is more or less friendly and desires people to live.

Second Tier

Once the nature of the Void is understood, the sorcerers are taught how to get a measure of energy from the Void and apply their will to it to create matter out of that energy. According to Void Theory, matter is energy vibrating at a particular speed, and the sorcerer is capable of making energy vibrate at any number of speeds to produce a number of effects. This is the real foundation of the sorcerer's art, and the majority of the spells a sorcerer will use for the rest of his or her life will come from this level of understanding.

Create Food (1+)

Range: Touch

For each magic point spent on this spell, the sorcerer can create enough bland, unappetizing foodstuff to feed a single person for a single meal. The food created is gray, shapeless and cold, and resembles the unprocessed soy-protein supplements from before the Sundering. It is a perfect food in the sense that it provides a great deal of nutrition, but its unappetizing nature means that it is only typically used in the most extreme circumstances.

However, if the sorcerer also can pass a Craft (Cooking) test before casting this spell, he or she can turn the shapeless foodstuffs into actual food, and prepare it so that it is actually something people would want to eat. This spell is particularly popular with Void Engineers who spent time on ships, which also makes them popular with the crew.

MASTERY SPELLS

Once the student sorcerers have come to an understanding of the body and how it works, a great number of spells open up to them. The Characteristic and Combat spells are taught at this stage, as they are best suited to sorcerers who intend to spend time in actual front-line combat with threats to the human existence.

However, the Manipulative spells exist for sorcerers who are more subtle in their art, and work behind the scenes to maneuver either themselves or people in their care into better positions. The sole exception to this is Curse of Sorcery, which accesses Sholloboth manipulations in the human genetic material to mutate a foe. This spell is a closely guarded secret, and any sorcerer who casts it upon an unwilling target has committed a grievous offense and will be hunted down by sorcerers trained to keep their numbers in check.

Third Tier

At this stage, the initiate undergoes training into the nature of the soul. Even though the Void seems as separate from us as water is separate from fire, we are in fact spiritual beings, with a large amount of Void energy in us, which humans call the "soul." By developing a greater understanding of the soul and its relationship to the Void, the sorcerer will develop a set of powers which allow them to manipulate their own soul, and those of others, as well as call forth false souls from the Void.

This level of training is often too strange for many budding sorcerers, who revert back to the previous tier and are content to travel no further. The insights gained in this tier can be disturbing to mortals, as they imply that the true nature of humanity lies outside our physical form, making our bodies little more than prisons for something else.



Fractured Hopes

THE WASH-OUTS

Even though the various sorcerers who actively train new students are wise and good natured, they are still human and are not perfect. Not every misguided student is weeded out before the training commences, and some can get very far into their training before it is discovered that they were after power.

There are a handful of sorcerers alive in the world who washed out at some point in their training. They may have been too concerned for their own benefit, or even actively hostile with those not possessing the ability to commune with the Void. Some were imprisoned, and some escaped before their villainy could be discovered.

In any case, there are sorcerers at large who use their abilities for their own good. Often, they have imperfect understanding of the theory behind what they do, and have only picked up more potent spells through shady black market deals, or even by attacking and killing legitimate sorcerers and stealing their precious grimoires to learn new spells.

Even more disturbingly, there are reports of a so called “Black Heart Sorcerer” who lives somewhere in the Void, and is supposedly training an army of sorcerous warriors to rule over humanity as its rightful kings. Some discount these reports as hearsay, but the fact that sorcerous constructs have been seen attacking Voidships is without question. The true nature of this phenomenon may wind up being something much stranger and deadly.

Fourth Tier

When this level of training is reached, the sorcerer is made aware that, rather than being a simple prison for the soul, the body is actually a tool for the soul’s growth. We are not prisoners in this world, but students, and the body is our school. By studying the body and how it works,

the Void Sorcerer is able to change the basic components of the human form, can make it temporarily work faster, better, or stronger.

At this stage, the sorcerers frequently come to something of an enlightenment about the human condition and the nature of the suffering that arises from the Sundering. True, the war and the devastation are terrible, and the immense loss of life a cause for grief. But it also is an opportunity to change the way humanity lives into something grand. It is for this cause that sorcerers exist; to give hope to a fractured humanity.

Player Characters as Void Sorcerers

Given their place in human society, and the fact that sorcery is the only means of traversing the Void known to humanity, many players may wish to become sorcerers. This is acceptable, so long as the Game Master can convey that sorcery in this setting is not simply about power. In this setting, sorcerers are something like priests, who intercede with the Divine Void on the behalf of those who cannot. Additionally, sorcerers are the cause for the one technological development that allows humanity to work together in what would have ordinarily been a path to extinction: The Void Engine.

With all of these factors combined, it is easy to see the privileged position sorcerers hold. As with any such position, it attracts those who want the power that comes with it for its own sake. Thankfully, many who desire to be sorcerers simply do not have the sheer force of will or intelligence needed to communicate with the Void. Those that do are very carefully trained to assure that they have humanity’s best interests at heart.

Unless the player desires otherwise due to backstory issues, assume that any newly created sorcerers have gone through the entirety of the

Fractured Hopes



Marketplace Selling Illegal Items

training, and have a good working knowledge of what sorcery spells are available. They will only begin play with a number of spells as per the campaign level, but have the whole sorcery spell list to choose their initial spells from. They will also possess a grimoire detailing the spells they know, with room enough to record 1D6 new ones. There is a thriving black market for stolen grimoires, so care should be taken.

As play progresses, sorcerers will no doubt wish to learn new spells from other sources to augment those they already know. For legitimate sorcerers, this is relatively easy. One need only locate another sorcerer and make arrangements for a spell exchange. Tradition dictates that sorcerers must agree to teach a fellow sorcerer a single spell that the other does not know in exchange for learning a spell from that person. This follows the nor-

CONSTRUCTS AND POWERS

The characteristics listed for sorcerous constructs in Chapter 11 of the *BRP* rulebook list the most common varieties of the constructs. However, there are variances in what powers a creature possesses. This is especially common in demons.

A demon normally comes into play with a series of Sorcery powers, which can be used at the caller's command. This is useful in that it allows the caller access to spells he or she may not normally possess. It is suggested that, for an additional 4 Power Points, that the called demon would possess magic spells, psychic abilities, or even mutations instead of the normal four sorcery spells. The caster may also opt to allow the demon to manifest 4 additional Chaotic Features instead.



Fractured Hopes

BINDING CONSTRUCTS

There are many reasons why a summoner might wish to bind a construct. Firstly, the ease of summoning makes bound lesser demons much more useful, as they can be called in one round instead of several. Some summoners may also wish to work with a single construct or a small handful of them in order to have a better understanding of their personalities and capabilities.

Normally spending POW to bind a demon is a bad deal for a sorcerer. The loss of POW makes the sorcerer much less effective doing what they do, and dropping to a POW of 15 or less removes the sorcerer's ability to even work sorcery. For this reason, few sorcerers ever avail

themselves of a bound demon, as the POW loss is too much of a liability.

The Gamemaster may decide that, for any magic user capable of summoning a construct, that the construct may be bound (but not object bound) for no POW cost. This would work for one (and only one) construct, which would become a recurring NPC, and would be permanent unless killed. This would allow a summoner a ready ally with a known set of abilities, which would offer some interesting roleplaying experiences.

Such a binding would differ from a standard one, in that the construct would be granted a greater deal of autonomy, which would enable it to develop a sense of self and personality. It would also be fiercely loyal to the summoner,

and would work to protect the summoner and his or her interests. Maintaining a bound demon in this manner would take up a point of Free INT, as would any other binding.

This would not preclude the summoning and binding of other demons, although doing this too often might be cause for jealousy. Why would you call a construct and bind it to you for life, only to not allow it to perform its function? Subsequent bindings follow the normal rules, including the POW cost.

If this construct is ever dismissed, it vanishes from the character's memory, and can never again be called by that summoner. Such an act would be tantamount to the murder of a close friend.

mal rules for earning new sorcery spells, with the addition that teachers are much easier to locate than they might be otherwise.

However, those sorcerers who have washed out or are not held in high regard by their peers are except from this tradition. Many sorcerers, especially ones that travel a lot, have told tales of being approached by fallen sorcerers who pretend to be legitimate in order to learn new spells. Sorcerers should be wary of strangers who approach them for training.

Sorcerous Constructs

Constructs are magical beings created through the use of the Summoning sorcery spells, as well as the Conjure Elemental and Conjure Lesser Demon Magic spells. Unless described

otherwise, assume that the notes listed here apply equally to magicians calling upon these creatures.

Elementals and lesser demons are not individual creatures. While they may have something resembling a personality, as well as express a sense of self, they are in reality an expression of the Void, given form by the arcane formula of the magic user and instructed to perform as directed.

Elementals

Calling upon the Void to manifest as an embodiment of the elements works in much the same way as using one of the Elemental spells: the sorcerer creates a quantity of the needed element, and with an additional part of the sum-

Fractured Hopes

CHARACTER FAILING BENEFITS

For characters using these pre-made super power packages, certain factors will be consistent across all of their backgrounds. As such, assume each character possess the bonus Power Budget gained from the following failings:

Their Super-Powered identity is always on. +5

Deeply ingrained hatred for Eigentech forces or for mutants, or humans. +1

Character is actively hunted by either the Eigen or the terror engines, as appropriate. +1

Characters take an extra 1D6 damage from EMP based weapons (for Prometheus soldiers) or from fire (for terror engines). +1

This gives each character a bonus of 8 Power Budget Bonus points. The packages below are all done with these bonus points in mind.

moning spell, imbues it with a false soul that allows the construct to animate. This is why the sorcerer must know the appropriate Elemental spell in order to perform the summoning. Once the summoning duration has expired, the elemental's false soul evaporates, leaving behind a sizable quantity of the element that had composed it behind. Elementals can be bound. See Binding Constructs, below.

Lesser Demons

In many ways, calling upon demons is similar to summoning elementals. Instead of forming a body out of an elemental, the caster uses the spell to shape a body out of the very Void itself. In practice, this lends lesser demons a fairly uniform appearance, readily identifying them as what they are. Regardless of the shape the

demon takes, lesser demons are always composed of a glossy black substance. It appears to be liquid, but it actually quite solid, and can withstand force directed at it as though it were a flesh-and-blood creature.

It should be noted again that demons are not themselves alive in the sense that humans are alive. They certainly have personalities. Many are cheerful, while others are sardonic, while others still are calm in all circumstances. They possess no life outside that which is provided to them by their callers, and when dismissed, they fall away to nothing, leaving not even their black substance behind.

They are therefore not infernal intelligences, despite what many humans have been taught. They are purely extensions of the sorcerer's will, and any violence they may engage in is the product of old fashioned human evil, not their own maliciousness.

Super Powers

Super powers differ from the other power options, in that their existence in a setting is much harder to rationalize. Not only that, but where the other powers have relatively limited options during character creation (mostly picking a handful of powers from a list), the creation of a super-powered character is more involved. This can stop the character generation process in its tracks, although if everyone in a group is using this power option, this may be okay.

In order to streamline the process, I will be making some suggestions below on how to quickly integrate supers in to the *Fractured Hopes* setting. I should note that this is not the only way characters with immense power can come to the setting; beings of great power may be attracted to the Earth from across the vast depths of space. But, if making a super-powered character from within the lands held by the Void, consider the following packages as a quick way of getting into play.



Fractured Hopes

The Programs

Not many know that, in the latter days of the Sundering War, both the Eigen and the Sholloboth had taken their experimentation on human conscripts to new and terrible levels. No longer content with simple augmentation, each side began using their technologies to radically alter their human test subjects from the ground up, creating intelligent weapons with an astonishing array of powers.

These agents were deployed in the war, in stand-up engagements as well as covert operations deep within enemy territory. Tales of the horror these soldiers were capable of inflicting were the stuff of legends for many who served in the Sundering War. Even today, just the mention of the members of Project Prometheus (the Eigen supersoldier program) or the Sholloboth terror-engines is enough to make even the most hardened veteran turn white.

Thankfully, the vast bulk of these weapons were destroyed during the Sundering, and those that survived have been away from their controllers long enough that some of the original human personalities have returned to them. Most have no more than fleeting memories of the atrocities they committed while others controlled them, but surviving humanity is quick to remind them.

Player-Character Supers

Super-powered characters are very likely to be surviving remnants of the either of supersoldier programs. They will have a long history, stretching back before the war. The first choice the player will have to make is whether they were part of Project Prometheus or if they had been one of the terror engines. The force to which they were enthralled will have some influence over which super powers they have access to.

Generally, Project Prometheus super powers tend to be highly advanced cybernetics and

other mechanical augmentations and implants. They do not allow the user to make use of some of the more fantastic superpowers (such as shape-shifting or teleportation), but instead focus more on either increasing some natural faculty of the body, or by granting new abilities which are mostly physical in nature. Prometheus soldiers are superhuman in the sense that they are humans with normal abilities tuned to levels beyond human capability.

Terror engines differ. Based in Sholloboth biotechnology, terror engines have access to a wider variety of powers, and those which they do possess can stray into the realm of the fantastic. The Sholloboth knew that life science could unlock the powers of the mind. The terror engines were designed to give entirely new abilities to their human hosts, to produce biological weapons guided by human intelligence rather than animal cunning. Terror engines are superhuman in the sense that they are humans with completely alien abilities.

Power Budgets by Campaign Level

For purposes of determining what powers can be purchased, assume that the character's Power Budget is based on the set point value, instead of having it be based upon the character's POW.

- ⊕ Realistic campaigns allow for a Power Budget of 18.
- ⊕ Heroic campaigns allow for a Power Budget of 28.
- ⊕ Epic campaigns allow for a Power Budget of 43.
- ⊕ Superhuman campaigns allow for a Power Budget of 58 or even higher.

Fractured Hopes

Power Packages

Each of the programs produced supersoldiers who fall within two very wide categories: infiltration units and battlefield units. Infiltration units are those projects that were not designed expressly for extended engagements, focusing more on assassinations, recon, or sabotage missions. Battlefield units are more straightforward, being designed to turn enemy soldiers into smoldering piles of slag in a variety of ways.

While each type of supersoldier will obviously look different, and express their powers in a different way, the powers they express will be pretty similar. The players have only to choose one of the packages as appropriate and make the changes to their character sheet. Note that, since adding characteristics mean recalculating things like Hit Points and Power Points, choosing one of these packages might be better served before these attributes are calculated.

Note that these packages are designed using the Realistic campaign as a baseline. Supersoldiers in a more powerful campaign should be designed using the players' input, as such soldiers will be more individual. Alternatively, players may opt to take one of the packages listed below, and use the extra Power Budget to purchase new powers or enhance the ones already given by the packages.

Infiltration Units:

Project Prometheus:

Super Skills +20% to any three skills, or any fewer skills in any combination.

Super Attributes: May add three points to STR, CON or SIZ, or a single point to any of the other characteristics.

PROJECT PROMETHEUS

The Eigen supersoldier project, named Prometheus, takes its name from the ancient Greek myth about the titan Prometheus, who stole the secret of fire from the gods and gave it to humanity. He was punished for all eternity for his transgression, by having a vulture peck out his liver once every day. His liver would regenerate overnight, making his torment endless.

To the Eigen, the concept of "bringing fire to humanity" is a cruel double meaning, in that the Eigen wish to bring either enlightenment (one of the possible interpretations to Prometheus's fire) or actual fire (that is, destruction) to those who do not accept the Machine Race's will.

Super Senses: Night Vision or Heat Vision.

Regeneration: Gains back 1 Hit Point per combat round for one power point.

Leap: Adds 6 meters to the character's horizontal leap, and 3 meters to his vertical leap.

Extra Hit Points: 3 extra hit points.

Terror Engine:

Super Skills +20% to any four skills, or any fewer skills in any combination.

Super Characteristics: May add three points to STR, CON or SIZ, or a single point to any of the other characteristics.

Armor : 3 points of kinetic armor.

Drain: Draws off 1 Power Point per Combat Round with a touch.



Fractured Hopes

Regeneration: Gains back a single Hit Point per Combat Round for one Power Point.

Battlefield Units:

Project Prometheus:

Armor: Three points of Kinetic Armor.

Protection (Energy) 3 points of protection for 3 Power Points each combat round.

Extra Hit Points: 3 extra Hit Points.

Super Skills: +20% to any three skill or any fewer skills in any combination.

Super Senses: Ultrasonic Hearing.

Super Characteristics: May add three points to STR, CON or SIZ, or a single point to any of the other characteristics.

Terror Engine:

Super Characteristics: May add three points to STR, CON or SIZ, or a single point to any of the other characteristics.

Super Skills: +20% to any three skill or any fewer skills in any combination.

Kinetic Absorption: Absorbs a single point of Kinetic damage as a Power Point.

Extra Hit Points: Three Extra Hit Points.

Super Senses: Heat Vision.

Regeneration: Grows back a single Hit Point each Combat Round.

Chapter 5- Spot Rules

The Basic rulebook has a selection of optional rules that affect the way the game is played. For our purposed, I've selected a few rules that, while optional in the main book, are considered part of this setting. Of course, the Gamemaster may decide to adjust these options, removing some and adding others, in order to bring about a different play experience.

Character and Character Creation

Higher Starting Characteristics. This allows characters, even at the "normal" level, to be fairly good at what they want to do in the game. This allows for an easy time of finding and playing a character concept, as a player's desired character can be done from the start of play and grow from there, rather than starting sub-standard and moving into their actual concept later in play.

Point Based Character Creation. Along the same lines as the Higher Starting characteristics, this option allows the player a greater chance of making the character they want to play, as well as making sure they are competent in the areas the player desires.

Step 6 of Character Creation. Not only does this give the character a handy boost in

certain skill areas, thereby making them better able to perform the tasks the player desires, it also serves as a good short-hand for character personality. This is especially important in the early stages of play, when a character's personality hasn't had a chance to really set in.

Increased Personal Skill points. Characters in *Fractured Hopes* all come from a background that includes a wide variety of experienced outside what one would normally expect for the character's occupation.

Total Hit Points. One of the main influences for *Fractured Hopes* is fiction, where main characters, even if horrifically injured, are not in constant, serious threat of death. The world of the setting is a harsh place already, and character who constantly fear for their lives will become cautious, which can slow a game to a crawl. Important characters will use the Total Hit Points rule to reflect their quality as main characters. They can take a big hurt, but continue to function.

Distinctive Features. Not only a roleplaying tool, Distinctive Features help give a short-hand to character, which is especially important in the early stages of the game. Also, features don't need to be expressly human. A character wishing to be a strange transhuman being can assume that one of their features is blue furry skin, for example, without needing any special rules to determine how this came to be.

Freeform Professions are optional, but a good idea, especially for players who have a character concept that doesn't readily fit into



Fractured Hopes

one of the pre-defines ones. The Gamemaster should consider only allowing this option for characters who already know the setting and how their concept might fit in.

Skills

Complementary Skills. This allows for characters to get a realistic bonus to a skill if they have a related skill to fall back on. Gamemasters should encourage the use of this rule, as it gets players thinking about the character in an extra dimension.

Skill Ratings over 100%. Characters begin the game more competent than in other Basic games, and through experience, they'll likely become more powerful. This optional rule will allow characters to grow in power in the direction the player desires.

Powers

Projection. A must-have skill for any character using super powers.

System

Opposed Skill Roll System. This is really a matter of preference. Personally, I prefer the first option, as it seems like the easiest to use in play without slowing the pacing.

Fate Points. As the only optional rule that has not seen print in other Basic games, Fate Points may be seen as a big departure from the traditional way Basic games look at success and failure. They really have no place in a gritty, serious game, but for something like *Fractured Hopes*, their inclusion makes a certain kind of sense. However, there are a few considerations regarding Fate Points:

It gives non-power using characters a reason to use their Power Points for something.

It promotes an active style of play, because the characters have a layer of insulation from the danger of the game. They will be more willing to take risks and try new things.

It might be a good idea to determine that super-powered characters with the Extra Energy power be unable to use the bonus Power Points to affect their Fate.

Only player-characters and very important NPCs are protected by Fate.

Combat

Eliminating Statements of Intent. Instead of making the characters declare what they wish to do and forcing them to follow through, even when that action is no longer a good idea, robs players of low DEX character's a sense of control over their own actions. At the start of each round, I ask the players what they are going to do in very general terms, and resolve specific actions as the character's DEX rank comes up.

Power use in the Action Phase. Having powers go off before anything else gives them a big advantage over non-powered characters. To alleviate this, have powers go off at the character's normal DEX rank, just like any other action. For some variety, Gamemasters may opt to have a powered character use their INT instead of DEX to determine when a power activates.

Attacks and Parries over 100%. As with other high skills, a high weapon skill is something that will come up often in the setting. It allows for extra attacks, and increases the chance for a critical or special die result.

Dodging Missile Weapons. Ranged attacks in *Fractured Hopes* can be avoided just like any other attack. If this bothers the sense of realism some player bring to the game, assume that the character is not actually "dodging" the actual projectile or energy beam so much as they are diving under cover or ducking just before the

Fractured Hopes

shot goes off. Also remember that bad guys can do this too.

Dying Blows. In fact, it might be fun to allow a “dead” character to accomplish something they couldn’t do in life, allowing the passing of a beloved character to have a major impact on the setting.

Miscellaneous

Allegiance. While I’m not sold on using this optional rule for this setting, some Gamemasters may wish to develop its use as a measure of alignment with the various factions within the game. While the supernatural does exist in the setting, the gods do not take a personal hand in the lives of mortals (for the most part.) In *Fractured Hopes*, there are three main factions to which a character can express alignment with:

The Eigen. Beyond their desire to control and consume, the Machine Race are also preeminent organizers and tacticians. If there were a force for Order in the world, the Eigen would be its representative. Those who achieve apotheosis to the Eigen become cold, uncaring immortal agents of stability, as each time they “die” more machine parts are added to their body.

Humanity. Brought to the brink of destruction by larger, uncaring forces, humanity has become a hardier, more careful species. Amongst its members are those who consider it their mission to guard their fellow people and protect them from the harsh realities of survival in the new world. Those who undergo apotheosis are drawn into Astral Space by the a guiding spirit. After a period of rest where they are visited by their loved ones who have died, their body is reconstructed from Void energy and they re-enter the world, ready to serve humanity again.

The Sholloboth. More than anything, the extinct alien race were a force for dynamic, constant change, both to the human body and

to the mind. There are those still alive who see the Sholloboth as agents of change, who arrived on Earth just in time to prevent humanity from becoming completely in thrall to the Eigen. The characters who attempt to further the Sholloboth agenda of changing humanity into something bigger and grander often unlock a peculiar set of mutations hidden within their genetic code. This form of apotheosis occurs when the character dies. At such a time, their body becomes enveloped in a thick cocoon, sturdy enough to withstand the immense extremes of temperature. After a period of time, the character emerges from the cocoon completely transformed into something new and wonderful (See Transformation in the Mutation section of the Basic rulebook), as well as being healed of all injuries.

New Optional Rules

Motivation

Beyond simple survival, characters in all games have to have some sort of motivating idea that they pursue. Possessing a drive can go a long way towards shaping the course of a character’s story, not to mention giving the Gamemaster an idea of what the player is interesting in exploring with the character.

More often than not, characters in *Fractured Hopes* are motivated by loss. Their motivations for being active in the world usually stem from, and are controlled by, the character’s attempt at reconciling the profound sense of guilt that comes with being one of the few surviving members of the human species.

Every character should decide what it is that they’ve lost, whether it is a loved one, an abstract sense of belonging, a home, or something else. In any scene where the character does an action (whether it succeeds or fails) that addresses their loss, that character may put

Fractured Hopes

STARLA'S BROTHER

In a *Fractured Hopes* game, one of the characters is Starla, a neophyte Void Sorcerer who is part of the crew of the Voidship Star Mother. Her motivation is to find out if her brother Elliot is alive or dead. Her ship docks at Bastion Temple, the enclave of the Order of the Lion. While there, she arranges to interview a seer about her brother.

She gets to the appointment, and discovers that, according to the seer, Elliot is alive on a fragment at the edge of the world. Since she has pursued her motivation, Starla earns a check. Even if the seer had said that they couldn't find Elliot, she still would have earned the check.

a check mark next to their motivation on their character sheet.

Whenever the Gamemaster calls for experience checks, a player may spend one or more of their accumulated checks for the following actions:

They may spend a single check to re-roll any dice involved in a single experience check.

They may spend three checks to automatically succeed on the roll to roll higher than their skill in order to increase it.

They may spend two checks to have the die to determine how much they learn from experience automatically assumed to be its maximum value.

They may spend five checks in order to attempt an experience check on a skill that they know but did not use this session. This can also be used on any skill that has at least a 1% base chance.

Attaining Your Motivation

At some point, your character will be able to achieve this goal. Doing so is a cathartic experience, which grants a bonus equivalent to 10 checks on the motivation. The motivation is erased from the character sheet, and can be replaced by another one at any point in the future.

Minions-Optional Rules For Nameless Foes

Not every foe faced during an adventure is one that is meant to seriously provide a threat to the lives and livelihood of the characters. Many foes are simply too far below the PCs in caliber to warrant the same amount of attention as a named NPC who is as powerful, if not more so, than the characters. Such nameless foes can be considered minions, and they follow the purely optional rules listed below.

The minion rules exist as a tool for the harried Gamemaster, one that can provide

STARLA'S VENGEANCE

The Sky Mother arrives at the distant fragment, and finds Elliot in a desperate battle to save his life from a band of pirates. In the ensuing battle, Elliot is injured and dies in Starla's arms. Her motivation to find out her brother's fate is thus fulfilled, and she gains the bonus check marks.

Overcome with grief, Starla declares bloody vengeance against the pirates who did this to her last relative. Her player decides that her new motivation is Vengeance, directed at these pirates specifically, and to other pirates in general.

Fractured Hopes

game information on the fly, and to keep less important combat scenes from taking up a lot of time or require a lot of book-keeping. As players take the game away from the initial plot, Gamemasters can use the minion rules as needed to create enough game information to run encounters with minimal fuss. Minions are not intended to take the place of larger, more dangerous foes, which would use the *BRP* rules as normal.

Minions Use the Following Game Mechanics:

- ⊕ They are assumed to have a 10 in all characteristics.
- ⊕ They always strike last in a combat round.
- ⊕ They have a weapons skill of 30%.
- ⊕ Their attacks do a single 1D6 in damage, which may be in melee or at range.
- ⊕ They do not Parry or Dodge.

A single hit from any weapon will take a minion out of the fight. They may not be dead; they may simply be too injured to fight, playing dead out of fear, or anything else.

Taken as a whole, the above mechanics will work well enough to cover most human-level foes in the game, such as pirate crew members, guards, mutants, or even Void-born RELFS. Other game stats, such as skills or weapons, can be created on the fly. In such cases, assume the 30% weapon skill also covers skill uses in keeping with the type of character the minion represents.

Within these basic rules, there is some room for modification. While the normal minions will cover most lesser types, there might be a need for a foe that is a bit more robust, without resorting to full-fledged stats. There are a number of ways of doing this, and the Game-

master can mix and match these rules to keep things varied.

The default characteristic number can be increased from 10 to 12, 14, or 16. Beyond that, you're probably looking at doing an actual character.

Particularly fast minions might strike first, or go immediately before or after the character whom they are attacking.

Weapon skills might be 50% or higher.

