

KRAKEN'S LOOM

FADING SUNS™

A FADING SUNS ADVENTURE BY ANGUS MCNICHOLL

FADING SUNS

It is the dawn of the sixth millennium and the skies are darkening, for the suns themselves are fading. Humans reached the stars long ago, building a Republic of high technology and universal emancipation—and then squandered it, fought over it, and finally lost it.

A new Dark Age has descended upon humanity, for the greatest of civilizations has fallen and now even the stars are dying. Feudal lords rule the Known Worlds, vying for power with fanatic priests and scheming guilds.

Fading Suns is a science fiction game of heavy combat, vicious politics, weird occultism, alien secrets and artifacts, and unknown and un-mapped worlds. The **Shards** series is a collection of adventures and encounters, intended as an inexpensive resource for **Fading Suns** gamemasters.

This volume contains the adventure **Kraken's Loom**, designed for a group of 3 to 6 player characters. In this adventure, the characters search for a Hawkwood Count, a prominent diplomat whose ship was lost in the outer reaches of the Leminkainen system. The trail leads to Hargard, however, where they learn that there are many fates worse than death...

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Kraken's Loom

Kraken's Loom is a short adventure for **Fading Suns**, designed for a group of 3 to 6 player characters, that can be used as part of an existing campaign or as the start of a new epic. This adventure suits almost any group of adventurers ranging from lowlife scoundrels to Questing Knights. The only requirement is that they be on speaking terms with House Hawkwood who are their patrons for this drama. It would also be very helpful if the characters are able to speak the Vuldrok language, but this is not essential.

The gamemaster may find the descriptions of Leminkainen (**Hawkwood Fiefs: Imperial Survey 1**, p. 16), Vuldrok culture, and the lost world of Hargard (**Star Crusade** p. 106) useful. These books are not required to play **Kraken's Loom**, but will add more depth to the setting. While a gamemaster could relocate the adventure to different star systems, we advise not to do so, as both worlds are integral to the overall plot.

A View of Leminkainen

Leminkainen orbits an unstable red-giant star, which is badly affected by the fading suns phenomenon.

Once a vibrant yellow main sequence star, in the span of only a few generations it began to die, losing its luster and fading to red. The sanguine glow casts everything in a strange light, though plant life seems to thrive upon it. The limitation on the visible spectrum casts most colors into a darker shade and blues are completely lost to black.

The world has four continents (Jyvaskylä, Grikkor, Valdalla and Isalight) and several major island groups. The Vuldrok Star Nation holds most of Valdalla, while House Vasalayana rules Isalight. The Emperor and House Dextrite hold smaller island fiefs, but everything else is the domain of House Hawkwood.

With three moons the oceans of Leminkainen have great tidal swells, and the people living on the coast must keep careful watch on the tide levels when the three align. Jyvaskylä is the biggest continental mass, divided into four areas by a huge horseshoe-shaped chain of mountains. The most easterly of these is the Blood Desert that dominates the tropics south of the equator. Known for its coarse red sand

and sitting right on the cyclone belt, the desert is a harsh place to live.

Hakkonen, the planetary capital, sits on the coast with its back to the mountains. Desert stretches away to the east and north. On the edge of the tropical zone, the temperature is more tolerable and the sea brings cool, humid air.

A View of Hargard

Hargard has four great continents with very few island chains. The Vuldrok rule three of the continents; Ostmark, Jyandhom and Dagnir. Though the inhabitants are primarily of the Drenjar people, they are far from united, with many small thanes fighting over land and resources. The greatest of these is Thane Sigfaddir Firestorm who holds Ostmark from his capital of Valholm, and Thane Eldrid the Wise who holds a large piece of Jyandhom from her capital at Elfhome.

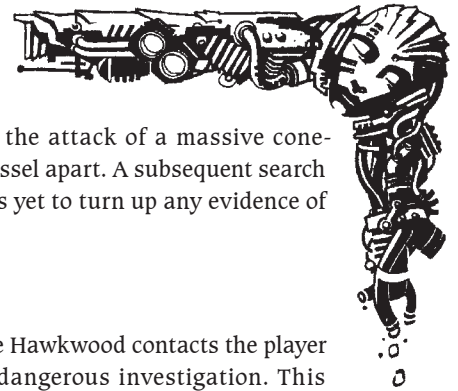
The fourth continent is the domain of House Ramakrishna and ruled from Achiharta by Queen Sura Ramakrishna. Vijayanagar managed to survive against the Vuldrok due to its high tech manufacturing base, the quality of its weaponsmiths, and the dedication of its soldiers. Many of the Vuldrok thanes have sought alliances with the Ramakrishna in return for trade in high tech goods and weapons for their raiders.

Recently, the Nizdharim have also settled on Hargard. They established several cities in the deep oceans and trade periodically with all nations. Strange cults have begun to rise in the coastal ports with whispered prayers offered up to Nidderdak from Beyond the Stars.

Running the Adventure

Kraken's Loom is an investigative drama that requires the player characters to put together the various parts of the puzzle. Although the drama has a definitive beginning and an end point, the middle needs to be a bit fluid to allow for investigative work and tangential ideas.





Kraken's Loom is laid out in acts, but within each act there is a great deal of freedom to pursue the investigation and in whatever way the player characters choose. Finally, we include suggestions on how to modify the drama depending on how this story best fits into your existing campaign, or whether you want to use **Kraken's Loom** as the beginning of a longer-running **Fading Suns** epic.

If **Kraken's Loom** is not used with an existing group of player characters (for a convention game, for example), players may use the pre-generated characters included in the **Appendix** on p. 24.

Adventure Background

The tallest tales told by spacers always seem to hint at what lurks beyond the Jumpgate in the dark between the stars. The horrors there are unimaginable, and to see them is to look upon the face of damnation itself. There are many tales of Void Krakens; few are true accounts, most are simply popular myths, embellished with each retelling.

While space pirates or Vuldrok raiders may be the culprits of many disappearances, there are still those few ships that escape an encounter with the alleged beasts to limp back to port bearing the scars of their battle. Some show great marks left by enormous suckered tentacles or bear marks on torn hull plating that give the appearance of them having been chewed upon.

Starships in the Leminkainen system are often harassed, boarded and searched by Hawkwood patrols; piracy is rife both from independent privateers and by Vuldrok ships. So it is no great surprise when a starship fails to reach its destination. Many disappearances are blamed on the actions of one party or another. When all sides blame each other, the myth grows that a Void Kraken took the ship before returning to the depths of space. But as the ancients said, there can be no smoke without fire.

One such incident occurred in 4996, when a liner en route to the Jumpgate failed to arrive at Byzantium Secundus. An investigation by House Hawkwood discovered that the ship never arrived at the Jumpgate, and a search eventually turned up three escape pods from the *Lexington Script* drifting slowly back to Leminkainen.

The life support had failed in one of the pods but rescuers recovered thirteen from the other two. All suffered trauma from what had occurred. Their stories spoke of panic and terror when several immense tentacles from the darkness of space ambushed the *Lexington Script*. The tentacles twisted and mangled the ship's structure, damaging many of its systems. Only a few people escaped in the life pods, forced to watch as the ship was broken apart and dragged away into the devouring darkness.

Only a handful of these thirteen survivors are still alive. Several committed suicide; others went mad or subsequently disappeared. The captain of the Hawkwood frigate that conducted the search and rescued the life pods wrote up the report as an unexplained disappearance.

More recently, in 5000, a second liner, the *Lady Lucinda*, suffered a similar fate, with only a single survivor who

claimed to have witnessed the attack of a massive cone-shaped beast that tore the vessel apart. A subsequent search of the surrounding space has yet to turn up any evidence of what actually occurred.

Plot Synopsis

A representative of House Hawkwood contacts the player characters to undertake a dangerous investigation. This mission takes them out of the Known Worlds and into the Vuldrok Star Nation. This puts the characters in the awkward position of being the outsiders, the aliens.

House Hawkwood lost a prominent diplomat, Count Anderton Blake Hawkwood, and a number of valuable heirlooms when the *Lexington Script* disappeared. Recently, one of those heirlooms was recovered from a trader who had just returned from the Vuldrok Star Nation, and this has in turn raised the question whether more items may be recovered or whether the Count may still be alive somewhere.

The characters choose how to undertake the investigation; they can interview survivors of the original incident, they can speak with the trader who recovered the heirloom, they might even meet with the Captain Kyme of the frigate *Hawk's Honor* that rescued the survivors.

Ultimately, they have to travel to Hargard to retrace how the heirloom came to be in the hands of the Vuldrok and what really happened to the *Lexington Script*. They need to rescue the count from what is doubtlessly a fate worse than death. Then there is the additional complication of succession; his younger brother Fitzroy Blake Hawkwood succeeded Anderton as count. He has no desire to see his brother making a triumphant return for surely he would then lose everything.

Act One: A Call for Help

The player characters recently arrived on Leminkainen, a Hawkwood world on the perimeter of the Known Worlds. Frequently raided and partially disputed by the Vuldrok, Leminkainen is a world in turmoil. Every time the jumpgate opens, people wait with baited breath to discover who is coming through, whether friend or foe, merchant or raider.

Leminkainen space is very dangerous, but, as with all dangers, there is a great opportunity for profit. Mercenaries from across the Known Worlds and Questing Knights frequently stop here as a staging area before pitting themselves against the little-known dangers of hostile space. Depending on who the player characters are, they could be on Leminkainen for almost any reason.

In the sanguine light of Leminkainen's dying star, the characters are invited to meet with their contact in the privacy of a luxury hotel, the *Leminkainen Grand*.

A private elevator whisks them to a penthouse suite overlooking the splendor of Hakkonen.

The city center is composed of many great buildings constructed from golden materials at the height of the Second



Republic, while the surrounding suburbs form a maze of squat, low-cost terracite dwellings that span out into the Blood Desert. In these luxury rooms they meet their anxious patron.

After their audience with the baroness, the characters are made a counter offer by a knight in service to the Count. So begins a political entanglement that only very careful mediation allows them to steer through without making serious enemies. Of course, the characters are free to choose whichever side they wish, but in polite society reputation is everything, and someone is going to be disappointed with their actions.

Finally, they also get to interview the trader who was arrested with the heirloom that he was trying to peddle in the Hakkonen Agora. He can tell them little, but offers his services as a guide in return for his freedom.

View from the Penthouse

The penthouse is well appointed with lavish finery. Hawkwood-liveried guards stand around the circumference of the large chamber while house servants come and go, bringing refreshments for the arriving guests. Baroness Jane Holden Hawkwood stands in the centre of the room, watching the sunset beyond the great windows that give such a commanding view of Hakkonen.

She turns from the view as the characters approach and casts a critical eye across them. The messenger bows and provides introductions before retreating to a safe distance. The appearance and social standing of the characters determines how the Baroness addresses them. If they look like a bunch of low-life peasant scumbags, she gives them short shrift, issues her instructions and has them gone from her sight as quickly as possible. If, on the other hand, the party has noble Questing Knights, they are treated with much greater respect, offered refreshments, given a seat and social pleasantries exchanged.

The Baroness outlines her problem:

"I have a need for subtle individuals who are, shall we say, well traveled and versed in the noble arts of knavery. A few years ago, my cousin vanished en route to Byzantium Secundus. Apparently the ship fell victim to some misfortune in the void between Leminkainen and the jumpgate. A few of the passengers survived aboard life pods that the Lexington Script carried, but my dear cousin was not among them.

The tragedy to have befallen our family was double, for not only did we lose a great man, an experienced diplomat, and influential member of the Imperial Court, but I also suffered a personal loss of a great friend and mentor. His brother succeeded him, as is only proper, but he lacks many subtle talents that made the Count a great man.

Of lesser importance, my cousin possessed a number of heirlooms of the family, which were lost with him. Recently one of these was discovered in the possession of a trader in the agora. I now have

the trader under lock and key, of course, until he can give me a satisfactory explanation for how he came by my cousin's blaster pistol."

She places a finely crafted weapon on the table so that the characters may examine it. It is a masterwork piece of fine brass, with etched details and an inscription on the hilt that reads, 'In honor of your service and sacrifice'.

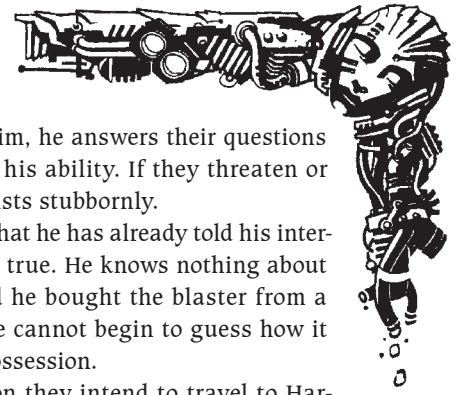
This weapon was a gift from Emperor Alexius himself, presented to my cousin for his services and loyalty during the Emperor Wars. There can be no mistaking that this was his; this weapon was of great significance to him, and it never left his side. This gives me hope that my cousin has survived.

I am prepared to finance an expedition into Barbarian space to locate my cousin, should he indeed live, and also to find a second and most important heirloom, a signet ring that symbolizes his lordship over Druak province in Northern Jyväskylä. The Count's brother now rules without its authority, and its return would greatly strengthen his position and bolster morale should the barbarians invade again.

I ask you, will you accept this duty for the good of House and Empire?"

How can the player characters refuse this call for assistance? The Baroness instructs her messenger to give the characters whatever reasonable resources they need for this





mission, which includes access to the imprisoned trader should they wish to question him. For the duration of their stay within Hakkonen, they also receive well-appointed rooms in the same hotel as the Baroness.

Counter Offer

When the characters leave the hotel, they are followed, which they notice if they make a Perception + Observe goal roll versus their shadow's Dexterity + Sneak goal roll. Once a safe distance from the Leminkainen Grand Hotel, the shadow approaches them and asks if he might have a moment of their time. He invites them into a nearby drinking establishment where their presence raises no eyebrows. The man is Sir Gregor Ashwood-Dale, a young knight in the service of Count Fitzroy Blake Hawkwood.

"Forgive me for having to approach you in such an unseemly manner, but I have been instructed to speak with you on behalf of my lord, Count Fitzroy Blake. I understand that your services have been retained by the lady Baroness Jane Holden, and I must ask that you consider your allegiance with care, for she is a skillful manipulator and has long sought to undermine the authority and legitimacy of my lord's rule.

I approach you open handed, that you might recognize the truth of which I speak. My lord is the rightful successor of his brother's rule and the Baroness seeks to usurp his lands and title. The lady has made no secret of her intention to dispatch a mission into Vuldrok space to search for the Count's signet ring. I wish you every success, but ask that you hand it over to its rightful owner upon your successful return. My lord is a gracious host and generous benefactor and will see you well compensated for your service."

If the characters refuse, Sir Gregor cautions them against rash decisions and tells them that the offer still stands. If they accept, he again wishes them the best of luck on their search.

In reality Sir Gregor is covering all his bases. He leads a search team to Hargard himself, but is aware that the characters have access to the trader and thus have a better lead than he has. By winning the characters over, he hopes that he might yet be successful through them, should his efforts prove insufficient.

