

Giant Robots. Teen Angst. Mecha Drama.

器械源
TEARS OF A MACHINE



A Role-Playing Game
by Russell Collins

Tears of a Machine



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Colophon

This book was created with Mac, OS X and Adobe. The following typefaces were chosen for their combination of futuristic precision and humanist readability: Gothic720 BT, Interstate and *Silva SSl*. Made with love in Chicago, IL.

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Dedicated to Stephen, James, and John.

Untouchable.

Accessibility Matters

A hobby built on imagination and creativity shouldn't be kept behind the barrier of the printed word. I'm committed to making gaming accessible.

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You can do this Amy! Remember your training.



Chapter 1.

Welcome to Tears of a Machine

What Is This?

Tears of a Machine is a story game in which a group of players get together to imagine new episodes of a giant robot anime. Through improvisational acting and rolling dice players tell the stories of teenage pilots who fight a war against an alien foe. The game focuses on the personalities of pilots and their lives; their ups and downs, friends and enemies, hopes, dreams, fears and frustrations. This drama feeds the action in the climactic scenes of giant robot combat. The personal involvement of the pilots is important in every scene, just as it is in the best shows and comic books of the giant robot genre. The rules for resolving conflict and for combat are abstracted so that the emotion and excitement can shine through.

Who Are We?

Tears of a Machine requires 3-7 people with one filling the role of the Director and the others playing the roles of teenage pilots. The pilots are the protagonists of the series; teenagers recruited for their youthful ability to mentally link with SAInts, the giant robots that can fight off the alien invaders. Each player will create a pilot character, choosing the motivations for her pilot, her drives and ambitions and fears and failings. The player will take on the role of the character in the game, speaking and acting for that pilot. As the game progresses, the player will advance her growth through the stories of her life.

It's the Director's task to fill in the world around the pilots in a way that the players will enjoy, and the best way to do that is to ask questions. Who are the characters the players have brought to the story? What are their personalities? What happens when someone starts flirting? Pulls a knife? Announces a pop quiz? Charges at them in a giant robot? Who do the characters care about? Is it a friendship or a rivalry? As the players answer these questions they create the story of their pilots.

How Does It Work?

Each episode has its own story; a theme created by the questions the Director asks and the answers the players give. The Director sets the stage for each scene of the episode: where the players are, who else is involved and what's going to challenge the pilots. Players suggest scenes through choices, such as deciding to go to the mall instead of another boring lecture, but they can also offer ideas through their pilot's motivations. The Director populates the scenes with important characters. Each pilot will have relationships that emphasize personal motivations and including these characters in scenes increases the drama.

Once the scene is set a challenge is introduced: Steve wants someone to slip a note to Cassandra; Mari wants to out-shoot everyone at target practice; an enemy robot drops out of the sky and flings bolts of scorching energy in all directions.

The players respond, describing what the pilots do and speaking through them. These choices lead to an Action, a major decision that involves the ability ratings of the characters, their relationships to the other participants and the chance element of dice. Players declare what Actions their pilots take and then dice are rolled. The results are compared and the success or failure of the Action takes effect. The players describe the outcome and the after-effects of what took place.

Most scenes are focused around a single challenge; the pop quiz, the target-shooting contest, or flirting with another pilot, and one Action sees this scene to its resolution. Each character focuses on his most important goal and then acts accordingly, whether that means going with the flow or finding his own individual path. More complicated scenes like a battle between giant robots or a debate between powerful people require a Trial; a series of Actions taken in turns as the hectic and risky situations play out. The basics remain the same. Each player declares the pilot's intended response to the challenge of the situation, dice are gathered and rolled and the results lead to description of the aftermath.

But There's a Twist.

Ego. A pilot's Ego is very important to the story, not just of her own life but her compatriot's as well. Ego is a currency in *Tears of a Machine*. It is earned by a pilot when her success carries personal importance. When

she strives toward her own goals and when she overcomes doubts that hold her back, she gains a greater sense of self-worth and optimism. This Ego can be spent to put more energy into her Actions. She can excel if she believes in herself and refuses to give up.

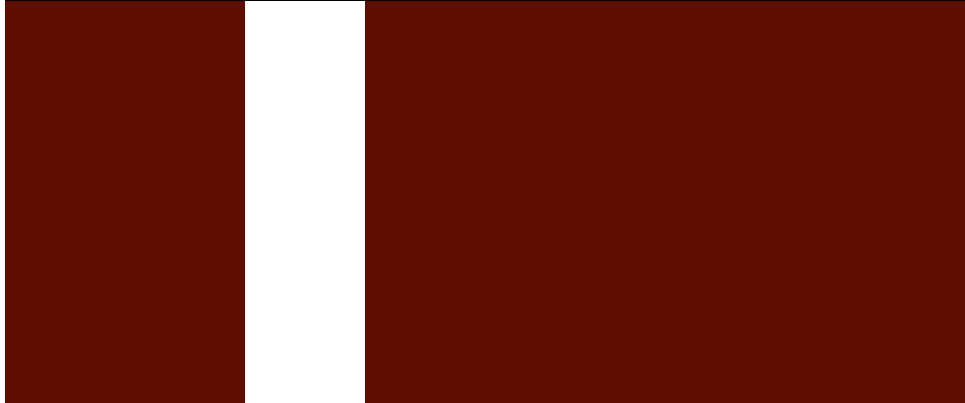
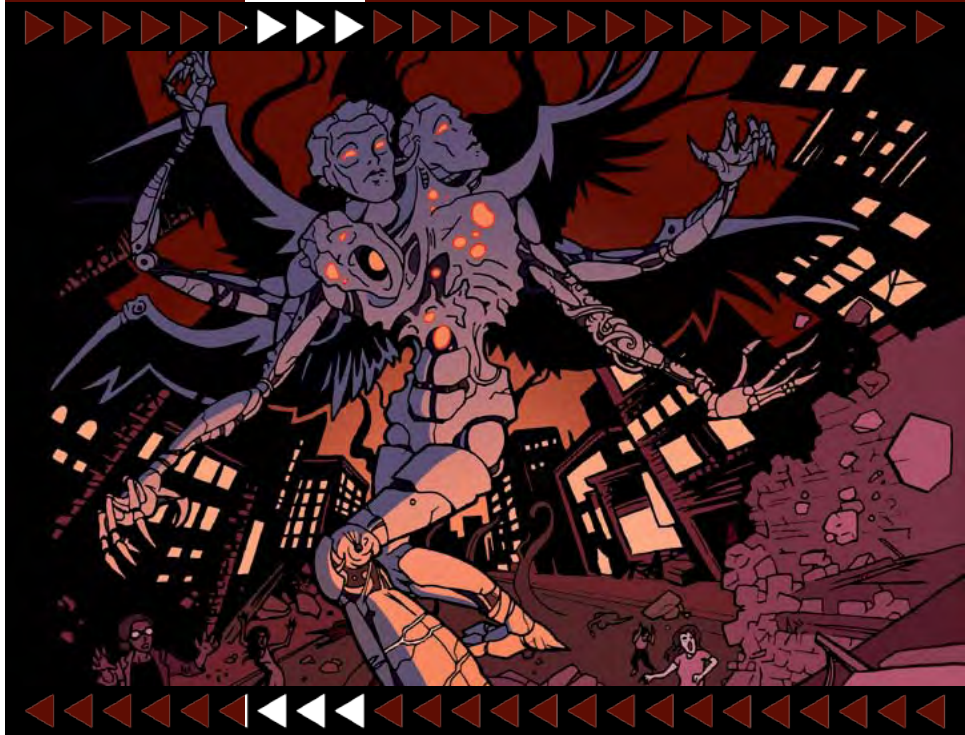
Over-spending in her Efforts leads to exhaustion and a diminishing sense of ability and value. Her failures also rob her of Ego, pushing her down into self-doubt and pessimism. All pilots struggle with this balance every day. Pilots strive to improve themselves while avoiding the pit-falls of depression.

What About the Big Picture?

Episodes take place each time a group of players gets together with their Director. Scenes are strung together to create an episode around a central theme. Typically an episode consists of five or more scenes that players use to improve the pilot's Ego followed by a climactic event. Episodes together create a series, the overarching story. Each series is about ten to thirteen episodes long and is one year in the life of the pilots. With each year, the series advances as the pilots grow, change, and pilot giant robots to save the Earth.

And That's It.

Laugh at your friend's classroom antics. Pine after the beautiful technician. Plot against the academy's top bully. Leap from the side of a skyscraper to crush a robot bug and save your comrades. Lose control of the giant robot and have nightmares about the consequences. Tell some stories and enjoy them!





Chapter 2. A History Lesson

Legulus

Seventeen years ago the aliens revealed themselves.

It was the second decade of the collapse of the world-wide economy. Natural resources were running out and food supplies were stretched to their limits. Unemployment increased and unrest grew. Starvation was rampant, wars over fuel sources became a steady constant and refugees wandered across abandoned, uninhabitable land fleeing the violence in their former homes. Those who had nothing turned to charities that broke under the weight of the needy. People everywhere had lost hope. They had lost faith as they watched the world fall to its death.

When the aliens came, there weren't any lights from the sky or a landing event. They stepped out from among the people and announced their presence to the media, government offices, even passersby who were willing to listen. They had been with us for years, living alongside humanity, indistinguishable from us. The aliens named themselves the Legulus, Latin for gatherers. They came forward to offer aid to mankind as a bid for acceptance. They would use their advanced nanotechnology to eliminate scarcity of resources. The Legulus could use their science to transmute materials: Stones into bread; scraps into clothing; wastewater into gasoline. In exchange, they asked for small pieces of land to house their settlements and the freedom to tell others about their way of life. At first they were laughed at and branded as an international cult of crazies. When they made good on their offers and produced huge quantities of food and resources people began to believe.

While suspicious nations refused, the desperate third world gave in immediately. Within weeks, small villages of Legulus structures appeared. They were not choosy about location; their ability to transform matter let them irrigate desert and dry up swampland. They erected clustered buildings of silver and porcelain with swooping arches and steeped domes. Then they began to distribute food from these colonies. The

hungry world ate up and asked for more, and more was given. Those who went to the settlements and listened to the Legulus received more and better food. Bread lines formed, miles long, and the Legulus had enough for everyone. People returned again and again to eat their fill and listen to the Legulus' words.

Soon the settlements were the food banks and fuel suppliers of the world. They only provided essentials and refused requests for any complex machines or dangerous materials. When asked how the machines worked they replied it was knowledge they were not to share. Attempts to reverse-engineer the technology from its products were fruitless and any alien tool that was stolen from a settlement would stop working and then crumble to dust. As the Legulus turned out more and more supplies the world stopped asking questions and accepted the handout.

Conflicting Ideologies

The path of the Legulus praised communal living and behavior, warned against the dangers of solitude and embraced concepts of equality and shared burdens within a homogeneous whole. They never gave a name to their beliefs, it was how they lived and there was no other way. The media considered it a new religion and invented the name "Universal Communion" to describe it. The world adopted the name, often shortening it to just "The Communion."

After the first year the Legulus began to accept humans into their settlements, allowing them to move into the communal villages. They were extremely selective and used a psychic telepathy to comb the minds of candidates. The Legulus' following grew and many refugees, eager to be accepted into the settlements, claimed to be followers of the Legulus "faith," forming camps outside the Legulus buildings and fervently worshiping them as saviors and angels. The Legulus did not encourage these people but also never discouraged them from that practice.

Churches and temples felt challenged by the growing numbers of Legulus worshippers. What had been seen as a charity speaking a simple message of generosity began to rival them for believers as more people flocked to get loaves and fishes from the aliens. At first small churches denounced the Legulus, claiming that they were buying faith and could not be trusted. As more people turned to the Legulus for their charity, the major religious organizations took notice. After the third year of the Legulus revelation, the Pope issued a statement reminding Catho-

lics that treating the Legulus as angelic figures conflicted with their beliefs. They were warned to stay away from gatherings of Legulus and their “sermons.” The worship of Legulus as angelic messengers or new prophets was forbidden. The Legulus were recognized as alien beings but they were still of this Earthly domain, and were not emissaries of heaven. Christian churches everywhere did the same, as did the leaders of major Jewish and Islamic organizations. Suspicion and mistrust grew while desperate people were caught between the politics of faith and their basic needs. As the next two years went by, the Legulus settlements expanded and the tensions surrounding them increased.

A militant cult, following a man who considered himself a prophet, planted and detonated bombs at the entrances to four Legulus settlements in Iran, Iraq, and Egypt within a twenty-four hour period. A United States senator, fearing collateral damage from a “terrorist Jihad” against the Legulus, tried to remove the settlement near his state’s capitol. Army reserve forces surrounded the settlement but worshippers of the Legulus gathered into a human wall against them. Tensions rose and a riot broke out that was suppressed by military force. News of the violence spread and similar situations of stand-offs and riots erupted around other settlements worldwide.

Ascension

In response to the violence, the Legulus brought as many of their devoted followers as they could fit inside their structures and closed the doors. In a synchronized lift-off every Legulus structure activated hidden anti-gravity engines, rose into the sky and ascended to orbit. They gathered together and flew away, lost behind the moon.

After the Legulus left the conflict died out. The old faiths were no longer challenged by an alien power. There were still some small cult groups that clung to what they understood of the Legulus but for most of humanity it was a belief of convenience. The cults proclaimed a return of the Legulus but were ignored.

Though the Legulus had taken the secrets of their technology with them, being able to rely on the infinite supply of resources for five years had bought the world some breathing room. Clean water and food were not as scarce as they had been. Having stepped back from the brink of disaster, America, China, and other major users of fossil fuels established programs of sustainable resources and reinforced these changes

with economic and political reform. The Legulus had left the world a second chance.

Humanity was alone for ten years.

The Return

A large craft made of advanced metals and segmented plates of ceramics emerged from the dark side of the moon bound for an orbit around the Earth. The world's scientists turned their telescopes to see the Legulus structures melded together into the large craft. Satellites were redirected and high altitude flights were launched to meet it, cautiously hailing the silent visitor. As it drew near, the ship began to show signs of activity; energy surged inside it.

There was a single transmission from the Legulus broadcast around the world in the language of every nation. "Gatherers no more, we come to harvest." It was a declaration of war. Energy weapons fired and a wave of destruction washed through the upper atmosphere. The ships and satellites that weren't destroyed were disabled. They sent frantic transmissions as sections of the craft detached and fell to Earth and the invasion began.

The detached pieces of the Legulus craft sped toward major cities around the world, punching craters into the landscape and sending shockwaves through the air. The landing craft were made like the buildings of the Legulus; graceful domes of porcelain clustered into organic shapes and tipped by gleaming silver spires but the friction heat of atmospheric re-entry warped and scorched them. Hatches and doorways opened and mechanical insects the size of tanks charged from them. The meteor attack ships were called Wormwood, inspired by the stone from the sky in the book of Revelations and the giant scorpion monsters that would rise from the crater where it landed.

The invading forces were given a new name based on their message before the attacks: Mayzor, a phonetic bastardization of the Latin word for harvester or reaper. They abandoned peaceful conversion and came to take people by force. The robotic monsters that landed in Wormwood meteorites attacked the nearest population centers. The largest were called Locusts. Robot tanks over twenty feet long that stalked on six or eight legs with pincer claws that sheared through steel and a tail tipped with a cannon that fired arcs of white hot plasma energy.

These spearhead units demolished defensive forces and marched on. Swarmer drones followed in the wake, sorting through the rubble, a tide of robotic insect scavengers ranging from rat-sized burrowing seekers to centipede monsters twenty feet long with legs that would fold into harnesses and restraints. Any survivors they found were subdued and carried back to the Wormwood and deposited inside it. After they had run rampant over the city the Mayzor machines would turn back to their landers and withdraw. The hatches closed behind them and the Wormwood rose into the sky, taking the captives with them back to the mother ship orbiting above.

There was no recognizable military strategy; Locusts did not set beachheads or form fronts. The attacks were brutal raids, smash and grab on a huge scale with living people as the targets. The military forces of the world formed barriers around cities that weren't hit in the first wave and pummeled the Locust when they emerged and advanced. Pouring out all of their firepower at the relentless alien machines, they were able to drive them back and the tide started to turn. Landers that lost dozens of Locust would withdraw or abandon the field with no abductees. But the victories did not last. After the first week of the invasion, when humanity had fought back the aliens again and again, the Magnas appeared.

The same surviving orbitals that saw the Wormwood fall also spotted the first Magnas. Hatches on the Mayzor mother ship opened and statues over one hundred feet tall flew from it. The pictures that the orbitals took showed expertly crafted statues of angels like those carved by Michelangelo or Donatello during the Renaissance. Perfect and beautiful sculptures of gleaming white porcelain with wings of flashing silver arching from their backs. But as they fell to the earth they burned. They crashed into the cities like the Wormwood they followed and rose from the wreckage scorched and twisted now an ugly mockery of an angel. When they rose from the carnage of their impacts they attacked as weapons of true terror. Mindless rage without humanity, they threw themselves into the worst of the fighting and obliterated all opposition.

Barons of Hell

Magnas attacks were apocalyptic. The Magnas attacked indiscriminately, destroying everything. Animal, plant, structure, all were burned by fire from energy weapons that blazed from their eyes and mouths or torn apart by claw tipped arms and wings feathered with blades. Thick

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clouds of toxins streamed from cracks in their armored bodies and choked anything living. And over all the chaos the Magnas screamed in an endless cacophony of deafening bellows and shrill howls.

The Magnas were dropped into the cities where resistance was strongest. In the places where the military had been able to turn back the Locust. With superior firepower and endless rage they dismantled the forces defending the cities piece by piece. They were also surprisingly nimble for their huge size. Magnas would leap so fast that they seemed to disappear. They outmaneuvered everything that humanity could throw at them in the early assaults. When human armies were in retreat, abandoning survivors to the Mayzor raids, the Magnas were recalled and flew back to the mother ship in a flash of lightning and boom of thunder. This is how the mother ship earned its name by the survivors, Tartarus; the prison where angels who have sinned are chained.

The world reeled and governments, military organizations and news services scrambled to act in the wake of the destruction caused by these new war machines. After the Magnas all had returned to their mother ship Tartarus shifted into a geosynchronous orbit over the holy lands. Nearly one hundred Magnas robots fell from the sky into Jerusalem and began a steady march outward annihilating everything in their path.

Vengeful Foe

The extermination of the holy lands is the only reported incident in which the Mayzor made no attempts to capture human survivors. In this attack, they burned everything. It was an act of vengeance against the human faiths. This was also the world's first glance of the Magnas transformed. Observers picked out many of the same Magnas robots from the first wave of attacks but they now had a patchwork quality. When they were damaged in combat the Magnas were not repaired but sprouted new body parts in place of their wounds. Multiple limbs, wings and even heads stretched the angelic form into a distended mass of scorched metal and porcelain. On every return each Magnas became more monstrous, growing in size and becoming more terrifying in shape as new extremities spread out from the core.

In the Wake of the Attacks

After the destruction of the holy lands, Tartarus left Earth's orbit and returned to the Moon, lurking on the dark side. Humanity had a longer

reprieve and the surviving forces of the world sprang into action. Providing aid and assistance to the survivors of the attacks was secondary to creating a defensive force to fight back the aliens when they returned. Beleaguered people struggled together, often without governing bodies where the seats of power were demolished. The surviving representatives of the United Nations tried to organize relief efforts but their authority was barely recognized.

To many these were the end times, the biblical Armageddon. All the signs were there: The stones falling from the sky and swarming insect monsters and the vengeful fallen angels. Political or national loyalty were not enough to unify the people. It was faith that brought them together to create the defensive army that would protect humanity.

Creation of the Preservation Force

The Mayzor had come in the guise of a biblical apocalypse, and people flocked back to their churches, temples, and mosques in fear of the coming judgment. Churches were overwhelmed by the parishioners and tithes. The prevailing message from church leaders was that the Mayzor were still false prophets, pretenders who would turn our beliefs against us as vengeance for our rejection.

The United Nations representatives met in constant talks, trying to organize soldiers, aid, and materials all over the globe. During these meetings the Swiss government introduced a representative from a secretive scientific organization, the Cloistered Research Council. The representative, who called himself Dr. Kreuz, explained they had been investigating the Legulus faith and technology since the Pope's edict, anticipating the retaliation of the Legulus.

Wearing a mask and with his voice distorted to conceal his true identity, Dr. Kreuz offered a grim message about the fate of those who had been taken by the Legulus, both willing and abducted. Through their experiments into human ESP they learned that the Mayzor shared a telepathic mass mind. They had penetrated this psychic network and discovered that the Mayzor wanted more individuals to become a part of their collective, and they were no longer choosy about the source. Everyone they abducted would be connected with this mass mind, increasing its power. The CRC was cut off when they tried to probe deeper. The far future plans of the Legulus remain unknown.

Dr. Kreuz also presented evidence that the Mayzor weapons and technology could be reverse engineered from the scraps left behind. The members of the Cloistered Research Council kept their research secret, fearing that it would be abused without worthy oversight. The Mayzor attacks forced them to reveal themselves and their findings to help humanity. However, their knowledge would come with a price.

The Council demanded they be granted authority to oversee the development of Legulus technology and that military use would be kept separate from any nation's leadership, preventing its abuse by selfish interests. An entirely new international military force would be made and the CRC would be the advisers to its leadership. The UN would still be responsible for military deployment and staff. The CRC also insisted on complete autonomy and secrecy in order to continue their research. No organization would have the authority to interfere or censure them. The identities of CRC representatives would be concealed to prevent any corruption from outside. If anyone tried to steal their secrets or manipulate the CRC, they would destroy the technology the same way the Legulus had. The United Nations bristled against these demands but recognized the greater need for technological advantage and approved the CRC's requests.

The military organization that was created was named the United Forces for the Preservation of Humanity, known as the Preservation Force. Though formed under the eye of the CRC, the Preservation Force drew its leadership from military commanders all over the world. The result was a United Nations defensive army with the CRC as anonymous advisers and overseers. Backed by the world's resources and technology, they were given one task: Save humanity from the Mayzor. The weapons and forces that survived gathered under the international coordination of the Preservation Force.

Outposts were constructed at the largest remaining population centers. These outposts were equipped with the heaviest military hardware available, with everything from gun emplacements to jet squads to the hastily constructed prototypes of robot tanks over one hundred feet tall. Survival shelters were built deep below these forts with resources to house and protect large numbers of the surrounding populace. Mayzor weapons were scavenged from the rubble of lost cities and the scientists analyzed them, looking for weaknesses.

In a few short weeks, the Preservation Force faced its first battles. Tartarus moved from its hiding place behind the Moon and reentered Earth orbit. Mayzor hit the cities in a new series of raids. This time, the people were prepared. The fighting was fiercer but humanity knew what they faced now, and feared capture more than death.

There was no immediate and triumphant victory. Cities fell and people were lost, especially where the Magnas fought, but in other places the Preservation Force turned back the tide of the Mayzor Locusts and even destroyed two of the Magnas under concentrated fire of the robot tanks. There was another period of quiet lasting almost one month in which the Preservation Force repaired defenses and began production of new and bigger weapons. When the Mayzor came again, the battles were as fierce as the last.

The New Weapons

At first the CRC used prototype nanotechnology to build on the same scale of the Mayzor. Walking Robot Tanks standing up to one hundred and fifty feet tall were constructed. Fusion power provided the massive amounts of energy they needed and new and experimental weapons were tested as part of the Robot Tank arsenal. Through sheer power these machines made good opponents to the smaller Mayzor Locusts. The robot tanks were given the nickname "Robbies." They were stationed in squads on the defensive lines of the largest population centers where they could support the local military. In combat Robbins took the front lines to break the first wave of attacking forces.

Today, Robbie pilots are highly decorated elites, trusted to safeguard the cities and military bases with powerful and dangerous weapons. They are in an awkward position however, politically. Though they work with local military in combat, Robbie pilots are Preservation Force soldiers and are forbidden to follow the orders of local leadership. The CRC is afraid of Robbins getting caught up in local tensions and turning their weapons against people. Rotations of Robbie crews help them keep their distance from local trouble. In some places Robbins are tolerated by politicians rather than welcomed.

As effective as the Robot Tanks are against the Locust they are still no match for the Magnas. Lighter armaments cannot penetrate the shielding layers that protect a Magnas and they move fast for their size, so they can evade heavy weapon fire and avoid being flanked or sur-

rounded. The Robot Tanks have proved their worth but a better weapon needed to be developed to combat the Magnas.

Creation of the SAInts

Reverse engineering wreckage from a destroyed Magnas provided the next technological steps for the Preservation Force. The CRC began to unlock the mysteries of the Mayzor's advanced robot designs. High-yield miniaturized fusion reactors, gravity nullification by electromagnetic field generation, bio-technological construction and material transformation, and telepathic communication systems. The result is the SAInt. SAInt stands for Sympathetic Android Interface. A bio-mechanical weapon grown from the same template of the Magnas and capable of combating Mayzor forces.

Magnas are programmed to be monsters on an instinctual level. When the researchers tried to retard the development of the SAInt's mind so that it could be controlled the entire process failed. To keep them docile SAInts were lobotomized as a final step in their construction.

SAInt Pilots

A pilot is needed to control the machine, but their duties are not pulling levers or pressing buttons. Controlling a SAInt requires that the pilot become the forebrain of the SAInt, guiding it as a surrogate body. The actual SAInt is a system, a combination of combat robot and telepathic link that creates weapons with the strength and mobility of the enemy but controlled by the minds of human pilots.

During development of the SAInts researchers found that the younger the pilot, the better her control of the robot. The ability to mentally connect to a SAInt requires a brain with immature neural patterning as the fixed neural pathways in the mind of a full grown adult will not communicate with a SAInt's mind and body. The SAInt must be able to influence the growth of undeveloped neurons, creating new parts of the brain devoted to operating a SAInt. The younger the mind, the easier it is for the pilot to exert control. As a pilot ages his neural pathways mature and the ability to interface with the SAInt is lost. To provide for this need, the Preservation Force recruits adolescents to become pilots. All SAInt pilots range in age from twelve to seventeen.

Arx

Providing defense for large regions of the Earth with a limited pool of elite weapons and pilots, the Preservation Force had to perfect a rapid

deployment system to defend and patrol these areas. The answer was to build an aircraft carrier that could travel through the sky.

The Arx are the largest single structures created in the modern age. The Arx are carrier ships so huge that an entire military base is housed within and atop the structure. Reverse-engineered Mayzor technology creates highly efficient anti-gravity engines that suspend the Fortresses in the air at an altitude up to one mile. Thick electromagnetic barriers encase the Arx and shield it from rough winds or the surge of Mayzor weapon blasts. Mass-driver cannons, missile launch tubes, beam weapon projectors and conventional turrets jut out in all directions.

Each Arx is charged with defending a zone thousands of miles across. They travel over nations on patrol, providing protection and aid to the population centers. Platoons of military forces and the technicians and civilian workers who support their operations populate each Arx and each is a storehouse of weapons and military vehicles, including four or more SAInt Companies. Their rapid deployment vehicles will launch SAInts into battle at supersonic speeds up to a thousand miles away.

Every Arx is home to a small city with a population of over 10,000 people. Arcology surface levels include apartments, shopping malls, small-scale entertainment venues and places of worship. Within the super-structure are the military offices, barracks, and the SAInt pilot academy and training facilities. Below them are the four or more levels of hanger bays and weapon stores. At the core are the anti-gravity repellers, fusion reactors, and top-secret laboratories of the CRC. Living on board an Arx means living in an armored town floating in the sky.

Each of the eighteen Arx is named in memorial tribute to one of the destroyed cities of the holy land; Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Jericho, Hebron, and so forth. Though they each patrol a specific region, the population of each draws from an international pool. People are always eager to have the opportunity to serve the Preservation Force aboard an Arx. They are the safest place to be; no Mayzor force has ever successfully assaulted an Arx and the amenities offered to the inhabitants are luxurious in comparison with the displaced peoples of the world.

SAInt Pilots

A worldwide search was initiated by the Preservation Force for young minds that would be compatible with the SAInt system. Adolescents are

tested in telepathic interface devices to see if they are fit to become pilots. The Mayzor attacks had left many orphaned children in the care of fostering organizations. Eager parents offer their children for testing. In some regions testing is mandatory. Very few people are capable of attuning themselves to the telepathic patterns of a SAInt and only about one in every five hundred children tested are candidates for the program.

When a candidate has been identified she is invited to the nearest Preservation Force operation center for additional testing and basic training. Basic training for SAInt pilots is a far cry from basic for soldiers. SAInt pilots are never meant to be on a battlefield without the SAInt robot and the neural linkage between the pilot and SAInt means that their own physical condition is not a barrier. A pilot learns to “discard” her own body while connected to the SAInt and control it through subconscious thought. Much of this time is spent in sensory deprivation exercises designed to give the pilot the sensation of being bodiless. Frequently, candidates wash out, unable to cope with the psychological stress of the exercises. A select few move on to simulated operations in which they are connected to a virtual SAInt robot through computer scenarios and learn the basics of movement and motor control.

During this two-week training period the candidates also attend age-appropriate schooling on the base. Language, history, mathematics and physical fitness classes fill out the time between a candidate’s simulation trainings. Candidates are allowed little downtime during basic training and sleep in large barracks-styled buildings. After this training, the candidate will either be thanked and excused to return home or graduated and invited to continue their training at one of the pilot academies on a Preservation Force Arx. Occasionally a capable but struggling candidate will get a third week in training but the Preservation Force prefers to keep the recruitment programs processing new candidates. Only about one in every three thousand children is able to pass the basic training program.

SAInt Academy

Once candidates arrive at the Arx they are enrolled in the SAInt pilot’s academy. Though pilots will work with military personnel on the fortress their housing is separate. Younger pilots are placed in the foster care of a family who live and work on the fortress. Foster families offer regular reports on the health and development of their charges. Older pilots are grouped with roommates and given suites of rooms in the academy.

Safety is the greatest luxury anyone can want in wartime. Being able to sleep soundly is foreign to children who don't have a home on the base. Security is always present around pilots, though the agents often stay back and avoid interfering in the pilot's personal lives to ensure they are not always being singled out from their peers.

Schooling and training continue from the two-week basic training. Pilots in the Academy now have some downtime between classes and exercises. Pilots of all ages are usually taught together in the same classes as all lessons focus on knowledge and abilities applicable to combat. Physics lessons cover engine thrust, ranging and trajectories of projectiles. Physical fitness classes emphasize team-based games of tactical action. History lessons focus on the war against the Mayzor.

Academies are military schools that train officers and soldiers for the Preservation Force in addition to SAInt pilots. All students wear uniforms that clearly indicate their field and status. The children of the families stationed on the Arx will attend some of the same classes as pilots but they wear different, more casual uniforms and have more free periods when pilots are busy in their special training. Though they get to mingle with their peers, pilots are often kept apart by their increased duties and in some cases the fame that they accumulate with their combat successes.

The Linc

Every student is given a Linc; a hand-held networked computer that flips open into a touchpad. Lincs tie into the network of the Preservation Force so that pilots will get immediate notification of their launch orders or changes to their daily routines. Students can also work on assignments outside of class, keep in touch with friends through calls and texts, and connect to the data libraries and browse books, music, movies, and video games.

Pilot Training

Pilot training is daily and consists of advanced simulations that grow more complex and realistic as the pilot's skill in interfacing with the SAInt improves. Weapons and tactics training soon become a part of the daily routine as the pilot learns to escape his own body and become the brain inside a giant, yet nimble, war machine. A pilot will learn to handle all the basic weapons of a SAInt and how to control the rapid deployment launcher that will deliver her to combat areas. By this time

she has logged dozens of hours in simulated combat situations. Then it is time for her to meet her SAInt.

Introducing a Pilot to a SAInt

SAInts are alive. They are introduced to the pilot like a new rider is introduced to a horse. In a careful process the pilot's neural patterns are compared to the SAInt's to find a favorable match. The pilot enters the sensory deprivation tank and it is connected into the SAInt's brain. Some pilots interface with the SAInt right away. Some need time and coaxing. The younger pilots are able to make the immediate connection. Those older than 15 have more complete neural development that slows the growth of the bond. SAInts cannot be shared by pilots. Each goes through the process of attuning his mind to a specific SAInt's body. If a pilot were immediately connected to a SAInt without this process the SAInt would go mad and lash out in a destructive frenzy, throwing off the pilot's control as happened in the earliest tests of human controlled SAInts.

Companies

Once the SAInt and pilot have become comfortable with one another the pilots are divided into companies. The company is the team that the pilot will work with for his career. Companies are usually made up of five pilots, though that depends on the pool of available pilots and SAInts in an Arx.

After companies are established live training exercises may begin. The sensory deprivation tank is fully connected and installed into the body of the SAInt and it is now the pilot's surrogate body. Tactics, maneuvering, flying, and weaponry move from simulation to reality.

Live Exercises

Live exercises are kept within strict limits. Neural buffers are used that keep the SAInts from operating at full capability. The effect is a mild deadening of sensation so that the pilot can still operate the SAInt but she feels light-headed and slightly distant from the mind of the machine. The pilots perform the same drills of simulation; running obstacle courses, seeking out dummy targets, and chopping and blasting through them. These mock missions are kept short because of the expense of maintaining the SAInt and to keep the pilot safe from any training accidents.

It is important for the pilots to remain attuned to their SAInt so they

will also have interface tests in which they are connected in the sensory deprivation tank to the SAInt's mind without being launched. These prolonged periods of telepathic communication help keep the pilots in touch with their SAInts but can cause lucid dreaming in which pilots imagine the events of their lives through the mind of the war machine. The more "spiritual" pilots attempt to communicate with their SAInts while they are connected but SAInts are too alien and the pilots never gain a sense of understanding from it.

Pilots' Place in the Military

Pilots do not hold any military rank. They are given the designation "pilot" but they are still considered to be outside the formal military. They do not salute or wear a military uniform, though academies do enforce dress code when attending classes and pilot school uniforms have a recognizable design. SAInt pilots are also not trained as combat soldiers. The cadets in the academy are training to be officers and to fight from tanks or VTOLs or even on foot but pilots will not be deployed outside a SAInt. Pilots within a team hold no rank over one another. Younger pilots will often look to older or more experienced pilots for help. Their training focuses on the importance of teamwork and tactics that rely on balancing one another's abilities.

When pilots are sent on missions they are given orders by war room commanders in the Operations center of the Arx, mission control for SAInt deployment. These commanders may or may not hold military rank. Commanders can come from any background and are chosen based on who is the most knowledgeable source of direction for a particular mission. Some will come and go, such as an instructor with specific knowledge about the city the SAInts are flying to defend. Others are a permanent fixture, like the general who manages all military actions of the Arx and the CRC representative who watches over them all.

Pilot Life

Many pilots have come from orphanages or refugee families. Becoming a pilot or a Preservation Forces soldier is an escape for these children from a life of desperation and danger. To them the awesome power of the Arx and the SAInts is a humbling, frightening thing. In their first few weeks, many come to view the Preservation Force with reverence. Here they have the access to the food, housing and medical care that they lacked in the orphanage or refugee camp. They live in relative comfort compared to their home communities.

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Between lessons and training pilots are often called in for medical testing and psychological review and counseling. CRC scientists will occasionally use medical procedures or interviews to perform experiments on the pilots. These experiments can deviate into some bizarre territory, like attempts at shared telepathy without a SAInt, as the CRC scientists research new ways to improve the effectiveness of the SAInts.

Most of a pilot's day is spent in training exercises as he hones his skill in working with his SAInt's body and the weapons and tactics of battlefield combat. Trainers will vary exercises frequently so that a pilot will be running an obstacle course one day and test firing simulated weapons on a virtual gunnery range the next. Periodically, a full-scale simulation will be run of a Mayzor assault, recorded or fabricated. Periodically, the pilots will be given a surprise training exercise; dragged out of bed and thrown into a simulation meant to represent a sudden Mayzor attack. Sometimes it's not a simulation.

The training and testing of pilots is a constant routine in their lives. Pilots do have some free time from training. The Preservation Force counselors urge pilots to use their free time as their peers do; taking the opportunity to be young and grow up like any kid should. There are "after-school" clubs and sports teams. The Arx includes shops, restaurants, theaters, and sports arenas. Pilots can spend their allowance buying clothes, toys or knick-knacks, access to different or better food than the usual cafeteria stuff, music, movies, shows, and games.

Curious teens will always be able to find a way into trouble. This might be sneaking into off limits security areas to find out what has been hidden from them, mouthing off to the staff of shops or military personnel, or getting their hands on illegal substances. There's always opportunity for embarrassment or punishment for the unwary and impulsive such as; demerits, extra clean-up duties, detention, loss of Lync access privileges, or just a severe tongue-lashing from a superior or caregiver.

Romantic feelings often blossom between pilots and peers as they grow and discover their hormonal urgings. The barely understood puppy love of the preteen recruit may change into the confusing desire for a deeper, physical connection. Though they cannot control emotions, the Preservation Force attempts to limit the romantic contact of pilots, and try to chaperone through the presence of security personnel, reports

from caregivers, interviews and checkups with analysts, and the unblinking eyes of security cameras. Sexual relationships are forbidden for pilots, with violation resulting in severe penalties including reassignment of both partners to other Arx and other regions of the globe. The Innocence Policy was ordered by the CRC based on evidence that a pregnant pilot would lose control of her SAInt if the neural activity of a fetus was picked up by the machine. Whispered rumors say that the one time it happened there were several deaths and later the pilot's child was born with the soul of her mother's SAInt.

Zones of the World

Life in the apocalyptic wake of the Mayzor attacks has forced humanity to adapt. The survivors especially have had to cope with displacement and loss. Though some have found ways to thrive, others have not. After every Mayzor attack the suicide rate spikes as people's hopes for deliverance is dashed. Religious initiatives have been launched to combat this and Preservation Force propaganda intensifies to help the people remain stalwart in wartime. The people and weapons of the Preservation Force now surround the largest population centers and patrol their major causeways but the Preservation Force is only concerned with detecting and repelling Mayzor attacks. Being an international army, the Preservation Force must avoid becoming involved in any local entanglements. Though they are tasked with providing security and support for the humanitarian efforts of the church they must not take any form of police Action.

The ways in which societies are structured have also changed. Some groups have decided to decentralize in Hopes that they will gain safety from the Mayzor by taking on a nomadic life. The leadership of these caravans or tribes keep their people moving so that the Mayzor will not take notice of them. In some of these groups lives grow ever more primitive and savage as they disconnect from the technology or luxuries of settled life. Others cling to the safety of the cities hoping that strength comes with numbers and they will be defended by military might or be overlooked by the swarm when their neighbors are taken.

Wasteland Zones

Parts of the world have been largely abandoned as too dangerous to populate or because of the fallout of Mayzor attacks. This can include

literal fallout in cases where nuclear weapons were used to repel the attackers. The people who have taken up residence in these regions are the outcasts of other zones or those who have stubbornly refused to leave the land of their birth. Cut off from the larger world, some groups revert to a backward way of life and shun the intrusion of other outsiders. Others travel from place to place scrounging and living off the land or stopping on the outskirts of towns or cities and providing temporary labor in exchange for food and supplies.

The people of the Wasteland live without amenities and most of the modern conveniences of those living the settled life. Living “off the grid” they are unprotected from Mayzor attacks so the leaders of these groups keep them moving, hoping that they will escape the notice of the Mayzor. Periodically a group of wasteland wanderers will disappear and no one can say for sure if they were claimed by the elements, other wanderers, or the Mayzor.

Some caravans are eager to present their children for testing by the Preservation Force. Having one less mouth to feed is a relief, as is knowing that these children will have the opportunity to fight back and defend their home. Children from the Wasteland zone are poorly educated, undernourished, resourceful, and self-reliant.

Rural Zones

Many small towns and villages have been able to escape the Mayzor attacks largely unscathed, though the occasional attack of a city boils over into the surrounding rural areas. Some cities have coped with being targets by breaking up their populace into small, remote, self-sufficient villages designed to limit population. These communities have taken up rural occupations and become the farmland, mines, refineries, and lumber operations that deliver raw materials to the larger towns and cities.