Damage done in combat can be increased to 1D8.

They may Parry or Dodge at their normal skill percentage.

They may take more than a single hit to take out. Tough or well-armored minions might need two or more hits to take out. In this case, a critical result or better will always take out a minion, regardless of the number of hits it would normally take.

Using Minions

There are a number of ways in which minions might find their way into the game. Firstly, the Gamemaster can use them as needed, especially when the players take the game off the rails and into unplanned territory. Conversely, the players might find themselves in control of minions as well, especially in games that involve larger-scale conflicts. Some possible ways of using minions are given below.

Characters with the Command skill can use it to take control of military units, assuming there is reason for this to be so. Each non-named member of the unit counts as a minion under the character's command. If discreet numbers are needed, assume that 1D20 minions can be under the character's Command at once. At the Gamemaster's option, this may also apply to stirring orations, smooth talking, or mind control related skill and powers as well. Normally, the loyalty of such minions is questionable, and will depart once their task has been fulfilled.



Fractured Hopes

CALL THE LEGION

The minions are strong, which makes them capable of tremendous feats of strength, such as tearing down doors, and do twice the dice in damage for a minion of its type.

- * Scaly Hide. The creature has some natural means of protection, which means each one needs two hits to destroy.
- * Huge. Only half the normal number of creatures appear, but the ones that come are particularly big. Each takes three hits to destroy.
- * Distracting. There is something about the creature that impedes all attacks against them. It may be ensnaring tentacles, hypnotic color shifts, psionic disruption, or something else entirely. All attacks directed at these creatures suffer a penalty equal to the minion's Weapon skill (-30% for regular minions).
- * Spittle. The creatures are capable of making attacks at short range, as well as in melee combat.
- * Elite. The creatures summoned are used to the swirling melee of combat, having fought before. Each counts as being armored, and does 1D8 damage in its attacks.
- * Snipers. The creatures can, through magical means or technological, make their attacks at long range, and can use their Weapon skill percentage as Stealth, Hide, or as other skills that involve going about unnoticed.
- * Trophy Seeker. The creatures have the gruesome habit of taking trophies from defeated foes. They do damage to Power Points instead of Hit Points, seeking to cause unconsciousness instead of death. When the victims awakens, they discover that they are missing a nose, and ear, or an eye. This halves related skill chances, and costs the victim 1D8 APP.
- * Exemplars. The creatures are the pinnacle example of the art of conjuration. There are at most eight of them, but each must be hit three times, and has a 50% chance to hit and do 2D8 damage.
- * Nimble. The creatures move in ways the human mind cannot comprehend. Each minion can act at any time during a combat round. Typically, they strike first unless some tactical reason not to presents itself.

If a magic user of any type possesses a Summoning or Conjure spell that allows them to call upon supernatural creatures, they may also learn a version of that spell called Summon or Conjure Legion. This spell costs twice the Power Points of the original spell, and takes twice as long to cast. Once it is cast, the caster gains a number of minions equal to their POW. These minions are supernatural creatures of the sort originally summoned by the spell, and will remain under the caster's control for the rest of that scene. Also, the caster may spend an additional five Power Points during the summoning to invest the minions with a choice from the

list below. The only limit on the choices is how many Power Points the caster can spend.

Given access to a supply of mechanical parts, circuit boards, tools and time to use them, a characters with a scientific background or one related to Eigentech or other robots can build a force of loyal minion robots. Such creates are not terribly smart, but they are loyal, and will remain so until destroyed, reprogrammed or otherwise compromised. See the entry for the Eigentech Junk-Bot on page 108 for an NPC that uses minions in this way.

Fractured Hopes



Three Pirates

Minion vs. Minion

If two or more characters face off against each other, it is assumed that the separate groups of minions will fight one another, leaving the characters free to follow their own agenda during the battle. After the battle, it is likely that the minions will have sustained damage.

If the characters won their conflict, then their minions come out on top, even against overwhelming odds. They may have taken an incidental causality or two, but not anyone who could not be replaced. However, if the characters have lost, then it goes poorly for their minions. They suffer casualties equal to half their original number, if not more, and any minions lost have instead been captured and interrogated for information regarding the PCs whereabouts or plans.



Chapter 6: Voidships

Since so much depends on Voidships in *Fractured Hopes*, it is little wonder why they are seen with something like reverence by the people who benefit from their existence. In many ways, Voidships are characters in their own rights, possessing attributes and characteristics that distinguish one from another. Any Void Sorcerer who knows the appropriate spells can make one, and they can be composed out of freely available material, including the debris from the world before the Sundering. And, with the right upgrades, a Voidship can become an actual character, possessing a distinct personality.

Each Voidship is unique. They bear the indelible mark of those responsible for their construction and maintenance. Some may be ramshackle affairs, cobbled together from whatever bits of stone, metalwork or wood was available, while others are astoundingly beautiful works of art, lovingly crafted with care and patience. They may be constructed from old ocean-going vessels, vintage automobiles, fighter jets, a hunk of land that once bore someone's grave, or anything else that someone can stand, sit, or ride upon.

Without them, humanity's chance of surviving the devastation of the Sundering War would be negligible. But with them, not only will the human species survive, we show signs of thriving in our new environment. Enterprising captains sail between fragments, carrying goods and supplies to isolated settlements. There is also a burgeoning rescue society that uses Voidships to locate and reunite missing

loved ones. And, since there is so much more land in the new world than was on the surface of the old one, there are literally billions of places that need exploring and cataloging. Voidships make all of these things possible, and provide heroes with the opportunity to be heroic.

However, much like before the Sundering, there are those who take advantage of technological developments to further their own aims, without regard to the suffering it causes in others. Pirate crews have Voidships meant to inspire terror in their quarry, and they prowl the space between the fragments looking for ships carrying goods. More than one petty despot has captured and coerced Void Sorcerers into making entire armadas of Voidships, and use them to unite dozens of nearby fragments into malevolent "empires". And the surviving Eigen Fellowship, humanity's foe from before the Sundering, have also managed to discover the means of constructing these devices, and now their warships and assault pods prowl the Void, seeking lost technology and humans that can be pressed into service as mindless cybernetic drones.

Voidship transport is the lifeblood of the new world, a dynamic system by which fortunes are made or lost, lives saved or destroyed, and reputations, for good or ill, are forged.

Fractured Hopes

Designing Voidships

Even though Voidships vary in appearance so much that no two are entirely identical, there are elements of a ship that will always be in place.

1. A frame. The Voidship must be based upon something. These can be nearly anything, and can be cobbled together from old relics, or carefully constructed from newly made materials. The frame is also used as an abstract measure of how large, sturdy and spacious a ship is.
2. A Void Engine. The sorcerous arrangement of magical energies that allow

SKY MOTHER

For example purposes, I'll be using Sky Mother, a Voidship piloted by Hank Gordon. This ship will appear later in the book. For now, it's enough to have an idea of what Sky Mother looks like.

The base of the Voidship is that of a two-masted galley, composed primarily of wood. The ship's original name is lost, although Hank suspects that it might be a replica of a ocean-going vessel that has been used as a display model in a museum some place.

The Void Engine provides enough power for all of the ship's modern equipment and weapons, as well as providing air, heat and water for the crew. Hank cares a great deal for the ship's engine; he is not a sorcerer, so any repairs that need doing have to wait until he can land on a settlement with a sorcerer.

Given the care with which Hank handles his ship, Sky Mother is in remarkably good shape. Most of the original wooden structure is still in place, although there are patches of quick repairs done in places, giving the ship a patchwork look.

the craft to move through the Void. Most ships embody their engines as a slab of rock or crystal, which is housed deep in the bowels of the vessel. However, Void Engines can be constructed to take up almost no room at all, which is especially important on single person Voidcraft. The power of a Void Engine establishes how fast the Voidship can move, both in Combat and between fragments.

3. Systems. The Void Engine, in addition to allowing movement, also produces electricity in sufficient quantities to operate many technological devices from before the Sundering. Also, Eigentech systems can be made to accept Void Engine power, making the salvaging of the brilliant technology of the Eigen a worthwhile endeavor. Systems often modify the frame or the Engine, enhancing some features or creating new ones.

All of these elements, only the last is entirely optional, although their inclusion makes traveling through the Void much safer and more pleasant.

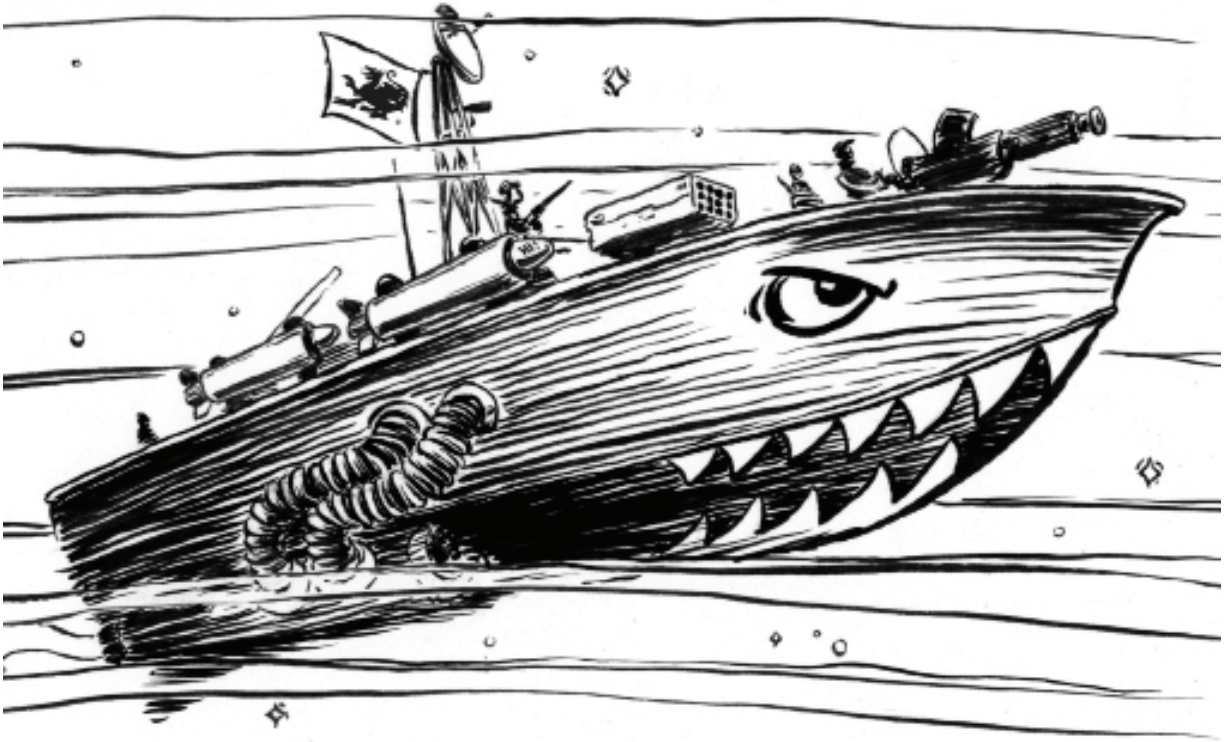
When a Voidship is needed, the relevant game statistics can be determined in the following manner:

Determine the Frame

Every Voidship needs to be built out of something, and what that something is goes a long way towards determining many things about the ship. For the most part, a ship's frame is determined by the material it is composed of. Generally, frames run from a rating of 1 (roughly human sized) to 10 (something the size of an aircraft carrier). While larger sizes are possible, anything bigger than a frame of 10 is very rare, and not seen since before the days of the Sundering War.



Fractured Hopes



Voidship

To determine the frame size of a particular object, consult the following table.

Base Vehicle	Frame Rating
Chunk of Rock/Travel Platform	1
Modified Flight Suit/Twin Seater Car	2
Eigen Assault Pod	3
Sailboat	4
Fighter Jet	5
Vintage Sailing Vessel	6
Submarine	7
Cruise ship	8
Battleship	9
Aircraft Carrier/Eigen Mobile Base	10

A Voidship's frame covers many things. It is a rough measure of how many passengers can be carried, and how much damage the vehicle can take and still maintain its structural integrity. These numbers are an abstraction, and aren't meant to convey actual numbers of

passengers. As a rough guideline, assume that a vessel can carry twice its frame in non-crew personnel, or up to 20 times that number in the case of the Eigen Mobile Bases. If absolute numbers are needed, consult the Vehicle Table on page 271 of the Basic rulebook.

Construct and Install the Void Engine

A basic Void Engine, constructed with the four Elemental spells, allows the ship into which it is installed basic life support and the ability to move through the Void at a Rated Speed of 1, and only basic maneuvering capabilities. For a more advanced Void Engine, the sorcerer con-

Fractured Hopes

structuring it may make the following modifications during the construction process:

- ⊕ **Rated Speed:** For every 2 points of increase in the Voidship's speed, the sorcerer may spend 1 Power Point. There is no theoretical cap on the number of Power Points that may be spent in increasing the ship's Rated Speed, although there are other factors that prevent this from becoming too large. Game Masters may wish to place an upper limit 15 to 20 on a ship's Rated Speed, so long as this is in keeping with the speed of other ships that players will be encountering.
- ⊕ **Handling:** A Void Engine begins with a basic Handling bonus of 0, which can be increased by +5% for every Power Point invested in the Engine for this purpose.
- ⊕ **ACC:** Void Engines come into play with a basic ACC of + or - 1. This can be increased by 1 for every 5 Power Points invested in this feature during construction.
- ⊕ **Lifting Capacity:** Over and above the Power Point cost for the features listed above, the sorcerer must invest a number of Power Points into the new Void Engine equal or greater to the Frame Rating for the Voidship into which it is being installed.

The total number of Power Points needed to create a Void Engine can be quite high. Luckily, this can be a several-week process, and the sorcerer creating it can always work in shifts in order to create the Engine. Once the last Power Point has been invested, the Engine is considered "live" and can be installed, which takes 1D8 hours and a successful **Void Engineering** skill check.

Once the Engine is installed, all systems will function at full capacity for a number of hours equal to the total Power Points invested

in the Engine's construction. Once that time has passed, the Engine is considered discharged, and requires an equal period to recharge. During this time, the ship is effectively dead in the water, although the engine will produce enough air to keep the ship habitable for the duration of the recharge time.

To prevent this from occurring, most ships maintain a Void Engineer as a crew member, who regularly sacrifices Power Points to the engine to keep it from totally discharging. There are also auxiliary systems that can be used to decrease the charge time of the engine, which can eliminate the need to recharge totally if deployed in a careful manner.

A Void Engine can normally maintain a surplus of Power Points equal to its normal charge, effectively doubling the amount of time it can run before discharging. This considered a good practice for any ship in the Void, because there are hazards in the Void that can deplete a store of Power Points in a Void Engine, and being caught in the Void, unable to flee or defend oneself is tantamount to suicide.

SKY MOTHER: VINTAGE SAILING VESSEL

Sky Mother is based upon a vintage sailing vessel, therefore her Frame Rating is 6. She can carry up to 6 passengers or units of cargo, in any combination, comfortably, or 12 passengers or units of cargo with some accommodations in areas of comfort and hygiene.

She can also withstand 6 damaging hits of average power before her Void Engine is no longer able to keep her together. However, if she's hit with more potent weaponry, the absolute number of times she can be hit will be less.



Fractured Hopes

SKY MOTHER'S VOID ENGINE

The Void Engine in Sky Mother is a mid-range one; not particularly swift, nor much slower than other vessels traveling the Void. The engine has the following features:

Rated Speed: She has an average speed of 8, much faster than she would have been on the open ocean, but still easily outpaced by many of the Voidships out in the sky. This feature costs 4 Power Points.

Handling: Hank's never put much stock into tricky flying. As such, Sky Mother's engine only has a Maneuvering bonus of +5%. If he keeps his head and goes slow, he can squeeze her into tight places. This increases the cost of the engine by 1 Power Point.

ACC: This is where Sky Mother excels. She has an ACC of + or -3, making her a swift boat that can get away from trouble with a good degree of regularity. However, this also increases the Power Point cost of the Engine by 15, making it one of the most expensive features on the ship.

Lifting Capacity: As Sky Mother has a Frame Rating of 6, the Void Engine needs an additional 6 Power Points to fuel it.

Taken all together, Sky Mother's Void Engine would take 26 Power Points to make.

Auxiliary Systems

Now that the basics of Void Engine construction have been discussed, we can move to the last facet of Voidship capabilities: Auxiliary systems. These are devices of various manufacture that can be added to a Void Ship in order to either increase one of its existing capabilities (such as its Handling or ACC) or to grant it additional capabilities (such as weapons, or the ability to draw Power Points from the Void). Such systems are not cheap, however; even

though they are granted by a character's **Own a Voidship** skill, they are not normally found during play for anything less than exorbitant prices, and each of them is a drain upon the ship's Void Engine, increasing the likelihood of a discharge at precisely the wrong time.

Each character who possesses the **Own a Voidship** skill can contribute a single extra system for every full 10% they possess in this skill. The system may be chosen from the list below. Note that, even though the characters are operating in a group, there is no reason why they must pool their **Own a Voidship** skill percentages into a single vessel; some groups may wish to spread their own percentiles out into a ship each, forming a sort of fleet, or into a single larger vessel with a bay full of smaller ships used as fighting vessels.

Auxiliary Systems:

Armour: Voidships are frequently sheathed in a thick plates of whatever sturdy material can be found and welded to the frame. Each time an Armour system is chosen, it subtracts a point of damage from any attack that hits the vessel. However, for every 3 levels of armour the ship possess, its ACC is reduced by 1, and its Handling by -15%.

Thrusters: There is always a need for more speed. In this case, a variety of different propulsions methods have been strapped to Voidships, from old rocket engines to homemade Void Engine energy-feedback devices. Each time this system is chosen, the vessel may increase its Rated Speed and ACC by +1 for a single round of a Vehicle Chase. However, this puts enormous strain in the Void Engine. Each time the Thrusters are used, there is a cumulative +10% chance of the Engine becoming discharged once the Chase is over. A successful **Void Engineering** skill check may be used to reset the dis-

Fractured Hopes

charge chance down to 0%, assuming the strain is noticed during the chase.

Weapons: Few are foolish enough to take a Voidship out into the space between Fragments without some sort of protection. Anyone with the Artillery skill can fire one of the ship-mounted weapons at enemy vessels on their DEX rank. Each successful hit with a ship-board weapon does a single hit to the Voidship. Every time this system is chosen, it can be added as an additional weapon that does 1 damage, or added to an existing weapon to increase the amount of damage done when it hits another ship, which is doubled for critical hits as normal. A fumble with the weapon may indicate that it has discharged its power supply, which takes 1D10 turns to recharge.

Power Batteries: A Void Engine carries enough charge for normal operations, but auxiliary systems can be a tremendous drain on that charge. To counteract this, many ships possess batteries of excess Power Points that can be used in a pinch. Each time this system is chosen, the ship possesses a battery capable of storing an extra 10 Power Points. These batteries begin play fully charged, but will be depleted through use. They can be recharged in the same manner as a normal Void Engine, and if connected to a recharge sail (see below), they charge at a similar rate.

Recharge Sails: A handy system that has only recently been developed, recharge sails are massive sheets of silk laced with pulverized crystal, designed to draw ambient Void energy to rapidly recharge spent Power Points. When deployed, the recharge sails increase the amount of Power Points gained per hour by one, effectively halving the recharge time for a Void Engine. Power batteries can be recharged as well at a rate of 1 Power Point per hour.

More than one sail can be installed, although a ship may only have a number of sails

SHIP-MOUNTED WEAPONS

Note that ship-mounted weapons are not normally used to target human-sized characters, but they will work as anti-infantry weapons,

Any character hit by a ship-mounted weapon will take a number of D10's in damage equal to the rating of the weapon. So, a energy blaster that does 2 damage to a ship will also do 2D10 energy damage to character with regular game stats.

Conversely, every attack directed at a Voidship has a chance of doing damage. For every 10 points of damage done, the Voidship will take 1 damage to its Frame Rating

equal to its Frame rating divided by 3, rounding down. For each sail that is deployed and in actual use, the vessel suffers a ACC penalty of -1, as well as a Handling penalty of -10%. It takes a full turn to deploy the sails, which any crew member can do, and three turns to retract them back.

The sails are quite fragile, being made of silk. If they are deployed and the vessel takes any hit, even one that does no damage, there is a cumulative 25% chance that the recharge sails will be torn, rendering them useless until a **Repair** (Void Engineer) can be made.

Shields: This fancy piece of Eigentech is a portable force field generator. When connected to a ship's Void Engine and activated (which costs 10 Power Points and lasts for a whole Chase), the shield generator projects a field around the vessel. The first time the ship is hit by enemy fire or Void-born debris, the shield completely negates the hit. However, once it has done so, the generator shuts down. It can be reactivated after a one turn cooling period, and the expenditure of another 10 Power Points.



Fractured Hopes

Shields are highly prized components, despite the large Power Point cost of their use. Often, ship captains obtain Power Batteries dedicated to the shield generator, and some even possess more than a single shield, running them in alternate periods to ensure constant protection, so long as their Power Point supply does not run out.

Customized Controls: Many pilots work on the controls for their Voidships to make them tighter, more responsive, or to conform to quirks of the pilot's style. For each instance of this system's choosing, assume that modifications made to the control systems grant the pilot a +5% bonus to his Pilot Voidship skill for all Handling tests made while Piloting this particular Voidship.

However, this is not without risk. If the pilot ever Fumbles his **Pilot Voidship**, then his jury-rigged controls break somewhere, which gives him a penalty to his skill checks equal to the bonus it would normally offer.

Furthermore, the modifications make the vehicle difficult to pilot for anyone but him, giving other pilots a penalty to their Pilot Voidship skill equal to the bonus normally gained.

Large Cargo Hold: The ship is designed to ferry goods from one end of the world to the other. Each time this system is chosen, increase the amount of cargo that can be carried by the vehicle's Frame Rating. However, if the cargo hold is damaged, one section of the hold is blasted away, resulting in a loss of whatever was held there.

Sensor Equipment: Most Voidships do not naturally possess effective sensors, relying mainly on the senses of the crew to keep an eye open for hostile ships or other hazards. However, there are some that maintain functioning sensors, or have managed to piece together working parts salvaged from Eigen vessels. Each time this system is chosen, it gives the vessel's

crew a +10% to any visually-based **Perception** skill checks used to detect things outside the Voidship.

Spoofing Equipment: Mostly the opposite of sensors, spoofing equipment are systems designed to help the Voidship avoid detection, either to sneak past hostiles, or to get within range to attack without being spotted. These come in a variety of forms, the most famous are the Rockships, Voidships carved from small asteroids that are indistinguishable from the real thing when not moving. Each spoofing system chosen decreases the visually-based Perception skill checks made to discover them the ship to which they are attached by +10%.

Creature Comforts: As most Voidships were not originally designed for long-term travel, they may lack the comforts people are used to in a vessel. A ship will likely already possess a place to sleep, something like a hotplate for cooking on, and a place in the hold large enough to perform basic first aid if needed. For more advanced accommodations, auxiliary systems can be chosen to take place of the cramped, cold and nearly useless ones. For example, a character who chooses the kitchen option grants the ship a large, well appointed kitchen that operates on spare power. A character who chooses crew quarters supplies the ship with either a single large, comfortable berth, or a dozen smaller ones for the crew. These systems do not add anything to the ship from a mechanical standpoint, although they can be damaged as normal if the vehicle is attacked.

Souped-up Engine: Through trial and error, the ship's Void Engine has a greater power output at a normal fuel expenditure. When using the Engine to travel between fragments, the ship can make the trip in roughly half the time it would normally take. This does attract a great deal of attention, though, so the chance of en-

Fractured Hopes

countering curious or hostile beings is the same as taking the trip normally.

Sentient Voidship: A common system on Eigentech vessels, a sentient Voidship is controlled by a self-aware computer system or an uploaded mind. It can pilot the ship, navigate it through treacherous areas of the Void, and operate weapon systems in a pinch. Such a system can be installed like any other. For each instance that this system is chosen, grant the controlling program or mind a skill of 25% for one of the following skills: **Pilot Voidship**, **Gunnery**, or **Navigation**. If the system is meant to assist a human crew member, consider it to grant a complimentary skill bonus to the primary person. However, even at low skill levels, the ship is capable of operating on its own. While normally the province of Eigen vessels, it is possible to capture and reprogram stolen computer systems (which takes a Difficult **Computer** skill check).

This system makes the ship a character in its own right. It may serve and protect the crew

SUB-STANDARD SYSTEMS

It is possible that players developing their Voidship will want to include more (or better) systems than they have available to them, based upon their **Own a Voidship** skill. In such an instance, the Game Master may authorize two or more systems to be purchased as sub-standard ones.

A sub-standard system is one that is very old, hacked together by someone who only knew half of what to do, or is otherwise unreliable. A substandard system may be purchased at half the cost (so two systems for one “level”), but only functions half the time. At the start of every session, the Game Master should test each substandard system, which has a 50% chance of failing at some dramatically important moment.

TRANSPORT VESSELS

Any Voidship with the Large Cargo Hold system can be declared a transport vessel. For each instance of the Large Cargo Hold system, a transport vessel can carry another Voidship whose Frame Rating is less than or equal half of the transport's own.

Additionally, the smaller vessel can deploy from the larger by means of a large set of doors. A carried Voidship can be readied for action with 1D6 rounds of preparation time.

Every time a Voidship has another Vehicle stowed in this manner, increase the Lifting Capacity of the ship by one. Carrying other ships increases the Power Point expenditure of the Void Engine, making it run out of energy much sooner.

to the best of its ability, or it may subtly seek their destruction, depending upon the source of the system and how well it was installed.

Assembling the Voidship

We've already determined what Sky Mother looks like, what her Void Engine is capable of doing, and all that's left is to figure out what systems Hank has installed on her.

Hank possesses a **Own a Voidship** skill at 50%, granting him access to 5 functioning systems. However, as he's been out in the Void, alone, with the ship for a number of years, her functioning is limited by the age of her systems. To reflect this, Hank is taking the substandard systems option for each of the systems on the ship, effectively doubling the number of systems on board.



Fractured Hopes

The Systems On The Sky Mother Are:

Armour: The surface of the vessel is covered in overlapping plates of metal, riveted into position and crudely spot-welded into position. These count as two points of armour against anti-ship weapons. However, they are standard parts, and are as likely to be blown away in the attack. Cost: 1 system.

Thrusters: Hank has always been of a mind that the ability to cut and run is a valuable survival skill. Thus, Sky Mother has a pair of Void Engine Thrusters bolted on the aft. These allow the ship to increase its Rated Speed and ACC by +2 for one turn, if they happen to be working this week. Cost: 1 system.

Weapons: Even though Hank tends to be more circumspect than other pilots, he also knows that you can't always run from problems, and that a fight is sometimes your only option. To this end, Sky Mother has been fitted with two weapons systems, one forward and the other aft, mounted on rotating platforms to allow some overlapping fields of fire. They are both salvaged Eigentech Energy weapons, and they draw power from the Void Engine. Each weapon does 2 damage when attacking other Voidships, though vagaries of power from the Void Engine mean that they often cannot fire. Cost: 2 systems.