First Port of Call

The characters can visit the trader who recovered the heirloom from Vuldrok space. He is incarcerated in a local militia precinct house, and with the right papers supplied by the Baroness's messenger, they can get in to interview him and even have him released into their custody.

The trader is a man named Tervus Wolfram; to those unfamiliar with the Vuldrok, this man seems to fit the description. But upon closer inspection, his lineage is clearly that of a Known Wordler, though he dresses and wears his hair in the barbarian style. He was evidently beaten and abused, and he expects similar treatment from the charac-

ters. If they are civil with him, he answers their questions honestly and to the best of his ability. If they threaten or actually torture him, he resists stubbornly.

He tells the characters what he has already told his interrogators, as it is essentially true. He knows nothing about Count Anderton Blake, and he bought the blaster from a market stall on Hargard. He cannot begin to guess how it came into the merchant's possession.

If the characters mention they intend to travel to Hargard, Tervus offers his services, explaining that in return for his freedom he would gladly act as a guide and interpreter for them. He also has a starship, a crew and he knows the jumproads intimately. If the characters do not take him up on his offer, they need to make their own traveling arrangements. Few starships cross into Vuldrok space, and those that do are not the type to accept passage contracts. If the characters use their own starship, they might have to acquire a jumpkey on the black market. There are numerous fakes and a genuine key fetches twice the regular price (about 6,000 firebirds).

Key Characters

Those few gamemaster characters important to the overall flow of the drama are detailed below. Incidental gamemaster characters need to be prepared either in advance or on the fly during the game. Note also that each of the characters only lists Learned Skills that may be relevant to the drama. They are likely to have many more.

Baroness Jane Holden Hawkwood

The Baroness is genuine in her concern for her cousin. She grieved long and hard when she believed him dead and there is no love lost between her and the Count's successor, who, while the rightful heir, is a weak fool in her eyes. Now after all these years, there is renewed hope that she might yet find her cousin alive and return a strong and compassionate leader to the province of Druak.

The Baroness is a tall elegant woman with a regal bearing; her face is framed by long, medium-brown hair that is brushed to shining bronze. Her fashion sense is impeccable but she disdains jewelry; she does not decorate herself with such idle things, instead relying on her figure and her intellect to impress people.

Body: Strength 5, Dexterity 6, Endurance 5

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 6, Tech 4

Spirit: Extrovert 2, Introvert 4, Passion 6, Calm 3, Faith 7, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 7, Dodge 5, Fight 3, Impress 8, Melee 5, Observe 8, Shoot 6, Sneak 3, Vigor 3

Learned Skills: Knavery 5, Leadership 5, Inquiry 4, Ride 4, Etiquette 7, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish

Weapons: None

Armor: None

Wyrd: 6

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○



Sir Gregor Ashwood-Dale

Sir Gregor is a clever young man who sees a great future for himself. He is loyal to Count Fitzroy and sees the potential return of the Count Anderton as an obstacle to his rise within the house. If he can recover the signet ring for the Count, he would surely be rewarded with land and title.

A young man with sandy-blond hair and a wiry, muscular build. When under pressure, he has a nervous tick in his left eye. He is dressed in good-quality traveling clothes that have seen some time on the road.

Body: Strength 7, Dexterity 7, Endurance 7

Mind: Wits 6, Perception 6, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert 2, Introvert 7, Passion 4, Calm 3, Faith 2, Ego 5

Natural Skills: Charm 5, Dodge 7, Fight 6, Impress 4, Melee 7, Observe 6, Shoot 6, Sneak 5, Vigor 5

Learned Skills: Knavery 7, Inquiry 6, Ride 5, Etiquette 5, Performance 6, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Vuldrok

Weapons: Blaster Pistol, Vibro-Broadsword

Armor: Assault Shield

Wyrd: 4

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Captain Tervus Wolfram

A clever but honorable man, Tervus was educated by the Charioteers Guild but turned his back on a guild career, instead becoming a yeoman wandering from job to job and from system to system. He is well traveled and harbors a fascination for Vuldrok culture. He never knew his father, and his mother never spoke of him, so he assumes that he is of mixed blood, part Vuldrok, part Known Worlder. This drove him to explore the Star Nation, and he maintains good contacts on both sides of the Jumpgate.

A lean man of medium years, he observes everything with bright intelligent eyes. His hair has been left to grow long in the Vuldrok style, but he was born on Leminkainen as a commoner to House Vasalayana. His clothes are travel-stained and ripped in places, with dried blood encrusted on them; he evidently put up a struggle when he was arrested.

Body: Strength 6, Dexterity 8, Endurance 7

Mind: Wits 8, Perception 6, Tech 6

Spirit: Extrovert 6, Introvert 4, Passion 4, Calm 3, Faith 4, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 5, Dodge 4, Fight 6, Impress 5, Melee 4, Observe 5, Shoot 5, Sneak 5, Vigor 7

Learned Skills: Knavery 6, Gambling 9, Inquiry 6, Drive (Starship) 4, Science (Sensors) 6, Lore (Jumproads) 5, Lore (Vuldrok Culture) 4, Streetwise 3, Stoic Body 4, Spacesuit, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Urthtech, Read Urthtech, Speak Vuldrok, Read Vuldrok

Weapons: None

Armor: None

Wyrd: 3

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Starships

Starships are both characters and backdrops to **Fading Suns** games. While many ply the jumproads of the Known Worlds, each has its own distinct flavor; even ships of the same class are unique.

Memloch, modified Vuldrok Myrkwyrin Class Explorer

Size Rating: 3 (35m long, 9m wide, 7m high)

Grade: Lander

Engines: Fast

Shields:

Speed	Left / Right
Full thrust	0 / 0
3/4 thrust	1 / 1
Half thrust	1 / 1
1/4 thrust	2 / 2
Full stop	2 / 2

Armament: 1 Lt Blaster (turret), 1 Grappling Gun

Sensors: Radar 5

Crew: 3 (captain, pilot, engineer)

Passengers: 4 (8 with double occupancy of staterooms)

Cargo: 30 metric tons

Jumps: 2

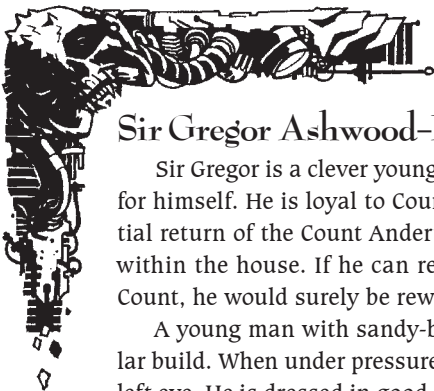
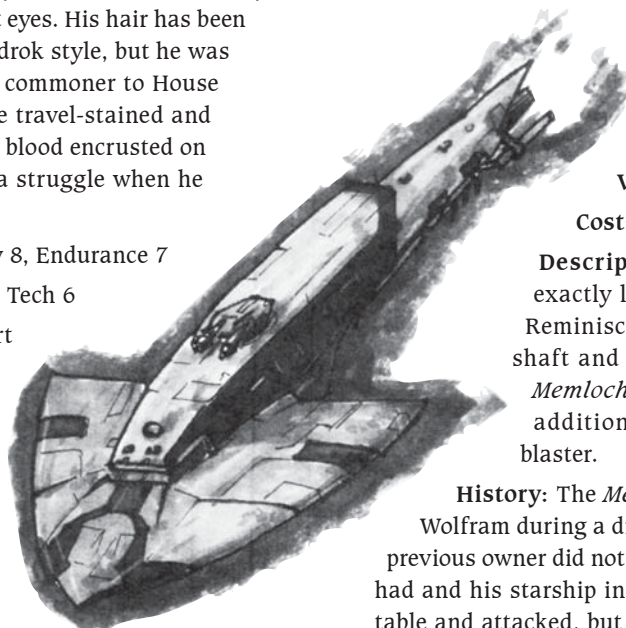
Supplies: 3 months for crew and full passenger load

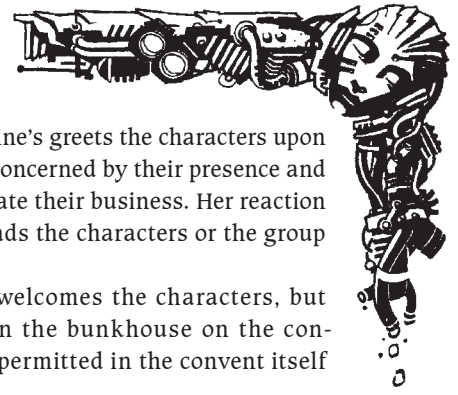
Vitality: 30

Cost: 49,900 firebirds

Description: The *Memloch* looks almost exactly like a standard Myrkwyrin design. Reminiscent of a spear with a long, slender shaft and an enlarged arrow-like head, the *Memloch's* only external variation is the addition of a dorsal turret with a light blaster.

History: The *Memloch* was a prize won by Tervus Wolfram during a drunken high-stakes card game. The previous owner did not take well to losing every firebird he had and his starship in one night. He overturned the card table and attacked, but was too far gone to recognize who





it was that 'cheated' him, starting a brawl that cost him his life. Since that day the *Memloch* has been Tervus' pride and joy; it sports a dirty white and red tiger patterned hull that stands out from any other ship at the spaceport.

Act Two: Those Who Bore Witness

The player characters can interview those who survived the horror of the *Lexington Script*. Of the thirteen who made it to safety, only two can actually be interviewed. The other nine committed suicide over the intervening years and a further two are missing, presumed dead. The captain of the *Hawk's Honor* can also be located as his ship is currently in dock for repairs.

The characters should not expect to get too much out of the remaining survivors, given that so many of their fellows have succumbed to the ordeal and taken their own lives. Their state of mind is definitely in question. Lady Tera Windsor Hawkwood is being cared for in the sanctuary of an Orthodox convent in the mountains overlooking Hakkonen, which the characters can easily reach within a couple of days by riding beast.

Friar Jack Brayfor is known to travel the small village communities in the cyclone belt between the Blood Desert and the Sedat Ocean. This makes him hard to track down and player characters could waste weeks trekking through the region seeking him. Friar Jack has a reputation among the people of this region and is better known as 'Lunatic Jack' or 'Howling Jack'. Though almost certainly driven mad by his guilt at surviving the Kraken attack, the local people look kindly upon him and give him bread and water whenever he passes through their villages. A few even call him Saint Jack, recognizing him as patron for those in suffering or hardship, something the local people understand well.

Silent Witness

The Lady Tera Windsor Hawkwood lives in Saint Catherine's Convent. Nestled in a high mountain valley, the convent and surrounding cultivated lands are sheltered from the worst of the storms to blow in from the Blood Desert. The convent itself was once a stately manor house donated to the Order of St. Catherine more than 300 years ago. The building is well cared for, and the nuns spend their time with backbreaking labor to provide most of the convent's food.

In the aftermath of the loss of the *Lexington Script*, Lady Tera was treated for her anxiety and guilt, but she ultimately retreated from public life, seeking the hard labor and isolation of the convent as a means of purification. Her family considers it a blessing that she removed herself from polite society. She had attempted to take her own life on more than one occasion and became something of an embarrassment.

The matron of St. Catherine's greets the characters upon their arrival, though she is concerned by their presence and respectfully asks them to state their business. Her reaction is less frosty if a woman leads the characters or the group has a female spokesperson.

Matron Anna Vitanen welcomes the characters, but any males have to sleep in the bunkhouse on the convent's grounds and are not permitted in the convent itself after dark.

It is possible to meet Lady Tera, though the Matron insists that another nun is present at all times, and she informs the characters that the lady has taken a vow of silence. She communicates by writing, but only does so in Latin, though she understands spoken Urthish. If none of the characters can read Latin, one of the nuns translates for them.

Lady Tera is reluctant to discuss what happened on the last voyage of the *Lexington Script*. After all, she took her vow of silence so as not to spread the evil that she witnessed. When the characters are shown to her small cloister, she is agitated. The chaperone tries to calm her with soothing words. The cloister is so small that only two of the characters (only one if particularly large) can enter and communicate with the Lady Tera. The others must remain beyond the threshold of the doorway. She pauses once the characters explain what they want from her. However, she quickly grabs a sharp knife from the writing desk and tries to end her own life right afterwards.

If the characters are fast enough they might be able to prevent her suicide. A character succeeding at a Perception + Observe goal roll with a hard (-6) penalty will not be surprised by her actions and may attempt to grapple and disarm her. She will fight fiercely, turning the knife on any character who tries to stop her. The characters may be able to subdue or at least grapple and hold her until she can be talked to again.

If the characters can convince her that some good might come from her telling her tale, she reluctantly writes her account of what occurred:

"My journey aboard the Lexington Script was to be my first time traveling through a jumpgate. I was naturally excited and stayed awake when the other guests retired to their rooms. I wanted to see the monument that the Ur had left behind for us. Tragically, not even to this day have I seen one with my own eyes. I was on the observation deck looking out at the stars, when space seemed to ripple like a heat haze on a hot day.

The Lexington Script veered to avoid this unnatural phenomenon, but as I watched, a great tentacle with a biting maw upon its tip ensnared the hull of our ship. I cried out with the horror of such a blasphemous thing. There was a great silence then, like all creation held its breath, then the sounds of straining buckling deafened us. I remember very little else with any degree of coherence, just fragments. Somebody bundled me into one of the nearby life pods, I do not



recall who, though I have not seen his face amongst those who survived.

All I can remember is tainted with the mind-numbing panic that I felt and still feels undiminished to this day. From the window of our life pod, I saw the body of a beast larger than the Lexington Script, with maybe six or more great tentacles. The body of the beast was like that of some great creature of the deep, and longer than the Lexington Script."

The lady breaks down and weeps at the memory she is forced to relive. The nun assisting the player characters insists that the interview is over and ushers them out. They are not permitted to meet Lady Tera again; if necessary they are told that her mind is frail and their questions risk pushing her over the edge of sanity again.

Raving Lunatic

Tracking down Friar Jack Brayfor can be as easy or as hard as the gamemaster wishes. He might be in the first village they investigate or he could be wandering the wilderness and sleeping in the protective shadow of a boulder. They may have to hire a guide and spend several weeks trekking about the Blood Desert. Assuming that the characters manage to pick up his trail and beat him to the next village, they are waiting for him when one of the children set to watch the villager's herd of desert goats, comes running, shouting that Howling Jack is coming.

The villagers all come out of their houses immediately, many bearing small gifts of food and water, some offering clothing as well. They line the dusty street and await the holy man's arrival. As he walks out of the desert, the villagers incline their heads and hold up their offerings. He accepts a bowl of water from one woman and some bread from another, as he makes his way to a small shrine in heart of the village. There he leads the villagers in prayer and as dusk starts to fall, he becomes increasingly manic and demands that the sick and injured be brought before him for healing.

The village builds a bonfire to provide the friar with heat and light. Once the great blaze is leaping up into the sky, he kneels with the most afflicted brought before him and prays as he lays his hands upon them. Once the healing is complete he leaps and dances about the fire, laughing and howling. The locals bring out simple musical instruments to accompany him. The characters have little chance to speak with the friar this night, but once the sun rises again he is approachable.