People must be hardworking to gain access to better food, protection and a more comfortable way of life than in the wastelands. Communication and travel is costly and difficult so people avoid having to go great distances. Contacting distant family and friends is limited to post or electronic messages routed through Preservation Force communications outposts. Close-knit groups develop and people look out for their own. There is a culture of hospitality towards travelers as all people have united against the greater threat.

Many eager adult volunteers from the rural zones turn out to join military efforts though most are reticent when it comes to their children. Suspicion of the CRC is strongest among the settled, practical people of these zones. Larger governing bodies have made testing of teenagers mandatory and a few families have been forcibly separated when promising candidates have been ordered by local governments to enter the SAInt programs.

Rural zone workers value the simple life that lets them live “below the radar” of alien attacks. They are wary of population expansion that would swell their ranks, make their villages too prominent and draw the attention of the Mayzor. The Preservation Force is late to arrive if the Mayzor attacks a rural area. When a small town or large farming commune is attacked, people blame community leaders for allowing the population to grow enough that the Mayzor notice them.

Urban Zones

People who live in larger cities have access to better goods and services, much as they did before the Mayzor attacks. The produce of rural regions flow into the cities along with the raw materials of industry. Most cities have returned to blue-collar occupations as the driving force. Local commerce has replaced the world spanning organizations that once ruled the economy. A wider variety of foodstuffs, better sources of advanced technology, ease of access to telecommunications and entertainment maintain the cities as the hubs of advancement. Children who have grown up in the urban zones are generally better educated and well fed than those from rural or wasteland zones. These children are sought after for pilot testing and technical jobs with the Preservation Force. Living in urban zones is more expensive than rural or wasteland living. There are problems and dangers that come from diverse groups contained in a small area.

Mayzor raids primarily target large population centers where they will be able to reap a greater harvest of captives. Every city dweller quickly learns their evacuation routes and the locations of the defensive shelters around the city. Urban populations have their Linc tuned to the alert messages from the Preservation Force. The cities that have coped well are those on the coast of a major water body. Mayzor always attack over land so defenders are at an advantage when they can put the water at their back. Cities on open plains or those with only rivers or small bod-

ies of water in their vicinity have been picked clean of their populations and abandoned as wastelands.

Suburban Zones

Caught between the rural and the urban, most suburban areas have withered, with people either moving to join the collective of the urban zones or spreading out into the sparse population of the rural zones. Some suburban areas remain as they were but here the people live a dangerous life; tightly grouped to attract Mayzor attention but without the direct protection of the Preservation Force armor stationed in the nearby urban zones.

Military Zones

The safest location for families is on the military bases, either of the local forces or of the international Preservation Force. Here the safety of family is assured by the willingness of a family member to go into harm's way. Most bases are self-contained cities with all the amenities that urban zones offer but an even greater focus on defensive measures. If any location is likely to see a Magnas during a Mayzor raid, it is the area with the strongest resistance forces.

Overall life on base is strictly controlled and monitored and the general mood of preparedness and defensive concerns can tip over into paranoia. Evacuation drills are a constant reminder to the population of the danger that they face. The broadcast propaganda still barely holds back the fear and anxiety over the hanging threat of Mayzor attack.

Not all base dwellers are military personnel. The need for management, tutoring, logistics, supplies, basic luxuries, and entertainment is met by civilian employees. The families that can gain access to the well-defended housing on a base without having to send one or more family members into combat with every raid are considered to be very fortunate. Competition for the jobs that will get one access to base housing can be fierce and has turned ugly in the past as rich or privileged families have tried to bribe their way into living space while less fortunate people have attempted identity theft or blackmail.

Testing of children for the SAInt programs is mandatory among military families. Even those that do not qualify for SAInt training will usually attend schools alongside pilots. These children share lessons with the same militaristic bent and will often enlist or look for jobs in service of the military on graduation.

Preservation Force Zones

Living aboard an Arx, one of the floating fortresses of the Preservation Force is seen as a unique blessing, beyond even that of a home on a standard military base. The Arx are the pinnacle of high technology military might and are the safest places to live in large numbers with all the amenities of modern life. The barrier to entry is that every adult inhabitant must contribute to the military of the Preservation Force. All occupations available are either military service or support of the troops. There are still plenty of “private sector” jobs on an Arx as there are in other bases; someone has to sweep up and run the shops in the mall and teach the children of the soldiers and so on but these jobs are highly sought after and policies of preferential hiring go to the family of soldiers stationed on the Arx.

It is because of this strict demand that most children in the SAInt program are placed with a foster family. The Preservation Force simply cannot afford the space to house a pilot’s family unless they are all soldiers or work in support roles. Foster families run the gamut of base occupations and while some children are very happy in their new homes, there are others who suffer from being separated from their families, have bad experiences or who yearn for the freedom of living with their peers in the academy dormitories.

CRC Research

In addition to the Preservation Force personnel and civilian workers, there is also the oddity of the CRC research personnel. Although these scientists work with the technicians and laboratory assistants from the general population, they often keep to themselves socially. Their housing is directly attached to their labs and under strict security. Their true identities are always concealed behind pseudonyms and official CRC garb. If a CRC scientist were to go out shopping, she would do so in the “alter ego” of her position as a low-ranked base technician. When they must be seen in public as CRC representatives they don masks and robes or smocks with red and gold markings of their affiliation. An unsettling sight but also a reminder of the importance of their station.

Life Goes On

People work their jobs, go shopping, watch television, play games and fall in love. The people of Earth carry on but with an eye on the sky, al-

ways ready to prepare for the alerts to seek shelter and send for help from the SAInts. The limitations imposed by the Mayzor destruction of the satellite network mean that most news and entertainment is local. Communication between major cities is difficult and highly expensive. Businesses are limited by distance in ways they hadn't been for over a century. The transportation of goods is restricted. Typically, only local supplies can be acquired without paying a premium price. Only the Preservation Force, through the network established by the CRC, has the world spanning access that was once available to nearly every civilian.

All new construction has the need for defense in mind. Any building in an urban area is a small fortress. Most new structures are constructed below ground. This provides emergency shelters with numerous barriers and defensive points on the above ground levels. Buildings may also have a system of defensive battlements for Preservation Force Robbies or SAInts to use in combat with the Mayzor. The new building materials bolstered by nanotech reinforcement are used when available. The style of architecture that has been embraced is decidedly opposite in appearance to the structure of the former Legulus buildings. Popular human architecture is all squared angles and blocky structures of utilitarian and militaristic design. Concrete fortresses that serve the need for defense and reinforce to humanity their new purpose.

Arts and entertainment have seen few advances in the past years but an underlying message of wartime optimism and the solidarity of humanity is popular. Shows idolize bold sacrifice and hatred for the alien ways. Popular games focus on military conflict and bravery winning out against the inhuman hordes. Even among the cultural groups that only have access to pre-electronic entertainments everyone agrees that stories of perseverance and eventual victory are the best.

The Bigger Picture

The world's political landscapes are in an unsteady state, with national movements struggling to secure their own people, sometimes at the expense of others. Local government functions as well as it can but with systems that have been cobbled together from the ashes of the former leadership. Infrastructure is unstable even in the wealthiest regions. Without the use of satellite communications business and governance move slowly. The Preservation Force and CRC are able to provide re-

sources generated through the nanotech methods of the Legulus but in a limited economy; they strictly control supply to match the most basic demand. In many places in the world the technological clock has been turned back by the scarcity of resources.

America was the hardest hit by the early Mayzor attacks. The large, modern cities were attractive targets to the invaders. Since then, economic and communications collapse have reduced the effectiveness of centralized government. Washington is slow to respond to the needs of the American people and more citizens turn to the state, local governance and militias to provide support. Interstate commerce has become strained as states that could once rely on the easy import of goods from other parts of the nation now face steep tolls and taxes as each state struggles to rebuild itself ahead of others. Though Canada's major metropolises were similarly stricken, the populace has managed to retain a stronger central government. The population of Canada has increased since the appearance of the invaders as Americans have fled north into the less populous regions.

Europe has fragmented as the large and densely populated cities of some nations drew more violent alien attacks. The binding forces of the European Union were not strong enough to hold as weak economies collapsed. While trade between nations remains due to their collective needs, some Eastern European and Mediterranean countries, their economy and infrastructure ruined, have been cut off from their neighbors. A few have petitioned to be absorbed into larger, more stable units and Russia and Italy have both expanded their borders. The nations to the north have remained stable as a degree of isolation from other outside influences has remained a part of their existence.

Asia suffered the worst political setbacks and dire sacrifices have been made by the nations and peoples of Russia, China, and India. Russian government was completely overturned following the Mayzor assaults that destroyed the capital. Faced with the dangers of urban overcrowding in the cities, the New Reform government began to evict civilians, forcing them out into agrarian communes and thinly spreading the populace.

China's disaster was of their own making. During the Magnas assaults, the military solution escalated until the leadership deployed nuclear weapons on their own soil. The result was massive civilian casualties and the ruination of resources, urban and rural, with little effect on the

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enemy Magnas. People rioted until the military and political leaders who had made the awful decision stepped down.

The densely populated cities of India were all but wiped out in near constant raids by the Mayzor. The lower class citizens were helpless against the invaders. Most of India is now agrarian and little interest has been shown in rebuilding the cities. Meanwhile, a new imperialist political party has been gaining ground in Japan, promising to make the island nation entirely self-sufficient and once again entering a period of *sakoku* or seclusion.

South America's major cities suffered the same fate as others but the nations of the region were able to recover more quickly from the devastation. The rich natural resources of these places had the chance to replenish during the Legulus period and fresh crops now can provide the sustenance that the people need. Political and economic instability have been common historically in these regions so the people are accustomed to the unpredictable nature of their leadership, although the greater threat of the Mayzor has helped more civilians become involved in strengthening reliable government. Additionally, the fervent faith of the people has led to equally strong support of the Preservation Force.

Africa's nations survived the Mayzor attacks better than many others because of the less developed metropolitan areas. In some regions little about day-to-day life has changed. Several North African nations saw the need to look beyond individual differences in the face of the alien invasion and have formed together into the African Coalition. The member nations have worked to strengthen and centralize government and pool resources. Though relationships are troubled at times, this effort has met with success and a capable unified military now patrols the urban centers. Many other nations have chosen to remain independent of the Coalition. They have redrawn their borders on the historical lines of the indigenous groups. Local governance is the most common form of leadership. In some of these places it is the strong and well-armed that rule, taking advantage of an oppressed populace. Humanitarian efforts by the church and even the Preservation Force are limited, meaning that little can be done to help these situations.

Australia was not included in the first Mayzor raids and most of the populace and politicians were able to evacuate from the cities to evade the following attacks. Australia has been able to preserve much of its pre-

Mayzor infrastructure and governmental policies. Unlike the Russian policy of forced dispersion, most Australians were eager to seek refuge outside the cities and the government acted quickly to support their efforts. Spreading the population across the continent has forced many into a more rugged and dangerous way of life. This shift has led to a hardier volunteer militia in the long term. Australia and New Zealand are further removed from other countries and international communication and trade are more expensive and less common.

The Middle East faced annihilation at the coming of the Mayzor. In a cruel act of vengeance, the holy places of major religions were demolished and the people slaughtered. The cradle of civilization is now little more than the rubble of cities, new and old, and the steadily burning fires of oil fields. Some slow progress has been made toward reclaiming these lands but even a small settlement here seems to draw the ire of the Mayzor. The message is clear. Keep out.

The Preservation Force and World Politics

The Preservation Force occupies the unenviable position of being an international force in a fiercely nationalistic world. Nations grudgingly give their resources and people to support the anti-alien efforts. Many would rather that the CRC surrender their technology to the individual nations and let each defend itself. The CRC has been adamant in its opposition to doing so, as they insist that a nation armed with the weapons of the enemy would quickly lose control, and become as great a threat as the Mayzor. The church's support of the Preservation Force and the well-publicized victories have sustained popular favor but there is still fear surrounding the strange and powerful technology and weapons that the Preservation Force controls.

Cult of the SAInt

SAInts appear out of the sky on angelic wings and battle enemies named for the barons of Hell. It is no surprise that the SAInts and their pilots have become the subject of a new religious fervor. Among these people the SAInts are the saviors of the modern age, worshiped alongside, or in the place of, the icons of their faith. Though the Preservation Force tries to quash this cult-like worship of the SAInts, the CRC seems to have recognized that it is useful when it moves public opinion to match their purpose.

The Cloistered Research Council

PER SCIENTIAM VICTORIA

- Through Knowledge, Victory

Suspicious people believe the CRC demanded they be anonymous and autonomous to evade prosecution for the crimes they had to commit in order to crack the code of the Mayzor weapons, and the Symbiotic Android Interface in particular. They circulate rumors about inhumane experiments carried out on kidnapped children and occult practices investigating the powers of telepathy. Rumors spread that the CRC had known about the Mayzor and their evil intent all along but they waited until the world needed them to ensure that they would not be challenged when they revealed their knowledge. Even now they may be positioning themselves to become the rulers of the Earth once the invaders are dispatched.

Though they are the driving force in scientific research, the CRC are not everywhere. Technicians and scientists from all disciplines work with them and with the technology they have decoded. The CRC recruit others into their ranks with the selective nature of a secret society. Members of the CRC are never to reveal themselves publicly. When a CRC representative is required to appear in person he does so masked with protective scientific apparel. A rare few have even given up their personal life entirely, going everywhere in filter masks and surgical gowns, eyes goggled and hands gloved, and red and gold crosses adorning their garb; the enigmatic face of the CRC.

The Apostle Project

Regardless of any opinion of the CRC, their understanding of the technology that creates SAInts, Arx, and other weapons in the fight against Mayzor make them a necessity to human survival. The work of the CRC continues in the deep levels of each Arx, within the research laboratories of the Preservation Force. The most closely guarded of these top-secret experiments is The Apostle Project. Only a tiny group of scientists and their subjects are aware of the details of the project. The rumors and hearsay surrounding the project hint that it involves pilots who have experienced some deep bonding experience with their SAInt and whose minds have been altered by what they experienced.

The New Future

What the future holds, no one can say. All people are in agreement that the Mayzor will never leave us in peace and our only recourse is to launch our own counter-assaults, but just the resources for basic defense are hard to supply. Our best hope rests with the SAInt pilots. As the users of our most advanced and capable weapons they will be our front line in this war. We must rely on them to become the strongest and best warriors the world has ever known.

SAInts

May the SAInts preserve us.

- Traditional launch command at SAInt deployment

The SAInt is a cloned bio-mechanical creature encased in layers of advanced composite armor. The pilot is inserted into the SAInt's body at the base of the spine in a sensory deprivation tank and attached to the nervous system by a neurological cybernetic link between the human mind and the android's body. This link between the pilot's mind and robot's body lets the SAInt be surprisingly nimble for such a huge weapon. SAInts are the most versatile and advanced weapon that humanity has in their war against the alien invaders. They are also expensive, difficult to create and terribly dangerous. The remnant of SAInt's original mind, hollowed out for the human occupant, still has desires of its own. Its subconscious Id yearns for violence, brutality, and war.

Bio-mechanical construction

SAInts are not constructed like other robotic tanks. They are made of a biological material that is cultured and grown. Once this tissue reaches sufficient complexity it produces organs that act like the nano-technology of the Mayzor and transmute available carbon molecules into a steel alloy. This alloy combines with the growing tissue to slowly replace the organic components with mechanical organs that function the same way. At this point, the growth can be influenced by electrical manipulation and rudimentary programming, to create a skeletal structure, musculature, organs and a skin of flexible carbon steel mesh. Even after growth has completed, the bio-mechanical nano-tech robots remain active to maintain and repair the structure of the SAInt.

Post Construction

Three steps follow construction of the SAInt's body. First, the SAInt is lobotomized. Preservation Force scientists have been unable to find a way to influence the growth of the brain and defeat the natural instincts of the Mayzor programming without completely ruining the immature neurons. If a SAInt were to activate before the thought centers of the brain were disconnected it, like any Magnas, would be a raging monster. Pacifying it surgically leaves the gap in control that a pilot fills. Next, exterior armor plating is attached to the SAInt. This reinforces its defensive measures but also gives it the uniform look of a SAInt and obscures the "Mayzorness" of its looks. Lastly the fusion power core is activated. The SAInts require huge amounts of power but fortunately their Mayzor blueprints include growth of a bio-mechanical fusion engine at the heart of the SAInt. Though a highly stable and renewable energy source, if this reactor is ruptured by severe damage it will ignite the surrounding material and even the very air in an explosive blast.

Self Repair

SAInts have the ability to use their bio-mechanical systems to affect immediate battlefield repairs. A thick slivery slurry of mercury and suspended carbon particles flows through a network of conduits like a circulatory system and nano-tech machines float through this liquid. If the structure of the SAInt is damaged this paste flows to the surface and the microscopic machines go to work, reading the encoded pattern of the surrounding structure and shaping the mercury and carbon to "heal" wounds and even crudely rebuild destroyed components. Grievous damage like the loss of a limb can be repaired in time as the nano-tech uses the slurry to recreate what is lost. This is an extremely uncomfortable thing for a pilot to experience. There is no way to rationalize the sudden regrowth of a limb or the twisted replacement that is created by the process and pilots find the results unsettling. Battlefield repairs are functional, but ugly and ruin the polished metal army look that the Preservation Force wants from the SAInts. When a SAInt is returned to the hangers, the repair technicians remove the armor plates and cut away the rough nano-machine growths. Then the damaged parts are regenerated in a more controlled environment, slowly restoring the proper appearance before re-attaching the armor coverings.

Telepathic Link

SAInts communicate through telepathy rather than electrical signals. Though the speed, strength and over-sized weapons have made the SAIInts effective, the enigmatic psychic factor has played an important role as well. The CRC are still performing research and experiments to learn more about this communication medium but have already put it to use with the SAIInts and the Arx.

The MetaTron

Pilots communicate with other SAIInts and Operations through the MetaTron, a telepathic network similar to the bond between pilot and SAIInt. The telepathic transmitters and receivers are organic components derived from the SAIInt's brain. Transmissions are immune to interference or electronic countermeasures. Pilots can immediately identify the other SAIInts (despite their identical physical appearance) by their auras. They can speak to all other pilots at once or focus to speak to specific individuals or groups. Sometimes a strong non-verbal feeling will come through but usually only a conscious message can be heard and understood by others.

Operations can deposit information in the short term memory of a pilot through the MetaTron network so that factors such as the layout of a battlefield and the location of enemy forces are immediately known by the pilots. This information fades once the pilot disconnects. So far, no "implanted learning" experiments have been successful.

The Mayzor use a similar method of communication in a shared hive mind but neither Mayzor nor SAIInts are able to access each other's networks directly. However, there is some telepathic bleed and this has become one of the SAIInt's most valuable features.

Disturbance

When attacked by conventional weapons the Magnas have a preternatural ability to evade or absorb damage, as if they can foresee where and when an attack will come. They can focus their barrier defenses, begin a spontaneous regeneration of damaged parts, or just not be in the path of fire. SAIInts nullify this ability through their connection to the telepathy of the Mayzor. When attacked by SAIInts, the Magnas' paranormal psychic senses are impaired and they must rely on their basic senses to react. This evens the odds between SAIInts and Magnas and forces

them into a fair fight. No pilot has been able to tap into that clairvoyant ability but, if possible, it would add a great advantage to the SAInt.

Sensors

Because the pilot is the cognitive brain of the SAInt, he does not perceive the world of the battlefield through his human senses. His field of vision is much larger with the ability to focus on minute details at great distances. He can see in total blackness and through obscuring mist and smoke. He can pinpoint the location of others by sound and even train his ears to pick up very specific noises. Additional tactical and targeting information is fed to pilots by command but there is no heads-up-display or overlay as there are in the robot tanks. The extraordinary sensor capabilities of the SAInt are simply a part of his senses. These improved senses of a SAInt are also well defended. The SAInt is not oversensitive and extremes of sensations are reduced. The pilot's ears are buffered from the deafening blasts of noise in a battle and her eyes are spared the blinding surges of energy weapons fire.

Though a pilot must feel the weapon in her hands and the shifting of the rubble beneath her feet, intense sensations and "pain" or the effect of damage to her SAInt body are filtered out. This allows a SAInt to fight despite massive wounds. A SAInt may continue to press an attack while tumbling forward on a mangled leg with an arm ripped away at the elbow. There are limits to the system however. If the SAInt is catastrophically damaged then the buffers may be overwhelmed. If that happens the pilot's nervous system will be subjected to the full sensations of the SAInt. These pilots may experience agonizing pain, blinding light, cacophonous sound and the assault of other senses. The pilot must struggle to simply remain conscious long enough to activate a repair or eject and take her chances without the strength of her SAInt to protect her.

Rapid Deployment System

Each Arx must patrol an area thousands of miles in diameter. A high speed launch system was developed to deliver SAInts where they are most needed as quickly as possible. Jehu's Bow, the rapid deployment system, combines plasma drive afterburners and a gravity catapult to allow a SAInt unit to travel at sustained speeds up to Mach 3 (2,304 mph/3,708 km/h) and reach a combat zone across the continent within an hour. When the SAInt nears the deployment point the 'Bow detaches

and drops away and a wing shaped array of fins and directional verniers attached to the SAInt's back parachute it to the ground. Affectionately called Angel Wings, the parachute system lets the SAInt pilot have more control over his descent so he can choose where to land. Once the SAInt touches down the wings also detach. Once the SAInt's deployment is over the slower flying transport craft will fly in to recover the SAInt and airlift it back to base.

The Pilot and the SAInt

Pilot Insertion

The first step to boarding a SAInt is donning the Launch Suit; a skin-tight full-body jumpsuit complete with gloves and slippers. The Launch Suit is made of scale-like cells of plastic material on a mesh of electrically conductive fibers that relaxes its elasticity when stretched but slowly contracts into a form fitting shape in a few seconds. Passing current through the fibers will cause the suit to flex or contract to immobilize the pilot's body or to massage the muscles and regulate blood flow to prevent blackout from extreme speeds or impact. The purpose of this suit is to limit the mobility of the pilot's body and protect his autonomic functions. While fully interfaced with a SAInt, a pilot's body is meant to be immobile, as the nerve impulses are directed into the body of the robot rather than the pilot. Some reflexive signals slip past and will cause twitching or convulsions so the suit gently prevents the pilot from inadvertent self-harm.

Once suited, the pilot connects small padded plates with clip points that will suspend him in the sensory deprivation tank. A high collar rigidly holds the neck steady and the pilot clips a re-breather mask to this collar. Rather than feeding him air however, an oxygenated fluid will be pumped into his respiratory system. Having the pilot breathe fluid provides further protection from the intense pressures of high-speed travel in deployment.

The next part attached to the Launch Suit is the Neural Exchange Halo. A feather-light neurological scanning and transmission device is carefully attached by small manipulator arms. A series of concentric golden rings surround the back of the pilot's head and hundreds of needle-tipped electrodes extend from these rings, brush past the hairs on the top and back of the skull and settle lightly on the surface of the skin.

This delicate machinery reads the neuron activity in the pilot and sends similar signals to receptors so that the pilot's brain activity can be communicated to the SAInt and the observations of its sensors fed back to the pilot's brain. Now the pilot is ready to enter the sensory deprivation tank of the control pod.

Pilots have given the sensory deprivation tank the nickname "the bucket." It is a barrel, three meters high and two meters in diameter, thick walled with electrical and pneumatic conduits running through it. The pilot climbs up and the harness points are attached to suspension lines so that he is held in the center of the empty barrel. The connection cables are attached to the base of the halo collar and the pilot's mask begins to fill with the oxygenated fluid. Once the pilot is secure, a suspension gel is pumped into the pod. The suspension gel is a thick impact absorptive substance, heated to body temperature and electrically non-conductive. The gel provides another layer of defense to the pilot while also ensuring complete isolation from outside signals and influences apart from those that come through the SAInt's nervous system. Pilots are trained to enter a soothing meditative state while the tank is moved into position and inserted into the body of the SAInt robot, plugging into the spinal column at the back of the thorax and then enclosed in layers of armor. As the pilot relaxes into the nothing of total sensory deprivation the Launch Suit slowly contracts, pulling his arms across his chest and tugging his legs up into the fetal position at the center of the tank.

The robot's boot up sequence is next initiated. Electronic and mechanical-biological functions awaken and the nervous system impulses slowly filter into the pilot's mind. Gradually, he becomes aware of his body and mind through his amplified senses. Many describe this sensation as waking up from a long, deep sleep. It is typically accompanied by a rush of invigorating emotions as the pilot becomes aware of the strength of the SAInt. At this point, the SAInt is fully ambulatory, but robots are usually restrained on hauling decks or launching sleds until they can be moved into position for deployment. The SAInt's weapons have been strapped to the robot and Jehu's Bow is connected in a framework that encases the upper body of the SAInt in thrusters, ailerons, and verniers. The winged SAInt enters the launch tube, the catapult rockets fire and it is launched into action.

While a pilot is in control of a SAInt, it is his body and he is the brain. There are no controls and the pilot's own body is kept suspended and restrained. He does not need to think commands to move the SAInt or fire its weapons; he walks, runs, leaps, aims, fires, and swings his sword as he would on his own but with the added power of a metal giant.

Body . . .

Despite their neural union, the pilot retains his humanity and the SAInt retains its "otherness." Built from the pattern of alien monsters, SAInts are still, at the core of their being, beasts with inhuman functions and thought processes. The goal of the CRC designers of the SAInts was to make the machine as human as possible so that it would remain submissive. If a pilot begins to lose sense of the body that he controls, he can dissociate and the monster will become dominant. For that reason, the SAInt itself must maintain the illusion of being the pilot's body. This is partially the reason that all SAInt weapons are carried, like their human equivalents. Early tests showed pilots were uncertain and awkward using weapons built into the body and the unnatural aspect caused the independence of the SAInt to grow powerful. SAInts damaged in battle are quickly repaired and carefully restored to their proper appearance to ensure they are never seen as monsters.

. . . And Soul

The sheer power of the huge machine at the pilot's control and the aggressive desires of the SAInt's mind creep into the pilot's own subconscious as she wakes in the tank. Even before the machine's emotional energy can be detected at measurable levels the subtle effects are there. She is thrilled by the anticipation of combat. Ready to go and fulfill her purpose. Once she is deployed, her mind is distanced from the brutality of the fighting, both the enemy's and her own. This psychic protection is, in a way, a blessing. Though pilots witness the horrors of war they are shielded from the worst. Where many soldiers stumble away from the battlefield to a life of post-traumatic-stress nightmares, the pilots can fight a titanic struggle, climb out of the bucket and go have dinner with their friends almost oblivious to what they have experienced and done. This effect of distancing oneself from the battlefield seems to be limited to a pilot's time on deployment in the SAInt. A kind of "temporary sociopathy" given to the pilot by his SAInt but gone once he has returned to his own body. At least, that's what all the data says.

Frenzy

As a SAInt fights, its instinctual ferocious nature is fed. SAInts have a desire toward violence. As they act, anger builds within the shared mind of pilot and SAInt. The CRC have named this building emotional imbalance the Id. Giving in to Id and lashing out with violence is a release valve for the building energies in the mind of the SAInt. For the pilot it is empowering and freeing as well. The pilot shares in the SAInt's "adrenaline rush" and may be carried along by the feeling, at least at first. If the fight goes on too long however, or if the SAInt becomes frustrated and unable to enact the violence it craves the pilot will need to fight the autonomy of the SAInt as his "body" misinterprets his commands or ignores them outright. The pilot with his Ego must battle for dominance with the SAInt and its Id. If he loses that battle then the beast is unchained and the SAInt becomes like its originators. A machine in Frenzy.

The Frenzied SAInt

An unleashed SAInt is a terror weapon. It does not understand strategy or tactics and is blissfully ignorant of the effects of collateral damage. A frenzied SAInt revels in the power of destruction and will act with increased brutality, causing more violence. Regaining control of the SAInt is a struggle of wills as the pilot must assert himself over the drives of a monster. Often it is only after the SAInt has slaked its thirst for destruction that the pilot can force it back under his control. Recovering from the SAInt's frenzy is a relief to the pilot whose body has been rebelling against him. At the same time those emotions are mixed with a strange sadness, in recognition of what has been lost. Once he has control again, the pilot will have to deal with the consequences of what happened when the monster in the machine broke loose.

The Mayzor

Biomechanical weapons, the Mayzor robots fight driven by instinct. Like insects, they ignore danger and march into battle heedless of their own survival. The mindlessness of the machine makes them frightening and deadly.

Wormwood

Mayzor forces travel to the surface in landing vehicles called Wormwood. The size of a city block, they are roughly spherical in shape but

are made out of uneven overlapping plates of porcelain and metal. They are scorched black and burnished by the heat of re-entry as they fall from orbit to crash-land on the Earth. Hatches peel open all across its surface and Locusts pour out. Wormwood have no weapons, relying on the speed of the raid and fire support from the robots they transport. If the Wormwood comes under attack it will call the Locusts to come to its defense, or call for a retreat. Once the raid is completed, either by the swarm collecting all of the survivors they can find or the Wormwood being attacked, then the Wormwood blasts off. An arc of electricity and a blast of thunder and the vehicle leaps into the sky at immense speeds and the Mayzor, and their victims, are gone.

Swarm

The foot soldiers of the Mayzor invaders, swarms come in a variety of shapes and sizes but all are giant mechanical insects with hard carapaces, grasping claws and rows of legs. Weapons and tools are built into their bodies. They are designed to locate, suppress and capture humans rather than kill and destroy. The swarm follows after the heavy assault of Locusts or Magnas weapons and scour the rubble for survivors they can restrain and carry back to the Wormwood landing vessels. Individual swarms pose no threat to the larger robot vehicles of the Preservation Forces but when they attack they come in hordes to surround and overwhelm their prey.

Locusts

Named for the creatures in the book of Revelations, Locusts can serve as mobile howitzers, assault force bulldozers, or all-terrain tanks. The most common are Soldiers, attack robots on four to eight legs that leap with anti-gravity thrusters. Their primary weapons are energy beam cannons in the abdomen that arch over the back. Their legs are tipped with pincers and claws that can crush or shear through armor plating. Locusts are the primary battle weapons of the Mayzor, surging from a Wormwood and destroying all military forces they encounter.

The robot tanks of the Preservation Forces were designed to counter Locusts but in large numbers they can even bring down a SAInt. If the swarms encounter a target too hard to penetrate then the Locusts will take over, blasting through walls and into evacuation shelters.

Magnas

Their name is taken from the Latin for baron, the opposite equivalent of the arch-angels of heaven, the barons of hell. When they first appeared they were one hundred foot tall angelic statues of chrome and porcelain, burned black and pitted by the fall to the Earth. With each new appearance they become more grotesque and terrifying. Arms are distended and end in claws, wings are edged with scissoring rows of blades, heads sport grimacing faces, and fissures and cracks over the burned porcelain body spew a steady trickle of oily black smoke that sinks to the ground around its feet in a toxic fog.

Monstrous, unstoppable, unpredictable and indiscriminate killing machines, they appear on a battlefield at random and, despite their immense size, flit about the combat zone on anti-gravity engines, raining energy weapons fire on everything around them, melting vehicles to slag, crushing buildings to rubble and incinerating any living thing caught in the open. They constantly scream, with pain and rage. They bellow and shriek to burst eardrums and make buildings tremble.

The Preservation Force classified the Magnas into three ranks by threat level. Because they grow in size and power with each encounter the veteran Magnas have advanced in rank over time. Principal ranks are the units that still roughly resemble the angelic statuary of the first Magnas encountered. A construction of porcelain and chrome scorched black and burnished, cracked and pitted. A rare few have a human profile similar to a SAInt but most already sport multiple wings, faces and limbs crushed together at the Magnas' core creating the appearance of a Seraphim, Cherubim, or Hindu god. The Magnas in this class stand between 100 and 150 feet tall, comparable with a SAInt. Measurements vary and some are much larger by wingspan than by height.

Dominion class units range in size between 150 to 200 feet in height or width depending on how the Magnas has grown. With the increase in size comes an increase in the number and lethality of weapons that the Magnas can bring to bear. Multiple limbs tipped in slashing claws and overlapping bladed wings present a physical threat for anyone unfortunate enough to get close. Within the heads and faces that have begun to spread across its mass are staring eyes and energy weapons that fire from screaming mouths. These Magnas have lost most of the humanoid structure as the scale of their limbs no longer matches that of their bulk.

Throne ranked Magnas are up to 300 feet in size and truly lethal to even a full company of SAInts. Everything about the Dominion ranks is magnified by these massive abominations. Oddly however, their shape generally becomes more humanoid. At this size the individual limbs are useless and cluster and weave together into trunk-like tendrils studded with claws and wing blade "thorns."

Magnas travel to and from a battle in the same manner of the Wormwood, falling from orbital heights and leaping back into the sky on a thunderbolt. They may arrive before or after a Wormwood landing, and sometimes they do not appear during a raid at all. There has only been one incident in which Magnas attacked without a Mayzor raiding force and that was the vengeful destruction of the holy lands. Hundreds of Magnas deployed and laid waste to the cities and people of Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. No prisoners were taken and every structure was demolished. The earth itself burned into cinders, glass and ash.

Generals

A single image recovered from a fallen SAInt's optics showed a human woman wearing armor of glowing white porcelain with pale skin and long silver hair overseeing the loading of captives into a Wormwood. There may be humanoid Legulus officers in the Mayzor army but that is only conjecture by Preservation Force intelligence. Pilots are told to always be on the lookout for these "Generals."

The Hidden Enemy

While no one has yet provided proof, it is persistently rumored that the Mayzor have left spies among us. Hidden as the Mayzor first were when they were the Legulus, these observers and informants allowed themselves to be swept up in the shifting tides of population change after the Mayzor attacks and could now be anyone, anywhere. The greatest concern is what power these spies might have if they were to infiltrate the Preservation Force. After all, a young orphan with a highly developed telepathic sensitivity is an excellent candidate for the SAInt program.



**Three simulation battles in four days? It's no wonder
I'm so hungry!**



Chapter 3.

RULES OVERVIEW

These next chapters cover the mechanics for *Tears of a Machine*. These chapters will explain how the rules function and how they can be used to create a story from numbers and dice. Players and the Director should be at least basically familiar with the rules of *Tears* before beginning to play. After an overview of the mechanics, the details of the pilot's motivation, relationships, and ratings will be explained. Next there is a complete explanation of Actions and Trials and then the rules for combat and battle scenes. Character creation follows these rules so that all players understand what the abilities and ratings mean before they begin creating their pilot.

The Pilot

A SAInt pilot is a teenager given the awesome responsibility of being the last Hope of humanity, at a time in her life when she is just starting to come into her own as a person. The world demands she be strong and capable and leap into situations from which most soldiers flee. If she is going to survive she needs her own sense of purpose, not just orders barked by some commander. Giving in to fear and failure will leave her helpless on the battlefield; a defenseless victim of the Mayzor or even her own SAInt's rage.

Ego

A Pilot lives or dies by her Ego. Her sense of self-worth is what she will draw on when she must succeed. By pursuing her Hopes and dreams a pilot grows her Ego, reinforcing the sense of self-worth. When she is frustrated by stress or depression and gives in to Despair then Ego is lost. The pilot's Ego is rated from 0 to 5 and will rise and fall through her Actions, driving the drama of the story as she pursues her Hopes while fighting to avoid her Despair. Relationships the pilot has formed also feed or starve her Ego. She can find reinforcement for either Hope or despair in the supporting characters of the Director. Friends are found who further a Hope and rivals will appear to frustrate the pilot and drive her toward despair.

Talents

The pilot's basic strengths and weaknesses are represented by the ratings of her five Talents; Charm, Coordination, Intellect, Tone and Spirit. Talents are the pilot's natural, untrained abilities and are rated from 1 to 5. A pilot with a Talent of 1 is deficient or impaired while a 5 shows an exceptional natural ability.

Sven has a Charm rating of 4 compared to Josh's Charm of 2, making him the more likeable, outgoing and handsome pilot but Josh's Tone of 5 means he is in peak physical condition.

Proficiencies

The knowledge, skill, and practice that a pilot has earned are the ratings of her ten Proficiencies: Observe, Study, Convince, Empathize, Firearms, Engineer, Athletics, Close Quarters, Create, and Rally. Proficiencies are rated from 0 to 5. A 0 represents a pilot having no knowledge or training in the field of the Proficiency but with a 5 the pilot has mastered it through intense study and practice.

Cass grew up in the rural backwoods where there was no time for school but plenty of need to hunt deer. Her Study rating of 1 and her Firearms rating of 3 reflect what she learned back home.

Combining Talents and Proficiencies

The two ratings, Talent and Proficiency, are used together to determine a pilot's failure or success when she takes Action. Each Talent relates to two Proficiencies. Intellect for Observe and Study; Charm for Convince and Empathize; Coordination for Firearms and Engineer; Tone for Athletics and Close Quarters; Spirit for Create and Rally.

It's time for a fitness test and Hester will need to run the obstacle course. Her ratings in Tone and Athletics will be the basis for how well she does.

Dice

When a player's pilot takes Action against something or someone she rolls the dice. *Tears of a Machine* uses standard 6-sided dice you find in any hobby shop, game store, or disused copy of *Monopoly*. Players roll dice individually or in handfuls, as many as five at once. Because players don't need to "take turns" for Actions it's recommended that everyone have their own dice.

Actions

A pilot taking Action uses one of his Proficiencies and the related Talent. An Action can settle the outcome of a brief argument, a pop quiz, or a schoolyard scuffle. Actions are not a single word or swing or step. In a debate each Action is a series of points and counterpoints. In battle each Action is a salvo of weapon fire, a dash from street to street, or a series of punches, blocks and kicks. The winner of a quick pick-up game of basketball or a 100-meter dash under the watchful eye of a trainer can be resolved with a single Action. The details in an Action are abstracted; if a pilot is the winner of a fire-fight he may have shot first or he may have avoided his opponent's blast to land his own carefully aimed shot. What truly matters is that he got the results he wanted.

The Challenge

When a pilot is confronted by a situation the Director presents a challenge value. This number is what the player will need to beat to earn success and control the outcome of the situation. The challenge is static but sometimes the pilot's opponent will roll dice too and the value may change from moment-to-moment. Without a challenge value then there is no opposition, so no Action takes place.

Ken has been sitting through a boring history lecture when the teacher announces a pop quiz. The Director warns Ken that his grades are already faltering and he needs to do well. If he fails then the tutor will send him for extra lessons and cancel his free period. The challenge value for the Action is 7.

Pilot's Effort

The player describes his desired outcome for the situation and what the pilot will do to achieve his goals. Sometimes this can change the challenge, such as a pilot deciding to hide and outwit a pursuer rather than outrun him, and the Director will provide a new challenge value to reflect that choice. The player chooses the Proficiency and Talent that match the Action and commits to his decision. The player picks up as many dice as the pilot's chosen Talent rating and rolls them. He selects the die or dice with the highest rolled number. He then adds the rating of the Proficiency to this high rolled value. This total is the pilot's Effort for the Action.

► **Effort = Highest Talent die result + Proficiency rating.**

/ Tears of a Machine /

Ken considers trying to fake a stomachache but decides on the straightforward approach; he'll take the quiz and hope for the best. Ken's player picks up the two dice for his Intellect Talent and rolls them. The results are a 2 and a 6. He adds his Study rating of 1 to the high die value of 6 for a total Effort of 7.

Resolution and Outcome

The value of the pilot's Effort is compared to the value of the challenge. Exceeding the challenge earns the pilot success and his intended outcome takes effect. He gets what he wanted from the situation. Falling short of the challenge or tying the value results in failure and the pilot suffers the consequences. This could be an embarrassment, a defeat, or even a physical injury to the pilot depending on the challenge. The outcome, success or failure, is narrated by the pilot's player and the Director. The pilot player narrates his Effort and if he has succeeded, the outcome of his Action. If he is not successful then the Director narrates the result of the Action and any immediate follow-up. Consider the difference between the challenge number and the Effort achieved when narrating the outcome. A small difference is a narrow miss while a big difference is a catastrophe for someone.

Ken has tied the challenge for the Action. His player describes the valiant attempt at guessing the right answers but the Director points out that when the tutor announces "Styluses down!" he has only finished half the questions.