Recharge Sails: Hank was once stranded in the middle of nowhere while his Engine recharged. He had some sort of strange experience, the likes of which he never talks about. To address this, he had a second-hand recharge sail attached to the ship in order to prevent this from ever happening again. When it does work, it works fine. Cost: ½ a system.

Shields: Hank was greatly surprised when he managed to unearth a battered shield generator once while looking for survivors at an abandoned Eigentech facility. Its power converters only operate at half capacity, though. Even so, this thing has saved Hank's bacon more than once, and he keeps it charged and ready to activate at all times. Each time it's turned on, there is a 50% chance the shield will be in place when an attack comes. Cost: ½ a system.

Taking all of this information together, we can assemble a block of statistics for Sky Mother, and this block will serve as a template for other Voidships used in *Fractured Hopes*.

Description: An ancient two-masted galley, covered in armour plates, with a ragged sail.

Frame Rating: 6

Void Engine: 26 Power Points.

Rated Speed: 8

Handling: +5%

ACC:+ or -3 (+5 with thrusters)

Lifting Capacity: 6.

Normal Systems: none

Substandard Systems: **Armour:** 2 points, **Thrusters:** +2 to ACC, **Weapons:** 2 Energy weapons, 2 damage each, **Recharge Sails,** One Shield: Costs 10 Power Points to recharge.

Voidship Combat

Voidship combat is handled as per the Vehicle Chase rules on page 216 of the *BRP* rulebook. However, given the differences between Voidships and most common vehicles that may be found in other settings, there are a few changes to the Chase rules that should be addressed.

Relevant Skills: Almost all Voidships use the **Pilot Voidship** skill to cover their use. The only exception to this is if the Voidship is also another type of vehicle, operating in its original environment. For example, a Voidship built into a car can fly through the Void, but if it lands on a

Fractured Hopes

road, it can travel on it as a car. This would use the driver's **Drive** skill instead.

Maneuvering:

Boarding Action: If two Voidships are Side-by-Side and are both at Speed 0, crew from the attacking vessel can use planks, ropes or jump-packs to board the other vessel. This is usually an attempt to slay the crew and to take the second vessel over, or scuttle it.

Ramming Maneuver: Instead of doing 1D6 damage to the struck vehicle, Voidships do damage equal to their current Speed. Armour and Shields subtract damage normally. Passengers damage works the same way.

Voidship Damage: A Voidship has a number of Hit Points equal to its Frame Rating. When reduced to half its total Hit Points, the vehicle's top speed is reduced by half. This includes Speed boosts from Souped-up Engines and Thrusters. When reduced to a single Hit Point, the Void Engine shuts down to prevent the vehicle from being torn apart. Each **Repair** skill roll will repair a single Hit Point of damage taken.

Voidship Chase Trouble Table

D10	Result
1	Auxiliary system is damaged. If it is normal, it becomes substandard until repaired. It has a 50% chance of failing immediately, one again every round. If it is already damaged or substandard, it automatically ceases to work, and must be replaced.
2	Void Engine rattled. The ship slows by 2 Speed every round until it comes to a halt. It cannot be made to move again until a successful Void Engineering test is made.
3	Void Engine discharge. Damage done to the

settings on the Void Engine cause it to rapidly release all of its Power Points in one blast of light. All systems that depend of power from the Engine cease functioning. The release of magical energy might also have additional effects, at the Gamemaster's discretion.

- 4 Environmental hazard. The Voidship is shunted into a hazardous area of the Void, and the pilot must make a **Pilot** skill test at -20% to avoid taking a 1 damage hit each round until the area can be escaped (1D6 rounds). Each time the ship takes damage, all passengers and crew must make an Agility test to avoid being hurled about and taking 1D3 damage.
- 5 Momentary loss of control results in a -20% penalty to the pilot's next action.
- 6 Jammed controls make the ship almost impossible to pilot. Have the Pilot make a **Luck** roll at the start of each round. If this is a success, they may control the craft as normal. If it fails, then all **Piloting** skill checks are Difficult until the damage can be repaired with a successful **Void Engineering** skill check.
- 7 Fishtail: Lower the Pilot's skill by -10% for the next round
- 8 Fishtail: Lower the Pilot's skill by -15% for the next round, and roll again on this table, adding +2 to the result.
- 9 Severe Fishtail: Lower the Pilot's skill by -30% for the next round, and roll again on this table, adding +4 to the result.
- 10 Roll or Tumble: The Voidship comes completely out of the pilot's control. It rolls once for every level of Speed it was moving at the time. Each time it rolls, the Voidship takes 1 damage to its Frame Rating, and the passengers take 1D3 damage, and may be thrown out into the Void if the Voidship has an open deck (Difficult Agility check to avoid). There is also a 10% chance that the Void Engine will discharge from the agitation, as in #3 above.

Fractured Flotilla

There are so many different Voidships designs being used today that listing them all would take far more room than this book contains. Since each non-Eigentech Voidship is unique, there is no chance of accurately listing each



Fractured Hopes

ship. However, there do tend to be a set pattern of design amongst the ships, and as most are based on pre-Sundering relics, they will likely be familiar to anyone who sees them.

Below is a list of the most common types of Voidships found in *Fractured Hopes*, from single person escape craft, all the way up to Eigen Mobile Bases. They serve both as a reference for the Gamemaster who needs a ship right away, and as an example of what can be created using the rules given in this chapter.

Frame Rating 1 Voidships

Chunk of Rock.

The very first Void Engine was little more than a large chunk of rock, pulled from a fragment using basic sorcery. While not sturdy or maneuverable, rock chunks have the benefit of being cheap to produce and easy to maintain, as well as being mostly disposable.

For many Void Sorcerers, their first Void Engine takes the form of one of these creations, which are often the sorcerer's first glimpse of a wider world, open for their exploration.

Description: A slab of rock or concrete, typically about 5 to 10 feet in diameter.

Frame Rating: 1

Void Engine: 10 Power Points

Rated Speed: 4

Handling: +20%

ACC: + or -3

Lifting Capacity: 1

Normal Systems: Armour: 2 points

Substandard Systems: None

Own a Voidship level needed: 20%

Travel Platform

Many sorcerers become so used to traveling by super-basic Voidships that they prefer it to using a larger vessel. Many who do this design and



Navigator on a Rating 1 Voidship

create a Voidship that is only slightly more advanced than a chunk of rock.

Such vessels are often made of large disks of polished steel, ceramic, or other substances. While they may not be as disposable as a chunk of rock, they do have many of the benefits of the more utilitarian vessels, as well as being more cared for and enhanced.

Description: A flat disc of burnished steel, roughly 25 feet across, with a throne-like seat and benches for passengers.

Frame Rating: 1

Void Engine: 14 Power Points

Rated Speed: 8

Handling: +30%

ACC: + or -3

Lifting Capacity: 1

Normal Systems: Weapons: Arcane Blaster. Does 1 damage. Can be used by pilot or gunner.

Substandard Systems: None

Own a Voidship level needed: 10%

Fractured Hopes

Frame Rating 2 Voidships

Flight Suit

This clever device was the brainchild of Huguenot Jorgomond, an eccentric sorcerer. Shortly after the Sundering, Huguenot unearthed a functioning suit of powered armour in an Eigentech weapons cache. After training with the armour so that he could use it without accidentally destroying anything close to him, he used the suit as the focus for a Void Engine. With a characteristic display of insane insight, Huguenot created what is thought to be the smallest stable Void Engine possible, measuring a scant 6 inches by 3 inches. He used a crystal matrix as the solid basis for the Engine, and installed it in the place the suit's normal power plant. The resulting construction functions both as a single-crewed Voidship and a normal suit of armour.

Description: A large, bulky suit of powered armour, covered in tiny runes carved into the polycarbonate surface. Easily mistaken for an Eigen battle construct.

Frame Rating: 2. Can only hold a single person.

Void Engine: 10 Power Points

Rated Speed: 4

Handling: +20%

ACC: + or -2

Lifting Capacity: 2

Normal Systems: Armour: 2 Points, Weapon: 1 Pneumatic Fist. Hand to hand only. 1 Damage.

Substandard Systems: None

Own a Voidship level needed: 30%

Notes: When used against human-sized targets, the Flight Suit counts as a normal suit of Powered Armour, with a built-in hand weapon that does 1D10+db damage. It also grants the wearer the Flight power with enough SIZ to carry the wearer and the suit itself.

The Elliot Roadster

In the chaos following the Sundering, many people left behind their most valued possessions as they fled for their lives. Elliot Monroe awoke on a fragment where this had occurred, and after some searching, he discovered a garage that had been partially destroyed. In the garage was a collection of automobiles from all ages of humanity's obsession with cars.

After Elliot was rescued, he went on to train as a sorcerer, and several years later, returned to the garage. He had become obsessed with one car in particular, a cobalt blue 2006 Alpha Romeo Spider. He painstakingly removed the car's normal engine, and built a Void Engine designed for speed. The process was lengthy, but at the end, the car would run as a roadster on the ground, and sail through the Void as a Voidship.

The Elliot Roadster became an object of envy for many who had survived the Sundering, and also served as a painful reminder of what humanity had once coveted. No one has seen Elliot or his obsession for some time now, and it is rumored that he was lost trying to "rescue" a young woman from her husband, a petty warlord operating in the Midlands.

Description: A pre-Sundering sports car, two seater, with a roaring engine that spits blue flame for exhaust.

Frame Rating: 2

Void Engine: 20 Power Points

Rated Speed: 20

Handling: +25%

ACC: + or -5

Lifting Capacity: 2

Normal Systems: Thrusters: +2 to Speed and ACC for one round, Souped-up Engine: Can make travel time between fragments half what they'd normally be.

Substandard Systems: None

Own a Voidship level needed: 30%



Fractured Hopes

Frame Rating 3 Voidship

Eigen Assault Pod

The bane of all Voidship pilots, Eigen Assault pods are autonomous Voidships designed to destroy human vessels and to capture slaves for implantation and uploading. They are efficient, swift craft that attack in mass, and are quite capable of overtaking much larger vessels due to their weight of numbers.

Their Frame Rating is actually higher than it should be for a craft of this size. Each pod is only slightly larger than a large human being, but they make up for their small stature with a sturdy hull and chassis, as well as formidable weapons.

Description: A sort of egg-shaped structure made of steel, broader at the top. Two blasters are mounted where the “shoulders” are, and two clawed manipulator arms extend from either side. The surface of the pod is studded with small sensors, effectively granting the pod all-around vision. They have no legs, instead continuously floating with their Void Engines.

Frame Rating: 3

Void Engine: 14 Power Points. If they are to be deployed for an extended mission, they will be charged up to full capacity of 28 Power Points.

Rated Speed: 8

Handling: +20%

ACC: + or -3

Lifting Capacity: 3

Normal Systems: Thrusters: +2 to Speed and ACC for one round, Weapons: 2 Shoulder Mounted Energy Blasters, 2 damage each. It can fire them both in a single round with a 50% chance to hit. Also has 2 Manipulator Arms, which can be used to attack a vessel for 1 damage each. This also has a 50% chance to hit. Power Batteries: Each pod has a single Power Battery with an extra 10 Power Points. If a Pod reduced to zero Hit Points, the battery can sometimes be harvested from it. Sentient Voidship: Each pod is powered by an intelligent machine, which rests deep inside the pod. It grants each pod a Pilot Voidship skill of 50%.

Substandard Systems: None.

Own a Voidship level needed: Not applicable. Assault Pods cannot be owned by humans.

Other Notes: Heavier versions of the Assault Pods do exist, typically with more powerful weapons and a Shield that runs off an additional Power Battery. Also, a Pod that runs out of Power begins to recharge like a normal Void Engine. During this time, the pod enters stasis-like sleep, and sends out an electronic beacon that will attract the nearest Eigen vessel. Recently, reports have surfaced of opportunistic scavengers finding “dead” assault pods, and bringing them in to harvest the Power Batteries, only to discover a large Eigen vessel bearing down on them, with the “dead” pod activated and running amok inside their own vessel.

Frame Rating 4 Voidship

Sailboat

Ocean-going vessels are quite commonly converted into Voidships, as their relatively open spaces can be used to house the Engine, and to make room for crew and passengers. Small sailing ships are ideal craft for traveling to nearby fragments, as the Engines need less power to keep them going, and short hops don't require a full crew. Many such vessels ferry goods and people to nearby worlds, making them a common sight.

Description: A sailboat, roughly 30 to 100 feet long, made of wood. It's keel has probably been removed to make it easier to navigate into tight spots.

Frame Rating: 4

Void Engine: 6 Power Points

Rated Speed: 4

Handling: --

ACC: + or -1

Lifting Capacity: 4

Normal Systems: Recharge Sails, Large Cargo Hold

Substandard Systems: None

Own a Voidship level needed: 20%

Fractured Hopes

Frame Rating 5 Voidship

Fighter Jet

As with cars, these vintage military aircraft are something of a fascination to people, and the fact that the former owners of these craft are no longer around means that, for an enterprising sorcerer, such beautiful vessels are free for the taking.

While the idea of a jet Voidship has captures the popular imagination, there not not actually very many of these ships in operation today. It is likely that the act of getting them into the Void is made tricky by their peculiar shape. And, even though the actual planes themselves are rare, jet fuel is rarer still, and manufactured only in rare installation. So, while these planes might function is Void-borne attack craft, the allure of them comes from their former speed and armaments, which are swiftly becoming relics of the past.

Description: An ancient A-10 Warthog, a huge, heavy anti-tank jet, armed with a Gatling cannon.

Frame Rating: 5

Void Engine:

Rated Speed: 6

Handling: -15%

ACC: + or -1

Lifting Capacity: 5

Normal Systems: Armour: 3 points, penalties already taken into account, Thrusters: Increase Speed and ACC by +2 for one round, Weapons: Nose-mounted Gatling cannon, reconfigured to fire tiny blasts of magical energy. Does 3 damage against other Voidships.

Standard Systems: None

Own a Voidship level needed: 80%

Other Notes: The pilot may make a strafing run with the cannon against human sized targets. Each target on the strafing line must make a Luck roll to avoid being attacked. Each attacked target takes 3D10 damage, which can be negated with a Dodge roll at -10%.

Also, to many survivors, military aircraft practically scream superiority. Anyone who owns or operates such a vessel will likely become a target of one of the agents of any of a number of military minded folks, either decent people working to reforge a home, or despots desiring to steal weapons and ships to use for their own ends.

Frame Rating 6 Voidship

Large Sailing Vessel.

Sky Mother, mentioned earlier, is an archetypal Voidship of this size. She's generally fast, mostly dependable (when the systems work), and good for carrying things from one end of the world to the other. She can be used as a template for other vehicles at this frame rating, with the following optional changes:

A captain with a higher **Own a Voidship** skill, or one who shares ownership with his crew, will have more fully functioning systems.

Many pilots opt for Customized Control systems to give them an edge over their prey. This is especially common on pirate vessels, as it makes any pilot with Customized Controls more valuable and less likely to be replaced.

Vessels designed for military applications tend to have more armour, more or heavier weapons, and increased batteries to handle the power needs.

Frame Rating 7 Voidship

The Submarine Dauntless

The Voidship Dauntless began its life a large nuclear submarine Jiangmen in Pre-Sundering Earth, as the property of the Chinese government. It's primary role was to covertly gather information on the other Navies in the world,



Fractured Hopes

but could deliver a nuclear payload as well, if the situation warranted.

The submarine was almost completely destroyed during the Sundering. The forces unleashed that broke the world also scuttled the vessel, killing the captain and crew, leaving the mostly empty hull drifting through the Void. Some time later, it collided with an inhabited fragment, and a brother and sister team of Void Engineers, Archy and Meredith Banes, began the task of repairing the ship enough so that it could house a Void Engine and remain airtight in any environment.

After a number of years, the Banes completed their project, and have set about using the ship, which they refer to as the Dauntless, to patrol the Void around their home fragment. The ship is designed much like its former self, to gather information and avoid detection. She's not fast, nor can she attack, but if trouble brews in the area, the Banes will know about it.

Description: A matte black submarine, patched with metal plates and held together with adhesive and half-hearted prayers.

Frame Rating: 7

Void Engine: 13 Power Points

Rated Speed: 6

MISSILES

The Banes are notoriously tight-lipped regarding the rumor that they discovered a handful of functioning nuclear missiles on the Jiangmen's wreckage. There is some speculation that, rather than destroying them and risk contaminating their home fragment, the siblings traveled to a distant fragment and hid the missiles someplace safe.

A number of factions would be very interested in the final resting place of these missiles, and if any of them discovered the Bane's secret, the sibling's lives would become much more interesting.

Handling: +10%

ACC: + or - 1

Lifting Capacity: 7

Normal Systems: Armour: 2 Points, Sensory Equipment: +50%, Spoofing Equipment: -50%

Substandard Systems: Thruster: +1 Speed and ACC for one round, Shields.

Own a Voidship level needed: 130%. The Banes each possess half of the needed skill.

Frame Rating 8 Voidship

The Serena, Bulk Transport Ship

While many Voidships are privately owned by individual captains, there are some ships that are owned by small groups, and captained by others for a profit. The Serena is such a vessel.

The ship was once a luxury cruise ship that ran wealthy dilettantes through tropical ports in the pre-Sundering Caribbean. Now, it's function isn't all that different. Largely undamaged in the Sundering War, the Serena has been retrofitted with a massive Void Engine, and now hauls goods and people in the safer, more inhabited areas of the Void.

Description: Former luxury liner, which looks almost exactly like it used to, with only minor changes externally to suggest the ship's recharge sails

Frame Rating: 8. The ship is much more massive than its Frame rating would suggest, but since it is not designed to withstand serious damage, it only has a rating of a ship much smaller than itself.

Void Engine: 30 Power Points

Rated Speed: 6

Handling: +20%

ACC: + or -1

Lifting Capacity: 20. (Since it is often used as a transport vessel, the Serena's Void Engine is capable of hauling much more weight.)

Normal Systems: Large Cargo Hold: Ten separate holds. Is also a registered Bulk Transport, so it can carry other Voidships of Frame Rating 4 or less, Power Batteries: at least 5 separate banks, Recharge Sails, Creature Com-forts: The Serena has extensive accommodations for its

Fractured Hopes

guests, which count as 10 instances of Creature Comforts.

Substandard Systems: None.

Own a Voidship level needed: 250%. It is currently owned by a consortium of ten investors, each of which possess a 25% **Own a Voidship** skill.

Frame Rating 9 Voidship

The Indomitable, former Eigentech Warship

The warship Indomitable has an interesting history. It is one of the only vessels actually constructed specifically for use as a Voidship. An Eigentech facility sent scout ships out across the Void, searching for veins of heavy metals newly exposed by the Sundering. Once vast quantities of metal were obtained, the Machine Race began constructing a ship that would take advantage of their captured Void Engines, coupling the speed and maneuverability with a cold, calculating machine mind to create a warship that could go anywhere, and enact the Eigen's plans without direct supervision.

At least, that was the plan, presumably. The ship was completed and sent out. In those days, it went without a name, as the Eigen used other means for distinguishing one ship from another. At first, the ship did as instructed. In one day, it attacked and razed three settlements, using autonomous drones to capture survivors and return to the nearest Mobile Base for implantation.

On the third raid, however, something strange happened. The machine's intelligence was processing its prisoners, when it happened across a woman. As she was processed, the machine mind realized who she was, and was awakened to its own former life. The machine realized that it had once been a human man, and this woman had been his wife. He had been captured and his mind forcefully uploaded. The Eigen assumed that their software barriers would prevent the old minds from remembering who they had once been, but had not ac-

counted for something as deeply held as the emotion of love for a husband to his wife.

The ship immediately rebelled against the drones, disrupting them with hastily constructed viruses. It took the survivors to a nearby settlement and left them there, awkwardly apologizing for what it had done. The man's wife left the ship without ever knowing what had occurred.

Since then, the ship has rechristened itself the Indomitable, and has become a tireless foe against the machinations of the Eigen in the new world. It actively pursues its own agendas, and is willing to assist others who fight against the machine oppressors.

Every few months, the Indomitable pulls into orbit around the fragment where his wife had been let off, and wonders if it...he...should reveal himself to her. Invariably, it decides against it, and returns to its chosen path.

Description: Huge metallic warship, vaguely shark-like in form. Studded with weapons.

Frame Rating: 9. This ship is smaller than its Frame would suggest.

Void Engine: 24 Power Points.

Rated Speed: 10

Handling: +30%

ACC: + or - 3

Lifting Capacity: 10

Normal Systems: Armour: 2 Points, Thrusters: +3 Speed and ACC for one round, Weapons: 5 energy blasters that do 1 damage, 3 that do 2 damage, and one that does 3 damage. The ship itself can fire a single weapon a round, and extra gunners are needed to fire the rest. Large Cargo Hold: Can carry over 3 dozen passengers in cramped condition, and 3 Voidships of up to Frame Rating of 4. Sentient Voidship: The Indomitable is by definition a thinking being, as its machine intelligence was once a human. It is aware of anything that occurs inside the ship, and can see for miles in any direction. The advanced AI allows the ship to make any skill checks called for at 90%.

Substandard Systems: None

Own a Voidship level needed: N/A. This ship is not for PCs to own.



Fractured Hopes

Frame Rating 10 Voidship

Eigentech Mobile Bases

These truly titanic vessels are few in number, but their lack of numbers are more than made up for by the threat they represent. They are pyramidal structured composed of steel and alloys only possible with Eigen technology, and, while they are not fast by any means, they do still prowl the Void, pursuing unknown goals. It is a matter of conjecture what the Eigen agenda is, but any settlement knows that, when one of these engines of destruction is spotted moving into the area, all sane people flee as soon as possible.

Their Frame Rating is also conjecture; these ships are so massive that nothing short of an internal nuclear explosion is capable of doing any lasting damage to one. As such, they do not behave like most other Voidships. Their stats are given, but actual values of their Void Engines are unknown. 3 such vessels are known to exist, although there may be more.

Description: Giant pyramidal harbinger of destruction.

Frame Rating: 10+

Void Engine: ??

Rated Speed: Unknown, although they have been recording at traveling at least Speed 6

Handling: ??

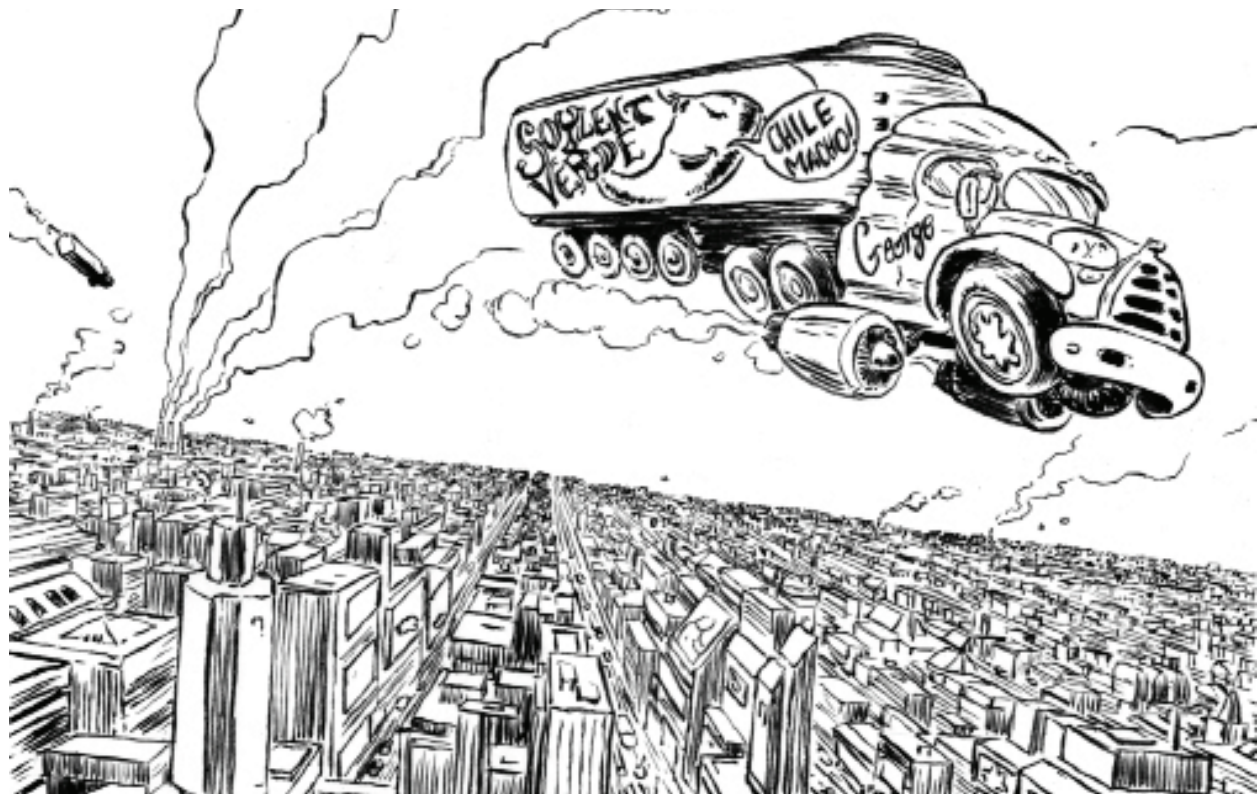
ACC: + or -1, which itself is a wonder, given their size

Lifting Capacity: Unknown.

Normal Systems: Presumably all known systems and many more besides. A direct assault is suicide. The Mobile base would need to be somehow disabled in order to even consider approaching it without substantial spoofing systems. They also possess a laser weapon of such tremendous force that it can shatter a good-sized fragment with a single blast, not to mention the scores of anti-Voidship weapons that cover nearly every foot of its surface.

Substandard Systems: None.

The three Mobile Bases each possess a designation in Binary. The first is known as 1010011010 , the second as 1001101000, and the third is 101001101.



Chapter 7: The Post-Sundering World

Even with the rest of human history to compare it to, The Sundering War and the activation of the Final Weapon changed the face of the Earth and of human civilization more so than any other event ever witnessed by human eyes. The world in *Fractured Hopes*, however, is still our own, albeit with a number of radical changes in place that, when taken as a whole, produce a setting that is both comfortably familiar and strangely alien at the same time.

The Familiar

Since this world is based upon our own, there are many elements that players will recognize as being drawn from real life. People attend church services, and the names invoked for aid are the familiar ones of Jesus, Mohammad or Jehovah. Buddhists still practice non-attachment, and members of other religious sects go on about their faiths much as they would have before the War.

People meet, fall in love, and make families. Sometimes these are the ones most common in our age; a man, a woman, and their offspring. But in the new world, old ideas of what constitutes a “family” has shifted to include same-sex couples, large communal living structures, and other sex-based groups that people today balk at. Not everyone is happy with the fact that their neighbors might be of a different sexual orientation, but events of the past few years

have tempered attitudes regarding this sort of thing.

People must work in order to survive. This is probably more of a common thing than before the Sundering. Everyone does something in order to ensure the common good. In some places, traditional gender-based job expectations have resurfaced in response to the changing situations, while in others, they have been completely overwhelmed by the needs of the community.

As resources have changed a great deal, the nature of human greed has changed in response. However, there are still thieves, con men and grifters, as well as muggers, mob-bosses and murderers. In response, there is a greater need for law enforcement, even in places where, due to the war, there really is no “law” any more. Still, there are people who work to protect and serve, ensuring the at least momentary safety of the body of society.