Though villagers offer him shelter, he does not go anywhere where he cannot see the sky and so the friar sleeps outside. In the early morning, as the true night fades, Lunatic Jack can be found curled up next to the little shrine, using it as a windbreak. He whimpers softly to himself as he pulls his ragged robe about him. In contrast to the night before, he should strike the characters as a pathetic wretch. Once the village starts to stir, Jack is offered food and water and always has at least a small group. If the characters want to speak privately, now is the time to act.

Jack is reluctant to talk about his experience with the Kraken and needs to be treated gently if they are to get him to speak of it at all. Lunatic Jack seems to look through the characters and quakes in fear of them. He initially refuses to speak with them, whispering that they are servants of the Kraken's will and that he will not aid them. He bids them put aside their quest. If pressed, Lunatic Jack howls like a man possessed and grapples the nearest character, forcing him to the ground and screaming prayers to the heavens. The friar is trying to bless the character, and requires grappling him for two rounds as he gives the benediction. The blessing is intended to open the eyes of the character receiving it. In the final act, the blessed character will be able to see the dark soul parasites within the body of the Count. What the character does with this knowledge is up to him. Of course, the characters rightfully believe they are under attack and have to defend themselves against the mad friar.

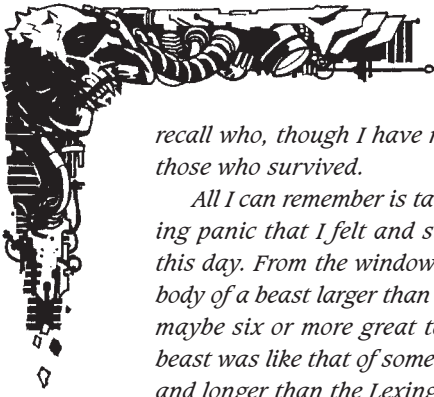
The moment any shouting starts the local people will start to rouse from their homes and come to the aid of their saint. If the characters are struggling with Jack, the peasants will take up arms, mostly farming tools, and run the characters out of town. If they can capture one of them, the character will be made an example of in the village square, where he will be tied up and beaten senseless. The character won't be killed, and will receive the friar's blessing before he is released. More likely, the characters have weapons and will be able to retreat without leaving anyone behind. Friar Jack will disappear into the desert again when he leaves the village later on the same day.

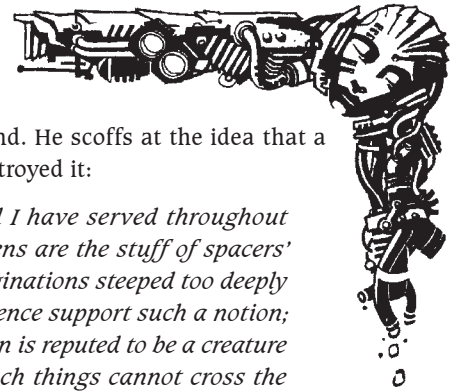
Disinterested Captain

Provided that a request is logged through the appropriate channels, Captain Kyme of the *Hawk's Honor* is available for an interview. The request needs to be logged with Hawkwood Naval Command. The captain is overseeing repairs to his ship and will decline coming planet-side to speak with the characters. They are invited to travel up to his ship and take a tour instead. This means being cleared by Naval Command, and this is where problems will start to arise. If the characters have any reputation for anti-Hawkwood activity, they will be declined regardless of their efforts. Otherwise, one of the characters will need to file the appropriate papers and make an Extrovert + Bureaucracy goal roll. The goal is modified by the composition of the character group: +1 per Hawkwood character, -2 per Decados character, -1 per alien character.

The characters have to take a shuttle up into orbit and dock with the Hornet-class ship as it undergoes some minor repair work to its systems following a skirmish with a pirate ship operating near Leminkainen's jumpgate.

The Captain is delighted to give a tour of his vessel and speaks enthusiastically about his ship and its proud service history. He has, however, scheduled a precise time window after which he encourages the characters to not overstay their welcome. If the characters do not take charge of the situation, the tour likely takes up the whole hour they are allotted.





Once they actually settle the Captain down to talk about his rescue of the *Lexington Script's* survivors, he does so with the precision of a military debriefing:

"We received a report of an overdue liner and set out to search the last known coordinates of the ship. The area of space was divided into a standard search grid, and we commenced a diligent search operation. After six days, we had detected no signals, nor recovered any debris from the Lexington Script. At thistime, I ordered that the search grid be moved further in-system. After a further two days searching, we located a weak transponder signal corresponding to one of the life pods of said ship. As we closed in to inspect the vessel, we recovered a further two signals and proceeded to recover all three pods.

Our continuous search over a period of a further five days failed to recover further life pods nor any wreckage. The survivors were all suffering from nervous exhaustion and shock, and my crew and I extended every courtesy and comfort that we could provide. Alas one lost soul took his own life before we made Leminkainen orbit."

If asked about the report that he filed, he states that he reported the incident as an unexplained disappearance, possibly due to technical failure or navigational error that led

the ship into the dark beyond. He scoffs at the idea that a Void Kraken might have destroyed it:

"I am not a fool, and I have served throughout Hawkwood space. Krakens are the stuff of spacers' tales conjured from imaginations steeped too deeply in ale. Nor does the evidence support such a notion; we all know that a Kraken is reputed to be a creature of the dark, and that such things cannot cross the threshold of a sacred jumpgate. Besides, the Lexington Script was just about to cross the orbital path of Bilgo when the life pods were launched. That's about 6 AU from the jumpgate. Whatever happened to them was the result of something more mundane, I'm afraid. Pirates and barbarians are all too common in this system."

Key Characters

Those few gamemaster characters important to the overall flow of the drama are detailed below. Incidental gamemaster characters need to be prepared either in advance or on the fly during the game. Note also that each of the characters only lists Learned Skills that may be relevant to the drama. They likely have many more.

Lady Tera Windsor Hawkwood

Profoundly traumatized by the destruction of the *Lexington Script* and her own survival. In recognition of the demonic beast that tore the liner apart and consumed it, she turned her face towards the Pancreator's light. She took a vow of silence so that she might never have to speak of such dark horrors again.

A woman entering her middle years. Though once beautiful, the harsh life at St. Catherine's has taken its toll, and she suffers from painful arthritis in her hands. She only communicates by writing in Latin. She is dressed in the customary convent garb, a long, hooded habit of dark-brown wool, belted with a simple knot of rope.

Body: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Endurance 7

Mind: Wits 5, Perception 4, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert 1, Introvert 9, Passion 2, Calm 1, Faith 7, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 3, Fight 3, Impress 4, Melee 3, Observe 5, Shoot 3, Sneak 3, Vigor 7

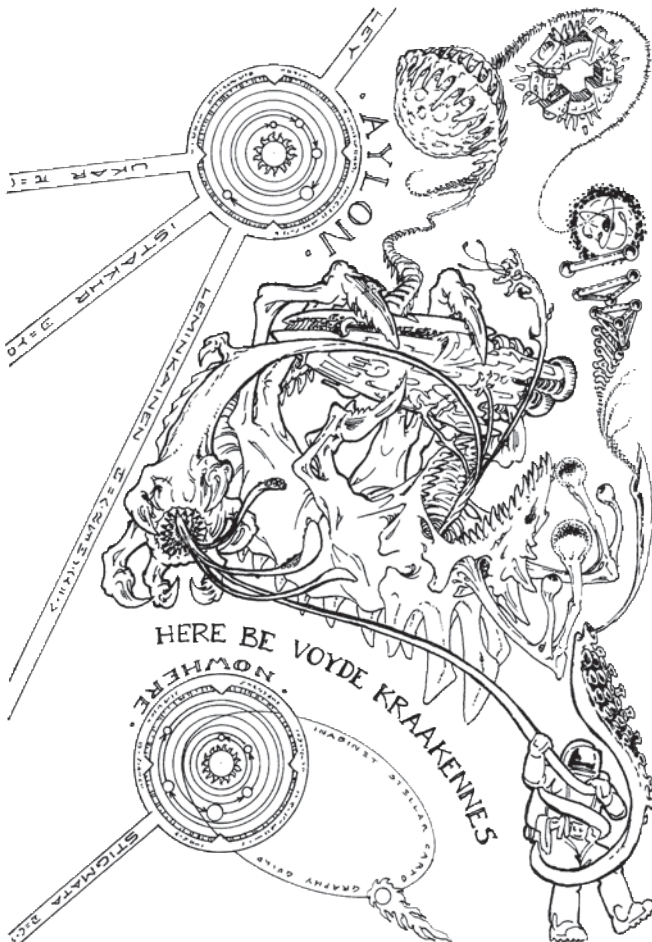
Learned Skills: Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Latin, Read Latin

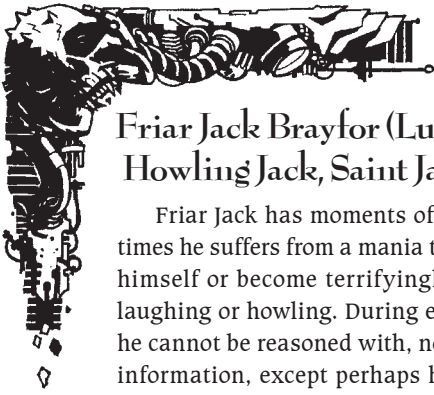
Weapons: Knife

Armor: None

Wyrd: 9

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|0|0|0|0|0|0|0





Friar Jack Brayfor (Lunatic Jack, Howling Jack, Saint Jack)

Friar Jack has moments of clarity and lucidity. At other times he suffers from a mania that makes him withdraw into himself or become terrifyingly animated, capering about laughing or howling. During either of these polar extremes, he cannot be reasoned with, nor does he provide any useful information, except perhaps hurled accusations or desperate prayers.

A man whose face and skin is so scorched by the sun and beaten by the weather that he looks like dried leather or vitrified wood. His hair is thin and wiry and recedes from the crown of his head. Dressed in rags that used to be the robes of an Orthodox priest, he walks with surprising vitality and strength. He carries a gnarled walking staff, though he does not lean upon it, and a sling bag that holds his few possessions.

Body: Strength 7, Dexterity 4, Endurance 10

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 6, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert*, Introvert*, Passion*, Calm*, Faith 9, Ego 1

*) These stats vary widely depending on his mania, and are subject to the gamemaster's discretion.

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 6, Fight 5, Impress 7, Melee 5, Observe 5, Shoot 3, Sneak 8, Vigor 10

Learned Skills: Social (Oratory) 7, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Latin, Read Latin

Powers: Theurgy 6, Hubris 0

Rites: Any he needs!

Weapons: Staff

Armor: None

Wyrd: 9

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Captain Henry Kyne

The son of a landless knight, Henry Kyne realized quickly that he stood to inherit nothing but mediocrity and obscurity. Not prepared to accept his father's lot, he joined the Hawkwood star forces early and earned his own command. He believes that everything has a place and that everything should be in its place, causing his junior officers to complain to each other about his micro-management style of command.

A short, muscular man squeezed into a uniform that must be a size too small for him. His hair is dark, shot through with wisps of grey.

Body: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Endurance 6

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 5, Tech 5

Spirit: Extrovert 5, Introvert 4, Passion 2, Calm 4, Faith 5, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 3, Fight 5, Impress 4, Melee 7, Observe 4, Shoot 6, Sneak 3, Vigor 5

Learned Skills: Social (Leadership) 5, Warfare (Military Tactics) 6, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish

Weapons: Palm Laser

Armor: Dueling Shield

Wyrd: 5

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Act Three: Strange Paths

The player characters must now undertake the voyage to Vuldrok (the Known World's name for the Hargard system). Though only a single jump separates Leminkainen from Hargard, the cultural divide between the two is immense. The characters are likely leaving the Empire for the first time in their lives. The isolation of being on foreign soil, surrounded by people who look different and do not speak their language, should be an unnerving experience. Even characters that make an effort to blend in stick out like a sore thumb to the locals.

If they spoke with Tervus Wolfram and cut a deal with him, they can get underway as soon as they are ready. If they have not employed Tervus, then they either need to find an alternative captain willing and able to take them across the border, or they must acquire a jumpkey if they take their own starship.

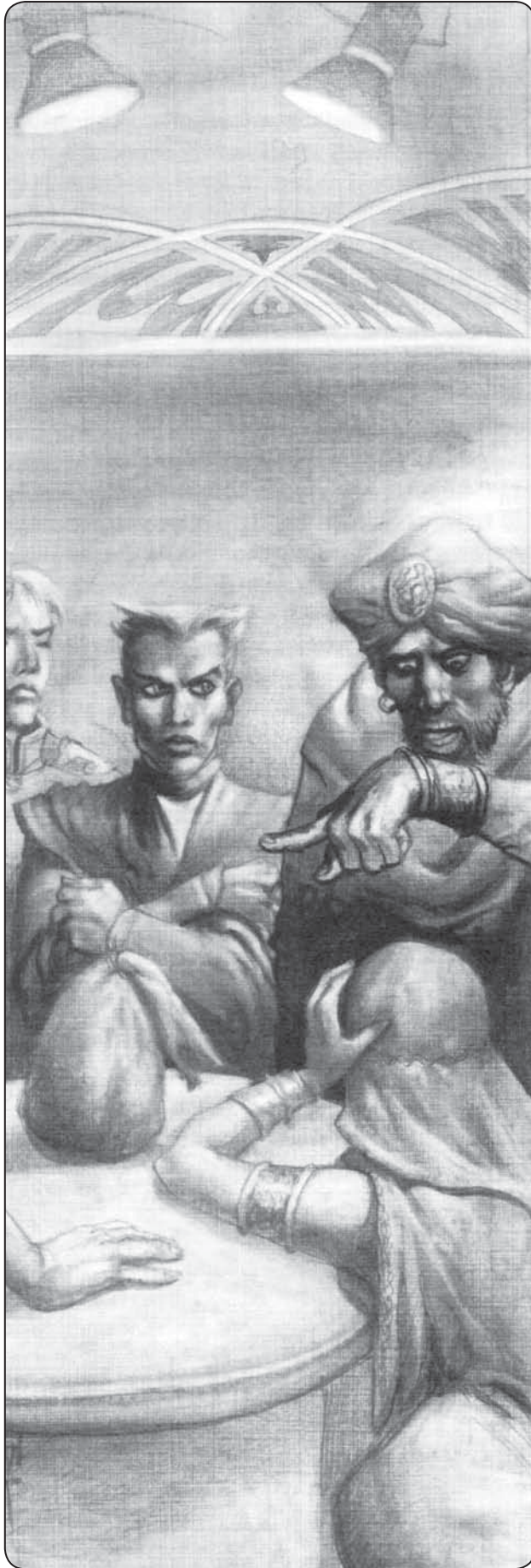
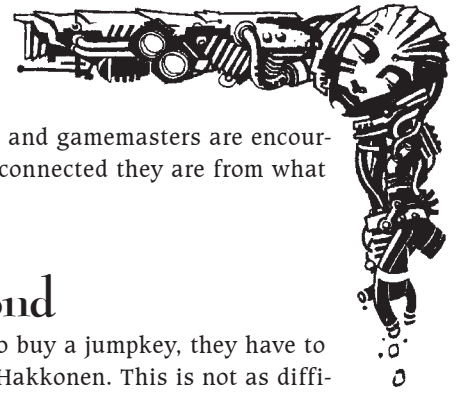
The characters should make special note of any gear they are taking with them as the moment they cross the threshold of the jumpgate their firebirds decline in value. Now that they are in barbarian space, they are the actual barbarians.