Alan beat the challenge number with his Effort of 8. His player explains how he raced through the questions following his instincts. As the grades are displayed on the main board at the front of the classroom he smiles to see his own "C" and jeers at Ken when he sees his "F." Hester's Effort is a remarkable 11 and she has earned the only A+ in the class.

Benefits

A pilot may be able to improve his Effort, adding help from dice, Ego, Id, or equipment. A lucky die roll can make all the difference but the pilot's resources can also turn the tide.

Benefits to Effort with Dice

If multiple dice match with the high value die during the roll then they will increase the worth of the highest die. Every die that matches the

high value die is a Benefit that adds 1 to the total Effort. For example: if the pilot rolls three 4's then the die roll is worth 6; the high value of 4 and the 2 Benefits added from the matching dice. Benefits may even raise the value of a die beyond six. Matches only apply to the high value die. If a pilot rolls a 5 and three 4's his Effort does not gain any Benefit and the rolled die value remains at 5.

Alan is taking the same quiz. His player rolls 3 dice for his Intellect. The results are a 3, a 5, and another 5. With double 5's, Alan's high die roll value is increased, by 1, to 6. He adds his Study Proficiency of 2 for a total Effort of 8.

Benefits from Equipment

Some equipment, such as the weapons a SAInt carries or quality tools, will add a Benefit to the pilot's total Effort. The amount of Benefit is explained in the equipment description.

Increased Effort with Ego

If a pilot's total Effort isn't enough to beat the challenge the player can increase his Effort for the Action by spending Ego. Ego is the inner reserve of self-confidence that a pilot can draw from when he must succeed. For each point of Ego that the player spends the pilot's Effort is increased by one. A player may spend as many Ego points as he needs to win success for the Action and no more. A pilot can only spend Ego for an Action in which he is rolling dice. Let's look at that quiz again:

Ken has tied the challenge for the Action and will fail. Rather than let that happen his player spends a point of Ego from Ken's current total of 3. As the clock shows two minutes to spare, Ken goes into overdrive, quickly skipping through the pages of the quiz, rapidly tapping out the answers in a flurry of half-guesses. His Effort is increased to 8 and he squeaks by with a "C" to pass the quiz.

Increased Effort with Id

Pilots aren't the only ones with an inner drive. The SAInts have their own resource of Id. When controlling his SAInt the pilot can spend points of Id from the machine's reserve the same way he would spend Ego. However, Id can only be used for acts of violence. A pilot can only spend as many Id points as he needs to earn success with his Effort and no more. A pilot can only spend Id for an Action in which he is rolling dice.

/ Tears of a Machine /

Ryoko is dashing across the battlefield in her SAInt when a Mayzor soldier Locust drops off a building into her path. She draws her 'Arc knife and lunges to impale the enemy but falls short in her Effort as she rolls a 6, tying the Locust's challenge. She calls on the Id of her SAInt, Spending 1 of the 2 points her SAInt has and increasing her Effort to beat the Locust's challenge. As the knife slips past she brings her knee up, splitting through the outer shell of the Locust, and the two tumble into the nearby apartment building.

Both Id and Ego may be added to the Effort of an Action together, so long as it satisfies the SAInt's desire to use Id in acts of violence.

Boosts

A successful outcome improved by Boosts is more powerful. Boosts are especially useful in Trials or Battles, situations in which the pilots must wear down the opposition or destroy an enemy piece by piece. A Boosted strike inflicts more harm; a Boosted argument cuts to the heart of the matter.

Boosts from Dice

If a successful player has rolled the matching high number on two or more dice, then he is extra-successful. The outcome of the Action is improved by one Boost for each matching high value die, just like the increase in Effort. If a pilot got a Benefit from the dice, then she also gets a Boost. Remember, only the high value dice provide a Boost.

Sven took the same quiz that frustrated Ken. He rolled double 5's to win his success so his outcome is Boosted. He's earned a B instead of the C he would have received otherwise.

Boosts from Ego

A player can add a Boost to the outcome of a successful Action by spending Ego. The player spending Ego explains the extra energy the pilot applies and spends the Ego points. Ego points that the player spent to add Benefit to the Action do not carry over, separate Ego points must be spent to add a Boost. The player may spend as much Ego as she has available to defeat her opposition.

Cass is trying to win over Commander Pilkington in a long debate. After a successful Action she spends 2 Ego points to

Boost the strength of the outcome. Pilkington gives up immediately and concedes the argument to Cass.

Boosts from Id

If she is piloting a SAInt the pilot may use Id as she would Ego to add a Boost to the outcome and increase the damage dealt by an attack. Id cannot be used to Boost the effect of other Actions. The player may spend as much Id as she needs to destroy her target but no more.

Ryoko is firing on a Magnas. She successfully connects and blasts a rift in the side of the enemy monster. Her player spends a few points of Id and unleashes her SAInt's ferocious power. She thrills as the bullets pour from the gun until it chatters empty. The mechanical innards of the enemy rupture in an explosion of detonating munitions.

Boosts from Equipment

Some equipment will include a Boost to successful outcomes. For example, an explosive warhead would cause more harm than a simple gun. The arsenal of SAInt weapons includes statistics for weapons of all kinds. Other tools or equipment can give a pilot a Boost in the right situations.

Ken and Ryoko dive into battle against another enemy. Both succeed in their attacks but Ken's sword provides a Boost to his Actions outcome. As Ryoko's knife punctures the electromagnetic shielding of the Magnas, Ken's more powerful sword cleaves the wing from its side in one slash.

Summary: The pilot player chooses a Proficiency for his Action. He finds the related Talent rating and picks up that many dice. He rolls the dice, keeping the highest rolled result.

The player then adds the Proficiency rating to that number, plus 1 Benefit point for each matching die, each Ego or Id point spent for Benefits, and Benefits from equipment to find his total Effort.

The Effort is compared to the Challenge. If it exceeds that number the pilot has succeeded. The effect is Boosted by 1 for each matching die, each additional Ego or Id point spent for Boosts, and Boosts from equipment.

Acting in Teams

A pilot can work with other pilots or supporting characters to assist an Action. This can help a pilot to be successful and improve the outcome. The pilot and assistants must be able to form a team in order to assist an Action. To form a team, the pilots use the same Talent to roll the same Action. One pilot leads the Action and his Effort will decide the success or failure for the team.

The number of characters who can assist are limited by the leader's rating in the Proficiency that he uses to face the challenge. His skill will guide their pooled Talent. If a pilot leads a team to haul an ammo crate away from the escape door and he has an Athletics Proficiency of 1, he can only have 1 other person assist him. Any more assistants than that, and they become confused and get in each other's way. A pilot with an Athletics Proficiency of 5 in the same situation can have 5 other characters assist him as he understands how to work with heavy weights and can organize larger groups. If there are more characters that wish to help they can form a separate team and act in parallel, hoping that they can make a difference with their own, separate successes.

The team leader rolls his Talent rating in dice, taking the high value die and adding his Proficiency rating and Benefits. The leader is given one Benefit for each assistant character in the team. Other pilots in the team roll the same Talent dice, but only dice that match the leader's high value will add to the result. The matching dice each add a Benefit to the leader's Effort for the Action. The leader can increase his Effort by spending Ego points. Other team members can also spend Ego points to add to the Effort, but only if they rolled a matching die. The total Effort is compared to the challenge. If that total Effort beats the challenge then the team succeeds. If they fail they all share the consequences of failure.

A successful leader applies Boosts from dice, weapons, Ego, or Id. A pilot who rolled a matching die not only helped the leader but has been successful on her own. The pilot's matched dice add Boosts to the outcome and she can add more Boosts by spending her Ego, Id and other sources like weapons. A pilot who didn't match the die roll doesn't add any Boosts.

The Director's characters can join a team to offer help. They add Benefits to the Effort and may also add Boosts to the outcome.

Summary: A pilot may lead a number of characters in a team Action, up to the Talent rating. Each assistant adds 1 Benefit to the leader's Effort. Assistants who roll matching dice add additional Benefit and add Boost to a successful Effort. The leader and characters with matching dice may add Benefits and Boosts from Ego, Id, and equipment.

Ken, Alison, and Hester are trapped on the lower maintenance deck of the New Jerusalem as a fire rages out of control. To escape the blaze they need to pry open a hatch, a challenge rated 10. Because they have the same goal they will act as a team.

Alison leads the Action. With her Athletics of 3 she can manage her two assistants. She picks up a broken beam to use as a huge pry-bar. Her teammates grab hold of the bar beside her. Alison rolls an Athletics Action and after rolling her Tone Talent dice for a high value of 4 she adds her Athletics Proficiency and another 2 Benefit points for the members of the team, earning a total Effort of 9. Ken rolls his Tone dice, getting two 4's. His matching dice add 2 more to Alison's Effort. Hester is a supporting character. Though she added 1 Benefit to the team Effort she doesn't roll dice for more. With a total of 11 they succeed! The door gives a sharp squeak and bursts open to the safety of the large hangar bay.

Trials

Trials are situations that can't be decided with a simple success or failure. In a Trial, opponents must be defeated by degrees. This might be wearing down Resolve or blasting away layers of armor. The pilot engaged in a Trial rolls a series of Actions. Each success harms the opponent's Condition and each failure harms the pilot's Condition. As long as one side's Condition remains, the Trial continues and more Actions are rolled until one or the other breaks.

Sven is standing in line at the cafeteria when George, the academy's biggest bully, shoves his way to the front of the line. Sven decides to teach him a lesson and shoves back, spilling George's tray down the front of his uniform. That's just an invitation to George and he squares off against Sven. George is a seasoned opponent and a single Action isn't enough to defeat him. Over a few Actions the two punch, kick and grapple back and forth until Sven has enough successful Actions to get the upper hand and finally drop George on his butt.

Talent Checks

When a pilot is confronted by a situation that relies only on his natural ability then a Check is made. A single die is rolled and if the result is equal or less than the pilot's Talent value then the Check is a success. Checks are reflexive and do not require any special exertion on their own. Some Actions always include an immediate Check as a follow-up.

A Check may be adjusted so that the rolled value is increased or decreased. This reflects changes in the situation that make it easier or more difficult, such as a pilot recovering from injury in a state-of-the-art hospital, instead of through bed rest at home.

Summary: The pilot player rolls a single die. If it is less than or equal to the Talent rating the check is successful.

Ryoko finishes off an enemy robot and it detonates as it is destroyed. After her Action to attack she rolls a single die to check her Coordination. Rolling lower than her Coordination rating, she successfully leaps behind cover and is shielded from the blast.

Conditions

Pilots will face attacks on their commitment and their bodies. When a pilot fails in the face of these dangers he could be weakened by injury or by the loss of fighting spirit. Conditions track the pilot's health and well-being. There are two categories: Injury and Resolve.

Injury

Physically fit pilots with a high Tone rating can survive lots of physical punishment and those with a rating of 1 will drop to a single punch. The Injury Condition tracks the pilot's ability to function after suffering serious harm. An Injured pilot can be Hurt, Wounded, or Unconscious. A pilot who is Hurt has to deal with pain but can work through it. If a pilot is Wounded his Actions will suffer from Setback. Rolled die values that are higher than the Talent involved in any Action are discarded. If the pilot is Unconscious he is out of action until he receives medical attention. Injury tracks life-threatening damage to the body and the Conditions of Injury last until the pilot has had time to heal. The Injury conditions also measure the amount of time the pilot needs in order to

recover, from 1 day for a Hurt pilot to 3 days for a Wounded pilot and a whole week for an Unconscious pilot.

Resolve

A pilot's dedication to achieving his goals is measured by Resolve. Pilots strong in Spirit have a more "winning attitude" and can keep after what they want while those with a rating of 1 will fold and give up when facing adversity. The Resolve Condition tracks the pilot's willingness to continue with a Trial. It is the "health" of his dedication. A pilot's Resolve Conditions can be Steady, Shaken or Lost. While Steady he still has courage and conviction. When Shaken he has lost faith in his course and his Actions suffer a Setback. Rolled die values that are higher than the Talent involved in any Action are discarded. If his Resolve is Lost the pilot has given up the struggle and concedes victory to his opponent. Harm to Resolve is not lasting and the pilot will bounce back to an unharmed Resolve at the start of the next scene. Unless . . .

Depression

The effects of lost Resolve linger with a pilot if his Ego is 0 when his Resolve is Lost. In this case, the pilot still feels the loss and has difficulty moving on until he regains his self-confidence. During this time, he will be a push-over. His Resolve is restored to be unharmed but he still carries the Setback penalty to all his Actions until he can raise his Ego.

Setback

Setback represents harm to a pilot's condition that is so severe he is unable to function to his full potential. The pain and impairment of being Wounded or the disillusionment and confusion of a Shaken Resolve put a limitation on the pilot player's dice so the pilot cannot act to his full potential.

The player of a Wounded, Shaken, or Depressed pilot rolls Talent dice for his Actions as usual but disqualifies any die valued higher than the Talent rating: Any die result higher than the number of dice that were rolled. After disqualifying dice, the highest remaining die is used with his Proficiency and other Benefits for the total Effort.

If all of the pilot's rolled dice are disqualified then he gains nothing from his dice and must rely on his Proficiency and Benefits from other sources for the total. A pilot can still include matching dice towards a success, and if there are enough of them they may even increase the value above his Talent rating. They will also Boost a successful outcome.

Summary: A pilot in a Condition with Setback penalties disqualifies dice from Actions with results greater than the Talent.

When the Mayzor attack started, Ken was caught out in the shopping district. The flames from a plasma explosion burnt his leg and now he is limping through the smoky streets toward the evacuation point. Getting over a pile of rubble will require an Athletics Action but he must deal with a Setback on his Action. With a Tone Talent of 4 he rolls 4 dice. One 5, two 3's and a 2. His Tone Talent is 4, so the 5 is disqualified and counts for nothing. But it's not all bad news. The two 3's amount to a 4 because of the matching result and he can add his Athletics Proficiency of 3 for a total 7 Effort.

Multiple Conditions

A pilot could be struggling with Setbacks from several sources at once, like being physically Wounded and Depressed. If that is the case, the effects of Setbacks do not “stack.” As long as one Setback remains the pilot still has the penalty on all his Actions. If the Wounded pilot gets a Boost to his Ego and is no longer Depressed he's still dealing with the Setback of the physical pain.

Structure

Structure is the SAInt's equivalent to Injury. It is the degrees of physical punishment a SAInt can survive on the battlefield. All SAInts have the same Structure rating: they can be Damaged, Malfunctioning, or Disabled. SAInts can be Damaged and operate normally but when Malfunctioning the pilot must fight Setback to drive his SAInt's Actions. Amazingly, a Disabled SAInt can still struggle to cling to “life” on the battlefield and the pilot can still roll Actions but also with Setback. More damage to the SAInt will destroy it.



Nothing! I couldn't do anything!





Chapter 4.

Rules Detail

Pilots and Motivations

Pilots are not just collections of rules and numbers. They are people with hopes and drives and fears and failings. They do not live in a vacuum; they are surrounded by others who rely on them and whom they must rely on in turn. Friends and foes are caught up in their choices and the consequences, good or bad. Numbers make *Tears of a Machine* a game but characters make it a story.

Ego

A pilot's Ego allows him to do great things. It is a resource of inner strength that can improve his efforts. It is also a measure of his mood and his feelings about himself. Achieving goals and earning praise strengthens feelings of self-worth but suffering failure causes a pilot to crumble. The strength of a pilot's Ego can only be changed through his Actions. Ego will be increased by success and lessened by failure. A pilot's Ego is represented by a value from 0-5 and will change freely through the scenes and episodes of a game.

Hope

A pilot's Hope is what he strives for, what he feels as his purpose. It is the goal that increases his sense of self-worth as he pursues it. When a pilot acts to grow closer to his Hope he can gain Ego through success on an Action. Failure on an Action while pursuing his Hope will make him lose Ego. A pilot may only have one Hope. Though it is not the sole motivating factor in his life, it is the most important and an expression of his innermost desire.

When the pilot character is created, the player chooses a Hope. The pilot's Hope should not be too vague, nor should it be too specific. Hope is an influence on him in almost every situation. It may reflect an ideal; a pilot can still strengthen his Ego pursuing an unattainable goal. Over time a pilot's Hope may change, or even be abandoned and replaced.

Cass is very protective of those close to her; their safety is the most important thing in her life. Her Hope is; I'll make sure no one harms my friends.

Despair

Despair is what a pilot fears. What he tries to avoid because confronting it makes him feel like a failure. All pilots have a Despair that is also made by the player. Like Hope, the pilot's Despair should be easy to define and apply to most situations. Failing an Action while confronted by a source of Despair will lessen a pilot's Ego but success allows him the opportunity to overcome it and improve Ego. A pilot may only have one Despair as it is the greatest source of fear and failure in his life. As a pilot grows and changes his Despair may also be modified or replaced.

Ryoko's father constantly asks for reports on her successes and failures in training exercises and combat. If she is not the best in her class he will shame her with his disappointment. Her Despair is; defeat in combat will upset my family.

Motivations in Action

When a pilot rolls for an Action he has the opportunity to gain or lose Ego if his motivations apply to the situation or are involved in what he does. Not every Action will feed a pilot's Ego or challenge it. When the pilot player describes the Action that his pilot will take he also declares if the pilot is pursuing his Hope or confronting his Despair as a part of that Action. He explains how the Action reflects his pursuit of his desires or how he faces off against what he loathes or fears. The player needs to provide some justification for his choices and satisfy the Director that the Motivation applies because Hope and Despair need a connection to the pilot's desires.

Only when a pilot is rolling dice to participate in an Action can his motivations and Ego be involved, for gain or loss. When a pilot is not committed to an Action and is not rolling dice, his Ego rating cannot change. It is up to the player to decide when to gamble for Ego and put the pilot's mental well-being at risk. Only one point of Ego may be gained or lost with each Action, though a pilot can spend as many as he likes. It is never possible to gain multiple Ego points or lose them in a single Action. A pilot cannot engage both his Hope and Despair at once; he must choose one or the other.

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To indicate the pilot's intent to involve his Motivations and potentially gain or lose Ego, the player can set aside a single die or some other marker as a reminder before the Action.

Gaining Ego

When a pilot is successful in an Action that furthers his Hope or confronts his Despair his Ego might improve. After the success is confirmed the player rolls a single die for a Spirit Talent Check. If the result is less than or equal to the pilot's Spirit a point of Ego is gained. With this success, the pilot feels the achievement has made him more valuable to himself and to others. If the Check fails then the pilot disregards his accomplishments or believes that he has been offered false praise. Though he has succeeded at the Action no Ego point is gained.

Losing Ego

A pilot's sense of self-worth can be destroyed by failure, especially failure in the face of Despair. When a pilot fails in an Action in a situation that reflects his Despair or the pilot is unable to achieve his Hope he may lose Ego. After the failure has been confirmed the player rolls a single die to check the pilot's Spirit Talent. If the roll is equal or less than the Talent rating it is successful and the pilot has retained his level of Ego, recognizing that he has not been marred by the failure or finding some comfort in others. If the roll is greater than the Talent rating it is a failure. The pilot has given in to pessimism and thinks less of himself. He loses one point of Ego and slides toward self-doubt and depression.

Summary: After an Action that relates to Motivations, a pilot player rolls a Spirit Talent Check to gain Ego from success or prevent its loss to failure.

Spending Ego

Ego is spent to add Benefits to the Effort of the pilot and Boosts to the outcome of his Actions. The extreme Effort involved in forcing his Actions to be successful and powerful exhausts a pilot's reserves of confidence and motivation. If a pilot spends his last point of Ego he is mentally and emotionally spent. Ego can only be spent if it would bring the pilot a success or increase the effects of a success.

All Is Lost

If a pilot's Ego is depleted and his Resolve is reduced to zero then the

weight of failure has driven him to depression. He can become emotionally and mentally detached and find it difficult to concentrate on Actions or even to stir up the motivation to act at all. While depressed, his Actions suffer a **Setback** penalty. A depressed pilot must be swiftly steered toward his motivations to regain faith in himself.

Ego in Teams

The success or failure of the team determines the pilot's success or failure in the Action, regardless of his own rolled dice values, but his Ego is his own. Pilots gain and lose Ego for their own motivations and Spirit when working in a team.

Id

The SAInts have a power like Ego that they inherited from the blueprint of the Magnas. Id is the strength of the robot's own will in its desire to cause destruction. Id can be spent like Ego as a force that adds Benefits or Boosts but only for acts of violence. Id grows in the mind of the SAInt, increasing by 1 if the controlling pilot's Ego remains "idle" or unchanged through his Action. If Id is greater than Ego, the pilot player will need to make successful Spirit Talent Checks or the SAInt's remaining mind could rip control away from the pilot and go into a Frenzy. Id ranges in value from 0-5.

Other Characters

Characters controlled by the Director populate the story of the player characters. They interact with the pilots, help and hinder them, provide challenges and reasons for the pilots to act. There are three types of Director characters: Extra, Supporting, and Antagonist. Each serves a different purpose. It will be up to the Director to flesh out these characters and provide physical descriptions, voices, attitudes, and challenges.

Director Characters

The simplest characters are Extras. Extras fill out a scene as faces in the crowd or a passerby in the pilot's story. Extras cannot be involved in Actions because they do not have ability ratings; they cannot provide a challenge or assist a pilot.

Supporting characters are people important enough that the pilots can interact with them on a regular basis. In addition to a face and name, supporting characters can be an obstacle to a pilot, providing the chal-

lenge to an Action. They have two ratings; Focus and Vigor to represent their social or mental and physical abilities. They can also assist a pilot in his Actions but do not roll dice.

Finally, there is the Antagonist type of Director Character. Antagonists are prominent and powerful in the lives of the pilots and have expanded abilities. Like Supporting characters, they have Focus and Vigor ratings. Antagonists also have Conditions, meaning a pilot must harm the antagonist's Resolve with a series of Actions in a Trial, or harm Injury or Structure in a Battle, to earn victory. Antagonists will roll dice to provide a variable level of challenge for a pilot or to provide capable assistance.

Relationship Characters

The lives of pilots are tangled with the Motivations and Actions of other characters in the series. The characters that are closest to the pilots' stories are relationship characters. These are Supporting or Antagonist characters who are a focus for the pilot's Hope and Despair and they can trigger his Motivations.

Friends and Rivals

Each relationship character is broadly classed as a friend or a rival depending on the nature of the relationship. Friends provide support for the Hope of a pilot. They may be a tutor, a trusted confidant or an object of romantic desire. Rivals exacerbate the pilot's Despair, driving her into conflict by trying to best or reject her. Rivals may be the bully, the know-it-all, or the abusive instructor.

Relationships in Play

The Director uses relationship characters to bring a pilot's motivations into his Actions, whether the player wants it or not. Whenever the Director involves a relationship character in a pilot's Action, the Action can affect the pilot's ability to gain or maintain Ego. Even if the pilot's choice of Action does not relate to his motivations, the involvement of a relationship character means that a person with a strong influence on his Ego will call his feelings into question.

When a relationship character is involved with an Action, the Director will ask the player to put aside a die for the Spirit roll as a reminder. The pilot then rolls the Action and determines success or failure. Once the Action's outcome is settled, the player makes the Spirit Check. Relationship characters offer the possible advantage for the gain of Ego but come with the potential risk of Ego loss.

Relationship characters can influence a pilot when they participate in her Actions but sometimes they can also affect a pilot without being present. If a pilot has interacted with that character in an earlier scene, such as getting a Linc call from parents back home, then the memory of their talk could be carried over into a following Action by the pilot player or the Director. If her mother spent the entire call chiding her for taking unnecessary risks, a dangerous Action could be bad for her Ego.

Only one relationship character can affect the Ego of a pilot in an Action. If there are other relationship characters involved, they cannot trigger additional response from the pilot and must “wait their turn.” A relationship character may only affect one Action in a scene. If the scene is a Trial, with multiple Actions, then after a relationship character has called the pilot’s motivations into an Action she cannot influence him again. In this case, he cannot gain or lose an Ego point because of her until the Trial is over. If there are multiple relationship characters in the Trial, then others may affect the pilot’s Ego in following Actions.

Summary: Relationship characters are tied to pilot Motivations. When a relationship character is involved in an Action the pilot’s Motivations are always involved. Only one relationship at a time affects an Action.

Number of Relationships

Relationships that have a strong effect on the pilot’s Ego are demanding and important. It takes a lot to maintain a relationship, good or bad. A pilot can only have as many relationship characters as his Charm rating. A pilot who lacks social graces or remains distant from others could have as few as one relationship character while a highly attractive social butterfly can have as many as five relationship characters influencing his Ego. If a pilot’s Charm rating is increased as he earns and spends Advancement Points then the number of relationship characters he can manage increases.

First Relationships

At the start of the game it is the job of the Director to create the first relationship characters for new pilots, characters who will further and frustrate the Hope or Despair of each pilot. Two relationship characters are made up for each pilot, one friend and one rival, except for those un-

likeable enough to have a Charm rating of 1. They will be stuck with a single relationship character. During play, the player has the option to establish relationships for her pilot with characters she meets, declaring this person important to the pilot's life.

Gaining Friends

Friends provide kindness, sharing and positive reinforcement. They come from many backgrounds and sources: Family members, other pilots, a paramour, kindly tutors or even commanders. What matters is the pilot draws strength from these people, feeling validated by their pride in him. A pilot may gain a friendly relationship after an Action or Trial that ends amicably with a feeling of good will between the two, such as a shared success or an agreement reached through empathy. The player of the pilot spends an Advancement Point to establish the importance of the relationship, giving it lasting value.

Gaining Rivals

Rivals are not outright enemies, though they can be. These are complicated relationships that are a source of conflict and stress. Rivals may be abusive or neglectful caregivers, a resentful trainer, an overly-competitive pilot or the object of unrequited romance. Rivals provide conflict, keeping the pilot's life "interesting." If a pilot player enjoys the tension between them (or has found someone he enjoys bullying) he can ensure that their rivalry will go on. Any time a pilot has an Action or Trial with another character that ends in enmity, such as browbeating another, a nasty argument or an exposed lie or even a fistfight, then the player of the pilot may spend an Advancement Point to establish a relationship and make the other a rival.

Losing Relationships

It's difficult to manage a large number of intense relationships at once, to juggle attention between many people and their own lives. If a pilot goes more than a few episodes without interacting with a friend or rival in any meaningful way then they may drift out of each other's lives and return to being casual acquaintances. The Director will warn a player if he notices that the relationship is winding down but if the pilot is unable to reconnect after another episode then the relationship is lost.

Pilots and their peers live dangerous lives. It's possible, even likely, that friends or rivals will be killed during episodes. If a relationship charac-

ter is killed, the relationship remains if the pilot refuses to abandon the memory. Over time, however, this relationship will fade. After a few episodes, with no new experiences and only old memories to return to, the pilot cannot gain or lose Ego to a ghost.

Changing Relationships

If a pilot shares good experiences and interactions with a rival it is possible to make that character into a friend. On the flip-side, if he is abusive or nasty to a friend he may turn her into a rival. Different Charm Actions, especially with Boosted outcomes can change relationships.

Minimum Relationships

A pilot must always have at least one relationship character and if she does nothing to maintain her human connection then the Director will have to create and manage that relationship. In this case, the most likely relationship is a rival who picks on the friendless loser.

Actions in Detail

For an Action to take place there must be some opposition. The challenge a pilot faces is decided by the type of character and the ratings of her opponent's abilities. Younger and less experienced pilots usually face easier challenges than their older comrades but can still get caught up in dangerous situations.

Episodes and Scenes

Tears of a Machine is patterned after anime TV shows. Each session of play is an episode of a multi-season series, with the events of each game session broken down into the scenes within that episode. A typical scene involves the pilots and supporting characters responding to a challenge with Actions that reflect their Motivations and Relationships. Each scene of a *Tears of a Machine* story is an opportunity to advance the plot, to let the pilots grow their Egos and develop their abilities. The scenes of pure dialog or descriptive transitions are links from one Action scene to another.

Setting the Scene

The Director will be responsible for designing many of the scenes in an episode, especially when the pilots are in lessons or in battle. As teenagers training to use cutting-edge weapons on a military base, most of

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a pilot's time is strictly scheduled into classes and combat simulation. Mayzor attacks come from out of nowhere and can interrupt any situation, forcing the pilots to rush to their SAInts and be launched into battle.

The Director is not the only one responsible for creating the events in an episode or a series. *Tears of a Machine* is a character driven game. Pilots are encouraged to guide the story toward scenes that interest them with their own Actions. If the pilots decide to skip history class and launch a secret mission to recover a friend's lost teddy bear then a whole new opportunity for scenes has opened up. The best story and plot follows the motivations and choices of the pilots. Hope, Despair and relationship characters are there to be a resource for Director and players when making decisions about important events.

Play

Typically, a scene begins with its setting; the place in which the Action will happen. The Director describes the locale and its important features. Players should always feel comfortable asking for details or to suggest their own. Players should base these suggestions on the typical features that might be found in the scene's environment. For example, it isn't hard to find a spoon in a cafeteria, but it's not likely you'll find a nano-machine armor caster there. The other characters involved in a scene will range in importance; from the background filling extras to the challenges of supporting characters and antagonists. If a pilot's relationship characters are in the scene then her motivations and Ego are on the line. Once the pilots have been introduced to the scene then play begins.

The pilot players act out and describe what they say and do within the scene. This interaction usually leads up to the challenge and the pilots roll Actions to face it. An enemy robot crests the hill and opens fire! The trainer loads up the weapon test range simulation! The class bully tries to make the pilot's best friend kiss him! The rubble of the half-collapsed building begins to shift and rain down from above! When the challenge appears the players need to make some decisions about what their pilots will do, and how. Part of describing the challenge is the Director's suggestion of what might happen if the pilots fail to act.

The Actions in the scene are decided by what the pilots need to do to succeed. Will this be a basic Action with the challenge of the scene satisfied by a single roll of the dice? Will it be a full-fledged Trial with

multiple Actions or a Battle scenario involving moving to the best positions on the battlefield and trading salvos of gunfire with an enemy assault? Most episodes consist of several scenes of simple Actions, with one Trial or combat situation.

Once the challenge is presented and everyone understands their options the pilots and Director will explain their desired outcome and what they will do to reach it. Situations may call for a specific response (no way to talk your way to safety from a collapsing building) or the pilot may have options for Talents and Proficiencies to use. As his motivations, the pilot's Hope and Despair are the best guide for his choice of Actions. If it's more important to his Hope or Despair that he embarrass the teacher rather than pass the test, make that his Action. A pilot wants to serve his Ego whenever possible.

Everyone chooses the appropriate Proficiencies and Talents for their Actions and if and how their Ego will be involved. The Talent dice are rolled, the high value is found, Proficiency ratings and Benefits are added and the total Effort is compared to the challenge. Once the pilot's success or failure is determined, any follow-up Checks are rolled and the final outcome is narrated by the Director and players.

Time in Scenes and Actions

Time is flexible in Actions and scenes. The quiz that lasts for two hours can be a single Action, decided by one die roll, just as the fist-fight that is over in thirty seconds could be finished with a single Action. Trials and battles can be made up of a series of Actions each lasting a few seconds or several hours.

Passing Story

Not every scene needs to include a challenge and Actions by the pilots. Sometimes the story needs exposition, transition from one location to another, or just some time for the pilots to share and collect their thoughts. These scenes shouldn't be left out of the game but they also shouldn't take over. Pilots cannot follow their motivations and earn Ego without Actions and rolling dice.

Talent Checks

A check roll is a quick test of a pilot's natural ability. Check rolls use a single die and do not involve a Proficiency. The player rolls the die and

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if the result is equal or less than the Talent rating, the check is passed successfully. A check is not an Action on its own but it may set up an Action or contribute to the outcome of an Action.

Some situations may add an adjustment modifier to a Check. This is a temporary increase or decrease in the pilot's Talent rating, such as having access to medicine when a pilot is recovering from injury. Increases make the Check easier, allowing a higher rolled value to succeed. Decreases make the Check harder to pass by narrowing the range of a successful value.

The Pilot Talents

Charm, Coordination, Intellect, Tone and Spirit. Talents are the pilot's natural, untrained, abilities. Each is the basis of two Proficiencies and the Talent rating is the number of dice the pilot player rolls when using those Proficiencies.

Intellect (Observe, Study): Intellect is the pilot's common sense, memory and perceptiveness. Intellect allows her to solve problems and recognize details. This measures quick thinking as well as retention. Intellect also assists a pilot's ability to spot concealment and conceal herself from detection.

Intellect is the basis of Study or Observe Actions. If a pilot needs to remember a fact or important clue but the player has forgotten, the Director can use an Intellect Check to jog his memory. If a pilot has a split second to notice some detail then a Check can decide if he caught the information before it's too late.

Ryoko saw the combination to Instructor Wu's desk lock scribbled on a piece of paper but can't immediately remember it. The Director asks the player for an Intellect Check to see if she can recall it with some rumination. Royoko is fairly observant with an Intellect rating of 3; she has a good chance to remember the details.

Charm (Convince, Empathize): Charm measures how likable a pilot can be. Attractive, friendly, noble; any and all of the natural qualities that make others want to be with the pilot. The level of Charm is also the upper limit of the relationship characters that a pilot may have.

Charm is important in social Actions and Trials when a pilot needs to Convince another character or win him over to her point of view through

Empathy. If the Director needs a quick way to decide a character's opinion of a pilot, she can use a Charm Check for a first impression, positive or negative.

Cass strikes up a conversation with one of the other pilots at the lunch table. The Director hasn't prepared a detailed description of the character since he is an extra so he asks Cass' player for a Charm Check. Cass' Charm is one of her best features; a 4 rating. She succeeds the die roll and "Robert," the long-range weapon specialist from Benedict Company takes a liking to Cass and happily joins her in talking about soccer.

Coordination (Firearms, Engineer): Coordination measures quick responses, precision and good hand-to-eye coordination. It is the foundation of combat Actions that require finesse over brute power. Coordination is used for Firearms. It is also used for Engineer Actions that require a quick response and nimble fingers.

Check rolls for a pilot's Coordination can be made as a follow-up to an athletic Action or a Check for quick reactions like keeping on balance or catching a dropped object.

Ken deals the killing blow to an enemy robot with his SAInt's blade but the machine's power core is about to explode so a Coordination Check is rolled to see if Ken is swift enough to leap away. He rolls a 6, higher than his Coordination of 3 and is caught in the blast, damaging his SAInt.

Tone (Athletics, Close Quarters): Tone is a measure of overall physical fitness, vigor, and size. Close Quarters fighting and Athletics Actions rely on the Tone Talent. It also determines the degree of Injury a pilot can survive and how quickly she recovers from injury.

If a pilot needs to lift or carry a heavy burden in order to take an Action then the Director can call for a Check before the Action to see if it is possible or afterward to see if the act has injured her. Prolonged physical exercise, exposure, or punishment can harm a pilot unless a Tone Check is successful. If a pilot is exposed to toxins or sources of infection then a Tone Check can be made to decide if she is affected.

Cass has gotten herself locked outside on the superstructure of the Arx. Caught in the icy cold temperatures, she has to climb around for hours before she finds a way back in. The Director

asks her player for a Tone Check to see if Cass has any lasting injuries from the cold. She rolls higher than her Tone of 3, fails and suffers Injury from frostbite. After a few days in the med-bay she will check her Tone again to see if the Injury has healed or if she must spend even more time in convalescence.

Spirit (Create, Rally): Spirit is a pilot's strength of will and her command over her own emotions and feelings. It is strongly tied to the pilot's sense of self-worth and Ego. It is the basis for Create and Rally Actions, when a pilot expresses herself to an audience of others. Spirit also measures the pilot's degree of Resolve, the ability to resist being shaken in her beliefs and to continue on with an argument or prolonged Effort.

Spirit will be Checked to test how a pilot responds to success and failure with a Hope or Despair, gaining or retaining Ego rather than missing or losing it. It is also checked when a pilot's SAInt threatens to run wild.

Kimiko's steady aim has earned her the praise of the weapons trainer. Her player makes a Spirit check to see if she has earned an Ego point. She fails the roll with a 6, just out of range of her Spirit rating of 5, and Kimiko smiles at the trainer's compliments but secretly knows that she doesn't deserve them. She should have done even better.

Proficiency Actions

Proficiencies are the training, schooling or experience that supplement Talents. The rating of a Proficiency is added to the highest rolled die of the Talent die pool for Effort. A skilled pilot has more knowledge to lean on for success and can organize others to put that knowledge into practice. With enough teammates on hand a pilot can double the value she adds to her Talent dice! Each Proficiency is associated with a specific Talent.

The Pilot Proficiencies

Observe (Intellect): A pilot can be trained in techniques of noticing and analyzing details to recognize important cues in the environment, such as the bully lying in wait around the corner or the pile of books that were stacked to hide a love note on a desk. The Observe Proficiency is used when a pilot is actively looking for something that has been concealed or to hide something, even herself. A successful Observe Action is usually an advantage that a pilot has gained. When an Action is a failure, he has given himself away to whomever it was he was acting against.

Observe Actions are not a substitute for general awareness of one's surroundings and should not be a barrier to advancing a story or allowing a pilot to function. They are only for significant events when noticing a specific detail would allow the pilot a great advantage, such as reversing an ambush or finding a clue that would be a useful tool in convincing a teacher to change a grade.

On the battlefield Observe Actions allow a pilot to locate enemies and choose the distance at which he will Engage them, controlling the type of attack that will be made. Observe can also be used when a pilot needs to find a safe place to Take Cover from enemy assault. Indirect fire weapons like howitzers or self-guided missiles are fired with an Observe Action rather than the Firearms Proficiency because they are about locating and identifying foes.

Michelle is out after curfew and can't afford to be caught again. She uses her Intellect and Observe Action to track the progress of the security squad and slips past them into the dormitory. Unfortunately for her, she didn't notice the janitor's bucket and ends up sprawled in the hallway, covered in soapy water as Tsubayashi rounds the corner.

Ivan is piloting his SAInt into battle with enemy robots. He spies an Archer unit, a long range specialist that would devastate him if he can't get in close. He rolls his Intellect rating in dice and adds his Observe rating to the highest die. With a successful Observe Action he dips in under its radar and lands near enough to strike with his blade.

Study (Intellect): Study is book learning and academic training of a pilot. Intellect is more a measure of ability to learn or "street smarts." Study represents the reading, writing, mathematics, and history that a student has learned and can put into practice. Successful use of Study lets a pilot show off her abilities in the academic fields but failure means embarrassing grades or a shaky theory that could cost the pilot her side in a debate.

All pilots are enrolled in academies and attend classes. The goal of the academy is to create effective soldiers so most lessons reflect military history and combat applications. Students ranging in age from 12 to 17 years old will share the same class and schoolwork but the pilots will get special attention.

/ Tears of a Machine /

Cass is struggling with her Military History 102 term paper and pulls an all-nighter as the deadline looms. The highest roll of her Intellect dice is barely helped by her Study rating of 1. She ties the Challenge but with the help of an Ego point, she wakes up drooling on an open book but with a workable draft typed out on her Linc.

Convince (Charm): Just being likable isn't enough to win an argument. A pilot who is a skilled debater or knows what angle to work when trying to get her way will be able to outwit or out-talk her opponent. Convincing someone is overt. Even if the pilot gets what she wants, the other character is aware that he has been harangued into agreement and though he can't act against her now, she hasn't won a new friend. Success with Convince will cause a feeling of enmity and a pilot might end up with a rival. Failure means the pilot has been out-smarted or just out-shouted. Convince is an expression of a pilot's attitude about others as much as it is a Proficiency. Some pilots are good at making friends but some want it all their own way.

Instead of writing her Military History 102 term paper, Michelle launches into a barrage of excuses why she can't possibly finish it and should be given an extension. Rolling her Charm dice and selecting the high result, she adds her Convince rating, easily outmatching the Challenge of the instructor. The exasperated man gives in but warns her that if she doesn't have her work done in two weeks then there will be severe consequences. Michelle smiles, knowing she can browbeat her way to a passing grade by then.