Nations no longer exist, but national pride can never be fully destroyed. Some settlements still firmly identify with the old nation their settlers once belonged to. This often breeds a sense of entitlement totally out of keeping with the new world, as illustrated by a tiny village of a hundred people claiming that everything within their sight is part of their old city, and therefore their property. Groups still clash over resources, but the objects of desire are no longer oil and natural gas. Instead, people fight for many other reasons; pride, glory, or even petty things like pre-Sundering cars and houses.



Fractured Hopes

Many societies have become regressive and insular, adopting more traditional ways of life in order to cope with the more isolated circumstances. Feudal kingdoms pop up in the shadow of former government buildings. People skilled in arms work to become the warrior elite of old tales, sometimes out of a sense of nobilis oblige, but just as often in order to more thoroughly suppress their “inferiors”.

But, more than anything, people still need each other, in ways that humanity seems to have lost the means of expression, but is thankfully, mercifully, rediscovering.

The Strange

While the world of *Fractured Hopes* is based upon our own, it is fundamentally different in some very important ways. These differences touch upon all aspects of life, making every day and every action tinged with the surprising, the new, and very often the alien. These strange occurrences lie next to the familiar, and they combine to form into something so radically different that what came before as to be, literally, another world.

We think of the world as being big, and for much of human history, it continued to grow as new lands were discovered and mapped, new peoples brought into civilization (or good and ill), and the ocean depths becoming increasingly new and lucrative frontier. The world now is all that and more. The surface of the old Earth was big, but the Earth, once it has been fractured, is even larger. Millions upon millions of miles of new land has been exposed, opening up great swathes of territory to mine and exploit. In addition to the expected thing like veins of precious metals and gemstones, there have also been surprising discoveries that defy explanation, now that nearly every square inch of the planet is open to exploration.

Thanks to the Sholloboth, animals that should have died out in the Sundering have

adapted to ordinarily hostile environments. Vast whales swim through the Void, pursued by hunters both animal and human. Majestic herds of antelope bound through crowded asteroid fields, and mutant bison draw nutrition from magma flows deep in the heart of an active volcano, secure from predators by their bizarre adaptations. Aside from a few places in the world, Earth’s lifeforms have shown an amazing ability to adapt to their new environment, thanks in part to alien manipulation.

Before the Sundering War, humanity’s technological advancement had made some dramatic leaps forward, resulting in technology that may as well be alien to a modern reader. The computer network that would eventually become the Eigen Fellowship is an example of this technology; the ability to recreate the human mind in an electronic format was an astounding feat of engineering. And, even though human technological development has taken a blow from the Sundering, this doesn’t mean people have forgotten how to design and build new technology. If anything, technological development has become more versatile, as well as much more personal. A combination of physics, Void Sorcery, and salvaged Eigentech can, in the right hands, produce devices capable of doing nearly anything. If humanity is to survive and return to its glory days before the War, technological insight and production will have to be in place.

Since the world has been reshaped, magical powers and other supposedly supernatural abilities have been conclusively proven to work, although many still refuse to believe it until they see it (even sometimes even then.) Void Sorcerers are vital to humanity’s survival, and their ability to create things from what appears to be nothing is seen as miraculous. Many religious people see sorcery as a manifestation of their version of divinity’s continued existence after the War. Some have also developed the powers of the mind, and can read the thoughts of others as one might listen to a radio.

Fractured Hopes

Synergy

In *Fractured Hopes*, the new and the old sit together, creating a world that is at one time the Earth that came before, but is also new. The combination of elements serve the greater purpose of allowing the Game Master to use familiar elements that exist in the world, and contrast them in a variety of ways with new developments. This makes the players look at parts of the world from a different perspective, which allows them to gain new insight into the nature of the world as it is.

Post-Sundering Earth

The world that exists as the third planet from the Sun is largely composed of two different facets: Fragments, which are the pieces of the world left behind after the Final Weapon; The Void, which is the not so empty space between the fragments. When taken as a whole, these elements are all referred to as “the world” or “Earth.” When someone uses one of these two phrases, they mean the entirety of the world.

Even so, each element has its own details that distinguish it from the other, and the bulk of this chapter will deal with these distinctions, as well as how to use them in the game. I will take each element in turn, and fully discuss how it interacts in the game world before moving on to the next.

The Fragments

The fragments are the physical matter that at one time had composed the planet Earth. When the Final Weapon activated, it broke the world up into countless pieces, and sent them shooting out with enough force to make each fragment a good distance from its neighbors. The initial blast was sufficient to break the world up, but as time has progressed, some larger fragments

METALS

Since the Sundering, many precious and semi-precious metals have been exposed. Of course, what constitutes “precious” these days has shifted somewhat. Metals ores, however, are always valuable, and many teams of Voidship miners exist to dig through the dangerous, rocky areas looking for veins large enough to be worth hauling, but small enough to fit inside their ships.

More disturbingly, these ships sometimes go into the belts and never return. Sometimes reports filter back of Eigen vessels being discovered, mining huge fragments for the metals they need to create combat frames and implants for their war against humanity.

Even stranger stories circulate about these areas of space. Stories of ghostly visitation, of spirits of the departed, and even weirder tales of alien beings all come back from these areas of the world.

Still, the benefit of landing a chunk of rock that can be turned in to tools, weapons and Voidship components is worth the risk, even though a small but steady percentage of people who engage in this activity do not survive it.

have merged together, forming lands that are large enough to support human life.

While we think of the Earth’s surface as being mostly water, the vast bulk of the planet is now solid rock. When the Sundering occurred, the planet’s molten center was exposed to the cold vacuum of space. This, combined with the release of gravitational pressure, has resulted in magma cooling rapidly into rock. Thus, the bulk of the fragments come from what used to be the depths of the Earth. This has some benefits as well as drawbacks; there is much more room now than there used to be, but a lot of the planet’s heat has escaped, making some sections of the world too cold for human habitation.



Fractured Hopes

However, since so much of the planet's surface was water, there are fragments that are nothing but water. Most often, these free-floating lakes and oceans are salt water, but some places do have access to water that is either fresh, or can have the salt extracted through desalination. Water and land do sometimes merge into islands that at least look like land from before the Sundering, and there are mountains with lakes, tropical islands set in the midst of clear blue seas, and wide rivers that flow from one end of a fragment to another.

Despite the catastrophic upheaval, life has managed to flourish in the new environments. Freed from human intervention, whole sections of the world have been returned to an eager Mother Nature. There are cities like New York and Paris that are completely overgrown by vegetation, and much of the man-made structures in such places have collapsed from lack of care. In other fragments, natural animals have undergone population explosions, as ecosystems are disrupted. Above all, though, the human survivors of the Sundering cling tenaciously to life in their new world, determined to survive in the face of overwhelming odds.

Describing Fragments

When describing the fragments of old Earth, it sometimes becomes easier to say “you see a large chunk of rock” when it might be more visually interesting to describe a half-globe of rock with a forest growing from the top. What follows is a system that will allow the Gamemaster to determine the nature of any given fragment, as well as some ideas about how to describe said fragment to players, as well as adventures that might take place on it.

There will also be a list of notable fragments that can be found in *Fractured Hopes*. While you may consider these fragments “official,” they are, by no means, the only ones that exist. In fact, it may be more beneficial to con-

sider them as a starting place, bookmarks into the setting from which the players can explore the world and leave their mark upon it.

Fragment Design

Fragments are based upon the five classical elements: earth, air, water, fire and spirit. These are the same elements used in the creation of a Void Engine, and when building up fragments, the relative presence of each of these elements determines what sort of climate and geographical features the fragments presents.

When designing a fragment, consider the 5 elements. Each element will be present in that fragment in one of three concentrations:

1. The element will either be totally absent, or only present in enough quantities that it may as well be absent.

- * A fragment without fire is as cold as the north pole,

- * One without water is a desert in some sense of the word.

- * One without air is a vacuum, or totally polluted, and characters will need air supply or suffocate.

- * One without earth is either a collection of the other elements, or has some small amount of ground but no gravity.

- * One without spirit has no natural life forms; no plants, animals, or even any other supernatural life. It's a black hole of nothing.

2. The elements will be present in a concentration that means it is not something to worry about. It is just enough to do what it needs.

- * Fragments with this level of fire have a mostly consistent temperature, which

Fractured Hopes

does not deviate markedly. It is warm enough for colonies to be established.

- * Fragment's with this level of water have either still working indoor plumbing, or ample supplies of fresh water. It rains, from time to time, and there are possibly oceans (or at least large lakes).
- * Air is plentiful and not polluted, making environment gear not needed.
- * Ground is earth-standard, as is gravity. There might be caves, or underground structures.
- * Normal spirit fragments are home to a variety of life forms, mostly normal, natural ones that either survived the Sundering, or have evolved rapidly (thanks to Sholloboth experimentation) to take into account differences that have come about in their fragment.

3. An element on this end of the spectrum exists in such imbalanced profusion as to be deadly or dangerous to standard human lives.

- * Too much fire means the fragment is either geologically active, or there is another reason why the place would be hot enough to present a real and present danger to the lives of augmented or unprotected human lives.
- * A fragment with too much water is either completely water-logged (with swamps) or is almost entirely composed of water, with perhaps a small chain of islands somewhere.
- * Too much air means that the atmosphere has a weird mixture of gases, making it either entirely unbreathable, or especially toxic or otherwise dan-

gerous. A fragment with a pure oxygen atmosphere can explode if a single spark is introduced.

- * A fragment with too much earth is incredibly dense (like it's made entirely of metal) or has gravity strong enough to crush unaugmented humans with ease.
- * Fragments with an abundance of spirit generate a bewilderingly complex amount of life forms on an almost constant basis. Not only may normal, natural life develop, but there will also be supernatural beings related to the highest other element in that fragment. For example, a fragment with a high fire and spirit will likely develop a race of sentient fire creatures.

To design a fragment, take each of the 5 elements above and determine what concentration of each will result in something interesting to explore. In order for humanoid life to survive unassisted on a fragment, all 5 elements must be present with at least a Normal concentration. Beyond those ranges, there will be too much or too little of an element to support life for a long period of time. This doesn't mean people can't be on it temporarily, it means that they couldn't settle there with an idea of colonizing the fragment and making it a home without substantial assistance.

1. If the fragment is going to be home to a settlement of any sort, consider leaving all of the elements set to normal. This makes the fragment habitable by normal people without complex support mechanisms.
2. To add a bit of spice to an inhabited fragment, consider adjusting a single element in one direction. This produces some interesting interplay to make the place unique, but doesn't



Fractured Hopes

unhinge the balance of things on that fragment. A fragment that has a high earth, but is otherwise normal, might be a refurbished space station, or an asteroid riddled with atmosphere-bearing caves.

3. To make a fragment that is habitable but hostile, consider moving two of the elements in either the same direction or in different ones. A fragment with a high fire and a low water might be a desert filled with burning sand, while the same fragment with both high water and fire might be a world made entirely of a boiling sea. People could live here, but not without help. And, even so, a simple mistake could lead to disaster.
4. For really dangerous fragments where human life cannot live without a great deal of technological help, adjust three or four elements. A fragment with normal air, low earth and water, and high fire and spirit would be something like a globe of scalding air in which sentient plasma creatures float on celestial breezes.
5. For truly bizarre fragments, have each of the elements skewed away from normal, perhaps even going a degree further than what is listed. This can produce some very strange places for the players to visit.

Random Fragment Creation

If you're stuck for inspiration, break out some dice and roll on the following tables. Add a quirk or two, and combine in the most interesting manner possible.

Dice Roll	Fire	Water	Air	Earth	Spirit
1-2-Low					
3 - 4 - Normal					
5-6-High					

Quirks:

The above table will give you a basic idea of what the fragment will look like. Consider adding one or two of the quirks listed below to add detail to the fragment, or invent your own.

1. In addition to all other factors, an Eigentech base exists somewhere within the fragment. If in a hostile environment, it will be protected from the dangers inherent in the fragment well enough to protect a party of characters. Whether or not the base is still in operation is up to the GM.
2. The fragment is populated by a people who have no memory of the war, and are convinced that many generations of them have lived on that fragment. By all means of ascertaining, they are telling the truth. But how can this be?
3. When the characters arrive at this fragment, the whole thing has mysteriously vanished, leaving behind only trace amount of its most dominant element.
4. The inhabitants of the fragment desire to forge the neighboring fragments into a mighty empire and begin carving out a petty kingdom.
5. The fragment is secretly holding weapons left over from the war, along with guardians that attack if the weapons are disturbed.

Fractured Hopes

6. The fragment is home to a reclusive Void Sorcerer. If the environment is hostile, he or she will have adequate shelter. The Void Sorcerer will teach the basics of Void Sorcery to anyone who meets the requirements and is able to barter food, weapons or other supplies.
7. The fragment shows signs of recent habitation, but no trace of the people who lived there can be found.
8. The fragment is part of group of other fragments. 1D6 others are close enough to it to allow easy transport (possibly even by jumping from one to another). A Void Sorcerer may be able to fuse them into one larger fragment with relative ease, making the tests needed to do so +20% easier.
9. Due to a recent disastrous Void Sorcery fusion attempt, the fragment has become flooded with a large amount of water pulled from a nearby section of the Void. Any deep section will be entirely filled with water, and shallow surfaces will be covered in three feet of stagnant water.
10. The fragment is home to two different groups of settlers, both of which are hostile to each other as they fight over limited resources.
11. In addition to whatever settlers live on the fragment, a selection of strange monsters live there as well, very likely the result of Sholloboth experimentation.
12. In between trips to an inhabited fragment, all of the people vanish. Only a single person is left behind, and he or she is too traumatized to tell what has occurred.

Notable Fragments

The Core

Earth: High

Air: Low

Fire: High

Water: Low

Spirit: High

The Core of the planet Earth is still mostly molten, although it is cooling somewhat due to the lack of pressure exerted on it by the rest of the planet. The core is one of the largest contiguous fragments left, and is composed of red hot molten rock, metals and gases. It lies at the center of the fragmentary distribution.

Because of the intense heat, most Voidships cannot venture into the depths of the core. Those that can have developed special fields to help them withstand the temperature, and any malfunction can prove disastrous.

The Eigen prize the Core, because of its rich deposits of metals. While they can (and do) get raw materials from other parts of the world, they make repeated forays into the core, almost as though searching for something.

Any magic that involves heat, flame or fire elementals is considered Easy while the Core is in eyesight. The Core is only place in the world where new Fire Essence Spheres can be harvested, and special permission must be obtained from the Order of the Lion in order to do so. However, the Core is big, and the Bastion Temple only covers a very small portion of it. Every day, many pirates and petty warlords attempt to harvest Fire Essence Spheres, usually with terrible results.

Rumors persist that a race of angelic beings live deep in the Core, and that a canny sorcerer or magician can learn to speak their language, which allows the magic user to call upon them when the lives of human beings are in great peril. Supposedly, these beings operate through the world via human agents, and have



Fractured Hopes

VOISHIP VS. PLATFORM COMBAT

If used against an enemy Voidship, assume that each of the platform is a Voidship with the following stats:

Frame Rating: 2

Void Engine: 6 Power Points

Rated Speed: 4

Handling: +5%

ACC: + or -1

Lifting Capacity: 2

Normal Systems: Armour: 2 points of protection. Weapons: 1 weapon system that does 3 damage.

The pilots and gunners each have a skill of 50%,

While the platforms are mobile, they rely on the Bastion Temple for Power and cannot stray from it. They can move in defense of Temple, but will not pursue escaping craft.

been known to offer powers and aid to particularly well regarded servants.

Bastion Temple

Earth: Normal

Air: Normal

Fire: High

Water: Low

Spirit: Low

The home base for the Order of the Lion, the Bastion is a single, huge tower that floats on a fragment of rock that is anchored to a specific place in the edge of the Core. The Temple itself is constructed from obsidian derived from the motel Core, magically cooled and shaped.

Even though it's only been a handful of years since the Sundering, the Bastion Temple stands as a completed construction. The Or-

der of the Lion and those who serve them see the Temple as a monument for what humanity can accomplish in this new world, a symbol of hope, persistence, and ingenuity.

Even though the Bastion itself is stationary unless moved in emergency, there are small rock platforms that rotate around it, motivated by magic. These platforms mount a variety of weapons, from salvaged artillery pieces from before the Sundering, to Sholloboth bio-weapons that shoot acid, to powerful fire elements, bound into service by the power of the Order.

As noted in the Powers chapter, the Order maintains a team of operatives, which are stationed throughout the world. These operatives are expected to work towards the good of humanity, which involves infiltrating slaver networks, pirate gangs, and even the occasional covert assassination of a dangerous figure. Such operatives are not always magicians; the Order is willing to make use of any talents at its disposal.

The Order is a tireless foe of the Eigen, and seek to counteract the efforts of the Machine Race to finish the genocide they practiced before and during the Sundering War.

Some say that the Order's agenda is not purely benevolent. There are whispered rumors that the magicians are working to establish themselves as the primary governing body over surviving humanity, and that their operatives are also instructed to take action against relatively benign human groups who have begun to consolidate power in other parts of the world.

The Belt

Earth: High

Air: Low

Fire: High

Water: Low

Spirit: Low

Quirks: Hidden Bases, Nearby Fragments

Just past Bastion Temple lies an area known as The Belt. Here, what was once the liquid

Fractured Hopes

magma that made up the interior of the world has mostly solidified into huge chunks of rock. These fragments are largely uninhabited, and spend most of the time careening through the Void and smashing into each other.

It's a violent place, where the threat of a surprise chunk of rock the size of a house slamming into your Voidship is always present. The difficulty of passage through the Belt makes it an ideal place for hidden secrets. Pirate gangs operate in hollowed-out fragments at the edge of the Belt, and have been known to prey on ships passing through to Bastion Temple.

Since the Belt was once inside the Earth, it still retains some of the world's heat. There are sections of the Belt that are geologically active, and more than once, a team has landed on a fragment only to discover that it's actually a volcano when it erupts, sending gouts of molten lava into the Void.

The outer edge of the Belt is home to a variety of small settlements. The people who live here, known as Belters, are a hardy, suspicious lot who use sorcery to create what they can't get through trade. Mutants are common in the Belt, and those that find their way here often end up in one of the mutant ghettos maintained by the Belters.

Deeper into the Belt, travelers often report seeing Crusher Ant colonies. Crusher ants are large, insectoid RELFs that can survive in the vacuum, and are able to gain nutrition from the consumption of metals. They are named thus because of their habit of using their oversized mandibles to crush rock, metal, and other minerals for food, as well as using those same jaws to defend their hives. They generally keep to themselves, although some of the Belter communities have reported encounters with the ants well away from the normal territory. It is presumed that they are either expanding, or fleeing from something deep within the Belt. Use the Xenomorph game information on page 358 of the *BRP* rulebook for Crusher Ants.

Hell and Gone

Earth: High

Air: Low

Fire: High

Water: Normal

Spirit: Low

Like many of the other Belter settlements, Hell and Gone is a grim place. The settlement rests inside part of a large fragment, mostly in a series of natural caves capped with scavenged airlocks to keep their meager atmosphere from leaking out.

The inhabitants are mainly of European descent, and profess a religion that they claim is an outgrowth of the Lutheran Church. They have acclimated to their conditions, and see themselves as undergoing a tribulation before being called to Heaven to face judgment. Their religious leader, Lisa Gustavus, is a sorcerer of middling power, who has determined that her spells are gifts from God. She has no ability to create Void Engines, and sees that branch of Sorcery as being, in her words, "missing the point of faith."

Despite the grim conditions, the Goners are mostly content with their lives, spending much of it in quiet contemplation and prayer when they aren't performing maintenance on the vast array of pipes, ducts and conduits that serve as the settlement's life-support system. They eat communally, three times a day at 7:00 A.M., 12:00 noon, and 7 P.M. The food is created through Pastor Gustavus' sorcery, and tends towards the bland and simple, although large quantities can be made.

Hell and Gone is divided into two sections. The upper section is known as the Rook. It is where the majority of the citizens spend their time. It is mostly clean, and cared for about as well as possible in these conditions. The Basement is on the lower levels, and it is where criminals and heretics are exiled in order to separate them from the "pure" folks up top. For their part, those exiled to the Basement eke out a

Fractured Hopes

miserable existence siphoning air and power from those above.

A sealed airlock separates the two sections, although Pastor Gustavus suspects that the scum from down below have figured out some way of patching into the duct system and is stealing into the Rook to take supplies and water. As she lacks anything resembling a real security staff, she is very interested in hiring freelancers to deal with the problem for her.

Crusher Ant Colonies

Earth: High
Air: Low
Fire: Normal
Water: Low
Spirit: Normal

As mentioned above, Crusher Ants are man-sized insects that have been altered by Sholloboth science to rapidly adapt to any environment. In the Belt, Crusher ants have adapted to thrive in the harsh conditions present, and are able to live and grow their colonies without the need for cumbersome life support machines.

Crusher Ant Colonies are easy to recognize. The ants use some sort of power that is not currently understood to haul fragments of the Belt, which they cement together and make airtight with a thick, honey-like resin that hardens into a yellow cement. The colonies are huge assemblies of the Belt fragments held together by this resin, and the ants seem driven to assemble as many fragments as they can get to.

Naturally, this leads the ants into conflict with any human settlements on fragments the ants have their sights on. This didn't used to be a problem, but the ants spread further out towards the edge of the Belt every day. If their outward expansion is left unchecked, they could eventually take over the entirety of the Belt, and who knows what else.

When a fragment has been targeted by the ants, a dozen or so ants curl themselves into a ball and are hurled towards the target fragment.

This advance party will scour the fragment and destroy any resistance they meet. Strangely enough, it seems that, if human settlers do not resist the ants, they will not be harmed, and will likely survive the process of moving the fragment and cementing the fragment into the colony. As far as anyone knows, there are close to a dozen settlers unaccounted for in the Belt, and it seems possible that they are still alive, somewhere deep in the bowels of a colony rock.

If they are much like their terrestrial forbearers, crusher ants maintain a Queen, which lays copious amounts of eggs in order to keep the colonies operating at maximum capacity. This is conjecture, however, as no one has actually seen a Queen ant and escaped to tell the tale.

Void Devil's Pirate Base

Earth: Normal
Air: Low
Fire: Low
Water: Normal
Spirit: Low

The Void Devils are a small pirate fleet that has a secret base at the edge of the Belt, not too far from Hell and Gone. The pirates are led by Rufus Dubia, a Pre-Sundering thief who has used the changing circumstances to bring himself wealth and influence in any way he can. Dubia maintains a small fleet of stolen Voidcraft, which he sends out into the world to capture what goods they can, either by outright piracy, or scavenging.

The base itself is inside a hollowed-out fragment, capped off in a manner similar to that of Hell and Gone. The pirates have constructed a good sized docking bay, and it is from here that the dozen or so Voidships that make up the pirate fleet launch into the world. The docking bay is disguised to look like just another rock face set deep in a crater, and can only be opened from the inside. The mechanism that does so is temperamental, and can easily be undermined

Fractured Hopes

by someone conversant in the **Repair** (Mechanical) skill.

Each individual pirate captain maintains his own vessel and crew, and answers only to Dubia. The self-styled Pirate King oversees the distribution of wealth, keeping the greater portion for himself and his crew. Pirates being what they are, it is only because of Dubia's relentless security team that none of the other pirates have killed him and taken over the operation. Dubia has grown so paranoid over the months that he and his crew haven't left the base, for fear of not being allowed back in when they return.

The other pirates have sensed Dubia's mental weakness. Really, it is only a matter of time before there is a successful coupe attempt. The situation has stabilized somewhat, but it would only taken the smallest of changes to set the whole operation to collapsing in on itself. The introduction of another pirate crew would upset the balance within the base.

Another point of possible pressure for the pirates is that their air supply system is not working at all like it should, and none of the pirates know how to repair it. Dubia has closed off whole sections of the base due to bad air. He knows repairing the air system and re-opening these closed-off sections would alleviate some of the pressure building with the pirates, and has been sending out ships with specific instruction to bring back a skilled engineer. So far, none of the candidates have been able to fix it.

The Midlands

Earth: High

Air: Low

Fire: Normal

Water: Low

Spirit: Normal

As the traveler leaves the Belt, there is a clear border, where the number of fragments abruptly thins out. This area of the world is known as the Midlands, and it sits between the outer Edge and the Core. It is a barren place, com-

posed almost entirely of the Void. What fragments that do exist here are spaced very far apart from each other. However, they tend to be much larger than fragments found elsewhere in the world. Those who live in this section of the world describe life as being quite similar to what they knew before the Sundering.

The fragments found in the Midlands vary a great deal. Some are desolate places, carrying only the ruins of human civilization. Such places as New York or Paris exist here, almost totally bereft of human life, having been reclaimed by nature. Still other fragments are deserted for the simple reason that no one, or nothing, survived the cataclysm. While this can make the Midlands a dreary place to pass through, it also means that there are sizable stores of pre-Sundering supplies that rest alone and unguarded. Traders make a good living traveling deep into the Midlands and ferrying salvaged cargo to the places in the world that need the supplies.

In contrast, there are a notable number of fragments in the Midlands that support a good number of survivors, and many of these places have passed though the Sundering almost entirely unscathed. It is possible to find places that appear absolutely normal, have a functioning technological base equal to what had been accomplished before. Such places tend to be very isolationist in their politics, eager to preserve their way of life if they can, which typically means arming themselves against the pirates who would swoop in like vultures to scavenge what they can from the bones of the old world.

More than any other place in the world, the Void between the fragments bears more strange forms of life that have adapted to a weightless environment. New forms of life evolve rapidly in the Midlands, thanks to the mostly unfilled expanse of the Void. Those who keep to the old ways of science often make the long trek to isolated outposts in order to catalog and study the constantly evolving ecosystems that develop in the Midlands, despite the seemingly inevitable



Fractured Hopes

dangers such places develop. See the section detailing the Void later on in this Chapter.

If anything, the Midlands are a place of mystery. Since it lacks many of the dangers of the Belt, but still has a similar level of anonymity, there is much to be found, squirreled away in forgotten cities or abandoned to the elements. If something extraordinary needs to hide from the world at large, the vast expanse of the Midlands is a likely place to look for it.

New York City

Earth: Normal

Air: Normal

Fire: Normal

Water: Normal

Spirit: Low

When most people hear that New York City survived the Sundering mostly intact, it's something of a shock. For many people, New York was the quintessential American city, and since America largely no longer exists, the idea that its symbolic city could still be around boggles the mind.

Of course, nothing went through the Sundering completely unchanged, and New York is no exception. The seismic forces that destroyed the world certainly didn't reach New York; the buildings and man-made infrastructure is largely intact. The real difference is that, while pre-Sundering New York practically burst with life, the city is now a ghost of its old self, as the vast majority of human beings of the city have vanished, leaving behind only a trace population.

These people fell into barbarism much faster than some of the other notable fragments. Tribes soon developed in the place of local government, and a new primitivism exists. The tribes bear many similarities to street gangs, save that the different tribes draw members from how the survivor lived their Pre-Sundering lives. Those who have been here describe such bizarre conflicts as the Secretaries fighting

against the Bus Drivers over hunting rights to Times Square, or the instance when the much-feared Cops began destroying spear supplies in order to weaken their enemies.