Once word reaches the nobles of House Ramakrishna that the characters have arrived on Hargard, they are curious to meet the newcomers. Though they would really like to know what the characters are up to, they would never be so crass as to ask directly. House Ramakrishna is both very keen on establishing diplomatic relations with the Phoenix Empire and repulsed at the same time. Though their envoys made formal contact with the Imperial court, the House still has a great deal to learn about the Empire and takes every opportunity to do so and to impress members of the Empire's own noble houses.

The characters receive an invitation to a celebratory feast, followed by cultural performances of music and dance. They are not the only guests at the feast, but surrounded by many Ramakrishna nobles, Vuldrok, and other guests from the Known Worlds. This gives the characters an opportunity to make new contacts and to appreciate just how different the two cultures are. Of course a social gathering would not be complete without the opportunity for a faux pas.

Depending on how things go at the celebration, the characters earn more or less respect and cooperation from their hosts. The purpose of this act is to introduce the characters to an alien culture; while it is a human culture, it is





very different to their own, and gamemasters are encouraged to stress just how disconnected they are from what they know.

A Key for Beyond

If the characters need to buy a jumpkey, they have to locate the black market in Hakkonen. This is not as difficult as it might normally be within Hawkwood space. As the only border world with access to Vuldrok space, there is a surprising amount of undeclared cross border trade and much of it is conducted through the sea docks as ships come and go from the Valdalla continent (which is under Vuldrok Star Nation rule).

Characters can cruise the dockside taverns looking for a suitable contact. After spending a few firebirds, they can attempt a Wits + Streetwise goal roll to find an agent to act for them. They eventually meet a man called Christian Blayford. Then all they have to do is retire to a comfortable hotel and await their contact's return. Only two days later they meet their shady friend again in the same watering hole. He carefully unwraps a dirty cloth, bearing for a moment a long, slender jumpkey adorned with a strange knotwork etching. He quickly covers it again before demanding 6,500 firebirds for his troubles. He expects (even looks forward) to haggling over the price. The characters can resort to an Extrovert + Charm or Knavery goal roll. Each VP they earn drops the price by 100 firebirds. But Christian also rolls and every VP he gets raises the price by 100 firebirds, though not above 6,500.

If the characters refuse to pay up after haggling, Christian is disappointed, apologizes for bothering them and leaves. His two bullyboys lurk around in an alleyway and mug the characters when they leave the tavern or if they try to follow Christian. If the player characters do not have a key at the end of this scene, they have to hire a captain who already has one, or make a deal with Tervus.

A Willing Captain

There are few traders willing to risk everything by flying into the face of the barbarian raiders and fewer still have a jumpkey that actually allows them to do it. Of course, if the characters simply ask around the spaceport, they are eventually directed to Captain Dana Rodriguez de Sutek. She looks the characters over and asks them why they want to cross the border. In truth, she does not care much so long as they can pay and they do not look like the types who will try to backstab her and hijack her ship.

The Captain demands payment in advance and does not accept guild passage contracts (she is an independent operator). The price is 1,000 firebirds per person, more if they look like trouble, and the same again to get back. Her ship will wait on the ground on Hargard for a week while she conducts business; if the characters are not ready to go when she leaves, they have to make their own way back.



Voyage into the Unknown

Regardless of whether the characters are flying with Tervus or Dana, the conditions aboard both ships are cramped and awkward as neither is designed for comfort nor for so many passengers. The trip to the jumpgate only takes six days, but as their captain tells them, that was the safe part. Space is big and running across other ships in transit is unusual. It is only when they have to hold station awaiting a jumpgate cycling that they are at the mercy of whatever is coming through or whatever else is waiting to get out.

A single Hornet class frigate defends the jumpgate, although a Griffin class destroyer and a further two Hornets are on maneuvers only an AU from the Leminkainen gate. That does not deter raiders if the prize is juicy enough, however.

Fortunately the gate opens within only an hour of having arrived. The ship's crew is called to the battle stations as they prepare to transit the gate, in case a welcoming committee is on the other side. As they pass through the aperture, they leave behind the dull red light of Leminkainen's star and enter the bright yellow radiance of Hargard's sun. A quick sensor search of surrounding space discovers nothing untoward; the crew can relax a little.

The journey in system to Hargard takes five days; space traffic is light in this system, much lighter than in the Empire. The squawker that is normally filled with the chatter of pilots coming and going is almost silent and those voices that are heard speak in deep foreign dialects. The ship makes for the spaceport and planetary agora at Achiharta in Vijayanagar. This is the domain of House Ramakrishna, which enjoys a relatively high technological and cultural standard. Achiharta is a beautiful city designed to showcase local art and culture. Many great buildings house fine art galleries, museums and concert halls; though such things exist within the Known Worlds, they are seldom open to the public or the lowest serf as they are here.

Achiharta spaceport is more akin to a well-tended garden; aesthetically designed permaplast concourses and landing pads are sculpted into the landscape. From the air, the whole construction resembles a great flower of drooping blossoms growing from the port control building. The structure fans out as a semi-circular building topped with a tower that leans in at a seemingly impossible angle. The architecture is clean, with curved lines rather than straight edges, and off-white stone adds to its pristine appearance.

Once the starship lands, a white cart rolls up to provide transport to the entirely automated port building. Once inside the building, the characters can use local services, including currency exchange. The local currency is the Lotus, roughly equal in value to the firebird. These can be exchanged back and forth on a 3 for 2 basis (the money lenders have to make a profit). Other barbarian currencies may also be exchanged, though the rates are not favorable. Firebirds can be used directly in the Vuldrok territories but are worth half their normal value. In Vijayanagar, the Lotus is the only accepted tender, though moneychangers happily exchange for Known Worlds coinage.

On the Ground

If the characters have Tervus with them, they do not have to hire a guide, if they do not, they should consider employing one. Achiharta is a strange and complex place, and it is easy to become lost or disorientated, as strangers in a strange land, where they do not speak the language. Though the Ramakrishna nobles speak many languages, their peasantry speaks a dialect of Urthish (called Idram) that is spoken very quickly, making understanding doubly difficult.

If the characters need to hire a guide, the spaceport offers that service, and for the sum of one Lotus a day they can have the services of Kurin Ramachandrin. The man knows the city well, having lived here all his life. He proudly shows off the cultural centers and is knowledgeable about Ramakrishna culture, arts, and politics.

Achiharta is a city of dichotomy; there are two distinct regions, the artistic cultural centre and the lowborn districts. Great museums proudly display technological accomplishments through the ages. Art galleries display the finest artistic masterpieces for all to see. Theaters offer venues for live performances or magic lantern shows. All these would never be so openly available within the Empire; the Universal Church would denounce such as vices and sins against the Pancreator and raze the beautiful white edifices to the ground.

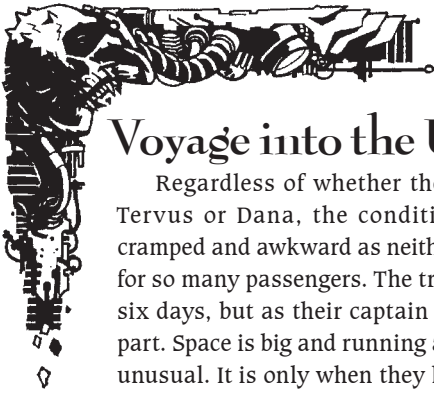
The lowborn districts are the polar opposite to the high artistic centre. The buildings are low, squat constructions; dirty white wash over fired bricks, and the streets little more than narrow muddy tracks between the houses. Street vendors set their stalls wherever there is room and hawk all kinds of foodstuffs, rare spices, live animals, clothing, and strange curiosities.

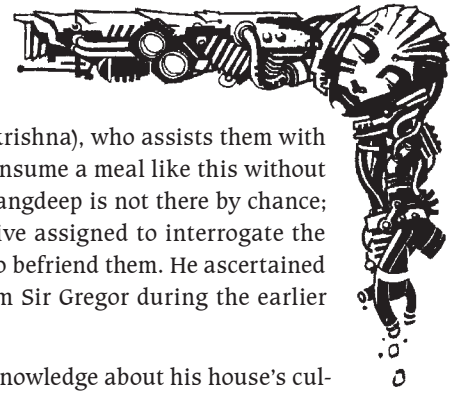
Cultural Learnings

A messenger delivers an invitation penned with beautiful calligraphic script, formally inviting the characters as guests of honor to an evening of celebration and cultural exchange. Although the characters are free to turn the invitation down, it would be a serious breach of etiquette to do so. Also, in Ramakrishna tradition there is no such thing as fashionably late (being late shows a flagrant disrespect for the host), nor should a guest be so crass as to come bearing arms.

The celebration is hosted by Prince Sapan Ramakrishna in one of the many open halls at the Achiharta Palace, constructed of stark white marble shot through with dark grey veins and inlaid with gold and silver decorations. With a high vaulted ceiling and an open airy feel, the palace is a masterpiece of architecture. Almost five hundred guests fill the hall and still have room to comfortably move around. Many are local nobility, political leaders, and captains of industry; also present are representatives from the Bishopric of Ostmark and several Vuldrok factions.

Guests can mingle and talk to one another, while smartly attired serving staff bring trays of drinks and canapés. Soft music plays in the background, and the topics of discussion





range across subjects as diverse as philosophy and trading pacts. The language spoken is predominantly Vuldrok, but Ramakrishna nobles are well schooled in Urthish and speak to the characters in their native tongue to put them at ease rather than display superiority, but achieve both nicely.

The characters might be surprised to meet Sir Gregor Ashwood-Dale and his retinue. He smiles and welcomes them warmly, enquiring how long they have been in Achiharta and how their search is progressing. He is as courteous as ever, but reminds them that his master is the rightful owner of the signet ring should they manage to locate it before he does.

A Taste of Culture

Once the characters have had ample time to mix with the other guests, a large gong sounds, and Prince Sapan announces that food is about to be served in the next hall. He then leads his guests through to another equally impressive hall. This one is arranged with rows of long, low tables. Seating is upon large cushions and some of the larger Vuldrok look a little uncomfortable with the arrangements.

Food is served in many bowls, kept warm on hot plates along the centre line of the table. The food is very spicy (reminiscent of Decados or Juandaastas cookery) and of many brightly colored sauces with meat or vegetables.

All this is served with flat bread instead of eating utensils (though servants provide knives and forks if requested). The characters are seated next to a kindly old Ramakrishna

gentleman (Jangdeep Ramakrishna), who assists them with the finer points of how to consume a meal like this without making a mess. Of course, Jangdeep is not there by chance; he is an intelligence operative assigned to interrogate the characters over dinner and to befriend them. He ascertained the characters' purpose from Sir Gregor during the earlier part of the evening.

Jangdeep gladly shares knowledge about his house's culture, but he subtly deflects the topic of conversation back on the characters so that he gains more from the conversation than they do. If asked about some particular aspect of culture, Jangdeep answers the question but then asks how this aspect is on their world, then probes further with a follow-up question. Most of the information he shares with them is about etiquette and the current social climate.

Some of the Vuldrok further down the table are having difficulties with the meal, and resort to using their hands to eat with. Unused to the spicy dishes, they ask for water or beer to quench the fire. Jangdeep points this out to the characters and requests milk if any character cannot deal with the spiciness. If the characters do not drink the soured milk, they must make an Endurance + Stoic Body goal roll (+4 if they are used to spicy food). While the Vuldrok are red faced and swilling large amounts of beer, the characters are spared that embarrassment and should trust Jangdeep more.

Once the meal is finished, servants bring small towels and bowls of hot water for guests to freshen up with. The dishes are removed and the tables cleared away.



A Culture of Taste

The festivities continue with professional performers in bright gaudy clothing who sing in a high-pitched keening that Known Worlders are unlikely to appreciate. The instruments they play look like strange variations on more familiar instruments from the Empire, but the sounds they make are strangely pitched. They perform in the local Idram dialect, which makes the whole thing even harder to follow.

Jangdeep does his best to provide a cultural and linguistic interpretation. But the worst is yet to come. Various Ramakrishna nobles are called upon to perform, and read poetry that they have prepared, others sing or dance or display other talents. While neither the characters nor any of the other guests are called upon to perform, they are entitled to do so and Jangdeep encourages them to show off their culture. Even the Vuldrok emissaries seem to have come prepared with the recital of epic poems or anecdotal tales that cause some to laugh and others to applaud.

If the characters do not perform, it is considered sad and disappointing that they are so lacking in culture that they are either ashamed to display it or that their culture is devoid of art, performance and entertainment, especially as the enjoyment of these things are what makes one noble. Sir Gregor is an accomplished musician and singer, although he will not step up until the characters have had an invitation to do so. More for the sake of one-upmanship, he will perform the ballad 'Star-born Prince', composed to celebrate the rise of Emperor Alexis.

Before the Night is Out

Jangdeep speaks to the characters about their quest; depending on how cagey they are to speak of it determines how he approaches the subject. If they tell him, he offers his assistance saying that he has many useful contacts in the city. If they do not mention their quest, Jangdeep is more direct, or simply lets on that Sir Gregor already confided their purpose to him.

There is of course an ulterior motive to assisting the characters; Jangdeep sees them as a means of investigating and dealing with a problem. In recent years, a cult has arisen among many seafarers and coastal fishermen called the 'Dark Pool Fishers'; it would be both unseemly and inappropriate for House Ramakrishna to take notice of such peasant superstitions. He suspects that there is a great deal more going on than meets the eye.

The characters can return to where they are staying after the evening's festivities, but Jangdeep offers them rooms in the palace and ask them to accept the humble hospitality of House Ramakrishna. Sir Gregor Ashwood-Dale and his retinue stay in adjoining rooms. The accommodations are beautiful in their simplicity. Lightweight gossamer drapes give everything a vaguely ethereal feel. The beds are low and similar to Li Halan futons, firm but comfortable.

Key Characters

Those few gamemaster characters important to the overall flow of the drama are detailed below. Incidental gamemaster characters need to be prepared either in advance or on the fly during the game. Note also that each of the characters only lists Learned Skills that may be relevant to the drama. They are likely to have many more.

Christian Blayford, Black Market Contact

Christian knows the backstreets and black markets of Hakkonen better than most, and if it is for sale, or even if it is not, he can get it. He earned his place in the underworld and his missing teeth and broken nose attest to what happens if you cross someone you should not, and he learned that lesson well. 'Fear keeps you honest' is his most common saying, and he is not afraid to enforce his business with some hired muscle, but nor is he stupid enough to sacrifice his investments needlessly.

