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EVENT HORIZON

VICTORY: 2442

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EVENT HORIZON

2442
VICTORY

A StarSIEGE: Event Horizon Setting

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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF ERNEST GARY GYGAX (1938 – 2008).

Welcome to Victory 2442, the first official setting for StarSIEGE: Event Horizon. Victory 2442 is set in the far future after a short but bloody and chaotic war between Humanity and the alien races known as the Niruai (ner-EYE). Humanity, with the aid of their once bitter rivals the Rykshi (RYE-kshe), managed to end all hostilities with no clear-cut winner. Now, the Hegemony of Earth lies shattered, the remains of New Beijing still smoldering while the Empire of the Niruai also faces a crisis as tribal schisms brought on by the war boil over into near civil war. Only the Rykshi Protectorate managed to escape the war without any lasting damage to their infrastructure. It was a war unlike any other for all the combatants, and it has left each bloodied and weary. The last of the guns have ceased firing, though the ruins still smolder, and every sentient being in the galaxy now turns gazes upon an unsettled landscape, where many of the old orders have been overturned, and the future is anything but certain. It is now the year 2442 CE by Human reckoning, two wars have ended while another smolders; there are casualties and survivors, the tired and the wounded, but only defeat in its many forms, and no true victory to be claimed by any

It is in this world that the players will find themselves. The galaxy seethes with change, allowing for opportunities for the most adventurous and imaginative of the races.

HUMANITY

The ruination of the Terran Sector has left most Human colonies isolated. The existing communications network was systematically dismantled by the Niruai invasion fleet, thus communication across the over 8 light year separation between Sol and their most distant colony in the Sirius System relies on the few courier crafts that survived the war. The only real power lies in the Knights of St. George, a loose confederation of military, merchant, and mercenary ships who served under Captain St. George and the *Victory* in the assault of the Niruai sector. These brave souls stand as the only real defense and police force in the quadrant. It was the Knights that signed the Ryk Accords with the Emperor's Emissary from the Niruai that ended the bloodletting, and it was they who salvaged the Human Alliance from the ashes of the Hegemony. Now the Knights of St. George have been tasked with the job to rebuild a Humanity scattered and bloodied from the long years of battle. Opposing them are the Ghosts of New Beijing, a guerilla group formed from the remnants of Battle Group 11 who doggedly pursued the White Fleet throughout the

Human Sector when all other hope was lost. The Ghosts want nothing to do with unification, believing a smaller, decentralized government will protect Humanity from the devastation felt in the last war.

Humanity is spread out amongst various artificial colonies, subterranean stations, and environmentally engineered planets. During the reign of the Hegemony, most Human colonies maintained their own governmental forms and cultures. Yet for all their differences, few of the settlements, save for far flung colonies or generational ships, were completely self-sufficient. As such, when trade was disrupted due to the war many colonies suffered from rationing or were starved out of existence. Only now, five years after the war's end, are Humans returning to the once thriving communities to attempt to pick up the pieces. Of course, this glut of abandoned property has given rise to piracy, crime, and scavengers all of which put even more of a strain on the few resources available to local authorities or the Knights of St. George. But persevering against great odds has been a hallmark of Humanity and all across the Human sector the people are reclaiming what was once theirs.

NIRUAI

The Niruai's most recent bid to rid the galaxy of Humanity has come to a great price to their Empire. The Niruai White Fleet suffered massive casualties in the campaign leaving the Empire with few craft of any kind to protect and supply their Empire. Moreover, the assault of Captain St. George's *Victory* and her accompanying ships has greatly crippled much of the Niruai's military-industrial complex. Coupled with these economic and materiel woes is the fact that a deep rift has formed in the tribal structures of the Niruai.

While the Niruai have never been fully unified, with each Tribe looking after its own over the Empire, all gave at least token respect to the Emperor. However, the most recent Emperor had managed a feat heretofore unknown to the Niruai: coalition. Regardless of the petty squabbles that existed between Tribes, the Emperor managed to bind them to one another, generally through imaginative manipulation of Tribal genealogies that drew connections between ancestors that most Tribes either didn't recognize or that probably never actually existed.

This bond of unification has slipped, however. The Synae Tribe, one of the strongest military Tribes in the Empire (and known as the Red Talons to many Humans), has all but seceded from the Empire, declaring the current Emperor unfit for rule due to his following of

the Kamisori Tribe's plan for mass-eradication of the Humans. Of course, Tribal grudges between the Synae and the Kamisori are also factored into this power play.

This schism has allowed other tribal conflicts to boil over in the years following the Accords. Already ancient, petty squabbles have lead to skirmishes between Tribes. Major Tribes have even begun raiding or annexing the lands and holdings of smaller Tribes. Of course these actions have allowed the Synae Tribe to amass a coalition of the smaller Tribes as well as a few Human sympathizers in their cause against the Emperor. Meanwhile the Emperor has been maneuvering the other major Tribes in such a way as to make a civil war all but inevitable.

RYKSHI

The long, grinding war that had begun against the Hegemony of Earth in 2427 and eventually culminated in the Protectorate aligning with their former enemies to repel the Niruai from the Human Sector in 2436. These decades of fighting have taken their toll on the Rykshi armed forces. While their civilian base escaped the last Intergalactic War relatively unscathed, all walks of life are beginning to feel the pain of a weak military presence. The Protectorate stands as almost one-hundred worlds strong with a variety of alien species living as vassals in the conquered territory of the Rykshi. Greatly outnumbered by their "subordinate" species, the Rykshi had long relied on their military strength to keep things in check. Now, lacking that strength, the Rykshi are finding it hard to maintain their dominance over those they had conquered over the millennia.

Independence movements have begun to crop up on many of the Protectorate's holdings, mostly in the form of refusal to pay taxes or to ship goods to Rykshi planets. The few military ships that are able to patrol the Protectorate's holdings have found themselves worn thin as they do what they can to quash the noncompliance where it arises. This withholding of goods and funds has put the Protectorate's economy into a tail spin, making it harder to fund any military build up that would help alleviate the issues. Add to these factors the Ryk Accords which require the Rykshi to help patrol the Human and Niruai sectors to help the Accords take hold and you see a Protectorate on the verge of possible collapse.

The Rykshi are a tough race and are not known to lie down easily when presented with opposition. Even now members of the Rykshi governing Council are working to make

political in-roads on their wayward planets. Their encounters with the independence-minded Humanity have given a new perspective to the Council on how to rule a conquered people. Of course, these new perspectives may take a while to become fully ingrained to a society that is focused on the supremacy of the Rykshi race over all others. Luckily, their pack-like hierarchy may make the transition a little less rocky, provided the Council managed to maintain their dominance over the populace.
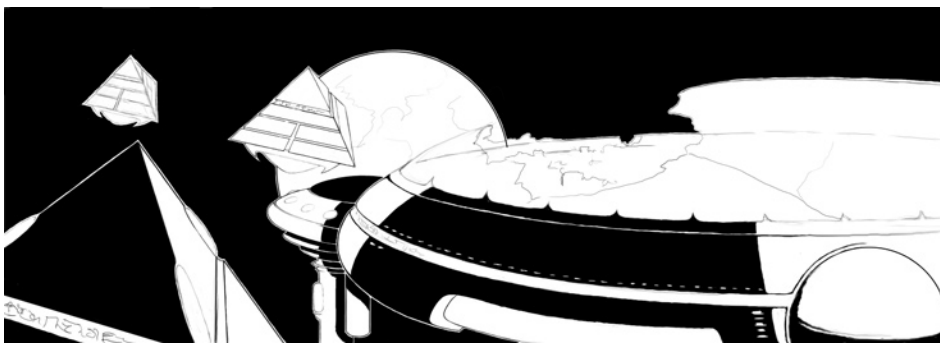
RULES MODIFICATIONS

Integrating Victory 2442 into StarSIEGE: Event Horizon requires very few changes to the base rules. There are some assumptions in technology and how things work that must be accounted for. If nothing else, these changes will help a SIEGE Engineer to understand how the rules can be altered to fit a setting of their own design.

SCALE

The first big change in Victory 2442 is a modification to the Scaling mechanics found in the Operations Manual. For Victory 2442 the Superluminal Scale has been removed and is instead replaced with Subspace. Subspace is an artificial construct in Victory 2442 to help explain how vehicles can travel the vast distances in the universe relatively quickly. More details on how Subspace works from a story perspective are handled in the Science section of this guide.

Mechanically, there are five levels of Subspace, called Bands. Each Band is named after a letter of the Greek Alphabet, so the Bands are: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and Epsilon. Each Band of Subspace represents a different Scale.

Band	Multiplier	Danger Factor	Damage	BP Cost
Alpha	x531,441 (9^6)	+1 CL	1 Wound	21
Beta	x4,782,969 (9^7)	+3 CL	2 Wounds	24
Gamma	x43,046,721 (9^8)	+5 CL	3 Wounds	27
Delta	x387,420,489 (9^9)	+8 CL	4 Wounds	30
Epsilon	x3,486,784,401 (9^{10})	+12 CL	6 Wounds	34

SUBSPACE RULES

When traversing Subspace, all energy-based weapons (e.g. lasers) and communications systems will have their Range Band reduced by one step per Subspace Band to a minimum of Close Range. Thus, a Medium Range Weapon would be Short Range in the Alpha Band and Close Range in all other Bands. Finally, each Band will also have an associated Danger Factor. This Factor is the Challenge Level that is added to all Piloting, Sensors, and Navigation rolls made while in that particular Band of Subspace. If any of these types of rolls are failed in Subspace, the craft takes a number of Wounds as listed on the chart (which are actually equal to ½ of the Challenge Level, rounded up). These Wounds cannot be reduced by armor or shields as it represents a collision with the Subspace shadow of an object in real-space.

The Danger Factor assumes the craft moving through Subspace has reconnaissance drones and/or a fighter screen serving as an advanced warning system for gravity shadows. If a craft is "flying blind" in Subspace, double the listed Challenge Level.

CYBERNETICS

Cybernetics are both dangerous and rare in the Victory 2442 setting. The base Cyber Score for all cultures is 5 and the Prosthesis Special Effect can not be purchased above level 3 for Humans and Rykshi. Furthermore, Humans and Rykshi can not have any cyberwear that grants any bonuses or augments their normal abilities. The Niruai can make use of level 4 Prosthetics and can use any form of augmentation, provided the SIEGE Engineer approves.

PSIONICS

Psionics are very rare in the baseline setting for Victory 2442. Assume the Psi Rating for all species to start at -1 when randomly determining a character's starting Psi Rating. This means that a character will need to roll a Psi Rating of +2 or more to have any Psi Ability, if not the character's Psi Score is set to 0. Beyond that, a character's Psi Rating can never be greater than 3. The Psi Rating of all planets and cultures is 0.

Psionic powers should be limited to relatively low powered effects like limited telepathy, telekinesis, psychometry, or limited mind reading. Of course groups may modify these limitations if they wish.

MUTATIONS

Victory 2442 is an Intensity Rating 0 setting, which means there are no beneficial Mutations.

NOVA POINTS

Victory 2442 is a mostly gritty setting with some pulp injected in to keep things interesting. Characters in Victory 2442 start with a total of 4 Nova Points.

ALIEN SPECIES

There are three major Alien Species in the Victory 2442 setting: Humans, the Niruai, and the Rykshi. The rules and descriptions of these species are provided in this guide. The Rykshi Protectorate is actually a large conglomeration of "conquered" worlds with their own indigenous life-forms, but most of these life-forms are rarely seen off of their home worlds. A SIEGE Engineer should feel free to use the sample Alien Species from the Field Manual to flesh out some of these minor alien races if need be.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Computer based AI as well as Androids are relatively unknown to any of the species in Victory 2442. Within the limits of existing technology, it is simply not possible to build a true, stable artificial intelligence. This means that Android based characters and any AIs cannot be modeled in Victory 2442. The Niruai do not have quite the same problems with unstable AIs as the Humans and Rykshi do, however, and so SIEGE Engineers may have a rare AI pop up here and there in Niruai space.

The solar system that gave birth to Humanity has changed almost beyond recognition in the millennia since recorded history began. Humanity has reshaped the worlds around it into images of Earth, only to see many of them ground back into dust by the wheels of war. Hundreds of orbital habitats and space stations circle the planets throughout Human-inhabited space, lie scattered in asteroid belts, or stand wherever a sprawling Humanity has found it convenient to make a home for itself. Sadly, many have been reduced to wreckage, or, perhaps even worse, semi-inhabitable hulks in which a tiny fragment of the original population clings to life. The far flung and war-weary places that Humanity still calls home are now loosely joined under the Alliance of Human Worlds, founded on the wreckage of the Hegemony of Earth which had united Humanity through centuries of discovery, growth and relative safety, but which, in the end, was one more casualty of the terrible war which raged throughout the galaxy.

The Human Sector itself consists of eight fully environmentally engineered planets or planetary objects. In the Sol System, the inhabitable objects are Earth, Mars, Luna, Titan, and Ganymede while in the Proxima Centauri System the planet of Galileo and its satellite Hawking are both at Earth-like levels. The most recently environmentally engineered planet in the Human sector is Asimov and is located in the Barnard's Star system, which is almost 6 light years from Sol. Before the war there were almost 40 other environmentally engineering projects in operation throughout the other planets in the Sol, Proxima Centauri, Barnard's Star, and Alpha Centauri systems. Some of these projects are still in operation while others suffered huge setbacks from orbital bombardments or Niruai CBRN attacks.

Human settlements outside of environmentally engineered planets tend to be in domed or subterranean settlements (depending on local conditions) of sizes from a few hundred to millions. For example, the Bush Habitat on Mercury is a subterranean labyrinth of mining tunnels and research stations containing some 400 souls while the extra-solar religious commune Beth-El Colony is a scattered network of domed villages and small crystal farms that are home to almost 15,000 settlers. Prior to the destruction of New Bejing on Mars, the Hegemony tracked some 300 "notable" Human colonies (with the "notable" designation given to any colony of over 10,000 people over the majority age of 18). The Knights of St. George, under the auspices of the newly formed Human Alliance, are doing their best to restore contact with any and all Human settlements they can find.

HUMAN SPECIES

The Human Species is a hardy and adaptable race of peoples. They are ingenious when it comes to solving problems and rarely back down from challenges. For the most part they are highly independently minded but easily form social groups for protection and the well-being of the species. They have earned the begrudging respect of both the Niruai and Rykshi due to their tenacity in the face of overwhelming odds.

Appearance: Two arms, two legs, bilateral symmetric, with Humanoid anatomy and bipedal movement. There is a wide variance in appearance for Humans, in body type, hair color and length, as well as skin tones.

Size: 10 (10 BP)

Move: 1 (Ground), Personal (4 BP)

Attribute Mods: None (0 BP)

Tech Score: Most Human Settlements have a base Tech Score of 9

Other Advantages (18 BP)

    Adaptation (P0 D0 X36; Automatic. Bonus Skill Bundle)

    Humans are extremely adaptable as well as quick learners. As such, Humans can select one additional Skill Bundle during character creation.

HUMAN CULTURE

Humanity has never done well in homogenizing itself. In fact, it almost seems against "Human nature" for a group of sufficient size to avoid devolving into cliques. It seems that while Humanity is a social animal, they don't always like to socialize with everyone. This drive towards individuation within a group has served as Humanity's saving grace time and again in the harsh universe. With such diverse individuals within the society come diverse groups, with some members spanning multiple groupings. This lends itself to a sense of community that, when threatened from without, allows for the disparate groups and individuals to work together towards a common good. Of course, this group cohesion in times of strife has no finer an example than the civilian defenders of Mars in the Niruai's First Invasion.