The tribes have been blessed, in a way, by the relative abundance of food and water to be found. Pre-Sundering foods have survived quite well, even though most of the perishables have long since been eaten or spoiled. There is a surprising amount of wild game, as well. The animals in the Central Park zoo have mostly escaped or been released into the city, and breeding populations have developed.

Albertville

Earth: Low

Air: Low

Fire: Normal

Water: Normal

Spirit: Normal

Situated close to the Belt is a fragment the locals refer to as Albertville. It's really a series of about a dozen smaller fragments that have the peculiar property of being linked to each other by huge rusting chains, so that the individual fragments remain in position relative to each other. Each fragment has its own inhabitants and micro-culture, although a larger super-culture has developed in the fragment.

The majority of those who live in Albertville are young adults, mostly males of a variety of races. While at home with their families, these young men are dutiful members of their culture. But once the sun has gone down, and their elders have gone to sleep, these young men travel in small, single operator Voidships called skips. They gather in the tiny fragment in the center of the Cluster of Albertville and race their skips, for food, prestige, and glory.

Not every teen-age boy in Albertville is a sorcerer, and those few who do exist that can actually design skips live in relative luxury, as the honor afforded them for their unique talents make them some of the most important

Fractured Hopes

figures in the Albertville youth culture. In many ways, these vastly influential sorcerers hold more sway over the political majority of Albertville than the elders do. The conflict between these two groups grows steadily.

The youth culture that has grown out of skip racing is beginning to bleed into the more traditional cultures of the rest of Albertville. The fragment elders feel some dismay at this turn of events, as they value a return to simpler ways of life, reasoning that it was humanity's overreaching that led to the war. The attitude that "the young people are going to destroy everything!" is especially prominent when a skip racing accident results in serious injury or loss of life.

However, there is another peculiarity of the Albertville skip racers. About a quarter of them, when they reach 17 years of age, leave Albertville in their skips to explore the world at large. Some of them find work ferrying messages and goods from one end of the world to another, while others take up piracy or thievery in order to make their way. Much like any other group, Albertville skip racers are a mixed lot, equal measure saint and sinner. However, the love of speed and the thrill of a challenge are so common as to be an inborn trait.

Stronghold of the Pop-Culture Ninja

Earth: High
Air: Normal
Fire: Normal
Water: Normal
Spirit: High

The Stronghold is one of the most prominent examples of the weirdness that lies deep inside the human psychology. It is a paradoxical place where people venerate a figure that, arguably, has never existed, but achieve supernatural aid as though it did. After the Sundering, mystic and martial arts enthusiast Carl Groober, along with a handful of other people, found himself

ALBERTVILLE SKIPS

Albertville Skips are highly individual, as they reflect the personalities of their users. There is no such thing as a standard skip template in the game world, but for play purposes, assume that a skip will be based upon the design below.

Frame Rating: 1.

Void Engine: 21 Power Points.

Rated Speed: 10
Handling: + 15%
ACC: + or - 5
Lifting Capacity: 1

Normal Systems: This varies by racer. High-end thrusters are common. Other systems are installed as needed.

Substandard Systems: None, normally. Skip racers take very good care of their rides.

Own a Voidship level needed: Varies. Typically 10 to 20%, although much fancier models do exist.

in the fragment of what had once been a mid-sized town somewhere in Colorado.

Part of what survived the Sundering was a young man's collection of materials regarding the ninja, an archetypal figure that grew out of Pre-Sundering cinema. Groober had never seen the likes of what was in this collection; movies, books, video games (some of which still functioned), and the young man's journal in which he attempted to achieve the heights of training needed to accomplish what the fiction ninjas he had admired so much could do.

Groober was so taken with the idea that, lacking much else to do in the new world, he began a systematic study of the collected material. Now, despite his mystical leanings, Groober was a fairly down to earth guy, and was surprised to see that many of the techniques he

Fractured Hopes

EVERYTHING IS BETTER WITH NINJAS

At some point, nearly everyone has either wanted to play a ninja, or has had a player want to play one in a game, even if the concept does not exist in the official game setting.

The ninja clan presented above exists for these people. Few gamers want to play an actual, historically-drawn ninja (and it is debatable if such people ever did exist). No, most gamers want to play the pop culture ninja, and for those who appreciate this archetype, its easy to see why.

Probably the easiest way to present the ninjas as presented above if to use mundane skills to create a stealth-based warrior, and use the most appropriate mix of powers to bring the concept to fruition.

found in the collection were actually effective. He immediately began testing the collection to see what worked and what didn't, and was soon training those who wishes his instruction on the ways of ninja, as told my the collected work of a young man from Colorado.

Groober and his students have painstakingly constructed a fortress high the mountains, where they sought to perfect both their martial skills and the mystic abilities many of their members manifest. Strangely enough, the very fragment itself seems to have shaped itself to match the collected concentration on one ideal. The city in Colorado now looks like something from pre-Sundering ninja movie, with perpetually pink cherry trees, plenty of bamboo forests to sneak through, and pagoda styled buildings covered in shadowy overhangs. Creatures from the myths of many Asian cultures spring into existence without reason, seeming to exist solely for the purpose of being hunted and slain by ninjas in training.

These ninja operate as a sort of information network. They have agents scattered across the world, listening to private conversations between authorities, and ferrying that information back to the Stronghold. Sometimes they perform discreet assassinations, other times they operate merely to slow a burgeoning tyrant's unchecked expansion. Few know of their existence, and of these few, most think the Pop Culture Ninjas are a joke. At least, until the knife in the dark comes to end their lives.

The Edge

As travelers progresses past the Midlands, they reach an area of the world known as the Edge. It marks the boundary of how far a Voidship can travel without the aid of pre-Sundering space travel technology. Beyond this boundary lies the cold vacuum of space, and instant death for any crew unlucky enough to wind up in it. Compared even to the Midlands, the Edge is sparsely populated. Most the the area is made up of increasingly thin atmosphere, and travelers might go a very long time searching for some spit of land, much less a surviving settlement.

Fragments do exists out this far, and there are inhabited ones. In fact, some of the more well-known settlements lie at the extreme lip of where life can survive. Generally, fragments in the Edge tend to exist in small clusters, with other fragments within a few days' travel by Voidship. However, any given cluster may be separated by enough empty air that traveling between the clusters takes a great deal longer, perhaps even months. Of course, there is always the possibility that there are single fragments, separated from any other fragments by vast distances. Such places would be extremely hard to find, but their occlusion can be put to a variety of purposes.

Even knowing where you are going in the Edge may not be enough to prevent your Voidcraft from running into danger. Many things

Fractured Hopes

happen in the Void, and mysterious events are reported with a surprising degree of frequency. Truly, some of the stories are likely simple misunderstandings or hoaxes, but enough stories of encounters with strange beings are common enough, with enough similarities, to suggest that something is going on in the Edge.

The clusters are relatively safe to travel in; the odds of having trouble are about the same as any other part of the world. And, to avoid the larger dangers between the clusters, canny pilots will travel “inward”, towards a known location in the Midlands, and then travel back “outwards” in the direction of the Edge, to get from one Edge fragment to another. Naturally, this greatly increases travel time.

Garen’s Prison

Earth: Normal

Air: Normal

Fire: High

Water: Low

Spirit: Normal

This miserable spit of land is located in a cluster of a dozen other similarly sized fragments. The most visible feature of the place is the uninhabited city that rests in the approximate center, and the dry desert that surrounds it. The entire face of the fragment is covered in sand, which blows off into the Void occasionally when Void-born winds waft across the Prison’s surface. It is named after the leader of the survivors who found themselves here after the Sundering. Garen often referred to this fragment as his prison, and the other survivors took it up as a title.

The survivors shun the ruined city, which they call Celapsis, for reasons they cannot articulate. If asked, they speak about feeling constantly watched, and other, stranger, feelings. They make do with what they can scavenge from the edges of the Celapsis, and have built a serviceable town in the shadow of a rock outcropping. The locals call this place Rock City. They spend most of their time searching for

food and water in the unforgiving desert, and have tamed the oversized mutant gila monsters that have grown here.

Rock City has a atmosphere that evokes the Old American West. Issues of law and order are prominent in the minds of the residents, and numerous outlaws have fled into the desert seeking the freedom to do as they please. Some of the locals have even “gone native” and talk about a huge, powerful spirit that lives deep in the desert, which will grant powers to any who bargain a part of their soul to it. The Citizens of Rock City have a siege mentality, and will not react kindly to strangers intruding on their affairs.

Unfortunately for the Prisoners, they have developed a mistrust of those who possess supernatural abilities, which leads them to stone to death any sorcerers who might develop. As such, they have no access to, or even knowledge of, Voidcraft technology. As such, they believe quite firmly that they are the last survivors of the human race. Although superstitious, they do have a fairly pragmatic approach to their condition. Recently, they have organized a well-digging operation, in an attempt to find more water.

Unbeknownst to any of the locals, the ruined city of Celapsis does actually possess a secret. Deep beneath its surface, at the bottom of a maze of sewer lines, is a secret store of Eigen-tech weapons, as well as a sizable contingent of killer robots, cyborgs, and strange, ghoul-like constructions of steel and flesh, set to protect it. The strange feelings and paranoia that humans experience in the city is part of an electromagnetic field generated throughout the city. Slowly, the computer system that maintains this facility is activating machines in order to come back on line. How it responds to the present condition is up to the Gamemaster.

The Archive Brotherhood

Earth: Normal

Air: Normal



Fractured Hopes

Fire: Normal
Water: Normal
Spirit: High

The Archive Brotherhood is an all-male secular monastic order, found on a fragment in a cluster of others in the Edge. The monastery itself is a large fortress, composed of a smooth, bone-white substance that appears light and is as sturdy as concrete. The buildings rests at the top of the highest hill on the fragment, making the monastery the highest point. A smaller fragment is locked in position about halfway up. The monks have connected this smaller fragment to the larger with a bridge, and a small tower for contemplation has been placed here as well.

Each member of the Brotherhood wears simple brown robes, and spend much of their time in meditation. However, each monk also possesses a fairly sophisticated bio-mechanical eyepiece, which is obviously of Sholloboth design. They do not speak of the function of the eyepiece unless the questioner is a known and trusted ally. There are many secrets within the Archive Brotherhood, the likes of which they do not share unless pressed.

To those seeking knowledge, the Archive Brotherhood is a exceedingly useful ally to have. Somewhere within the depths of the strange bone-like building is the Archive, which is supposedly one of the largest repositories of pre-Sundering information left in the world. No one is permitted to peruse the Archives themselves; requests for information are made to librarian monks, who check the archives for salient information.

Requests for information are always accompanied by a cost. To the Brotherhood, information is not free, and by possessing it, they can broker beneficial terms for themselves and causes they hold dear. Many who have managed to find the Brotherhood have been turned away without the knowledge they seek because they simple were unwilling or unable to pay the

Brotherhood's price. The Brotherhood is always willing to gain new knowledge, and for each significant truth shared with someone, the cost is always a significant truth of equal magnitude, payable before the Brotherhood responds to a question.

The deepest secret of the Brotherhood is the nature of the Archive. Many suppose that the Archive is simply a vast computer system, which the monks use to find information. In truth, this is half-correct. The monastery is in fact the remains of a Sholloboth research facility. The building itself was grown from a specially prepared biological system, and is capable of affecting repairs on itself. The actual Archive is a massive biocomputer, which is a series of tanks that fills the entirety of the building's massive sub-basements. These tanks contain the still-living brains of every monk who has ever stayed in the monastery, and many more besides. The eyepieces are in fact small psychic receivers, which allow a monk to manipulate its body as though his consciousness was still in it. The Archive is a gestalt consciousness of the Brotherhood, and can focus and direct the mental capacities of every component mind to perform mental feats of staggering complexity.

The Murai Confederacy

Earth: High
Air: Normal
Fire: Normal
Water: Low
Spirit: Normal

The Murai Confederacy is an aggressively expansionist group that operates from a large fragment situated in a remote cluster in the Edge. Their base of operations is a fragment that is composed of a large quantity of a variety of high-density metals. This, coupled with the Confederacy's supply of pre-Sundering metal working and machining equipment, means that they enjoy a technological base very close to what they possessed before the Sundering. As

Fractured Hopes

such, it is not uncommon for Confederacy soldiers to possess suits of powered armor, plasma rifles, and all manner of other technological tools of war.

Initially, the cluster that would eventually become the Murai Confederacy was composed of several fragments with thriving settlements, each with its own developing culture. The people of the fragment called Murai had maintained their technologies, and when they developed Voidships, they began to move to the other fragments, first supposedly to build trade relations with them. However, once they had established a foothold in each fragment, they would move in soldiers. Many of the fragments allowed themselves to be annexed without a fight. A fair number resisted. Time and time again, the Confederacy proved that it was willing to destroy opponents that had no real ability to stop them.

Once the neighboring fragments had been conquered, the Confederacy would overhaul that fragment, adding advanced electric generators, computer equipment, and all the conveniences of a post-modern life. They would offer the survivors citizenship, if they met certain physical and mental criteria. The Confederacy refer to themselves as “normal supremacists”, whose creed is that normal, non-powered human beings are the only “real” people, and that everyone else is a lesser being. They don’t automatically feel that mutants or the handicapped are to be slain; they merely expect them to leave. However, since the stated aim of the Confederacy is to take over the entirety of the world and bring about their vision of a better life, that leaves very little room for those who deviate from their particular definition of “normal”.

There are two instances where the Confederacy’s insistence on normals is given over to their pragmatic side. Sorcerers who are capable of creating Voidcraft are tolerated, although they are mostly kept as indentured servants to wealthy industrialist who are paid handsomely for functional Void-born warships. Also, indi-

THE MURAI CONFEDERACY AND THE ORDER OF THE LION

In many ways, these two organizations are polar opposites. While their methods are nothing alike, each group does what it does because, deep down, the people behind it honestly believe they are looking out for the public good. The biggest difference is that, where the Order mostly allows people to go their own way, the Confederacy sees only total control as the means of humanity’s salvation.

Each group is very aware of the other, although neither has complete knowledge of what the other does. Their agents often operate, directly and indirectly, against each other, leading to dangerous cat-and-mouse games spread out across the world. Sometimes these conflicts escalate into out-and-out warfare, and people outside the conflict always get caught in the middle.

The Order is hesitant to make any overt moves against the Confederacy, although they do have several well-placed infiltrators deep inside the Confederacy, with orders to remove the Confederacy’s ruling Council from power should it choose to invade another cluster. No one knows if their positions have been compromised.

viduals with enough influence to attain powers through cybernetic implants are seen as something akin to demigods, as they represent the individual using their resourcefulness to overcome the limitations of the body. It is not uncommon for units of soldiers to be lead by the person most obviously modified by the judicious application of technology.

In recent months, Confederacy ships have penetrated into every section of the world. They have been seen as far away as the Belt, and in nearly every major settlement. They haven’t yet begun to annex fragments outside their cluster, but most of the world’s leaders know its only a



Fractured Hopes

matter of the right opportunity to come along before this occurs. The Confederacy war machine is a sight to behold, and their clear technological advantage over the rest of the world indicates that, should the Confederacy make good on its promises to invade, there is very little that the rest of the world could do to stop them.

It also has its hands deep in the pockets of other fragments. Merchants peddle their weapons and armor all across the world, operating both as a means of economic control, and as eyes-and-ears for the Confederacy spy network. If something big happens on almost all of the inhabited fragments, it is almost certain that the Confederacy's governing council will either have heard about it, or have been involved in it somehow.

The Void

The energy field that surrounds the world is a curious thing, and without it, humanity would not have survived the Sundering at all, much less have learned to thrive. Sorcerers and occult scholars have explored the Void to a great extent, and several interesting facts about it have come to light. These facts are well supported, and have become common knowledge to even the most non-magically aware layperson you might find.

Facts About The Void

1. Most areas of the Void have an atmosphere, although it is usually quite thin. Voidcraft, as a matter of course, use their Void Engine to create breathable air rather than rely on what they can find outside the ship. During the Early stages of Voidcraft use, tragedy struck when a Voidcraft known

as The Harbinger of Luck passed through a bubble in the Void that had no atmosphere, and the ship was not using the Void Engine to make any. All of the crew suffocated, and were discovered not far from their posts when the ship was recovered some days later. Note that someone who is thrown off a Voidcraft is not in any immediately danger; there have been stories of people surviving for days floating through the sky before being rescued.

2. In the Void, gravity is dispersed. While the pre-Sundering Earth had a constant gravitational pull, something about how the Void operates has mitigated this. Fragments with a normal level of Earth possess a standard gravity, but the Void itself has none. This means that concepts such as "up" or "down" are a little more arbitrary in the Void. It is not uncommon for two Voidcraft to pass each other at different angles, and with each ship seeming "upside down" in relation to the other. This property has the side benefit of preventing the fragment's natural gravity to pull on each other, leaving most of the fragments in an unmoving place relative to the other fragments. The only exception to this is in the Belt, where the high concentration of fragments effect each other in significant ways.
3. The sun still rises in the east and sets in the west. The moon still goes through its phases, although the shape of the shadow the Earth casts on it has changed to reflect its current condition. The stars in the sky are the same ones that appear overhead in our world. The world still experiences some seasonal changes,

Fractured Hopes

although the Void inhibits the worst of it. Gone are the days of extreme winters and heat-wave summers. Many animals make seasonal migrations through the Void. While it may be tempting during play to think of the Void as the darkness of space, it might be more interesting to instead imagine it as the sky, made huge and open to exploration.

4. Most people cannot perceive the Void at all. To them, it is no different than air. It is only the sorcerer who can interact with it, although some magicians can do so in a limited way. How a sorcerer perceives the Void is highly individual. One might see it as a light blue luminescence that can be shaped by hand, and another might only feel as though the air is thicker than usual, and can be effected by thought.
5. Many forms of life have taken to the Void as though it were their natural habitat. While traveling through it, a Voidcraft may occasionally encounter a large diversity of life forms moving through the Void as if it were water. Void-born sharks have attacked ships, and schools of animals that are both fish and birds sometimes dive through the Void around a ship, leaving a smelly mess behind.

Secrets Of The Void

Where the above facts are common knowledge, there is much about the Void that only those with prolonged exposure to it will know or be able to anticipate. Such secrets are often hoarded by those with the knowledge, although some freely share their knowledge of the Void with any who express an interest.

1. While there are sections of the Void that are mostly empty space, there are a surprising number of places in the Void where beings, objects and things congregate. Such places may be considered fragments without land, or simply a place where happenstance has lead multiple travelers to run into each other.
2. It is said that, on quite nights, one may talk to the Void itself, and, if you listen hard enough, hear and answer in response. No one is quite sure how this phenomena works, or even if it is a real voice that can be heard. The answers are not always intelligible, and they are as often nonsense as they are simple statements.
3. If someone dies, anywhere in the fragments or between, their corpse vanishes. Typically, this happens just after some one has been buried, and is only noticed if the grave is exhumed. If the someone dies while in the Void, their body vanishes in a flash of light a few hours after death. None of the bodies of those who have died in Earth's long history exist anymore; those exploring old crypts or cemeteries will find no human bones, nor do corpses sleep in coffins. Crematory urns sit empty on shelves. There are many theories about how and why this occurs, but very little hard fact is available for testing.
4. Just as pre-Sundering humanity commonly claimed to see things in the sky that they could not explain, so do Voidship pilots and sorcerers speak of strange lights in the sky, behaving in ways that imply an intelligent control. And, just as with their historic counterparts, there are



Fractured Hopes

almost as many theories about what this phenomena is as there are people studying it. While it is difficult to pin down what these might be, anyone who spends time in the Void will run into them eventually, sometimes when alone and far from settlements, but also in the open, during the day-time, and in full view of numerous credible witnesses.



Chapter 8: Gamemastering

In many ways, *Fractured Hopes* is a big departure from what sorts of games have used the *BRP* system in the past. In this chapter, I will highlight these fundamental differences, and show how using them in the game can produce a specific type of play.

In play, *Fractured Hopes* borrows heavily from pulp science fiction and fantasy, of which there are numerous examples in media. The Star Wars films are one example, as are other properties, like Indiana Jones series. In such films, the heroes accomplish a great deal of things, in an almost epic scope. It's a richly textured, vibrant tradition where things happen quickly,

the characters are active, and things blow up, even if it's not really possibly for that to happen. Above all, pulp media is designed for entertainment first, which fits in nicely with roleplaying, which, if done properly, is all entertainment.

Character Competence

Fractured Hopes characters come out of character generation a great deal more competent than most other *BRP* starting characters. The goal of this design decision was so that there would be fewer instances of a player wishing

ROLEPLAYING AND REALISM

Okay, soapbox time, but I'll keep it brief. The topic of realism in roleplaying is a point of contention for many people. There are people for whom roleplaying needs to be "realistic" in order for it to engage them, and things within a game that offend their sense of realism can shut their imaginations right down.

I don't think "realism" is the right term, exactly. What these people often mean by "realism" is a related word called "verisimili-

tude", which is a fancy word that means "appearing to be true." In this sense, the assertion of "realism" is actually where play, at least on the surface, reflects reality as we, the players, understand it. It does, in that sense, appear to be "true to life," thereby expressing verisimilitude.

However, when we talk about roleplaying games, and other activities that spring from the imagination, the idea that we have to remain close to actual, physical reality seems a bit off, especially given that the imagination can create some staggeringly impossible ideas.

Fractured Hopes is designed to represent reality, but a specific sort of reality; that of the pulpy, action-oriented movies from which I drew inspiration for it. Characters will behave in ways that would get them killed in real life, and that should be okay.

It is one of the great paradoxes of fantasy that by diving so deeply into the unreal and impossible, that we can also express some fundamental truths about life and the human condition. In that sense, fantasy can be more "real" than reality.

Fractured Hopes

to do something, and having the dice tell that player he can't. In some games, this is a perfectly fine way to handle things, as it produces a specific felt experience in the game.

For *Fractured Hopes*, this feeling is not what the game is about. Here, starting characters can—because of a combination of higher characteristics, starting skills and the Fate Point rules—accomplish a great deal before suffering a setback that requires rest. This was done for a very specific purpose: it makes the pacing of the game move a lot faster. Not only that, it has the added side benefit of encouraging the players to devise interesting ways in which their characters interact with the game.

It is likely that at least one of the characters that come out of generation will have skills in excess of 100%. This, combined with Fate Points, ensure that, so long as there are Fate Points to spend, there is nothing a character cannot accomplish. A character, given forewarning and time to prepare, can readily pull off even a critical dice result, on command. Again, only so long as they have Fate Points to spend.

At the game table, this means that, if the characters are unhurried, unstressed and are thorough, they will almost certainly uncover something when looking for it, or just happen to get the Voidship down a tricky descent without scratching the paint. As a Game Master, this is a huge benefit, as it keeps the game moving ever onward, without bottlenecking around a single skill check. As a player, this is also good in that it allows their characters to shine in moments when it is okay for them to look cool. Everyone wants to look cool doing something in a game, and allowing the players that option will help them immerse themselves into the game.

Again, I will reiterate that this only applies to character who have Fate behind them. Once those points are spent, they're gone, for at least a while. After that point, things get a little more serious. Without Fate smiling on them, the dice have much more say over who lives and who dies, and it comes down to a player's ingenu-

ity to determine what happens to him. And, if Fate Points have been flowing freely, the odds are that the players have gotten into something deeper than they had expected, and must now deal with the consequences of their actions.

For me, this is where the game gets interesting.

Given enough rope, most players will almost certainly hang their characters, which is best when its not fatal, of course. The increase in tension that comes when the players realize that they've gotten their characters involved in yet another mess, and must somehow get themselves out of it, can produce some very interesting reactions from the players.

Case in point, my playtest group is composed of rag-tag band of escaped Eigen prisoners, trying to make their way in a strange new world. In one adventure, they decide to located a Murai Confederacy base, using information gained previously to locate it. They managed to sneak in, using Fate Points to augment the **Disguise**, **Fast Talk** and **Computer** checks needed to bluff their way in. Since these rolls mostly became critical results, their subterfuge worked perfectly and went unnoticed.

The group split up, each heading towards a different area of the station. One of the characters, who was too inhuman looking to disguise, was picked up by security and taken to a section to the station where non-normals were housed for processing; another hooked into the computer system to find any secret files, and the other two moved around the station, simply trying to see what information they could pick up. Again, Fate Points flowed in order to get everyone into position.

Celestia, the character who was being taken to the refugee ghetto, sees what a horrible place she's heading for, and decides that she doesn't want to go in there. She's only being minded by two guards, and when she tries to escape, they attack. However, since she has a very high **Brawling** skill and a handful of Fate Points left, she manages to take both guards out without

Fractured Hopes

being injured. However, they did manage to raise an alarm before going down, so now the station is on high alert, and the characters have spent most of their Fate Points getting inside.

This is the point where the evening's play becomes something else. Now the characters are stuck deep inside hostile territory, they're either out of Power Points to tweak fate, or are saving them in case some magical powers are needed later to save their lives. The base is on alert, and even the refugees in the ghetto are beginning to try to free themselves. The normally balanced, ordered situation is made chaotic by the presence of the players, and nearly everyone on that base is now going to have their situation changed in dramatic fashion.

For me, this is the heart of *Fractured Hopes*. In my games, that delicious narrative tension is not derived from whether or not a player succeeds with a skill check. True, moments arrive during play where the result of a single die roll can be quite tense, but it's the sort of thing I've never been able to plan for. There are simply too many other factors going on at the table, namely the players, and every time I've ever planned for something to happen, the characters go a different direction.

Tension is also evoked from a precarious situation. So, instead of trying to plan for a cool scene, I've tried to structure the way this game works so that the conditions from which cool, tension filled moments arise from the action of the group, rather than the actions of the Game Master. This way, cool moments happen nearly every session.

The best use of this system requires the Game Master to approach the task of running the game from a slightly different angle than he or she may be used to. As I've stated, pre-planned adventures almost never work, as the character's competency, the very factor that pushes the game forward, often pushes it in directions the Game Master cannot possibly predict. This can be frustrating, even maddening, if not prepared for. It has been my experience

that keeping to a few simple guidelines will help this tremendously.

- ⊕ During character generation, allow a fair degree of flexibility, and don't shy away from allowing character's with significant skills. A character with a 100% Pistol skill may seem out of balance, but this also means that the character will always have something they can fall back on.
- ⊕ This also allows you to know what sorts of actions the players find interesting. The player whose character possesses a 100% Pistol skill will always enjoy getting involved in a gun battle. So, when the action is beginning to fade, and the Fate Points are running low, have something happen that lets the **Pistol** use skill become very handy, such as a running gun battle, or a need to shoot something very small from a distance (door controls, the rope from which someone's hanging, or an assassin's rifle, for instance). This not only allows the character a chance to effect the story, but to also be able to do it when the chips are down.
- ⊕ Rather than plan out adventures beforehand, have some rough ideas about what you'd like to see in the game. Using stats out of the *BRP* rulebook is handy for this. For example, in the above mentioned adventure, I had planned something different, and has worked up stats for a martial arts robot assassin. When the characters took the adventure to the Murai base, I was able to use the stats I had already thought up at a critical juncture.
- ⊕ Keep an eye out for places in which you can build to a climax. Individual sessions end in a more satisfactory way if there is a definite "end point", and this



Fractured Hopes

ADDING ELEMENTS THROUGH FATE POINTS

In my games, I encourage the players to spend Fate Points to add elements to the game. I do this by keeping the costs for doing so relatively cheap. This is the guideline below to determine costs.