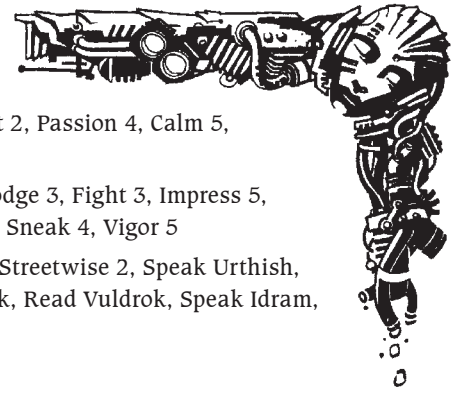
A middle-aged man who walks with a slight stoop. His hair is lank and his nose looks like it was broken many times. He is missing his two front teeth.

Body: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Endurance 6

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 5, Tech 5

Spirit: Extrovert 7, Introvert 3, Passion 3, Calm 4, Faith 1, Ego 7





Natural Skills: Charm 5, Dodge 5, Fight 6, Impress 4, Melee 4, Observe 7, Shoot 5, Sneak 4, Vigor 3

Learned Skills: Knavery 7, Lore (Agora) 8, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish

Weapons: Derringer

Armor: Standard Shield

Wyrd: 3

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○

Captain Dana Rodriguez de Sutek

Dana Rodriguez de Sutek is a noble woman by birth; she scorned her parents and her birthright and sought her own fortune amongst the stars. Fiercely independent and anti-authoritarian, she rejected even the League and instead forged a career that is as unique as she herself. She has traveled into Vuldrok space many times; some say that she is honored among the barbarians as one of the Fheykrig, warrior maidens, but this only a fanciful tale.

A tall, lean woman with long reddish hair that tumbles down her back almost to her waist. She wears no guild insignia on her beaten-up leather jacket but bears a twin pair of blaster pistols on her hips.

Body: Strength 6, Dexterity 8, Endurance 5

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 6, Tech 8

Spirit: Extrovert 7, Introvert 2, Passion 6, Calm 2, Faith 1, Ego 6

Natural Skills: Charm 6, Dodge 7, Fight 6, Impress 7, Melee 6, Observe 6, Shoot 7, Sneak 6, Vigor 5

Learned Skills: Knavery 7, Drive (Spaceship) 5, Science (Sensors) 8, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Vuldrok, Read Vuldrok

Blessing: Ambidextrous

Weapons: 2x Blaster Pistols

Armor: Assault Shield

Wyrd: 2

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○

Kurin Ramachandrin, Achiharta Guide

Kurin is an educated man with an aptitude for languages; he spends much of his time in study and contemplation at the University of Vijayanagar. He enjoys his job and takes an interest in people from other cultures. He has met Known Worlders before and speaks fluently but with a distinctive accent. He also speaks the local Idram dialects and Vuldrok.

A young man with tanned skin, his hair is cropped short. He is respectful at all times and keeps his head slightly bowed so as not to make eye contact. He wears brightly colored clothing wrapped about him in several layers to keep the cold wind at bay, which blows at this time of the year.

Body: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Endurance 5

Mind: Wits 6, Perception 5, Tech 6

Spirit: Extrovert 5, Introvert 2, Passion 4, Calm 5, Faith 6, Ego 2

Natural Skills: Charm 4, Dodge 3, Fight 3, Impress 5, Melee 3, Observe 6, Shoot 3, Sneak 4, Vigor 5

Learned Skills: Knavery 3, Streetwise 2, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Vuldrok, Read Vuldrok, Speak Idram, Read Idram

Weapons: None

Armor: None

Wyrd: 4

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○

Jangdeep Ramakrishna

Jangdeep spent a long life in the intelligence service of his house and is no stranger to violence and danger. He is not, however, a violent person, and prefers to extract information in the form of a confidante; an old man's curiosity is an excusable ruse.

An old man with long grey hair neatly tied back, his skin is pock marked from an illness in his youth. He is dressed in a pale, loose robe, the fashionable embroidery that many Ramakrishna wear is limited to the hems.

Body: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Endurance 4

Mind: Wits 8, Perception 7, Tech 4

Spirit: Extrovert 2, Introvert 5, Passion 3, Calm 7, Faith 4, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 7, Dodge 5, Fight 5, Impress 6, Melee 5, Observe 6, Shoot 4, Sneak 8, Vigor 3

Learned Skills: Knavery 9, Etiquette 8, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Vuldrok, Read Vuldrok, Speak Idram, Read Idram

Weapons: None

Armor: None

Wyrd: 7

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○

Starships

Starships are both characters and backdrops to **Fading Suns** games. While many ply the Jumproads of the Known Worlds, each should have its own distinct flavor. Even ships of the same class should be unique.

Strident Glory, modified Stalker Class Explorer

Size Rating: 3 (30m long, 10m wide, 7m high)

Grade: Lander

Engines: Fast

Shields:

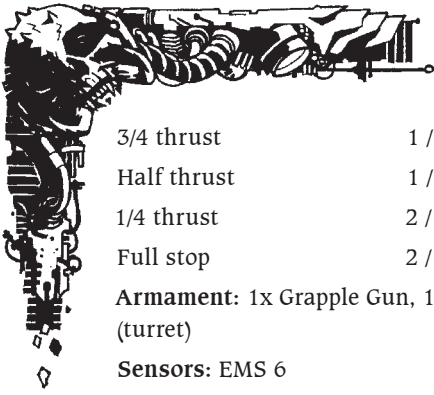
Speed

Left / Right

Full thrust

0 / 0





3/4 thrust	1 / 1
Half thrust	1 / 1
1/4 thrust	2 / 2
Full stop	2 / 2

Armament: 1x Grapple Gun, 1x Lt Blaster, 1x Lt Blaster (turret)

Sensors: EMS 6

Crew: 4 (pilot, navigator, engineer, gunner)

Passengers: 4 (8 with double occupancy of staterooms)

Cargo: 20 metric tons

Jumps: 4

Supplies: 2 month for crew and full passenger load

Vitality: 30

Cost: 55,000 firebirds

Description: The *Strident Glory's* typical Hazat design gives the blade-shaped ship a dangerous look. The paintwork is old and scorched in places. Upon its bow is a depiction of a woman holding a blade aloft.

History: The *Strident Glory* was left for dead by Kurgan forces, adrift in Hira's orbit. Despite the substantial damage, Scravers salvaged her and returned her to Leagueheim where she was sold to Dana Rodriguez and refitted to her new specification. The renovation took a lot more money than expected and still continues piecemeal depending on cash flow. But runs to Hargard pay well.

Act Four: In Search of the Signet

Now that the characters had an introduction to Ramakrishna culture and are enlisted by Jangdeep, they can get on with the business of tracking down the signet ring. They can try and trace the vendor who sold the heirloom to Tervus. Even though the vendor buys and sells a lot of different things, he does remember the weapon in question and the man that traded it to him.

Once the player characters have a description of the man and believe that he is still in possession of the signet ring, they can follow the trail to Elfhome, a Vuldrok city in stark contrast to Achiharta.

In the Market

The characters can now search the market places of Achiharta. If they are searching without help, this could well take days. In fact, without a guide, the characters are targets for just about every scam going. They are pick pocketed, sold items at vastly inflated prices, as they are unable to haggle (something of a national past time). A ring of traders all talking at once surround them, trying to get the characters' attention and sell them a rug or vegetables or clothing or any of a number of common items. The worst possible thing the characters can do is pull out a weapon, at which the crowd

immediately disperses, but everyone looks fearfully at them and will not deal with them from that point on.

So long as they have someone with them who knows the local customs, they should be okay. Tervus is an outsider but at least has some experience, Jangdeep commands respect just by his very presence. Provided he is with the characters, the lowborn are respectful and even actively helpful (Jangdeep does not explain this). While the player characters are moving through the market, give them a Perception + Observe goal roll to spot the man who is shadowing them. This is one of Sir Gregor Ashwood-Dale's men who is supposed to keep an eye on the characters. If he is spotted, he simply falls back into the crowd and vanishes again. If the characters try to capture him, he tries to evade them but does not start a fight. If cornered he simply tries to talk his way out of the situation. He says he was sent to ensure that they do not get into any troubles in this strange city; of course, he reports their movements back to Sir Gregor.

The shop where Tervus purchased the heirloom is an actual store rather than a street stall. The salty tang from the nearby docks is heavy in the air. Dim electric lighting casts an eerie glow inside and many curious artifacts are on display at exorbitant prices. There are a great many curiosities for sale, some human, some alien, some could only be from the Known Worlds, while others are from places that can only be guessed at. While there are many rings and other ornaments for sale, none match the description of the count's signet.

When asked about the weapon that Tervus bought from him, the shop owner claims ignorance, at least until the player characters have shown their faith by purchasing something (another strange tradition in these parts). Once their good faith is demonstrated, the storeowner suddenly 'remembers' the weapon, commenting that it was a beautiful piece and that it saddens him to have let it go at such a low price.

He often buys from and sells to the traders who come to the port but there is one man in particular who never buys, always sells, a Vuldrok sailor from one of the great trawler ships. He comes through here about once a month, and he was last here about two weeks ago.

The shop owner claims that he does not remember the man's name, but he does have a distinctive tattoo on his right shoulder, a vine-like design that spreads down his arm and up to his neck. He wears an expensive-looking ring similar to the one the characters seek.

After the chat with the storeowner, Jangdeep guides the characters into a local taverna, where they can sit and enjoy a herbal tea. They are brought hot water and a selection of dried herbs that are measured into a fine gauze bag and steeped in the hot water. The amount and type of herb changes the flavor of the drink; there is something of a fine art to knowing the herbs and the mixing of flavors.

Once he has sipped from his drink, Jangdeep leans in conspiratorially and tells them that he recognizes the description of the fisherman and his marking and that it is a symbol of a cult that has sprung up along the coast in the fishing communities. The cult calls itself the 'Dark Pool





Fishers', and they are followers of an alien god brought to Hargard by the star brethren.

The cultists are the cause of some concern, but there is no law against the worship of any god. Everyone is free to choose their own way.

Though Jangdeep is not very knowledgeable about fishing or fishing practices, he knows a little. Many Vuldrok trawlers make the journey to the richest fishing grounds where the different sea currents meet. The mouth of the Elfdrid Sea, where it meets the Lohritya Sea, and where the Lohritya meets the Jata Sea are amongst the most bountiful fishing grounds. While the smaller trawlers operate from Rotakin, the larger factory vessels sweep the seas between Elfhome and Achiharta, making two catches as they move first one direction and then return.

Asking the harbormaster is probably the easiest way to find out about the Vuldrok. The harbormaster does not know the man's name, but he recognizes the description of the tattoo and can tell the player characters that the sailor serves aboard a ship called *Modigh*, and that that ship sails between Achiharta and Elfhome. It is likely docked there now.

Jangdeep wishes the player characters the best in their venture to Elfhome, and asks that the characters remember the small part that House Ramakrishna played in their quest when they report back to House Hawkwood. As neighbors, it is important that the two houses are on good terms. Perhaps one day he will have the opportunity to meet with them again, but on their home soil.

If Jangdeep is not assisting the characters in this scene, then either Tervus or Kurin can provide the same information, though with less authority. If the characters are acting completely alone, they have to ask other patrons of the tavern or the owner. Provided they are polite and are partaking of his teas, the owner fills them in.

Getting to Elfhome

How the characters get to Elfhome depends on how they reached Hargard. If they came with Tervus, he simply takes them there, though he explains that landing there is not an easy task and something he does not particularly relish if there is bad weather.

If they arrived with Dana Rodriguez de Sutek, they have to make their own way. She has no interest in going to Elfhome and returns to Leminkainen as soon as her business is concluded. The player characters can book a commercial sky flight at the cost of 10 Lotus per person. If they have their own ship, they can, of course, just fly there themselves. The sky flight is by far the riskiest option, because it leaves them in another strange city without any form of backup or an escape route if things go badly.

Elfhome has a fearsome reputation; not only is it the domain of Thane Eldrid the Wise, the city itself is said to be unconquerable from sea, land or air. Approaching the spaceport, the characters come to the sudden realization that the sea docks and the space docks are one and the same thing. The city is built into the head of a great fjord. Sheer cliffs



plunge several hundred meters into cold water; the city is built along the cliff face and into the cliffs themselves.

Landing a spaceship here is a piloting challenge. The landing pads are barges that float out into the centre of the fjord. The pilot must maneuver his ship along the fjord with the canyon faces drawing in around, and drop gently onto the barge. This requires a Dexterity + Drive (Spaceship) goal roll with a penalty equal to the size of the starship (the *Memloch* is at a -3 to the goal).

If the ship is not centered on the barge when it touches down, or it comes in with too much force, it risks tipping the barge or sinking it. In bad weather, this is even more of a challenge. A Wits + Drive (Spaceship) goal roll (with a penalty equal to the size of the starship) is required not to damage or sink the barge.

Launching from the fjord is just as difficult as landing, but pilots who are familiar with the local terrain reduce the normal penalty by half, rounded down.

Once the starship is safely down on the barge, it is winched back in towards the cliff face. Hundreds of barges are moored under a carved-out overhang so that they cannot be seen or attacked from the air.

There is a huge fleet of Vuldrok starships, a sizable portion of the Thane's overall military power. The characters may not have seen so many starships moored in a single place before. Technical crews make repairs and modifications to various vessels. A few of these appear to be of Known World construction; whether or not they are part of the Thane's fleet or independent traders is impossible to tell. Here and there amongst the landing barges are great piers where seagoing vessels are docked. Small boats transport people and cargo from one side of the fjord to the other, where a mirror image scene of cluttered wharfs and landing barges is played out.

One spaceship stands out amongst the others: a great dark oval with six long lean claw-like fins at the front end reminiscent of a great dark hand. It dwarfs many of the ships berthed around it, and is comparable in size to a Hawkwood Frigate. It must have taken considerable skill to land that here.

If Tervus is with the characters, he appears quite shaken after the landing. He refuses to leave this ship and tells the characters that they do not need him along anyway and that he will stay behind to make sure the ship is ready for an immediate launch. If asked, he admits that what was his first landing at Elfhome and he hopes, he adds, his last as well.

As the characters disembark from the starship and attempt to cross from the landing barge to the main concourse, they are stopped by a group of sour-looking Vuldrok dock workers who demand their docking fee plus extra if they need cargo handled. They accept payment in either Firebirds or Lotus' (100 coins per size class of their starship).

This is actually an opportunity in disguise. Different gangs of dockhands have the right to manage cargos and ships within their area; they make the fees and pay a tithe to the coffers of Eldrid the Wise for the privilege. This means that the service one receives depends on how well

the characters get on with the handlers who run their berth. Befriending them now ensures preferential treatment later on (just in case the characters need to make a quick exit). Of course the characters can refuse payment, or even get into a fight over it, but this only causes bad feelings from the dockers and difficulties when they try to get back to their ship. In extreme cases, the dockers can scuttle a landing barge and send it and the starship to the bottom of the fjord.