When the Niruai launched a surprise invasion of the Sol system in 2298 they quickly destroyed the colony on Ganymede and moved swiftly to the planet of Mars. Humanity's few war ships at the time were incapable of subspace flight, and so were unable to respond to the rapidity of the Niruai's movements. It was during the battle of Mars that the civilian populace took to whatever space-worthy craft they could and brought the battle to the invaders. The passenger liner *Swan* lifted from the Martian surface loaded with nothing but ordinary citizens, their environmental suits, and whatever weapons they could find, but

managed to fight its way through to the Niruai flagship, where the desperate citizens of Mars literally leapt from one ship to the other in a deep-space boarding action that no military planner of either race had ever envisioned. Losses among the defenders were near total, but the Niruai fleet was unprepared for such a counterattack from an enemy that their scouts had reported to be divided and eternally at odds with one another. As the last survivors of the *Swan's* boarding party died literally hammering on the hatch to the Niruai flagship's bridge, the surviving invaders broke from Martian orbit, limped away at their best speed, and then vanished as completely as they had appeared.

In the centuries since that fateful first contact Humanity has spread itself across various colonies, planets, satellites, and other habitats. Often times a new colony will spring up as a group, dissatisfied with their current habitat or social situation, decides to strike out on their own. In the nascent years of the Hegemony, officials tried desperately to keep up with the myriad of new colonies and settlements that arose with the development of the Subspace drive. It didn't take long for officials to realize that they would never have the manpower to follow-through on this undertaking. Too often a new settlement would die out suddenly while three others would arise in its place. Settlements would assimilate one another

for protection and resources or small scale battles were fought between neighbors and rivals. In the end, Humanity went to the stars in the same manner they covered the Earth: fractiously.

This isn't to say Humanity hasn't been unified. Wars against the alien threats of both the Rykshi and Niruai have fostered a racial pride in Humanity through the last few centuries. This means that while many Humans wouldn't get along with each other culturally, they still recognize one another's Humanity. This has allowed for some level of cohesion to develop amongst the varied colonies and life-styles that exist within the Human sector. The Hegemony did much to foster this cohesion and was largely successful for hundreds of years. But now, in the wake of the Hegemony's death, Humanity is settling in to more "familiar" patters of in-fighting and squabbling amongst themselves. The devastation and lack of resources brought on by the war have only intensified this. The Human Alliance has their work cut out for them in once again uniting a Humanity splintered.

THE EMPIRE OF THE NIRUAI

The Empire of the Niruai spans well over 50 worlds seeded across a vast 6 light year radius from the Imperial seat of Ukolniruai. These worlds were either discovered to have rudimentary enough atmospheres for the Niruai to set up habitats or were engineered just enough to create environments that would not be hostile to their habitat modules. These modules are ubiquitous across Niruai space. Each Niruai world is considered to be under the domain of a single Tribe, even if a variety of Tribes operate on the planet, and that Tribe is responsible for the well-being and defense of that portion of the Empire.

There are ten major worlds within the Niruai's Empire. Their homeworld of Ukolniruai is of course, the most powerful and important of the worlds and is the only world that has no Tribal leader as it is considered the domain of the Imperial Tribe. Other major worlds include Ukolpaer, a rich mining world that is the only colony not controlled by one of the five major Tribes, and Nikhtaibri, a planet owned by the Taibri clan and home to some of the most advanced research and engineering collectives in Niruai space.

There once was a vast area of expansion in the Amatas Sector (near Kappa Ceti) where new colonies had been set up by a few of the smaller tribes in hopes to gain some more political power. These colonies were destroyed by the Rykshi invasion in 2300 but now stand ready for repopulation by Niruai after the Ryk Accords of 2442 ceded control back to the Niruai. Even now both minor and major clans are working to cement their hold on these settlements in hopes of expanding their world-base. What's more, the separatist movements within the Synae Tribe have set up numerous secret bases of operations in this Sector to build their coalition.

NIRUAI SPECIES

Appearance: Two arms, two legs, bilateral symmetric, with Humanoid anatomy and bipedal movement. The Niruai are taller on average than Humans, measuring well over 2 meters in height. This height, however, is not matched with much muscle mass, making them spindly-looking. They have an almost delicate look to their features and extremities. Niruai skin tones range from pale grey to almost completely black. They have no body hair and their eyes are milky white throughout lacking any pupils. Niruai have very expressive faces but lack any form of modulation in their speech, all speaking in a simple monotone with only small pitch variances between individuals. This means that a large component of the spoken Niruai language requires facial reference.

Size: 10 (10 BP)

Move: 1 (Ground), Personal (4 BP)

Attribute Mods: None (0 BP)

Tech Score: Most Niruai Settlements have a base Tech Score of 8

Other Advantages (36 BP)

Heritage (P0 D0 X18; Automatic. +2 to one Skill Bundle)

The Niruai have very strong ties to their Tribes, ties that go back for centuries if not millennia. These ties manifest themselves as an almost preternatural understanding in the field most directly associated with their Tribe. Thus the Niruai gains a bonus of +2 to the Skill Bundle most associated with their Tribe's specialty.

Glory Hound (P0 D0 X12; Automatic. Bolster +3, Charm +3, SFX: Fast)

The Niruai value individual and Tribal Glory above all things. Because of this, they are quick to react to danger. Beyond that, a Niruai wears its accomplishments as badges of honor and is quick to regale others of tales of their conquests and accomplishments, but never in a boastful manner. In fact, many are either inspired by these tales or charmed by the chutzpah involved.

Monotone (P0 D0 X6; Automatic. Bluff +6, Reasoning +3, Flaw: Non-Niruai Only)

The Niruai have no tonal modulation in their language and thus speak in a simple monotone. Quite a large bit of meaning in the Niruai tongue is encoded in facial expressions and tics. This makes it rather hard for non-Niruai to decipher when a Niruai is lying. Oddly this monotone, while somewhat hard to listen to for long times, often lends an authoritative air to what the Niruai is saying as well. This bonus only applies when speaking to a non-Niruai (a 9-point Flaw).

The Niruai are a proud race known for their loyalty to Tribe and Emperor. This loyalty, however, is mixed with a fierce devotion to individual accomplishment and honor. Glory is paramount to a Niruai as individual heroics in service to the Tribe are the center point of much of the Niruai's history. A Niruai will seek honor and glory in all their endeavors, which makes for a highly competitive society that oftentimes sees cooperation take a back seat to ambition. As such, there are many areas that the Niruai lag behind the other factions as each Tribe (and thus, individuals within the Tribe) does their best to keep their own research or information from aiding another Niruai or Tribe's rise to glory.

The connection to Tribe, family, and distant ancestors pervades almost every aspect of Niraui everyday life. Tribe is central even to an individual's identity. A Niruai's name consists of their Tribe, family, and given names and a Niruai is always properly addressed by his or her full name. The Tribal name may be omitted by other members of the same Tribe, and the family name by members of the same family, but no such dismissal of a Nirui's familial roots is allowed from an outsider. The changes made through thousands of years of war, peace, marriage, death, industrialization, plague, unification, schism, and travel across the stars have left modern Tribes almost unrecognizable from those of ancient times. Somehow through all this, Niruai Tribal historians have managed to maintain family histories and genealogical records. It is this connection to their ancestral past that serves as a constant influence on every individual Niruai throughout their lives. In recent years, however, the current Emperor has greatly solidified his power base by becoming a power broker between the five major Tribes (the Taibri, Synae, Kamisori, Syndain, and Jago Tribes). Much of this was done by secretly manipulating some genealogical records to create connections between Tribes in the millennia past. By creating these connections, the Emperor generated a feeling of unity amongst the major Tribes. These feelings of union have greatly increased the Emperor's newfound ability to act as a go between for the Tribes and have afforded him great power.

The Niruai's society is still largely tribal-based with each individual's fealty split between their tribal obligations and their devotion to the Emperor. With five major Tribes and almost a dozen minor Tribes, this makes for a fractious society. Combine that with the fact that each Niruai world is generally governed over by one of the five major tribes, and it seems that it would be almost impossible for the Niruai to put forth a unified front. And that was very much the case until the rise of the current Emperor, kah Ehshatom, some thirty years ago.

The Niruai largely operated as individual Tribes with barely any lip service being given to the Empire as a whole, which lead to a lot of inter-tribal warfare. Pacts and treaties between Tribes lasted only long enough for one Tribe to feel like they were being taken advantage of, which would then lead to short, but bloody battles marking the end of whatever agreement had been made. It wasn't until the failed invasion of the Human Sector and subsequent Rykshi invasion of the Amatas Sector that the Emperor was able to solidify his power-base and unify the race. The Synae Tribe, who had spearheaded the Niruai invasion of the Human Sector in 2298, suffered the most from the Emperor's power play and still chafed under the new order until eventually splintering off from the Empire at the end of the Second Invasion.

Under the unifying force of the Emperor, the Niruai culture, technology, and military has flourished. Great advances were made as much of the petty bickering between Tribes was relegated to the halls of the Imperial Court rather than to the battlefields. The Emperor also managed to secure a limited peace agreement with the Rykshi. It was this agreement along with the apparent strength of the unified Niruai Empire that lead the Emperor to believe the time was right to stage a second invasion of the Human Sector. This was a mistake that the Emperor is now paying for as his Empire now stands divided and talk of full-on civil war simmers throughout the sector.

NIRUAI NAMES

Niruai names follow a set pattern of his or her Tribe first, followed by the family name, Tribal status, and lastly by the personal name, and a Niruai is always properly addressed by his or her full name. Some example names for Niruai to help understand the flow are: Tybri-utol bi Matom, Synae-ukol nikh Mohsokaret, kah Ehshatom (the current emperor), Jago-lond kol Aetom (current head of Jago Tribe).

**Tribal Names**: Synae, Tybri, Kamisori, Syndain, Jago, Gysa

Family Names: utol (money lender), pol (thinker), ikol (warrior), ano (artist), wort (counsel), kil (trapper), lond (builder)

Tribal Status: bi (son of Tribe), nikh (daughter of Tribe), met (elder/noble), kol (Tribal head), kah (Imperial House), kah (Emperor)

Male Personal Prefixes: Ae, Ma, Sheh, Ga, Eh, Yeh, Sha

Female Personal Prefixes: Su, Ko, Moh, Tu, Bri, Kao, Nih, Bu

Personal Suffixes: -on, -uum, -tom, -ul, -sok, -sun, -kon, -tlo, -tas, -ret, -sut, -ehl, -bret, -blas
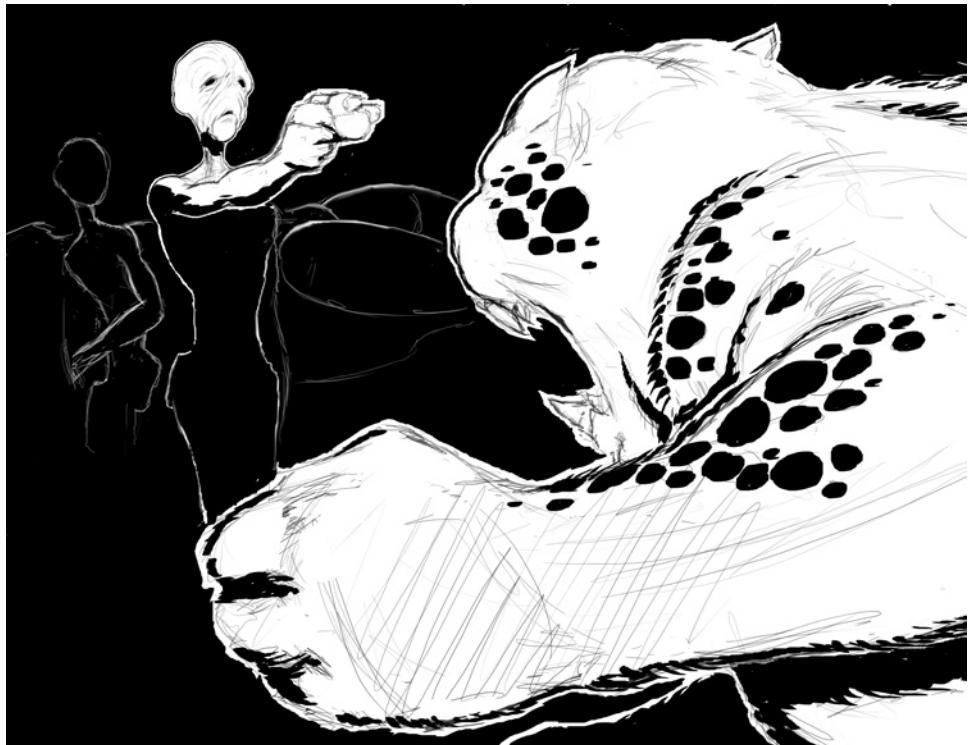
The Rykshi have conquered well over 100 worlds in the millennium since they took to the stars from their home world of Ryk. As an aggressive and martial race, they have found the subjugation of "lesser" species to be completely in line with their nature. "Upon the weak the strong stand" is a popular maxim for the Rykshi Protectorate. Overall, the Protectorate is host to 142 worlds, of which well over 90% are considered "conquests". Conquered worlds are considered to have at least one indigenous species that provided at least token resistance to the Rykshi fleet. This criteria could be satisfied by a highly aggressive predatory animal that stalked the Rykshi exploration forces all the way to a primitive race of pacifistic burrowing creatures (the Rael) who capitulated almost immediately to the military might of the Protectorate.

Worlds that were not conquered were largely taken due to resource needs of the Protectorate. The war-machinery of the Rykshi requires a constant stream of warships, fuel, and other materiel. As such, mining colonies are common on non-conquered worlds and they are largely peopled by conquered races rather than the Rykshi themselves. In fact, the Rykshi have a lot in common with the samurai or knightly traditions found in ancient Earth. They serve as protectors and conquerors, satisfied to let the conquered and weak provide for them.

Of the worlds in possession by the Rykshi Protectorate a few stand out. The planet of Ryk, of course, is the jewel of the Rykshi Protectorate. A lush world full of tropical forests as well as the Rykshi governmental seat, Ryk is sparsely populated as only "conquerors" or members of the Protectorate Council are allowed residence on the home world. The twin planets of Rykat and Rykas, found only a mere one light year from Ryk, are home to the bulk of the Rykshi populace and serve as the breeding grounds for generations to come. Cever Alit, a conquered world which is home to the beasts called the Ver by the Rykshi, is another prominent planet due to its vast plains where large farms have arisen. The "conquered" Ver are actually huge non-sentient carnivores (growing upwards of 8 meters in height) that wander the plains of Cever Alit and are considered a delicacy to the Rykshi. Meanwhile the planet Raetor is home to a small Rykshi garrison and the native population of the Rael who are a burrowing race resembling a cross between Earth's badgers and a lizard. The Rael have a complex society based off of a meritocracy and are largely pacifistic in nature. They live in relative peace on their planet, providing the necessary tribute to the Rykshi in precious minerals mined from their burrows.