Empathize (Charm): Being able to understand how someone else is feeling or thinking can be a great advantage when a pilot is trying to find the best way to approach that person. More subtle than Convince, Empathizing can coax someone into agreement or place a focus on shared feelings. Appealing to someone's better nature may win him over and seeing the intent of the opponent can steal his advantage. Success through Empathy is an amicable agreement and the pilot could even make a new friend. In a failed Action the pilot hasn't been able to reach her opponent through these subtle means. The advantage is that she isn't as likely to create an enemy unless she follows it up with insulting remarks. This is a choice that represents the attitude of the pilot expressing who she is and whether she puts others before herself.

Cass has noticed that Hester is always depressed lately and whenever anyone tries to talk to her she withdraws. Always eager to help others, Cass tries to get her to open up and talk about what is wrong. She rolls her Charm and adds her Empathy rating, her best ratings! Her Action is successful and Hester confesses her guilt over helping Enrique to cheat on the physics exam.

Firearms (Coordination): All pilots are trained in the use of a variety of firearms and missile weapons. When a pilot attacks an enemy at FA range or takes shots at targets in training sims the Firearms Proficiency is added to a Coordination roll. The qualities of a weapon can add Benefits to the Effort.

Preservation Force weapon training is always done through SAInt simulations or live fire tests while piloting. Pilots do not actually learn to handle weapons with their own hands. They are prohibited from having access to military firearms when not in a SAInt. Of course, some pilots were recruited from hostile places and learned to use guns at a very early age. Others can adapt the experience from their SAInt training if they gain access to weapons.

While a successful Firearms Action lands the pilot's shots on target, failure is a miss or slow draw that exposes the pilot to potential harm. In training, failure may result in a poor mark from the instructor but on the battlefield failure gives the enemy an opening to damage the pilot's SAInt.

Alison faces off against a Locust unit on the battlefield. Having secured a spot of cover behind an office building, she uses her Firearms Proficiency to Attack and leans out and fires a few quick bursts at the enemy robot. A roll of her Coordination dice rating earns her a 4 and the added Firearms rating of 3 beats the Locust's Challenge. Its head shatters under the fusillade of shells.

Engineer (Coordination): Engineer represents a pilot's ability in technical matters like computers, electronics, mechanics, and emergency medical care. Pilots receive limited technical training as a part of their general education but highly complex subjects like the construction and maintenance of SAInts are left to the more experienced adults.

A pilot uses the Engineer Proficiency when trying to build, repair or modify technology. It is also used when a pilot wants to use computers or equipment outside its standard usage, such as picking a lock or

hacking a message account. The difficulty of building something new depends on how useful it will be.

The level of challenge to bypass security comes from the technician who set it up or monitors it. To build an off-the-grid Linc with hacking software will be very difficult while modifying a friend's Linc to watch R-rated films will be easy. Failed use of Engineer can lead to malfunctioning or destroyed equipment. Failure can also result in a security alarm going off or the fire sprinklers switching on, depending on the gear that the pilot was attempting to build or alter.

First aid and emergency medical Actions will stop bleeding and prevent a character falling Unconscious or make it safe to move an Unconscious character. The patient's Tone is used instead of the care-giver's Coordination in the Action. Success will stabilize him, preventing further harm.

Ken has noticed that the base security is tracking his movements through his Linc. He sets about the difficult task of rewiring his Linc to send out false signals and confuse his minders. He rolls Coordination and adds Engineer to the highest die. With a successful Action he is free to sneak out of the dorms after his curfew without being pursued.

Sven comes upon Ellie who has fallen down the stairwell in the evacuation center. Unable to move her until he can immobilize her broken leg, he rolls an Engineer Action for first aid. He rolls her Tone rating in this instance, and rolls poorly. Adding his low Engineer Proficiency to the result, he fails to realize her fractured ribs and as he lifts her to stand she blacks out from the pain and collapses again.

Athletics (Tone): Athletics is the training in sports and exercises that develop a pilot's understanding of his physique. This is in contrast with Tone, which is natural strength, flexibility and balance. As a pilot attends the academy part of the curriculum includes physical education and sports activities. Most trainers try to stress teamwork but rivalries still form between those who excel at sports and those who do not. Successful use of Athletics will win games of soccer or break records in the 100-meter dash. Failures will earn the "participant" trophy. If the pilot is trying some very dangerous activity then the failure could cause Injury from pulled muscles or broken bones.

Whenever a pilot needs to move quickly or with precision then an Athletics Action is rolled. In combat situations the pilot's Actions with the Athletics Proficiency are used to advance and retreat while avoiding fire in Change Range Actions. Success gets the pilot safely across the field but a failure catches the SAInt in the crossfire of weapons and damages it before forcing him back.

Alison has been chosen as goalie in the lacrosse match. To successfully defend her team's winning record she rolls her Tone rating dice and adds her Athletics to the high result for her Action. Ivan, the forward on the opposing team proves to be a little too quick for her and her failure costs Company "C" the coveted trophy.

Sven is caught in Close Quarters with a Brawler robot. Hoping to get out of its reach, he attempts an Athletics Action to back off to Firearms range. He rolls his Tone and adds his Athletics rating to the high die. He succeeds and dodges away from the grappling claws of the enemy. Now that he has a little distance he readies his rifle for a counter-attack.

Close Quarters (Tone): Close Quarters reflect a pilot's ability in martial arts or with melee weapons. Close Quarters is the Proficiency used for Attack Actions at CQ range while wielding a SAInt's sword, knife, or even fighting "bare handed." Some firearms weapons such as the pistol or shotgun can be used at the CQ range but the Close Quarters Proficiency is still added in these Attacks. The fighting styles borrow from many sources but are usually regionally appropriate for the Arx location. English trainers favor a broadsword fencing technique while the Japanese prefer to teach kendo.

When a pilot has chosen to engage in Close Quarters combat he is trying to injure another and has put himself in danger of Injury as well. The success and failures of his Actions can cause lasting harm, affecting the Injury condition of the pilot and characters involved. Even in the strictly controlled environment of the dojo, a pilot could crack another's rib with a wild blow or sprain his ankle if he has a particularly bad failure, though a minor miss only earns a smack on the padded helmet and a disappointed sigh from the instructor.

Ken made some vicious enemies when he told Commander Pilkington about Michael and Joseph's contraband stash. One

evening they corner him, hefting lengths of spare pipe. Ken grabs up his own makeshift club. He rolls his Tone and adds his Close Quarters rating for the Action. He cracks Joseph's knuckles, knocking the weapon from his hand and sending the two bullies running.

Create (Spirit): Artistic creation and performance are an expression of the pilot's self and can help him find fulfillment and reach out to others. The art form and style varies but pilots, being teenagers, are generally creative and most haven't found their best avenue. It is very common for a pilot's artwork to also be a source of Ego, directly expressing a desired Hope or a feared Despair.

If an artist lacks an audience his work won't earn him any greater sense of self-worth; he has to share it with others. When the artist presents his work to an audience the dice are rolled. With a successful use of Create the pilot has reached his audience. They might not necessarily understand the work but they appreciate it. Failure leaves the audience confused or dissatisfied and the pilot suffers their ridicule.

For months, Ivan has been quietly working away on his poetry collection. Now that Christmas and the winter holidays are coming on, he decides it is time to share what he has written. He recites a few passages for the assembled pilots at the party and waits for their reaction. He rolls his Spirit rating, adding Create to the high rolled die. His success has deeply moved Yuri and he begs him to keep reading as tears fill his eyes.

Rally (Spirit): Motivating a large group of people into Action is different from persuading one or two people into agreement. When trying to win over a crowd or issue orders to a gathered force or teach a class, what is said is less important than how it is said. Overall attitude and strength of conviction is what gets the attention of the masses.

When a pilot makes a public speech to a large audience he hopes to influence then he rolls his Spirit and Rally Action against the challenge of the most stubborn member of the crowd. The effect of a Rally Action is an urging, not an order and the pilot cannot control a group with any delicacy. Success motivates the crowd into a favorable response. They will back up the pilot and follow some simple directions. If the pilot fails then the crowd is uninterested by what he has to say or doesn't understand. They drift away or ignore him. Rally isn't useful in situations

when there are only a few people who can be spoken to directly. For those times the pilot will use Charm-based Proficiencies.

The evacuation alarm has been sounded but Ryoko finds a crowd of civilians who have clustered in a building lobby, unsure if they should stay where they are or dash through the enemy attackers to reach the shelters. She jumps up on a desk in the lobby and starts shouting at them to clear the way. Her Spirit dice offer her little help and a low Rally rating doesn't do much either. A few members of the faceless group try to move as she yells but most don't get the message and remain indecisive, blocking the doorways.

Unskilled Actions

If a pilot is forced to take Action with a Proficiency rated at 0, he's trying to use skills he's not been trained to use. He relies on the raw Talent that corresponds with that Proficiency. He can still gain Benefits to his Effort from team assistance, Ego, Id, or equipment if available.

Summary: A pilot with 0 Proficiency rolls Talent dice but adds no Proficiency points to Effort,

Ivan has never been any good in the classroom and another exam is beginning. With a Study Proficiency of zero he must rely entirely on his Intellect Talent, a 3. The dice are rolled and a 5 is the best result. He falls short but the instructor notes his attempt.

Trial Scenes

When a pilot faces a significant obstacle or persistent opponent then she will enter a Trial. A Trial allows a pilot to succeed or fail by degrees. For a pilot to leave the situation a winner she plays out a series of Actions to earn success. The character that challenges a pilot to a Trial must be an antagonist with a Resolve rating and dice to roll for Challenges.

Time in a Trial

Time is flexible in a Trial, like the Actions that are a part of it. Trials may drag on for hours or represent a few moments of quick decisions and fast Action. When pilots' Actions all contribute to the same end they are not necessarily simultaneous.

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Alan, Sven, and Ken bump, set, and spike with Athletics when acting together in a volleyball game.

The company pilots all stay up for a late-night Study cram session before the mid-terms the next morning and then cheat anyway, sharing their answers with clever Observation.

Actions in a Trial

A Trial can contain several different types of Actions so that the pilot is rolling different Talent dice and adding different Proficiency ratings from phase to phase. Trials may require these different Actions or a pilot could choose to change Actions to suit her advantage or just to make the scene and story exciting.

Summary: A Trial is a scene in which an Antagonist opposes a pilot. It requires multiple Actions to determine the final Outcome. These Actions may repeat the same Proficiency or change to involve others.

Getting through the obstacle course is one thing, but doing it without setting off the alarms is another. Sven will need to succeed at Athletics Actions to pull himself up over the wall but he'll also need successful Observe Actions to duck past the sweeping security lasers.

Following Failed Actions

If a pilot failed an Action but the Trial is ongoing then she may not immediately repeat the same Action. She must change her approach for her next Action and find a new way to continue. After another Action has passed the pilot may return to the Proficiency of her failed Action to try again.

Summary: After a failure the pilot's next Action must be a different Proficiency. After that different Action, the pilot may attempt the failed Proficiency again.

Alison's in the teacher's office when Instructor Levinson comes in and sees her trying to switch her grade for the mid-term. She tries to Convince him that she's picking up some files for her writing assignment but fails. She wavers but still has some fight in her so she runs for it. Her Athletics Action succeeds and she ducks out of the room and down the hall as Levinson bellows and charges after her. She could try another Athletics

Action to outrun him, she could use an Observe Action to duck into a hiding place, or she could return to Convince and call for another teacher to help because "he's gone crazy!"

Resolve

Trials are tests of Resolve. Resolve is the dedication a pilot has toward seeing her goals achieved. When a pilot's Action in a Trial succeeds she harms her opponent's Resolve. When she fails an Action one degree of her Resolve is harmed. More degrees are harmed if there are Boosts to the outcome. The first degree of Resolve affected is determined by the Pilot's Spirit. The Resolve of an antagonist is set by his challenge when he is created by the Director. Once a character loses all Resolve she loses the will to continue and the Trial ends.

There are three states of pilot Resolve: Steady, Shaken, and Lost. When a pilot's Resolve is weakened to the level of Shaken she suffers Setback penalties to her Actions as she loses focus. At Shaken, Die values higher than her Talent are disqualified and do not count toward the Effort. Pilots pushed beyond Shaken are Lost and the opponent is victorious, whether that means agreeing to the point of view or dropping out of the contest.

- ▶ A pilot with a Spirit of 2, 3, 4, or 5 may begin doubting his confidence if he loses an Action but he has additional degrees of Resolve so that he is still Steady.
- ▶ A pilot with a Spirit of 1 has only one degree of Resolve and is Shaken by a single failure. He suffers Setback penalties to Actions and disqualifies dice rolled higher than the Talent rating.
- ▶ A pilot driven past Shaken is Lost and will give up. His opponent will be victorious.

Summary: Pilot success in Trial Actions harms the opponents Resolve. Failure harms the pilot's Resolve. When all degrees are harmed a character is defeated.

Marking Harm

When a pilot's Resolve is harmed his player notes the damage on the Resolve track on his pilot record. Tokens, clips, or pencil strokes can mark the current degree of Resolve. The first degree of harmed Resolve is equal to the Pilot's Spirit and is the first marked by a failure. When a pilot's Resolve is unharmed he is fine, even if his Spirit is normally 1. A pilot with low Resolve is not in a constant state of Setback, he is just easily discouraged.

Recovering Resolve

The harm to a pilot's Resolve is temporary and short lived. Once the Trial is over and its final outcome decided the pilot's Resolve is restored to full value. She must accept the outcome of the previous Trial and move on. A loser may not engage in another Trial over the same stakes or with the same Antagonist twice in one episode of game time.

Depression

If a pilot has zero Ego when she Lost her Resolve then she is Depressed. Her Resolve is restored at the end of the Trial but the penalty of the Setback lingers. Until she earns a point of Ego she must disqualify dice rolled higher than her Talent from Effort totals. The Depressed pilot is beaten down by her past failures. Without Ego to call on and with the limitations of Setback she will have a hard time succeeding at new Actions. Even if she can mask her feelings of hopelessness, there is no confidence behind what she does.

Using Boosts in Trials

Matching high dice or spending Ego will Boost the outcome of a successful Action. This is important in Trials because each Boost harms another degree of Resolve. With enough Boosts a pilot can immediately weaken her opponent or end the Trial with a single successful Action. With an unlucky failure the opponent could crush the pilot's spirit all at once.

Ken finds that Joseph and George are eager for a rematch. Rather than let it come to blows in a drawn-out fight, he decides to try intimidating them. He draws himself up to his full height and marches at them, growling about their insignificance. His Charm and Convince Action succeeds with double 6's and he spends an Ego point for good measure, adding 2 boosts to his success and harming 3 degrees of Joseph and George's Resolve. They are immediately broken and they slink away. Ken relaxes. He's spared himself from a struggle that might have taken another two or three Actions to end and maybe sent someone to the hospital.

Social Trials

A pilot fast-talking her way out of a late grade for a missed homework assignment is no big deal. Arguing with her tutor about the worth of homework in general is a fight she won't win without some serious

debate. Social Trials are intended to make a long-term change in someone's outlook. Whether this means convincing her foster parent to extend curfew, getting the trainer to treat the weakest pilot with respect, or winning the heart of a peer by writing the most moving poetry, the pilot will have to engage in a series of Actions against the challenge to wear down her opponent's Resolve.

At the start of any Trial both sides of the argument must be understood. What does the pilot want to gain? What does she stand to lose if she is defeated? This intent or consequence can be changed through the Trial. If one side or another changes the outlook or goal during the conflict then declare it so that players are aware. The participants' previous successes and failures still stand even if they redirect their intent in the Trial.

Resolve in Social Trials

Degrees of Resolve measure the progress of one side winning out over the other. Resolve must be diminished in Actions against the antagonist's Focus challenge. Each successful Action by the pilot harms the antagonist's Resolve. Failure harms the Resolve of the pilot. If one side's Resolve falls to zero then she has Lost the Trial. Her argument has no merit, her opponent is unmoved or her poetry is trite. Until the Resolve of one side or another is gone the back-and-forth Actions continue.

George has taken Allen's Linc, and Allison has decided she will get it back for him. She catches up with George in the park where he smokes contraband cigarettes with his friends. Allison's Spirit Talent is 3 so she has 3 degrees of Resolve. George has two.

Allison tries to reason with George, appealing to his better nature to realize how childish his Actions are. She makes an Empathize Action with her Proficiency of 2 and Talent of 3 against George's Focus. He's an antagonist so the Director rolls dice to add to George's Focus of 7 but doesn't add any Benefit. With a total Effort of 6 in her Action against George's total challenge of 7, Allison fails and George laughs it off, enjoying his role as the bully. Allison's Resolve is harmed and she loses some ground. The first degree of Resolve is marked, the "3." She is still Steady but because of the failure she cannot immediately try Empathizing again.

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She decides to harangue George, changing tactics and attempting to intimidate him with threats that she will expose his petty crimes to the instructors. This sort of Action also matches well with her Despair of being bullied so she puts her Ego on the line. Allison makes a Convince Action with a Proficiency of 3 and her Talent of 3 against George's Focus again. She rolls well and with two 4's and her Proficiency of 3 she has an Effort of 8. George rolls a Benefit this time and ties the Effort with a challenge of 8. It looks like Allen won't be getting his Linc back.

Allison refuses to accept that outcome and spends a point of Ego to increase her Effort to 9. Letting her disgust at George show through in full force, she puts an extra sting of insult in her demands. Now she is successful and George becomes flustered. Her success harms his Resolve by one degree and the Director marks George's "2." The matching die roll reduces his Resolve by one more degree, leaving him at "1." Seeing his weakness she decides to spend one more Ego point to end the argument. His Resolve falls to Lost. He hurriedly stubs out his cigarette and tosses the Linc to the ground at her feet. Before he turns and storms off he eyes Allison angrily. The battle is over but not the war. Allison passes her Spirit check and replenishes some of the spent Ego, having faced down her own fear of George's ire.

Physical Trials

A detailed moment-by-moment contest of physical ability is a Trial. A pilot and his opponent will struggle back and forth until the one side admits defeat. Even a fistfight is a Trial, so long as someone can stop the fight by shouting "uncle." Before the conflict the pilots declare their intent for the outcome, whether this is winning the foot race or embarrassing the other team with a slam-dunk. In physical Trials Athletics Proficiency Actions are typically opposed by the Director character's Vigor, though an Observe Action could be used to find a vulnerability that the opponent does not notice, or an Engineer Action to cork a baseball bat. If a pilot were to use Close Quarters Actions he will introduce the danger of physical Injury to himself or his opponent.

Resolve in Physical Trials

Resolve is still the measure of success in these contests; the commitment to winning and the drive that prevents someone from admitting

defeat. When someone's Resolve is Lost in a physical Trial his winning spirit is sapped. He "hits the wall" on his run and collapses, gives up the winning goal, or throws in the towel in concession. Pilots and antagonists can change their intent as the Trial continues but this does not "refresh" Resolve. Previous successes or failures and harm to Resolve still stand.

Sven and his company begin to run the simulated battlefield obstacle course. At the same time Tara's company begins the run in parallel. This is Sven's chance to earn the best time, and with a live audience!

Sven rolls an Athletics Action as he weaves and dives down the fortress-walled streets to evade enemy fire. With a total Effort of 10 he outmatches Tara's Vigor challenge of 8. As her machine is struck by an imaginary blast of beam fire she sees Sven's SAInt barrel down the corridor ahead of her. Tara grits her teeth and prepares for another challenge. Her Resolve is impacted but she's still determined not to give him the victory.

After glancing over his shoulder to see Tara struggling to regain some ground, Sven picks up the pace and slips behind the cover of a low wall. With another Athletics Action he ducks below the bursts of plasma fire that streak toward him and Tara. With a fortunate die roll he has a total Effort of 11 and poor Tara still has her challenge of 8. Sven decides to spend a point of Ego to seal her fate. With two Boosts to his outcome from dice and Ego he will harm her Resolve by three degrees and drop her condition to Lost.

Tara, barely back on her feet, runs headlong into the searing burst. As she staggers and falls again she catches a glimpse of Sven looking down at her with a dismissive sidelong glance. Tara's Resolve is Lost. Her huge armored body collapses to the ground and the giant machine heaves as she begins sobbing. No one will beat Sven's record today.

Other Trials

Players may face many kinds of Trials when playing the game. What about a pilot hacking the secure network while the countermeasures team tries to track him down? A brutal final exam in which the tutor taxes the pilots to the edge of their nerves? An art show? The basic mechanics always remain: One side rolls Actions against the other until they have destroyed the opponent's Resolve.

Combat Trials

Combat in robot battles and personal skirmishes is more detailed and elaborate than other Trials because of the risk of lasting injury and death. The Battles sections explain battlefield positioning, weapons, Injury states, structural damage and the power of the SAInt.

Struggles Between Pilots

If pilots ever face off against each other their conflict becomes a Trial. Each roll their Actions and the pilot with the higher Effort total is successful. Her successes and Boosts reduce the loser's Resolve. A tie between pilots is a stalemate and no pilot succeeds or fails. It is possible for pilots to mismatch their Proficiencies in a situation like this: As one is winding up a punch the other could be babbling a frantic apology.

Ego Gain and Loss in Trials

Because Trials are made up of many Actions there are just as many opportunities for a pilot to gain or lose Ego to victory or failure. Some Trials will include repeated use of the same Action. So long as it is still in line with the pilot's motivations she can repeat her attempts to earn Ego points from a repeated Action. Needing to change Actions due to failure or because of events might disqualify her from earning Ego: A pilot who has been trying to stand up to a bully with her Convince Actions who changes to defensive bargaining by Empathizing might not be serving her motivation anymore.

Relationship Characters and Trials

When a relationship character is a part of a pilot's Action during a Trial, directly or through some influence, then the player rolls the Check for Ego even if it did not relate to her pilot's motivations. That power to provoke a reaction is what makes relationship characters both a benefit and a hazard. Only one relationship character can force an Ego Check on a pilot in a single Action during a Trial. In a Trial scene a pilot's relationship character can only have his influence in one Action; the same relationship doesn't affect a pilot for the entire Trial. After the pilot has rolled one Spirit check for that relationship she won't do it again until the Trial and the scene are over. If several relationship characters are present, the Director must choose one who will provoke the pilot. If there are more Actions in the Trial then other relationship characters may have their turn.

Teamwork in a Trial

Pilots in the same Trial can act independently or they can form teams, working toward the same goal with the same Action to help one another. In either case, if they face the same opposition then all their successes count toward defeating it. Failure affects each pilot individually.

Teams Actions in Trials

Teams form just as they would for a single roll Action. Success by the pilot leader reduces the opposition's Resolve and failure reduces the Resolve of his team. All members of a losing team suffer equal loss, meaning the Resolve of all team members is harmed by the same number of degrees. If a team member's Resolve is Lost then he must accept defeat and concede. This pilot leaves the team and no longer adds to their Effort. If it is the team leader whose Resolve is Lost then the whole team is defeated. All members of his team concede, even those who still have some unharmed Resolve. Any supporting characters in the team will follow the leader to stay or abandon the Trial if they do not have Resolve of their own.

Changing Action

A team leader may change his intent and choose a new Proficiency between the Actions in the Trial. A leader who fails an Action cannot immediately repeat it, and must choose another Proficiency for his following Action. If they wish to stay with the team, each assisting character follows the leader's choice of Proficiency or leaves the team and acts individually. A member who leaves the team during a Trial does not refresh her Resolve. Any Resolve already lost remains that way.

Changing Leaders

A team may change leaders between Actions. This new leader declares her intent for the Action and assisting characters, including the previous leader, back her up or move to independent Actions. With a new leader for the team they may re-try a failed Action and do not need to change to another Proficiency. The Resolve of pilots does not refresh with the introduction of a new leader. Though a more assured pilot may take the reins and hold off defeat, the damage done from previous Actions remains.

Summary: Team Actions can be taken in Trials. The Condition of all characters is affected individually but if the leader is defeated all team members share the defeat. The choice of Proficiency and leader may change between Actions. A team may repeat a failed Proficiency Action under new leadership.

Ryoko teams up with the girls for a game of beach volleyball against the boys. She will lead them with an Athletics Proficiency of 3 so she can have the assistance of three others. Alison, Cass, and Hester will help her. Two of these pilots are player-controlled characters who will roll dice and the third is a supporting character who will only offer the assistance Benefit to Ryoko's Effort.

Ryoko's player rolls an Athletics Action, adding three points to her Effort for the assist. Alison and Cass' players also roll Athletics dice and both roll a matching die, adding two more Benefit points to the Effort and Boosts to a successful outcome. After a surprisingly high serve, the field explodes in scrambling and diving to and fro as the teams smack the ball back and forth over the net. After Alison stops a spike, Cass returns and Alan is distracted by her "bounce" and the ball slaps into the sand behind him.

The members of the boy's team suffer 3 harmed Resolve degrees. They grumble but Sven, their team leader, is still determined to win and they play on. A few have already lost the will to win and are happy to just enjoy the scenery as the next round begins.

Sven had taken an Athletics Action for the first round of the game but because his team failed he cannot immediately try again with Athletics. He contemplates changing his Action. Perhaps some smack-talk will Convince the girls that they can't beat him? If successful, it would still harm their Resolve, but with a lower Convince rating, he won't be able to get the whole team to back him up. Instead he turns to Ken. "Your turn." With Ken leading the team they can try to out-play the girls with another Athletics Action. If that works out, Sven could leave the rest to Ken or step back up to lead Athletics Actions later.

Battle Scenes

Combat between the gigantic robots of the Preservation Force and the Mayzor are called Battles. Like Trials, the combatants must be beaten by degrees. The only way to defeat the single-minded enemy robots is by destroying them as armor plate is blasted away and vital components melted through Attack Actions. Battles require strategy and tactical decision-making so information about range and unit strength and weapon features are important. However, minute details such as the number of rounds in a volley or the distance in feet between robots should remain abstracted to keep the pace moving and to allow the dramatic flair of the pilots and players to shine.

The basic goal of any battlefield scenario is the same: Engage the enemy and survive. Because the Mayzor robots are single-minded in purpose they focus on the destruction of defenses or abduction of people. There is more to a battle than simply repelling the invaders: The Preservation Force may be able to attempt different tactics, such as intercepting the Wormwood lander or trying a new type of deployment. More often it is the same situation; the aliens attack and the Preservation Force must live up to its name and place themselves between the enemy robots and the retreating populace.

Battlefield Ranges

The distance between pilots and their enemies decide what Proficiencies, weapons, and tactics may be used in their Actions. As range changes from Action to Action so do their options. Range in *Tears of a Machine* is simplified and abstracted into three basic categories:

Close Quarters (CQ): At this range the pilot is within a few quick strides of striking with fists, feet, claws, knives, and swords. When a pilot confronts an enemy at this range he will roll Actions with the Close Quarters Proficiency. Some firearms, like pistols, may be used at Close Quarters range but the pilot still Acts with Close Quarters because an enemy might deflect the firer's aim with his own strikes and grappling attacks.

Firearms (FA): Pilots fighting enemies at this range will be using the Firearms Proficiency for Actions with pistols, rifles, Gatling cannons, and rocket launchers. Firearms is outside of the reach of hand-to-hand combat and within line-of-sight for manually aimed weapons. The actual distances within the FA range are much greater than Close Quarters

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but details are unimportant as the giant robots of Preservation Force and Mayzor constantly charge and dodge in combat, keeping the distance in flux.

High Ballistics (HB): This range is for extreme long distance weapons, indirect fire, or self-guided missiles. Weapons like SAInt scaled sniper rifles, rocket batteries, or turreted cannons will be used in Firearms Actions at these ranges (HB-FA). Guided missiles or howitzer cannons are fired with Observe Proficiency Actions, as they rely on sighting locations and coordinates rather than manual aim (HB-Obs.)

Battlefield Cover

A pilot will need to hunker down to avoid enemy fire when he needs to reload a weapon, let his SAInt's automated repair system run or just to take a breather from the combat. Taking Cover is an Action and the surrounding terrain can be a Benefit to the pilot's Effort. Cover is divided into four classes each with its own level of Benefit; No cover, light cover, medium cover and heavy cover.

No Cover: Low-lying, single story buildings or sparse trees and flat, even ground offer No cover for a SAInt. The SAInt out in this environment is either completely exposed or behind something that enemy weapons could blast right through.

▶ **No Benefit is added to a SAInt's Action to take cover.**

Light Cover: Light cover is sturdy urban structures that a SAInt can kneel behind, vision obscuring forest, hilly terrain, or structures taller than a SAInt but widely spaced.

▶ **Light cover; Benefit +1.**

Medium Cover: Medium cover is offered by dense urban construction with many close buildings taller than a SAInt, steep culverts, or canals a SAInt could duck into. Medium cover could also refer to fire support from military forces. Tree cover or natural environments that would offer this level of cover are usually so dense that a SAInt would have to smash through them to move.

▶ **Medium cover; Benefit +2.**

Heavy Cover: Heavy cover is available in fortress cities or military installations. New buildings are constructed from advanced ceramics in herringbone ramparts at chest height for a SAInt. Taller buildings include blast shields that extend when the alarms of enemy attack are

sounded and placed weapons of the city assist the Preservation Force by pounding enemy robots with fire. Heavy cover may also be found in the wilds on mountainsides or in the deep rain forests but SAInts have serious trouble moving in these environments. Fortunately the Mayzor almost never target these areas.

▶ **Heavy cover; Benefit +3.**

Objectives

Each battlefield includes objectives that the Mayzor are targeting in the assault. Evacuation shelters, defensive weapons, other Preservation Force robots, civilian housing, and major travel lanes for military advance or retreat. The Director may plan some of these objectives or invent them to match the situation. Some will be included in a launch briefing while others arise during the battle. As the battle begins and continues these objectives may be endangered by the Mayzor, meaning they are under immediate threat of destruction. If a pilot doesn't take Action to defend the endangered objective and succeed, then the enemy destroys it. The destruction of an objective means mounting casualties or even the death of another character. These outcomes will harm a pilot's Resolve if he doesn't have the Spirit to resist.

Actions in Battle

In the frantic clamor of battle, Actions are not organized in a neat sequence. Each combines movement, dodging, defensive blocking, bursts of fire, and a series of strikes into an exchange between the pilots and their challengers. The Actions in battle are kept simple so players can create excitement by adding the details with the narration of their deeds and descriptions of the events. There are four basic things that pilots will do in combat: Engage enemy forces to gain control of the situation; Change Range to put themselves at the best distance; Take Cover to avoid enemy attack or detection; and Attack with Close Quarters or Firearms weapons.

In a scene or a Trial the pilots can win with any of a choice of different Actions. They can harm the enemy Resolve by outmaneuvering, out-talking, or distracting him. In Battle a pilot must destroy the enemy robots to defeat them. Successful Attack Actions destroy minor threats or harm the Structure of an enemy robot by degrees. Engage, Change Range, and Take Cover Actions are important to the Battle but only the Attack Actions will destroy the enemy and end the combat.

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There is no strict order for pilots to declare their intended Actions but they must remember to be respectful of other's choices and time. Players can call a brief huddle to coordinate or each make their choices independently, going around the group from one to the next. The enemy forces of the Mayzor act in response to the pilot's choices and their successes or failures.

Because events are not divided up into a strict order, all successes and failures are included in the outcome and narration. Two SAInts attacking the same enemy robot individually will each have their own outcome, whether that is each SAInt defeating the challenge and destroying the target, being defeated and each taking damage, or one SAInt succeeding and destroying the enemy as the other fails and is damaged. The success of one player does not cancel out the success or failure of another. All characters must have an outcome for their Actions, so an enemy could suffer harm from multiple pilot Actions or deal out harm to respond to many pilot failures. Time is just as flexible in battle as it is in other Actions and in Trials.

Engaging the Enemy

Locust robots are supporting characters and do not initiate combat with a SAInt. They are machines, single-minded and programmed to destroy defenses and clear the way for the smaller robots of the swarm. It is up to the SAInt pilots to choose to Engage these foes.

Pilots have the option to immediately jump into an Attack against an enemy unit or to try to find good positioning and a tactical advantage. The Locusts are programmed to use the appropriate tactics for their strength: Brawlers will stay under cover from long range attacks and charge into CQ combat as soon as possible while Archers will take advantage of more powerful sensors and indirect fire to strike foes at HB range. The Locust's preferred weapon range is its Threat Range and at this range its weapons add Benefit to the Vigor rating and Boost to damage. If a pilot wishes to immediately Attack a Locust, he can skip past the Engage Action but must meet the enemy on their own terms and begin fighting at Threat Range.

If a pilot wants to stay out of the Threat Range but still engage a Locust unit, she will first need to find a way around the threat. The pilot rolls an Observe Action against the Locust unit's Focus challenge. If she is successful, then she has gained the tactical advantage and engages her

enemy at the range of her choice. This Observe Action counts for sneaking closer to a foe just as it does for hanging back and finding a good vantage point for a clear shot. If the Observe Action is not successful then the pilot has failed to find her sight line, slip past enemy detection or has been surprised by an enemy unit. In this case, a SAInt is forced into the enemy's Threat Range and is damaged by an immediate attack.

Summary: A pilot may immediately attack an enemy at the enemy's Threat Range. The pilot chooses the range for the engagement when they successfully complete an Observe action against enemy Focus. Failure forces the SAInt to the enemy threat range and the SAInt is damaged.

Ken sees a Brawler Locust preparing to tear open an evacuation vehicle. With no time to lose he immediately attacks the Locust. This choice forces him to attack the Brawler at Close Quarters range, where it is most dangerous. He makes an attack Action instead of an Observe Action.

Ryoko must engage a unit of Archer Locusts so she has to slip in past their High Ballistic Threat Range. With a successful Observe Action Effort versus the Locust's Focus she evades the Archer's long-range radar and takes up a position that favors her at Firearms range. Had she failed, the Locusts would have cut her off, catching her in a damaging blast of their plasma cannons and trapping her at the HB range. She will be able to attack them at FA range with her next Action.

Change Distance

If the pilot is at the wrong range to engage a foe, such as having the wrong weapon or being caught at a Locust's Threat Range, she may move to Change Range between herself and the enemy unit. Taking an Action to Change Range involves taking an Athletics Action against the enemy's Vigor challenge. Success allows the pilot to Change Range by one measure. A SAInt at CQ can retreat to FA; a SAInt at FA can advance to CQ or retreat to HB; a SAInt at HB can advance to FA. Failure means the pilot has been caught out in the open by enemy attack. In a Failure, her SAInt is damaged by the enemy and she is kept at the same range.

Summary: With a successful Athletics Action against enemy Vigor a pilot may change distance from an enemy by one measure. Failure damages the SAInt.

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After surviving a punishing attack by Soldier Locusts at FA range, Ken decides to take the fight up close and personal where he will have the advantage. He rolls an Athletics Action, comparing his Effort to the Vigor of the Locusts. With a successful Action Sven runs up and over a ramp to CQ range and gains the high ground.

Cass is desperate to escape the fire of the Magnas. She is at FA range and rolls an Athletics Action to move to HB. Her roll doesn't beat the Magnas' Vigor though. Her SAInt is scorched by plasma fire and she must hunker down where she is.

Take Cover

If a pilot is already engaged with an enemy unit but needs to avoid combat for an Action then she can Take Cover by rolling an Observe Action. She keeps her head down and moves to evade enemy fire or stay out of reach. A pilot could Take Cover to reload a weapon or to repair her damaged SAInt or recover from shock. To Take Cover and defend herself the SAInt pilot rolls an Observe Action against the enemy's Focus. The level of Cover offered by her environment may add Benefit points to her Effort. A successful Action keeps her safe from harm. If she fails, the enemy has spotted her or blasted through her cover and her SAInt is damaged. Any simple task such as reloading a weapon is completed, even if the SAInt is hit.

Summary: With a successful Observe Action against enemy Focus a pilot may Take Cover from enemy attack and completely defend herself. Cover offered by the environment adds to the Effort. Failure damages the SAInt.

Allie's SAInt has been heavily damaged by the lashing beams of a Magnas attack. She needs time for her SAInt's repair systems to work so she ducks behind the burning shell of an apartment block. The city environment's Medium cover offers her a Benefit of 2 points to her Effort total and she rolls the Observe Action to find a spot to stay out of the line of fire. Even with the extra help from her surroundings, the Magnas is too sharp and finds her. Her Action fails and her SAInt's auto-repair sequence is interrupted as she is caught by another volley of particle beams.

Attacking

The goal of any battle is to see the enemy forces broken and destroyed. The pilot's choice of Proficiency and the weapon he uses is limited by his range to the opponent. All weapons include a range category in their description and a few weapons may be used at more than one range but the pilot still Attacks with the Proficiency that matches his distance. Weapons may add a Benefit to the Effort of the Attack or a Boost to damage. The pilot's player rolls the Talent dice, adds Proficiency and compares the Effort to the enemy's Vigor. A successful Attack damages the enemy but failure damages the SAInt. Boosts to a successful Attack Action increase the damage dealt.

Summary: Attacks use the Proficiency and weapon matching the range. Attacks oppose an enemy's Vigor. Successful Attacks deal damage to the foe. Failure damages the SAInt.

Close Quarters: This range involves attacking an opponent with swords, fists or claws or firing small arms point blank. Close Quarters Attacks are not necessarily toe-to-toe and the speed of a SAInt makes it easy to move in and out of striking distance to deal blows with a weapon.

Sven draws his sword and slashes at the distended, grasping arms of the Magnas. He rolls a Close Quarters Action against the Magnas' Vigor. His Effort beats the challenge and the weapon adds a Boost to the outcome. His powerful sword cleaves through the monster's twisted limbs.

Firearms: Firearms are Pistols, Rifles, grenade launchers and direct fire weapons; volleys of short bursts or the sustained stream of fire from a machine gun. Some Firearms weapons expend their magazine with each Attack Action and require a reload between uses.

Ryoko settles into her perch on the top of the fortress and shoulders her combat rifle. She rolls a Firearms Action, totaling her Effort and comparing it to the Vigor of the Magnas. She falls short and the Magnas rakes her position with its own energy weapons, burning away layers of shielding before slicing off her leg at the shin.

High Ballistic: Weapons fired at the HB range are split into two categories for the Proficiency and the Talent a pilot uses to Attack. Direct fire weapons like sniper rifles or rockets are Firearms Proficiency Actions

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against Vigor. Guided missiles and cannons need to be sighted on their targets with an Observe Action against enemy Focus.

Hester has access to a long-range missile system which she brings to bear on the Magnas at HB range. The missiles are self-guided so rather than aim them herself, she only needs to sight the enemy and let them take over after being fired. Hester rolls an Observe Action against the Magnas' Focus, earning success that she Boosts to increase the damage. The Magnas sees the incoming fusillade too late and is caught in a cluster of destructive blasts that carpet the city around it.

Reloading

The most powerful firearms and weapons spend their ammunition with every Attack, success or failure. After the SAInt has attacked with one of these weapons the pilot cannot use it again until he reloads. A pilot does not need to dedicate an Action to reloading weapons and may Change Range, Take Cover or Engage a different enemy while reloading but he may not make any kind of Attack, even with another loaded weapon. If he does, the reloading is delayed. If the pilot has several weapons to reload he may reload them all during the Action that he is not Attacking. Weapons that do not have the Reload note in their statistics carry enough ammunition in their large magazines to get the SAInt through the Mayzor raid without reloading.

Summary: A pilot wishing to reload may take any non-Attack Action.

Ken has demolished a Soldier Locust with his rocket launcher. As he reloads he chooses to roll an Observe Action to Engage the unit of Brawler Locusts as his next targets for the powerful weapon.

Damage to Opponents

Successful Attack Actions by pilots deal damage to their foes. A single Attack success will destroy a Locust robot but the Magnas are more robust. Each success and Boost does one level of harm to the Structure of the Magnas. When all of the degrees of Structure are harmed the Magnas is destroyed.

Stacy successfully attacks the Archer Locust unit and demolishes it with a barrage of armor piercing rounds from her machine gun. She then turns to the Magnas and successfully Attacks again. She Boosts the outcome of her attack with Id.

The Magnas suffer one degree of structure damage for the success and another for the Id point. Its Structure is damaged 2 degrees and it's electromagnetic shields crackle as a rift opens in its side.

Failure

When a pilot's Action fails in combat a few things can happen. If the pilot is in range of the enemy's weapons his SAInt is hit and is damaged. If he is outside the range of enemy weapons, then the enemy advances or retreats to put him in range for the next Action. If there are supporting characters or battlefield objectives involved in the scene they could be harmed or endangered. If those characters or objectives are already endangered they can be destroyed as the pilot has failed to save them.