Once on the narrow concourse that runs the length of the harbor, the characters have to walk for some miles. Tunnels, bars and storefronts are all cut directly into the cliff face, lighting is mostly provided by oil lamps. A cold breeze runs up from the water under the cliff shelf and every sound seems to echo.

Finding the Modigh

The trawler ship is moored about two miles up the fjord from where the characters' starship is docked. Having unloaded its cargo, the dockhands sit around relaxing and keeping a watchful eye on any suspicious types (such as the characters). The crew went ashore to carouse while they have the opportunity, and to spend their hard-earned cash. Most have simply walked off the ship and into the closest tap house. The man the characters are seeking is one of them, a man named Bjorn.

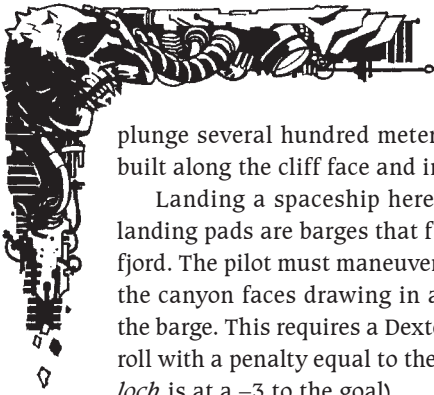
Some of the crew and dockhands are engaged in games of skill and chance, while others are spending what they have on ale as fast as they can consume it. Bjorn and several others sit around a card table drinking and playing a game, the loser of which must buy the next round. There is room for one more at the table and, if one of the characters can both gamble and speak Vuldrok, he is welcomed into the circle, though the buy-in for the game is a round of drinks.

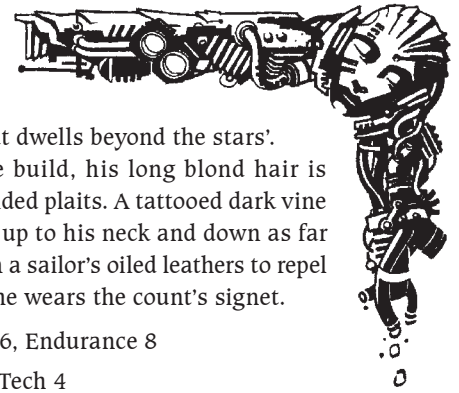
The game moves on to higher stakes as the Vuldrok see the opportunity to fleece a stranger of all the money and other valuables he has. The character can make a contested Wits + Gambling goal roll with a penalty equal to the number of drinks he has had. If he can score 10 VPs then Bjorn is forced to put the ring up as a prize. Bjorn's successes reduce the character's VP total.

This is not the only way to get their hands on the signet ring. The player characters can simply wait until Bjorn attempts to stumble back to his ship and mug him, or steal it when he is too drunk to realize. Neither of these approaches tells them anything about the count or how Bjorn came to have the ring.

If the characters bring up the subject of the ring during the game or once they have won it from him, he tells them that it was a gift for his service. He does not say more on that, but some of the others nod sagely until Bjorn silences them with a glance.

If the characters push things, they have a bar brawl on their hands. So long as they take down Bjorn with little or no actual damage, they can interrogate him once he wakes up. The Vuldrok only pull weapons for a brawl if the characters do so first. This is a sign of escalation in Vuldrok tradition and pulling a weapon moves a fistfight into the





realms where people are easily killed or seriously injured, and which starts blood feuds between families.

If the characters kill anyone, there are serious issues later on when family members or other cultists come seeking revenge. Otherwise the losing side is left unconscious in the bar and expected to pay reparations to the owner (if they have any money left). Assuming the characters win, they can drag Bjorn away for a more private interview when he comes round.

Getting to the Bottom of Things

Once the characters interview Bjorn and persuade him to talk coherently, they can plan the finishing movements of this drama. After much cursing and threats to be released, Bjorn finally accepts the idea that he has to give the characters something before they let him go. He does not actually know much that is of any use. He was given both the weapon and signet ring and many other things to be traded for coin so as to fund the building of shrines to 'the one from beyond the stars'. He was supposed to pawn the ring but he liked it and kept it for himself. The money he made he gave to the Dark Pool Fishers of which he is a member. His tattoo is the mark of Nidderdak, which he bears as a testament to his faith.

If the characters mention the count, he says that the envoy might know about him. He himself knows nothing more than what he has told them. He can tell them that the dark ship docked close by is one of the star brethren's great ships, and the envoy lives aboard it. At this point, Bjorn will tell them:

"The Envoy, he is both blessed and cursed to walk amongst them. You will know him when you see him, for he looks like no other. He alone has looked upon the face of the one from beyond the stars. The ship comes and goes; it gathers supplies intended for a dark port beyond our world. The envoy will be supervising the loading as few among the Vuldrok who are not initiates of the Dark Pool Fishers can bear to board that dreaded vessel."

Key Characters

Those few gamemaster characters important to the overall flow of the drama are detailed below. Incidental gamemaster characters need to be prepared either in advance or on the fly during the game. Note also that each of the characters only lists Learned Skills that may be relevant to the drama. They are likely to have many more.

Bjorn the Fisher

Bjorn has been a trawler man most of his adult life. His keen understanding of the sea and where to find the best catch is a valuable skill to the captain of his ship. He is also a long-time convert to the cult of Nidderdak. He is slowly converting the others on his ship and keeps a small shrine

on the vessel to 'the one that dwells beyond the stars'.

A young man of sizable build, his long blond hair is arranged into a series of braided plaits. A tattooed dark vine on his arm extends tendrils up to his neck and down as far as his elbow. He is dressed in a sailor's oiled leathers to repel the damp. On his left hand he wears the count's signet.

Body: Strength 7, Dexterity 6, Endurance 8

Mind: Wits 6, Perception 5, Tech 4

Spirit: Extrovert 3, Introvert 4, Passion 4, Calm 3, Faith 6, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 5, Fight 6, Impress 3, Melee 5, Observe 3, Shoot 6, Sneak 3, Vigor 8

Learned Skills: Gambling 3, Lore (The Sea) 6, Speak Vuldrok

Weapons: Dirk

Armor: Leathers

Wyrd: 4

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Act Five: Smash and Grab

The characters can take a closer look at the star brethren's ship. It is currently taking on cargo and preparing for departure within the next few days. The characters cannot easily get closer to the landing barge where it sits, as all the dockhands in that area are cult members. However, they can observe from a distance using binoculars or other surveillance technology. They quickly realize that the envoy and the count are one and the same person, or what is left of him.

With some careful investigation the characters can find out what kind of cargo the envoy is loading and pose as merchants who bring a cargo to the quayside. That way they can at least get close to the ship and the man they are trying to rescue. They might try a simple smash and grab or try something more subtle. Little do they know that Sir Gregor Ashwood-Dale and his retinue also tracked down the count and also prepare for just such a smash and grab.

Their plan is very simple; their starship is prepared for launch and floated out ready for take-off. One of them is standing by in a small boat ready to take the count and snatch team back to the starship. They get at least a thirty-minute head start on anyone chasing after them. The snatch team causes a diversion on the dockside and tries to grab the count. This should all kick off just as the characters get themselves into position for their own move.

Nefarious Cargo

The black ship is taking on strange organic-looking cargo pods, not unlike giant seedpods, though their contents are a mystery without actually opening one. They are very distinctive in appearance and most of the dock hands (except the cult members) avoid them like the plague. Some stay



as far from them as possible, while others make the sign of the evil eye and give them wide berth. The characters can follow the delivery wagons as they return to a warehouse to be reloaded with the next pod, or they can bribe one of the dockhands to find out where they are coming from.

Once the player characters know from where the cargo is coming, they can set up surveillance or break in to investigate. The warehouse is dug directly into the cliff face like most of the buildings at the dock level. The main doors are guarded by members of the Dark Pool Fishers and they do not take kindly to people poking around in their business. Asking the other dockside denizens gets the characters all manner of speculation and gossip about the containers and their contents. Some say that they contain fresh kelp and other sea flora, others insist that it is in fact other creatures harvested from the sea and kept alive for experiments or for reintroduction to whichever dark world the ship hails from. Of course a few say that they contain humans, some dead, others sustained by the cocoon-like shell.

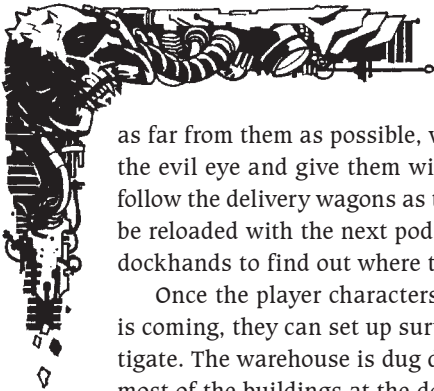
There is a grain of truth in all this. Most of the containers do carry foodstuffs, mostly in the form of living plants and sea life that is used to reinvigorate an ocean on another world or be consumed directly by the star brethren. Some do contain human slaves in a state of suspended animation, who may be used for food or to be indoctrinated into the cult of Nidderdak, or even to be remade into envoys to spread the word.

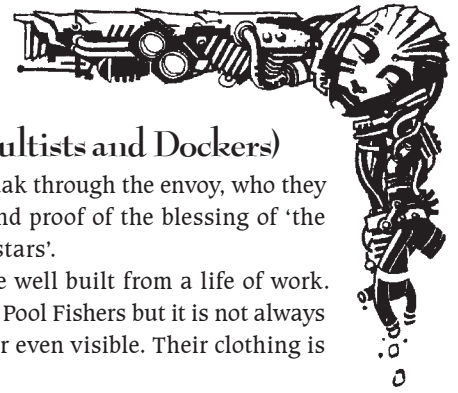
Dockside Diversions

Once the characters have formulated their own plan to extricate the count and start to move into their positions, they have a chance to spot that they are not the only people who seem to be up to something. A Perception + Observe goal roll reveals three shady characters (Sir Gregor's snatch team) sizing up the dockside. Then an explosion rips apart the adjacent wharf. Part of a landing barge upends and the starship upon it tilts, slides, and then tips the barge off balance, forcing it over before it sinks. Confusion reigns on the dockside and the snatch team throws aside their long cloaks to produce an assortment of military hardware and go to work.

The characters must act fast if they are to retake the initiative and grab the count. This quickly becomes a three-way firefight between the cult, the snatch team, and the characters. If the characters hesitate for too long, other Vuldrok get involved. Confusion and great black clouds of smoke prevent any real organized defense from the cult. Of course the characters stand to be blamed for what can only be called a serious diplomatic incident. The Vuldrok do not tolerate terrorism and sabotage. Nor do the Nizdharim.

If the characters can remove the evidence of Known Worlder involvement by not leaving any of the snatch team behind for identification, the authorities blame the Dark Pool Fishers, and use it to curtail their actions. The count does not resist being bundled away.





Making a Run for It

Depending on their actions on the dockside, the characters can get away clean, in which case they have little to worry about. More likely, however, is that one or more of the factions involved have seen them kidnapping the Envoy. They may be forced to join up with Sir Gregor during the firefight and escape in his ship rather than returning to the *Memloch* or their own vessel.

The cult cannot follow them immediately, but the Vuldrok, the Nizdharim, and possibly Sir Gregor could all be on their tail as they race for the jumpgate.

Key Characters

Those few gamemaster characters important to the overall flow of the drama are detailed below. Incidental gamemaster characters need to be prepared either in advance or on the fly during the game. Note also that each of the characters only lists Learned Skills that may be relevant to the drama. They are likely to have many more.

The Envoy of Nidderdak

All that the Count Anderton Blake was, his loyalty to his House, his devotion to the Emperor, his faith in the Church, was washed away when the void kraken destroyed the *Lexington Script*. His memories of the event are hazy at best, but he cried out for mercy as the folded superstructure of the ship, contorted by Kraken's grip, crushed his legs. As darkness descended upon him, a blasphemous creature appeared and gave him the mercy he had cried out for. He was remade then as one of the changed, modified to suit the purpose and environment of his new masters. He became the Envoy of Nidderdak, forever in its blasphemous service.

The count appears as a shambling man whose movements resemble those of a husk. The smashed bones in his legs cause his strange movements, as shards of bone still pierce the flesh in places. He wears little more than a loincloth, or on occasion a ragged and washed-out cloak. Metal bracing pins hold his legs rigid so he can walk, though every step is an agony for him. His skin is greyish and wrinkled like it was immersed in salt brine for too long; his eyes are dark pits. But the count was remade and now gill slits run down his back, though these are closed and hard to spot when in air.

Body: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Endurance 10

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 8, Tech 5

Spirit: Extrovert 2, Introvert 7, Passion 3, Calm 5, Faith 9, Ego 1

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 3, Fight 5, Impress 8, Melee 4, Observe 7, Shoot 4, Sneak 3, Vigor 9

Learned Skills: Knavery 6, Lore (Theology) 5, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Vuldrok, Read Vuldrok

Weapons: None

Armor: None

Wyrd: 7

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Dark Pool Fishers (Cultists and Dockers)

All of them serve Nidderdak through the envoy, who they see as a messianic figure and proof of the blessing of 'the one that dwells beyond the stars'.

Physically these men are well built from a life of work. All bear the mark of the Dark Pool Fishers but it is not always tattooed in the same place or even visible. Their clothing is mostly oiled leather.

Body: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Endurance 6

Mind: Wits 4, Perception 5, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert 4, Introvert 3, Passion 3, Calm 2, Faith 5, Ego 2

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 4, Fight 5, Impress 3, Melee 6, Observe 4, Shoot 5, Sneak 5, Vigor 6

Learned Skills: Speak Vuldrok

Weapons: Dirks / Clubs, some might have light revolvers

Armor: None

Wyrd: 3

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Snatch Team

Four men (Gild 'Locker' Fanom, Drex Horton, Toby Prin, Damal Adams), all hired muscle from the Muster. They served as mercenaries on several battlefronts and are experienced at taking on superior numbers. Three members start on the dockside; the fourth brings up a boat to escape with.

Each member of the snatch team is well-equipped. They start off in the disguise of Vuldrok dockers, but once the action starts they discard the disguise to minimize the likelihood of shooting each other in the confusion.

Body: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Endurance 6

Mind: Wits 5, Perception 5, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert 3, Introvert 3, Passion 5, Calm 2, Faith 4, Ego 2

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 5, Fight 6, Impress 4, Melee 4, Observe 5, Shoot 6, Sneak 6, Vigor 5

Learned Skills: Disguise 5, Drive (Watercraft) 4, Speak Urthish

Weapons: Polymer Knit

Armor: Blaster Shotgun, Grenades

Wyrd: 4

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○|○

Starships

Starships are both characters and backdrops to **Fading Suns** games. While many ply the jumproads of the Known Worlds, each should have its own distinct flavor. Even ships of the same class should be unique.