RYKSHI SPECIES

Appearance: Two arms, two legs, bilateral symmetric, with Humanoid anatomy and bipedal movement. A Rykshi has a massive build, most averaging well over 2 meters tall and near 200 kg in weight, making them dense and powerful creatures. They are covered in thick, short fur that ranges in coloration between orange to brown, and are often times freckled with black or white patches of fur. Their faces confirm any questions of their predatory heritage, resembling in some ways a cross between the big cats and bears of Earth. They have short muzzles that terminate in large, sensitive noses. These muzzles are also covered with fine whiskers, barely visible from any great distance. Their jaws are powerful and their mouths full of razor sharp teeth. They have green to grey eyes with a vertical slit pupil that can expand to the full size of their eyes, allowing for greatly enhanced low-light vision.

Size: 11 (11 BP)

Move: 1 (Ground), Personal (4 BP)

Attribute Mods: +1 Physique (18 BP)

Tech Score: Most Rykshi Settlements have a base Tech Score of 9

Other Advantages (17 BP)

    Enhanced Senses (P0 D0 X11; Automatic. Anticipate +2, Detection +2, SFX: Low-Light Vision)

    Rykshi have highly developed senses of smell, touch, taste, hearing and vision. As such, it is very hard to catch one unawares and very few things escape their attention when they put their focus into looking for things. Also, they have eyes that resemble the big cats on Earth with pupils capable of full dilation allowing them to see very well in low-light conditions.

    Predatory Origins (P0 D0 X4; Combat. Melee +2, Close Range Only, Flaw: Unarmed disadvantage, +1 Wound)

    The Predatory Origins of the Rykshi are most apparent when faced with their sharpened claws and strong jaws. In close combat, a Rykshi is never without powerful weapons at their disposal capable of delivering impressive wounds. A Rykshi can add their default unarmed combat damage to the damage, but they are considered to always have a Disadvantageous Position when attacking an armed opponent (if attacking another unarmed opponent, this penalty goes away).

RYKSHI CULTURE

Rykshi psychology is very group-oriented, while maintaining a strong sense of individuality within the group. Rykshi fall very easily into cooperative groups around whatever common task they find for themselves, and just as easily assert themselves within that group to form a rough hierarchy of leadership and obedience. Rykshi social interactions nearly always have some significance within the group hierarchy, either reinforcing the existing structure or testing whether or not a move to a position of greater dominance would be accepted by the group. As such, one must always be on their toes when dealing socially with a Rykshi as they will constantly be testing others for signs of weakness that can be capitalized upon.

The culture of the Rykshi overall is one of constant competition that prizes accomplishment and domination. But even with such drives to dominion, the Rykshi are amazingly fair-minded. This is due to "The Acknowledgements" that most Rykshi follow. While all Rykshi aren't required to follow "The Acknowledgements," this code has become such second nature to the species that most Rykshi follow at least the first two

edicts without thought. It should also be noted that all members of the Rykshi military forces must submit to the code before they can begin active service. The edicts of "The Acknowledgements" are as follows:

1. Accept one's station with honor
2. Accept no weakness above or within
3. Accept fealty with tolerance and responsibility
4. Accept no word under duress

The Protectorate Council and Rykshi military use "The Acknowledgements" with ruthless efficiency in their dealings with other races. New species encountered are challenged and their fealty accepted unquestioningly once conquered. The species are left to rule themselves, with only a token garrison left on important planets or annual visits for tribute on the less important vistas. The Rykshi aren't interested in ruling worlds, merely expanding their holdings and proving their dominance. That said, they are brutal when crossed and insurrection on any holding is generally dealt with quickly and mercilessly.

Their recent encounters with Humanity and the Niruai have proven a challenge for the Rykshi existentially. Both races have proven to be unconquerable, but neither species has risen to a commanding position, either. Thus, the Rykshi have entered into an unfamiliar territory: how do they deal with a species that they cannot conquer but who has not conquered them? Even now, the Council meets in hopes to answer this question.

RYKSHI NAMES

Rykshi naming conventions follow the same general conventions of Humanity, a personal name followed by a family name. Personal names for the Rykshi are usually given to honor an ancestor or fallen hero, as such there are some quite common names repeated throughout Rykshi history.

Male Personal Names: Aigern, Atlir, Borkern, Hafir, Hrolfir, Skithin, Throrfin, Throthir

Female Personal Names: Aigerti, Arnka, Dragni, Jori, Ranla, Throhila, Valdi

Family Names: Friholm, Frothil, Gereholm, Gerhil, Rastolm, Scredhil

SCIENCE

Science is one of the most important aspects of any science fiction epic. The science presents the trappings of the setting and, in turn, helps define the setting. In Victory 2442, science and technology for most of the factions sits comfortably in the Tech 8 to Tech 9 rating from the perspective of the StarSIEGE: Event Horizon system.

The three main factions have starfaring technology capable of faster than light (FTL) travel as well as aspects of environmental engineering. What follows are some specifics on different aspects of science and technology present in the setting. Groups should feel free to expand or modify these sections as fits their own preferences.

SUBSPACE

Interstellar travel is achieved through Subspace: a series of universes parallel to our own, in which any given point corresponds exactly to another point in our universe, but in which the points are more densely packed together. This relative shift in density means that a ship in Subspace travels at the same apparent speed as it does in normal space, but will find that it has traveled a greater distance in normal space when it shifts back.

While the discovery of Subspace travel was the true door to the stars for all known races of the galaxy, it does not come without cost. Subspace shift generators are complex, delicate, and require a great deal of power. A Subspace shift field generator creates a sphere centered on the generator

(causing most ships to be built with the shift generator as close to the exact center of the ship as possible). When the shift field reaches the size dictated by the amount of power fed to it, there is a brief pause, during which the field becomes briefly visible, and then everything within the field is shifted to an adjoining level of Subspace. If the edge of the Subspace shift field intersects a physical object of any significant mass at the moment the shift would occur, the field breaks apart in a flash of unexpended energy. This backlash not only prevents the shift from occurring, but also damages or even destroys the generator. For this reason, most Subspace shift field generators are built with a set power intake hardwired into them, calibrated to generate a shift field large enough to contain the

ship for which it was designed with a small margin for error, but no larger.

Once in Subspace, travel can be quite dangerous. Even after centuries of usage by the sentient races of the galaxy, Subspace is still poorly understood at best, and while its relationship to the force of gravity is clear; gravity itself still remains largely a mystery. It is known that physical objects in normal space cast a gravitational 'shadow' in Subspace. The gravitational shadows become exponentially larger the deeper into the layers of Subspace that a ship goes, to the point where even a small normal-space object casts an enormous grav-shadow in the deepest layers. These increased gravitational effects mean that a shadow that can cause minor damage in the Alpha Band can become impenetrable obstacles in the deeper Bands. For this reason, ships do not shift into Subspace while close to planets, stars, or other large bodies, and need to employ scout craft or a sharp eye on the sensors while in Subspace to avoid collision with the grav-shadow of a normal-space object.

In fact, it was these gravitational shadows that caused most cultures to develop small one-man fighter craft. Reconnaissance drones are commonly deployed ahead of Subspace capable craft to serve as an early warning system, since Sensors are so much less effective. The Drones, however, have very limited range and threat detection capabilities. Fighters were developed by both the Niruai and Humans to serve as an early warning screen deployed in Subspace to warn larger craft of gravitational shadows. The Rykshi rely more on drones, but often use Gunships for this purpose in deeper Bands of Subspace. The Fighters are more maneuverable and better able to avoid dangers than the larger ships. That said no pilot enjoys their patrol duty in the disquieting expanse of grey.

Only the first three Bands of subspace (Alpha, Beta, and Gamma) can be traveled with any degree of safety within a planetary system, and even the incalculable emptiness between stars can be dangerous in the Epsilon Band. Deeper Bands of Subspace have only been reached by purpose-built exploratory craft entering Subspace from the emptiest reaches of normal space. Hypothetical models suggest that there are an uncertain number of Subspace layers beyond the Zeta Band, culminating somewhere in a Subspace "core" beyond which no farther compaction of space is possible.

Though the actual source has defied physicists for generations, there is a sort of ambient light that pervades Subspace, which shifts through the spectrum of visible light (red to orange to yellow, etc) as deeper layers of Subspace are reached. Physicists from all three starfaring races argue over the source of this energy almost as much as they do over the connection between Subspace and gravity. The existing evidence that this "spacelight" is a quantum phenomenon rather than a gravitational one only further complicates current scientific thought. Again, however, the practical effects of this radiation are clear: while it leaves subspace illuminated in a constant, flat, featureless glow, it also creates an energy-wave compression effect which impedes all other forms of radiant energy, limiting sight distance, impairing sensors, and greatly reducing the range at which ship-to-ship communication is possible.

COMPUTERS

Computers are an inescapable feature of everyday life for essentially everyone living in known space. All three races continue to make advances in miniaturization and data storage, but advances in processing power and software sophistication ran into an obstacle to further development and have yet to overcome it: it is simply not possible to build a computer beyond a certain level of power or a program beyond a certain level of intricacy before a level of self awareness develops, and true, stable, sane artificial intelligence has yet to be found.

Reactions to the sentience barrier have varied among the races. Rykshi perfectionism leads to the utter rejection of any computer which cannot be completely relied upon, and the Rykshi routinely dump any new computer or program design which shows even a glimmer of independent thinking, no matter how benign. The Rykshi use of smaller crews for their ships, and their relatively low population overall, has pushed their engineers to absolute mastery of non-sentient automation, however. A high end Rykshi computer can respond to any number of routine matters automatically, only referring to a living operator for circumstances outside its programmed parameters or decisions requiring something other than a predetermined response, and even in those situations, it will present the operator with a short list of promising courses of action and their likely results. The average Rykshi is constantly surrounded by machinery which is capable of fulfilling 90% of its purpose without any input from the Rykshi at all, and all without that machinery developing any sense of self identity or capacity for willful disobedience.

The Niruai sit at the opposite end of the spectrum: well willing to install computers capable of self-awareness wherever they think they might provide a decisive edge, and willing to pay the price of constant wariness that using an inherently unstable self-aware computer requires. The Niraui also employ a great deal of voice-recognition software and use voice commands as the primary form of input for their computers, to the point where a Niruai having an involved conversation with a self-aware computer is not unheard of, despite the horror with which a Human or Rykshi computer engineer might view such a scene. While the Niruai have accepted artificial intelligence to a greater degree than any other race, they have had only little additional success in keeping such intelligences stable and functional. Occasional technological breakthroughs from self-aware computers have been a significant part of how the competing Niraui Tribes have kept within a few steps of the overall technological level of other races, but destabilized AIs that were not detected or shut down in time have resulted in significant and sometimes spectacular failures as well. Niruai starships are all built with lower powered, non-intelligent computer systems should the primary system undergo a catastrophic failure, but those backup systems are far less sophisticated than anything in use by either of the know races, putting a Niruai ship whose AI fails in any fashion at a heavy disadvantage compared to a similar Rykshi or Human ship.

Finally, Humanity has taken a very cautious approach to Artificial Intelligence. AIs gone amok have been a staple of fear and superstition since the very dawn of the Human Space Age, and no Human-built ship carries a main computer that approaches the sentience barrier. Humanity as a group, however, has not been so close minded as to end all research into artificial intelligence, and while Hegemony laws strictly regulated where such computers could be built and how much access to larger computer networks they were allowed, several AIs could be found at any given time in universities and laboratories across Human space. Few such institutions survived the War or the Second Invasion fully intact, and the fate of pre-war AIs, as well as their future in a world where Hegemony regulations on them can no longer be enforced, remains unclear.

CYBERNETICS

Much like the development of computers, the replacement of meat with metal has seen truly significant advances in technology, and also run into barriers. Complex nerve interfaces, adapting microcomputers, and light weight materials have all gone into making near perfect copies of living flesh, but only "near perfect." Even the most advanced prosthetics cannot quite match the sensitivity and control of the original, and the recipient of a cybernetic replacement will struggle with tiny lag times and slips in motor control for the rest of his or her life. Likewise, the enhancement of an otherwise healthy individual with bionic enhancement runs not only into the limits of current technology's ability to mimic living tissue and responsiveness to neural input, but faces the additional complication of trying to generate a "natural" response to something inherently unnatural. "Bionic" cybernetics remains a troubled subject among the known races at best, and is more often stigmatized and left far behind the development of other technology.

Humanity's development of cybernetic technology had long centered on the production of viable replacement parts, largely due to the Hegemony's uncompromising military orientation and the realization that even the best fought wars will carry inevitable casualties. Human-built cybernetic replacements are good, but still distinguishable from actual flesh, and the overall feel and control are never quite as good as the original nerves. Enhancement cybernetics, however, is essentially a dead field in Human research: cyborgs of various sorts were attempted in pre-Hegemony times, from government super soldiers to truly repugnant attempts at corporate "enhanced workers", but generally resulted in questionable gains and highly unstable recipients. A number of ugly and highly publicized incidents in the early 22nd century were seized upon as rallying call against bionics by groups ranging from the religious to the medical, and a heavy social bias against trying to improve Humanity through the addition of machinery has existed ever since. Even prosthetic technology carries some social stigma in most Human societies, which has lead to a great deal of emphasis placed on making cybernetic prosthetics as natural as possible.

Rykshi technological perfectionism has ironically left them somewhat behind the Human level of sophistication for cybernetics. The consistent inability to match the performance of actual flesh has led to a great deal of frustration among Rykshi cyberneticists, and few of the best minds are attracted to the field as a result. This effect is even more pronounced with "improvement" cybernetics, and work along those lines was essentially abandoned centuries ago as soon as adverse effects on the recipient were conclusively established. Generally speaking, an injured Rykshi is more likely to wear their scars with pride than accept a cybernetic replacement, and the idea of deliberately adding a cybernetic limb, organ or implant in hopes of making something that is better than that individual was before is an abhorrent one. There are individual exceptions, of course, and Rykshi prosthetics are quite functional even if they are not as advanced as other fields of their technology, but a Rykshi with a missing hand is still a far more common sight than a Rykshi with a cybernetic one.

Niruai attitude towards cybernetics varies widely from Tribe to Tribe. There is no real stigma attached to prosthetics, and while there is no general acceptance of enhanced cyborgs, there is only some wholesale rejection of them as well. Throughout their history, some Tribes have experimented with "improved" soldiers, workers and even scientists, and if any of the major races can be said to have had some success with cybernetic enhancement, it is the Niruai. The Niruai have had only modest success with working interfaces between the brain and parts that they would not ordinarily have, or in receiving input that they have not evolved to receive, and Niruai cyborgs have proven every bit as vulnerable to psychological instability as any other race. The Tribes that have employed them have done so primarily as shock troops, however, and instability and inconsistent results were generally considered worth the cost when the soldiers in question were not expected to live long anyway. Cybernetic enhancement is not universally accepted among the Tribes, however, and has frequently been a source of conflict between them. In the face of conflicts like their war against the Rykshi or the Second Invasion, however, even the most anti-cyborg Tribes have been willing to look the other way while truly mechanized infantry or pilots plugged directly into their fighters took the first hits. Overall, the Niruai have a level of sophistication in cybernetics that the other races have not matched: their prosthetics are less natural in appearance than Human equivalents (indeed, the Niruai generally put little effort into making a replacement part look like the original), but their level of responsiveness is generally better than Human. The Niruai are clearly ahead in enhancement technology almost by default, and while the Niruai have had little success in keeping enhanced individuals sane and functional, the Tribes that have accepted cyborg usage have mastered the art of getting newly made cyborgs to the front lines while some use might still be made of them.