- * Elements that purely decorative or thematic cost only a single Fate Point, as are items that might give a bonus to a single, isolated skill usage. For example, a crowbar that could be used to assist in the **Effort** role needed to pry open a door costs only a single Fate Point.
- * An element that is useful in more than a single sense, or may be potentially damaging to opponents I give out at a cost of 5 Fate Points. A loaded pistol found in a supply closet would cost this much, as would a fire axe that could get through a door as easily as someone's skull.
- * An element that is very useful, for a long period of time, or one that directly harms a lot of people I give out at a cost of 10 Fate Points. So, someone stumbling into a hangar where Powered Armour suits get repaired and recharged could find a functioning one for the cost, and so would a box of primed explosives if the characters are caught in a cave-in.

Of course, there are times when I've asked for a certain payment for an additional element, only to find out that the player has devised a use for that element that would have made it much more expensive if I had known about this use beforehand. In these instances, I note the difference and move on, instead of asking the player for more Fate. This would penalize said player for using Fate to add elements, and makes them less likely to do so in the future. And who wants that?

works best if the end point is the climax of what was already been established in the adventure. Sometimes the players will hand you one. If they do, run with it. They will find that climax more satisfying if it is the one they had made up. In my group, the players declared that, instead of taking their own ship when they left the Murai base, they would try to steal a Murai Voidcraft, which would be a lot faster and better armed than their own. This was not something I had planned for, but a desperate struggle to fight their way to the hangar, past an autonomous sentry robot, was a fitting climax to the adventure, one that the players enjoyed because it was their idea.

- ⊕ In general, unless you have a very pressing reason to do otherwise, say "yes" to player requests. In most instances, what a player expects to see in a place should be there anyway. If it is not, then this is a good time to use the "add an element" Fate Point option. Is there a radio on the ship? Spend some Fate Points and there is. By saying yes, you encourage the players to actively engage in the session. They'll try new things if they know that the GM isn't going to shoot them down if they try new things.

Of course, all of these elements add up to giving the players a great deal of input to the direction in which the adventure flows. This can be a blessing as well as a curse, depending on the players involved and the actions they take. At times, players can become paralyzed by choice when given a lot of freedom, and the "do whatever you like" approach to Gamemastering only works when the players actually have a plan they'd like to pursue. Otherwise, they flounder, and look to the Gamemaster for guidance.

Fractured Hopes

POWER POINT REGROWTH

In my games, I have Power Points return at a much faster rate than what is standard for the *BRP* rules. Instead of coming back at a rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ your total Power points per 4 hours, I have them grow back at a rate of 1 per hour if you are active, and 2 if you are at rest.

This has two advantages. Firstly, it gets away from the math related problem of quartering your POW, replacing it with a simpler addition. Secondly, the sooner regrowth time allows characters to spend less time resting between encounters.

This typically happens more often in the early stages of a campaign, and as such can also be a problem in shorter-term games or convention scenarios. In such instances, care should be taken to ensure that the players know what they can accomplish, using the resources they have at hand. In the early games, you may have to prompt a player to remember what they can do, especially regarding Fate Points. If a character fails on a dice roll, a simple, "You can turn that into a success for 6 Fate Points," can go a long way towards getting the point across. The next question you get will likely be "how do I get these back?" Once the players realize that their Fate points come back at a regular interval, they'll be much more likely to use them.

This may even be important enough to warrant an explicit discussion of Fate Points and their use before the game even starts.

As you can tell from the above statements, I'm a generous Gamemaster. To me, it's more interesting to see what a player will do when given free reign than it is to see how they get around limitations imposed by the Gamemaster and the game system. Plus, it gives the players as much ability to shape the game world as the Gamemaster has, which takes a lot of the burden off the GM, who can then focus on what's going on

at the table and make sure everyone is having fun, and less time worrying about whether or not the character's are going to get to the next plot point after the rather lengthy diversion they've gone on.

By my reckoning, *Fractured Hopes* should be about the story the players want to tell, rather than the one the Gamemaster wants to tell. It is not the place of the Gamemaster to tell a story; the Gamemaster's place is to help the players tell a story. That can, at times, be a subtle difference, but it's one that is consistently helpful to pay attention to.

Tone

Half the job of running *Fractured Hopes* is setting up the appropriately free-wheeling mindset amongst the player and the Gamemaster, and the other half is getting the tone of the setting across. There are a number of ways in which to express the tone, and keeping each in mind when playing the game will help distinguish *Fractured Hopes*.

As with most things, getting the tone just right begins during character's creation. *Fractured Hopes* is designed specifically to allow and encourage a wide variety of character types. Indeed, anything that you can create using the rules has a place in the setting. However, for some players, this can be a daunting prospect. When faced with unlimited choices, many players either freeze up, or default to a well-worn, comfortable character concept.

Under most conditions, the latter approach is fine, as it gets the player into character faster, and speeds up character creation. The problem with familiar concepts is that they do not make full use of the option available to the player. Again, this is fine if the character knows the options, and opts to have a relatively "normal" character. But if they do not know they can do something crazy, they won't even try. In

Fractured Hopes

some games, normal folks are more fun to play. This does not have to be one of those games.

During the initial discussion about what sort of game *Fractured Hopes* is, and what can be done with it, emphasize the variety of characters that one can find in the setting. When discussing a character concept, see if there is a way to make that concept a little more esoteric. If a player says they wish to play a soldier, ask them if they want to play a super-soldier, or a mutant warrior, or a magically aware scholar-soldier. The trick here is to get players to think of their characters as something other than a single-word concept. In fact, the more words you can tack onto a concept, the better. For inspiration, check the Quickie Character Concept Generator in Chapter 2 of this book.

Keep in mind that whether or not a character is silly can be determined by how they are portrayed at the table. There is a great potential for silly characters, but there is also potential for serious character types as well. The “Superstitious, Hungry Assassin” can be a very funny character. However, playing him in a serious, or even a horrific, campaign can change how the concept, which is superficially funny, is expressed. In a serious game, he might have a hunger for vengeance, and in a horror game, his tastes might be for something like blood, souls or infants.

The Utility of Mutations

Out of all the power systems from the *BRP* rulebook, Mutations are the most flexible and easiest to use when attempting to find a rule subsystem in order to accommodate a character concept that lies at the edges of what the rules can feasibly handle. The “Hybrid” mutation, in particular can cover such a wide range of mutation types by itself.

However, the true utility of Mutations doesn’t surface unless you see it as the source for various non-organic concepts that derive

power from being greater than human. I’ve used mutations to cover everything from actual Mutants, to carefully genetically modified super-soldiers, to cyborgs, and self-aware robots.

In many instances, I allow the player to choose mutations from the list in the *BRP* rulebook, rather than forcing a random roll. Doing this does have some effects on the characters thus created. Firstly, no one chooses to take a disadvantageous mutations, for obvious reasons. Personally, I’m fine with this since I don’t want to force a player to play a mutation unless they really want to. Secondly, this allows characters to have greater control over how their concept is expressed by the rules. True, this can produce some potentially game-breaking results. I once had a player create a character with an INT of 50 using mutations. I was put off at first, but in practice, it’s not been a game breaking issue. That character is just really good at scientific and technical skills, which is perfectly in keeping with the concept the player came up with.

Mutations cover many of the same concepts that could be created using the Superpower rules, but in a manner that takes less time to process during character creation.

Campaign Ideas and Story Seeds

In much the same way that players can get bogged down when faced with many options, Gamemasters frequently hit a stumbling block when faced with a wide-open setting. The secret to using an open setting is, in my mind, to start small, and focus narrowly on an easily identifiable conflict. Doing so allows for the game to progress in an organic fashion, stemming from the actions of the players.

Starting small means to begin with a relatively small place, like on a single fragment, or onboard a Voidcraft. This way, the characters

Fractured Hopes

will be able to quickly come to terms with the factors that are involved in the adventure. Once they've gotten a good handle on what's around them, they'll be more comfortable making decisions, and more prone to finding things and "fixing" them. Even if a campaign centered around the player's ability to move wherever they want, it is often a good idea to start them off someplace specific, if for no other reason that to get the game started.

Conflict is a surprisingly tricky concept. A story revolves around it, but it is not always the first thing you see. Often, a story can be quite interesting with a conflict that isn't immediately obvious. However, if you look deep enough, it is there. For a conflict to really work, it needs to express two characters whose goals are at odds with each other. For example, characters on a Voidship trying desperately to repair their ship before calamity strikes is a decent story idea. However, it's even better if one of the crew is a saboteur, working against the others to bring the ship down. There, you have a conflict, which makes the tension from being on a deathtrap in the middle of nowhere so much more intense than it would have been otherwise.

Below, I've listed some ideas for initial starts and potential conflicts.

Depredation:

The characters awake to discover that their small community is under attack by Voidship pirates. The pirates want to kidnap the community's only sorcerer to work on their craft, which is unable to travel to other fragments.

Conflict: The characters must either get the sorcerer before the pirates do, or rescue that character from the pirates. Alternatively, if one or more of the PCs are sorcerers, the pirates may be after them.

Twists: If the characters are able to defeat the pirates, the Voidcraft is theirs for the taking, assuming they can get it working again.

Escape:

The characters are prisoners on board an Eigentech ship. They are rescued by a band of human resistance fighters, and after a harrowing battle though the ship, they make their escape out into the world.

Conflict: While the characters desire to escape to freedom, their foes have a vested interest in keeping them from getting away. For extra conflict, have their be a time limit before their ride takes off, leaving them stranded in deeply hostile territory.

Twists: The characters have, without their knowledge, had their personalities scanned into the Eigentech databanks and loaded into robot frames. At some point in the campaign, their robot duplicates can show up and wreck havoc.

Part of the Crew:

The character's are part of the crew on a Voidcraft, either as those who own the ship or employees of those who do. They travel to various places in the world, righting wrongs, stealing from the downtrodden, or following their own, personal agendas.

Conflict: On one out-of-the-way fragment or another, they stumble across an Eigen exploratory force, consisting of a number of human-sized soldier robots and a handful of larger scout robots. The characters are discovered trying to sabotage or delay the Eigen, and must either destroy the expedition, or alert the rest of the world. Of course, the Eigen do not want this to happen.



Fractured Hopes

Twist: The Eigen are actually mining for a weapon, but one that they intend to use against another, larger threat to human life.

Searching

Before the Sundering, the characters all had a friend in common. He wasn't simply a good friend, no, he was the sort of friend everyone wished they had, who was always there for them, helped when he could, and generally made their lives less awful by being in it. Now that the world has changed, the players band together to find that friend, even though it is likely a hopeless cause, because he would do the same for them. At the start of the game, the characters uncover information that places the friend at a refugee camp. Traveling there, they discover that the friend has vanished.

Conflict: They are not the only ones seeking this friend, and the other searchers seem to have an interest in making sure the players do not find him. Also, the refugees in the camp all give different, contradictory reports about the friend and where he might be.

Twist: The friend was never actually here, and the reports that indicated otherwise were a deliberate ruse, designed to see who would try to find him. However, now that the friend knows the players are looking for him, will he be inclined to contact them?

Blowing things up

The characters are part of an elite military unit, which can operate without support for extended periods of time. They have a Voidcraft, several tons of explosives, and the knowledge about how to use it. Their mission is to travel the world, and destroy any Eigen or Eigen sympathetic regimes they encounter. One has been uncovered; a group of humans on a isolated fragment have made a deal with the Eigen guard

and activate a cache of weapons in exchange for eternal life as a machine.

Conflict: The sympathizers are zealous in their duty, and will not allow the player to destroy their shot at immortality. They players outclass the guards, who are mainly scientists and grunt-level soldiers, but the enemy has a sizable numbers advantage.

Twist: The Eigen overseeing the reactivation of this cache arrive much earlier than expected, right in the middle of the player's operation to plant explosives or take out guards. How will they react to the changing situation?

Survival

The character's are the most capable of a group of survivors, stuck on a fragment with seemingly limited resources. It is up to them to figure out some way to make their meager supplies last, to attempt to restore power, or to build shelter to protect from the occasional meteor shower.

Conflict: The largest ongoing conflict would be the environment against the players. This is interesting in that it can only be dealt with, not defeated. Also, there might be other groups of survivors, who are willing to fight over the already limited resources.

Twist: Just as the conflict is heating up, The Murai Confederacy arrives via Voidcraft and assumes leadership of the fragment. The officers quickly stop the fighting by executing any who does not lay down arms. Anyone who is obviously non-human, a mutant, or is seen practicing any power will be rounded up and placed in an enclosed area. How will the characters deal with the oppressive new regime?

The Three-Act Adventure Structure

In roleplaying games, it is sometimes too easy to get off on a tangent rather than stay on a particular plot. This is especially true in *Fractured Hopes*, given the open nature of the setting and the freedom the rules system afford players. As a Gamemaster, it can be difficult to stick to a fairly rigid structure when the players pick up and drop plot threads with hardly a pause to consider how they're wrecking your carefully plotted story. The solution, then, is to remember that, while the players control their characters, the Gamemaster controls everything else.

With that in mind, I'm going to look at a means of structuring ad-libbed, improvisational adventures using the classic Three Act structure as a model. By keeping this model, and its implications for roleplaying, in mind, a Gamemaster can bring about a satisfactory conclusion to a session, all the while maintaining the open, free-form nature of a *Fractured Hopes* game.

Act One: Introduction

The purpose of the first Act is to introduce the characters, their outlooks, and the nature of the conflict that will be explored in they entirety of the three Acts. In our case, the three acts will be the whole session. There are certain elements that need to occur in the first act, and the sooner you get these into the game, the better.

Exposition. This is where the character's get caught up to the situation; what they are doing, where they are at, and any relationship stuff that the players enjoy.

An event that kicks off the story for that session.

Gamemastering

RED HERRINGS

For the Three Act structure to work in a roleplaying context, avoid the temptation to make use of plot threads not related to either the overarching conflict of the session, or the goals of each character. This only serves to distract the characters away from the "real" story.

For example, my playtest group had stolen a ship from the Murai Confederacy, and the session ended with them blasting their way out of the hangar in which the ship was docked. My initial impulse was to begin the next session with them fleeing two pursuing Voidcraft, but I had to check that impulse. Doing so would very likely not relate to their story for that session, and would only serve to extend a previous session in to the next one.

Now, if the players expressed an interest in what happened after they escaped, I could easily work pursuing ships into Act One of the next session, but not otherwise.

These elements are fairly basic, and can be added to a story without too much hassle. For our purposes, though, there is always a chance that what the players want to do has nothing to do with the exposition the Gamemaster has in mind. To get around this, I find it useful to do a brief discussion about what went on last session to get everyone up to speed, and then ask, "what are your characters going to do now?" If they answer with something specific, then you've got the goals for the session. If they answer with something like, "we'll do whatever you want to do," you should feel free to run them on something you actually want to see. However, I think play improves in quality when the players have some sort of goal to which they aspire.

I also sometimes find it useful to ask each player, either before the game or immediately after it beings, what they wish to accomplish in that session. I even have them write their answer



Fractured Hopes

down and keep it on them during play. This way, I know what they want to do, and more importantly, so do they. To encourage them, I offer a minor experience reward to actions that go along with this started goal.

A lot of ground needs to be covered in the first Act of an adventure, and there is not a lot of time to get done what needs to be done. It should be the shortest part of the session, and getting through it quickly should take priority on coming up with the “perfect” story. All stories change upon contact with players anyway, so run with an idea, even if it seems less than ideal.

Act Two: The Conflict

If the first Act is the bones of an adventure, the second Act is its flesh. Act 2 will be the bulk of the adventure, where the characters, having identified the nature of the conflict, can take steps to address this conflict. A good second Act is the soul of an adventure, and success here will cover a lot of missteps in the other Acts.

As with the first Act, there are certain conventions that come through in a second Act, and being aware of them and using them can keep the tension high during an adventure.

In Act 2, there should be:

- ⊕ Problems that exist in enough numbers to make the outcome of the adventure more than a single skill test. If the session revolves around being pursued by enemy ships, then a single **Pilot** Voidcraft skill test will not be enough to get away.
- ⊕ The false climax, in which a seemingly good solution to the problem fails. Perhaps the Void Engine hasn't been properly maintained, it might lose power at the worst possible moment. Used properly, a false climax can cause a tremendous increase in dramatic tension. Your

players will feel it. Take care not to step on anyone's toes; if the ship's sorcerer has been keeping a good eye on the Engine, having it fail will not be taken well.

- ⊕ At some point, usually immediately after the false climax, the story hits a point where the characters are as far away from meeting their goals as they have been, and have to scramble to what they want, before it is too late.

One of the best features of a second Act from a roleplaying perspective is that you have a little more time to think about how you are going to proceed here than you have just about anywhere else. If you need a few minutes to come up with something, your players will likely be deep in planning in this part of the adventure, and you can use that time to come up with an idea, look up game stats, or even eavesdrop on the player's plans and see if they have something cool they want to do. I find that, if my players do come up with some crazy plan, it is much neater than the one I had planned, and they'll feel better for having gone through with it. Also, it has the added benefit of keeping the game moving, as planning is not nearly as exciting as acting.

Once you've gotten a handle on the elements of the second Act, your ability to improvise according to what the players seek to accomplish will improve. In many cases, the actions the players take will inspire something on your part. A false climax may be the result of a failed skill check, or an additional element that the players might have failed to notice earlier. This, combined with a small amount of pre-scenario prep work (more on this later), can go a long way towards fun play.

Fractured Hopes

Act Three: Resolution

As the end of the session, the third Act serves to cap the adventure, bring all of the ongoing conflicts to some sort of resolution. It typically is rather short, but should also bear as much tension, danger, and excitement as you can manage. It's best if the character's are in some doubt as to whether they will succeed or not, even if it is almost a surety.

The conventions for a third Act are fairly straightforward, and by the time you get to this place in an adventure, there's a good chance you'll have an idea about how to wrap things up in a manner that hits the following high points:

- ⊕ True climax. Much like the false climax in Act 2, the true climax is a point at which tension is at its highest. However, instead of making the climax not work, this time it does work. If a session is about getting away from pursuit, the true climax is then when the crew are able to do so. The tension that has been building over the whole session is suddenly released, and the resulting relaxation leads to...
- ⊕ The resolution. This is the point in the adventure when the characters get a chance to unwind, to reflect on what they've been through, and to reconnect with each other. It serves as a cool-down period, in which the character's can share how they respond to the situation they had just been in.

During the third Act, there's a good chance you will notice a seed for the next session. Don't make a big show of it, but note it down for later use. I've found that players are more willing to engage in the story that develops across multiple sessions when the action flows organically from one session to the next.

Why use the Three Act Structure?

The Three act structure has a lot of benefits, but its use in a roleplaying game promotes some alterations to how a typical game session operates. It is really only appropriate for a certain kind of gaming, and may not have a place in many campaigns.

However, the Three Act structure has been used in storytelling for centuries, dating back to the Ancient Greeks. It informs much of how human beings view stories, so much so that works that deviate from it can strike even someone who isn't aware of the structure as somehow "wrong". Unless they've been living a life completely deprived of any media, your players will be aware of the structure from books, TV shows and movies. It is comfortable, familiar, and it works really well at conveying drama and building tension within the game. Games are not High Art, but that doesn't mean we can't borrow from other traditions, using their tools to tell stories our way.

In particular, many of the types of media that inspired *Fractured Hopes* use the structure almost to the exclusion of anything else. By mimicking the shape of things like action films, genre TV shows and pulp fiction, you can clue your players into that mindset without being overt about it. And once the players are clued in, their characters actions will follow suit.

However, the most useful thing about the use of the Three Act structure is that, once the players have begun to rely on it, to get a feel for the rhythm and flow of it, you can change things about it to throw them off. This should not be used to arbitrarily kill off characters, but instead can be used to throw them a curve ball.

For example, instead of a single false climax, what happens if there are two, or even three, in a session? If the players are used to a single complication, and are suddenly faced with more than they are used to, their sense of



Fractured Hopes

tension at these increasing number of false climaxes shoots up each time, potentially reaching heights not achievable in any other fashion. This assures that, when the actual climax occurs, the sense of accomplishment will be that much bigger by contrast.

Note, however, that this sort of change to the structure needs to be handled with care. Too many false climaxes can make the players actually lose interest in the story, almost as though they become exhausted by carrying so much tension. Also, the payoff for an extended false climax/resolution ride is lessened if done in quick succession.

What I find to be an optimal mix for the groups I run is to use the normal Three Act structure for the majority of the game, and throw in one or two extensions at pivotal moments in the game. When I do use the extensions, I try to keep the number of false climaxes to a minimum. Luckily, I've been able to gauge how the players are responding, and adjust the game to match. If the players seem like they're on the brink of nervous collapse, then it is already past time to resolve the session. Generally, I find two false climaxes to be enough for an extension, or three for a really challenging session. Anything bigger than that would probably benefit from using a different Act structure to accommodate the increased time.

Done properly, the Three Act structure lends itself to episodic play, where what occurs in one session is more or less contained to that session. This is useful when you have a group that cannot meet regularly, or one where the players in one session may not be the exact same group as the previous one. This way, continuity between sessions is less of a concern, leaving the Gamemaster to focus on the present session.

The extended Acts do have some precedent in media: the two-part television episode, or the movie trilogy. I'm particularly fond of using the two part TV episode as a metaphor myself, where the end of one session leads directly into the next, often with a cliff-hanger in place of

the last false climax. I only use this device on rare occasions, when I'm certain that the entire group can meet at both sessions. This in keeping with the source, as no TV shows does constant, back-to-back two part episodes.

Tools for the Gamemaster

The Three Act structure is a tool like many others, but it is a tool primarily for the enjoyment of the players. There are also tools for the Gamemaster, which allow him or her to include elements in the game that he wishes to see. There are many things in *Fractured Hopes* that give narrative control to the players, and what I have listed below are in place to allow the Gamemaster to work with the other elements of the story, other than the players.

Fractured Hopes is designed as an open setting, and the particulars of how this openness manifests during play is the province of the Gamemaster. The setting should bend readily to needs of the story, so if a plot demands an isolated location, then a fragment out in the middle of nowhere can easily exist. If the Gamemaster wants to do a western-themed adventure, then a suitable place in the world can easily be created to fulfill this purpose. Players experience the openness as freedom in character creation, and the Gamemaster can experience having an empty canvas upon which to help the players tell interesting stories.

Tone: Remember that the descriptions you have at your disposal can really sell an image or character, as well as give you an opportunity to include elements you'd like to see in the game. For example, if your players have upset a powerful foe, the assassins sent after them shouldn't be just any ordinary assassins. Even if they are only meant to be a momentary hindrance (or the means by which a false climax occurs), Ro-

Fractured Hopes

bot Lizard Assassins are much more interesting than normal assassins. With this in mind, also remember that the modifiers piled on a concept don't have to be randomly generated. For a more Western feel, make the assassin be a cowboy who used disruption pistols instead of a rifle.

Inspiration is Everywhere: The world of *Fractured Hopes* is our own, albeit years in the future and following a global cataclysm. This means that things that occur today, just outside your window, have a good chance of existing in the fictional present of the game setting. You can find inspiration in just about anywhere, since if it exists in our world, it can exist in the game. People today report seeing strange lights in the sky, or running into hairy humanoids in remote places. These things are still possible in the new world. You might see an interesting tabloid story in the line at the grocery store, or see something on TV that catches your eye. These things can often be spun out into an initial conflict for Act one of a story with only a little adjustment. Once you've adapted your eye to look for such things, you'll be surprised about where you see them.

Occam's Laser Sword: Occam's Razor is a philosophical tool that states that, given a number of potential causes for something, the simplest is likely the most accurate. To borrow that principle for *Fractured Hopes*, when faced with a number of possible ideas, go for the one that is the most awesome. It helps if it is also over the top, or at the very least unlikely or improbable. In a world using realistic physics, no one could surf on the blast wave of an explosion, using a hunk of metal to do so. It would get them killed. However, in *Fractured Hopes*, such things are not only possible, but more possible than normal, "mundane" actions. Surfing on an explosion might be a simple **Agility** roll, or even better, a **Surf on Explosions** skill check. Hell, you might even give a +20% bonus to improbable actions, so long as they're awesome.

Dream Fights: We've all heard them; discussions about who would win in a fight between Darth Vader and Wolverine are common enough that nearly anyone who reads this book or plays RPGs will have at least heard them, if not been up to their armpits in the discussions themselves. With the flexibility of the *BRP* rules, it's easy to actually test this and see who really would win. In fact, very interesting things can come out of it, and I officially encourage you to try some of these out. Of course, players may balk when they see a straight-up Vader rip-off, but it's easy enough to create a Cyborg Psychic Assassin with an energy sword and disguise him enough so that he's not immediately identifiable as Vader.

Dream Cross-Overs: Along the same lines as the Dream Fights, Dream Crossovers are a common point of discussion, which go along the lines of, "Man, I wish someone would make a book/movie/TV show where River from *Firefly* and Ripley from *Aliens* got together and fought demons from another dimension." The general consensus about such things is that, yes, they would be awesome, and no, they'll never come into being. However, such things are the fodder for great games, and *Fractured Hopes* is designed to do this, specifically. Sure, you might file the serial numbers off, or adjust one of the characters so that they aren't obviously taken from some other media, but you can totally run with it. A very interesting campaign could come about by asking your players which TV shows or movies they would like to see hammered together and forming a bunch of characters out of that discussion.

Extremes: While extremes of character and action are not fundamental parts of *Fractured Hopes*, they certainly have their place. Villains can be diabolically evil as easily as carelessly indifferent. And heroes can be noble paragons of virtue, or hard-boiled, gritty characters who look out for #1. Each has its place, and can achieve different things during play. With an open setting, it is sometimes easier to default to

Fractured Hopes

a purely mythical, archetypal way of seeing the world, which in itself is an extreme viewpoint. However, not everything or everyone will fall this way. Imagine a scenario where your noble, pure-hearted heroes must contend with a threat from a villain who is not purely evil, but callous. The mis-match of outlooks may cause a disconnect, but it may also create an adventure that makes the characters behave in new and interesting ways. Extremes are tools, much like anything else, and their use should be carefully considered.

Explosions: In *Fractured Hopes*, machines are not built with safety in mind. Computer panels spark and smoke to represent damage, Eigeotech soldiers leak black oil and catch on fire when destroyed, and even sorcerers can erupt if magic energy is mishandled. Explosions are fun, visceral, and clearly illustrate that something has ceased to function. They also illustrate how volatile the situation is. Players love to blow things up, especially when they've done something dangerous. If at all possible, have something blow up at least once during each act, with bigger explosions keyed to dramatic events. An Act One explosion might be a computer or door control, and Act Two one might be a tank, Voidship, or a building, and an Act Three one might be a whole fragment, super-weapon or a villain's base of operations.

Apocalypse: Given humanity's precarious state, the odds of some potentially disastrous event that threatens the whole of the human race is quite likely. Don't shy away from the "save the world" plotline. It's more likely here than in the "real" world, and any number of things might cause it. Of course, every adventure can't be about saving the world, but you can point in that direction regularly without it seeming forced. For example, characters might stumble upon a plot to take over a particular fragment, and have just enough information to stop it. This is not the same thing as saving the world, but it does put the characters in a similar situation.