Damage to SAInts

When a pilot fails an Action in combat he has been struck by the enemy and his SAInt is damaged. A failure causes the SAInt to lose one of its six degrees of structural integrity. If the pilot failed while engaged at an enemy's threat range or if the enemy rolled 6's with the dice the damage is Boosted and more degrees of Structure are lost, one more for each Boost. If a SAInt is badly damaged to the point that it's Malfunctioning then the pilot's Actions are penalized with a Setback. If all six degrees of Structure are harmed the SAInt is Disabled. Further damage and it is destroyed.

Ken's attempt to put some distance between himself and the Magnas has failed. The Magnas has Ken at its Threat Range and rolled two 6's in the challenge for Ken's Action. Ken's SAInt suffers four degrees of damage to its Structure. This, added to the damage he suffered when he first clashed with the Magnas, leaves his SAInt Malfunctioning. He only has two degrees remaining before the SAInt is destroyed. He is in dire need of some repairs but with his SAInt so badly damaged it will be even harder for him to get away from the enemy to safety!

Changing Tactics After Failure

After a failure in battle the pilot cannot immediately repeat the same Action and she must choose another for the following Action. After that Action has been carried out, she may return to the failed Action to try again. It isn't necessary to succeed on the following Action to return for

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a retry. Being a member of a team will allow the pilot to try again right away if the leader of the team changes.

Summary: After failure, a pilot cannot repeat the same Action until another Action has been taken.

Ryoko missed her shot at the Magnas and was caught in a blast of fire for her trouble. She cannot immediately shoot again but must instead Take Cover, Change Range, or Engage another enemy. She contemplates hunkering down behind the wreckage and waiting for another chance to shoot but then shoulders her rifle, draws her sword, and charges her enemy, attempting to Change Range and close the distance between them. If bullets aren't enough then maybe a blade will do. If she fails again and the Magnas halts her advance then she could fall back and try to Take Cover, Engage an easier foe, or pick the gun back up and hope for better luck with another Attacking salvo.

Endangered Objectives

Another possible result from a pilot's failure is the endangerment of one of the objectives on the battlefield. If an objective is endangered, a pilot must move to defend or it is destroyed. Endangered objectives demonstrate a bad situation turning worse. Once a pilot successfully defends an objective from the enemy it is safe for the rest of the battle. A pilot can defend an objective by Engaging or Attacking the enemy targeting the objective. Until the enemy has been destroyed, the objective is still endangered as the giant robots clash over it.

Endangered Characters

Like objectives, supporting characters may also be endangered in the outcome of a pilot's failure. A supporting character who is a part of the battle can come under immediate threat but it is also possible for the Director to choose another character in a more complicated situation. The pilot is always given the chance to rescue an endangered supporting character. However, if the pilot fails, then the Director may kill or otherwise ruin the supporting character with crippling injuries, psychological collapse, or some other permanent trauma. If the pilot succeeds then the supporting character can escape or resume fighting. Supporting characters are not safe. They can be endangered again if the pilot they are following fails them.

Saving Endangered Objectives or Characters

If a character or objective has become endangered it needs to be rescued by a pilot's next Action. A pilot can offer rescue by a variety of Actions. Pilots can leap to attack the enemy and pull it away from the endangered target; to Take Cover along with an endangered character; Change Range away from the enemy escorting the endangered character or an Engagement Action to distract the enemy away from the endangered objective or character. Whatever the Action it must be successful to save the character or objective. Failure gives the enemy time to destroy the target. If a character is able, he assists the pilot coming to his rescue.

The same barrage of fire that hit Ryoko also struck an escaping passenger plane and it has been forced to make an emergency landing, right in the path of a Locust soldier! Cass has seen the plane go down and rushes the Locust, hoping to get into Close Quarters range with her Engagement Action before the enemy can crush the fuselage. Her Observe Action is a success and she leaps between the Locust and its target, brandishing her sword. Now she is the enemy's target.

Sven has charged at a Magnas with Robert and Ken at his side but the monster is too powerful for them and scorching waves of plasma fire melt away their armor. Robert stumbles and the Magnas advances on him, crushing a building in its way. Sven calls for a hasty retreat and he and Ken attempt a Take Cover Action to get Robert to safety. Even with Ken's and Robert's help the Magnas is victorious. Sven and Ken are further beaten down by the weapons of the robotic thing as it brings one titanic foot down on Robert's SAInt. For a brief few seconds his scream echoes on the telepathic network before it is silenced.

Destroyed Objectives

If no pilot is able to save an endangered objective or character from the enemy then all members of the company have failed. All of the pilots roll a Spirit Check. The Resolve of any pilot who fails is harmed by one degree and he may suffer Setback to his Actions. Due to the joining of minds with the SAInt, most pilots will recover from the trauma of loss quickly and Resolve will be restored at the end of the battle. If a pilot's Resolve has been Broken and his Ego is at zero, he remains depressed after the Battle until he can recover some Ego.

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Sven, Ryoko, Ken, and Cass all hear Robert's final scream and the frantic chatter of the mission commanders. Each roll their Spirit Check. Sven and Cass refuse to let his death break their wills and charge against the Magnas. Ryoko and Ken follow after them but choking back their fear and pain. Ken is especially affected and he falters in his attack.

Ego and Id in Battle

A pilot's Ego points can be spent for a Benefit to any combat Action and as a Boost to the outcome of her successful Attacks. Ego is a crucial resource for a pilot on the battlefield. The ability to turn a failure into success can mean the difference between life and death. When fighting the most powerful foes a weak pilot will have to lean heavily on the Benefits that Ego can give her.

The Id of the SAInt is its own desires. A SAInt's motivations are burning rage and a thirst for battle. Magnas charge in and only ever leave the battlefield when on the edge of destruction and every SAInt is made from the same materials and shares the urge to revel in devastation. Id is spent like Ego, adding to the Effort or Boosting the outcome of Actions, but only when Attacking and dealing damage. Ego and Id may be spent together in an Action, adding to one another.

Ego is gained and lost through successes and failures when the pilot's motivations are involved. Id slowly builds in the mind of the SAInt when the pilot's motivations are ignored and Ego remains unchanged. If Id becomes too strong it will overwhelm the pilot and the SAInt will explode in a Frenzy of rage. Id will be explained in detail with the other features of a SAInt.

Hope and Despair in Battle

A pilot's combat Actions can still express the desire to pursue her Hope or defy her Despair in the way that she fights. Actions in battle are like any pilot Action and have the possibility of earning the pilot Ego through success or losing it through failure. It's more common for a pilot to earn Ego on the battlefield by overcoming fear and Despair, though a Hope that focuses on martial excellence or being part of a successful team can be a good source of Ego Boosting Actions. Pilots may have Hopes or Despairs opposed to fighting and violence or foreign to the battlefield. Such pilots need to find their strength elsewhere and come to the fight already prepared in spirit, bolstered by their success

in the classroom, on the tennis court, or with memories of the love note from their crush.

Relationships in Battle

Relationships are part of a pilot's Actions in battle whenever the right characters are involved. Relationships can be part of Actions directly if the character is present on the battlefield or heard over the communication network of MetaTron. They can also influence actions if the pilot and relationship character had a recent, and relevant, scene together. The mood and Ego of a pilot can be influenced by other pilots, instructors, trainers, advisers in the command center at the Arx, and even the memory of a letter from home.

Interacting with relationship characters or involving them in Actions may be difficult when on the battlefield. The pilot's Actions focus on fighting off enemies and staying alive. Having those characters on the battlefield can help as they will be witness to the Actions of the pilot and might even assist him but they are also in harm's way and could be killed by a few failures. Only one relationship character can influence the pilot's motivations in an Action. The Director must choose one to be the focus if other characters are also in contact with the pilot. With the many Actions that take place in a Trial there will be opportunities for others to influence the pilot's Ego but only one at a time. Once a relationship has been part of one Action in a battle that character cannot affect the pilot's Ego again until the battle scene is over. They can still interact in the scene but the pilot will not gain or lose any Ego from it. If there are other relationship characters who can provoke a pilot's motivation in an Action, it's now their turn!

As her shot goes wide, Ryoko can only think of the letter from home that she read just before deployment. Memories of her father's stern looks and sighs of disappointment play in her mind. She rolls a Spirit Check, passing with a 2 and saving her Ego from Despair.

Commander Pilkington gives her the order to relocate to higher ground. As she makes the Change Range Action, her relationship with her friendly Commander will mean another Spirit Check, hopefully gaining her Ego.

Teams and Assistance in Battle Actions

Pilots may form teams to take Actions in battle as they would in other

situations. Pilots can form teams to Engage a foe together, help each other as they Change Range, provide support for each other in Taking Cover or to Attack the same foe with Close Quarters or Firearms Actions. All pilots in the team will take the same Proficiency Action. A team leader is chosen and each team member adds one Benefit point to his Effort total. A leader can only be assisted by as many other characters as his Proficiency rating in pilots and Director Characters. A supporting character that joins a team will only add a Benefit point to the Effort. Supporting characters do not roll dice or add Boosts. Antagonists add Benefit and can add more with matching dice that will also add Boosts.

The team leader and other pilots in the team roll their Talent dice. Each die that matches the leader's high die value is added as a Benefit to his Effort and if he is successful, as a Boost to his Action. All members of the team who rolled a matching die have the option to spend Ego or Id to increase the Effort or to provide more Boosts to the outcome. They also add the Benefits and Boosts from their weapons. Pilots gain or lose Ego individually from a success or failure, reflecting their motivations and the Spirit roll made after the outcome has settled.

If the team leader's Effort fails against the enemy challenge then all members of the team have failed and are damaged by the enemy or the enemy may change distance from the team in its favor. Supporting characters do not suffer damage but are endangered if the team leader fails. Antagonists suffer damage like pilots but will be endangered if they are harmed to zero degrees. If there are many Director characters in the team then the Director chooses one to be endangered. An endangered teammate can be destroyed if a pilot does not succeed to defend or rescue her in his next Action. After a failure the team cannot immediately repeat the same Action with the same team leader. They must either choose another Action or another team leader if they insist on retrying the same Action. After this following Action they may return to the failed Action or previous leader.

Summary: Pilots and supporting characters can team with a leader. Each assistant adds one Benefit point to the leader's Effort. The leader's Proficiency rating represents the maximum number of assists he can have. The leader's Effort and outcome are increased by matching assistant dice. Those who match can add Benefit and Boosts from other sources. Ego loss or gain is handled separately. If the leader fails his team fails.

Tara and her company form up into a loose firing line in order to concentrate their fire on the Magnas. Tara will lead the attack and with a Firearms Proficiency of 3, she can gain the support of three other pilots. Two of these pilots are player-controlled characters who will roll dice and the third is a supporting character who will only offer the Benefit to her Effort.

Tara rolls the Firearms Action, rolling a 5 on her high value die. Kelly and Stacy also roll their Firearms dice. Kelly rolls two 5's and Stacy rolls a 6. Kelly's two 5's add 2 Benefit points to the Effort and 3 more Benefit points are added for the assists. Stacy's 6 is not added. With the increased Effort they easily succeed against the foe's Vigor. They add two Boosts to the outcome for their matching dice and both Tara's and Kelly's weapons add further Boosts. Kelly spends an Ego point to increase the damage even further. The company rains blast after blast of rifle fire down on the Magnas, pounding at its structure and tearing away wings and claws as armor piercing shells detonate in its bloated torso.

Tara's Hope is to always be the leader among her peers. Her success while leading the team lets her roll her Spirit Talent Check to earn an Ego point.

SAInts

The ultimate weapon of the Preservation Force. The SAIInt is unlike any war machine that has come before. Built on the patterns of monsters, SAIInts are dangerous to both enemy and ally if the pilot isn't strong-willed enough to keep it under control.

Id

Id is a valuable resource on the battlefield. Id is what makes SAIInts effective against the Magnas. When a pilot's mind is merged with a war-loving beast he can march into situations that send veteran soldiers fleeing. Violence is right. It is what they are made to do. Post-traumatic stress isn't a common concern for pilots, they are provided with a buffer from what they experience by the SAIInt. A pilot without that mental armor may learn that he is nowhere near as brave and sturdy without his plated skin and mechanical muscle.

Id is also a hazard. Because it is such a force for destruction it is not

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easy to contain. When a pilot indulges his SAInt's Id the result is more effective but it is also dangerous and damaging. If the Id becomes too strong it will tear control of the SAInt away from the pilot's Ego and launch a destructive Frenzy.

Gaining Id

SAInts begin each battle with zero points of Id. Whenever the pilot's emotional state is "static" through an Action then the Id grows in power. If the pilot rolls an Action that does not involve her Ego in any way then the SAInt's mind gains power from her passivity. When Action outcomes are settled the SAInt's Id is increased by one point toward the maximum value of five. By making her Ego an important part of the fight the pilot's mind stays dominant and in control. Even if she loses Ego her mind remains the focus of the SAInt. If her Ego value changes during her Action, even temporarily, then the Id will not increase. Gaining, losing, or spending Ego is an important part of staying in control.

A SAInt under repair is the exception. The SAInt's ability to repair its own body on the battlefield is inherently inhuman and a pilot cannot ignore the feeling that this alien body is not his own. For each level of Structure restored to a SAInt the Id rises by one.

Summary: If a pilot's Action did not change her Ego value the SAInt's Id increases by one.

Sven and Ken are fighting side by side against a group of Locusts. Working as a team, they successfully attack. Sven has not used his motivation in the Action and gets one point of Id. Ken's player put his Ego on the line when declaring his Action. He makes a successful Spirit Check for his Hope to "assist the company" and because he has involved his Ego, he does not gain Id.

Using Id

A pilot can spend Id fighting, letting the beast run loose for a short time. Id can only be spent in Attack Actions, when it will add Benefits to the Effort of an Attack or Boosts to a damage result. Because Id represents blood lust and violence, when a pilot spends Id the result is overkill. The SAInt's brutal attack often does as much damage to the surroundings as the target.

Summary: Players may spend Id to Benefit Effort and Boost outcome for Attack Actions.

Frenzy

The balance of Ego and Id shows whose mind is really in control of the SAInt's body. When a SAInt's Id value rises above the pilot's Ego then the violent urges of the machine can take over. While Id is greater than Ego the pilot must make a Spirit check at the start of every Action to stay in control of the SAInt. If he succeeds then he acts normally. If he fails then the SAInt's rage has overwhelmed him and the robot breaks into a Frenzy. A Frenzied SAInt is no longer under the pilot's control. His rational mind is pushed into the subconscious of the machine and locked away as a mute witness. During a Frenzy, the Director takes control of the SAInt.

SAInts on a rampage have no understanding of collateral damage and even enjoy fighting in the most destructive manner possible, though they ignore their weapons and only fight in CQ. Crushing bystanders and structures while charging the enemy, lashing out at any teammate in the way, or even attacking its former allies if there are no enemy targets left. Any nearby SAInts, those in a team with the Frenzying SAInt or those Engaging the same Magnas are under threat of harm. Any nearby objective the pilots are trying to defend is also in danger. Other pilots can try to restrain The Frenzying SAInt by using Athletics Actions in place of Close Quarters to grapple and hold it. They may also use Firearms Attacks to damage and destroy it.

If the pilot falls Unconscious, is killed, or ejects from a SAInt that is still operational and it has any Id points it will Frenzy until they are spent. Then it falls dormant and shuts down. A Frenzied SAInt burns off the Id that set it loose. After every Action that it is Frenzied Id is reduced by one point. When Id reaches 0 the Frenzy ends.

The pilot of a frenzied SAInt is disconnected from what is happening and cannot earn Ego from the SAInt's Actions. The SAInt itself does not gain more Id points while Frenzying. Frenzied SAInts are also unable to take part in team Actions.

Summary: If Id is greater than Ego the pilot Checks Spirit before an Action. Failure causes the SAInt to Frenzy. The Frenzying SAInt is a battlefield danger like enemy units. During Frenzy pilots earns no Ego. A frenzied SAInt may not be in a team. Each Action spent in Frenzy reduces Id by one. At 0 the pilot regains control.

Scouring Id

If the pilot cannot release the SAInt's rage through Attacking the enemy, but must reduce it he can Scourge the SAInt's mind. SAInts do not feel pain; it is as alien to them as metal organs are to the pilot. The human mind in the machine can translate some of what the SAInt feels into painful sensations that will startle the SAInt and cow it into obedience.

Scouring is accomplished when the pilot disables the trauma buffers and neural blocks that keep the SAInt's senses from reaching him unfiltered. This is a blast to the pilot's system, mental and physical but that jarring trauma can stop the monster in its tracks and prevent or end a Frenzy. Opening himself up as a conduit in this way harms the pilot's physical body: His neurons misfire and muscles spasm. Even protected by the suit and gel, he gets hurt. For each point of Id the pilot nullifies he harms his own Injury by one degree. The pilot's Injury can cause Set-backs for the rest of the battle. A pilot who has badly harmed himself may be ordered to retreat or forced to eject by remote. Degrees of Injury need hospital time to heal.

Summary: A pilot can reduce Id by harming his own Injury. One point of Id for one degree of harm.

Structure

All SAInts are constructed from identical mechanical patterns so the Structure is the same from unit to unit. Some cosmetic changes may differentiate one SAInt from another but all possess the same degree of durability. SAInts are constructed to survive terrible punishment on the battlefield and keep fighting. SAInts have the ability to self-repair on the battlefield almost immediately. Nothing stops them, short of total destruction, just like the Magnas they emulate. The pilot is aware of damage as a physical sensation but there is no pain unless he disables the neural blocks.

A SAInt in top condition has 6 degrees of Structure. There are three states of structural integrity for SAInts: Damaged, Malfunctioning, and Disabled.

- ▶ **Damaged:** A SAInt that has suffered any harm is in a Damaged state. In this state, they have fallen from Structure 6 down to Structure 2. Defensive electromagnetic barrier fields and outer layers of armor plate are the first things to go. Though damage can be quickly repaired the SAInt is vulnerable to greater harm from enemy

assault. SAInt pilots do not suffer Setback to Actions while the SAInt is Damaged. Even with outer layers of armor stripped away and blasted through, it keeps on fighting.

- ▶ **Malfunctioning:** If the SAInt is harmed to 1 Structure then it is Malfunctioning and the pilot's Actions suffer a Setback penalty. This continues until the SAInt's structure is restored above the Malfunctioning degree. A SAInt damaged to this level may have lost a limb or be pierced through its mechanical organs.
- ▶ **Disabled:** When the final degree of Structure is lost the SAInt is Disabled. Despite the grievous damage it can still act, but only to Take Cover and avoid enemies, and it still faces Setbacks as it drags its broken body to safety. A Disabled SAInt is a horrifying sight, with limbs mangled or missing and its inner workings torn open. It can still recover with self-repair but it will be unpleasant and taxing.
- ▶ **Destroyed:** If the SAInt is damaged beyond 0 Structure it is Destroyed and the pilot either ejects or dies with his machine. Ejection is controlled by a remote signal from Operations who will choose to eject the pilot whether he wants it or not. Ejection is traumatic: The pilot feels his surrogate body stripped away and his raw mind is plunged back into the blank emptiness of the tank. The pilot must succeed a Tone check or suffer a degree of physical Injury. By this point, the SAInt is little more than a twitching heap of scrap and the empty shell that housed the pilot's ejected tank.

Self-Repair

One of the most important features of the SAInt is its ability to affect immediate battlefield repairs. Complex and powerful systems of bio-organic nano-machines and digital DNA allow the SAInt to regenerate and rebuild itself even after suffering tremendous damage. This power, stolen from the designs of the Magnas, is not risk-free.

The Magnas automatically self-repair and warp and mutate on the battlefield. The SAInt pilot must activate the systems himself and give them a short time to work. If the pilot can succeed at a Take Cover Action to avoid further damage he can start the system and the SAInt's components are repaired. Nano-machine factories spin carbon fibers filling gaps in the SAInt's armor and stitching broken components back together. Even missing limbs will re-grow, though the replacements are

crude. The SAInt's repair functions are decidedly inhuman and activating them causes a disassociation between the pilot's mind and the robot body. The pilot chooses how many degrees of damaged Structure to restore and gains one Id point for each Structure restored. The repairs are immediate and are completed by the single Take Cover Action.

A pilot cannot activate the self-repair system on an undamaged SAInt. A SAInt cannot have more than 5 Id so if its pool reaches 5 Id the self-repair system deactivates. If the pilot needs the SAInt to continue self-repair functions he must drain the SAInt's Id through Attack Actions or he must Scourge the Id by tormenting himself. A Frenzied SAInt will not activate self-repair; that function belongs to the pilot.

Summary: A pilot may activate self-repair in a Take Cover Action. He gains one Id for each level of Structure he has repaired. The Id maximum is 5.

After Ken weathers the punishing attacks of the Magnas, Cass and Alison leap to his defense and help him to safety in a Take Cover Action. Hidden from the enemy for a moment, he activates the SAInt's self-repair systems. Reflective silvery blood oozes from the wounds and seals the tears in his armor as his leg begins to knit itself back together. Watching the strange reconstruction of his alien body, Ken is repulsed. At the same time the edges of his vision cloud and he starts to feel angry and eager for revenge. The system overloads and self-repairs stop before his armor is complete. Ken needs that extra degree of Structure so he grits his teeth, his real teeth, and opens the pain blocker.

Arsenal

SAInts have a wide variety of weapons at their disposal. Selections and load-outs are often chosen by command to focus on the pilot's best combat abilities but a trusted pilot may make requests. A SAInt carries two main weapons and a backup weapon. The main weapons are usually a Fire Arms weapon and a Close Quarters weapon. The "default" equipment is the rifle and sword with pistol or knife. Larger firearms may prevent the SAInt from carrying a second weapon and some weapons prevent carrying a backup as the space is needed for ammunition. SAInt pilots are trained in the use of all the standard weapons but most gravitate toward a preferred selection.

Weapon ratings include the Action that the pilot will roll when using the weapon, the Benefit points that the weapon adds to the Effort of an attack roll, the Boost in damage for the outcome of a successful attack, and if the weapon needs a reload between firings. Weapons can only be used at the proper ranges but some are versatile and can be used at more than one range. Benefits to Effort and Boosts of weapons are separate.

Close Quarters Weapons

'Arc Sword: Name for St. Joan, the sword is made of carbon plates keened to a razor edge. Reciprocating motors within the handle cause the blade to vibrate hundreds of times per second. If that isn't enough killing power, capacitors in the base of the blade discharge with every impact of the edge releasing a deadly electrical surge. Forty feet of humming, electrically charged, diamond hard alloys.

▶ **CQ. Attack Benefit +1. Damage Boost +1.**

UDkR-A Hammer: "The Gavel" is a huge war-hammer made from the heaviest metals of SAInt construction, housing a modified gravity control module and sheathed in the same electrical field of 'Arc weapons. While carrying the weapon the anti-gravity field it generates makes it light and easy to control. When the SAInt swings the hammer the gravity module flips from reducing the effect of gravity to amplifying it, creating a heavier striking head a fraction of a second before impact. Mastering the Gavel is difficult because once a swing begins it's impossible to stop.

▶ **CQ. Attack Benefit +0. Damage Boost +2.**

LaNSe Detonating Spear: A dangerous Close Quarters weapon that requires specialist training. The LaNSe is tipped with a miniaturized neutron warhead encased in an armor piercing shell of hardened ceramics. Once the warhead has penetrated the enemy's armor it lodges inside the target and the shaft of the weapon detaches and collapses back into the handle. After a few seconds the explosive detonates inside the target. The weapon can be reloaded by attaching a fresh warhead. A SAInt equipped with the LaNSe cannot carry a backup weapon; that storage space is needed for additional warheads.

▶ **CQ. Attack Benefit +1. Damage Boost +2. Reload.**

Firearms Weapons

RDav Combat Rifle: The L'roi David SAInt combat rifle has several internal barrels firing synchronized bursts of closely grouped armor

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piercing shells to punch through enemy shielding. Nicknamed the “giant killer” this is the standard weapon of most SAInts and considered the best all-purpose armament. Sized approximating an assault rifle, the weapon is carried over the shoulder.

▶ **FA. Attack Benefit +1. Damage Boost +1.**

Levic Flechette: The “stone thrower” is a SAInt sized combat shotgun firing mixed clusters of EMP explosives and shards of diamond hard ceramics rather than pellets. It makes it easier to hit a target but with little extra effectiveness. The stone thrower is equipped in place of the combat rifle for SAInt pilots who frequently alternate between Close Quarters and Fire Arms ranges in battles or those who need some help to just hit the target.

▶ **CQ/FA. Attack Benefit +2. Damage Boost +0.**

Nimrod Combat Cannon: Much larger than the rifle, this Gatling-style rotating barrel weapon fires rocket propelled armor piercing explosive rounds and lots of them. Ammunition is fed from a separate storage pack attached to the back. The large size and need for extra ammo capacity prevents a SAInt from carrying a second weapon so it is typically given to SAInts who will be avoiding close ranges. A backup weapon may be carried for when a lucky enemy gets too close for the massive gun.

▶ **FA. Attack Benefit +2. Damage Boost +1.**

L-XIV Ultima Rocket Launcher: Shoulder carried, the launcher can fire aim-assisted multi-stage explosive rockets over great ranges. It is a very dangerous weapon and a missed shot could even topple a reinforced building. A SAInt equipped with the Ultima is unable to carry a backup weapon as that storage space is needed for additional rockets.

▶ **FA/HB (Fire Arms). Attack Benefit +1. Damage Boost +2. Reload.**

Backup Weapons

Levic Pistol: A SAInt’s pistol fires rocket propelled explosive tipped rounds. Small enough to be used in close quarters but with enough range to strike at firearms distance, the pistol is versatile but underpowered.

▶ **CQ/FA. Attack Benefit +0. Damage Boost +0.**

‘Arc Knife: This knife is a version of the sword with the same destructive features in a smaller package. Some pilots choose to mount the knife as a bayonet on the combat rifle for maximum versatility.

▶ **CQ. Attack Benefit +0. Damage Boost +1.**

Bare Hands: A SAInt pilot may use his martial arts training while piloting to fight bare handed. With the power of a hundred tons of advanced robotics, a capable pilot can level an old building with a kick.

- ▶ **CQ. Attack Benefit +0. Damage Boost +0.**

Advanced Arsenal

The Preservation Force is always experimenting with new weapons and equipment that could be useful to SAInts in combat. After observing a pilot in action trainers will often make suggestions to better equip a pilot for the roles she serves. The following are a few weapons that they might be issued.

Close Quarters Weapon

Sam-L Shield: A defensive plate of layered ablative ceramics and alloys. The Sam-L generates a magnetic field like the SAInt's armor to absorb or deflect weapons fire. The shield can nullify the effect of one level of harm every Action. The pilot can choose to absorb more, up to the full amount of damage suffered in the Action but doing that destroys the shield. The shield also provides a cover bonus for the SAInt, adding 1 Benefit to the SAInt's Effort for a Take Cover Action.

The Shield is paired with another armament and a backup weapon but it may also be used to strike opponents in Close Quarters combat.

- ▶ **CQ. Attack Benefit +1. Damage Boost +0. Cover +1. Reduce damage by 1 per Action or all if sacrificed.**

Observe Weapon

Tiamat Multiple Missile System: Attached to the back of the SAInt and slung over the shoulders, the T-MMS fires specially designed self-targeting missiles that home in on the telepathic resonance of Mayzor. These missiles relentlessly seek out targets. The weapon can fire three volleys but reloading on the battlefield is impossible.

- ▶ **HB (Observe). Attack Benefit +3. Damage Boost +1. 3 firings.**

Firearms Weapon

EZK-L Particle Beam: An experimental energy weapon designed after the beams used by Mayzor, the EZK-L is a sniper weapon intended for use in extreme ranges. There is a long cool down time between shots to prevent the weapon backfiring and targeting relies entirely on the pilot's skill. However, the focused strike causes severe damage to anything it

hits. Over-sized when compared to the rifle, a second weapon may not be included in the SAInt's load-out but a backup weapon can still be carried.

- ▶ **HB (Fire Arms). Attack Benefit +0. Boost +4. Reload.**

SAInt Modifications

The basic design of the SAInt is universal throughout the Preservation Force. It's not just good public relations; having the SAInt appear human makes it easier for a pilot to adapt to his new body. SAInts may have different detailing or paint jobs to give them a little individual character but gleaming silver armor and a visor are traditional. Regional variants, like the samurai styled helmets on the SAInts that patrol near Japan are also allowed by Preservation Force commanders.

CRC engineers experiment with other tools and gear that could be used by a SAInt pilot to improve her chances on the battlefield. This equipment is attached to the SAInt as if worn and has activation switches or controls that the pilot uses to turn them on or off. To use special gear the SAInt pilot needs to go through extra training and sacrifice some weapon storage space. SAInts will never be equipped with more than one piece of gear.

G-Mag Ground Effect Mobility Enhancement v.3.0: Technicians typically shorten this long name to "the skates." This equipment is a pair of anti-gravity hovercraft platforms clamped to the legs and feet of the SAInt. By shifting his weight the pilot can glide just above the ground at higher speeds than he could reach running. The skates are used in urban battlefields because they work best on a level straightaway and do not handle rough terrain. Most pilots take a skier stance but some have adapted a surfer or skater pose. To compensate for weight, lift, and drag the pilot can only carry one main weapon and one backup using the skates.

- ▶ **Change Range Benefit +1 in smooth terrain.**

K/0-D Boost Jet: Small plasma thrusters attached at the SAInt's back and waist increase the height and distance of jumps. SAInts are not capable of actual flight without their deployment rockets but this gear allows a SAInt to move over broken and dangerous terrain more easily. It is used when SAInts must be deployed in rural zones or in the rubble of an old city. A SAInt must sacrifice a second main weapon to equip the Boost Jet's bulky fuel cells and steering verniers.

- ▶ **Change Range Benefit +1 in rough terrain.**

Spectrum Veil Shield Tr-N: An overcharge generator wired into the SAInt's electro-magnetic shielding forces the energy into the visible spectrum. This distorts the SAInt's appearance into a rippling blob of reflected images and obscures its outline, making it harder to target. Movement disturbs and cancels the effect but if the SAInt is relatively still then it improves cover. To equip the module and power cells the SAInt pilot gives up carrying a backup weapon.

▶ **Take Cover Benefit +1.**

Babel Scrambler: Using a portable MetaTron unit to broadcast noise into the telepathic network of the Mayzor, the SAInt can confuse or disorient Locusts and Magnas for a short time. However, this equipment cuts off the SAInt's own telepathy so the pilot can't communicate with other SAInts or Operations. The pilot may not take part in any team Actions until he switches the module off. It is a complex and bulky bit of tech so the SAInt carries no backup weapon if it has a Babel unit attached.

▶ **Engage +1 Benefit. May not join a team for the Action.**

Mendicant Configuration

The Mendicant is a tandem variant; a SAInt for two pilots. The configuration was created so that pilot candidates who have excellent telepathic abilities but can't pass the physical or academic tests for Preservation Force service can be paired up together. The two pilots cooperating cover for each other's deficiencies.

A Mendicant is slightly larger than a SAInt, with broader shoulders and a barrel chest to fit the second pilot's sensory deprivation tank. Once both are connected they share the Mendicant's body, focusing their thoughts together into a unique, synchronized mind. The Mendicant is identical to a SAInt in all other ways.

The pilots of a Mendicant are always acting as a team, trading off the lead for Challenges and assisting each other with every Action. They can't perform two Actions at once but can give a better Effort working together. They also have a second chance to avoid Frenzy. The Mendicant SAInt will not Frenzy until its *Id* is greater than both pilot's individual *Egos* and both fail the Spirit Check to stay in control.

Klaus and Alicia are a tandem pilot team. Klaus is the "brains" of the operation, boasting an acute understanding of battlefield tactics, though his physical failings leave him barely able to

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point a gun. Alicia's combat skills are second-to-none but she was raised in a nomadic tribe and has the knowledge and social graces of a feral cat. Neither is a suitable pilot as an individual but after they got over the friction of their introductions they began to work together. Klaus is excellent at spotting and out-witting the enemy and Alicia guides their hands and feet to slice and stomp Locusts.

In the middle of a fight their Mendicant's Id rises to 4. Klaus' Ego is at 2 and Alicia's is 3 so the SAInt strains against their control. Alicia fails her Spirit Check but Klaus succeeds and they both hang on, holding back the monster's rage.

Twining

Twining is a side-effect of the close connection between the pilots of a Mendicant. CRC scientists have found that these pilots develop similar thought patterns and begin to pick up on subtle cues from one another. They will share the same habits and finish each other's sentences. Twining isn't considered a problem by the CRC. Better understanding makes better pilots and sometimes the effect is almost telepathic.

After every battle in which they have piloted the Mendicant, both pilots roll a Charm Check. If both succeed the Check, they've developed the special bond from twining. They may form a team for Actions, so long as they are in each other's presence. They can share the answers to a quiz from across the room or one pilot could help the other stay calm when meeting her boyfriend in secret.

Alicia is sweating through another math test, sure that she will fail. Something tugs at her attention and she looks up to see Klaus at the opposite end of the classroom. She watches the way he holds his stylus, tilts his head from side to side, and runs his fingers through his hair. Then she begins marking her answers, confident now that she'll get at least a "C". She thinks she should buy him an ice cream after class; then wonders if that thought was her own.

Reassignment

Tandem piloting is intended to be a temporary solution. Once the pilots show that they are capable fighters and don't need the constant assistance of another to be effective they are each assigned their own SAInt. The split can be difficult but these pilots stay on in the same company

for a few months, at least. Without the close connection of combining minds to control the Mendicant the twinning effects slowly fade. After each battle piloting separate SAInts both pilots roll Charm checks. If either fails then the bond of twinning is broken and lost.

PROPHET - CRC Experimental Unit

Though the SAInts have allowed the Preservation Force to fight back, they still don't have the weapon they need to win the war. Scientists and technicians work day and night to develop a new class of SAInt. At the same time, they are trying to train a new generation of pilots to operate these unique robots. The Director has more information about these SAInts and pilots of the future.

Skirmish

Combats on the human scale, without the giant war machines of SAInts and Magnas are Skirmishes. Deadly serious physical conflicts can only take place with antagonist characters. Supporting characters cannot offer a real fight to pilots because their conflicts are limited to a single Action, enough to wound a pilot once or surrender before the scene and fight must end. When an antagonist is involved then the combat can be real threat to the pilot's life.

SAInt pilots are kept out of combat situations without their SAInt and are only allowed to practice martial arts either in SAInt simulation or in controlled training environments. When a pilot, one of the most valuable assets of the Preservation Force, is in danger of real, lasting physical harm or even death, then things have gone very, very wrong.

Skirmish Vs. Battle

People and human-scaled weapons are hopelessly outclassed by the massive ordinance and mobility of robots. When a pilot is caught on the battlefield with robots that range from tank-sized bugs to three hundred foot tall monstrosities his best course of action is to run for cover and hide. Successful Actions will keep the pilot alive while failure means capture or death.

The Scene

The elements of a Skirmish scene are identical to those of a battle. The location provides an advantage with the amount of cover a combatant can hide behind. The relationships and motivation of the pilots are im-

portant to their Actions. Pilots are challenged to survive by the Vigor and Focus abilities of their foes.

Ranges

Skirmish ranges are the same as ranges for battles but on the human scale; distances of hundreds of feet become yards. Ranges are still abstract and reflect the type of weapons and the Actions that the combatants can use. Personnel scale weapons have range statistics to match the Actions.

Skirmish Cover

The cover available in a Skirmish matches the options available in battle. Chest or head high obstructions that will stop or deflect fire from guns and swings of swords will give the combatants some bonus to their Effort when taking cover from attack. There may be more variety in the composition of defensive cover as not every wall needs to stand up to white-hot plasma bursts and diamond hard alloys but the end result is the same.

Skirmish Actions

A pilot has all of the same Action opportunities that she had on the battlefield. Threat range is established by what weapon the enemy has at hand. The pilot can Engage or maneuver to Change Range toward and away from an opponent and Take Cover. She will make her own Attacks with the weapons she has or with hand-to-hand combat. The statistics of most weapons are equivalent to the large scale SAInt versions, though any use of firearms by a pilot is strictly forbidden and anything nastier than a rattan training sword is likely to get confiscated and the pilot punished.

The pilot can call upon her Ego to increase her Effort and Boost outcome. Since she is separate from her SAInt, she cannot use Id. She can involve her motivations in her Actions or her relationship characters can provoke her emotional response and Ego is gained or lost by success and failure. Pilots are able to form teams to combat an opponent and opponents may form teams of their own. Supporting characters become endangered if the leader fails and may be killed if they continue on in the fight without being helped by a pilot.

Harming the Enemy

The goal of Skirmish remains the same as battlefield combat; to do harm to the enemy until he relents or is dead. There are other options but when weapons and Attack Actions are used then Injury is the intent. Harm to an antagonist from weapons and attacks causes Injury. If a pilot depletes an antagonist's Injury then the means in use and the pilot player's narration decides the fate of her opponent. That training sword will knock the enemy out or beat him into surrender but the blade with a real edge will have maimed or even killed the enemy, if that was the pilot's intent. This damage is usually lasting and the antagonist will be removed from the story by the Director until he has had time to heal.

Distraction, Negotiation, Non-injurious Attacks, and Illness

Not all damage in a Skirmish is physical Injury. A pilot can be harmed without fighting. Sometimes a pilot wants to bring a fight to a stop by convincing the enemy to lay down their weapons and simply surrender. Other times a combatant can try to grab or wrestle an opponent into submission. In these cases the rules for non-combat Trials are used and the pilots try to break the opponent's Resolve.

To negotiate (or intimidate) the pilot rolls Convince or Empathize Actions against his opponent's Focus. The target is not required to respond in kind, and may continue to attack with bullets while the pilot uses words. Shaking the opponent's Resolve forces him to act through Setback penalties. An opponent who is Lost gives up and surrenders.

A non-lethal physical take down requires being in the CQ range and using the Athletics Proficiency, not the more brutal martial and weapon arts of Close Quarters Combat. Successes will affect the opponent's Resolve rather than Injury. Weapons designed for pacification like stun-guns or anesthetic gas also affect Resolve instead of Injury.

Injury

When a pilot fails a Skirmish Action he is Injured. Boosts from weapons cause deeper and more dangerous wounds. The levels of Injury that a pilot can survive is determined by his Tone.

There are three states of Injury: Hurt, Wounded, and Unconscious.

- ▶ **Hurt:** A pilot with a Tone of 5, 4, 3, or 2 is hardy or capable at minimizing injury. He is Hurt by his failure but can go on fighting.

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- ▶ **Wounded:** A pilot with a Tone of 1 is Wounded by failure. He is easy to harm or has a low pain tolerance and suffers Setbacks to Actions while injured.
- ▶ **Unconscious:** A pilot injured beyond Wounded is Unconscious and incapable of taking Action. It is not safe to move him until he receives first aid and doing so inflicts more harm. The Unconscious pilot must pass a Tone Check or die.

As a pilot is injured the player marks the degrees on the Injury track on his pilot record. The pilot's Tone rating is where the first Injury falls. Further Injuries reduce the pilot from a state of health toward Unconsciousness. A pilot harmed past Unconsciousness is dead.

First Aid

A pilot can offer help to a badly hurt person with an Engineer Action and some basic medical training. Successful first aid will help an Unconscious character so that he can be safely moved and kept from the immediate danger of death. In First Aid Actions, the pilot does not roll his Coordination for the Effort. Instead, he uses the patient's Tone or Vigor before adding his own Engineer rating to the high roll. Proper medical equipment can add Benefits to the pilot's Effort. The challenge is randomly set by the Director because identifying Injuries are the first steps in first aid.

Summary: A First Aid Action pairs the patient's Tone Talent with the caregiver's Engineer Proficiency.

A training exercise has gone wrong and Ken has had to drag Michelle's Unconscious body from a damaged simulator. As the medical technicians rush to the facility he attempts first aid. Ken's Engineer Proficiency is 4, so he stands a good chance but Michelle's Tone is only 2. The Director rolls a challenge of 8. Michelle is barely breathing. The situation looks grim and Ken silently pleads for the emergency crew to arrive with their gear as he begins CPR.

