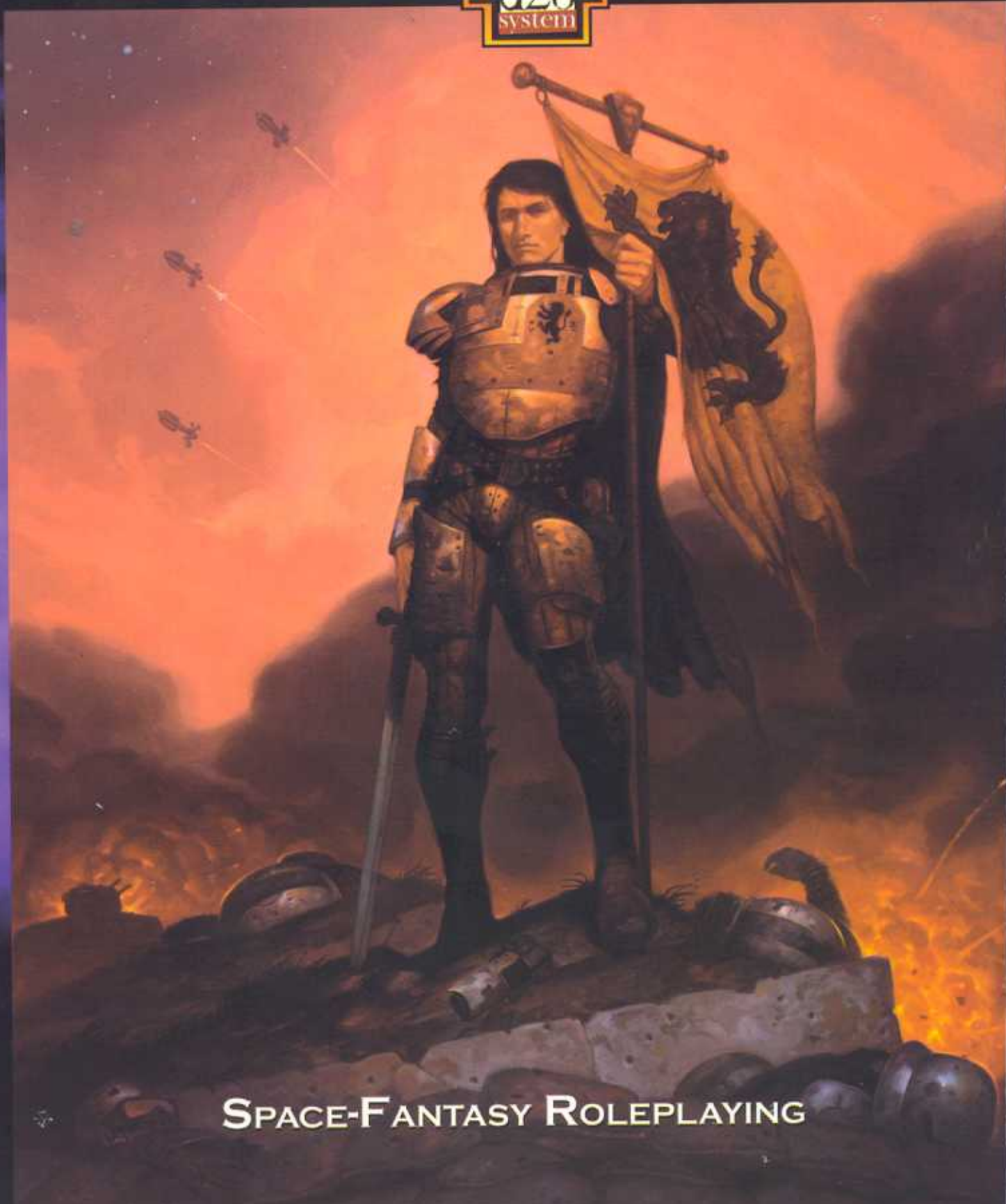


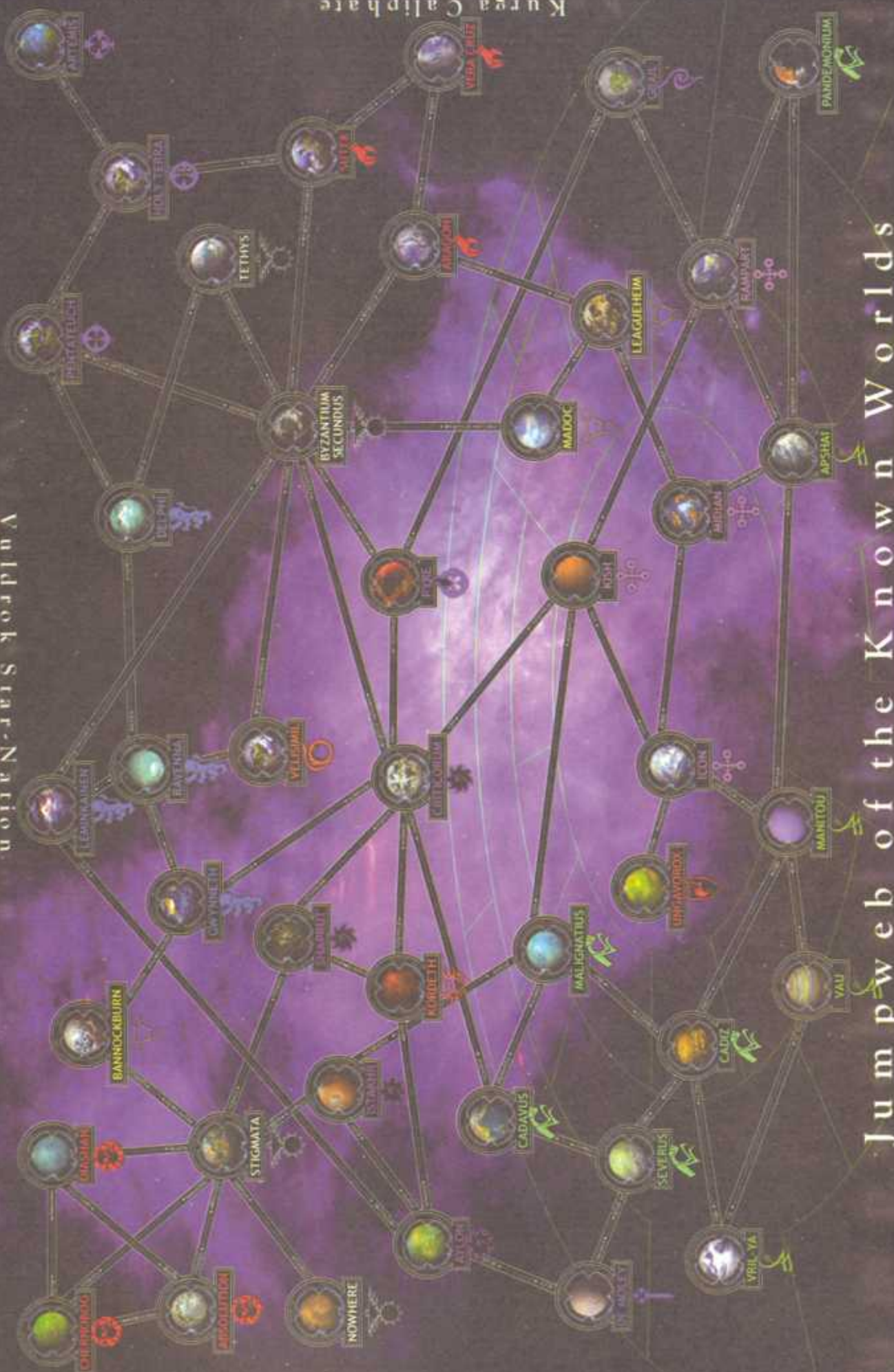
FADING SUNS



SPACE-FANTASY ROLEPLAYING

Vuldrek Star-Nation

Kurga Caliphate



Jumpweb of the Known Worlds

FADING SUNS



by Bill Bridges and Andy Harmon

Based on FADING SUNS created by Bill Bridges and Andrew Greenberg



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FADING SUNS



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Alustro's Journal: Aeolus Solaris

It's not easy to think straight with a gun pointed at your head.

My every muscle was tense, holding me perfectly still — but for a quivering in my legs — as the Inquisitor's right arm circled my neck while his left held a slug gun to my temple.

His attention, however, was focused not on me — except, perhaps, for a taut awareness of any movement I might make — but instead on my liege, Lady Erian Li Halan, who stood glaring at him with iron determination, her unwavering rapier poised to pierce his ribs. This standoff had already lasted nearly a minute, with no word spoken or gesture exchanged. Only their glared intent communicated the coiled conflict ready to burst forth at the slightest move any made.

Caranzo, Erian's bodyguard, began to slowly — almost imperceptibly — move to my left, but then halted at what was surely some sign of recognition from my captor, perhaps a flick of the eye or tilt of the head. I couldn't see it from my vantage.