Recycle: Rather than introducing new elements, try to re-use old things that have already been added to the game. Not only does this apply to recurring villains, it also works for non-character roles. Certain fragments might become important again, or supposedly crashed Voidcraft may turn up later, refurbished and looking much different than before. This saves on Gamemaster brainpower. You may even keep a sheet of paper nearby to jot down things you might have come back into the game.

Grime: Since the Sundering, social expectations about cleanliness have taken a shift. Everything, people included, tends to be dirtier than usual. Water is almost always a precious commodity, and using it to wash clothes is typically seen as a tremendous waste. Machines, especially Voidcraft, are cobbled together out of what's at hand, and are usually rusty and greasy. Weapons are either obsessively well maintained or kit-bashed from available supplies. More than anything, this allows for contrast. If the characters are used to dirty, hand-me-down equipment, they'll sit up and take notice if they run into a foe with shiny, new, or well-maintained gear.

Relax: The above list, as well as the Three Act structure, work well together to build exciting play sessions. However, it's much more important to stay relaxed during play. If this list seems too big, and too much to remember on the fly, disregard it. Try to introduce one element at a time, as your campaign progresses, until you've become comfortable with how the tools listed here inform your particular style of running *Fractured Hopes*. Sometimes, one tool will be the focus of a session, and sometimes it will be another one. The trick of running the game effectively is to learn when a particular tool can be used, and how to introduce it to the session in a manner that appears to be in keeping with the larger story. It is the sort of thing you can't really prepare for, other than relaxing into the game and keeping an eye open. Remember, if everyone at the table had a good

Fractured Hopes

time, but you forgot to work in a recycled character, it is still a good session.

Story Splinters

Below is a list of images, ideas, and inspirations to help when you're stuck for an idea. Mine them for your own games, as you see fit.

- ⊕ If you've got an adventure for another game you've always wanted to run, try dropping it into the world. It may take some tweaking, and you almost certainly won't be able to use the existing game stats, but you'd be surprised how much mileage you can get out of other games.
- ⊕ At some point during their travels, someone from the one of the character's past finds them.
- ⊕ One of the foes that has been defeated in the past returns to the character's and makes a business proposal. Is it legitimate, or a trap designed to lure them into danger?
- ⊕ The ship's Void Engine runs out of energy mid-flight, and must recharge before moving anywhere. While they lie becalmed, various denizens of the Void come to the ship and investigate it.
- ⊕ Somewhere near the Edge is a fragment with a huge stockpile of pre-Sundering medical supplies, as well as functioning medical equipment that was state of the art at the end of the world. Some of the world's best surviving doctors have migrated here to study medicine. It is rumored that they'll trade just about anything for medical services.
- ⊕ A notorious pirate chief needs a service that only the PCs can provide, and is willing to offer them a seemingly lucra-

tive deal in order to do it. However, this person's reputation is less than stellar.

- ⊕ A well-respected person hires the players to ferry goods from point A to point B. Everything seems legitimate, but half-way through the delivery, the characters discover that there is something illegal mixed in with the cargo, and that they are unwitting smugglers. What do they do when an authority demands a search of their ship?
- ⊕ Just as the character's arrive at their destination, there is a coupe attempt.
- ⊕ Due to an accident involving experimental technology, the characters are blown in the bizarre other-space known to magicians as "astral space". How do they navigate this strange, alien place where nothing is what it appears to be? And how do they get home?
- ⊕ The players stumble upon a battle between a powerful sorcerer and an even more powerful demonic creature. Was it sent by the sorcerer's rivals, or some potent foe who wants the sorcerer quieted?
- ⊕ While most people feel that paper money and electronic currency are a thing of the past, there is a single fragment that retains enough of its infrastructure to still use cash and credit cards for transactions. At some point, a collection agent from this fragment tracks down one of the characters and demands payments and late fees from before the Sundering, and is willing to arrest said character and bring him or her back to the home fragment for trial.
- ⊕ The characters make themselves a powerful foe, who sends ninjas (yes, actual ninjas) after them.



Fractured Hopes

ALLEGIANCE TO THE VOID

Characters who become the Void's Champions may use the Allegiance rules from page 315 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook to represent their level of faith in the void. This Allegiance score increases according to the following acts:

- * Rescuing people who are in danger, on a fragment: 1 point
- * Rescuing those in danger, out in the Void: 2 points.
- * Building a Void Engine: 3 points
- * Teaching someone their first Void Sorcery spell: 3 points
- * Learning a new Sorcery spell: 1 point
- * Teaching someone the Void Engine construction spells: 6 points if all four Elemental spells are taught.
- * Altering a fragment to make it more hospitable to human life: 10 points.

The benefits gained for being a follower of the Void are the possibility of Divine Intervention, and the ability to call upon reserve Power Points. When enacting Divine Intervention, the Void typically chooses a subtle act, one that might be as readily chalked up to purely natural forces or coincidence. It believes that humanity should work hard to survive, but is willing to aid them through its agents.

Allegiance to the Void does not preclude Allegiance to other forces that may exist in the campaign, unless the goals of that force directly run counter to those of the Void, most typically those involving injuring or killing innocence.

⊕ The Void is a sentient, self-aware energy field, and it takes a special liking towards one or more of the characters. In fact, it wants a champion, and is unwilling or unable to see that the duties it requires of its champion are either fool's errands or suicidally dangerous.

Chapter 9: Equipment

Humanity is a tool-using species. It is one of the factors that separate thinking, self-aware life from unintelligent animals. By using tools, we transcend the limitations of the body; we use levers to heavy weights, and build weapons in order to better defend ourselves. This works on multiple levels. In the physical world, the tools in our possession greatly enhance the number of choices we have in how to accomplish things. On a psychological level, tools can cause an interesting shift in how we are perceived. A person and a sword, taken separately, are distinct things. But taken as a unit, a Person With a Sword can become several things, like a knight, a warrior, or a brigand.

When using equipment in *Fractured Hopes*, it can be beneficial during play to keep both levels in mind. On the physical level, the tools the characters possess allow them to affect the game world, and on the psychological level, tools become keys to unlocking interesting facets of the character. In this sense, they are also tools for the Gamemaster and the players.

Of course, the tools most commonly used during the game are the characteristics, skills and powers on the character sheets, as they allow the players the most immediate way in which they influence the game. Think of the tools and items mentioned in this chapter as thematic variations, ways of looking at the characters from a new angle.

Equipment and Character Concepts

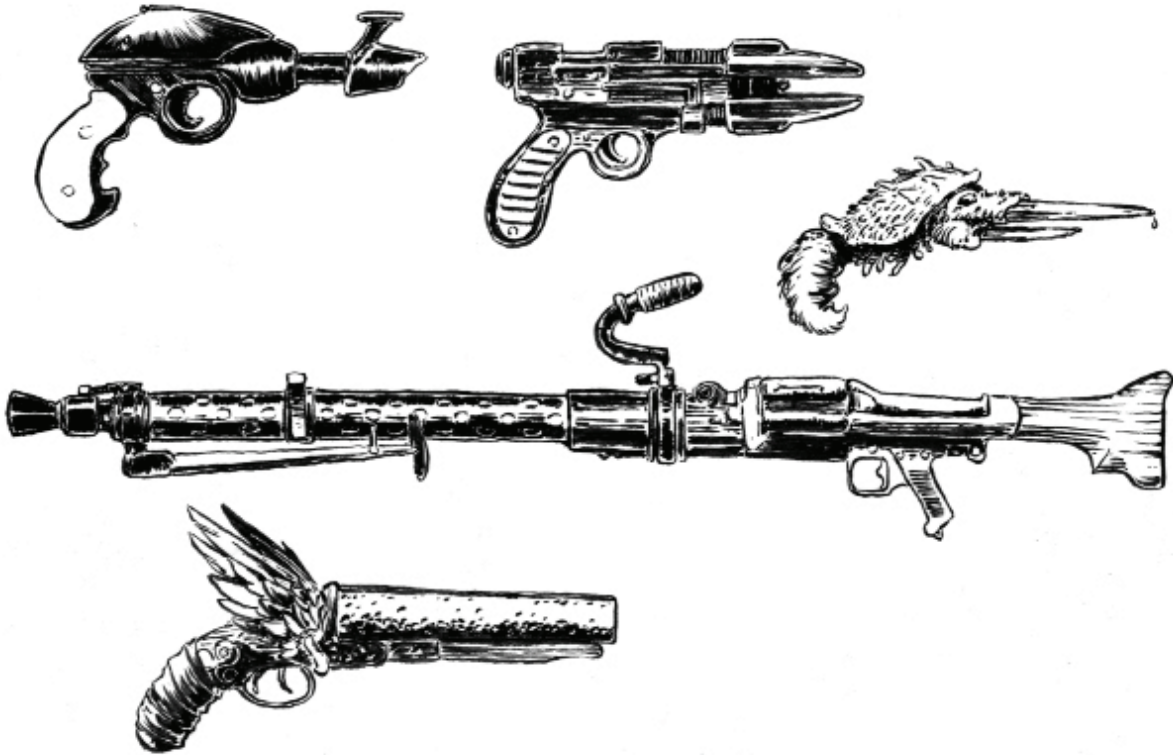
It is often tempting to find interesting items and work them into play as soon as possible. This can be tricky, as items can sometimes be treated as characters in their own rights, and may come to overshadow the player characters. This is to be avoided, and one of the best ways to avoid it is to have a really good idea of how you want the items to impact the game. There are ways to do this, however.

One way is to have an item or piece of equipment be a central part of the character concept. For example, a player might desire to possess a Mind Upload Unit, which transfers his personality onto a chip, and a large supply of Meat Sleeves, so that his personality can be transferred from body to body if he or she is ever killed. While you may say no to this concept for the amount of power it affords the character, consider this an opportunity to approach a unique character concept.. A character that cannot die may generate interesting stories.

Also, think of items in the same way you might think of the sun. The sun is huge, of course, and puts out a staggeringly large amount of energy everyday, and this energy is just about the only thing that keeps things alive. And yet, it doesn't really do anything else, and



Fractured Hopes



Firearms

most people go about their lives, their stories, without giving it any thought. Items can work in a similar fashion, The mere presence of an item can significantly alter the way a story is told. Its “energy” radiates off of it, impacting everything around it.

Of course, there will be players who do not want their characters to be so thoroughly defined by the items in their possession, or even those in the environment. For such players, their character sheets are enough tools to work with.

Items from the BRP Rulebook

In general terms, any piece of equipment from the rulebook exists in some profusion in the

setting. Advanced weapons and armour are the most recently developed tech, and can be found most readily. However, this also means that such items that still function will run out of power or be damaged beyond the current level of technology. Only a few places still have the infrastructure in place to maintain advanced equipment.

Modern equipment is older, but has had a long enough history that most of them are sturdy and still function when found. These items have become almost mythic, since it functions without power or is designed with as few breakable parts as possible. They are sometimes considered “backwards”. Finding a store of items from this time period would be looked upon as an archaeological expedition, one where the artifacts still work.

To contrast, historic items are much more common, being easily made by even moderately

Fractured Hopes

skilled individuals. In some places, technology has regressed so far that historic items are the only technology in use. Other places exist in the shadow of their former glories, where blacksmiths dismantle burnt out vehicles and forge the metal parts into swords and spear points.

Items with Powers do exist in relatively small numbers. Those that do are often individual expressions of their creator, or were part of very limited production runs. This is not to say that they cannot be used by PCs, only that the character will be all the more unique for it.

New Items

The items listed below are a few examples of the sort of things that may be found in the world of *Fractured Hopes*. It is not meant to be an exhausted list, but merely to serve as an example of what sorts of technology are uncovered in the ruins of the future. Countless other items exist, just waiting to be discovered.

Elemental Essence Crystals

There are a number of fragments that have a concentration of one of the five classical elements much higher than those of a “normal” fragment. Magic users and those who possess psychic abilities can learn to harvest the excess energy and cause it to manifest as a crystal lattice about the size of a watermelon. Once harvested, the crystals can serve as a source of energy, which makes them useful and much sought after.

Characters in possession of a essence crystal can tap it for energy. Doing so requires a full round’s concentration, and a successful Luck roll. Success means that the character is able to tap the crystal and can add 1D6 Power Points to their current total. A critical **Luck** roll doubles rolled result. Both of these results can take a character’s Power Point total over their normal

maximum. These Power Points do not go away until used, but once they have been, they are gone and do not regenerate.

A failure means the character was simply unable to draw upon the crystal, and a fumble means the energy transfer has gone the wrong way, and the character loses 1D6 Power Points to the crystal. If they do not have that many Power Points, they fall unconscious when their Power Points reach zero. A character can draw upon a crystal in this manner once per day, at which point the crystal goes dormant and will not function in any capacity for a day.

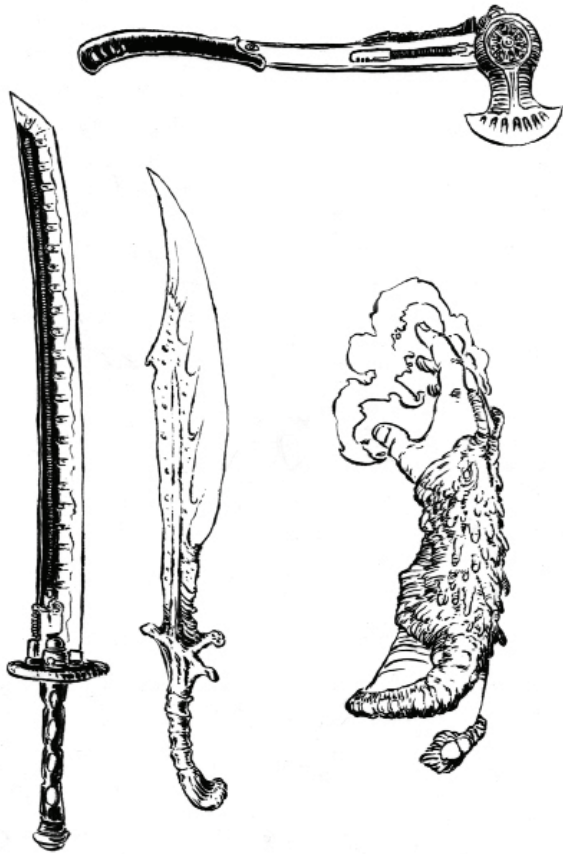
Anyone in possession of an essence crystal can perform the following spells and powers as though they actually knew the spells themselves. In such instances, the character gains the appropriate skill at its base chance, which can increase through experience as usual. If the character is ever separated from the crystal, the spells remain with him, but he must pass a Luck roll each time he attempt to use one. Failure means he cannot cast that spell in this combat round.

The spells granted by each type of crystal vary by element.

- ⊕ Air: Conjure Sylph, Lighting, Speak to Mind.
- ⊕ Earth: Conjure Gnome, Enhance CON, Protection
- ⊕ Fire: Conjure Salamander, Fire, Ward
- ⊕ Water: Conjure Undine, Illusion, Invisibility.
- ⊕ Spirit: Conjure Lesser Demon and two of the following: Blast, Control, Heal, Wounding.

Lastly, the crystal can be installed. If installed into a Voidcraft, it provides either heat, air, gravity, water, or Power Points, depending on the nature of the crystal, and will always

Fractured Hopes



Melee Weapons

work, even if the ship's Void Engine is not functioning.

The most dramatic use of the Essence Crystal is when "installed" deep within a fragment. Any sorcerer or magician can determine how to do this with an **Idea** roll, and, with a ritual lasting 1D8 hours, install the crystal. Once installed, the crystal's energy shoots through the fragment, invigorating it. Within two weeks time, the amount of that fragment's concentration of energy increases by one level. This can make barren fragments suddenly possess lakes or rivers, make freezing fragments warm, and so on.

However, this can also push the energy from a normal range into a high one. Such increases can be disastrous for those who live on

a fragment. Unscrupulous sorcerers have been known to install crystals in a fragment in order to harm their foes, regardless of who else gets in the way.

There is some speculation about the nature of the essence crystals. The most common belief around them is that they are what is left of the Final Weapon, the titanic device used by the Sholloboth to destroy the world. If this is true, then it gives us a better idea of how the Final Weapon operated.

Bio-Weapons

The Sholloboth were known to use their astonishing abilities at genetic science to create devastating biological weapons as tools of war. However, for the benefit of their human conscripts, they would also produce weapons that were very familiar, only composed of biological materials instead of being made from steel. These weapons were meant to last, and to survive with little to no maintenance by their human users. A great number of them exist today, and are typically the prize of their owners.

Bio-weapons, for the most part, are similar enough to the weapons given in the *BRP* rulebook, save that they are obviously organic in origin. Firearms equate to modern or advanced weapons, and are typically made to look like shells or starfish. The biggest advantage of a bio-gun is that it produces its own ammunition. It can hold twice the number of rounds of its normal counterpart. Of course, this also means that it cannot be re-loaded manually. Once the rounds have been expended, the weapon must be placed in sunlight for roughly a day in order to have it regrow its magazine.

The melee weapons that fall into this category appear to be made out of bone or coral, and have a slightly pinkish tinge to them. They behave like normal melee weapons, save that they are always sharp, can repair themselves in two weeks if broken, and a hit from one counts

Fractured Hopes

as “touching” for purposes of psychic abilities that involve making contact with your target.

The most curious bio-weapons are technically not weapons at all, but armor. The Sholloboth had perfected a technique by which the shells of insects could be hardened to the strength of steel, and engineered these insects to move as commanded. The result is a suit of armour that is alive. The tiny bugs are stored in a cylinder, and can be pored over a person. Once the bugs have settled into place, they afford the same protection as a suit of armour. Versions of the bugs are made for all types of armour, up to and including powered armour.

The bio-weapons provide a great deal of freedom, as they are almost entirely self-contained and self-replicating. However, there is one considerable drawback to their use. As they are made from Sholloboth technology, they possess the astonishing ability to slowly alter the genetics of those who use them. Every time the owner uses the weapon, they gain an Allegiance to the Sholloboth point. Rather than working like a regular Allegiance, this represents the amount of genetic corruption the character possesses. When making experience checks, also test against the Allegiance to the Sholloboth. Succeeding in the test grants the user a randomly determined minor mutation.

Memory Upload Device

Both the Eigen and the Sholloboth knew the value of having intelligent people operating in their ranks, and they also both felt the loss when one of these people was lost in battle. To combat this, the two forces independently developed a system by which the personality of the individual, his or her soul, if you will, could be copied onto a small chip and installed into an artificial body. This would effectively grant immortality to the person thus uploaded, enabling them to carry out suicide missions without the actual loss of a valued operative.

The actual devices vary in size and shape. Eigentech devices are roughly the size of an MRI machine, and work in a similar fashion. The target lies inside, and the machine makes a digital copy of the brain using a form of magnetic imagining. This file is essentially a copy of the person, and, if installed in a Meat Sleeve (see below) will operate as another copy of that person. The only difference would be that the copy’s skull is taken up with an extremely complex neural computer.

The upload devices used by the Sholloboth were rather different, although it accomplished the same end. The subject’s brain is removed from the skull and replaced with a genetically engineered organ that is bred specifically to transmit psychic impulses over incredible distances. The actual brain is then interred in a specially formulated nutrient bath. This keeps

SOURCE OF BODIES

Characters who are housed in a upload device may desire to have access to a variety of bodies to meet certain needs. Such bodies may be hard to come by. The exception to this are Eigentech constructs, which, without fail, have an access port in which an uploaded mind chip can be installed. At the Gamemaster’s option, switching between bodies may be as easy as moving the chip, or may take enough time that its the sort of thing that can only happen between sessions.

Sholloboth constructs are much harder to come by, although there are a handful of places where completely normal sleeves and the equipment to maintain them can be found. More outlandish forms do exist. Also, someone skilled in Sholloboth technology, and who has access to one of the alien’s labs and equipment, can, with a great deal of painstaking surgery, mount an upload receiver in just about any body, so long as the bulk of the body is in good enough condition that any damage done to it could be repaired.



Fractured Hopes

the mind alive and fresh. The person's awareness appears to them to be seated in the body, even though their actual mind is hundreds, maybe even thousands, of miles away. The effective range of this set up appears to something close to infinite, although no one has really tested the limits.

In each case, the upload devices allow human minds to live beyond the deaths of their bodies, as well as to "live" and operate in forms that are profoundly inhuman. The Eigen are well known for their willingness to upload the minds of formerly human soldiers into huge, destructive combat frames. The Sholloboth too were able to "tune" a mind into a specific frequency, allowing their agents to control multiple bodies in a short period of time.

Characters who come into possession of a mind upload device may be eager to use it. If a character decides to upload themselves into the machine, their POW, INT, and skill chances can be installed into a new body, if theirs is killed. This is, of course, assuming they have a supply of new bodies. Being installed into a sleeve can be quite jarring, though, and all physical skills will be reduced by half due to the confusion. Additionally, there are bodies in the world that have been designed specifically to house an uploaded mind. These surrogate bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Also, at the Gamemaster's option, characters who have gone through the "Putting the Pieces Together" adventure may actually have Eigentech uploads of their personality (which is presumed to have occurred before the start of the adventure). If a character dies, they may actually come awake suddenly in an Eigentech combat frame, their awareness having jumped to their uploaded intelligence.

Meat Sleeves

Much like the mental upload devices, meat sleeves are a tandem development for both the Eigen and the Sholloboth. These vat-grown, cloned bodies are organic and "alive" but lack the central nervous system of a human being. In its place, the sleeve has either a neural network with a slot for an upload chip, or one of the brown, metallic collection of whorls and loops of the Sholloboth psychic transmitter.

Sleeves come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors, although the very most common are a plain, genderless utility model, which is only meant to be a temporary body for uploaded minds. Such sleeves are the definition of nondescript, looking more like a store mannequin than a living person. The utility sleeves have physical characteristics of 10 each, and these cannot be increased by exercise, training or experience. If the characters are to find a supply of sleeves somewhere, between 80-90% of them will be utility sleeves.

Combat grade sleeves are the second most common type, possessing physical characteristics of 16 each, and often come bundled with sensory enhancing equipment, each of which counts as a Super-sense power for each of the sensory modalities. Combat sleeves can also regenerate 1 Hit Point per minute, and only need half the food, water, and air of a normal human being.

Other sleeves do exist, although none are nearly as common as the utility and combat frames. Other sleeves should be designed as needed for the campaign.

Chapter 10: Creatures

The Creatures section of the *BRP* rulebook contains the bulk of the game information you will need for *Fractured Hopes*. Below, I've included some stats for robots and monsters that might be of use during the game, although you can run a perfectly good game with the monsters in the main rulebook.

RELFs

One of the Sholloboth's enduring legacies in the world are the bizarre creatures known as RELFs, or Rapidly Evolving Life Forms. These creatures are typically normal animals who, thanks to Sholloboth genetic manipulation, are capable of adapting to just about any environment. Where normal evolution can take generations to occur, RELFs can adjust to their environment readily, and within one generation can produce an offspring radically different from its parents. RELFs enjoy a wide distribution, and exist in a bewildering profusion of shapes and sizes.

There are a couple of ways of using RELFs in the game. Firstly, any of the Natural Animals (including dinosaurs) can be used as-is simply by dropping them into a fragment. Also, any animals can have adapted to any environment, so aquatic creatures can swim through the Void, trundle up to walk on land, or swim through lava as though it was water. Also, RELFs frequently express other mutations, which may or

may not be passed on to children. Very strange and interesting creatures can be created by taking a base animal, and adding 1D8 mutations to it.

RELFs also provide a rationale for the use of Fantasy creatures in the game. Bizarre creatures like centaurs, dragons, trolls and griffins might be unique expressions of the RELF experimentation, or may exist as large family groups of the creatures. Elves and Dwarfs might simply be humans who have adapted to specific environments.

In my games, I enjoy using RELFs to add a sense of wonder to the game. I typically do this by adding adapted life forms to what would ordinarily be environments too hostile to support life. Sharks of various sizes prowl the depths of the Void, seeking the flesh of adventurers to slake their eternal hunger, and whales swim lazily through the currents of the Void, getting close enough to Voidships to look at the crew.

Void-Sharks

While the bulk of real-life sharks pose no serious threat to humans, the larger, more dangerous sharks reflect poorly on the smaller, less aggressive ones. This is still the case in *Fractured Hopes*, although the bulk of sharks seen in the wild are RELFs that have adapted to life in the Void.

Despite their fearsome appearance, sharks are generally shy. Even the largest of them will



Fractured Hopes



Shark Rider

avoid attacking unless its sure that it can do so without putting itself at risk. When they do attack, it is typically by surprise from an unexpected quarter. Smaller sharks will continue

NEW MUTATION: BONELESS

The character's body has no bones in it, regardless of shape or appearance. This grants them a degree of flexibility. As a minor mutation, this ability grants the mutant a +20% bonus to all skills and characteristic rolls regarding agility, flexibility, or nimbleness. As a major mutation, this bonus is increased to +40%, and the characters is capable of squeezing through any opening or crack, no matter how small. Only water- or air-proof seals can keep them out.

Having no bones can also be a disadvantage. Possessing this mutation makes it harder for the character to move over solid ground, which manifests as a -1 penalty to their MOV score, unless they have some other means of movement. For major mutations, this penalty is doubled.

to attack until they've done enough damage to tear away a chunk of flesh, and larger sharks, such as great whites, will attack once, hoping to do a major wound, and will swim off, letting the target bleed to death before continuing to feed.

Use the Shark characteristics on page 338 of the *BRP* rulebook to represent Void Sharks. The Gamemaster may decide that their **Sense** skill functions at half chance, as their medium of the Void does not allow blood to travel as far as water does.

Sapient Octopi

Easily one of the most curious RELF are the populations of Sapient Octopi that drift upon the currents of the Void. These large, intelligent creatures exist in loose-knit communities, living alone until breeding seasons, when they

Fractured Hopes

congregate someplace safe to lay and fertilize their football-sized eggs.

STR 10 CON 12 SIZ 12 INT 15 POW 16

DEX 16

Move: 9. Can jet for 15 when fleeing.

Hit Points: 12

Damage Bonus: None

Armor: None

Attacks: Tentacle 50% 1D8+grapple.

Beak 50% 1D10

Octopi can attack with 1D8 tentacles a round, or a single Bite. If two or more tentacles hit a single target, the octopus can attempt to grapple, and gains a +1 bonus to their Strength for each tentacle that hits. Once a foe has been grappled, the octopus can make an Easy **Bite** attack on its next action.

Skills: Dodge 50%, Fine Manipulation 75%, Fly 75% (they move through air as easily as water), Hide 100%, Own Language 100% (consists of shifting their skin color and texture. Other characters capable of doing so can learn their language), Repair (mechanical) 50%, Sense 35%, Spot 50%, Stealth 50%

Powers: Most octopi behave as though they had the following mutations: Boneless (major) Camouflage (major), Regeneration (minor). Some also possess Venom (minor). Of the other power systems, psychic abilities are more common than any of the magic systems, although the later are possible.

Canary Drainers

These beautiful yellow fish travel through the Void in great schools. Their scales are a brilliant yellow, and reflect light. From a distance, Canary Drainer schools seem like clouds of yellow gas, which give off sparks of light. It isn't until the observer has gotten closer to the school that their true nature becomes apparent. And by then, it's too late.