COMMUNICATIONS

Ships traveling through Subspace have, thus far, proven to be the only efficient method of communication between planets. Messages sent by laser, radio or any other energy form will, of course, reach their destination if sent correctly, but are subject to the limits of the speed of light. A ship traveling at even a moderate depth in Subspace will generally arrive at a destination some time before a light-speed signal sent from the same source at the same time, and the deeper reaches of Subspace are the only viable method of communication between stars if the message is to arrive within the lifetime of the recipient. The Spacelight phenomenon limits the range of radio and laser-based communications in Subspace severely, and while some attempts at constructing small Subspace communications networks, none were developed that were even more than marginally successful, let alone worth the cost of construction and maintenance.

From the first Subspace shift generator built until the present day, the only practical way to communicate across the vastness of space is the simplest: record a message, and put it on a ship bound for wherever you wish it to go.

POWER

Centuries after it became a viable power source for Human technology, nuclear fusion remains the primary power producer for both the Humans and the Rykshi, though continuing refinement has made the modern fusion plant a miracle of efficiency compared to the first crude generators. A fusion generator even at its most miniaturized is still too large for one-man space craft and conventional ground vehicles, leaving hydrogen fuel cell generators and high-capacity batteries as the power sources of choice where a fusion plant is impractical. Rykshi technology is, on average, somewhat better than comparable Human fusion plants, with a slight edge in efficiency and a noticeable advantage in magnetic containment bottle stability. Rykshi technological efforts have, however, focused primarily on the large

scale of the last several decades, leaving Human and Rykshi fuel cells and batteries at roughly equal levels of sophistication.

The Niruai, on the other hand, favor less stable, high-output fission plants for large scale power. The Niraui arrived at nuclear fission at roughly the same point in their history as the Humans and the Rykshi, but unlike early Human efforts at fission-based power and weaponry, the Niruai ceased development almost immediately after the implications that large-scale fission power would have on their homeworld. As a result, the Niruai entered their Space Age almost entirely on hydrogen fuel cells, and have maintained a level of parity with Human and Rykshi fuel cells despite a somewhat lower level of technology overall. Niruai concerns about fission power's impact on their environment and radioactive waste products fell by the wayside as the Niruai stepped to the stars. With the discovery that their sun could be used as the ultimate incinerator for spent fuel rods, the Niruai turned back to fission power and have achieved a level of sophistication with it that neither the Humans nor the Rykshi can match. As such, their generators are more efficient for their size than Human or Rykshi power plants, and there is the added bonus of using spent fuel rods as weaponry on some of their military craft.

As is the case in so many other areas of technology, the Tribes of the Niruai have proven willing to put considerable time and effort into alternate energy sources that have either been dismissed by the other races or not even considered. Most recently, a few Tribes have experimented with antimatter technology, but the results of such research have proven to be fruitless or spectacularly unpredictable power output and equally spectacular containment failures. While the Niraui have never been reluctant to use unproven technology in full production if they felt that it might be successful, antimatter power currently remains confined to Niruai laboratories, and even then under highly controlled circumstances.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING

Humanity is at the forefront of environmentally engineering, far outstripping the capabilities of either the Rykshi or the Niruai. Planetary engineering is a slow process, so for the most part, the older the colony, the more developed. Thus Mars, the Moon, Titan, and Ganymede are all very Earth-like. Pluto and Mercury, being well outside the Habitable Zone of Sol even with the miracle of environmentally engineering, have domed and underground habitats. Human environmental engineering efforts still require near centuries for even the most likely of planets to become completely habitable. The few extrasolar colonies that survived the Second Invasion still have decades to go before they are fully habitable. Only the planet on Miranda in the Proxima Centuri system has advanced to the "developed, self-sustaining" point. All others run stand as "works in progress" requiring a small amounts of protection (rebreathers and UV screening) when outside of the environmentally engineering installations.

Environmental Engineering is less important to the Rykshi. Their low population and practices of leaving governance of conquered worlds to the conquered has put wide scale Environmental Engineering into a sideline science at best. Where they have excelled is in the miniaturization of necessary environmental suits and packs for their soldiers and emissaries. As it stands now, a small Rykshi rebreather unit and light environmental suit can last for almost a week without need for a full recharge and are completely adaptable to whatever environment they enter. At best Human and Niruai environmental suits are bulky and require recharging after a day or two.

The Niruai have great interest in environmentally engineering, but have had little luck in their own researches. Captured technology from the recent war have many Niruai scientists excited about the possibilities. As it stands now, Niruai environmental engineering projects have managed to convert mostly dead worlds to slightly survivable worlds provided they exist within a very narrow band of the overall Habitable Zone of a given star. The Niruai concern themselves only with making the atmosphere breathable. Beyond that, they do little else to make their projects any more livable.

GRAVITY MANIPULATION

Gravity Manipulation is a relatively new field for all of the major species, and only Humanity has made any real inroads with their Clarke Generators. Clarke's "little invention" transformed Humanity's voyages between the stars. Aside from the comparatively minor benefit of being able to generate artificial gravity for the comfort of the crew when they would otherwise be in freefall, the Clarke Generator's short-range ability to negate acceleration towards it provided the foundation of a complex, ship-wide inertial compensation system. From almost the very beginning of Humanity's departure from Earth, the acceleration of a manned spacecraft was not limited by the amount of thrust that the engines could generate so much as the ability of the crew to tolerate the G-forces that the ship's thrust created. Clarke Generators are able to create or nullify about six gravities worth of acceleration on average, and ships built with Clarke-based inertial compensation systems took an enormous step forward in speed and maneuverability.

These Clarke Generators have also lead to a surge in "hover" vehicles which are able to float on the Clarke field within the gravity well of a large object. Some kind of external drive (e.g. fans or jets) must provide the forward thrust for these vehicles, as the Clarke Generator can only supply enough energy to allow the craft to float a few meters off the planetary surface.

Clarke's invention has already been backward engineered by the Niruai and they make use of a stripped down version of the drive to increase their maneuverability of their craft. This means that the Niruai rarely mount a full Clarke Generator on a craft as one of its subsystems. The Rykshi, who follow a design philosophy of endurance over speed rarely make use of their own version of the Clarke Generator.

ARMS

For all of the advancements in engineering and transportation, weapons technology hasn't made huge leaps over the centuries. Of all the races, the Rykshi have perhaps the most advanced weaponry with Humans and Niruai on basically the same plateau. Energy weapons are available but still require relatively large power sources to make particularly damaging effects. Some hybrid energy weapons, called blasters, are more common, especially in Rykshi space. For the most part, however, chemical propellant weapons dominate the galaxy. These weapons are both easy

to build as well as maintain in a variety of environments. Furthermore, they don't suffer disruption in the void of Subspace. Missile weapons, which are basically a hybrid between chemical propellants and small vehicles are also very common in large scale combat as they are perhaps the most efficient way to deliver high powered munitions to a target accurately.

Humanity has turned the development of chemical propellant based weaponry to an artform. Humanity developed gunpowder weaponry relatively early compared to the other races, so they have a sizeable time advantage over the other species. And they have used that time to develop some of the most advanced firearms in the known galaxy. In particular, Human ship-mounted assault cannons surpass the damage and range of any other species. Furthermore, their missile technology is sufficiently advanced with guided smart missiles capable of delivering all manner of highly destructive warheads quickly. Humans tend to shy away from chemical, nuclear, and biologic weapons due to past Hegemony bans on their use on sentient species. This ban, however, hasn't really limited their warheads destructive nature. In the field of energy weapons Humans haven't made much progress. Small field lasers and a few military longarms exist utilizing energy based weapons technology, but beyond that few energy weapons are fielded by Humanity. A recent advance, called the Light Amplification Surge Effect (LASE) has been discovered after researching Niruai laser technology and promises to be a huge leap in Human weapons technology.

For the Rykshi, the Blaster is the pinnacle of their weapons development. While chemical propellant tech is mostly new to the species, their energy/projectile hybrid far outstrips the weapons of other races. Blasters require large amounts of energy to speed up the tungsten-aluminium-chromium slugs to where they become superheated and are ejected as bolts of plasma. These weapons are devastating at short range and have no problems bypassing even the most resilient of armors and shielding. After their blasters, Rykshi use smaller gauss-powered cannons and personal weaponry for their mainline projectile attacks. Missiles are less common, save for delivering large ordinance such as nuclear payloads, and are used only in the most extreme of situations. Lasers and other energy based weapons aren't used much by the Rykshi, with most of their energy weapons development funneled into their unique Blaster technology.

The Niruai are masters of energy-based weapons, at least in the scale set by the Humans and Rykshi. Their laser weapons deliver far more damaging effects by kilowatt than any of the other species. That isn't to say that their laser weapons are that much better, however. In fact, most of the Niruai weapons technology lags behind fairly significantly from either the Humans or the Rykshi. The places where the Niruai excel are in the willingness to use the technology they do have ruthlessly and efficiently. Niruai do not shy away from chemical, biological, or nuclear ordinances and have a very robust CBRN weapons program. The Niruai also use computer and limited AI technology to maximize their efficiency through guidance and fire control systems.

ARMOR

In light of all the new and interesting ways to die in the 25th century, Engineers and Scientists from all three species have done their best to keep up with defensive capabilities. Armor for the most part usually consists of numerous metal and ceramic layers. Large vehicles usually mount highly dense metals and ceramics for added protection while personal armor revolves more around metallic-fiber weaves and ceramic plates. Ablative shielding that is used to deflect or disperse laser weapons has also become more common. Recently, simultaneous independent breakthroughs in both the Niruai and Human defense technology industries have lead to the development of directed energy shielding. These shields are powerful but tend to burn out quickly due to their copious power demands.

As it stands now, the worlds inhabited by Humanity, the Niruai, and the Rykshi (as well as their subjugated races) cover a radius of almost 18 light years within the Milky Way Galaxy, centered on Earth. Most craft would take over a month in the Epsilon Band of Subspace—with all of the accompanying dangers—to cross this expanse. For comparison purposes, the following table outlines the amount of time a craft must spend in the appropriate band to travel various distances of light-speed.

Distance	Alpha Band	Beta Band	Gamma Band	Delta Band	Epsilon Band
1 light hour	44.04 Hours	4.89 Hours	32 Minutes	3.6 Minutes	0.4 Minutes
1 light day	45.35 Days	5.04 Days	13.44 Hours	1.5 Hours	10.2 Minutes
1 light year	10,302.1 Days	1,144.68 Days	127.19 Days	14.13 Days	1.57 Days

This separation doesn't necessarily mean that planets and colonies are totally isolated from one another. Many inhabited worlds are only within a few light hours or days from one another. This grouping of planets and colonies are generally referred to as Systems. For example, the Human Sector has one major System (Sol) and two minor Systems (Proxima Centauri and Epsilon Eridani).

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Each culture's individual history stretches back for millennia, with at least ten-thousand years of combined history amongst them. With such a back-log, any meaningful history of even one of the races could fill volumes. This book will instead focus on the major conflicts between the three factions and how they have shaped the current landscape.

THE FIRST INVASION (2298 CE)

As Humanity as a whole continued to find new ways to both divide themselves into new groups, it was an outside force that would provide the final impetus towards unification. Beginning in the closing years of the 22nd century, sightings of strange ships on the very edge of sensor range began cropping up across Human-occupied space. In 2298 Humanity found once and for all that it was not alone in the Universe, as a fleet of alien starcraft appeared without warning not far from Jupiter, descended on the fledgling colonies on Ganymede, and took them by storm. The Niruai had arrived, and without a word spoken or transmission made, their intentions were still quite clear.

Alarm spread throughout Human settlement as rapidly as laser communications could send word from planet to planet, and colony to colony. The few transmissions sent from Ganymede showed a swarm of ships, many larger than the various armed ships the multitude of Human government and corporate navies had produced. The invaders advanced with ruthless speed through Human settlements, calling in massive orbital strikes wherever the disjointed resistance of the Ganymede colonists began to stiffen. Three days after the appearance of the Niraui fleet, the transmission from the last Human outpost on Ganymede had ceased: every colony and enclave had been taken, and every Human on the moon either killed or driven into the wastes between colonies.

As governments and boardrooms alike were grappling with the implications of this attack, they received a second shock: the same fleet of alien ships appeared again approaching Mars, hundreds of thousands of miles from Ganymede, and less than a week later. Mars, however, was among the first footholds Humanity had placed off of its native planet, and the Human population of Mars was too large to be taken by storm as Ganymede had been. Despite the destruction of nearly every ship and station in orbit and the bombardment that rained down from the invaders' ships wherever it seemed that Humanity might win even a small victory; Mars fought with desperate courage.

The population of Mars rose to its own defense. Casting aside all separate command structures and points of origin, the surviving national and corporate naval ships were joined by a swarm of hastily armed civilian craft, from yachts to freighters, often entering battle carrying nothing but a drive system and a crew willing to fight and die. Rallying around whatever leaders seemed most effective; this makeshift unified fleet took the battle to the invaders circling their planet. As the surviving Human military ships sought to engage their technologically superior foes, the swarm of lightly armed civilian craft that accompanied them threw themselves on the Niraui fleet with suicidal fury. Freighters lumbered deliberately into enemy fire, dying under weapons meant for far stronger foes in order to buy the armed Human ships just a few more seconds in which to fire. Ore-haulers, tugboats, cutters and shuttles dodged or plowed through the Niruai escorts to ram enemy battleships, sometimes packed with explosives, and sometimes with nothing but speed and mass. Through these desperate measures, Humanity showed the Niruai invaders that they would not quietly lie down. Nearly forty-eight hours after the Niruai attack on Mars began, new Niruai craft appeared around Mars. Fearing the worst, Humanity pressed their attacks. Suddenly, the Niruai craft began disengaging from the Human defenders, vanishing as quickly as they had arrived. Almost inexplicably, the battle of Mars had been won and the First Invasion repelled, but at a great price to Humanity.

PROJECT SIEGE

THE RYKSHI/NIRUAI WAR (2300 – 2304 CE)

Humanity later learned that the Niruai had not fled due to the tenacity of the defense of Mars, but instead due to the Rykshi invading Niruai space. The war between these two races was titanic as huge pitched battles raged through the Amatas Sector. The Niruai were too fragmented internally to put up any coordinated effort, however, and this lack of organization cost them dearly in the war. The Rykshi, on the other hand, had never encountered such fierce resistance before and had to admit a growing respect for their foes over the years of battle.

In the Battle for Amatas IV, the Jago and Synae Tribes gave glimpse of what power a unified Niruai armada could do. Atamas IV was held by the Synae Tribe and served as a shipyard. The Jago Tribe had some smaller holdings on the planet's surface mostly for research purposes. Having heard of the invading forces, the Jago and Synae elders on Amatas IV decided to combine their forces to defend the planet. While the Synae Tribe was better armed and equipped than the Jago, Jago-hul met Shehon—a master strategist—was visiting family friends at the time. The Synae agreed to submit to Shehon's orders with a pledge that the Jago would relinquish control of one-quarter of their holdings on Amatas IV if victory was secured. Thus, when the Protectorate's Maw Strike Force appeared from Subspace they met a combined Jago and Synae force led by one of the finest strategic minds in the Niruai sector.