I tried not to notice the subtle checks and counterchecks being made around me. I instead attempted to pray. As I said, it is hard to collect one's thoughts when a cold steel gun barrel is impressed upon one's temple. Nonetheless, I endeavored for a moment to let go of the world and open myself to the Pancreator's grace, silently reciting the litanies that had been so assiduously taught me in theurgic seminary.

It was not easy. The rite I attempted normally required that I recite the litany aloud, accompanied by a series of gestures. Without these components, the proper enactment of the rite was unassured.

As the cadence of the rhyme culminated, I released my internal, mystical flame with an exhalation of breath — so slight I hoped it would not garner the attention of my too-attentive host. With the rising and release of the flame, the rite was complete. As I felt the buoyant, airy jacket of divine protection wreath me, I lunged for-

ward and away from the gun.

It fired. The bullet sparked against the immaterial field of force that surrounded me, ricocheting across the room. The Inquisitor's arm released me and I ran forward as fast as I could, escaping any further attempts to snare me.

I turned and saw the robed fanatic crumple to the floor, Erian's rapier buried to the hilt in his torso. He had released me only because his arms had become too weak to hold me, robbed of vitality by the sword thrust into his heart.

I said a prayer for his departing soul, hoping that its light found its way back to the Empyrean. I feared, however, that the weight of its own anger and intolerance would keep it mired in this universe, a ghost hungry for both vengeance and release.

I drew the sign of the jumpgate in the air, thanking the Pancreator for his grace and the theurgic secrets that had protected me from harm.

"Are you all right?" Erian asked, looking at me with some concern as she withdrew her rapier, now slick with the Inquisitor's blood.

I nodded. "Yes. You don't need to worry about me. I'm sorry I let that happen."

"Don't be," Cardanzo said, moving past us to examine the passageway from which the Inquisitor had come. "He was quick. But I don't see any more of them. If he had companions, they're somewhere else in the complex."

"Then we shouldn't waste any more time," Erian said, heading to the passageway. "The sooner we reach the control room, the quicker this ends."

Cardanzo slipped into the darkness ahead of her and she followed. I fell in behind them, feeling my way along the dark walls, following the faint sounds of their footsteps and breathing. I felt safer now, cloaked in grace, but knew it was no guarantee that we



would survive this foray into the past.

A faint light came from somewhere ahead, from down a side passage. We followed it. It soon led us to a circular room lined with glass windows, now empty of any electric life. The glow came from a weak everlight hung from the ceiling, an orb set to burn a millennium ago by its Second Republic makers. It still performed that duty, lighting the room enough for us to see the desks and control panels that promised access to the think machine entity buried beneath the complex.

Two other passageways led from the room, each into more darkness.

Erian spoke into her whisper pin. "Julia? I think we found it. Can you backtrack and follow our scent here?"

I couldn't hear the response; the speaker was hidden in her ear, its words whispered only for her.

She nodded. "Okay. Don't be surprised at the body." She then looked at Cardanzo and I. "They're coming. Ong should have no trouble picking up our scent."

"I can't figure out how to restore the power," Cardanzo said "It may mean going down into the generator."

"We don't have time for that," Erian said in exasperation. "Besides, that's probably where the rest of the robes are. Let's hope Julia can figure it out from here."

By 'robes,' I knew she meant more Inquisitors. I looked around the room, hoping to find something I could do here. Until the think machine's power was restored, however, I had nothing to lend.

The rest of our crew arrived within 15 minutes. Onggankarak was the first into the room. He had traveled the low-ceilinged passageway on all sixes, but stood on two legs at his full 10-foot height once he entered the room. The Vorox nodded and bowed to Lady Erian as he did so.

He was immediately followed by Julia Abrams, who simply nodded at all of us and immediately got to work examining the terminals, her tools already in her hands. As a member of the Chariteers Guild, she was qualified to operate and repair all manner of high-tech devices.

Entering behind them a few minutes later was Sanjuk oj Kaval. An Ur-Ukar, she could navigate the darkness better than most of us, for she had spent the first years of her life in the dark caverns of Kordeth. "I think there's someone coming," she said. "I'll go back and find out who."

Erian nodded to Ong, who dropped once more to six legs and started to follow Sanjuk. The Ukari stopped and shook her head at him. "You're too big. There's no way they won't hear you in these halls."

Ong turned to Erian again. She nodded and motioned to another corridor. "Perhaps you'd best keep watch on one of the other passages." He was there in seconds, disappearing into the darkness. I turned to watch Sanjuk again, but she was already gone.