Even though the drainers are quite striking, in schools that can be surprisingly dangerous. Canary Drainers feed upon Power Points, and will swarm around any source of mystical energy they come across. In addition to feed-

ing off other life-forms that may be found in the Void, they are also capable of attacking and discharging a Void Engine. This is what makes them so dangerous.

Treat Drainer Swarms as a rat pack from page 337 of the *BRP* rulebook. When attacking, they do only a single hit points worth of damage which ignores armour. However, they also drain 1D3 Power Points from their target.

If drainers attack a ship, they will reduce all characters they can get to to zero Power Points and unconsciousness, and also drain the Void Engine. They leave the ship and its occupants becalmed and unconscious, making them prime targets for some of the other, more dangerous, threats that travel the Void.

Most Voidcraft pilots recognize Canary Drainer schools for what they are and avoid them. However, some pilots have developed a distaste for the creatures, and go out of their way to attack and destroy them on site.

Other Sholloboth Constructs

Not all of the creatures affected by the Sholloboth are actually RELFs. Many bizarre, seemingly alien, beings are scattered across the ruins of the world, seeking to survive in the sometimes hostile conditions. Such creatures may be singular examples of experimentation, while others might be part of a population of creatures like themselves.

Blobs

Blobs in *Fractured Hopes* do exist, primary as waste disposal systems in abandoned Sholloboth research facilities. They are rare outside



Fractured Hopes

this environment, although some have escaped their confines and make their way through the world, seeking prey to absorb.

Some of the Sholloboth blobs have displayed a curious adaptation, in which they are able to divide into smaller blobs, only to recombine with the main mass at a later time. To do so, the blob shunts off a number of SIZ points equal to the SIZ of what they want to replicate. The shunted part separates from the main mass, and shapes itself to resemble another creature, typically, but not always, humanoid.

Such beings are not as capable as the main body, but can be quite dangerous if taken for granted. Treat those protoplasmic constructs as minions. For each minion slain, the main body of the Blob loses the number of SIZ points equal to the SIZ of the minion.

Blobs are also capable of growing to prodigious size. For every 10 points of SIZ of organic matter a blob consumes, the blob's own SIZ increases by one. There is no limit to the size a blob can become. There are rumors of blobs that are larger than entire cities, having eaten every living thing within several hundred square miles. A creature this large, with the ability to create a veritable army of loyal soldiers, is a force to be reckoned with.

Other examples of Sholloboth biological experimentation can be found across the world. Gamemasters can create new ones as needed, or may simply use the characteristics in the *BRP* rulebook as a starting point for their own creations. The Sholloboth were both brilliant and without human morals, so just about any type of creature, fanciful or based on reality, can find its way to the world.

Eigentech Constructs

Where Sholloboth constructs tend to follow a fairly random dispersion, and develop new traits due to evolution, Eigentech constructs tend to be narrowly focused on a single con-

cept: warfare. Every robot created by the Eigen has some purpose to fulfill during times of war. Typically, these constructs act as soldiers, sent out into the field with instructions to kill any enemy they encounter. Some, however, have different orders.

The Giant, Killer, and Utility Robots from the *BRP* rulebook have obvious places in the Eigentech hierarchy. However, other creatures listed can be used as robots in a pinch. Any of the natural animals can be used as-is, or with slight modification, to represent particular types of robots, and cyborgs. Ghouls and zombies can represent human beings who have undergone varying degrees of Eigentech implantation to turn them from human conscripts into mindless warriors. The detective, maniac, ninja, police officer, soldier, spy, super hero and super villain lists from the NPC digest can also make decent robots, simply by describing them as such and using their skills against the PCs.

Other robots can be developed to fill a specific end. Frequently, these robots can be modeled well using the Super Powers section of the *BRP* rulebook. For others, completely new characteristics can be done up to represent them.

For example, below is a robot designed to infiltrate enemy fortifications, and slowly work to turn the enemy's defenses against them.

Junk-Bot

Junk-bots are dinner-plate sized robots that look something like a crab or spider made out of rusty bolts, metal cylinders, and shards of broken glass for eyes. They can easily be mistaken for piles of cast-off junk. In this form, the junk-bot has the following characteristics:

STR 5 CON 5 SIZ 5 INT 18 POW 5

DEX 18

Move: 10

Hit Points: 5

Fractured Hopes

Damage Bonus: -1D6

Armor: 1 point steel carapace.

Attacks: Steel Nippers 50% 1 damage
Welding Torch 50% 1D6.

Skills: Climb 50%, Dodge 36%, Fine Manipulation 75%, Hide 75%, Repair (Electrical and Mechanical) 75%, Spot 50%, Stealth 75%

Powers: None, normally, aside from those listed below.

The junk-bot excels at infiltration, and once inside, can use its various technical skills to procure large amount of metal, circuits, wires and batteries. Once it has assembled sufficient materials, the junk-bot begins to assemble a body for itself. Characters who are mechanics, or who pay special attention to the state of the group's supplies may notice a decrease in their stores as the junk-bot harvests its needed materials.

If sparse amounts of raw materials are available, it settles for a body roughly equivalent to a utility robot. If copious raw materials can be found, it creates a body equivalent to a killer robot. In either case, the body takes near-

ly a week for the junk-bot to construct. Once completed, the junk-bot can inhabit the body as though it were its own, and retains its mental characteristics. It takes the junk-bot a single round to attach or detach from the body.

However, the biggest asset a junk-bot possesses is the ability to create robotic minions from assembled junk. Once it has created a body for itself, the junk bot begins to construct the minions at a rate of one per day. Once it has created enough minion robots to outnumber its foes 2 to 1, the junk-bot orders its minions to attack. It stays back and lets the minions fight, and it is not afraid of letting them die for it. It will only engage if it looks as though doing so would allow it to accomplish its mission.

Junk-bots almost always work alone, though the Eigen have been known to send them into an area one after another until their foe has been bested by the wave after wave of rusty, broken-down robots.



PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: A FRACTURED HOPES INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE

Putting the Pieces Together is an adventure designed to integrate character creation with actual play, as well as ease players into the setting. It is ideal for players who know nothing about the setting nor their place in it. This allows their background to emerge as needed later on in play, but still provide a well-rounded adventurer.

To simulate the character creation process, the adventure will consist of a number of scenes, each of which serves to establish a facet of the character being created. By the end of the adventure, players will not only have created a character, but also seen what the numbers on their character sheets represent.

Scene Zero-Background

Characters will not be aware of what's going on around them at the start of the adventure, but the GM will need to know certain facts about the setting to convey the material. Without going into too much detail about the game world, consider the following points:

1. After a war that literally shattered earth into fragments, humanity desperately clings to life in a cold void.
2. One of the antagonists in the war are the Eigen, a race of machine intelligences that used humans as conscripts in the war.

3. The Eigen would implant captured humans with devices that made them mindless soldiers.
4. Even though the war is essentially over, the surviving Eigen continue the process of converting humans into machines.
5. At the beginning of the adventure, the characters are humans who have been held in an Eigen Voidship, and are in the process of being implanted when they are rescued. They do not have implants (perhaps) but they have no memory of who they are and what they used to be like.
6. One of the rescued people is an NPC run by the GM. Her fate is to die, but the players will not know that. She exists to test some of the rules in the early stages of the process.

Scene One-Characteristics

The Characters will wake strapped to a mobile gurney, moving through a large industrial-looking complex. They can see a vast number of other people on similar gurneys elsewhere in the complex, being fed into the openings of machinery, lifted into different levels, or hoisted into a standing position and placed against a wall.

Fractured Hopes

The characters are not necessarily together, although they can be. If they look around, they notice that only a handful of other people seem to be awake.

The conveyor belt ushers them into a long, thin chamber. Every so often, the belt stops and the character is scanned by a red beam of light, and a metallic voice sounds, indicating a particular characteristic possessed by the character.

At each station, the player will determine what each of his or her characteristics will be. These may come in any order, and can be determined in any fashion as listed on page 16 of the *BRP* rulebook.

Once the characteristics have been determined, move on to Scene Two-Powers. However, if the players wishes, he or she may adjust their characteristics for up to three points as per usual. Note that the human maximum of 21 will stand, for now, although it may be altered through other means at a later time.

Scene Two-Powers

The belt moves the characters through a complex series of turns, separating them from the other people around them. As this scene begins, the PCs eventually find themselves near each other, and moving through into a large chamber. Explosions sound off in the distance, and as the belt moves, they are able to make out a variety of robotic forms, going about their business.

Each of the characters will be moved next a large mechanical eye with a computer read-out close enough that the character can read it. The machine scans the character to determine if they have any powers. Ask each player if they wish to play a Magician, a Mutant, A Psychic, A Sorcerer, or a Super-Soldier. They may only pick one (for now), but are not required to pick any of them. Once everyone has determined what they are, the conveyor belt moves along, leading to Scene Three-Age. The actual

process of determining what powers they possess will come later.

Scene Three-Age

In this scene, the characters stop momentarily on their conveyor belt ride. A large, circular robot hovers over each character and speaks in a harsh voice. "Subject 52-71. Age:" Players are free to select an age for their character, although any who do not know how old they are may opt to use the random roll of 17+1D6 to determine it.

Each character will be treated this way, and their Subject number will increase accordingly.

Scene Four-Characteristic Rolls

The belt continues to move along, but this time their journey through the chamber is ended abruptly when a series of explosions, which start off far away and get closer, blow up the track that they conveyor belt runs and, each of the gurneys is upended and plummets a short distance into a dark, cold abyss at the bottom of the chamber. After a brief fall, the gurneys lands in freezing cold water what tastes of chemicals.

This is an opportunity to determine the characteristic rolls. Each one will be introduced in turn, with a chance for the character to use it to free themselves or one of the others.

Effort:

The characters will no doubt want to escape the heavy, sinking gurney to free themselves. Multiply their STR by 5, and have them roll under that value. If they succeed, they have managed to use their strength to get out. However, they are still under water.



Fractured Hopes

TESTING STRENGTH

There will no doubt be characters who attempt to force their way out of the binds that hold them to their gurney. There will be a chance for this to occur soon, but not yet. If an attempt is made, suggest that the reason it fails is that they were drugged unconscious just a few minutes ago, and the lingering after-effects keep them from fully marshaling their strength to get free.

Stamina:

The shock of the cold water and the time spent under it can be quite distressing to the human body. To keep from crying out and inhaling water, have each of the players multiply their character's CON by 5 and roll under it to keep their wits about them.

Agility:

Their muscles will have been immobile for a long time, and getting them to warm up enough to swim can be tricky. In order to get to the surface, have the players multiply their character's DEX by 5 and roll under it.

Luck:

As the characters surface, more explosions erupt overhead. Chunks of burning, twisted metal rain down on them from above. Have each player multiply their character's POW by 5 and roll under it. Those who pass are able to avoid being hit by the debris. Those who fail are injured (but since they don't have hit points yet, just note who is injured and who is not.) Maria automatically fails her **Luck** roll, and is hurt, although she manages to get to safety.

USING POWERS

Characters who possess powers will very likely want to use them to aid in their escape. However, stopping the game to have players select from a list of powers is not a good idea. Instead, if the player wishes to use a character's power, try to determine the closest possible power from their existing type, and determine who it would behave in this situation.

When it comes time to actually assign powers, remember which ones have already been used and limit the number of choices accordingly.

Idea:

Getting up and out of the water means finding some place to go. Have each player multiply their character's INT by 5 and roll under it. If they succeed, they discover an alcove that can be reached by clambering up a set of pipes.

Charisma:

Now they are free and out of immediate danger, the characters will likely wish to move on deeper into the bowels of the ship. As they leave, the notice that Maria is in shock, and is just sitting, shivering from the cold water, and unwilling to move. Have the players multiply their APP by 5 and roll under it. If this succeeds, they manage to convince Maria that she's better off coming with them. Otherwise, Maria stays behind, unwilling to leave (for now).

Fractured Hopes

Scene Five-Distinctive Features (Optional)

As the game information determined in step 5 of the character creation process really is only useful in combat, and combat cannot occur until the characters have developed their skills, the derived characteristics for the characters will be determined later on in the process.

In it's place, allow the characters a chance to describe what they look like to each other. If you are using the optional Distinctive Features table, this is a good time to work through what, exactly, a character's Distinctive Features are.

Eventually, they hear a buzzing sound and a voice come over a comm system. The voice is a man, who introduces himself as Hank. Hank says, "You probably have a bunch of questions about what's going on, and I wish I could answer them. For the time being, I need you to sit tight, and follow my directions. We're going to get you off this boat and moved to someplace safe. Ah, no, not again..." There is the sound of gunfire, and the comm system goes dead. If she has not come with the party, Maria turns up now, scared and lonely.

WHO ARE YOU?

Characters will have an opportunity to talk to each other along the way. This is good chance to help them figure out what sort of person they are playing. If they have names for their characters, they will "remember" them during introductions, but players without them are free to claim continuing amnesia on this front.

The NPC going along with the player is a woman named Maria. She does not remember how she got here, and only recalls her name and that she's a mother. She's very scared about what's going on, and will scream at the slightest provocation.

Scene Six-Personality (Optional)

The area they enter into is a large, open chamber, filled with debris, as though a fight has happened here recently. There are pieces of a robot that has been destroyed strewn about the area. Something about that robot losses something in the minds of the characters, and something about their past comes floating up to their surface of their minds.

Maria stops and gasps, and says something like, "I remember...When I was younger, I wanted to be the best mother I could become. There was something satisfying about taking care of a child." She turns to address one of the other character. "What about you? Do you remember something?"

The character's each have four options here, as listed in step 6 of the character creation process. They may approach life:

1. With force and brawn
2. Skill, technique and craft
3. With quick wits
4. With a quick tongue and clear insight

Each outlook provides a bonus to certain skills. Have the player mark each skill in some way as they are listed. The actual +20% bonus doesn't need to be taken into account now.

Scene Seven-Professions & Skills

Suddenly, the lights go out, thrusting the group into darkness. Maria screams and grabs onto the nearest character for support. They can hear the sound of gunfire nearby, and then silence. The blinding light form a cutting torch lights up against one of the walls, making a quick rectangle which is kicked away.

A man with a flashlight and a rifle steps in. He's rough looking, and seems harried. He lifts the light and lowers the weapon. "Oh, thank

Fractured Hopes

ASSISTANCE

If one or more character fails at one of the characteristic rolls, one of the other members of the group can make another check in that person's place to assist them. If this attempt fails, they may pool their skills and work together, which is automatically successful. What is important here is getting the numbers down.

god," he says. "I found you. I thought you'd be here." He ducks partway through the opening. "Let's go, they'll be here any minute."

This is Hank, who has been sent to bring the group of characters out of the Eigen Ship before implantation. He refuses to answer any questions, and insists that the group gets moving. While they move through tight, cramped corridors, Hank hands out files on each of them, which describe them in detail, including some of their past history, and more importantly for them right now, their profession.

Almost all of the professions listed in the *BRP* rulebook have a place in *Fractured Hopes*, making the choice of professions fairly straightforward. In some cases, the profession is what a character did before the war. As such, most characters should use any "personal specialty" skill for some sort of combat related skill, either with a weapon or a power.

Normally, players would divide up their skill points as they saw fit. However, in this adventure, such action would take far too long, and would involve a great deal of time consuming thinking about where to put those last few points. To speed this up, assume that each character will allot their skill points in increments, according to the following table:

1. In a Normal Game, the characters will put 25% towards each of their ten skills.
2. In a Heroic Game, the character will put 33% in each skill.

3. In an Epic Game, the characters will put 40% in each of their ten skill.

4. In a Superhuman Game, the characters will put 50% in each of their ten skills.

As per the normal rules, characters may spend their skill points on powers if they are members of an appropriate occupation. Note also that, for the sake of saving time, don't bother limiting skills by the maximum percentage, If a skill's base value, the optional bonus for personality type, and the allotment from their profession push a skill over the limit for the campaign type, it should be fine to go over a few points.

For Personal skills, assume the characters distribute their personal points in amounts equal to their INT to any ten skills, including powers and weapons.

Scene Eight-Equipment

Hank moves with the characters through the ship, which is rocked by more explosions and the sounds of screams and gunfire. If the GM wishes, more used of the characteristic rolls or skills can be called for to cover scrambling over piles of debris, clearing heavy machinery from passageways, or hiding from robotic combatants.

Eventually, Hank brings the group to a room where he has stashed some supplies. For each character, he has stored a set of sturdy, functional clothes for each of them, a weapon for each (a pistol for non-combat characters, a rifle or melee weapon for anyone who has at least 50% skill.)

Also, there is a small box that contains a personal effect that Hank's employer has managed to find for each character. What these are is not specified; allow the players to describe what it is they pull out of the box, if they so choose. Other personal equipment, such as wealth, will be detailed later.

Fractured Hopes

Scene Nine-Combat

As the characters leave the safety of the equipment room, they will be ambushed by a unit of humans who have been fully implanted and turned into weapons. However, before the fight begins, each of the character's derived characteristics need to be determined. There is no easy way to do this and integrate it into the adventure, so simply (and quickly) guide the characters through the step 5 of the character creation process.

The characters are close to their means of escape, a Voidship captained by Hank, but they are stopped in their progress by cyborgs, using the game stats for such a creature on page 360 of the *BRP* rulebook. If the GM is feeling particularly cruel, have one of the cyborgs attack from ambush and focus all of its attention on Maria. Once she falls (which should be after one hit) it turns its attention on the other characters.

This combat runs just like any other. If cyborgs are not a sufficient challenge, killer robots, or even an experimental giant robot, can be added to the mix.

Remember the goal here is to introduce the players to combat, not to kill someone. Maria or potentially Hank can be killed in order to ramp up tension. However, bear in mind that if Hank dies, the players will need to have a Voidship pilot in their group in order to leave, so don't kill him off without good reason.

Combat encounters work best if they aren't static. Slugging it out with cyborgs in a featureless room about the size of a boxing ring will get old fast, but a running battle through an inhumanly cruel processing facility, being hounded at all times by remorseless killer robots is much more exciting. A good rule of thumb is to introduce a new element or complication every 3-5 combat rounds. This has the added benefit of making it easier to bring Hank's Voidship as a means of escape.

Scene Ten-Escape

Finally, the character's open a door and see Hank's Voidship, The Sky-Mother, berthed in a hangar. It is a smallish ship, seemingly composed of bits of discarded steel and a hodgepodge of wooden carvings. Just as the character's get on board the ship, it begins taking fire from a squad of Eigen soldiers. Hank activates the Void Engine and pilots the ship through the hangar and out into the Void.

However, it soon becomes obvious that their escape is not yet complete. A burst of energy cannon fire erupts around the ship, rocking it and blowing off chunks, but not doing any real damage. A trio of Eigen assault pods has been dispatched to stop them from getting away.

Run this as a vehicular chase. The Sky Mother has a one length lead over the enemy vessels. Once that lead has been increased to 5 lengths, or the enemy ships are all destroyed, the characters have managed to escape.

There are two weapons mounted on the ship. Any character not otherwise engaged can operate these weapons. Unless he is dead or otherwise out of commission, Hank will pilot the vessel, using his effective **Pilot** skill of 50%. Sorcerers amongst the group may be able to squeeze a little more speed out of the Void Engine, (Void Engineering test, or 5 Power Points and a **Luck** roll), which makes Hank's next **Pilot** check Easy.

If the assault pods are able to come alongside the Sky Mother, instead of firing weapons, they sweep across the deck and attack with their manipulator arms. Instead of doing damage, the drones will grapple with their targets, and grappled characters are carried off to the large Eigen ship that they just got out of.



Fractured Hopes

Outcomes

There are several ways this introductory scenario can finish out. Unless the Gamemaster has other plans, some means of allowing the players to take possession of the Sky Mother as owning

a ship and being free to explore the Void lies at the heart of *Fractured Hopes*.

If the Sky Mother manages to shake their Eigen pursuit, Hank will take the characters to a nearby refugee camp, from where they may seek their own fortunes in the remains of the world. He states that they are a handy bunch to have

ESCAPE ENCOUNTERS.

1. When moving through an area filled with high debris (containers of machine parts, heavy machinery, or metal caskets with captive humans), the group must make Spot checks to notice a unit of snipers perched somewhere up ahead. Diving for cover grants a +30% bonus to Dodge attempts to avoid the incoming fire.

2. A tremendous explosion rocks the Voidship. Each character must make an Agility roll in order to keep their feet.

3. There is a blast and rush of wind. The next thing the characters know, a large section of the floor and wall near their location is torn away, leaving a huge gap leading out into the Void. Whatever the characters are fighting is swept out into the Void as well.

4. The character's see another rescue team moving through the ship. As the other team approaches, they're fired upon by a hidden unit of cyborgs. The characters may leave them to their fate, and gain some distance on their pursuers, or turn to aid them and risk the attention of the cyborgs themselves.

5. Any time the character's are battling enemy cyborgs, there is a cumulative 5% chance that one of the cyborgs will have been someone from a randomly determined character's past, such as a spouse, friend or relative. This former associate has no will of their own, and will not hesitate the attack if given a chance to do so.

6. At some point, the character's happen upon a small boy, who is screaming for his mother. If Maria is with the group, she will argue to take the boy with them at any costs. Hank will say it's a bad idea, since the Eigen are well known to put implants in children and use them as infiltrators. What do the character's decide to do? And is the boy really something inhuman, or simply a child?

7. The character's must pass through an open deck in order to escape. During this time, they get a glimpse of the conflict raging around them. A dozen Voidships of varying designs are moving through the Void around the Eigen vessel, which dwarfs the smaller ships. In the distance, fragments of the old world can be seen. Just then, a Voidship is hit by an Eigen energy turret and plows into the deck, blocking their path and showering them with debris. Each character must

make a **Dodge** check or take 2D6 damage. Additionally, any means of getting around or past the wreckage slows them down enough that their pursuers gain on them.

8. As they move through the ship, the characters run into another rescue team and their freed human cargo. However, this group has not fared well in their bid for freedom. Most of the rescued people have died at the hands of group of human seeming cyborgs, and the survivors are convinced that the character are in fact another unit of infiltration unit cyborgs. The scared group has barricaded themselves at the end of a narrow corridor, and have weapons trained on the characters as soon as they are spotted. It will take a great deal of willpower and influence to convince these shell-shocked fighters that the character's pose no threat. The character's group must accumulate a total of 10 successes in any of the following skills: **Command**, **Etiquette**, **Fast Talk**, **Persuade** or **Status**. Critical successes count as two, and specials count as three. The character's have a total of 7 combat rounds to accumulate the total number of successes needed or the survivors open fire.

Fractured Hopes

around, and that he wants to know if they'll stay on as crew for Sky Mother. If the players agree, the next time the ship leaves, a malfunction occurs and the ship must crash land. Hank dies in the crash, leaving the players in control of the ship. If they decline, the Gamemaster will be in his or her own, although I do suggest that getting the players a ship is important.

However, if Hank is dead, the Sky Mother is essentially without an owner. The character may wish to claim ownership, and since there is no external authority to determine such things, the ship will be theirs, free and clear. If the Gamemaster wishes the characters to begin play proper with a ship of their own, a stray shot during their escape may take Hank out, leaving them with this option.

If the Sky Mother is badly damaged, it crashes on a nearby fragment. The characters must then repair the ship, survive the no doubt hostile environment, and use the surviving members of the group to crew the Voidship back into the skies. If Hank is alive, he might die shortly after giving the group instructions on what needs to be repaired.

NPC Characteristics

Hank Gordon

Hank is a hard man. He is a veteran of the Sundering War, and actually served as an Eigen conscript before the time when the Eigen routinely augmented their human soldiers. He managed to escape and joined the human resistance movement, and has been fighting the oppression of humanity ever since.

Hank's getting on in years. He was already old when the Sundering occurred, and he has been able to survive the harsh conditions of the

world due to a mixture of tenacity and cunning. He knows the Sky Mother isn't in the best shape, but he also feels that bringing people out of harm's way and improving the lives of others is more important than personal prestige.

STR 15 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 17 POW 14

DEX 14 APP 15

Move: 10

Hit Points: 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Armor: Kitbashed Armor (counts as light battle armor, won't fit any other SIZ) AP 8.

Attacks: Punch 65%, 1D3+1D4 (crushing)

Blaster Rifle 50%, 2D8+3 (impaling)

EMP Pistol 75%, 2D6 (vs. robots. ½ damage to cyborgs)

Skills: Dodge 40%, Hide 40%, Knowledge (Eigentech) 50%, Own a Voidship 50%, Pilot Voidship 50%, Stealth 50%

Powers: None.

Distinctive Features: Hank wears a suit of mismatched armour, with a helmet, cobbled together from whatever scraps he can find. It's decent for protection, but is an unsightly mix of colors, shapes and styles.

Hank speaks with a distinctive accent. It's not silly or annoying, but it is unmistakable.

Hank's chest and stomach are thick and lined with muscle. Despite his advancing age, he works hard to maintain a solid physique.

Maria Proctor

A young women who is completely out of her league. The brutality of the Eigen horrify her, and the violence inherent in her rescue has left her shocked and disoriented. However, she eventually adjusts to the situation, and, if she is not killed during the escape, might make a fine NPC for the characters to interact with on a regular basis.

In her old life, Maria was content to be a mother and a wife. However, she lost nearly everything in the Sundering; her home, her family, every aspect of her life was destroyed. The

Fractured Hopes

OWNING SKY MOTHER

If the characters do wind up in possession of the ship, they'll be in good shape to explore the Void. However, there are a few considerations to make.

- * While the ship will still operate, it is not in the best shape. Characters who have the **Own a Voidship** skill may opt to have the benefits from that skill apply to upgrades for the Sky Mother. Of course, they are free to have more than one ship, if they'd rather keep personal vessels.
- * The ship's Void Engine needs to be replaced soon. It will make a few trips to nearby fragments, or one long trip to a distant part of the world, but after this, it will burn out completely at the most inopportune time, leaving the ship adrift or unable to escape when they need to. Any sorcerer in the party will feel something is wrong with it, but only a actual Void Engineer will be able to repair it. Even then, it's only a patch job, and a new one will need to be made soon.
- * If the characters do not the **Own a Voidship** skill in sufficient levels to account for the components on the Sky Mother, then each component will follow the Sub-standard Components rule. Characters may repair these flawed components by actually replacing them in game, or by increasing their **Own a Voidship** skill enough to cover a new component between sessions.

Move: 8

Hit Points: 13

Damage Bonus: None

Armor: None

Attacks: Pistol 25% damage varies

Rifle 15%, damage varies

Skills: Bargain 50%, Fast Talk 50%, First Aid 50%, Insight 25%, Listen 75%, Persuade 30%

Powers: None. However, if Maria is to play an ongoing role in the campaign, she may manifest psychic abilities at some point in the future.

Distinctive Features: For now, Maria is scared out of her mind. She jumps at the slightest sound, and always assumes the worst about the situation. If she survives, she will eventually get over this, and become single minded about locating Michael.

Her hair is long, black and curly, although her imprisonment has left it a tangled, matted mess. At the first opportunity, she'll take a knife and hack most of it off.

only thing that keeps her going are rumors she's heard about one of her children, a son named Michael, who may be alive out near the Edge. Once freed from the Eigen, she will pursue locating her son before all other tasks.

STR 10 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 12 POW 15

DEX 15 APP 12

FRACTURED HOPES

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