The battle was intense, with the Niruai craft vastly outnumbered and outclassed by the invasion force. Jago Shehon realized that the battle was not a winnable one, but she pressed the attack, inflicting great losses on the Rykshi force. But it was when all seemed lost that the Niruai's cultural draw to glory saved the day. A small gunboat captain by the name of Synae-tom bi Aeron made a gamble that entered his names in the glorious ancestral lineage of the Synae Tribe. His craft, disabled save for a few maneuver thrusters and a single LASE cannon, floated dead in space as the battle raged around him. Biding his time, Captain Aeron powered down all systems and floated amongst the dead members of his crew wearing a battered and leaking vacuum suit. Then, as a Rykshi Cruiser, the *Ekki Kann*, loomed into view, Captain Aeron powered up his ship and set the capacitors on the LASE Cannon as well as his Fission drive to overload. Thirty seconds later, a fireball ripped through the bridge of the *Ekki Kann* destroying the Rykshi's only Carrier support in the battle. In the end, the Niruai lost the Battle of Amatas IV, but it showed the Empire what could be accomplished through the unification of the Tribes.

By 2304, the Rykshi had conquered every corner of the Amatas sector. The Niruai, however, had left little for them to lord over, destroying any piece of equipment or materiel they could as they left. In the end, the Niruai abandoned the sector to the Rykshi, ending the war in a sort of stalemate. The Niruai never accepted the terms of the Rykshi to submit, nor did they defeat the Rykshi in combat. Their withdrawal left the Rykshi at a loss. The Protectorate Navy, realizing the Niruai's society spanned multiple systems immediately began a data recovery and scouting effort to discover the Niruai's true home-world in order to secure a sound victory. In this effort they did not discover the location of Ukolniruai, but they did learn of Humanity.

THE BATTLE OF APRIL SECOND (2324 CE)

The differences between the Rykshi Invasion and the attack by the Niruai twenty six years earlier were apparent almost immediately. On March 16th, the Rykshi Fleet emerged from Subspace well within the Solar System, and began broadcasting. Echoed on every newscast in the Hegemony was the message from the Rykshi Warleader Hrolfir Friholm with translations provided by the Rykshi themselves. The message was simple: the Solar Syste;m and all of humanity were now part of the Rykshi Protectorate. Any human armed forces were ordered to stand down and the Rykshi would be arriving on Earth shortly to determine the arrangements for Rykshi governorship. With the same directness that humanity would learn characterized almost all Rykshi actions, the fleet promptly returned to Subspace and set a course for Earth.

The blunt, simple announcement that the Rykshi considered themselves already victorious provoked a variety of reactions from humanity at large, but an invading fleet advancing through Subspace directly for Earth was a scenario that Hegemony military planners had long considered, and orders emerged from New Beijing almost as soon as the Rykshi's course was confirmed. All across the Earth and the Moon, planetary firebases and orbital defense stations brought their systems online, even as the ships of the Hegemony Navy moved into position and quick reaction forces scattered throughout the solar system raced towards Earth to join in the impending battle if they could.

On April 2nd, the Rykshi fleet emerged from Subspace to find the Navy of the Hegemony's Battle Group 2, stationed on Earth, and quick-reaction Task Forces Alpha and Gamma combined under the command of Vice Admiral Thomas Graves waiting for them. The Rykshi fleet had just begun maneuvering in response to the apparently unexpected mass of human warships when Graves sent a single, brief transmission to the Rykshi flagship: "We have received your message, and do not accept your terms." With those words, what would later be known simply as the Battle of April Second began.

In one short, brutal hour, the battle ended. The Rykshi reacted remarkably well despite what amounted to an attack from ambush, and displayed a degree of fleet coordination that few human commanders could have managed under similar circumstances. Each Rykshi ship had absorbed far more punishment before falling out of action than a Hegemony ship of a similar size could have done. The Navy of the Hegemony suffered heavy casualties despite their overwhelming numbers, and Vice Admiral Graves himself was killed when his flagship exploded under enemy fire with all hands aboard. Despite his death, his victory was complete: the entire Rykshi fleet, from the eight titanic battleships to the last escorting cruiser, had been destroyed. Not a single Rykshi ship had managed to escape back into Subspace.

After the victory on April 2nd, Humanity rushed to amass a fleet to send a more decisive response to the Rykshi. By September 14th, 2324, the Second Fleet of the Hegemony passed the orbit of the outermost planet of the Rykshi home solar system. Admiral Rebecca Zimir's ships traveled at their maximum speed in the Gamma Band of Subspace: a layer theoretically safe in the immediate area of a star only at a cautious speed and when good navigational charts were available. Second Fleet had no such charts, nor the luxury of traveling at a safe speed, and paid the price for it.

The unmanned reconnaissance drones provided a layer of protection for the headlong plunge towards the planet Ryk, but they didn't prove enough for the speed the fleet was making. After the heavy cruiser *Ares* was destroyed in a collision with what was believed to have been the gravitational shadow of a small comet in the first day of the charge, Admiral Zimir refused to lower the Fleet's speed or move up to a higher layer of Subspace. Instead she reformed the Fleet's formation to place all of its lighter ships in a broad screen at maximum communications range from the Fleet's main body. Thus she screened the heavier warships from damage but sacrificed her lighter ships and their crews in the process.

As cold-blooded as the screening maneuver was, it succeeded in its intended purpose. Second Fleet tore across the Rykshi solar system without losing any more of its heavier ships. Meanwhile, four destroyers and a light cruiser were destroyed in the course of Second Fleet's charge. Second Fleet raced from the very limits of detection range to all the way to Ryk itself in a scant six days, and Rykshi Protectorate reaction forces were just beginning their pursuit when Second Fleet emerged from Subspace within sight of the Rykshi homeworld. All that stood in the Fleet's way was the Ryk Planetary Defense forces.

In the battle around Ryk, the individual superiority of Rykshi warships demonstrated itself once again, as the defenders took two of Second Fleet's ships with them for every one that was destroyed. Second Fleet had not flown across the light-years to be turned away in defeat, however. Even as Admiral Zimir spent her warships destroying the Rykshi fleet and every orbital defense station that could possibly interfere, the remainder of Second Fleet went into action. The Hegemony had sent out the greatest part of its strength as a weapon of conquest, not mere raiders, and armored troop transports roared towards the planet's surface even while the battle in orbit was still being fought.

The Battle of Ryk was anything but a clear cut victory for the Hegemony. Second Fleet paid dearly to destroy the Protectorate fleet guarding the planet, and the Hegemony Marines found that the Rykshi were every bit as ferocious fighting on the ground as their Navy was in space. Even if Second Fleet paid a heavy price, in the end, it accomplished what it came to do. By the time the Protectorate reaction forces had assembled in strength, Ryk's orbit was guarded by Hegemony ships and several major cities on the planet itself were occupied by Hegemony Marines. As Admiral Zimir rallied her damaged fleet to meet the oncoming Protectorate Fleet, humanity received yet another surprise from the Rykshi: they sued for peace.

Admiral Zimir found herself in an unexpected and unenviable position. While armistice negotiations were far better than fighting a losing battle against the assembled Rykshi fleet, she was neither a diplomat nor a negotiator. Admiral Zimir and her staff quickly assembled the best set of peace terms that they thought they could get away with: cessation of hostilities, reparations for the damage caused by the Rykshi invasion of the human Solar System, free passage for any Hegemony ship traveling through Rykshi space, and the contents of any computers or databases that the Marines had already seized on the planet's surface. The Rykshi Armistice was a simple, straightforward set of terms and something that Admiral Zimir and her staff hoped would be a statement of a clear victory by the Hegemony without making any demands so unacceptable that the Rykshi would choose to resume the fight and simply wipe out her entire command.

It was a moment that would be studied by xenologists, Human and Rykshi alike, for decades: Fleetleader Kyr Helmwyr's surprised confusion at receiving Admiral Zimir's terms and Admiral Zimir's surprised relief when they were immediately accepted. The Rykshi Armistice was signed with little fanfare, and the leaders of the two fleets returned to their flagships and prepared to return home. Though the terms of the Armistice would be criticized by dozens of politicians, Hegemony High Command reviewed all the data that had been brought back and reached many of the same conclusions that Admiral Zimir's staff had: the war needed a quick and decisive end. High Command quietly commended the Admiral on her decision, and officially ratified the Armistice with only little more fanfare than it had been signed. The Rykshi War began with a roar and ended with a whisper, but as narrow and inexplicable as their victory had been, the Hegemony was now without question the foremost power in known space.

THE ENDLESS WAR (2417 – 2437 CE)

The Endless War was named by the Rykshi. They called it such as they had never engaged for so long against a single enemy without a decisive victory. Fought between the Human 1st, 4th, 7th and 10th Battle Groups and elements of the 1st and 3rd Protectorate Navies, the Endless War was almost textbook in it execution. A purely military engagement in largely unpopulated areas, the war waged on for almost two decades. Scholars and historians have fought over the true causes of the conflict and, in the end, most agree that the Endless War was most likely fought simply over mining rights in a small sector of Epsilon Eridani.

The war was at a stalemate until Niruai's Second Invasion in 2435. With their destruction of Hegemony high command, the Human Battle Groups became disorganized. The Rykshi capitalized on this strange turn of events, blithely unaware of their ally's actions in the Human Sector. Battle Groups 1 and 7 were almost completely wiped out in their attempt to break the blockade over the Beth-El colonies. This failed gambit, however, strengthened the resolve of the Beth-El colony and lead to a bloody guerilla campaign by the colony against the Rykshi.

After the Second Invasion, many elements of the 10th Battle Group abandoned their posts in hopes to help in the Human Sector. This dissolution of the Human forces further confused the Rykshi. A successful raid by the 4th Battle Group that swept the Rykshi presence completely out of the Alpha Centuri Sector but then abruptly stopped combined with reports of Human craft disappearing finally made the Protectorate Council suspicious. They began sending Envoys to the Niruai as well as Scouts deeper into the Human Sector. When one of their Envoys returned a prisoner of a small Human contingent from the Niruai Sector, the Rykshi's confusion quickly ended.

When they learned of the events transpiring in the Human Sector both from their Ambassador and returning Scouts, the Protectorate Council acted quickly. All hostilities between Humanity and Rykshi were ended on August 5, 2437 and a force was quickly organized to repel the Niruai invasion fleet. Mere days later the combined 2nd Protectorate Navy and the remnants of the 4th and 10th Battle Groups started their journey to meet up with Human Battle Group 34 to take the fight to the Niruai.

THE SECOND INVASION (2435 – 2437 CE)

The most recent of wars, the Niruai's Second Invasion of the Human Sector has had the largest impact on the climate of the world of Victory 2442. Its history is intermingled with the Endless War in many ways, as events such as the Rykshi/Niruai non-aggression pact greatly influenced the actions during the war.

THE WHITE FLEET

Seeing the bulk of Humanities forces committed to the Endless War, the Emperor of Niruai managed to work out an armistice with the Rykshi. Armed with protection from aggression on one front, the Niruai Emperor assembled the White Fleet to be an overwhelming force, one that would decapitate the Human government before it knew it was at war, and then systematically destroy every Human settlement until capitulation or eradication. The Niruai had learned much of Human tenacity in the First Invasion, and hoped to head off such resistance with a scorched earth campaign. Kamisori met Saijan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs had personally persuaded the Emperor of the surety of the plan.

The White Fleet crawled through the Alpha Band, following almost fatally close to Haley's Comet as it traversed its eons-old path through the Human Sector. This risky proposition paid off as White Fleet passed through the Navy of the Hegemony's perimeters and checkpoints undetected. When the Fleet finally left the Comet's shadow and sped towards Mars, the Hegemony Navy's nearest quick reaction forces knew that they would be too late to be of any aid.

After their successful destruction of New Beijing, the fleet continued its systematic destruction of Human infrastructure and military bases. Before long the Fleet was harried by Human craft performing surgical strikes or even suicide missions. Admiral Grahm-roh bi Ehan was killed in one such strike, which lead to the rise of acting Admiral Admiral Tybri nikh Sotas. Admiral Sotas, frustrated by the tactics employed by the Humans, grew more and more ruthless in her attacks. She approved the use of chemical and biologic assets as conventional warheads were depleted. Over time, she became entirely fanatical about wiping out all Humanity.

BATTLE GROUP 11

When the Hegemony Navy finally arrived at Mars, the entirety of the Hegemony central command was destroyed. The Navy, without a central command, fractured. Some craft left immediately to defend settlements or military bases according to their standing orders. Admiral Rachel Sherman about the carrier *Manfred von Richthofen* made an impassioned plea to the remaining craft, calling to them to join her in following the White Fleet wherever it may go. At that moment, Battle Group 11—"The Ghosts of New Beijing"—was born.

The Ghosts were tenacious in their pursuit of the White Fleet. They employed quick strikes and even a few suicide missions to harass the Niruai. The few remaining Hegemony governors chafed at these tactics. Instead, they wanted BG11 to spread out and defend the remaining settlements. Admiral Sherman knew that plan was folly, there were too few ships. Even bolstered by an ever growing civilian fleet that was spurred into action by President Kensington's words, splitting the Battle Group would mean guaranteed destruction of the craft one settlement at a time.

The Ghosts would continue their campaign until the end of the war. Eventually, all the large military craft in the group would be destroyed. Admiral Sherman's *Von Richthofen* was destroyed with all hands believed to be lost in a pitched battle over Io in the waning days of the war. The *Von Richthofen*, at only half strength at the time, took with it a Niruai Cruiser and Carrier. Conflicting reports of Admiral Sherman surviving the attack still linger to this day, however. By wars end, the Ghosts of New Beijing were mostly comprised of civilian and mercenary ships as all but a few military gunships were destroyed in their two year campaign.

BATTLE GROUP 34

Upon learning the fate of New Beijing, Captain Matthew St. George of the aged Dreadnought *Victory* knew something must be done. The *Victory* was an older model due to be mothballed in a few years and had been kept on active reserve in the Kuiper belt. Realizing the intention of the White Fleet immediately, Captain St. George put a call out to every member of Battle Group 34. He had a plan to take the battle to the Niruai, in hopes of disrupting their supply chain at the source. Few craft joined him initially, but as word of their exploits in the Niruai home sector filtered back home more and more craft would make the journey to take the fight back to the Niruai.

Captain St. George's plan only targeted military and industrial installations in the Niruai sector. A calculating and by-the-book individual, he had no interest in vengeance for the Niruai's tactics, only in aiding a military victory. The tactics of Battle Group 34 were simple: find poorly defended but high priority targets and destroy them. With the bulk of the Niruai naval resources deployed in the White Fleet, St. George's job was quite simple at first. As the victories mounted, so too did the opposition. St. George's plan was working superbly: in attacking the Niruai's homeworlds, craft were being diverted to a second front, thus denying reinforcements to the White Fleet.

Unfortunately for Battle Group 34, as more resources were diverted to defend the sector, casualties in the group mounted. With few military ships remaining, St. George eventually capitulated to pressure from his command staff to accept civilian craft that had made the dangerous journey to join their cause. Enlisting them as privateers, each was forced to fight according to military engagement rules. Those that refused were turned away and those found breaking those rules were had their craft seized and crews imprisoned by the Battle Group.

Upon learning of a strain in the alliance between the Rykshi and Niruai from a captured Rykshi Ambassador, Captain St. George made a bold gamble. He sent a few ships with the Rykshi Ambassador to the Human/Rykshi front along with word of the events transpiring in the Human Sector in hopes of further widening the gulf between the two allies. Sadly, the Captain would never learn of the success of his gamble as he was killed, and the *Victory* lost, a few weeks later during an assault of a Niruai shipyard.

Word returned from St. George's envoys that the Rykshi were willing to ally with the Humans to end the Niruai's scourge of the Human Sector. Acting commander Captain Soraya Mhaille of the Carrier *Katya Budanova*, accepting the mantle and

ideals of Captain St. George accepted the alliance and broke off Battle Group 34's engagement in the Niruai sector. The Battle Group returned to the Human Sector as the Knights of St. George and brought with them an alliance with the Rykshi and members of Battle Group 4 who had been fighting on the Rykshi Front. This was the moment that turned the tide in the Second Invasion.