Endless Stride, modified Fackel Class Raider

Size Rating: 4 (30m long, 15m wide, 10m high)

Grade: Lander

Engines: Fast

Shields:

Speed	Left / Right
Full thrust	0 / 0
3/4 thrust	1 / 1
Half thrust	1 / 1
1/4 thrust	2 / 2
Full stop	2 / 2

Armament: 1 Lt Blaster (turret, think machine gunner)

Sensors: EMS 8

Crew: 2 (pilot, navigator)

Passengers: 12

Cargo: 20 metric tons

Jumps: 4

Supplies: 3 month for crew and full passenger load

Vitality: 40

Cost: 65,000 firebirds

Description: The *Endless Stride* is a sturdy ship following the al-Malik principles of design. The basic twin hulled catamaran design has been stripped down and refitted in recent years. The original design was to produce a rugged long-range scout and raiding vessel to serve against the Decados during the Emperor Wars. These vessels command respect amongst seasoned captains because of their incredible range and relative comfort.

History: The *Endless Stride* was constructed in a hidden shipyard located in the Kanya Kumari Asteroid Belt in the Shaprut system during the early years of the Emperor Wars. The vessel served with distinction and passed through the hand of three captains during the course of the war until finally only months before Alexis claimed the Phoenix Crown, she was badly damaged during a skirmish and abandoned. Recovered by the Scravers and sold into the hands of Sir Ernest Reginald Hawkwood who funded the restoration of the vessel, it served several bands of questing knights over the years before finally being sold to Fitzroy Blake Hawkwood as his personal starship. Sir Gregor uses it while he is acting as a troubleshooter for the Count.

The Black Ship

The Nizdharim are a race of mysterious squid-like aliens. Their home world and origins are completely unknown; their biology is poorly understood and based mostly on the study of similar creatures that inhabit the oceanic depths. The workings or even the basis of their technology is completely unknown. Xenobiologists have often postulated about how a water-dwelling species could develop space-faring tech-

nology when the basics of fire is impossible within their natural environment.

Nizdharim guard their secrets and their privacy, though in recent years the number and type of their ships has increased dramatically in the Hargard system. They often employ 'envoys' from a particular race to be their negotiators in any dealings they have, preferring to keep themselves away from prying eyes.

Their starships are just as enigmatic. Not surprisingly their design emulates the look of strange deep-ocean leviathans. They are not formed of hard ceramsteel plates as in human construction, but instead seemingly formed from a single piece of material more akin to a hardened shell covered with some kind of organic hide.

These ships seem to glide or hang effortlessly in the air as though held aloft by an unseen hand. There is no sign of engine flares, maneuvering thrusters or the ear-splitting whine that so characterizes human starships. When landing, these ships put forth bony ridges upon which to balance their weight.

When the cargo apertures open, there is a squelch of parting membranes and the dripping release of a briny discharge, which may be the remains of the cycled internal atmosphere. Those few humans who have been aboard such a vessel never ventured further than the cargo bay. Even then, the insides of such a beast are reminiscent of a great mouth or stomach, often still ankle deep in brine. A profound sense of unease, a feeling of being constantly observed, and the organic-looking cargo seedpods add to the eeriness.

Though many on Hargard have seen these ships come and go, there is no recorded sighting of any such vessel using the jumpgate. Often they head off in a random direction when they break orbit unconcerned with the routes of other traders.

As for the ship's offensive and defensive capabilities, these can only be speculated that as there is no record of Vuldrok ever having made such a raid. Perhaps no Vuldrok has ever survived such an attempt to tell of it.

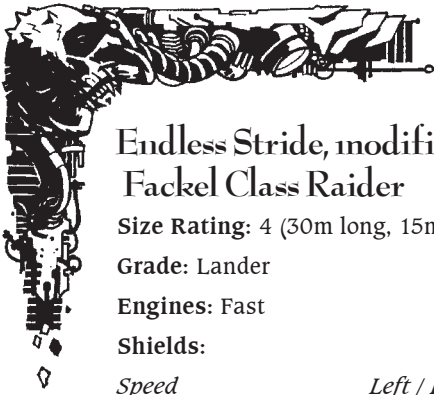
Aftermath

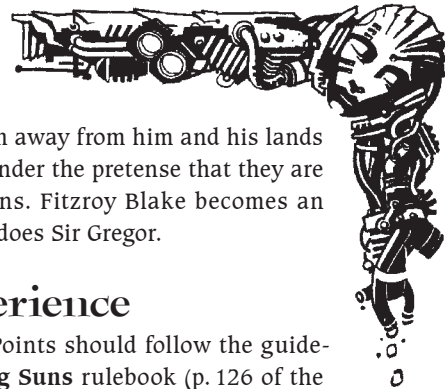
Depending on how things work out, the characters might already know to whom they will give the signet ring. They might also cause a problem by returning Anderton Blake to his rightful position as count. Of course the characters can try their luck at bargaining one patron against the other. But when the patron becomes aware of this double-dealing, the characters make another enemy.

So, with whom do the characters side with?

Baroness Jane Holden Hawkwood

If the characters honor the original deal with the baroness and return the signet ring and her cousin, she is extremely pleased and speaks favorably of them when other nobles are listening. She rewards each character with 1,000





firebirds for their troubles and if they had to purchase a jumpkey for Hargard, she reimburses them too, if they hand over the key, that is. A brief legal consultation with the Reeves confirms that Anderton Black has only been missing since 4996 and as such could not legally have been declared dead. As a result, his brother is only a regent in his place and the count returns to his ancestral lands. The characters have made an enemy of his brother though.

Sir Gregor Ashwood-Dale

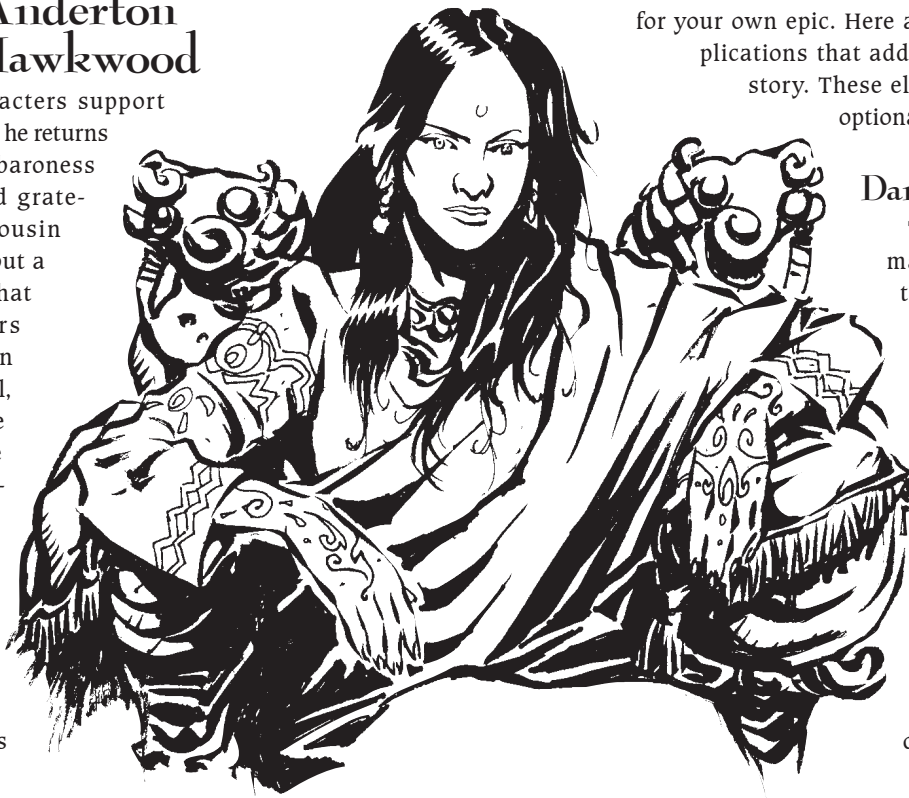
Provided that Sir Gregor survived, the characters can turn the signet ring over to him in return for 1,500 firebirds for each player character. Anderton Black returns to his ancestral home under the care of his younger brother. There is no legal argument over regency and right to rule. Sir Gregor is promoted to Baron and awarded a parcel of land. The characters make an enemy of the Baroness who does everything in her power to ensure that the characters' names become synonymous with infamy for their betrayal.

Count Fitzroy Blake Hawkwood

If the characters take the signet ring and Anderton Blake directly to his brother, they receive the count's appreciation in the form of 1,500 firebirds each. Anderton Black returns to his ancestral home under the care of his younger brother. There is no legal argument over regency and right to rule. The characters made an enemy of both Sir Gregor and the baroness, who does everything in her power to ensure that the characters' names become synonymous with infamy for their betrayal.

Count Anderton Blake Hawkwood

If the characters support Anderton Blake, he returns to power, the baroness is relieved and grateful that her cousin has returned, but a little put out that the characters did not return to her first. Still, the outcome is what she wanted. Anderton rewards the characters with 1,000 firebirds each and ensures that there is a constant stream of quests



to go on and that keeps them away from him and his lands for as long as possible, all under the pretense that they are his acknowledged champions. Fitzroy Blake becomes an enemy of the characters, as does Sir Gregor.

Awarding Experience

Rewarding Experience Points should follow the guidelines on p. 136 of the **Fading Suns** rulebook (p. 126 of the **Revised Second Edition**). In addition, gamemasters can award:

- 1 Experience Point if the characters failed to retrieve either the signet ring or the count.
- 2 Experience Points if the characters managed to obtain the signet ring, but failed to rescue the count.
- 3 Experience Points if the characters managed to obtain the signet ring and rescue the count.

Extra Experience

The player characters may receive bonus experience for good role-playing, working together and learning new things as detailed below.

+1 Experience Point for role-playing: Any character that was role-played properly and took an active part in the drama should receive this award.

+1 to +3 Experience Points for learning something new: There is plenty to learn in this drama; likely this was the characters' first trip beyond the borders of the Known Worlds, their first encounters with House Ramakrishna, the Vuldrok and the Nizdharim.

Complications

Of course you do not need to run the drama exactly as written. Feel free to tweak or change any aspect of it for your own epic. Here are a couple of complications that add extra layers to the story. These elements are entirely optional.

Dark Motives

Tervus is not the man that he appears to be; in truth he is a Dark Pool Fisher, sent back to the Known Worlds to prepare the way for the return of the Envoy. After several weeks of trying to seek an audience with the baroness and being rebuffed, he contrived an alternative plan of action.

Now he stands ready to reward the characters for their assistance — by bringing them to their knees before an altar of Nidderdak.

Polite Vulgarity

While attending the Ramakrishna cultural evening, the characters have the opportunity to make contacts with many different people. Sir Gregory Ashwood-Dale has sought to place obstacles in their path by being open about their purpose and true intentions. He may also have embellished a few details or added a few white lies to make the characters' lives more difficult. He might, for example, discreetly inform one of the Vuldrok that the characters are on Hargard to court the favor of a rival Thane. Any accusation of espionage, or deal-making with a rival thane, is bound to bring them unwanted attention.

Ever the Envoy

If the characters have returned the count to his rightful place, he is a disciple of Nidderdak, and soon a new cult springs up around him on Leminkainen. Dark ships come to establish a trading community in the Credia Ocean close to the count's lands. In time, all communities up and down the coast of Jyväskylä and Grikkor know of the message of the star brethren and the name of Nidderdak from Beyond the Stars.

Spin-offs

If the characters are moving on from this drama into an ongoing epic, here are few ideas to keep them busy:

Successions

The return of Count Anderton Blake Hawkwood was at first heralded as a miracle. But he is not the man he once was. His younger brother contrives to usurp his brother's office for the good of all. He recruits the characters to help him; giving them the opportunity to redeem themselves from the evil they brought back to haunt the House.

Tour of the Empire

The Phoenix Throne calls upon the characters to protect a diplomat as he tours the Known Worlds. While the characters likely groan at having to wet-nurse some barbarian diplomat, the Office of the Emperor wishes that the diplomat should see only the most positive aspects of the Empire. Little do they realize until they meet the man that he is none other than Jangdeep Ramakrishna and he specifically requested the characters as his escorts. He wishes to gather an unfiltered view of life in the Known Worlds and uses his considerable intelligence experience to achieve that, causing the characters to confront some of the less palatable things about the Empire.

Whispers from the Dark

The Dark Pool Fisher did not forgive the characters' involvement in the capture of their envoy. They send an assassin after them or their families. The assassin might employ the characters to do a particular job and set them up so they appear to be guilty of some heinous crime. The Dark Pool Fishers are resourceful and well aware of the characters' capabilities, so they use underhand tricks and manipulation to bring them down and/or force them to recognize the power of Nidderdak. Forcing the characters to flee Church persecution and embrace Nidderdak as their savior would be the cult's ultimate prize.

Vuldrok Tensions

If the characters (or the Known Worlds in general) are blamed for the bombing of the Elfhome docks, there is an immediate increase in the amount of unrest on Leminkainen, and the Vuldrok seek retaliation. Raiding fleets from Hargard ambush ships from Leminkainen and make raids against valuable Hawkwood resources on-planet. This increase of tensions could well lead the Empire and the Vuldrok Star Nation into open conflict and precipitate a call for a Vuldrok Crusade. This could have irreparably damaged negotiations with Eldrid the Wise, causing her to side with Ostmark against the Phoenix Empire.

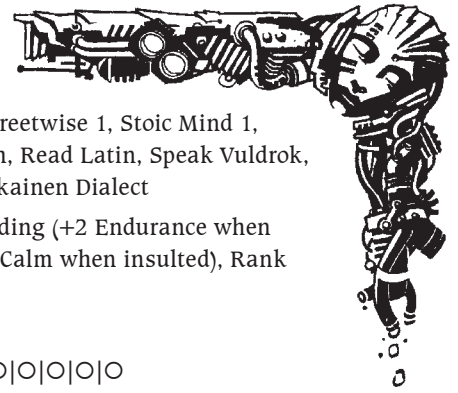
Appendix

Baron Gant Ernest Hawkwood

Born and raised on Leminkainen under the constant threat of the Vuldrok, his father and older brothers all served their time in the military. Gant would have followed their path had his father not insisted after the death of this eldest son that his youngest should never have to raise a sword.

The sample pre-generated characters are presented in pairs representing a Questing Knight and his squire/sidekick. Unused characters can be used as non-player characters or simply discarded. Please note that although all the characters are gendered male. It is a simple thing for players to rename and switch gender if they prefer. The descriptions are likewise deliberately vague so that the players can embellish and personalize them.





Instead Gant was tutored in science and languages so that his mind would be sharp and a more formidable weapon than any blade.

His father sent him to court to learn the ways of ambassadorship and diplomacy, but Gant would not be pushed. Once beyond his father's long arm on Byzantium Secundus, he used his contacts to start his questing career, ultimately earning himself an Imperial charter and being recognized as a Questing Knight. Gant returned to his family's manor on Leminkainen in a bid to earn the approval of his father.

Race: Human

Allegiance: Questing Knights

Rank: Baron

Quote: "Fortunately my long years of study have prepared me well."

Description: A young man with blond hair and a square jaw, physically well built.