Medical Treatment

Healing requires time and taxes a pilot's body. A strong and healthy person recovers from Injury faster than a weak or sick character. Tone checks affected by available medical care are made periodically to see how the patient is recovering.

The severity of the Injury decides how long the pilot must spend in convalescence to recover. If a pilot's injuries rendered him Unconscious, it will take at least one week of bed rest before the pilot could be well again. After seven days have passed, the player will check the pilot's Tone. A Wounded pilot rolls to Check Tone after three days bed rest and a pilot who is only Hurt will Check after one day of rest. If a pilot cannot take the time to rest and heal and is forced to take part in strenuous physical Actions then a day is added to the healing time before the Tone Check.

The environment in which the pilot convalesces can ease his recovery. In a state-of-the-art hospital, like one would find on a military base or on an Arx in which specialist care and the high tech equipment of the CRC and Preservation Force are available, the pilot's Tone is increased by two points for Tone checks, making it easier to pass. With basic hospital care and the attention of medical staff that one would find in most cities or towns the pilot's Tone is increased by one. If the only care available for the pilot is bed rest at home and only intermittent care or the assistance of non-professionals, as is common in the rural or wasteland zones, then the pilot makes his Tone check unadjusted.

Once a pilot succeeds the Tone check he is fully healed and suffers no penalties or restrictions on Actions. A pilot does not need to heal each degree of Injury separately; a successful Tone Check restores the pilot to full health. If the pilot fails the Check then his convalescence is extended by a day and another Tone Check is rolled tomorrow. For the duration of a pilot's convalescence he is in the same state he was when he was injured. Even if he is awake and able to move freely he is still leaning on things for support and seeing the world through a haze of medication while distracting pain interferes with simple functions. This means that Setback penalties to any Actions are still in effect until the pilot's recovery has completed.

Summary: An unconscious pilot needs 1 week to heal, a Wounded pilot 3 days, a Hurt pilot requires 1 day. Strenuous activity adds another day to healing time. After this time roll a Tone Check, adjusted by given care. Success restores the pilot to health, failure adds another day in care.

After a week in the medical center Michelle has passed her Tone Check successfully. She is still a little sore on one side and taking painkillers every few hours but she can manage to get around the halls of the academy. Prof. Takamishi is eager

to welcome her back to class and assigns her an entire unit of chapters to read so that she can catch up on all the lessons she missed. Hooray.

Illness

Most illnesses or minor toxins attack the Resolve of the pilot. Once exposed the pilot must make a Tone check to resist the loss of Resolve. Resolve weakened by illness does not refresh and remains weakened unless it is healed like Injury; with rest, medicine, and Tone checks. Deadly poison or virulent disease causes Injury rather than weakening the pilot. In any case, large doses or continued exposure to the poison or infection will require more Tone checks.





Chapter 5.

Pilot Creation

Pilots

Each pilot player in *Tears* will create a persona to play through the stories of the game. A pilot should be interesting to the player, first and foremost. Players should craft a character whose life is made of the kind of adventures and troubles that they find exciting. Fill out a pilot record sheet with the motivations, statistics, and details of the pilot.

Creating a Pilot Character

Creating Pilot characters should be the focus of the first *Tears of a Machine* play session. Players design their pilots together so that they can understand each other's motivations. Pilots do not need to have "roles" or "duties" in the team and players should not abandon ideas for a pilot just to fill in the gaps in some other pilot's abilities. The Director will use this same play session to design the relationship characters for the pilots and plan out some places and other people that may be important to their shared lives.

Pilot Record

Each pilot player will need a copy of the Pilot Record sheet. The statistics and characteristics are written on these pages and there are "tracks" that can be used to record the current status of Resolve or Injury during a scene or session. The pilot can mark these tracks with tic marks or use paper clips at the edges of the sheet to indicate current status. The Ego pool can be tracked by writing in tic marks or numbers but beads or tokens or poker chips make it easy to record Ego since it rises and falls often. This also gives the Director any easy way to check on the "health" of the pilots' Ego by looking over their pools. A part of each pilot record is set aside to record the armaments and special abilities of the SAInt, along with a track for its Structure and a separate pool for its Id. If using chips or tokens for the pools of Ego and Id, be sure they are different colors so that there is no confusion between the two.

Pilot Reference Sheet

As the players are creating their characters and filling out Pilot Record sheets, the Director fills out his Pilot Reference Sheet. This page is a quick reference of the pilots' important features like their motivations and relationships. It is a guide to the Director when she creates scenes and challenges for the pilots so that they are meaningful and engaging. She will also have pages to record the important ratings and details about Director characters that are created to join the pilot's story as well as the enemy forces and details of battles.

Pilot Background

Information about a pilot's history can help flesh out the numbers for her abilities, giving reason to the player's choices. They can also inspire Motivations or ground them in the pilot's experiences and way of life.

Age

Age is important. Younger pilots are less developed in abilities and training but are quicker to learn and will have a long career in the Preservation Force. Older pilots begin with more Talent and skill but will "age out" of service and be unable to interface with a SAInt in a short time. A SAInt requires a telepathic bond for the pilot to control it. As a pilot ages her neurons stabilize and lose the openness of a growing mind. She can expect to be transferred out soon after her 18th birthday.

Age is a factor a player cannot control. To find a pilot's age roll 1 six-sided die and add 11 to the result. This gives a pilot a starting age between 12 and 17 years. The passage of time is important to a *Tears of a Machine* series so be aware of how much time the pilot has left in her career. What motivations and desires would suit a pilot this age? What is less important? What is more important? Children grow up fast in wartime. Especially when they become soldiers.

Name

The Preservation Force is an international organization so pilots can have names as varied as the regions of the Earth.

Company

Each pilot is assigned to a company on entry to the Preservation Force. Companies are made up of five pilots but may vary by a few depending on the availability of SAInts and Pilots. Most Arx follow an alphabetical

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organization of companies but give them more distinctive names. On one Arx the A, B, and C companies may be named “Absolution, Benediction, and Charity” while on another they may be “Akita, Bizen, and Chiba.” The players can decide on a company name or the Director can choose something appropriate.

Pilots are not military personnel and have no official rank. While some lean on their seniority to assert themselves, only a tutor, trainer or operations commander has any authority over a pilot. If a pilot transfers out of the SAInt program they can join the regular Preservation Force and earn a rank to match their Talents and experience.

Background

A pilot’s story begins with his life before the Preservation Force. The Mayzor invasion began 5 years ago so all pilots can remember a time before, though they are childhood memories colored by the horrors that followed. Think about the part of the world that the pilot called home and an overview of his living conditions. If the pilot has living relatives, who are they? A family or guardians may be a source of strength or a liability to the pilot. Many pilots are orphans from foster programs that care for abandoned survivors. These programs are overburdened and piloting is an opportunity for a teenager to excel or at least make room for another child.

Housing

All active pilots live aboard an Arx. There are a few fortunate exceptions but most pilots do not live with their families. Younger pilots live in foster homes with guardians drawn from the base personnel, military or civilian. These arrangements can be random and awkward but many young pilots are happier with a family. Once a pilot is older they may move into the dormitories of the base academy where they will live with other pilots.

Pilots aged 12 and 13 live with a foster guardian, often a tutor, trainer or technician for the SAInt program, keeping the pilots close to their duties. Some live with other pilot “siblings” and some are “only children” depending on how many wards their foster family can support. At 14 or 15 a pilot has the option to apply for housing in the academy. Officials review the pilot’s behavior to determine eligibility. A positive evaluation allows a pilot to move into the dormitories. Evaluators are eager to have pilots

move into the academy so that fostered space is freed up for young recruits. 16 and 17 year old pilots live in suites at the academy, separated by gender. They are grouped together with other members of their company if possible. Four to six pilots will share two person bedrooms and a communal bathroom, kitchen and living room with their roommates.

Hope and Despair

With two short statements the pilot's motivations, positive and negative are expressed in game terms. Hope and Despair are very personal statements about the pilot. Clear but not too specific, the pilot's Hope and Despair should be flexible enough that they can be applied to most situations in a pilot's life but not so vague that they lack direction. A motivation inspires the abilities that the pilot favors and the Actions that she prefers to take. It's also a window into her attitude about other situations when she is out of her element.

Most of the time it will be the player's decision to involve the pilot's Hope or Despair in a Trial. They can embrace motivations or try to avoid them but avoiding them cuts the pilot off from Ego that he may need later. Sometimes the pilot's motivations will be forced onto the scene by others. Hope and Despair are not entirely fixed. There will be opportunity for the pilot and player to analyze his life and his interests and update or even change these directions to his behavior.

Creating Hope:

A pilot's Hope fills him with joy and a sense of self-worth. It is what keeps him moving forward and lets him face the Mayzor. Pursuit of Hope is a motivation for playing the pilot's role but is also the source of Ego in Actions. Hopes are dangerous too. A pilot's Hope is something that truly matters to him and if he fails when reaching for it he can affect his Ego. A Hope can be a simple desire or an ideal but it must be something that the pilot can find in his common situations and extreme challenges. Whenever a pilot acts he should attempt to make the Action Benefit his Ego through his Hope. As a teen, the pilot is always looking for validation from others to confirm that his feelings are right.

The Hope expresses what the player has decided is important to the pilot and to the game, so it is valuable for the Director too. The Hope "I want to be the best SAInt pilot" implies that it is not only important to the pilot to be skilled and successful in combat but also that she must

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out-perform other pilots. This tells the Director that stories and scenes involving competitions will be important to the pilot and that other Actions can change to serve this Hope. A pilot in full pursuit of her Hope will try to bring it into all aspects of her life.

When composing a Hope, try framing it as a positive statement of what the pilot desires: I will, I want, I must, I like. Think of a few different Actions a pilot could take to pursue that Hope. What represents success to the pilot? How will it involve other pilots and supporting characters? A few examples of a well-crafted Hope include:

- ▶ I will find the positive side in any situation.
- ▶ I love discovering new things and puzzling out mysteries.
- ▶ I will find the good side in every person.
- ▶ I'll make sure no one harms my friends.
- ▶ I like to make my tutors proud of me.
- ▶ I want everyone to know I'm the leader.
- ▶ I want everyone to work together.
- ▶ I want to make a surrogate family to replace those I've lost.
- ▶ I will be famous as a pilot.
- ▶ I'll show them I'm no weakling!

Poorly created Hopes are often too specific and can only be applied to rarely occurring situations or are too vague and offer no definition of their success or direction for the story:

- ▶ I will find a Legulus general and interrogate him to find out what happened to my brother.
- ▶ I will attain maximum interface rating with my SAInt.
- ▶ I'll be better than everyone.
- ▶ My team will appreciate me.

We can improve those Hopes by giving them better focus; allowing them to apply to more or better Actions and involving other characters with them.

- ▶ I will study my enemy and learn their secrets.
- ▶ I will never lose control of myself, in battle and in life.
- ▶ I must succeed on my own.
- ▶ I will prove myself to be an asset to every team.

Creating Despair:

The pilot's Despair is the source of his self-doubt. His fear of failure and the reason he loses faith in himself and his abilities. The pilot's Despair is the emotional element that holds him back from happiness. Like Hope, Despair is something that the pilot encounters in his day to day life. Despair is as strong a motivator as Hope and can be just as useful. When a pilot is challenged by his Despair, and is successful, then his Ego is improved by overcoming the negativity. Failure is just as damaging as a pilot's failed attempts to achieve his Hope and can cost him some of his Ego.

Deciding the Despair for a pilot may be more difficult. Though it is supposed to be a negative aspect of the pilot's life it is also an important part of her and should be encountered and faced often. It may be tempting to simply use the opposite of the pilot's Hope as her Despair but that will limit options for her story. A pilot who wants to be the best SAInt pilot but has the Despair of "not being the best SAInt pilot" isn't going to do anything other than pilot a SAInt in her stories. When she does anything else, such as attending classes or going to the mall she will have minimal engagement. If that same pilot's Despair stemmed from being outside her SAInt, such as "I hate being the ugly one," then we have some real opportunities for story situations as the show-off pilot becomes shy and avoids attention away from the battlefield (especially if she isn't ugly and just suffers from self-esteem issues when not crushing things in a giant robot.)

Try framing Despair as a negative statement of what upsets the pilot: I can't, I won't, I mustn't, I hate. Think of a few situations that could challenge a pilot's self-esteem. What does failure mean to the pilot? How does it involve others? An excellent Despair is flexible. Some good examples include:

- ▶ I can't abide other's emotional weaknesses
- ▶ I hate being the center of attention
- ▶ I hate that people think I'm spoiled.
- ▶ I'll never be smart enough to be taken seriously.
- ▶ Hard work bores me
- ▶ I can't face the tragedy of my past.
- ▶ I'm always suspected for things that aren't my fault.

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- ▶ I can't risk my life; my family needs me.
- ▶ I don't like being treated like a child.
- ▶ I'm a pilot because people want me to die

Poorly crafted Despair, like a poorly crafted Hope only applies in very limited situations or will intrude on every aspect of the pilot's life.

- ▶ Every missed shot is an insult to my family's honor.
- ▶ I mustn't displease my history tutor.
- ▶ I don't want to be a pilot.
- ▶ I'm not good at anything.

These can be improved with better focus, adding other characters or defining a failure by the opportunity for success.

- ▶ Defeat in combat will upset my family.
- ▶ I mustn't displease my superiors.
- ▶ I don't want to face being a pilot alone.
- ▶ I'm not the best at anything.

A Hope or Despair can also be improved by "reversal." The Hope "I want to end the fighting" will be difficult to uphold when facing the mindless killing machines of the Mayzor. A sentiment like that might be better suited to be the pilot's Despair. "I hate that I have become a killer." Try reversing the concepts between the two before making the final decision in creating a Hope or Despair.

If a pilot is ever faced by both Hope and Despair in the same situation he may choose which one he will engage for his Action. Unless a relationship character is involved. Then the relationship character's influence takes over.

Relationships

Relationships are supporting characters who are significant to a pilot's Hope and Despair. These are friends and rivals who reinforce or diminish the pilot's self-worth. These focus characters will make repeat appearances in the series. Interacting with relationship characters is a direct line to dealing with the pilot's Hope and Despair. The Director creates these relationship characters for the pilot, though the pilot's player may offer some suggestion. Creating these characters gives the Director some influence over the pilot's attitudes and their involvement

in situations. Pilots will have the chance to gain, lose and change relationship characters as the story progresses.

Talents

Talents measure the raw natural ability of a pilot or antagonist character. The values range from 1-5. They are the number of dice a pilot will roll in an Action and are the limits for Checks. Some Talents determine a pilot's durability, physical or mental and social life. There are five Talents measuring the pilot's abilities:

- ▶ Intellect for Intelligence and sharp thinking.
- ▶ Charm for charisma and sociability. Also the maximum number of Relationships.
- ▶ Coordination for detailed work and accuracy.
- ▶ Tone for muscular strength and stamina. Also the measure of Injury.
- ▶ Spirit for the pilot's willpower and sense of self-worth. Also the measure of Resolve.

A pilot has as many total Talent points as his age at character creation; a twelve year old pilot will have a total of twelve Talent points, a sixteen year old pilot will have sixteen Talent points. Divide these points between the five Talents to determine their rating. Each Talent must have a value of at least one.

Proficiencies

Proficiencies measure the skill and training of a pilot. Proficiencies range from 0-5. This number is added to the pilot's die roll for an Action with that Proficiency. The Talent commonly associated with that Proficiency is also noted. These are the Actions that a pilot can choose to take when facing a challenge.

- ▶ Observe (Intellect) is the pilot's awareness of details.
- ▶ Study (Intellect) is book learning and scholastic study.
- ▶ Convince (Charm) is the skill of cajoling others into agreement or at least acceptance.
- ▶ Empathize (Charm) is the Talent of recognizing emotion in others and making use of it.
- ▶ Engineer (Coordination) is the advanced use and repair of devices as well as emergency medical care.

willpower and desire to succeed. While Ego is a commodity that is earned and spent, the pilot's Resolve is a value that is reduced by the success of opponents in Trials until the pilot gives up the will to argue or compete.

The pilot's Spirit determines his base Resolve Condition. A pilot with a low Spirit value can be easily swayed while a pilot with a high Spirit value may continue to press on despite disagreement or hardships for much longer. Each pilot record sheet has a Resolve track. Locate and circle the number that corresponds to the pilot's Spirit. If the pilot fails an Action in a Trial then this is the first level of Resolve lost. If the level includes a Setback, this penalty only comes into effect when the pilot's Resolve is harmed.

Injury

All characters have physical states of health and well-being. When a pilot is involved in Trials of combat or physically hazardous situations she may be injured. Injuries are not simple bumps and bruises. These are wounds that result from gunfire, weapon blows, explosions, fire, or long distance falls. Injuries are potentially life threatening.

The pilot's Tone determines her Injury condition. A pilot with a low Tone value can be immediately disabled while a pilot with a high Tone value may shrug off the wounds that would kill another and survive multiple attacks before succumbing to Injury. Each pilot record sheet has an Injury track. Locate and circle the number that corresponds to the pilot's Tone. If the pilot is injured then this is the first level of Injury that she will sustain. If the level includes a Setback this penalty only comes into effect when the pilot is Injured and does not affect her when she is healthy and unharmed.

Finishing up

After creating a character it is good to break before beginning the series. End the session and begin playing the next time. Each player should take this time to acquaint his or herself with the pilot role. It may be very difficult for some players to get into the mindset of a young adult or a tween, so spend some time preparing. What was important to you at that young age? What was your outlook on life? What has happened to your pilot before she was chosen for the SAInt program? What short or long term goals does she have for herself? The character her-

self may not be aware of these deep motivations but it will help a player to stay actively involved with the pilot's life if she has the "insider information" on the role.

The SAInt Record

The SAInt section of the Pilot's record sheet tracks the SAInt's statistics and abilities.

Armaments

SAInts are typically equipped with 1 primary Firearm weapon, 1 primary Close Quarters weapon and 1 back-up. Refer to the SAInt Arsenal and note the Benefits, Boosts and any special information about the weaponry. Certain special equipment can be used by SAInts. Note the Benefits and Boosts it offers here as well.

Id

The Id pool rises and falls as the SAInt's rage builds and is released by battle. The level of Id compared to Ego is important. When Id rises above Ego the Pilot may lose control of the SAInt, allowing it to Frenzy.

Structure

All SAInts have the same Structure and can survive the same degree of punishment before being destroyed. There are 6 degrees of Structural integrity; 5 Damaged, 1 Malfunctioning. At 0 the SAInt is Disabled, but it can still take some limited Actions. A SAInt that is Malfunctioning or Disabled suffers Setback penalties. If the SAInt is damaged past the Disabled degree it is destroyed.

Character Advancement

Pilots will grow and learn from their experiences in battle, training, tutoring, relationships and life experience. To represent this development pilots will be awarded Advancement Points, or AP. These points can be spent to improve their Talents and Proficiencies, learn new Proficiencies, gain friends (or rivals,) improve existing relationships, and even allow the pilot to change her outlook on life by modifying Hope or Despair.

Earning Advancement Points

Each pilot will earn between 1 and 3 AP per episode. At the end of each episode or play session each pilot is awarded one Advancement Point.

This point is for the general experiences and development of the pilot. A pilot with strong personal engagement in the episode, one who has involved her motivations and made every scene and decision matter, grows faster than a pilot who never feels the extremes of Ego gain and loss. If the pilot's Ego reached 5 at any point in the episode the pilot is awarded an AP. Pilots won't only learn from successes but are taught by failure too. If the pilot's Ego was ever 0 during the episode, the pilot is awarded an AP. These awards are only given once per episode.

Using Advancement Points

Teenagers grow in sudden ways. A growth spurt and nutritious diet will turn a short weakling into a volleyball star in a few months; hormones settling in will deepen a squeaky voice into a rich and nuanced baritone or fill out the curves on a flat silhouette. Access to tutors and computers can give a deprived child the tools and exercise to overcome a learning difference and show that she's as capable as her classmates. Pilots change in ways that will never be possible again in their lives but they have a special advantage because there's a player guiding their growth.

Talents: To increase the rating of a Talent a player spends the new value multiplied by 3 in Advancement Points. Players need to pay for each value if they want to jump up by two or more. They can't skip over a rating.

- ▶ To increase a Talent of 1 to 2, the cost is 6 AP.
- ▶ To increase a Talent of 2 to 3, the cost is 9 AP.
- ▶ To increase a Talent of 3 to 4, the cost is 12 AP.
- ▶ To increase a Talent of 4 to 5, the cost is 15 AP.

Proficiencies: To increase rating in a Proficiency a player spends the new value multiplied by 2. To take up a new Proficiency at value 1 a player spends 2 Advancement Points. Players need to pay for each value if they want to jump up by two or more. They can't skip over a rating.

- ▶ To increase a Proficiency of 1 to 2, the cost is 4 AP.
- ▶ To increase a Proficiency of 2 to 3, the cost is 6 AP.
- ▶ To increase a Proficiency of 3 to 4, the cost is 8 AP.
- ▶ To increase a Proficiency of 4 to 5, the cost is 10 AP.

Modifying Director Characters

Pilot players have the option to affect and even change Director characters with their Advancement Points. If a player has fun with a Director

character or just wants to move the story in a certain direction then advancing other characters will make them important, recurring members of the “cast.”

Elevating Characters: A single Advancement Point can be spent to make an extra character into a supporting character or a supporting character into an antagonist. A supporting character will make repeat appearances in the series and will have her own ratings so that the pilot can interact with her in Actions. Elevating a supporting character to be an antagonist adds more detail to the character and means she can now be a foil to the pilot in Trial scenes building drama and adding more chances to gain Ego.

Creating Relationships: An Advancement Point can be spent to make a supporting character or antagonist into a relationship character. The player invests in the character so that he will make frequent and meaningful appearances in the series as a friend or rival. Whether the character is a friend or rival depends on the social interactions that the two have shared. If the pilot has Empathized with him then the new relationship is with a friend. If they have been at odds in Convince Actions then the new relationship is a rival.

Changing Outlook

If a player feels that his pilot's attitudes have changed over time and his Hope or Despair are no longer what is really important to him he may modify or even abandon that outlook and create a new Hope or Despair. He spends an Advancement Point to reflect the time and introspection needed to make a change to his desires and fears. Relationship characters may change with the pilot's shifting interests and new ones will need to be found to take the place of those that cannot stay relevant to the new motivations.





Chapter 6.

The Director

These pages describe the tasks of the Director in detail. The Director will populate the world around the pilots with characters. She will build a series out of episodes and scenes and trials and battles.

Director Characters

The Director populates the world around the pilots with good friends, dire enemies, passing acquaintances, and bustling extras. While some characters will be just a face, a name, and a few lines of dialog, others will become a big part of the pilot's life. These characters make stories more interesting and complicated, creating drama, fun, conflict, laughs, and tears.

Challenges

The people that the pilots interact with will provide the challenges in most scenes. Actions that matter are about the drama between people. A well-learned student could easily pass a test but picking the right multiple-choice answers is dull. This scene becomes meaningful when it is about impressing the teacher. The challenge does not come from the test on the student's desk but from the instructor and his opinions and reactions.

Character Types

There are three varieties of Director characters based on their abilities and interactions with the pilots: Extras, supporting characters, and antagonists. There are prepared forms for a Director to use to keep records of these characters. As Director characters grow in importance to the story, they also grow in detail.

Keep the supporting cast limited. Focusing on a small group of recurring characters gives them the chance to become full individuals and the stories they share with the pilots will become more potent. Limit the number of characters that the pilots have available for their relationships. Crossing over each other's relationship ties leads to interesting drama, especially when one pilot's friend is the other pilot's rival.

Director Character Promotion

Players have the option to make Director characters more important to their story. By spending an Advancement point the player can turn an extra into a supporting character. The Director creates the statistics for this character and makes him a part of the ongoing story. The Director can also make an extra into a supporting character to provide a challenge in response to something a pilot does or to give an interesting character a bigger role. Once a character is a supporting character then he may become a relationship character.

The player can spend another Advancement Point to elevate a supporting character to be an antagonist or the Director can choose to raise a supporting character to antagonist status. Ratings are added and the character is more detailed, especially in motivations. This person is now a major part of the series and scenes involving her can become Trials. Antagonist characters can also be relationship characters.

Extras

The simplest characters are extras. They do not take part in the pilot's Actions as anything more than background. The Director can use the Director Character Record sheet to make note of the name, appearance, and motivations of an extra that might be useful in later events or one that might become a supporting character in future.

Professor Takamishi is the old man who gives boring history lectures.

Karen Traviss is the stuck up girl from SAInt Company C.

Supporting Characters

Supporting characters can become part of pilot Actions and will be the source of challenge in most scenes. Before a character can be a relationship character for a pilot, friend or rival, he must be a supporting character. Supporting characters are able to join a team and provide assistance, either to a pilot or an antagonist.

Supporting characters have two ratings: Vigor and Focus. Vigor is the physical side of the character and is the challenge to a pilot in situations involving strength, speed, endurance, dexterity, and martial prowess. Focus is the supporting character's social and mental abilities and challenge pilots in situations of intelligence, awareness, cunning, charisma, and perseverance. For a student to do well in class she must

have a greater Effort than the instructor's Focus. To win a footrace on the athletics field her Effort must be greater than her opponent's Vigor. To convince an academy student to stash cigarettes in his roommate's desk requires greater Effort than his Focus. These numbers are fixed for supporting characters.

Supporting Character Ratings

Supporting characters are ranked by the age of the pilot that they challenge. Numbers from the range can be picked by the Director or randomly decided with a die roll using the Challenge Values table. If the supporting character is a challenge to many pilots the eldest pilot decides the rank of the character. Supporting character ratings can be made up ahead of time in anticipation of a challenge or when the character is introduced and a challenge is made.

Challenge Values Chart

Pilot's Age	12-13	14-15	16-17
Base Value	2	3	5
Add	1d	1d	1d
Range	3-8	4-9	6-11

A supporting character has a complete description of name, appearance, and motivations. He will probably play a recurring part in the pilot's story and needs some goals of his own. Whenever this character appears, he acts on those motivations, especially when they relate to pilots. After each Action the Director should look at how these motivations can change and update them. When Alan survives a mission with help from the other pilots he may become less selfish. After Karen browbeats the security guard into letting her pass he might become more suspicious of pilots in general, or her specifically if they create a relationship.

On the Director Character Record list the important facts about the character's appearance, outlook and motivation, and the total challenge ratings. A supporting character can be beaten by a simple successful Action.

Professor Takamishi is the old man who gives boring history lectures. He is physically frail, leaning heavily on an antique cane, but sharp-witted. He is a strict taskmaster, especially with

the youngest SAInt pilots. Vigor 3, Focus 7. (His ratings were made for the 13 year old Pilot he harasses most frequently.)

Karen Traviss is the stuck up girl from SAInt Company C. She's a spoiled brat who sees piloting as a task for the elite. She looks down on other people and pilots. Vigor 7, Focus 8. (She's a thorn in the side of a 16 year old pilot.)

Antagonists

An Antagonist is a more robust Director character and a greater threat to the pilots. He can turn a scene into a Trial and offer more than a passive challenge. An antagonist has Vigor and Focus values but may add Benefits when a pilot acts against him. Antagonists also have a Resolve and an Injury rating so single Action scenes are not enough for a pilot to be successful when an antagonist character is involved. They will also roll dice in Actions, altering their challenge ratings with a lucky result.

A pilot's interaction with an Antagonist character is not always negative, the word Antagonist is used because that character can create Trials. Antagonists are heavily involved in the pilot's life, are important to his story and will act with or against the pilot whenever possible. They need to be fully developed persons with a history of motivations and a future of goals. Pay close attention to the outcome of scenes between pilots and antagonists; their motivations should be updated after every one. These characters will develop a lot of history with the pilots and can carry a torch or a grudge for whole seasons. If they develop a relationship with a pilot they will bring that baggage to their scenes.

Antagonist Character Ratings

An antagonist's Vigor and Focus are made like a supporting character's ratings, assigned or by die roll or chosen. The Resolve and Injury ratings for the antagonist and the number of Action Dice he may roll are also based in the pilot's age. The antagonist who is made to face a pilot aged 12 to 13 has 1 degree of Resolve or Injury and rolls 1 die while one made to oppose a 17 year old has a 3 in those ratings. Antagonist characters do not suffer Setback penalties as they lose Resolve or suffer Injury.

The challenge ratings of an Antagonist can Benefit from Action Dice the Director rolls. When a pilot rolls dice to act against an antagonist, the Director also rolls the antagonist's Action Dice. Every 6 that the Director

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rolls adds a point of Benefit to the antagonist's challenge and, if the pilot fails, will add a Boost to harm the pilot's Resolve, Injury, or Structure.

Antagonist Action Dice Chart

Pilot's Age	12-13	14-15	16-17
Resolve/Injury	1	2	3
Action Dice	1d	2d	3d

Professor Takamishi is the old man who gives boring history lectures. He is physically frail, leaning heavily on an antique cane, but sharp-witted. After a Mayzor assault on his home city he spent two days buried under rubble awaiting rescue. He is very defensive of his self-reliance. He is a strict taskmaster, especially with the youngest SAInt pilots as he remains skeptical of the fitness of any pilot until they have proved themselves to him. Vigor 3, Focus 7. Resolve/Injury 1. 1 die. (It takes 2 successful Actions or a Boosted success to win a Trial against him. With a 6 on his 1 die his Challenge ratings could be increased to 4 and 7, respectively, and he could add 1 Boost to harm a Pilot, if that Pilot fails.)

Karen Traviss is the stuck up girl from SAInt Company C. She's a spoiled brat who sees piloting as a task for the elite. The fact that she was selected to be a pilot is all the proof she needs that she was destined for greatness. She looks down on other people and pilots, taking every opportunity to remind them that they will never escape their humble backgrounds. Vigor 7, Focus 8. Resolve/Injury 2. 2 dice. (It takes a total of 3 successes and Boosts to win a trial against her. Rolling 6's on her dice her Challenge ratings could be 8 or 9 for Vigor and 9 or 10 for Focus. She could add up to 2 boosts to harm a pilot if he fails an Action against her.)

Antagonist characters can still be used in simple Actions. The scene does not need to be a Trial if a single Action makes a better scene. The Vigor or Focus provide the challenge but the antagonist's dice are still rolled and may add Benefits to increase them.

Antagonist Character Advancement

Antagonists can advance in challenge and grow with the pilots as the story continues. After a Trial involving an antagonist the Director may

increase one of the character's ratings: Vigor or Focus may be raised by one point, the antagonist's Resolve/Injury rating may be raised by one point, or the number of dice rolled in Actions may be increased by one. The antagonist can continue to increase challenge rating with every Trial, even going beyond 10, but Resolve/Injury and Action dice are capped at 5.

Professor Takamishi caught Ken in a lie but only after debating back and forth with him, wasting valuable class time. At the end of the exchange his Focus is increased by one to 8. Next time it will be harder to bamboozle him. A few term papers later, his Resolve has been increased to 3, and he rolls 2 dice during Actions, making him a tough man to debate.

Teams of Director Characters

A group of supporting characters or antagonists may form a team against a pilot and increase the challenge. A leader is selected for the team and each additional Director character adds a Benefit to the challenge, increasing it by 1. If there are Antagonists in the team then the Director will also roll the dice for their rank. Each 6 rolled adds a Benefit to the challenge and will Boost harm to the pilot if she fails the Action. The number of members in the Director character team is limited to the highest Base Value of characters in the group: 2, 3, or 5 respectively.

Karen has cornered Klaus in the cafeteria and begins to lay into him about his unkempt appearance. She's flanked by Stephanie and Kimberly, two Supporting characters, so her Focus stands at 10. The Director rolls two dice and gets one 6, further increasing the Challenge to 11. Klaus is going to need some serious help or his Resolve will take two degrees of harm.

Director Characters in Pilot Teams

Supporting characters follow the lead of a pilot in team Actions and each adds a Benefit to the pilot's Effort. They do not add Boosts to a successful outcome. These characters share in the success or failure of the leading pilot. In the case of most Trials they will hang on until the leader's Resolve is gone. In combat situations they can be Endangered if the team leader fails. An allied antagonist will use his own Condition ratings. Because antagonists roll dice in Actions, they may also add extra Benefits and Boosts to the team Action but by matching the leader's roll. They do not add Boosts from other sources like weapons or tools.

Allied Forces

When other characters are involved in scenes but are not part of pilot Actions they can be handled as extras, filling out the background. It is best to have the characters mirror the pilot Actions so that when the pilots do well their allies follow suit. When the pilots fail their allies may be endangered or destroyed.

Relationship Characters

All pilots begin the series with relationship characters who provide meaningful connections to the pilots' Hopes and Despairs. The Director creates these characters so that they fit the setting of the series and provide a basis of interaction and challenge. They come from many backgrounds: Family members, other pilots, a paramour, kindly tutors or even commanders. The purpose of these characters is to urge the pilot to engage her Hope and Despair. Consider the relationship character as an embodiment of the pilot's desire and aversion.

Relationship characters are classified as friend or rival. A friend is a relationship character who is generally supportive of the pilot's Hope. This is a character who wants to see the pilot be successful. Friends provide kindness, sharing and positive reinforcement. The pilot draws strength from these people, feeling himself validated by their pride in him. This also means that if the pilot disappoints them, either in actuality or in his internal perception then he feels his value diminish. A rival wants to see the pilot fail. The rival doesn't need to be openly aggressive to a pilot; he can be content with embarrassing or belittling him. Rivalries are complicated relationships that are a source of conflict and stress but also offer the possibility for triumph and victory over adversity.

Rivals hold grudges and become more negative over time while a friend grows more supportive. The Director doesn't need to balance the number of friends and rivals in a pilot's life. Some pilots will be more interested in gaining friends while others enjoy the competitive spirit of many rivalries. A pilot must always have a minimum of one relationship character. If a relationship is lost leaving the pilot without any friend or rival then another character must be created to fill the void.

Creating Relationship Characters

The Director uses pilot motivations to design characters that can interact with the pilots in significant ways. A pilot with a Charm rating of 1

has 1 relationship character at the start of his series. The Director decides if this relationship is a friend or rival. If the pilot has a rating of 2 or more then he begins the series with two relationship characters, 1 friend and 1 rival. A pilot with a Charm higher than 2 can gain more friends and rivals during the series but begins with the two “starter” relationships.

Find some overlapping interest between the pilots when creating these characters so that relationships are important to more than one pilot. Urge the pilots toward common interactions even if they have very different attitudes about these characters. This creates the possible dramatic tension of pilots earning and losing Ego from the same person in the same situation.

Gaining Relationships

A Pilot can establish relationships with any supporting character he chooses. The player spends an Advancement point to make this person a more important part of the pilot's life and story. Dealing with only the same relationship characters can become tedious. Introducing variety to the series through new characters will keep things fresh and allow the pilot to explore new stories and ideas.

Losing Relationships

If a pilot goes two or more episodes without involving a relationship character in an Action she rolls a Charm check to determine if the character is still interested in the pilot. If she fails the roll then the character, while still a supporting character, is no longer a relationship character. Success on the roll will maintain the relationship for the rest of the episode but unless the pilot interacts with that character in the next episode she rolls another Charm Check.

Fighting a war, people die. A pilot can lose a relationship character as part of the series, though she is always given an opportunity to save his life. When a relationship character is killed the relationship does not immediately end. The pilot can still pay remembrance to a fallen comrade or ask the Director for a flashback scene in which to renew her devotion, but it's like grabbing smoke. At the end of each episode the pilot rolls a Spirit Check. Success means she holds on to her feelings for a little longer while failure means that she cannot deny the loss and has to move on, removing the relationship from her pilot record.

Making Friends of Rivals and Rivals of Friends

Over time a pilot may be able to bridge the differences between himself and a rival. He can also sour a friendship through negativity and abuse. When a pilot uses Empathize in Actions then he is reaching out for understanding with the other person. If he is being Convincing then he is pushing to get his way and ignoring the feelings of others. If the pilot wins success from a Rival with Empathize they might have a breakthrough and gain some respect and good will. On the other side, using Convince Actions on a friend will strain the relationship. If the Director decides that these Actions have had an impact on the relationship then she creates a scene of the relationship character confronting the pilot with these feelings. He can roll Empathize or Convince Actions to turn the relationship or keep it from changing.

If a rivalry becomes a friendship the pilot and his rival grudgingly accept their need to function as a team, or they find common ground and interests that they didn't know they shared, or they recognize the romantic tension that lead them to feel upset and confused about one another. The rival becomes a friend, supporting the pilot's Hope rather than triggering his Despair. The relationship may still be strained or confusing but the underlying feelings are for the shared happiness of the two. If the friendship becomes a rivalry the pilot and friend have a ferocious argument, a bad break-up, or just realize that their good will has been worn away. From now on, the former friend becomes a rival who plays on the pilot's Despair. The memories of their Hope may remain but without the care and attention of the pilot they will be lost forever.

Minimum and Maximum

Pilots always have at least one relationship character. If a pilot does nothing to maintain or improve his relationships then he will be left with whatever bully chooses to be his rival and pick on him for being friendless and alone. If a relationship is lost or changes so that the pilot doesn't have one then the Director must create a relationship with a supporting character to fill the gap. A pilot may not have more relationship characters than his Charm value. Therefore, he may be forced to lose a relationship to make room for the new friend or rival.

Common Relationships

- ▶ The SAInt Company: Pilots are always grouped together into companies of approximately five members. In a group of fewer players

the Director will need to supply supporting characters to fill those roles. Because they will be spending so much time together in training and on missions, these supporting character pilots are perfect for early relationships, introducing drama and tension into the team of pilots from the start.

- ▶ **Pilots and Peers:** A pilot from another company makes an excellent rival or a “brothers-in-arms” friend. The academies of the Arx don’t just train pilots but also the young officers-to-be of the Preservation Force who will command and control the robot tanks. How the pilots and “tankers” feel about each other can open up possibilities for good-natured camaraderie or hostility and backstabbing.
- ▶ **Tutors, Trainers, and Operations Command:** Instructors and commanders are responsible for training the pilot in and out of her SAInt. Military staff who provide strategic support for Preservation Force Actions and their response to the child soldiers of the SAInt program can lead to strained and unusual relationships.
- ▶ **Family:** Most pilots will be living away from family members but that does not stop their influence over the pilot. Family can interact through calls and mail and even sharing stories from home with other pilots can stir up strong memories. Those living with a foster home on the Arx now have a new family that they will need to learn to live with.

Relationship Characters in Actions

When a relationship character can be a part of a pilot’s Action then the Action is “about” that pilot’s Hope or Despair, even if it does not relate to his Actions. A relationship character can provoke a pilot’s motivation when he is avoiding it or even defying it. If Sven’s Hope is to “always be the center of attention” but he only joins in team Actions as an assistant, then Commander Pilkington should remind him that his Ego is on the line and challenge him to step up. After the Action a Spirit check is rolled for Ego.

Relationship Characters in Trials

Relationship characters can and should be a part of Trial scenes. There are limits to the relationship characters influence on Ego. A relationship character cannot be an endless source of Hope or Despair. Even if a relationship character is present or mentioned in every Action of the Trial, once that relationship has been involved in one Action of the Trial it has no further influence on Ego. Only one relationship at a time can have in-

fluence on a pilot's Ego. If multiple relationship characters are involved then only one can influence his Action at a time. A pilot could not gain or lose multiple points of Ego because of several relationships. He can only gain or lose one point for each attempt and the relationship character's influence supersedes his own choice of motivations.

Relationships Without Actions

Not every interaction with a pilot's relationship characters must be an Action or a Trial. Sometimes they are a part of passing scenes between others. Though these scenes are not opportunities for Ego immediately, the relationship is still a part of the story and can have some influence on the Actions that follow, such as Commander Pilkington reminding Sven of his drive to gain attention during a counseling session before he goes to the soccer game. The memory of that conversation can carry forward into Sven's later Action.