THE SYNAE FLEET

The first nuclear explosions witnessed by either the Niruai or Humanity in centuries occurred when, in response to a suicide attack on the carrier *Tybri sek Shemara*, the White Fleet unleashed enough nuclear warheads to glass the surface of Eden X. This act was too much for Commodore Synae-kil met Ehsok. After the utter destruction of Eden X, Commodore Ehsok tried to reason with Admiral Sotas only to be rebuked and threatened with treason. With no other choice, Commodore Ehsok withdrew his Dreadnought, the *Synae sek Pashhra*, from the White Fleet. As he left, all other Synae Tribe craft left with him. In his final transmission, the Commodore vowed to stop Admiral Sotas' madness. The Synae fleet, which became known as the Red Talons to Humanity, made good on this promise. They systematically hunted down and destroyed any White Fleet craft that deployed their chemical, biologic, or nuclear arsenal on Humanity. While never officially aligned with Humanity, when word of their exploits reached settlements across the Sector, the Red Talons became a new beacon of hope.

RYK ACCORDS

With the arrival of the Knights of St. George, Battle Group 4, and a Rykshi Fleet, the Niruai leadership knew the war was lost. After only one decisive battle on September 27, 2437, the White Fleet capitulated and the Empire of Niruai sued for peace.

The Peace negotiations were to take place on the Rykshi homeworld of Ryk, and they turned out to be nearly as contentious as the war itself had been. For example, while peace was officially declared on October 5, 2437, the Ryk Accords were not ratified by all factions until late 2438. Much political maneuvering and outright hostilities between Humanity and the Niruai drew-out the process. Furthermore, the Rykshi had never served as mediators between two factions before, and barely understood the process of developing accords. In all, the year long battle for the Accords was a lesson for all the factions involved as to how different they really were from one another.

In the end, the Accords set up a Neutral Space between the three faction's holdings as well as called for an inter-species council to help mediate further conflicts between the factions. The Niruai were forced to accept responsibility and restitution for their actions, but as of 2442 no monies have been sent. This is mostly due to the fact that Humanity still hasn't managed to establish any form of centralized government for the Niruai to pay. Other aspects of the Accords were the formation of a Courier organization to allow for information to travel amongst the factions without hindrance as well as a strict agreement as to what weapons and targets would be acceptable in future engagements. In the end, CBRN weapons and civilian targets were forbidden from military engagements, but any craft mounting any form of weaponry would be considered a military target, regardless of its markings or a civilian designation.

Finally, the Accords set up the Rykshi to serve as peacekeepers within the Niruai and Human Sectors as well as the Neutral Space for at least two decades. This time limit was imposed to allow time for the Accords to work while preventing any wide scale engagements between the two factions. Even five years after the fact tensions between Humanity and the Niruai still run high, and if not for the Rykshi in the area it is certain that hostilities would have broken out again.

CAMPAIGNS

Victory 2442 provides a galaxy rife with possibilities for characters from all walks of life. The chaos that now exists in the aftermath of the Second Invasion affects every being in the known worlds. From the mounting insurrections in the Rykshi Protectorate to reconstruction efforts of the Human Alliance and the border skirmishes in the fracturing Niruai Empire a group of adventurers have endless options. The following guide will help SIEGE Engineers by offering suggestions on different campaigns that can be run. This list is not exhaustive, but should help to spark a SIEGE Engineer's imagination.

STEP ONE: GAME STYLE

The SIEGE Engineer should, first and foremost, talk with the players of the game and discuss the type of game they want to play in. This initial buy-in helps to make sure everyone is on the same page. To do this, the SIEGE Engineer has the following list of descriptors to use. The group and SIEGE Engineer should decide which of these descriptors they want to explore in their game.

ACTION!

Action is one of the most common tropes found in sci-fi (and roleplaying games in general). The core tenet of an Action game is "Success through adversity", or more simply: "Might makes right." Action games are heavy on combat, and thus it makes a great descriptor for war or crime stories.

ADVENTURE!

The Adventure descriptor is very similar to Action in that physical adversity is paramount. It differs in that the focus for Adventure is not on combat, but instead on defying death from other sources like deadly traps, insane stunts, or even chases. This descriptor goes well with cinematic type stories where cool stunts override reality.

CAMARADERIE!

Groups that want to explore interpersonal relationships of the characters are focused on Camaraderie. These games usually have characters with rich back-stories (the Life Path rules in the Field Manual are a good place to develop these stories) that will be further developed through game play. Camaraderie games focus on role-playing and interaction and can be used to tell dramatic or comedic stories.

DISCOVERY!

Exploration is the goal of a Discovery game. The Discovery descriptor can usually take one of two paths: Personal or Environmental. Personal Discovery games can take the group through the trials and tribulations of personal introspection and development. Personal Discovery is particularly good for character-based games that focus on the lives of the Player Characters. Environmental Discovery games obviously center their attention on exploring some environment. These games could tell the stories of intrepid adventurers

looking to seek out new worlds and civilizations or could instead concentrate on a group of treasure hunters looking for lost technology on a deserted world.

HORROR!

Horror games are similar to Discovery games in that they have a Personal and Environmental path. Environmental Horror games focus on stories where the characters are menaced from an external threat, like an unknown alien species that is slowly killing members of an advanced research team. Meanwhile, Personal Horror stories take a more psychological approach and deal with the character's feelings of guilt, isolation, or emotional instability as the driving force in the story.

INTRIGUE!

Groups that want to explore games full of political machinations, plotting, and scheming will be drawn to the Intrigue Descriptor. These could be stories about a brave group of investigators trying to topple a corrupt governmental office or, instead, about a group of rag-tag rebels scheming against an evil empire.

ROMANCE!

Many stories or games can benefit from some kind of a Romantic subplot. Some groups might find roleplaying romance difficult and so great care should be taken to make sure everyone playing the game is comfortable with introducing this Descriptor into a game. Tales of strong-minded princesses falling for rough-and-tumble smugglers can make for very interesting games for the right group.

SUSPENSE!

Suspense games run a very close line to both Intrigue and Personal Horror games in that they deal with uncertainty. They differ in that the slow build of uncertainty helps create a feeling of tension. Moreover, Suspense stories also rely on some eventual climax (although subverting this expectation can also make for interesting stories) in which the tension is released. Suspense games make for great stories full of drama and thrills.

SURVIVAL!

Characters striving against seemingly unbeatable forces are the heart of Survival games. These types of games mix well with the Horror, Action, and Adventure descriptors, depending on how the group wants to try to oppose the force. In Survival games a character's main goal will generally not be about overcoming the forces opposing them, but instead enduring them. Survival stories could focus on a group desperately trying to reactivate a damaged ship's systems as its orbit around a black hole decays.

STEP TWO: GROUP DYNAMIC

After the group has decided on the style of game they wish to play in, it's best for the group and SIEGE Engineer to work out the group dynamic. This will help the SIEGE Engineer craft the story and game around the group. Below are some examples of groups that are found in Victory 2442. The players can choose to be members of the example groups or can use them as a jumping off point for creating their own associations.

SIEGE Engineers and players will note that most of these examples seem to be specific to a single species. For the most part, the world of Victory 2442 does not lend itself to inter-species mixing in a group setting. The fact is that the war and a general lack of understanding of the other factions has kept most mixing of species to a minimum. This isn't to say that a group can't have mixed species in it. The SIEGE Engineer would, however, have to work with each player to make sure the inclusion of different species within a group would fit. A Rykshi serving in a Human Alliance Naval unit might be a liaison attached to help them re-train while a Human serving in a Marine unit with a Niruai may be working with the Synae Tribe in hopes of overthrowing the Emperor who brought such devastation to the Human Sector.

ADVENTURERS

Once a pastime of the idle rich in the Human Sector, fortune hunting has become more common in the devastation following the Second Invasion. Groups of friends, families, or even complete strangers will set out from their ruined lives in hopes to find something better in the stars. These stalwart souls travel around, searching the wreckage of the war for valuables. Often called "carrion walkers," the Adventurer is seen as a scavenger by those individuals who are trying so hard to rebuild their lives. Couple this perception with the fact that more and more local governments are enacting strict "scavenger laws," to criminalize the Adventurer lifestyle. But even with such great risks of persecution and imprisonment, there is great wealth still out there for those willing to find it.

Adventuring is almost entirely a Human lifestyle. Rarely will one find a group of Niruai or Rykshi plundering lost or destroyed settlements. The Niruai find the practice inglorious at best, seeing the Adventurer merely as an opportunist. Still their pragmatism sees the practice as necessary at times, but most Niruai blanch at the thought of taking on the Adventurer's mantel themselves. The Rykshi, on the other side of the spectrum, see nothing morally wrong with the practice, but their complex rules regarding ownership make plundering a risky occupation.

BOUNTY HUNTERS

With so much area to patrol and not nearly enough craft or personnel to do it, The Knights of St. George, under the auspices of the Human Alliance, have begun licensing and bonding Bounty Hunters. Upon joining the ranks of the Bounty Hunters, an individual is given access to a large database—known at the Black Rolls—available at any The Knights of St. George controlled port. This database provides a list of current bounties and any known whereabouts that has been collected though the Knights of St. George or private citizens. Bounty Hunters can use whatever methods they wish to track and detain their quarry, provided no undue pain or suffering is brought to their target. Lethal force is only allowed when the Hunter's life is directly threatened by the bounty, although with such a dearth of law enforcement, it's often very easy for a Bounty Hunter to skirt this issue. Bounties are paid at The Knights of St. George aligned ports, with a live Bounty granting a 15% bonus.

The Rykshi have a long and proud tradition of Bounty Hunters in their ranks. Called the Veithimar they are known for their tenacity and perseverance. The Veithimar serve as the main force of law-enforcement for the Rykshi and being apprenticed to a Veithimar vessel is one of the greatest honors that could be bestowed upon a Rykshi cub. The Veithimar have great authority and serve as both investigators and lay-judges. Their quarry, called Utlagi (literally "outlaw") are considered to be traitors to the Protectorate as a whole and, as such, there is no form of punishment nor method of tracking considered too extreme. It takes an indictment from a Protectorate "Council of Three" before any Rykshi can be dubbed an Utlagi. A Council of Three is simply any Rykshi that is at least three levels above the accused, or any combination of Rykshi one or two levels above the accused that equals three. Thus, three Rykshi directly over the accused can comprise a Council of Three, as could one Rykshi two levels up and one only one level up. Non-Rykshi requires only the impeachment of any Rykshi in good standing.

With such complex interactions between Tribes and the Empire, the Niruai do not have any Imperially-sanctioned Bounty Hunters. Individual Tribes may employ Bounty Hunters from time to time, but usually only at a local level. This is due to the fact

that once outside the gravity well of a given planet or colony, Tribal law is suspended an only Imperial laws remain, stripping the hunter of any certification or endorsement beyond their home planet or colony.

COURIERS

With faster than light communication still eluding all of the factions, Couriers fill a vital role to all societies. In fact, one of the main agreements found within the Ryk Accords is non-combatant status afforded to any craft bearing a marque of Dispatch. This marque is only granted to independent couriers who serve no governmental or military power. Through the marque, couriers can move unchallenged through any non-interdicted system. Of course, the Accords are somewhat vague as to what classifies as an "interdicted" system, making a courier's job slightly more risky.

Legally a courier cannot be detained by any organization if on a sanctioned route for a specific client. Clients cannot be kept secret and information as to the Client and destination must be given if challenged. Any craft that fires upon a marqued Courier is to be captured or destroyed by local authorities as soon as possible.

Couriers are heralded as modern heroes almost universally. A Courier's arrival to a small colony is often considered a huge affair and can even be cause for celebration or holiday. Yet for all the protections and accolades, a Courier's life is dangerous. Traveling in Subspace is wrought with peril. Moreover, pirates and other ne'er do wells have no problem breaking the Ryk Accords in hopes of gaining whatever data or goods someone paid good money to entrust to a Courier.

EMISSARIES

With the advent of the Ryk Accords, Emissaries have become far more important on the galactic stage. Before the Accords most negotiations between the Human, Rykshi, and/or Niruai factions were generally handled with warships and fighters. Now that the Accords have made a call for a Neutral Space and the creation of an inter-faction council, Emissaries are flocking to the region.

Emissaries can come from any organization, be it corporations, small religious communes, minor Tribes, or whole planets. The Niruai and Humans are particularly interested in developing the inter-faction council, as both are known for being highly diplomatic races. The Rykshi, however, are relatively new to the concept of negotiations outside of warfare, and are stepping into this theatre tentatively. In fact, it has been rumored that some of the more tactful Protectorate species other than the Rykshi may be sent to the council to represent the Rykshi's interests.

ENTERTAINERS

Poets, musicians, troubadours, actors, and artists are all common sights throughout the galaxy. The need for entertainment is one that crosses all factional lines. Even the pragmatic Rykshi enjoy the tales told by their skalds of great warriors past. Human society has long revered its entertainers oftentimes affording them greater amounts of wealth and popularity than the other factions. This is still the case in 2442, with the remnants of Humanity looking to their entertainers to provide a level of normalcy that has been missing in the years of devastation. The Niruai also have a strong tie to popular entertainment and media. In fact, Niruai cinema and literature are perhaps the only places other than military service that can garner the most honor and respect amongst the Niruai. The Niruai see the expression of one's self to be the most honorable act that can be taken, so to be able to so artfully express oneself to the awe of another is a great honor.

INVESTIGATORS

Groups of Investigators could range from police forces, detectives, private investigators, or even spies. Investigators focus on uncovering and trafficking in information. These intrepid souls are found in every faction, employing their skills of deduction, forensics, and social networking to great effects.

Humanity has a long tradition of all types of Investigators, but is the only faction that grants powers to private investigators. Private Investigators, also known as PIs, are still regarded with a romantic allure that has surrounded them since the 19th and 20th century where they were popularized with the likes of Sherlock Holmes, Philip Marlowe, Sam Spade, or Thomas Magnum. In the 25th Century, private eyes have greatly expanded powers and responsibilities, especially in the wake of the Second Invasion. With so few actual police forces functioning, the Human Alliance has begun licensing private eyes to serve as official detectives until a more long-term solution can be devised. Not all private investigators choose to follow this route, however, preferring to sell their services to the highest bidder rather than to a fledgling government.

MERCENARIES

Guns for hire are found throughout the galaxy. With the recent ending of the Second Invasion many mercenary companies are looking to expand their rosters or find new employers. Luckily for the Mercs, war is always a growth industry. Inter-Tribal conflict and rumblings of civil war within the Niruai Empire has seen quite a few Human mercenaries looking to join up with the Synae Tribe in their coup bid. Resentments towards the Niruai Empire as a whole are still high among many Humans, and many mercs

see this is as an opportunity for vengeance. The Synae Tribe's defection in the later term of the war and their stalwart defense against Imperial forces using chemical and biological agents has won quite a bit of sympathy for their cause in Human estimation.

Rykshi Mercenary companies are less common, as most Rykshi will join up with a regular military unit. In general, a Rykshi merc will be an older member of the race who has retired from active service to the Protectorate but still longs for the thrill of battle. The Ghwa Ter Company (literally the "Greybeards") is a well known mercenary company in Rykshi space whose ranks are entirely filled with retired regular military units

The Mercenary tradition is strong in Niruai space. Smaller Niurai Tribes tend to serve as mercenaries to the larger tribes, as their military units lack the strength to stand alone. Within the larger Tribes, some family lines form private military units that then hire themselves out as mercs to their own Tribe.