Age: 26

Equipment: Traveling Clothes, Wrist Squawker, Dueling Shield, Blaster Pistol, Vibro-Broadsword, 1,180 firebirds

Body: Strength 6, Dexterity 6, Endurance 6

Mind: Wits 6, Perception 5, Tech 6

Spirit: Extrovert 6, Introvert 3, Passion 5, Calm 1, Faith 4, Ego 1

Natural Skills: Charm 4, Dodge 4, Fight 4, Impress 3, Melee 4, Observe 4, Shoot 7, Sneak 4, Vigor 4

Learned Skills: Etiquette 2, Lore (Leminkainen) 1, Lore (Folk) 3, Lore (People & Places) 1, Ride 1, Academia 3, Focus 4, Inquiry 2, Science (Anthropology) 5, Drive



(Watercraft) 1, Remedy 1, Streetwise 1, Stoic Mind 1, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Read Latin, Speak Vuldrok, Read Vuldrok, Speak Leminkainen Dialect

Blessings & Curses: Unyielding (+2 Endurance when honor at stake), Proudful (-2 Calm when insulted), Rank (Baron), Imperial Charter

Wyr: 5

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|0|0|0|0|0|0|0

Staff Sergeant Benjamin Fouk

Born as a serf on Leminkainen, Benjamin Fouk was never expected to be anything other than a farmer. He was conscripted at a young age into a peasant militia during a dispute between Hawkwood nobles. He distinguished himself by surviving three years as a frontline meat shield for the more important troops and nobles. This did not go unnoticed as he was ordered into regular military service for the house once the petty disputes of his owner were settled.

He distinguished himself against the Vuldrok and rose quickly through the ranks to earn the status of freeman when he mustered out. Despite having been granted his freedom, Staff Sergeant Fouk knew little other than service to his house. His skills made him a valuable commodity as he entered the service once again, this time as an advisor and bodyguard to one of the highborn.

Race: Human

Allegiance: House Hawkwood

Rank: Staff Sergeant

Quote: "Remember your training and you come back alive."

Description: A well-built man who has seen his fair share of battle, he has several scars on his weather-beaten face.

Age: 32

Equipment: Traveling Clothes, Wrist Squawker, Polymer Knit, Blaster Pistol, Sniper Rifle, 995 firebirds

Body: Strength 7, Dexterity 6, Endurance 8

Mind: Wits 4, Perception 5, Tech 4

Spirit: Extrovert 1, Introvert 3, Passion 4, Calm 1, Faith 5, Ego 2

Natural Skills: Charm 3, Dodge 4, Fight 6, Impress 4, Melee 7, Observe 3, Shoot 8, Sneak 3, Vigor 8

Learned Skills: Lore (Leminkainen) 1, Lore (Army) 1, Drive (Beastcraft) 2, Drive (Landcraft) 3, Drive (Watercraft) 3, Knavery 3, Survival 4, Gambling 3, Remedy 2, Search 1, Speak Vuldrok, Speak Urthish

Blessings & Curses: Proud (+2 Faith or Ego when suffering hardship), Cynical (-2 Passion when asked to volunteer), Rank (Staff Sergeant), Cohort Badge

Combat Actions: Snapshot

Wyr: 4

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|0|0|0|0|0|0|0|0





Baron Arman Irem al-Malik

From a very young age Arman was immersed in court life; he quickly mastered the intricacies of political survival but was constantly seeking excitement and embarked on the path of the duelist. But his path is ever twisting, changing direction, and doubling back on itself. Perhaps this is his strategy intended to confuse and confound his rivals. He was appointed as an ambassador for House al-Malik but after a few years changed his outlook again.

Arman swore his oath to the Emperor and took up the mantle of Questing Knight. Perhaps this was his goal all along, for he seemed uniquely qualified to represent the Empire in its search for Lost Worlds.

Race: Human

Allegiance: Questing Knights

Rank: Baron

Quote: "Subtlety in all things is a greater force for change than brute strength."

Description: Still favored with youthful looks, he is older and wiser than he appears.

Age: 30

Equipment: Traveling Clothes, Wrist Squawker, Standard Shield, Vibro-saber, 375 firebirds

Body: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Endurance 5

Mind: Wits 6, Perception 5, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert 6, Introvert 1, Passion 1, Calm 8, Faith 2, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 5, Dodge 4, Fight 3, Impress 3, Melee 7, Observe 5, Shoot 3, Sneak 4, Vigor 3

Learned Skills: Etiquette 3, Remedy 1, Arts (Rhetoric) 2, Inquiry 2, Social (Debate) 1, Lore (Court Rivals) 1, Ride 1, Performance 2, Empathy 2, Inquiry 2, Speak Vuldrok, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Graceful Tongue

Blessings & Curses: Gracious (+2 Extrovert with guests), Impetuous (-2 Wits when trading), Rank (Baron), Imperial Charter

Combat Actions: Parry, Thrust, Slash

Psi: 3

Paths: Sixth Sense (Sensitivity, Darksense, Subtle Sight)

Wyrd: 8

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○

and find a new way where his talents would be appreciated. That is not how it worked out. He was too quiet and insular, despite his great mind he was again the runt of the litter, the litter being his academy class. Upon graduation he undertook work in a cybernetic clinic and ultimately went under the knife himself to redress his inferiority complex.

Once he had reveled in his newfound physical prowess, his confidence knew no bounds. He sought to test himself in adventure and what greater adventure is there than to join a questing cohort and earn the gratitude of the new Emperor.

Race: Human

Allegiance: Engineers

Rank: Apprentice

Quote: "You think me weak and defenseless, eh?"

Description: A stick thin man with very pale skin, with metallic enhanced muscles that can be seen through his skin.

Age: 22

Equipment: Traveling Clothes, Wrist Squawker, Volt and High Tech tools, Drexler Gatling Shotgun, 1,500 firebirds

Body: Strength 4 (7), Dexterity 4, Endurance 4 (6)

Mind: Wits 8, Perception 7, Tech 8

Spirit: Extrovert 3, Introvert 6, Passion 4, Calm 1, Faith 1, Ego 3

Natural Skills: Charm 4, Dodge 3, Fight 5, Impress 5, Melee 3, Observe 6, Shoot 5, Sneak 3, Vigor 3

Learned Skills: Inquiry 5, Streetwise 1, Lore (Folk) 1, High-Tech Redemption 4, Volt Redemption 2, Mech Redemption 2, Science (Cybernetics) 4, Science (Sensors) 1, Science (Engineering) 3, Think Machine 4, Academia 1, Etiquette 1, Focus 1, Social (Debate) 1, Speak Vuldrok, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Speak Urthtech, Read Urthtech

Blessings & Curses: Innovative (+2 Tech when creating something new), Unnerving (-2 Extrovert when dealing with serfs), Rank (Apprentice), Cohort Badge

Cybernetics: Goliath Skin

Wyrd: 4

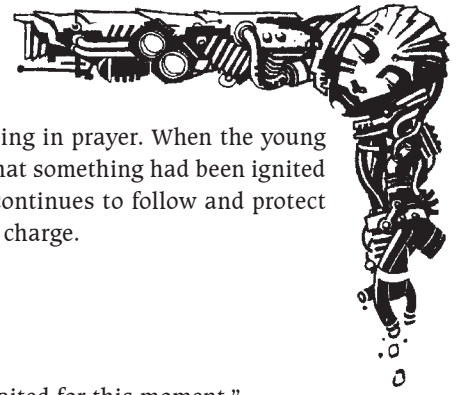
Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○|○

Sir Tang Lung Li Halan

Born on Rampart, Tang was something of a problem child. Clever and therefore bored, he became a hellion during his teenage years. He was palmed off to a distant uncle for tutelage in the Imperial Court. He quickly made a name for himself as having a smart mouth and a fast wit and more often than not it got him into trouble, which meant dueling.

He found his calling in the art of fencing and applied himself to its mastery. Although his parents did not approve,





his uncle persuaded them that the young man must be permitted to go his own way and make his own mistakes. Then one night he experienced a vision calling him to quest. Up until that point his faith had been circumspect. But the following morning, he rose a new man and announced his intentions to serve the Emperor as a Questing Knight. Sir Tang imagines that he was put upon this path to right wrongs and serve the good of the people. His imagination is still far more vivid than his reputation but he aims to correct that.

Race: Human

Quote: "My blade will reveal your sins."

Allegiance: Questing Knights

Rank: Knight

Description: A young man with long dark hair and delicate features. He always walks with his head held high, it gives the unfortunate impression that he is looking down his nose at everyone.

Age: 19

Equipment: Traveling Clothes, Wrist Squawker, Vibro-Katana, Palm Laser, Assault Shield, 375 firebirds

Body: Strength 5, Dexterity 6, Endurance 5

Mind: Wits 7, Perception 6, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert 3, Introvert 4, Passion 3, Calm 5, Faith 6 Ego 1

Natural Skills: Charm 5, Dodge 4, Fight 3, Impress 3, Melee 8, Observe 4, Shoot 3, Sneak 4, Vigor 5

Learned Skills: Etiquette 5, Lore (Theology) 1, Focus 1, Inquiry 4, Remedy 3, Arts (Rhetoric) 2, Social (Debate) 1, Speak Urthish, Read Urthish, Read Latin

Blessings & Curses: Pious (+2 Extrovert amongst the sinful), Guilty (-2 on rolls to oppose Church officials), Rank (Knight), Imperial Charter

Combat Actions: Parry, Thrust, Slash, Draw & Strike, Flat of the Blade

Wyrd: 5

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○

morning, the boy was kneeling in prayer. When the young man turned, Solomon saw that something had been ignited within his spirit. Solomon continues to follow and protect the young knight that is his charge.

Race: Human

Allegiance: Orthodoxy

Rank: Deacon

Quote: "All my life I have waited for this moment."

Description: A middle aged man whose hair has been turning grey for a few years now. He speaks in a soft yet firm voice that adds gravity to his words.

Age: 37

Equipment: Traveling Clothes, Wrist Squawker, 1,995 firebirds

Body: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Endurance 4

Mind: Wits 8, Perception 6, Tech 3

Spirit: Extrovert 7, Introvert 2, Passion 5, Calm 2, Faith 8, Ego 1

Natural Skills: Charm 4, Dodge 4, Fight 3, Impress 6, Melee 3, Observe 5, Shoot 3, Sneak 3, Vigor 4

Learned Skills: Inquiry 5, Streetwise 1, Lore (Folk) 1, Academia 1, Focus 3, Lore (Theology) 5, Physick 3, Social (Oratory) 8, Empathy 2, Lore (Folk) 1, Remedy 1, Stoic Mind 1, Social (Debate) 5, Speak Urthish, Read Latin, Speak Latin, Speak Vuldrok

Blessings & Curses: Pious (+2 Extrovert amongst the sinful), Austere (-2 passion before the flock), Rank (Deacon), Cohort Badge

Wyrd: 5

Vitality: -10|-8|-6|-4|-2|○|○|○|○|○

Deacon Solomon Demaskus

Deacon Solomon Demaskus was born on Tethys and spent his early life there. Once he was accepted into the priesthood he traveled to Holy Terra to undertake his training and ordination. As a preacher he started to become disillusioned that he was not fulfilling the role the Pancreator had sent him to fulfill. The opportunity presented itself when a young Li Halan noble needed a personal confessor and guide who was wise in the ways of the world and the spirit. Or so the boy's uncle had said.

The truth was, of course, that the boy was initially unmanageable, undirected and therefore unfulfilled. One



Shards Submission Guidelines

The **Shards** series is a collection of adventures and encounters for the **Fading Suns** game. Intended as an inexpensive adventure resource for **Fading Suns** gamemasters, they are also a springboard for aspiring writers. The **Shards** series is published and available for purchase online from www.drivethrurpg.com and www.rpgnow.com—it is possible that a collection might see print at a later stage. Please read the following guidelines carefully before submitting your idea for a **Shard**. Submissions that do not conform to the guidelines may not be accepted.

What We Are Looking For

Short adventures and encounters (including appropriate setting descriptions) for **Fading Suns**, written to be used with the rules contained in the main rulebook. A **Shard** can also contain new creatures and gamemaster characters. The tone and style of the text should fit the **Fading Suns** setting (refer to previously published adventures to get an idea of what we are talking about here). As mentioned above, the **Shards** series also serves as a hunting ground to find potential new writers we can send outlines to and ask to participate in bigger projects, so succeeding here may result in future agreements.

What You Need to Send Us

Your manuscript, formatted as outlined below, attached to an eMail sent to submissions@fading-suns.com. The eMail must contain a standard disclosure agreement (copy the boxed text unaltered into the body of your eMail). Please note that these guidelines are subject to change, so check www.fading-suns.com for updates and an FAQ).

Formatting

We accept electronic submissions only. Each entry should come as a separate file (please use any of the following formats for your entries: DOC, RTF, TXT, or PDF). Your full name and eMail address should be provided on all pages of each entry.

All pages should be plain white letter- or A4-sized paper with one-inch margins all around, and set in type no smaller than 10-point). Using the default settings of your word processor is usually a good idea. Pay close attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuation—use our **Submission Handbook** as a guide (available at www.fading-suns.com).

What Happens When My Submission Gets Accepted?

If your submission survives our evaluation process (as outlined in the **Revisions and Rejections** section of our **Submission Handbook**), we will contact you and start working on getting the **Shard** ready for publication (this involves editing, artwork selection/creation, and layout by our staff).

Once we reach this stage, your submission becomes the property of **RedBrick Limited** and **Holistic Design, Inc.**, meaning that you lose all rights to publish it elsewhere.

I wish to submit the materials attached to this eMail for consideration for publication by **RedBrick Limited**, subject to all of the conditions below:

I agree with the terms and conditions outlined in the **Fading Suns Shards Submission Guidelines**.

I submit my materials voluntarily and on a non-confidential basis. I understand that my submission and its review by **RedBrick Limited** does not, in whole or in part, establish or create by implication or otherwise any relationship between **RedBrick Limited** and myself that is not expressed herein.

I further understand and agree that **RedBrick Limited** in its own judgment, may accept or reject the materials that are submitted with this eMail and shall not be obligated to me in any way with respect to my submission until **RedBrick Limited** shall, at its own election, enter into a properly executed agreement with me, and only then according to the terms of the **Fading Suns Shards Submission Guidelines**, as outlined under **What Happens When My Submission Gets Accepted?**.

I agree that **RedBrick Limited** may have a reasonable period in which to review this submission.

I understand and agree that the review by **RedBrick Limited** of the materials that accompany my submission does not imply or create (a) any financial or other obligation of any kind on the part of **RedBrick Limited**, (b) any confidential relationship or guarantee of secrecy, or (c) any recognition or acknowledgment of either novelty or originality.

I also understand and agree that if the submission utilizes or is based on characters, settings, or other materials that are owned by **RedBrick Limited** or **Holistic Design, Inc.**, or if the submission contains trademarks and/or other proprietary materials that are owned by **RedBrick Limited**, then I shall not be free to submit the submission for publication to any person or firm other than **RedBrick Limited**.

I warrant that the submission is original, and that its publication will not violate the rights of any third party, and that the person identified herein as the submitter is the sole owner of the submission.

Furthermore, I am of legal age in my country of origin and am free to make agreements relative to this submission.

Version: 20070130

Payment

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