Director Characters on the Battlefield

SAInts are elite units on the battlefield but may receive support from other Preservation Force Robot Tanks or from other Director character pilots. If the other characters in the fight are only extras, they will have no influence on the outcome of a combat scene and their struggles are entirely background dressing. The Director can take advantage of these extras as a way to echo the Action of the pilots or increase the tension of the situation as the victory of the pilots leads the forces backing them, while enemy successes against the pilots can translate to lost ground or lives for the defensive forces. Extras, having no statistical value, can be killed outright in combat as the collateral damage of an enemy attack or to increase the tension in a fight.

Supporting characters and antagonists have the opportunity to join the pilots to assist their Actions, providing Benefit for each supporting character joining the Action up to the maximum allowed numbers of the team. If the leader fails in his Action then the supporting characters and antagonists also suffer defeat and may be damaged or in danger of destruction. If a supporting character or antagonist is not involved in assisting a pilot or antagonist, he acts as an extra, though he does have the advantage that he cannot be destroyed quite as easily. The Director can endanger a supporting character and if the pilots do nothing to rescue him or fail in their Efforts then he can be dispatched. The pilot is always given the opportunity to rescue a supporting character or antagonist in

danger. Directors characters will back up a pilot but are not protagonists and do not do a pilot's work for him. If the Director needs to rescue the pilots from a terrible situation then the Director characters join the pilot's team and assist his Actions; they do not substitute their own.

The Tears Series

Creating a series is a communal activity. The pilot's life in the fight against the Mayzor is the general backdrop to every *Tears of a Machine* series but each player's likes and dislikes and choices and motivations influence the whole game. As a Director, find out what pilot players want from the story. While creating their pilots, ask what drew them to choose to play *Tears*. Work with them to make this a part of their game from the start. The statistics that they assign their pilot are that person's past: How they have grown and where they have come from. Hope and Despair are their future: What they want to strive for and fight against and where those drives will lead them.

Always keep the players informed of the direction of the game. The lives of pilots are determined by the Preservation Force, so much of their day-to-day activities are planned and organized for them. The pilots only have the surprises they make for themselves and the random strikes of the Mayzor. Be comfortable with discussing these ideas out of play as well so that you know how the players feel about what is happening and can address concerns, questions or grievances. Have informal briefing sessions before play and debriefing sessions afterward. Introduce the session with a reminder of how the last ended. If the episode ends with a foreshadowing of coming events, present a cut-away scene to Director character actions or dialogue that can serve as the lead-in to the next. These coming episode clips are standard for anime series and keep the audience interest through the time between episodes.

Seasons

The series is made up of seasons that mirror the seasons of an anime TV show. Each season should include approximately twelve episodes. This season tells the story of one year in the lives of the pilots, so that by the end of that time all have had one birthday, either during an episode or in downtime between the episodes. The next season continues the one-year cycle. Pilots will grow and change and live and, under the worst circumstances, die. Pilots may eventually age out of the SAInt

program while others won't last that long. There is a life cycle for pilots that means that with time a player will need to create a new pilot to continue in the shared story of his company.

Big Picture Planning

Too much planning can be bad for a series. Preplanned events require predetermined outcomes from the pilots' choices and Actions or that they be removed entirely from scenes that decide the plot of the story. Don't let the pilots become victims of fate or sideline observers to their story. Instead, offer challenges and let pilot choices build an organic story arc. Keep a list of possible events that match up with the ideas of your episodes or series. They should be brief, no more than a single sentence or phrase about something that could happen to the pilots or to the world around them. Below are a list of example events that may happen in your series:

- ▶ Curfews are now strictly enforced.
- ▶ A new company is formed that the pilots are told to welcome.
- ▶ The Japanese military unveils their own prototype SAInt.
- ▶ A new type of submersible Locust attacks (Lobster class.)
- ▶ The favorite instructor retires and is replaced.
- ▶ A former Rival starts to show romantic interest.
- ▶ A new grading system might have the pilots reassigned to other companies.
- ▶ An Arx is directly attacked by a Magnas (for the first time.)
- ▶ A pilot's dead comrade appears in visions as he falls asleep in the tanks.
- ▶ The Jehu's bow launch system is broken and the pilots have to launch single file, arriving at the battle separately.

The more provocative situation, the better. An idea that doesn't catch on any of the pilot's motivations or background isn't going to inspire a response.

These events may spawn others and a thread will develop as the pilots and their players respond to the idea. And if they don't? Then leave it aside. Maybe it's an idea for another time in the story or maybe other, better ideas will replace it. Go with the story that the pilots are building for themselves with their choices. Once players are along for the ride with a suggested idea look for related ideas or other events that will

build on to it to keep the story pointed in that direction. The story is the journey and plot only creates destinations.

Story Lines

Because of the importance of their motivations, each pilot has a personal storyline. When he acts frequently in an episode then his storyline takes the spotlight. While it's okay to have an episode that focuses on a single pilot, it can steal attention from the others and even block a player from participation. This is why it's good to find common ground between the pilots' motivations and to create overlap in their relationship characters. Then one pilot's story will carry over into another's. Among all the pilots there can be many parallel stories going on in a series, an episode, or a single scene.

Supporting characters can contribute their own storylines as their motivations align and conflict with the pilots'. Work the relationships between supporting characters and pilots. What do they want? How can they get it? How can they involve the pilots in reaching success and avoiding failure? As with any pilot's motivation, the motivations of the supporting characters and antagonists are not the plot, they are suggestions.

The Theme for Tears of a Machine

Tears of a Machine has important themes built into its narrative and rules. Pilots will face incredible odds on the battlefield and can only rely on each other. Teamwork is what will carry them through the darkest times. Growing and learning together as comrades and friends will make them stronger. A pilot's fight might be her own but she never has to face it alone. These underlying ideas are what give *Tears of a Machine* its theme.

The Theme of Your Game

Having a consistent theme will keep the "feel" of a series together even when the content of episodes varies. At its core, what is your game of Tears about? The series is the story of the pilots' lives. Common ideas that pilots share will get most of the attention. The theme will drift over the course of a series. Pilots grow and change and new motivations, goals, and feelings will become important to their stories. Use downtime between episodes or scenes to review and re-evaluate the theme with the players so that it doesn't become stagnant. Focus on what everyone wants to enjoy in the game.

Beginning the Series

The first play session of a series should be devoted to bringing the players together in the world and creating their pilots. Part of creating a pilot is finding the potential for meaningful interactions with the other players, whether that means hanging out together and playing pranks on the snobbish academy newbie or bickering in the locker rooms after a failed mission. A player's choices in creating a pilot are her statements about the kind of story she wants to experience and share. Other players can reinforce that desire or look for their own way but all should be aware of the expectations that they are creating for the other players and the Director.

Everyone needs to be honest about what they want from play but also open and willing to adjust expectations to help everyone have a good time. The motivations of a character, Hope and Despair, will prompt scenes. Some motivations are more common or easy for the Director to organize than others. Each character doesn't need to fill in some niche in the group. There is no need to limit a character to be greatly successful with one or two abilities and suffer constant failure with the rest. Because the company will be encouraged to work as a team for their Actions, being broadly capable and able to contribute to the group Effort is valuable.

Revising Characters

Another option that a Director can offer is an opportunity for a player to revise a character after the first session or two. Perhaps a player's concept is too awkward or difficult to play, or he misunderstood how to rate his abilities so that he can succeed or fail in ways that emphasize his motivations. If the player wants to make these changes she should do so with the involvement of the other pilot players, just as a character is created. After the first two sessions, however, the only way a character should change is through collecting and spending Advancement Points.

Episodes

Every play session of *Tears of a Machine* is an episode with a dramatic arc of beginning, middle, and end. With a longer play session the Director may present two episodes back-to-back. The recommended structure of scenes is the same, even with a break in play in the middle.

The Structure of an Episode

A typical episode consists of a series of dramatic scenes of the pilots' lives leading up to a climactic conflict and then a cool-down. The climax may be an intense argument with a professor, a championship volleyball match against the rival pilot company, a nasty brawl with the biggest bully in the academy, or a combat deployment to fight off the alien forces of the Mayzor. This form lets the drama of the pilots' lives lead into their battles, giving them the opportunity to gain or lose the Ego they need to face a greater challenge. Follow this structure closely with the first few episodes when characters and theme are being established so that more attention can be paid to learning the basics. After a few episodes the Director can play with the narrative structure to create more interesting stories, like having the fallout of an early combat mission provide the drama for the rest of the episode. Directors may also "shift" the scenes so that the play session ends with a cliffhanger and a "to be continued" line at the end.

Every Action scene in the episode should involve relationship characters and reflect the Hopes or Despairs of one or more pilots. Some Actions will test all pilots at once so they can pull together in a team. Sometimes they must act individually, such as a classroom exam or contest. Scenes may target all, or just a few pilots. Scenes that target one pilot should be kept to a minimum. Excluding other pilots denies them the chance to earn Ego or contribute to the story. Not every scene needs Actions and dice, but without Actions pilots cannot earn Ego.

Pacing the Episode

To build in the rise to climactic events while still following the player's choices, the Director can cue the types of scenes off the pool of Ego that the pilots have between them. When the pilots have lots of Ego they are ready for prolonged conflict and greater dangers. With less, they will need simple Actions and opportunities to build up their Egos before they can face a difficult Trial and win.

Try this episode structure early in the series: Play enough scenes to give all the pilots the opportunity to earn three Ego points. Keep these Actions generic at first, situations in which all of the pilots are easily involved such as classes or training sessions. If their motivations don't apply to a particular scene, add their relationship characters to the scenes. If a pilot suggests a scene, keep everyone involved or split them

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off into another scene so that all pilots have an equal opportunity for Actions to earn Ego.

After these Action scenes, check the Ego levels of the pilots. The total pool of Ego is that potential energy that the company has to throw at opposition. When the total is three times the number of pilots or more, then the company is ready for a Trial or Battle. If the amount is less give them another scene or two to take Actions and prepare. Look to the pilots with the lowest Ego as inspiration and bring their motivations and relationship characters into these scenes so that they can balance out with their teammates. Or open up the direction to the players. Give the pilots free periods to goof off at their leisure or ask them to suggest scenes that follow their motivations.

Once there have been about five Action scenes then the pilots are due for some sort of Trial, ready or not. A good Trial involves the motivations of many pilots at once. Use overlap in their motivations or drop in relationship characters to increase the involvement of those who do not have a personal stake in the Trial. Overlap in relationship characters is important too. If the best student in class and the worst student share the tutor as a relationship character then the drama of the situation will be even stronger.

Trials can be interruptions in the ongoing story; the alarms sound and pilots are scrambled to a battlefield, a bully rolls up spoiling for a fight, the Instructor runs into the company and decides to chew them out. Other Trials are an extension of the Actions that the pilots are already taking. These Trials are usually the most interesting for the players. Pilots are showing off in athletics class so the instructor launches a full-on basketball game with prizes at stake. Sneaking out for a smoke on one of the maintenance gantries triggers an intrusion alarm and the pilots need to evade the sweeps of security and sneak back home or get caught, or even break down and turn themselves in. The attempt to make a lying pilot confess blows up into a debate and personal secrets are laid bare, one by one.

Keep a few scenes in reserve after each Trial. These can be quiet passing scenes to wind down the tension or Actions that start the build up to a Trial in the next episode. It's good to have time for the pilots to collect themselves and look toward the future before the episode ends. If there are injured pilots then they can spend some time in the hospital to recuperate.

With this form pilots should have between three and five Action scenes for every Trial they face and another couple of scenes to wind down after a big blow-up conflict. Most Episodes include one Trial or Battle. It is possible for a fast paced episode to include two Trials but there should never be more until after an episode break. As your series progresses you'll develop a sense of what your players enjoy and how to structure your episodes.

Remember to break up the time between scenes. Playing out every minute of a pilot's life may be tempting but each season of thirteen game sessions represents a year of the pilot's life. Between scenes and episodes days, weeks, even months may pass and the players should be kept aware of the dwindling days of the pilot's teenage years.

Mood

Establishing mood will help to involve the pilots in the episode and provide some loose direction. Mood will shift from episode to episode and scene to scene following the dramatic arc building to a climax and cool-down afterward. The more pilots succeed, the more upbeat and energetic the mood. When they fail and lose Ego then darker moods will take over. High spirits can be crushed and failing pilots redeemed. Sudden shifts in mood and tone are a great way to re-engage a pilot but an up-and-down rollercoaster of moods will numb some players. Present the situations and Director characters with strong, obvious emotions but let the players and their Actions decide how the pilots feel.

Episode Ideas

Here are a few examples and suggestions for episodes. These events could be an active part of the pilot's stories or they could just be the backdrop to their own dramas.

Light Hearted: Some pilots are barely older than children and even if they are orphaned survivors, they have safety and security with the Preservation Force that allows them to relax and enjoy being young again.

- ▶ To celebrate the New Year the pilot trainer has decided the SAInts will perform a giant robot gymnastics routine. Better than interpretive dance I guess.
- ▶ A pilot from another company has decided she is desperately in love with one of the player pilots. What lengths will she go to make him notice her? Will this relationship affect the mission?

light and dark episodes feed the pilots Hopes and Despairs and keep the players feeling happy with their time spent laughing and crying at the controls of giant robots.

Episode Rewards

Award each player 1 AP for the episode. Make sure that other AP were awarded for Ego ratings reaching their limits through the scenes. If a pilot's Ego was ever 5 during the episode, award 1 AP and if the pilot's Ego was ever 0 during the episode award 1 AP. Players can earn 1 to 3 AP for each episode.

Scenes

Scenes are the opportunities for pilots to follow their motivations and face a Challenge. Most are a straightforward setup for a single Challenge but others will be complex Trials and Battles. *Tears of a Machine* is a game about the pilots and their motivations so the Director's best tool is the Pilot Reference Sheet; a simple list of the Hopes, Despairs and relationships of the pilots. With that she can create the places, people, and situations that the pilots and their players want in the story.

Outline Scenes

Use pilot motivations to inspire scenes but be ready to accept how the pilots choose to respond. There's nothing wrong with asking the players directly about what their pilots want to do. Director characters have been designed to be quickly created and readily accessible so that a Director can step into and out of the role of extra, supporting character, or antagonist with ease. Don't ignore their motivations. A Director character's motivation and his status as friend or rival says a lot about the kind of challenge he will create for the pilots.

Challenge and Action

The ten Proficiencies on the pilot record are all the Actions that pilots can take. They are categories with subtlety and variety in their application, the palette of choices the pilots have available so that they can decide to sneak into a locked room at night or browbeat a janitor into handing them the keys. The scene could be instigated by the pilot's choices so that it advances towards a specific choice of Action. In scenes instigated by the Director characters, the player may have to choose her pilot's Action to suit what is happening, or not act at all.

A pilot might face challenges that target him directly or challenges he could choose to pick up or ignore. A bully coming at the pilot with anger in his eyes won't let him get away without some kind of challenge. However, if that same bully is after another character the pilot could decide to not get involved. Some of the most interesting challenges can come from a pilot witnessing a situation that relates to his motivations and choosing to step in and uphold his values. At the same time a pilot who prefers to avoid trouble can become a passive character in his own story and needs some direct prompting.

Every challenge is a chance for a pilot to gain or lose Ego. This lets pilots control the economy of Ego. Pilots try to be involved in Actions, just as the Director balances the pilot's opportunities to act in scenes. Allowing many rolls for an individual will place him much further ahead or behind the rest of the team in Ego so offer opportunities for pilots to act together in teams or with other Actions in the same scene. When pilots must be alone for Actions, offer "meanwhile" scenes to other pilots so they have just as much chance at earning Ego. If a pilot is given opportunities but refuses to be involved in Actions then he has denied himself those chances to get involved and earn Ego.

The pilot's choice of Action can change the challenge he faces. If Ken is trying to climb over a fence to escape the class bully he could go quietly and stealthily, rolling his Athletics Action against the bully's awareness (measured by Focus) as he tries to slip out of sight. Or, he could charge the fence to scramble over it, with his Athletics Action challenged by the bully's speed (Vigor) as he runs to catch up. When there are many paths through a challenge the pilots are encouraged to stick to their motivations and find their own way. In a Trial a pilot may need to change his approach from Action to Action, especially if he fails at first and has to find another path to victory.

Planning Focus

Review the pilots and their motivations before play, during breaks, and as the game is progressing. For a scene to engage the pilots it plays on their Hopes and Despairs and involves relationships. Each classroom lesson, encounter with a crush, or Magnas attack addresses the motivations of as many pilots as is possible or is open-ended so that each pilot can express his own motivations, applying them to his Actions. The pilots live controlled lives on the Arx but Directors should allow them to

lead and go off the schedule. There's plenty of fun and tension to be had when the pilots slip out past curfew to go look for a secret lab in the restricted levels. When they instigate these scenes meet them there with their motivations and supporting characters.

Location

The environment of the scene influences what kind of Actions can be taken. A Director is giving a guided tour of a space when describing it as a setting. Think logically about what is prominent and important before moving on to details. Involve all the senses so the pilots also know how the place sounds and feels. Noise, scents, temperature; describe the significant feelings of the place. To deal with very large spaces, limit description to specifics in what is nearest the pilots and leave more distant things as vague outlines until they are approached. If there is one particular detail that should interest the pilots, bring it up at the end of the description so that is fresh in their minds.

There are a wide variety of locations and environments within the Arx. Take advantage of this variety, rather than having boring classrooms followed by combat in a ruined city for the whole series of episodes. A military installation with an attached mall provides a lot of options to play games, hang out and relax, cause trouble, and go exploring. The Mayzor will attack any concentration of people and could target a rural village, mountainside enclave, or advanced military research installation.

Don't overlook the emotional weight of a setting. The tone or mood that it creates will be a guide to the pilots and other characters. Even a small change to the space will have an impact. The same launch deck that is a hub of bustling activity under the hot sun can be a lonely place in the dead of night or even a spot for a romantic rendezvous when the moon is full and the stars are bright. This can have a bearing on the Hope or Despair a pilot will deal with here.

Never hide an important detail. If a scene or story would lose momentum without the pilots noticing something or someone then introduce the detail to them, either in the original description of the setting or as the Actions pick up. Observe Actions are not the focus of the scene if it isn't about looking for clues or trying to avoid an ambush. Don't waste time with Observe Actions just to find out if a pilot can see what is in front of him.

Participants

Actions require that characters must have ability values and dice must be rolled. That means that supporting characters or antagonists are part of any Action. Though it is possible to have an Action opposed by an arbitrary value, such as how difficult it is to climb a wall, what makes an Action matter to the story is the characters observing the pilot. That Action to climb the wall carries greater weight and importance when the pilot is being watched by his persnickety combat instructor. The Action is about impressing the instructor, not just getting over the wall, and the pilot can engage his relationship to the instructor to earn Ego.

Each type of character has ability values that determine if a scene is a single Action or a longer and more detailed Trial scene. Extras can be the audience to a pilot's Actions, but they cannot take part in Actions unless they are elevated by the pilot or the Director to be a supporting character. Supporting characters provide challenge to Actions with their ability ratings. Antagonists spark Trials and prolonged conflict. Relationship characters come into a scene with the emotional baggage of the pilot.

Use relationship characters as the inspiration for scenes created by the Director. Be varied so that the entire series isn't just about one pilot's unrequited love for the older robot technician. When the pilots instigate the scene bring the relationship characters or supporting characters along with them. This is the easiest way for a Director to follow the lead of the pilot players and still provide a compelling story.

Establish the "home turf" of recurring characters to bring setting and characters together. Places shape the people who inhabit them, and vice versa. The tutor who keeps his desk spotless is stricter than the one who has let books and papers stack up next to a half-drunk bottle of water and a wilting plant. If the pilots are used to only seeing Commander Pilkington at Operations or in training exercises then when they see her shopping for a fancy dress in the mall it could be enough to get their interest.

Director Character's Motivations

Building and playing the motivations of the Director characters will keep them active in the pilot's story. They are people with their own wants and needs and when these desires cross the motivations of the pilots they are driven to take Action, either against or with the pilots. Di-

rector characters with weak motivations won't add much to the story so don't place attention on them. As a Director character grows and advances, his motivations also change and grow stronger.

Director Character Intentions

The intentions of supporting characters and antagonists are a “call to Action” for the pilots. They present the challenge in story and numbers. The character's goal is explained as what he will do. The challenge numbers do not need to be declared but may be used as a quick way to explain what the character wants and how hard he will try to get it. This gives pilots an idea of what will happen if they don't act and the consequences if they fail. Only intent is being described before dice are rolled and Actions haven't taken place. A bully might want to grab up a wrench and throw it at a pilot but he could be outmatched by a pilot who snaps up the wrench first, just as he could by a pilot who dodges the throw.

Pilot Actions

A Director should never keep players in the dark. Answer all reasonable questions about a scene before the pilots act. Anything that a pilot could know the player should know before she decides her goal. She might not know exactly whose footsteps those are rounding the corner down the hall but she can tell if it's an adult or a child. She declares what Action the pilot will use and who or what will be the target.

Whenever a pilot acts he tries to do so in service of his motivations, Hope and Despair. Though a pilot's choices may be limited by the situation, he may sometimes have a very different response to a challenge than his peers. Maybe it's more important to him that he fail a history quiz with gusto, reinforcing his own belief that his natural Talents should be enough and that book learning is beneath him, rather than trying to ace the quiz. A pilot who tries to talk his way out of a fight rather than duck or punch back will be using a different Action and different numbers will be involved in the die rolls. A Director needs to be flexible in handling the pilot's reactions to challenges. The Director characters respond to the choices and Actions of the pilots.

Challenge Values and Effort

Most challenges a pilot faces come from the statistics of the Director controlled characters. Meaningful challenges don't come from inani-

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mate objects. Sometimes a pilot has to navigate a maze of corridors or guess the code for an alarm panel but a Challenge from a Director character means the pilot's motivations or relationships can be involved. Ego could be gained or lost and the story will develop with triumphs and consequences that will follow the pilot in later Actions.

A pilot might be caught by a challenge that cannot involve another character. For example, a pilot might be alone and trapped, racing to escape a collapsing building. The Director can randomly generate a challenge value for the pilot Action with a die roll. The ranges that are appropriate for a pilot's age are similar to the statistics of Director characters.

Random Challenge Values Chart

<i>Pilot's Age</i>	<i>12-13</i>	<i>14-15</i>	<i>16-17</i>
<i>Base Value</i>	2	3	4
<i>Add</i>	1d	1d	1d
<i>Range</i>	3-8	4-9	6-11

Action Resolution

The pilot rolls the Talent dice, adds Proficiency rating and any Benefits to the high value, totals up the Effort, and it is compared to the challenge. The pilot succeeds or fails and the outcome reflects how well or how poorly the pilot did. The mechanical outcome of an Action is a simple "yes" or "no" answer to his attempt. The "why" and "how" of the Action are what make it a story.

Success

In the most basic sense, when a pilot succeeds he gets what he wants from the Action; what the player has explained as his intent comes to pass. The player narrates his success and the Director explains the response of other characters and the environment. The player can add some little flourishes to detail his success.

The aftereffects of a pilot's success aren't always positive. There are two sides to every Action that a pilot takes and a pilot's success means someone else has failed, and they could hold a grudge. Think ahead to the kind of responses that an Action could provoke to continue the story.

When the pilot's Ego is on the line and points may be gained or lost, it is best to wait until the Spirit check is made before describing any out-

come. Take that Boost or drain of self-confidence into account in the description that follows.

Success with Benefits and Boosts

The Benefits and Boosts gained from matching dice are the turn of good fortune that fell into line with the pilot's Efforts. Her opponent stumbled and the soccer ball bounced off his head and into the goal. The tutor's quiz matched up perfectly with the pilot's notes. The Locust turned at just the right moment for her sword to catch the gap in its shoulder joint. Luck, or fate, is on the pilot's side.

The Benefits and Boosts offered from gear, equipment, and weapons are displays of technical ingenuity that win the day for the pilot. For example, the blast from her rifle powers through the armor of her enemy. Her Linc grabs the right answers off the Arx databanks. The Boost jet carries the SAInt over the building and the tip of her toe grazes the roof. Those drawn from assistants are the combined Effort of the team. Each are doing their part and contributing toward the whole, the pilots and their friends have come together to win.

When a success doesn't come from the dice and the abilities of the pilot but from spending Ego then the pilot has made an extreme and draining Effort to win. Refusing to lay off the trigger as his rifle overheats in his hands or debasing himself with a desperate attempt to impress the instructor. A victory by Ego is usually more of a relief than a celebration as it is a narrow win against frightening odds.

Ego Gain

There's a difference between winning the volleyball game to earn some scattered applause and getting hoisted onto the shoulders of your teammates to be paraded around the field. When a pilot not only succeeds but earns Ego from the success then play up the impact of the outcome. Things go better than expected and everyone's response reflects it. It's important that a Director not tell a pilot how she feels but shows her how others are responding when Ego rises, and when it falls.

Failure

The effects of a failure are closely controlled in Trials and battles as Resolve or Structure is harmed and damaged. But numbers are not dramatic and when a pilot fails she needs to know what really happens in the outcome. The opposition gets its way by destroying the target or

outperforming the pilot or shoving the technician down the stairs and the pilot has to live with her loss.

Failure is boring if it is a simple “no”. If it is a dead end with no other options then the story grinds to a halt. It's also dull if there are no lasting effects from the failure. Ever failure moves the story forward and informs a follow-up. What complications does this failure introduce into the story of the pilot? If he can't get the door to the equipment locker open, who is going to round the corner and catch him fiddling with the lock? Who is going to laugh out loud when he falls on his butt running the obstacle course? Who will turn up her nose and walk the other way when the pilot offers a plastic rose and a love poem? What cover is left on the battlefield after the gun batteries are demolished? How long will the pilot be stuck cleaning up the classrooms after lessons? Without consequences the Action becomes unimportant instead of being the springboard for the pilot's next choice. Will he redeem himself next time or dig the hole deeper?

Failure Despite Benefits

A pilot who fails even with the help of Benefits might have had some especially bad luck or an equipment malfunction or some other interference. Worse though, is the pilot who fails while being assisted by his teammates. He has let the team down and caused them all to fail.

Ego Loss

There's an extra sting to a pilot losing Ego from a failure. When the cute technician turns down his Valentine's present she could have just politely apologized but instead she laughed loudly and walked away. Or her boyfriend bounded into the room and swept her up in a hug. And that boyfriend is the same jerk that beat our poor pilot at tennis earlier that day. With Ego loss, the Director must “rub it in” so that the pilot's player really understands that he can't just get up, dust himself off, and go on with his day. This is the kind of loss that stays with him.

Passing Story

A scene may cut quickly from one location and situation to another. At other times a transition from one time or place to another will connect scenes. Some scenes will need a detailed preface or denouement, like the exposition of the mission briefing, the suiting up of a pilot before

the launch or the conversation between two characters who have come to an agreement after an argument. Sometimes the pilots just need a chance to sit together in the cafeteria and talk. The parts of the story between Actions are not typically scenes on their own but are the passing story between Action scenes, stitching them together and providing continuity. In these segments, though characters are interacting with one another, no Actions are rolled so Ego is not earned or lost.

Don't spend the time to play out every active moment of the pilot's lives in these passing story segments. Doing so will bog down your episodes and lessen the tension of the Action scene. Don't be afraid to quickly move the story forward. Check with the players though before skipping the clock ahead or cutting to the next scene. If pilots have important Actions then they should ask for a complete scene in which to act and not try to slip Actions in during passing scenes and transitions. The best way for a Director to use passing story is as a setup for later Actions. If there is a relationship character that the pilot never sees on the battlefield, have him drop by and offer some well-wishes for the next fight. Remembering that moment in the heat of battle could "activate" that relationship and put Ego on the line for the pilot's Action.

Example Scenes

Classroom lectures: SAInt pilots are still completing their education in reading, writing and mathematics. As Preservation Forces recruits all their education is focused on military application, much like an officer's academy. Pilots will have training in battlefield tactics, military history and the technical operation of their SAInts. Perhaps they will be able to move into some other branch of service once they are too old to pilot. They may also need this education if they wash out.

Combat simulation: The greater part of a pilot's day is spent in training for SAInt combat operations. Pilots are loaded into control capsules where they run combat simulations or observe military actions from within the conflict through a playback of a SAInt's memories of battle. Training scenarios will vary but may include target practice, combat maneuvering, stealth and countermeasures, close combat, rapid deployment, observation and comment on the tactics of other pilots, and complete battle scenarios. Rather than play these mock combats out blow-by-blow the Director and pilots could describe their overall strate-

is always there for a misstep leading to embarrassment. Debates can settle arguments or win over friends while artists can show off their talents and athletes can impress on the field or court. Pilots will hang out and play cards and games in the dormitories or foster homes. They can visit the shopping plaza or entertainment centers like the theater or game room or coffee bar. Time is still limited, even in these relaxed and friendly moments. There is always the possibility of a special training session being ordered or the danger of an emergency dispatch to counter an enemy attack.

Operations recognizes how important it is for pilots to develop strong peer relationships, not only to improve teamwork in combat but also for the healthy development of the teenage psyche. Fosters, tutors and trainers are expected to monitor relationships and ensure that they remain platonic or at least never move beyond childish romance. Operators call this the Innocence Policy.

Grudges: Hot-blooded people in dangerous situations means that a lot of anger can be misdirected. Insulting another soldier, outperforming a peer or upsetting an officer or even a civilian occupant of the Arx could lead to enemies, rivalries and even violence. A pilot could be ambushed in the service corridors between training sessions or the locker room. A pilot could also arrange such an ambush herself if she has decided violence is the way to solve her problems.

Trials

The Actions in Trials are not much different than those in single Action scenes and are executed the same way. The difference is in how they follow on one another. Successes and failures accrue, changing the Resolve of the pilot and his opponent from Action to Action and the drama of the situation as one side becomes more desperate to win. Because of the need to reorganize and change Actions after a failure, pilots need to move through a variety of different approaches to the situation, and also move through the environment as well; a chase ending in a dead end could turn into a brawl. Pilots may also choose to change Actions and leaders even if they succeed to spice up the situation and add more options.

Time in a Trial is flexible: Actions do not have to immediately follow one another. Building the best remote control model hovercraft and winning the race can be a montage, beginning with the act of constructing and

testing the machine over the day and night before the race. If the pilot does well in the early Actions of the Trial the outcome of the race itself could be a foregone conclusion.

It is important for the Director to update the pilots on how the situation has changed in the outcome of each Action. How have attitudes changed? Is the setting different now? What are the new Actions that the pilot can take and what has changed about his opponent's intent? Make sure the pilots are all aware of the new information before they begin their next Actions.

Battles

The Director has more work to do in preparing and running a battle scene than in Trials or other scenes. When the danger of death and loss of a valued character is at risk, more rules are involved as a way to keep the outcome fair. Battle scenes are not common, with no more than one in an episode, or fewer, but the threat of an unpredicted Mayzor attack is always be a risk for the pilots. Use the Battlefield Record to organize the battle if necessary.

Combat in *Tears of a Machine* isn't just about the fight. The numbers and dice create a tactical puzzle but that is just math. Some players in combat can fall into simply declaring Actions and rolling dice and don't feel the excitement and horror of a deadly dangerous fight. When the personalities of the fighters shine through the battle becomes interesting. Actions and objectives within the battle are valuable if they serve the pilots' personal stories; driving a pilot to face down his fears or chase his dreams. Just like with creating other scenes, when preparing for a battle, review the pilot's Hope, Despair, and relationship characters. Include as many elements from each pilot as possible in the events of the battle.

The other human actors in the battle include; the local militia forces, other Preservation Force companies, robot pilots, troops, evacuees fleeing to the shelters, the company commander and advisors broadcasting from the Operations center on the Arx. While some of these people will be the faceless extras who fill out the scene and create the tension and panic of a battle, others will be supporting characters or even antagonists who will interact with the pilots to help or hinder them. Keep communication and dialog between the pilots and other Director

characters going and build the story as the battle continues. Relationship characters keep the players in touch with the pilot's motivations through directions from Operations, the banter of other pilots or defenders, and even bystanders. Encourage them to keep open lines with the other pilots of the company as well. The flexible nature of time in battles means that a player should never feel pressured to limit what he can say to others between exchanges of weapons fire with the foe. There's usually a lot of talking on an anime battlefield.

The Battlefield

Mayzor launch raids on population centers so combat through the streets of a city under siege will be common. Simple variety can be introduced by changing the arrival time of the SAInts. If they are quick to the battlefield then the Mayzor are still stuck at the outskirts of the city and the danger of civilian casualties is lessened. If they are late to the fight however, or if the Mayzor landing was very close or even within the city then they will arrive to find panicked civilians being carried away from the shattered survival shelters, past the burning hulks of robot tanks.

Add more variety to battlefields later in the series. There have never been any aquatic assaults, no Locust unit is capable of submarine travel, but what if a new unit appears? What if a lone Magnas is discovered wandering out in the country? Or the wreckage of a failed raid? If battles are played in a paint-by-numbers routine then it is time for a change of scenery.

The environment too, can offer other challenges to the pilots. A fight in the high mountains can trigger an avalanche. A dense forest could block the SAInts from moving while the smaller Locust robots scurry through the trees.

The value of cover is important to the setting of a battle and to the pilot's Actions. Cover provides a Benefit and that makes it mechanically significant. Decide if the battlefield is primarily light, medium, or heavy cover that can give the pilots Benefits or a no-man's land that offers no protection.

Objectives and Danger

The sealed blast doors of the evacuation shelter, the gun battery on the hillside, or the damaged Robot Tank limping away in retreat; these are all targets for the Mayzor assault forces. Every battle centers on the

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Preservation Force and the SAInts protecting these objectives as the Mayzor move to endanger and destroy them. Draw up three to six possible objectives on each battlefield for the Mayzor to attack, adding more if the pilots are capable veterans. They don't need to be planned out in detail and the pilots don't know what they are until they are endangered by the Mayzor. They can even be improvised from the pilots' choice of Actions. There may be more objectives on the battlefield if the Mayzor are raiding a large city but other companies would be launched to cover them. The objectives the pilots are defending are those in their part of the battlefield. If the battle goes well for the pilots and they wipe out the forces endangering their objectives they may be moved to reinforce these other companies and take on the defense of more objectives.

When the pilots arrive at the battlefield these targets are already under attack and several of the objectives are endangered. The pilots must Attack or Engage the Locust threat with their first Actions or these objectives will be lost. The number of objectives that are endangered at the start of the battle is based on the Ego of the pilots. For every pilot with more than three Ego points one of the objectives is already endangered. These pilots have the resources to leap into Action and fight the enemy alone, if they have to, while others need to form up in teams and reinforce one another for a sure victory.

Once the pilot successfully acts against the Mayzor it is destroyed or it turns to fight the greater threat. If an objective is endangered and a pilot doesn't succeed in his Action against the Mayzor then the objective is destroyed, broken or ruined so that the pilot can't do anything more to defend it. The robot tank collapses and erupts in flame or the main gates of the shelter are smashed open. An inventive Director can find other ways to destroy an objective. Instead of demolishing the tank its crew could turn deserter and bolt from the battlefield. The pilot's failure could be caught by media cameras and used by detractors of the Preservation Force.

Other objectives can become endangered if a pilot fails an Action. If there are Mayzor forces that have not been engaged they continue to attack the objectives and the pilot's failure is a trigger to the Director to increase the tension and force the pilots into desperate, exciting choices. The Preservation Forces VTOL could be knocked out the sky and the surviving crew surrounded by the Mayzor swarm or a building could

collapse onto the major roadway to block the evacuation route already choked with fleeing civilians. Pilots are never allowed to be idle in a battle and if they can't bring the fight to the enemy then they will be forced to respond to their advances.

Once an objective that was endangered has been successfully defended by the pilots it won't be endangered again for the rest of the battle. The pilots can focus attention elsewhere instead of constantly falling back to hold the same ground again and again.

Endangered Characters

Though an extra can be killed outright by the Director in service of the story, supporting characters have the chance to be rescued by the pilots. If a supporting character is faced by a superior foe and is on his own or if he is involved in a team Action that has failed he may become endangered. The Director describes how the character is in immediate danger and if a pilot does not take Action to save him, and succeed in doing so, the supporting character will die. If there are several supporting characters that could be endangered, like when a team of pilots fail an attack, then the Director chooses one from the group to be endangered. If there are multiple groups lead by multiple player pilots then more may be endangered in the same Action, but only one per team.

Even if there are many supporting characters on the battlefield the Director shouldn't just endanger them, one after another, with every pilot failure. Choose significant characters and dramatic moments. If a pilot's relationship character is on the battlefield, then don't endanger him when just any pilot fails. Wait until the pilot who has a bond with him fails before adding the tension to the fight. One of the most powerful tricks in the Director's book is using endangered supporting characters to disrupt the pilot's carefully laid battle plans. He could choose to endanger another supporting character elsewhere in the fight, or even beyond the battle. A supporting character cannot be endangered if he is beyond reach of the pilots. Even if a pilot's friend is miles away, trapped under rubble and bleeding out, he cannot be killed until the pilot arrives and attempts an Action to save him.

If the pilot succeeds in the Action to save the supporting character then she can get to safety or rejoin the fight. If the pilot's Action fails then the supporting character could be killed, but that isn't the only possibility. She could survive but be ruined by the post-traumatic stress of the

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fight. Her relationship to the pilot could turn negative and hateful. If she is piloting another SAInt she could be taken over by a frenzy. Even if she survives she will be changed and can blame the pilot for her failure.

Antagonists have Condition ratings so they are harmed by failure, just like a pilot. Antagonist's SAInts use the Resolve rating of the character as Structure and are not repaired automatically. If an antagonist would be destroyed then he is endangered and needs to be saved by a pilot. If he is saved one level of Structure is restored to his SAInt and he can fight on or retreat.

A Director character who has been endangered but chooses to return to the fight after being saved is not safe. He can be endangered again by another failure. If he leaves and seeks safety after being helped then he cannot be endangered again for the rest of the fight.

Deploying Locusts

The number of Locusts on a raid should be a suitable challenge to the pilots (or the Preservation Force would never have needed to launch the SAInts.) One to 4 Locust units per pilot is typical, with the pilot's age as a guideline so that a group of young pilots will face between six and twelve Locusts while older pilots will be sent to fight between ten to twenty enemy units. The mix of unit types will add variety to different battles, moving the focus to different ranges and weapons. If the pilots ever fall into a rote strategy of fighting the Locust, shake things up with an unusual combination of units or have them form teams early in the fight to add Benefits to their Vigor and Focus ratings.

Deploying Magnas

The Magnas are sent to fight when the Mayzor face resistance and the Locust or swarm are turned back too easily. If the Locust have been unable to destroy a single objective before their numbers are reduced to be equal or less than the number of pilots then the Magnas will be sent to destroy the resistance. Magnas are drawn to battles that are especially violent and destructive. If the total amount of Id among the pilots is greater than their total amount of Ego and they are still fighting strong then the rage "calls out" to the Magnas and it arrives to fight the SAInts. Magnas could also be introduced at the start of the conflict, replacing a group of Locust against highly experienced pilots with strong Egos.

Higher ranked Magnas are sent to contend with more capable SAInts. A Principal rank Magnas can be launched against a group of younger, less

experienced pilots and a Dominion rank unit can be sent to fight veterans. The Throne rank are held in reserve by the Mayzor and are only deployed into the fiercest and most brutal fighting where they would face large numbers of expert pilots. These monsters take no prisoners and leave nothing but scorched wreckage in their wake.

If the Magnas is badly damaged, with only one or two Structure left, or of the other Mayzor robots have been destroyed or retreated from the battlefield, then the Magnas will also retreat, teleporting back into the sky with another explosive blast of lightning. If a Magnas is completely destroyed then its generators flare, burning it from the inside out and possibly harming any pilot caught too close. All that remains is the monster's twisted husk.

Keeping the Fight Personal

If the players are heavily into the story of their teenagers then battles can be interruptions in the pilot's lives. Monsters appear, they smash them or get smashed, and then go back to the classroom drama and unrequited love stories. Integrating battles into the ongoing story will keep them engaging and give the pilots more to do than just rattle off the training sequence of combat maneuvers. Don't let the drama drop off when the Mayzor strike.