Mercenaries that hire themselves out to smaller communities or even corporations are often referred to as "Troubleshooters". These mercenaries tend to work for greater wages as they are usually highly specialized in their field. Troubleshooter groups tend to be small, highly skilled, and well-respected in their field.

MERCHANTS

Where Couriers are the lifeblood of information, the Merchants serve as the heart that keeps the economies of the factions beating. A Merchant craft could be a single run by its owner/operator or could be one in a fleet of a huge Shipping consortium. The Syndain and Jago Tribes of the Niruai are both well known for their huge Merchant fleets. The Jago merchant fleet is so large it is referred to as the "Economic Navy" of the Niruai. The Rykshi tend to have smaller syndicates of a few owner/operators working together for a common good. Meanwhile, the best-known shipping conglomerate in the Human Sector is that of the Cholmondely family of Mars: "StarShift Shipping" whose merchants are known for their "no haggle, no fuss, and no delay" policy.

MILITARY UNIT

The various military organizations of the three factions are currently in a rebuilding phase. The results of the Second Invasion are far from certain. Only the Rykshi fleet survived mostly intact, but recent insurrections in their own holdings as well as Peacekeepers promised in the Ryk Accords have placed great strains on their resources. The Niruai's White Fleet was reduced to at least half its former strength in the war and has now split along Tribal lines

as the Emperor's power weakens. Finally, the military might of Humanity has all but vanished in the wake of the war, leaving them to pick up the scattered pieces.

For Humanity, the Alliance is basically starting from scratch to rebuild any semblance of a military. It is believed that the only military grade craft to survive the war were three carriers, a handful of destroyers and cruisers, and the Dreadnought *Hasten.* Much of Humanity's armed forces now consist of The Knights of St. George. The Knights are comprised of the remnants of Captain St. George's assault wing and the armed civilian irregulars who joined him in assault of the Niruai home sector. They are now doing their best to reorganize themselves into a more cohesive fighting force while maintaining the individuality that allowed them such great flexibility in their guerilla war against the Niruai. Beyond Naval power, the Hegemony Marines were almost completely wiped out and regular Army forces were decimated in the carpet bombings and chemical attacks of the White Fleet.

The Rykshi lost a relatively small portion of their vast military resources in the war compared to the other factions. Nevertheless, the long years of war between the Humans and the Rykshi left a great divide between veteran and green units, and most forces now in service to the Protectorate are new recruits. While their battles with Humanity had been confined to only small military engagements on border worlds, a great many Rykshi warriors lost their lives in the conflict. Luckily, their non-aggression pact left them free from threats from the Niruai.

When word finally came of the tactics and devastation wrought by their allies in the war, the Rykshi were sobered. The Rykshi quickly sued for peace with Humanity and brought their weight to bear against the Niruai. Now the Rykshi stand as the only true "superpower" in the galaxy, but with that title they also hold the burden of defending the peace they negotiated in the Ryk Accords. Unused to a policing role of unconquered people, the Rykshi military is chafing in its role as peacekeepers and there is even some rumbling in the military of breaking from the Protectorate Council ruling and "finishing the job when our enemies are weakest." That sentiment may have more support if not for numerous and well-coordinated insurrections on Protectorate holdings that seemed to have sprung up from nowhere, diverting attention (and resources) back to the home-front.

The Niruai's Naval and Marine forces suffered greatly in the guerilla battle with The Knights of St. George and the Ghosts of New Beijing. Unused to the hit-and-run and suicide tactics employed, the White Fleet suffered great losses. Then, with the Rykshi-Human Alliance, the Fleet was further reduced in strength. Now, the Niruai military is in shambles. The defection of the Synae tribe and many of the minor Tribal mercenaries as well as a weakening in the power base of the Emperor has let the White Fleet completely collapse. Units once united are now fractioning along Tribal lines and moving to shore up support for their Tribe in the all but inevitable civil war.

MISSIONARIES

Various religious sects and movements populate the galaxy. Humanity has always been a spiritually fractious lot with few religions or philosophies surviving long-term. The Niruai are far more unified in their ancestor worship, provided one stays within Tribal lines. There is some overlap in these revered ancestors, however, which had allowed the Emperor to better cement a unified Niruai. Even with this overlap, a Niruai's religion is very tied to their Tribe, and so the idea of missionaries converting non-believers is almost completely unheard of in Niruai space. Meanwhile, Rykshi have little or no reverence for the spiritual aspect of the world, with their strongly agnostic or atheistic bent. Missionaries are mostly Human, but the rare Niruai or Rykshi that has converted to Human religions can be found at times. Missionaries serve to either bring enlightenment to others or to act as envoys, ambassadors, or even peacekeepers.

The life of a missionary is often harsh. Small communities often look askance to new beliefs being introduced and larger communities find a missionary's message drowned out. The danger of angering highly religious communities with unpopular or even heretical dogma is always a threat. The Beth-el colony, which rests on the outskirts of the Human Sector near the Rykshi border, is a good example of a smaller community of Human worshippers that do not truck with heresy. Anyone, visitor or resident, who is heard in public espousing heretical beliefs, is to immediately be "spaced" to save the flock from dissent.

REBELS

With political instability existing in all three of the faction's territories to one degree or another, a rebel group can be a very interesting staring point for a game. Rebels are much like mercenaries in that they are generally unaligned military groups, but they differ in that they fight for beliefs rather than for money. Rebel groups firmly believe in the cause they are fighting for. Thus, the players could all be members of a Niruai insurrection force hoping to topple the current Emperor's rule. They could be aligned with the Synae Tribe or completely unaligned, hoping just to destabilize rather than institute a new regime. In the Human Sector, on the other hand, the Human Alliance is trying, through the Knights of St. George, to re-unite the varied Human settlements. The "Ghosts of New Beijing" was a guerilla group that fought during the war that now opposes unification, believing it was the centralization of all power that led to the near extinction of Humanity. Conversely, the rebel group could be for a competing organization hoping to usurp the Alliance's power.

Rebel groups in Protectorate space are far less common, and would probably be confined to some of the Protectorate's "conquered" species. These could be stories of economically and technologically depressed people rising up against their overlords in desperate bids for freedom. Or, they could be groups of Rykshi sympathetic to the plight of those conquered organizing various insurrections on numerous holdings in hopes of destabilizing the current Council.

RESEARCHERS

Research, development, and scientific experimentation are all extremely important fields in the 25th century. Every faction highly respects the advances made by the more scientifically minded in their species. As such, great respect and funds are often appropriated for these groups to carry out their research. Groups could be field biologists for the Protectorate studying a newly "conquered" race for its inclusion into the Protectorate's annals or a small band of Human engineers field testing their latest development in defensive screen technology. Alternately, the group could consist of Niruai engineers and their testing of a newly developed combat Android.

TRAVELERS

Some people merely want to see the variety and vastness presented by space. These groups of Travelers want nothing more than to tour the galaxy, finding work as they can and moving on when they so wish. Both the Human and Niruai have strong Traveler traditions within their cultures. For the Humans, they are the Nomads, who have long history of ties to no one country; instead they are tied to their ethnic group. The Niruai, have the Gysa Tribe, which is not a proper Tribe, but a conglomeration of outsiders, defectors, and criminals that have lost their rank and place in their birth Tribe. The Gysa rarely settle in one place for long, and those that do are usually run out by other Niruai once they are discovered. Gysa are considered to be thieves and bringers of Ashyn (the ill will of one's ancestors) to anyone who grants them harbor for more than a week.

Travelers are less common in the Rykshi culture, but not completely foreign. Smaller packs sometimes choose the route of the Traveler rather than making attempts to qualify for membership to the Protectorate Marines or Navy. Being a Traveler is not well-regarded by most Rykshi, as they see it as a shirking of one's duty to the Protectorate.

The Final step to creating a campaign in Victory 2442 is the development of the story that the group wishes to tell. This, of course, first starts with combining the Descriptors of Step One and the Group Type of Step Two to get a general idea of the direction the group wants the story to go. Provided below are some story seeds that a SIEGE Engineer can use to develop games in Victory 2442. Also provided in the seeds are examples of how the ideas can be modified according to the Descriptors the group has chosen. Once more, these are merely suggestions to inspire, rather than hard and fast plot lines.

THE CACHE

Rumor has it there's an abandoned Human research station out near the Rykshi border that was abandoned during the First Rykshi War. So it's been floating out there in the cold, forgotten. But now you have some coordinates, discovered purely through happenstance while culling data from a salvaged Hegemony computer. What will you find out on the edge of space?

Other Possibilities: Cache of opposing force's weaponry. Fully functional, but secret research facility.

Action! – Have the Rykshi commandeered this station over the years? Perhaps Pirates use it as a base of operations or another group is out for the same salvage.

Adventure! – Does the station have an automated defense mechanism? Or maybe the system has been damaged over the years, requiring dangerous space walks and maneuvering in corridors filled with twisted wreckage.

Discovery! – Exploring the abandoned station or even searching the area near the coordinates when the station wasn't where it was supposed to be.

Horror! – Perhaps the station was experimenting on illegal genetic mutations and one of the experiments still lives, waiting for someone to return.

Intrigue! – Why was this station abandoned? How did the coordinates get "lost" for so long in the Hegemony annals? What are people trying to hide out there?

Survival! – Maybe the group's craft was damaged on the approach to the station and now they must try to salvage equipment from the hulk to repair their craft before their emergency life support is depleted.

THE OPPORTUNITY

To call relations between Humanity and the Niruai "strained" since the Ryk Accords is an understatement. In some sectors, the only things keeping the two sides from continued hostility are a lack of resources and the ever present Rykshi Peacekeepers. But trouble back in the Protectorate has seen the Peacekeeper presence in this sector all but disappear overnight. Sure, there's a few gunboats patrolling, but this is a big sector. Chances are good that a lightning raid at the right moment might catch the other side completely unaware. Do it fast and quietly enough and the Rykshi will never know you pulled it off.

Other Possibilities: Characters are Peacekeepers trying to fend off raids while short staffed. Raid a Rykshi post for weapons and equipment before the actual assault on opposition forces.

Action! – This adventure should be ripe for opportunities for action, from fighting the opposing side or even running afoul of a Peacekeeper gunboat en route.

Adventure! – Perhaps the Peacekeepers catch wind of the character's plot and give chase through an asteroid field.

Camaraderie! – A comrade was captured in an earlier attempt at such a raid, and the group wants nothing more than to launch a recovery mission.

Horror! – The raid was successful, for the most part… unfortunately it seems there was some collateral damage and some civilians got in the way. How does the group deal with the civilians and the associated guilt if things go badly?

Intrigue! – The target of the raid is a databank that holds information on possible spies and sympathizers working for the other side. What do the characters do with the information, once uncovered? What if one of the characters or an ally is named on the list?

Suspense! – Much like action, this entire plot is filled with opportunities to build suspense. Maybe the group runs into a patrol and has to shut down their craft to avoid detection. Make them sweat out those tense minutes of uncertainty.

Survival! – The raid is completely botched, leaving the characters stranded on enemy ground. What can they do to avoid capture and return home?

THE HERMIT

The group has been paid well to recover a respected member of the Tybri Tribe, Tybri-asi nikh Misut, that has gone into retirement. Misut was once a very influential member of Imperial Intelligence and second only to Syndain-okul bi Garkon, the deposed Director of Intelligence. Garkon and most of his staff has gone into hiding after accusations that Imperial Intelligence aided Humanity and the Rykshi towards the end of the war. The Emperor believes Misut to be innocent and hopes to use her political influence and knowledge of both the Tybri and Synae Tribes to avoid the coming civil war. Trouble is Misut isn't too keen on the Emperor, nor her Tribe's current affiliation with him. Can the group persuade her to join the cause, or will she sway them instead?

Other Possibilities: Characters are marqued Couriers but the target is in an "interdicted" zone. Characters are instead Human and are hoping to kidnap the Hermit for ransom, information, or "war crimes".

Action! – Synae forces are lying in wait, hoping to stop the group from delivering Misut to the Emperor. Assassins have been sent by Syndain-okul bi Garkon to keep Misut silent.

Camaraderie! – Perhaps Misut is an old friend of one of the group members, putting her in a position of choosing between her loyal friend and her doubts about the current Emperor.

Discovery! – Maybe Misut is already dead when the group arrives and it is up to them to discover who killed her and why.

Intrigue! – Misut attempts to employ members of the group (individually or together) as spies for Syndain bi Garkon. She knows of Garkon's plan to depose the Emperor during the coming war and offers the group in on "the new order" now in exchange for letting her escape.

Romance! – Misut is deeply in love with Synae-asi bi Shakon, who is a member of the Synae Resistance. Can the group convince her to abandon her love in service to the Empire? Instead, a group member may attempt to seduce Misut in hopes of gaining her trust.

Survival! – Misut has spent the intervening years building up defenses to her retreat in hopes to dissuade visitors; can the group escape her deadly maze of defenses?

THE THREAT

A Frigate full of precious metals is en route from Raetor towards the Rykshi manufacturing center in the Capor Nebula. Members of a separatist group of "subordinate species" have taken control of the Frigate and are threatening to crash it into the Rykshi garrison on the first satellite of Raetor unless the current embargo of the nearby planet Forid is lifted. The group has been charged by the Protectorate Navy to recover the Frigate and

its metals intact by any means necessary. Can the group talk down the terrorists or must they result to force?

Other Possibilities: The characters are, instead, pirates looking to hijack the shipment and run afoul of both the terrorists and the Rykshi sent to pacify them.

Action! – If the characters so choose, this can be a daring boarding mission complete with hostages and well armed terrorists.

Adventure! – Perhaps the terrorists decide to make a break for it, leading to a chase through Subspace. Or maybe the terrorists go through with their suicide mission; can the group find a way to stop the Frigate without destroying its cargo?

Discovery! – Where did the terrorists get their access and weaponry? How did they

Horror! – How do the characters deal with the aftermath of a failed attempt to stop the suicide attack?

Intrigue! – The characters, in subduing the terrorists learn that the terrorists were trained and funded by a Rykshi. How far up the chain does this corruption go? To what end are these conspirators working?

Suspense! – Tense negotiations with the terrorists or even a mass attempt to evacuate the crash site, for precautionary measures. Will the characters accomplish their task in time?

THE AMBASSADOR

Being tapped to serve in the Neutral Space as emissaries of the Human Alliance was a great honor. You believe in what the Knights of St. George and their political counterparts are trying to do. Now, you have been assigned the task of cozying up with the new Rykshi Ambassador to the Neutral Space. Negotiations as to the nature and power of the Inter-species Assembly will definitely have to go through Ambassador Aigern Gereholm. Can the group win over his trust over all the other sycophants and politicos surrounding them?

Other Possibilities: One or more characters have been charged with assassinating the Ambassador to destabilize the peace process.

Adventure! – The characters must help the Ambassador escape an attempted assassination.

Camaraderie! – One character finds out that his friend has been paid to kill the Rykshi Ambassador. The group strangely befriends a Niruai envoy and now must weigh the ruthless agenda they've been sent to push against the knowledge that not all Niruai are bloody-minded murderers.

Discovery! – Learning of a planned assassination, the group must discover who is behind it before it's too late.

Intrigue! – This is pretty much set up to be an Intrigue based game. This game should be full of political machinations, bribery, and currying favor.

Romance! – Love can blossom in the strangest places… even on a senate floor. Perhaps a character falls for a rival emissary or vice versa.

Suspense! – Along with Intrigue, this plot can be full of dramatic moments as the characters do what they can to push their agenda through the proceedings, making allies and enemies along the way.

STAR CRAFT

What follows are general templates for some of the more common starships found in the Victory 2442 setting. These templates provide a guideline for groups to model further modifications or entirely new designs. Also listed in each category are modifications that the different factions tend to use on their craft from the default template. This will allow groups to understand the different design philosophies used by the three alien species.

FIGHTERS

Interceptor: R2 S22 T7 V16, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move 2, Suborbital Scale, 4 Durability, Flight +4, Sensors +3, Defense +4, Quarters 10, 3 x Subsystem 10, Flaw: Volatile.

HUMAN MODIFICATIONS

Provided above is a stock Human Interceptor. Generally they come equipped with a Clarke Generator, Armor Plating, and either a LASE Array or Light Assault Cannon. Some heavier assault models replace the Clarke Generator with a Missile Battery.

NIRUAI MODIFICATIONS

The Niruai favor more maneuverable ships. A typical Niruai Interceptor will remove one Subsystem 10 and use the 5 Building Points to increase the Move to 3, the Flight to +6, and Defense to +5. They usually mount Armor Plating and a weapon in their two remaining Subsystem slots.

RYKSHI MODIFICATIONS

Rykshi detest "one-man" fighters and do not use them. The smallest craft the Rykshi field is the Gunship.

FREIGHTERS

Light Freighter: R2 S24 T8 V18, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move ½, Subluminal Scale, 3 Durability, Flight +1, Sensors +3, Defense +1, Quarters 14, Cargo 22, Subsystem 6, Subsystem 8, Subsystem 12, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Temperamental.

Medium Freighter: R2 S26 T8 V21, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move ½, Subluminal Scale, 5 Durability, Flight +1, Sensors +3, Defense +1, Quarters 16, Cargo 28, Subsystem 6, 2x Subsystem 8, Subsystem 12, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Terrain Ban (Atmosphere)

Heavy Freighter: R2 S28 T8 V25, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move ½, Subluminal Scale, 6 Durability, Flight +1, Sensors +5, Defense +1, Quarters 18, Cargo 32, Subsystem 6, 2x Subsystem 8, Subsystem 12, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Terrain Ban (Atmosphere).

These three designs represent the bulk of the freighters used by most factions. Minor variations on design exist, but these are good exemplars.

GUNSHIP

The stats for a standard Gunship can be found in the StarSIEGE: Event Horizon Field Manual.

HUMAN MODIFICATIONS

Human Gunships favor maneuverability over additional equipment. Remove Subsystem 7 and increase Quarters to 14. The remaining 3 BP are usually placed to increase Flight to +3 and Defense to +4. Human Gunships tend to mount Armor plating and two weapon systems, although one weapon system and a reconnaissance suite are common as well.

NIRUAI MODIFICATIONS

Niruai rarely use Gunships outside of port interdiction. There are no differences from the stock craft. They generally mount reconnaissance suites, armor, and weapons.

RYKSHI MODIFICATIONS

Rykshi Gunships are much sturdier than their counterparts. Remove Subsystem 7, increase Quarters to 14. The remaining 3 BP are placed in Durability giving the craft a Durability 8. Rykshi will mount armor and weapons in their remaining subsystems.

CORVETTES

Corvette: R1 S25 T9 V26, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move 2, Subluminal Scale, 6 Durability, Flight +3, Sensors +3, Defense +3, Stealth +4, Quarters 16, 2x Subsystem 8, Subsystem 10, Subsystem 12, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Terrain Ban (Atmosphere).

HUMAN MODIFICATIONS

Humans make no modifications to the Corvette listed above. They will mount a Subspace Drive, Armor, and weapons on their subsystems.

NIRUAI MODIFICATIONS

Niruai maneuverability once more shines through in their Corvette design, sacrificing stealth for speed. Remove Stealth +4 and instead give Niruai Corvettes a Move of 3 and a Defense of +5. They will mount similar subsystems as humans.

RYKSHI MODIFICATIONS

A Rykshi corvette is all about durability. Reduce Stealth +4 to Stealth +2 and Flight +3 to Flight +1. With the 4 BP, increase the Durability of the craft to 10 Durability. Rykshi will mount armor, subspace drives, and weapons on their Corvettes.

DESTROYERS

Destroyer: R1 S27 T9 V30, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move 1, Subluminal Scale, 9 Durability, Flight +3, Sensors +3, Defense +5, Quarters 18, Subsystem 10, 2x Subsystem 12, Subsystem 16, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Terrain Ban (Atmosphere).

Frigate: R1 S26 T9 V24, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move 1, Subluminal Scale, 6 Durability, Flight +2, Sensors +5, Defense +2, Stealth +2, Quarters 16, Subsystem 8, 3x Subsystem 12, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Terrain Ban (Atmosphere).

> The Destroyer class of ships covers both Frigates and Destroyers. They are used as the mainline assault craft for most navies. Frigates generally fulfill the role of missile craft while Destroyers serve as general assault craft.

HUMAN MODIFICATIONS

The examples above are standard human Destroyers and Frigates. They will mount a Subspace Drive in Subsystem 12 and Armor in their smaller subsystems. Frigates will fill their remaining subsystems with missile batteries while a Destroyer will carry a larger weapon such as a Kensington Cannon or Rail Gun.

NIRUAI MODIFICATIONS

Both Niruai Destroyers and Frigates just use the Destroyer stats above. Niruai Frigates will use the Subsystem 16 to mount a Nuclear Missile Battery while Destroyers will carry an Assault Laser or Rail Cannon.

RYKSHI MODIFICATIONS

A Rykshi Destroyer is not changed from the listed stats. Remove Stealth +2 and increase Durability to 8 on a Rykshi Frigate.

CARRIERS

Carrier: R2 S30 T9 V29, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move 1, Subluminal Scale, 6 Durability, Flight +2, Sensors +3, Defense +3, Quarters 20, Cargo 27, 3x Subsystem 9, Subsystem 12, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Terrain Ban (Atmosphere).

> Carriers are the core of both the Human and Niruai fleets and are used to deliver fighters into battle, since all fighters lack subspace drives. The stock Carriers are capable of deploying 32 fighters into battle.

HUMAN MODIFICATIONS

Humans prefer to carry more fighters into battle than the stock design allows. They increase Cargo to 28 (allowing for up to 64 Fighters) and by doing so they reduce their 3x Subsystem 9 to 3x Subsystem 8. The remaining 1 BP is used to increase Quarters to 21 to accommodate the additional pilots. Carriers will mount armor, defensive weapons, and a subspace drive.

NIRUAI MODIFICATIONS

The Niruai make no modifications to the standard Carrier design.

RYKSHI MODIFICATIONS

Rykshi Carriers are designed with delivering Gunships into battle rather than Fighters. They make the same modifications as Humans save that they can only deliver 16 Gunships into battle with their Cargo 28 due to the larger Size of the Gunships.

DREADNOUGHTS

Battleship: R1 S29 T9 V31, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move 1, Subluminal Scale, 10 Durability, Flight +2, Sensors +2, Defense +3, Quarters 20, Subsystem 8, 3x Subsystem 12, Subsystem 16, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Terrain Ban (Atmosphere).

Cruiser: R1 S28 T9 V27, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move 1, Subluminal Scale, 7 Durability, Flight +2, Sensors +5, Defense +3, Bolster +3, Tactical Maneuvers +3, Quarters 18, Subsystem 8, 2x Subsystem 10, Subsystem 12, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Terrain Ban (Atmosphere).

> The Dreadnought class covers both Battleships and command Cruisers. Dreadnoughts are far and away the largest and most devastating craft fielded by any Navy.

HUMAN MODIFICATIONS

The examples above are standard Human Dreadnoughts.

NIRUAI MODIFICATIONS

The Niruai favor faster Battleships and reduce Quarters to 18 to increase Move to 2. Niruai Cruisers do not make use of the Bolster +3 and use those points to increase Flight and Defense to +4 each.

RYKSHI MODIFICATIONS

Once more, the Rykshi favor strength in their designs. Rykshi Battleships reduce their Subsystem 16 to a Subsystem 12 and use the 4 BP to increase their Durability to 14. Rykshi rarely field Cruisers and so use the stock model when they do.

SUBSYSTEMS

What follows are some Victory 2442 specific subsystems. Groups should feel free to build more subsystems as they find necessary for their games.

GENERAL SYSTEMS

Clarke Generator: R1, S7, T9, V10, Automatic. 5 Durability, Handling Skill Bonus +2, Defense +4, SFX: Fast, Flaw: Slave.

> The Clarke Generator greatly increases the speed and maneuverability of the craft it is mounted on. Its only real flaw is the power requirements to generate the Clarke effect.

Subspace Drive: R1, S12, T8, V19, Automatic. Locomotion: Flight, Move 2, Delta Band Scale, 3 Durability, Sensors +1, SFX: Variable Scale, Flaw: Bulky, Flaw: Volatile, Flaw: Slave.

> The Subspace Drive is used by all factions to speed up interstellar travel through the use of Subspace. This Drive allows for craft to enter any band of Subspace up to the Delta Band (via the Variable Scale effect) and also

allows the craft to move up to a Move of 2. On the down-side, the drive is massive and requires a lot of power to use. Also, it tends to explode if it takes too much damage. Furthermore, all craft that mount a Subspace Drive are assumed to carry at least 50 Reconnaissance Drones as part of the system. These Drones effectively boost the Sensor rating of the craft while the craft is in Subpsace.

Reconnaissance Suite: R2, S8, T8, V9, Automatic. 2 Durability, Sensors +4, Detection +5, SFX: Expanded Spectrum (x4), SFX: Low Light, Flaw: Slave.

Reconnaissance Suites are a great boon to any craft that mounts them. These sensitive devices greatly expands the sensing capabilities of the craft.

DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS

Armor Plating: R0, S7, T8, V8, Automatic. Defense +2, 6 Durability, Armor 2, Flaw: Bulky.

Armor Plating is common and cheap and used throughout the galaxy as the mainline defense for most vehicles.

Point Defense Screen: R0, S6, T10, V9, Automatic. Defense +4, 3 Durability, Armor 4, SFX: Reinforced, Flaw: Slave.

Newly developed by both the Niruai and Human factions, the Point Defense Screen provides a high-powered energy-screen for the vehicle that mounts it. This screen is very resistant to armor piercing attacks and provides defensive capabilities twice that of standard Armor Plating, but the screen fails much faster than physical armor does.

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Assault Laser: R1, S16, T10, V9, Combat. Line of Sight Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +8, SFX: Armor Piercing, Flaw: Slave, Flaw: Bulky, 2 Durability, 5 Wounds.

This weapon represents the cutting edge of Niruai laser technology. The Assault Laser is a devastating weapon at most every range and is capable of cutting through all but the most stalwart of armor. Only the Niruai have access to this powerful weapon.

Blast Cannon: R4, S12, T9, V16, Combat. Short Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +6, SFX: Armor Crushing, Flaw: Slave, Flaw: Bulky, 4 Durability, 6 Wounds.

The Rykshi have refined their "Blaster" technology and the Blast Cannon is the heaviest weapon they produce in that category. Devastating at close ranges, the Blast Cannon ignores every armor or shielding in production by any of the factions. The Blast Cannon is found only on the heaviest of Rykshi ships.

Chemical Missile Battery: R4, S10, T8, V13, Combat. Extreme Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +4, SFX: Ammo, SFX: Vicious (x2), Flaw: Slave, Flaw: Bulky, 3 Wounds.

Chemical Missiles are terribly sadistic weapons. Largely banned by a "gentlemen's agreement" by most factions, Chemical weapons haven't seen much use until the most recent war with the Niruai, where they employed these weapons mercilessly on Human settlements. Chemical weapons are deadly and extremely vicious, causing those who witness their use severe mental duress. A variety of payloads can be mounted on these chassis, such as nerve gas (Stun Special Effect), knockout gas (Daze Special Effect), or even poison (deal an additional Wound).

Conventional Missile Battery: R4, S12, T6, V9, Combat. Long Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +7, SFX: Ammo, Flaw: Bulky, Flaw: Slave, 4 Wounds.

Missiles represent one of the most commonly used weaponry in large scale combat. They are reliable, cheap, and versatile. All factions make use of these weapons on their ship to ship combats.

Kensington Cannon: R4, S16, T10, V12, Combat. Medium Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +3, Flaw: Slow (x2), Flaw: Slave, Flaw: Bulky, 1 Durability, 1 Critical Wound.

Named for Admiral Walthrup Kensington, hero of the first Niruai Invasion, the Kensington Cannon is the apex of Human heavy weapon technology. Cursed with a slow energy build-up and limited fire control, the Kensington Cannon unleashes a ruinous stream of high powered energy that melts away the hulls of ships, delivering critical damage with each stream.

LASE Array: R2, S10, T10, V16, Combat. Line of Sight Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +9, SFX: Armor Piercing, SFX: Rapid Fire, Flaw: Bulky, Flaw: Slave, 4 Wounds.

The LASE Array makes use of the Laser Amplification Surge Effect, new tech for Humanity but older tech for the Niruai, to create a rapid fire, armor piercing laser attack. The LASE Array is one of the most impressive smaller capitol ship weapons.

Light Assault Cannon: R4, S7, T7, V10, Combat. Short Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +4, SFX: Ammo, Flaw: Bulky, Flaw: Slave, 2 Durability, 3 Wounds.

A common light weight projectile cannon used by various military and merchant craft for rudimentary defense.

Nuclear Missile Battery: R6, S16, T7, V22, Combat. Line of Sight Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +4, Flaw: Bulky, Flaw: Slave, Flaw: Devastation, 3 Critical Wounds.

Nuclear Missiles generally represent the alpha and omega of weapon systems developed. These are devastating weapons capable of destroying anything in their path. The only flaw that prevents their wide-scale use is this devastation, however. For game purposes, the devastation wrought by a nuclear attack affects all targets (friend or foe) within Close Range to the initial target suffer the full effects of the weapon. Unfortunately, the fallout from the fission explosion wreaks havoc with electrical and ecological systems. Any unshielded electronic systems within Short Range to the blast are permanently disabled. If used within a planet's atmosphere, the devastation will spread into the ecologic system causing long lasting fallout effects such as nuclear winter, radiation storms, or blighted areas. The SIEGE Engineer should adjudicate such effects. Nuclear weaponry have largely been relegated to "last ditch" status for all factions but the Niruai and even the Niruai blanch at their use most of the time.

Heavy Assault Cannon: R4, S10, T7, V10, Combat. Close Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +5, SFX: Rapid Fire, Flaw: Bulky, Flaw: Slave, 4 Durability, 4 Wounds.

A larger rapid fire version of the Lighter Assault Cannon, this is a powerful close-range weapon used by larger ships for offensive and defensive capabilities.

Rail Cannon: R2, S16, T8, V10, Combat. Medium Range, Subluminal Scale, Shooting +8, SFX: Armor Piercing, SFX: Fast, Flaw: Slave, 2 Durability, 4 Wounds.

A common weapon found on most capitol ships, the Rail Cannon uses magnets to push its slugs to supersonic speeds. The Rail Cannon has a high rate of fire, which means it is often the first weapon brought to bear in any large clash. All factions employ the Rail Cannon due to its versatility and reliability.