The easiest way to keep drama alive is to carry over the relationship characters and their attitudes. The bully is still angry about the incident in the cafeteria. Will he refuse to help the pilot or will he be the bigger man? The love struck pilot's paramour could be a pilot herself or the voice of Operations in his ears. Pilots may not have motivations that apply to combat. Use the relationships of those pilots to keep their motivations and Egos engaged as the battle continues. When a pilot has a motivation that can be applied on the battlefield then provide some variety. The pilot who wants to outshine her company-mates and the one who's frightened of harming innocents will put their motivations into play but they shouldn't always be doing the same things. What if the company is split up between separate target areas? How does the other pilot react when the fighting is in an uninhabited area as opposed to a city in the middle of a full evacuation?

Keep pilot motivations in mind when setting the objectives for the battle. If a pilot's sister is in the Preservation Force then it could be her unit of attack VTOLs in the air above the Locust archers. The evacua-

tion shelter below the elementary school means more to the pilot with a younger brother than the shelter under the office buildings.

Make the Battle Exciting

Part of making combat lively is keeping the Action moving in a constant flow. Though the Actions occur in “cycles,” always think ahead and plan the next challenge for the pilots as the effects of their current Actions are worked out. Once an enemy is struck, decide what his reaction will be. If the Magnas successfully attacks does it immediately press or use the advantage to change tactics toward a more important goal? Don't wait for a pause in the Action to make these decisions. Do not overthink the strategy or pilot players may do the same and lose the momentum and thrill of combat. The restriction on a pilot repeating a failed Action forces pilots and their players to stay engaged and always aware that they cannot rely on a simple rote series of Actions when the fighting gets really dangerous. It prevents the boring stonewall of “try, try again” failure when a pilot uses the same Action and dice over and over.

Excitement has to be created by the players as well as the Director. Encourage interesting description of pilot Efforts, especially when the pilot has the opportunity to bring Hope or Despair into the Action and gain or lose Ego. Actions are never single strikes or motions and combatants are always moving even if that only means rolling from one piece of cover to the next. SAInts and the robots of the Mayzor arsenal are fast moving and dynamic. Battles between these powerful machines are never the lumbering conflicts of tanks, they are quick and acrobatic. Bunny-hopping over a house and landing sword blade first on the head of a Locust and slapping your hand down on the pommel to split its shell open is a lot more engaging than just stabbing a Locust.

A battlefield is always changing as pilots and enemies attack, counter-attack, jockey for position, and destroy the landscape. After every new Engagement or Change in Range refresh the pilot's surroundings. In a few short strides a SAInt can span city blocks and leap from a residential district of a town to the downtown shops and office buildings.

Make it Powerful

The first thing that any pilot should notice at the start of combat is the awakening of their SAInt body. Though the pilot's ratings are used for Actions, he is now one hundred feet tall and sheathed in gleaming

steel. He is the pinnacle of human battlefield engineering. The last, best hope for humanity. The would-be savior of the world. All pilots feel the rush as the Id first connects with the mind and that burning desire for Action sparks.

The massive destructive power in use during combat between the giant robots is staggering, even to the pilots. The sound of weapons fire is the rumble of a dozen thunderstorms and gunfire is the burning strobe of the lightning. The earth trembles and quakes beneath their feet. A SAInt can vault over buildings and casually kick cars aside as it charges at highway speeds towards its foes.

When a SAInt is in battle it's cutting loose. This is what it was made to do. What it was born to do. The pilot isn't merely along for the ride. She is caught up in that feeling, as much a part of the machine as its arms and legs and ears and eyes. The Preservation Force has expressed the same ideas to its trainees: You have been trained, crafted, and remade to do this. To fight for humanity and be our preservation.

Keep it Grim

War is Hell, especially in the aftermath. Though there is nothing but excitement at the start of a battle, the SAInt pilots soon see the suffering and devastation that are a part of their lives as child-soldiers. Friends will fight and die. They will be wounded, physically and spiritually. The burden of saving the world is very heavy for a kid just out of middle school to carry.

There are the dangers of collateral damage, especially when the Id is in control of the SAInt. A building smashed open reveals the guts of its rooms and the lives of the people who lived there. Evacuation might still be underway as the SAInts arrive and they may have to form a shield between evacuees and the enemy. What about the unfortunate survivors being carried off by the swarm during the battle? Can a SAInt rescue them while being pummeled by enemy fire?

If the battle is going too well for the SAInts and they have dispatched the enemy with ease, don't be afraid to amp up the tension. A new enemy force can land. A compatriot may be distracted and overwhelmed, needing rescue. Or, the most frightening disaster can occur: A Magnas appears. If the fight goes wrong and the pilots are in danger they will be given the call to retreat. The pilots and their SAInts are too valuable to be lost and sometimes they will have to fall back and leave

the fight to their reinforcements or abandon the field to the enemy and hope that the survivors can hold out until the Magnas has had its fill of rampaging destruction.

Summary: To build a battlefield; Decide available Cover Benefit. Create 3-6 starting objectives. Endanger 1 for each pilot with an Ego of three or greater. Deploy 1-4 Locust per pilot based on the pilot ages. Deploy Magnas at start, substituted for Locust, or to respond to the SAInt's successful defense of objectives.

The Enemy

Locust

Locust are the front line forces of the Mayzor. The giant insect-shaped robots are more than a match for the conventional weapons of Earth's military but are outclassed by the SAInts. It is still dangerous to underestimate them, as their strength lies in numbers and a careless or poorly prepared pilot can be overwhelmed.

Locust Ratings

The challenge ratings of Locust are determined by their type. Each has been designed for a specific combat application reflected in their Vigor and Focus values. Locust are Supporting characters so they may be defeated by a single successful attack Action but they also carry weaponry that makes them more dangerous. Use the Battlefield Record to note the numbers and types of Locust on the field. Mark their ranges to note when they are in combat with SAInts and what weapons are in use.

Locust Weapons

Each Locust type has a Threat Range that is optimal for its weapons. When a pilot engages a Locust at this range then its Vigor is increased by a Benefit. If the pilot fails when engaged at that range, the damage to her SAInt is Boosted. Not all Locust are capable of combat at all ranges. If a pilot fails a battle Action and the Locust cannot damage her SAInt it Changes Range instead to put the SAInt in its sights.

Locust Types

Soldier: The standard Mayzor Locust is a giant scorpion, forty feet long and twenty high. A well-rounded fighting machine, it has clawed limbs and a battery of energy weapons in its tail. The Soldier Threat Range is

FA, where its tail weapons are most useful.

▶ **Challenges: Vigor 6, Focus 6. Range CQ, FA +1 Vigor/Boost, HB N/A.**

Brawler: The Brawler is a larger variant of Locust with over-sized fore-claws, resembling a beetle or lobster. Unlike the Soldier, they do not have a tail weapon pod. Brawlers charge, shielding themselves behind the massive claws before ramming their target and then tearing it apart. They are incapable of attacking outside of CQ but the damage from those attacks comes with two Boosts.

▶ **Challenges: Vigor 8, Focus 6. Range CQ +2 Vigor/Boost, FA N/A, HB N/A.**

Archer: The long-range weapon of the Locusts, the Archer is capable of High Ballistic fire from the large energy weapon pod in its tail. The Archer has sacrificed powerful claws for improved mobility and will back away from close quarters fighting.

▶ **Challenges: Vigor 6, Focus 8. Range CQ N/A, FA, HB +1 Vigor/Boost.**

Teams of Locust

Sharing a telepathic hive-mind, small Locust units can flawlessly organize into large squads. In battle individual Locusts of the same type will quickly join a squad to reinforce it against the enemy if it is under attack. As the squad grows in number the new units add a Benefit to the challenges of the squad. Once a SAInt engages a squad other squads of Locust on the battlefield may move to join it or each other. It will take an Action to form the Locust team so if the pilots act quickly they can keep the Locusts from organizing into a major force. If different Locust types team up, such as a group of long-range Archers grouping with general function Soldiers, the higher of the Vigor and Focus Challenges is used for the Vigor and Focus of the combined team. The team could gain another threat range, such as when Soldiers join up with the Close Quarters only Brawlers and the Soldiers' ranged weapons add a new danger for the pilots. The Benefit and Boost from Threat Ranges does not increase however. The Brawlers are not adding anything to the potency of the Soldiers' cannons. If a successful attack Action destroys a unit in the squad, but the rest remain, the squad may reorganize to continue to act as a team or split off into separate targets.

Magnas

The supreme challenge for the SAInts and their pilots is the Magnas, the doomsday weapons of the Mayzor forces. Companies of SAInts

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need to work in teams and employ careful strategies to fight Magnas. A single Magnas can wield tremendous power and easily destroy an inexperienced pilot. The Preservation Force has classified the Magnas into three ranks based on their threat and battlefield effectiveness. Magnas appear again and again on raids, growing in size and configuration with each return and climbing in rank. Names for recognized Magnas come from the catalog of demons of various faiths and beliefs.

Sample Magnas are provided for each class but the Director can modify these designs and develop new and more dangerous Magnas of her own.

Principal

The least mutated, least experienced and least dangerous rank of Magnas. Principals resemble the angelic statuary of the first Magnas encounters; a construction of porcelain and chrome scorched black and burnished, cracked and pitted. Most Principal ranked Magnas stand approximately 100 feet tall. This height is comparable to a SAInt though the huge wings sprouting from their backs make them look larger. A company of pilots should be able to defeat a Principal Rank with minimal loss.

Dominion

The Dominion ranks have neared 150 feet high, or in some instances, wide. No longer humanoid in shape, these behemoths are collections of misshapen ceramic statues and twisted, razor-edged metal. Despite the chaotic influence on their growth, many take on a kind of symmetry that suggests plants or invertebrate animals. Experienced pilots will need to work together and coordinate their Efforts to destroy a Dominion rank Magnas.

Throne

The most horrible weapons, the Throne rank are giants among the giants. Throne rank have been seen that are up to 300 feet in size and their weapons and abilities are far more powerful than Principal or Dominion ranked Magnas. Most regain a vague humanoid shape as body parts knit themselves together into a mess of twisted limbs, howling faces and scorched armor plates. Whole companies of highly trained pilots may be needed to bring down one of these beasts.

Magnas Ratings

The Vigor and Focus of Magnas units begin at the superhuman level and rise from there. Each Magnas has unique ratings based on rank.

The Director can use this table to choose or roll Vigor and Focus ratings.

The constant self-repair and mutation of a Magnas and the redundant parts make the Structure ratings of Magnas especially high. Structure of a Magnas is its total Vigor rating. Magnas also have dice the Director rolls in each Action with a pilot. Each 6 that is rolled is a Benefit to the challenge values of the Magnas and a Boost to harm if the pilot fails.

Magnas Challenge Values Chart

<i>Magnas Rank</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Dominion</i>	<i>Throne</i>
Base Value	7	9	12
Add	1d	1d	1d
Range	8-13	10-15	13-18
Action Dice	3d	4d	5d
Threat Range	+1 Benefit/ Boost	+2 Benefit/ Boost	+3 Benefit/ Boost

Magnas Threat Ranges

All Magnas have Threat Ranges. If a pilot Attacks the Magnas at this range the Magnas Vigor is increased by a Benefit and the potential damage of the Outcome is Boosted. Magnas, being twisted mutations of battle, may have more than one Threat Range and even add several Benefits and Boosts to different ranges. When creating the ratings for the Magnas the Director can decide what range or ranges get the Threat increase. The Director can sacrifice the Magnas' ability to attack at a range to add another Boost.

Magnas Special Weapons

Some Magnas have developed weapons beyond plasma throwers and blades. These special weapons will give the Magnas an edge on the battlefield and may force the pilots to make ability Checks during Actions or fight against Setback. A Principal rank Magnas is unlikely to have a special weapon but Dominion and Throne rank will definitely have one or more.

Sample Principal Rank Magnas

Thammuz: Standing just over one hundred feet tall, Thammuz is humanoid but its torso has been bisected to the waist. New appendages have grown to replace the damaged parts so that it has two heads, four arms and four wings growing from its back. Thammuz moves nimbly, ducking into close range and lashing out with concentrated attacks at a foe before leaping away to find another target

- ▶ **Challenges: Vigor 9, Focus 10. Structure 9. 3 dice. Range CQ +2 Benefit/Boost, FA, HB N/A.**

Belial: This Magnas has enormous broken wings draped around his shoulders like a robe which covers many twisted and screaming masks all over his body. Any pilot caught in close contact with Belial will hear the strange and horrible whispering voices of his hidden faces. He has a third arm tucked behind his back but it ends in a glowing blade of concentrated energy rather than a hand.

- ▶ **Challenges: Vigor 11, Focus 10. Structure 11. 3 dice. Range CQ +1 Benefit/Boost, FA, HB. Special: The evil voices of Belial's mouths are a painful distraction. A Pilot attacking at CQ must first pass an Intellect Check or Setback penalty is applied to the Attack Action.**

Sample Dominion Rank Magnas

Vepar: Vepar has numerous tapering limbs that divide and sprout at the joints so that the 8 arms attached at its torso divide into approximately 20 clawed hands; likewise it has many feet, wings, and heads all sprouting from a trunk-like torso. It streams narrow, slicing beams of laser light from eyes all over its body and skips lightly across the ground.

- ▶ **Challenges: Vigor 12, Focus 13. Structure 12. 4 dice. Range: CQ, FA +2 Benefit/Boost, HB. Special: A web of beams from Vepar threaten anyone who emerges into the open. Before attacking Vepar with CQ or FA the pilot must first pass a Coordination Check or suffer Setback on the Action from glancing beam strikes.**

Beelzebub: This Magnas is a shrouded, hunched hulk that hovers a few feet off the ground. Beelzebub drifts onto the battlefield accompanied by the buzzing susurrant of insect wings. A thick black smog stains the air to conceal its exact location. A flock of robotic Wasps cling to its shell.

- ▶ **Challenges Vigor: 14, Focus: 10. Structure 14. 4 dice. Range: CQ, FA +1 Benefit/Boost, HB +1 Benefit/Boost. Special: When not being attacked Beelzebub uses its regeneration to create Wasps. These Wasps assist Beelzebub, adding 1 Benefit to its challenge totals. Beelzebub may have up to 3 units of Wasps at once. Beelzebub can also launch Wasps as missiles, adding another Boost to the damage of any pilot's failed Attack but destroying one unit of Wasps in the process.**

Sample Throne Rank Magnas

Avnas: A 200-foot tall tower of thrashing bodies perpetually burning

with plasma fire. The massive heat and burning light of its aura is veiled by thick clouds of black smoke and the incinerating fires that spread around its juggernaut bulk. A huge mouth and eyes have been carved out of the cliff face of the monster that burns from the furnace inside. Thrashing tendrils of woven limbs and bladed wings reach out and pull enemies into its blaze.

- ▶ **Challenges: Vigor 16, Focus 16. Structure: 16. 5 dice. Ranges: CQ +2 Benefit/Boost, FA +1 Benefit/Boost, HB. Special: SAInts attacking from HB must first pass an Intellect Check or be Setback in the Action as flames and smoke make the body of Avnas difficult to locate. Those attacking CQ must pass a Tone check to resist the heat or be Setback in the Action.**

Asmodeus: This Magnas is the most feared and despised that has been faced by Preservation Forces. Asmodeus is the largest and most misshapen of its rank. It was one of the original robots launched in the first Mayzor assaults and has been on numerous deployments since then. Asmodeus stands over 280 feet tall and individual limbs have branched and braided together into two huge arms sprouting from the shoulders of a tapering trunk-like body. Clusters of wings lash like thorn tendrils over its bulk. Its head is a pyramid of howling beastly faces crowned with a huge broken mask with a contented smile on its lips. The most horrifying feature of Asmodeus are the “corpses” of three SAInts impaled on its body, crucified victims of the Magnas.

- ▶ **Challenges: Vigor 18, Focus 17. Structure 18. 5 dice. Ranges CQ +1 Benefit/Boost, FA +1 Benefit/Boost, HB+1 Benefit/Boost. Special: Communication channels of SAInts and the command’s systems are constantly filled by a ghastly wailing of young voices, begging to be saved or killed. The signal has been traced back to the SAInt units trapped in the body of Asmodeus. It has found a way to penetrate the SAInt telepathic network by keeping the pilots of those SAInts alive in torment. Before every Action, the pilots must pass a Spirit Check or act with Setback penalties. Damage from Asmodeus’ attacks are also felt as a psychic wound. Pilots lose Resolve as well as SAInt structure when they fail combat Actions.**

The Magnas Record Sheet

Each Magnas can have unique Ratings and abilities. Enter the Rank, challenge values, Structure, Dice rolled, and Benefits and Boosts for Threat

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Ranges. Note special weapons and effects of the Magnas. As the Magnas is damaged use the Structure track to record the damage to the Magnas Structure. Use the range increments listed on the Magnas record to keep track of engagement range with SAInts. Place a mark or token at the range as a reminder of the weapons and attacks that can be used.

Frenzying SAInt

When a SAInt breaks loose of its pilot's control it becomes its true self; a Magnas. It takes all of the power and skill of its pilot but crushes his reason into its subconscious and rampages until the Id is spent. A SAInt has the power of a Magnas but not the weapons. In addition, its self-repair systems are restrained so it has fewer degrees of Structure.

The SAInt will continue to attack an already Engaged Mayzor unit. The Vigor and Focus of the SAInt are its Effort against the Mayzor Challenge. However, it will attack nearby SAInts and objectives too. If another SAInt is engaged with the same enemy or defending the same objective as the Frenzying SAInt then its Vigor or Focus are a Challenge to that SAInt. If the pilot's Effort does not beat the Frenzyed SAInt's Challenge then he suffers the effects of a battlefield failure. His SAInt is damaged or an objective or Director character is endangered. If SAInts Attack the Frenzying SAInt, it is like other robots on the battlefield and they must beat the Vigor and Focus Challenges to succeed.

- ▶ **Challenges: Vigor 7, Focus 7. Structure: 6. 5 dice. Range: CQ, FA N/A, HB N/A. Special: The SAInt steals the pilot's luck too. The player of the pilot rolls the dice**

The Swarm

While the larger robots fight against the SAInts, the small machines of the Mayzor swarm surge into the buildings and homes looking for victims to paralyze and abduct. The swarm is too small to be of any threat to a SAInt. It is also too varied and massed to be other than a formless source of danger to people on the ground. Anyone caught out in the open must run, hide, and fight to escape the hordes of robots ranging from rat-sized drones with drilling tools and sedative needles to horse-sized carriers with grappling claws and paralytic gas nozzles. Struggling against the swarm are random challenge Actions with failure meaning injury and eventual capture. Until the larger robots of the raiding force disengage or are destroyed, the Swarm does not stop.

Eye to the Future

The question most pilots ask is “How long will the war go on?” The future of the Earth is uncertain. The Preservation Force is steadily growing stronger but with each advance, the enemy also becomes more powerful and brutal. Can humanity fight back and win? There is no fixed plot for the future story of *Tears of a Machine* but the Preservation Force and the CRC have a mission.

The Apostle Project

The CRC is always working to advance the SAInt and build something better. That includes finding and training better pilots for their new machines. Pilots with exceptional control over their Egos and a strong Spirit are the best candidates and will be invited to transfer to the Apostle Project and learn to pilot a Prophet. These pilots spend hours in guided meditation and telepathic exercises in a facility that is half classroom, half zen garden. They must maintain a strict emotional stability because their Egos are the fuel of the Prophets.

Pilots can only become members of the Apostle Project by invitation of a CRC representative. They must show excellent control over their emotions, have a record of successful battlefield engagements, and be generally competent in other areas. Pilot characters need a Spirit rating of 4 or 5 and must be rated 2 or higher in their other Talents. They need a rating of at least 1 in all Proficiencies with special attention paid to combat Proficiencies and the Create Proficiency, which will be used for guided meditation. It also helps for a pilot to have motivations that tie into the training they will undergo as a member of the project.

Once recruited a pilot begins a program of exercises that blend simulation with the telepathic connection to the MetaTron network to create shared dream experiences. The goal is for the pilot to manipulate her surroundings by force of will, transcending her human limitations. To control a Prophet the pilot needs to be able to put aside her humanity and accept an obviously alien body as her own. Each Apostle Project pilot also spends an hour or more in mediation inside the control pod of her Prophet. During that time she transfers Ego from her mind into the mind of the Prophet.

The Prophet Class SAInt

A Prophet is a SAInt completely stripped of its Id. It is a passive thing so the pilot provides more than just direction; she provides purpose. By

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meditating and transferring her Ego to her Prophet the pilot is imprinting herself onto the blank slate of the Prophet's mind. This connection is deeper than the bond a pilot has with a SAInt. Though a SAInt is a surrogate body it has been made as human as possible so a pilot will not reject it and lose control. The Prophet is completely inhuman, with gear and weapons built into its body so the pilot has to learn to accept the transformation every time she connects. Giving her Ego to the machine will bridge the gap.

A Prophet's mind is a battery of psychic energy. The Ego that a pilot gives the Prophet is stored and may be used like the pilot's own Ego in combat. Prophets may contain up to five points of Ego. While the pilot can tap into that source of Ego while in combat she may not transfer Ego between herself and the machine while in combat. That requires long periods of quiet mediation. If a Prophet is ever forced to spend all Ego, reducing it to a zero rating, it falls dormant and will stay that way until the pilot can refresh its store of Ego.

When a Prophet has been damaged and needs battlefield repairs the pilot spends one point of Ego from the Prophet's store. This one point will completely restore the Prophet's structure and repairs are neat and clean, unlike the mutated growth of a SAInt's battlefield repairs. Prophets completely lack Id and do not gain Id for repairs or for any other battlefield Actions.

Prophet Tech

Prophets are the culmination of experimental SAInt technology and have the most advanced systems built into their bodies. The Apostle Project pilot's ability to merge with the mind of the Prophet allows her to operate the inhuman technology without the conflict that holds back a weaker pilot. All Prophets have these new features.

Anti-Gravity Propulsion: Prophets' legs and feet have been replaced with anti-gravity engines like those that hold the Arx in the air. They don't walk or run but hover a few feet above the ground, skimming over obstacles and leaping over buildings after skating up the sides. In low gravity they would be fast and nimble fliers and CRC scientists hope to launch some into orbit to provide an interplanetary defense. Their flexibility and speed of movement give them an advantage to control position on the battlefield.

► **Change Range Benefit +1.**

Active Defensive Screens: A Prophet is always framed by a rippling corona generated by its electromagnetic shielding and ribbons of holographic light halo its torso, shoulders, and crown. Improvements to the SAInt's defensive shielding let the pilot focus its energy into a point barrier that intercepts attacks. It takes concentration from the pilot but can save the Prophet from harm. As the pilot creates the barrier this energy intensifies into a glowing disc of light that floats between the Prophet and the attackers. The CRC developer of the system programmed an assortment of blessings of protection from many different faiths to appear in the holographic projections of the shield.

▶ **Take Cover Benefit +1.**

Telepathic Decoy: The Prophet's connection to the telepathic network has been so fine-tuned that it can send signals to Mayzor units that duplicate their identification signatures. The Prophet can confuse the Mayzor's recognition of opponents long enough to control the range of engagement. These messages are kept separate from the MetaTron network so they do not interfere with SAInt communications.

▶ **Engage Benefit +1.**

Vanquish: The great strength of the Prophet is its new weapon. Having tapped into the telepathic network of the Mayzor, the Prophet is able to seize control of the self-repair nano-machine systems of a Locust or Magnas. With a gesture and telepathic command a Prophet can order a Mayzor robot to dismantle itself. The most powerful are able to cancel the Vanquish command before they are destroyed but the damage is severe as the Magnas' body breaks itself apart into crumbling ceramic and liquefied steel. This weapon comes at a cost; the pilot spends an Ego point each time to fire it. The Benefit and Boost of this spent Ego is already in the Vanquish statistics.

▶ **CQ/FA/HB (Fire Arms). Attack Benefit +3. Damage Boost +3. Reload.**

Because these advanced systems are built into the body of the Prophet it is still able to carry and use other weapons from the SAInt arsenal. It does not equip any of the advanced gear; it already has the latest versions installed.

Operation: Blue Moon

Once the Apostle Project has reached sufficient strength, the Preservation Force will launch a major offensive against Tartarus. The details

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of this plan are uncertain, even to the CRC and Preservation Force commanders. They don't yet know what to expect from the Prophets and their pilots. They do agree that the only military option to stop the Mayzor is to strike back in a launch from Earth to the Moon of the assembled Prophets supported by Arx that have been upgraded to be capable of space flight. The Mayzor destroy any satellite put into orbit around Earth so there is still little intelligence about what weapons they might have ready if they were engaged in space or what ground defenses they may have hidden on the Moon. Scientists and observatories continue to look to the sky hoping for an answer.

And Then?

After the Preservation Force has destroyed the Mayzor weapons, (hopefully) liberated abductees, and driven their surviving forces off into space, what will they do? The Preservation Force will be in command of an army of telepathic teenagers piloting space-worthy robots with the most advanced military technology in the world. What would you do?

In Closing

Tears of a Machine has giant robots and alien invaders and strange technological conspiracies. There are half-understood psychic powers and religious iconography but it's not about all those details and trappings. It's about growing up. It's about how the pilots survive these amazing things that are thrown at them. How they are affected by them, how they respond, who they become as they grow up in a turbulent age. It's about the bonds they forge with each other and with those around them.

Though we may not have to grow up during such a perilous time for the world, everyone has to face being a teenager; confused and afraid but also gaining power over ourselves. Having friends and enemies and people to care about and people who care about us, no matter how intrusive that is, help us through the confusion to the next stage of our lives. It's just as true for a 13-year-old anime fan as it is for a 15-year-old combat mecha pilot.

Fight the monsters, face down the bullies, chase your crushes, and struggle to beat the odds. Grow up. But don't do it alone.

Research

Here are some recommended shows that could be sources of inspiration for scenes, episodes, and series. Look for the Hopes and Despairs of the pilots in these stories.

- ▶ *Neon Genesis Evangelion*: The modern classic of the genre. Unwitting teenagers must pilot gigantic cyborgs grown from cloned cells of humans combined with embryonic aliens representing angels of Christian faith. Heavy with tortured relationships, religious symbolism, brutal combat and deep despair but lightened by endearing characters. Even if you skip the rest, watch this one.
- ▶ *Gunparade: March*: A team of high school teenagers are the world's only hope in turning back the tide of giant insectoid invaders. With all of the archetypal high-school characters on the roster, it is a good blend of schoolyard drama with the pain of loss as classmates fall to the unstoppable monsters. With its focus on teamwork, this might be one of the best inspirations for a game of Tears.
- ▶ *Fafner: Dead Reckoning*: Specially selected teenagers live on a secret island where they are trained to repel aliens that appear as glowing golden statues. With more melodrama and less humor, the series can be harder to enjoy than some but it includes interesting tensions between pilots and the support team made up of their parents. The large cast offers interesting situations of teams working together and falling apart but plotting becomes muddled among all the characters.
- ▶ *Total Eclipse*: A Top Gun anime series. An international team of mech' pilots is assembled to test experimental machines and perfect weapons that will try to win Earth back from an alien invasion that has already claimed most of the planet. The pilots have good "brothers-in-arms" relationships and the rivalry/romance between the Japanese-American protagonist and his commanding officer is interesting. Robot battles usually take a backseat to romantic plots and international intrigue.
- ▶ *Soul Eater*: While there are no mecha, this series about the students of a witch-hunting academy is excellent. Well-defined characters with strong personalities must learn to rely on one another when faced by a greater foe. A mix of fantastical comedy with the greater issues of acceptance, redemption, and death keep the stories compelling and lively.

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- ▶ *Linebarrels of Iron*: An action soap opera with an overconfident mecha pilot whose brash nature ruins missions just as often as it saves them. Surrounded by a fan-service harem of sexy women and with a wacky commander (the anti-Gendo Ikari,) the hero must fight off some bloodthirsty alien mecha pilots. The series becomes grim in its second season with betrayals and murders handing victory to the villains and forcing the pilots into fighting a resistance action.
- ▶ *Infinite Stratos*: Another harem show but with a lead oblivious to the female attention he earns from being the only boy at the academy who can pilot a robot. Every few episodes another girl is dropped into his life to form a rivalry with the others and add more opportunities for him to be accused of being a womanizing pervert. Good for the school atmosphere and the comedy of misunderstood teen affection. (Check out how the line-up changes with the ending credits through the season.)
- ▶ *Full Metal Panic!*: High school romantic tensions between a spirited girl with alien knowledge and a child soldier turned stoic defender. A terrorist organization and despicable villain make their lives hell. There are two spin-off series as well; *The Second Raid* focuses on the military actions, adult relationships, and robot combat and has a more grim and serious tone while *Fumoffu* plays on the light-hearted themes and comedy of high school high-jinx mixed with high-caliber weapons.
- ▶ *Str.A.In*: After a traitorous assault on the pilot's academy, a young woman takes to the stars with the fleet in hopes that she will find her brother and the answers to what made him turn against his homeland. Bullying and rivalries make up most of her relationships and depression consumes her. Then she finds a mecha that links to her mind allowing her to become the best pilot on the field and making her life even more complicated. The supporting characters are the real source of light in her life, though they have a habit of dying when she needs them most.
- ▶ *Gurren Lagann*: Survivors of an alien invasion escape their meager lives underground through the discovery of robots that they power with their own determination. Starting out a pure comedy peppered with robot fights, the series takes a turn for the serious midway through season one but never loses sight of what keeps it fun. The second season turns the established world on its head.

- ▶ *Martian Successor Nadesico*: A self-aware parody of the space war genre. What other anime has a crew holding an anime convention aboard their battleship as a major plot point? Even the most bizarre and obnoxious characters become endearing as their pasts and motivations surface. This series asks the big question: Can you really attain peace through fighting a war?
- ▶ *Jinki: Extend*: A teenage girl discovers that she is part of a legacy of mecha engineers and pilots. The story starts out with cutesy discovery and the formation of a team of young girl pilots whose rivalries motivate the action but descend into some dark territory with internal schisms, horror at collateral damage from their battles and even creepy implied incest.
- ▶ *Gundam*: The granddaddy of them all, the Gundam series has had spin-offs, re-imaginings, and imitators too numerous to list. The themes (and quality) of these series vary, from the Earth's united military fighting off an alien invasion to an underground organization trying to win world peace through their superior fighting machines. If you can't find a story that meets your interests, wait a couple years and check again.
- ▶ *Robotech*: My introduction to robot anime. The American series is an amalgamation of several separate Japanese series about young soldiers fighting to save the Earth from alien armadas while living the soap opera drama of their lives and loves. Though lighter on the pathos of later anime, the military focus may help fill out some of what goes on around a SAInt pilot in the rest of the Preservation Force. The low budget shows however, making the full series quite a slog. Good for nostalgia's sake though!

Design Influences

No one works in a vacuum and I want to recognize the games and designers whose work I feel educated me in this project.

- ▶ *3:16 Carnage Amongst the Stars* by Gregor Hutton: Quite possibly the biggest influence on my design in the past 5 years, *3:16* does an amazing job of keeping the personal in the firefight. Abstracted combat moves quickly but stays tactical. I highly recommend this book.

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- ▶ *Burning Empires* by Luke Crane: Scenes as currency and the scaling of actions within scenes. Before I played this game I knew, but didn't understand that the structure of the game itself is a resource to be earned and spent. When I got stuck on advice for pacing I turned here for inspiration. It's much more technical than my approach but a great illustration of the concepts.
- ▶ *Sorcerer* by Ron Edwards: The importance of relationships as a driving force in the story. Non-player characters should have wants and needs that are just as strong as the player's. Stories happen when these people meet and agree or clash. Ron also gave a lot of great advice in codifying "Bangs!" as challenges that a player cannot ignore. Create situations in which a player must make a decision (and no decision is a decision) to become involved in the drama and action.



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Appendix

Collected Summaries

Actions

- ▶ The pilot player chooses a Proficiency for his Action. He finds the related Talent rating and picks up that many dice. He rolls the dice, keeping the highest rolled result. The player then adds the Proficiency rating to that number, plus 1 Benefit point for each matching die, each Ego or Id point spent for Benefits, and Benefits from equipment to find his total Effort. The Effort is compared to the Challenge. If it exceeds that number the pilot has succeeded. The effect is Boosted by 1 for each matching die, each additional Ego or Id point spent for Boosts, and Boosts from equipment.
- ▶ A pilot with 0 Proficiency rolls Talent dice but adds no Proficiency points to Effort.
- ▶ A pilot in a Condition with Setback penalties disqualifies dice from Actions with results greater than the Talent.

Talent Checks

- ▶ The pilot player rolls a single die. If it is less than or equal to the Talent rating the check is successful.

Ego Gain and Loss

- ▶ After an Action that relates to Motivations, a pilot player rolls a Spirit Talent Check to gain Ego from success or prevent its loss to failure.
- ▶ Relationship characters are tied to pilot Motivations. When a relationship character is involved in an Action the pilot's Motivations are always involved. Only one relationship at a time affects an Action.

Trials

- ▶ A Trial is a scene in which a pilot is opposed by an Antagonist. It requires multiple Actions to determine the final Outcome. These Actions may repeat the same Proficiency or change to involve others.
- ▶ After a failure the pilot's next Action must be a different Proficiency. After that different Action, the pilot may attempt the failed Proficiency again.

- ▶ Pilot success in Trial Actions harms the opponents Resolve. Failure harms the pilot's Resolve. When all degrees are harmed a character is defeated.

Teamwork

- ▶ A pilot may lead a number of characters in a team Action, up to the Talent rating. Each assistant adds 1 Benefit to the leader's Effort. Assistants who roll matching dice add additional Benefit and add Boost to a successful Effort. The leader and characters with matching dice may add Benefits and Boosts from Ego, Id, and equipment.
- ▶ Team Actions can be taken in Trials. The Condition of all characters is affected individually but if the leader is defeated all team members share the defeat. The choice of Proficiency and leader may change between Actions. A team may repeat a failed Proficiency Action under new leadership.

Battles and Skirmishes

- ▶ A pilot may immediately attack an enemy at the enemy's Threat Range. The pilot chooses the range for the engagement when they successfully complete an Observe action against enemy Focus. Failure forces the SAInt to the enemy threat range and the SAInt is damaged.
- ▶ With a successful Athletics Action against enemy Vigor a pilot may change distance from an enemy by one measure. Failure damages the SAInt.
- ▶ With a successful Observe Action against enemy Focus a pilot may Take Cover from enemy attack and completely defend herself. Cover offered by the environment adds to the Effort. Failure damages the SAInt.
- ▶ Attacks use the Proficiency and weapon matching the range. Attacks oppose an enemy's Vigor. Successful Attacks deal damage to the foe. Failure damages the SAInt.
- ▶ A pilot wishing to reload may take any non-Attack Action.

SAInt and Id

- ▶ If a pilot's Action did not change her Ego value the SAInt's Id increases by one.
- ▶ Players may spend Id to Benefit Effort and Boost outcome for attack Actions.
- ▶ If Id is greater than Ego the pilot Checks Spirit before an Action. Failure causes the SAInt to Frenzy. The Frenzying SAInt is a battle-

/ Tears of a Machine /

field danger like enemy units. During Frenzy pilots earn no Ego. A frenzied SAInt may not be in a team. Each Action spent in Frenzy reduces Id by one. At 0 the pilot regains control.

- ▶ A pilot can reduce Id by harming his own Injury. One point of Id for one degree of harm.
- ▶ A pilot may activate self-repair in a Take Cover Action. He gains one Id for each level of Structure he has repaired. The Id maximum is 5.

Injury and Recovery

- ▶ A First Aid Action pairs the patient's Tone Talent with the caregiver's Engineer Proficiency.
- ▶ An unconscious pilot needs 1 week to heal, a Wounded pilot 3 days, a Hurt pilot requires 1 day. Strenuous activity adds another day to healing time. After this time roll a Tone Check, adjusted by given care. Success restores the pilot to health, failure adds another day in care.

Charts

Challenge Values Chart

<i>Pilot's Age</i>	<i>12-13</i>	<i>14-15</i>	<i>16-17</i>
<i>Base Value</i>	2	3	5
<i>Add</i>	1d	1d	1d
<i>Range</i>	3-8	4-9	6-11

Antagonist Action Dice

<i>Pilot's Age</i>	<i>12-13</i>	<i>14-15</i>	<i>16-17</i>
<i>Resolve/Injury</i>	1	2	3
<i>Action Dice</i>	1d	2d	3d

Random Challenge Values

<i>Pilot's Age</i>	<i>12-13</i>	<i>14-15</i>	<i>16-17</i>
<i>Base Value</i>	2	3	4
<i>Add</i>	1d	1d	1d
<i>Range</i>	3-8	4-9	6-11

Magnas Challenge Values

<i>Magnas Rank</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Dominion</i>	<i>Throne</i>
<i>Base Value</i>	7	9	12
<i>Add</i>	1d	1d	1d
<i>Range</i>	8-13	10-15	13-18
<i>Action Dice</i>	3d	4d	5d
<i>Threat Range</i>	+1 Benefit/ Boost	+2 Benefit/ Boost	+3 Benefit/ Boost

Character Records and Reference Sheets

- ▶ Pilot Record Sheet
- ▶ Director's Pilot Reference Sheet
- ▶ Director's Character Sheet
- ▶ Battle Record Sheet

All sheets available as downloads from <http://robotclaw.info>

Name

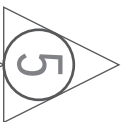
Company

Housing

Background

Age

AP



Hope

Despair



Friends

Rivals



Intellect

Charm

Coordination

Tone

Spirit



Study Observe

Empathize Convince

Firearms Engineer

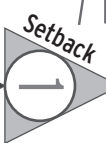
Close Quarters Athletics

Rally Create



Injury

Resolve



Primary

Range

Benefit

Boost

Rid

Backup

Range

Benefit

Boost

Rid



Arsenal

Secondary

Range

Benefit

Boost

Rid

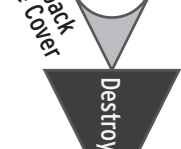
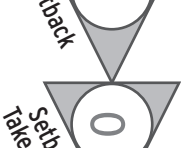
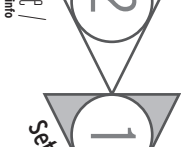
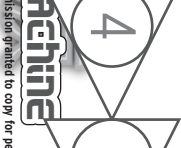
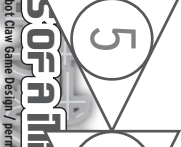
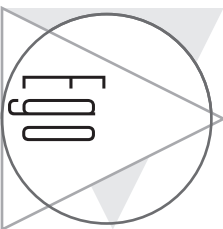
Advanced

Action

Benefit



Unc.



TEARS OF A MACHINE

SPMC Structure /

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Director Pilot Reference

Pilot Name	Age	Challenge
Hope	Despair	
Friends	Rivals	
Other Notes		

Pilot Name	Age	Challenge
Hope	Despair	
Friends	Rivals	
Other Notes		

Director Character Record

Name

Vigor

Focus

Dice

Motivation

Resolve



Friend/Rival

Injury



Details

Name

Vigor

Focus

Dice

Motivation

Resolve



Friend/Rival


Injury





Details


ID-Frenzied SAINT


Vigor Focus

ID - Frenzied SAINT 

Structure 

Dice 


Range 


Threat 


Special
SAINT Pilot player rolls the dice.
After every action, ID is reduced by 1.


LOCUSTS


Vigor Focus


Soldier 






















Vigor Focus


Brawler 


































Vigor Focus


Archer 























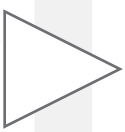






Battlefield Record

Location



Cover

Endangered

Magnas

Vigor Focus

Range

Threat

Type

Structure



Dice



Special

Vigor Focus

Type

Structure



Dice



Special

Objectives

Objective 1:

Objective 2:

Objective 3:

Objective 4:

Objective 5:

Objective 6:

Objective 7:

Objective 8:

Objective 9:

PER SCIENTIAM VICTORIA



Tears of a Machine

An anime-inspired game of giant robots and the teenagers who pilot them.

Fast-Paced Combat.
Unrequited Romances.
Dangerous Alien Technology.
Brutal Robot Foes.

A Secret Society of Zealot Scientists.
Teamwork Against Overwhelming Odds.
Goofing Off at the Arcade.

Get together with your friends and share the joy and pain and wonder and cry your eyes out at the controls of a giant robot.