"Got it," Julia said matter-of-factly. "The circuit breaker was hidden under this panel. Give it a few seconds and the power should start cycling."

Almost immediately, lights began to flicker and glow across the panels, and the glass screens flared with life. We could see passages displayed on the some of the screens, places we had been and others I didn't recognize. On one screen, the darkness was filled

with a glowing red bulk, an odd shambling shape. "What is that?" I asked, my voice displaying perhaps too much of my nervousness.

Everyone looked concerned at the image until Julia laughed. Her chuckle was a strange thing here, echoing through the dusty chamber. "It's Ong," she said. "That's an IR camera. It's watching his passageway." She motioned to the passageway Ong had gone down. "At least we can keep an eye on him, in case anything happens."

"All right," Erian said. "Let's get to work. Can you bring up Doramos's files?"

Julia sat down at one of the swivel chairs and began typing at one of the terminals. "Let's see... It shouldn't be too hard. I mean, this place was meant to monitor his work, after all."

"Yes," I said, "but the files we want won't be so obvious. If they were, they would have been distributed in some other cache or datafile before now."

"Well, c'mere then," Julia said. "A lot of this is in Latin, and I can't read it."

I came and looked over her shoulder at the file names. I was no stranger to data libraries — the Church maintained quite a number of its own — but this one seemed unique, designed to baffle the casual reader. File names were in Latin, with ostentatious titles — clearly codewords of some kind or other. We didn't have all day to decipher them.

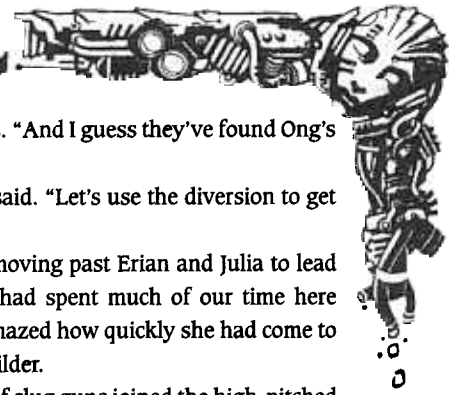
"Alustro," Erian said. "Sanjuk tells me there are five more Inquisitors in the first foyer. If they follow our trail, they'll be here within 10 minutes."

"I understand," I said. I had to figure out Doramos's codewords in a scant few minutes — surely impossible; no other Second Republic figure was so arcane as Doramos, the World Architect whose terraforming skills had reshaped the Known Worlds. Here, in a long-lost complex buried beneath Pentateuch's Megiddo Desert, he had hidden a number of important files, keys to his methodology that any guildler — or Eskatonic priest, for that matter — would surely contemplate murder to get. That's why the Inquisition, who followed the same leads we had, were out to prevent anyone from finding it. Their irrational hatred of technology extended even to the work of a man the Republican patriarchs considered to be a saint. They would kill to ensure that nobody got it.

I had to get back to basics, review what cosmology Doramos had worked from, and hope to find a clue there to his naming conventions. We couldn't open every file, hoping to find the one out of hundreds that we needed. Julia was awakening them as fast as she could, only to discover simple and well-known terraforming programs (well-known within those technical schools, that is; rare elsewhere); we couldn't waste our time with them.

I knew that Doramos had used codes based on the Omega Gospels, the collected sayings and stories by and about the Prophet and his disciples. The file we searched for promised — according to all the sources we had followed — to reveal some of the secrets of Pentateuch's wild weather patterns. Hence, a title displaying some weather event from the Omega Gospels would be most appropriate.

I asked Julia to engage another monitor, so I could perform a separate search. She lit the one next to me and I scanned its file name list. There — about half way down: "Aeolus Solaris." It was from Paulus IX, the chapters concerning Saint Paulus, the Prophet's



starship pilot. The Divine Starwind, the invisible wind that blows through the void, enlightening the wise, guiding the lost and damning the sinful.

I awakened the file and read the Latin text — a whole tome hidden in electric pathways. “This is it,” I said. “It must be. There are words I don’t understand, but it’s definitely meteorological.”

“Which one?” Julia asked. I told her its title and within seconds she had a data-crystal copy in her hand. “Let’s go.”

Ong suddenly burst into the room, panting hard. “Golems! Coming this way!”

Erian looked confused, staring at the monitor that watched his passageway; it was blank. “I don’t see anything.”

Ong growled. “They’re coming! They shot at me!”

“They’ve probably got IR baffling,” Julia said, heading for the passageway we had arrived from, pulling Erian with her. “The camera won’t read them.”

Cardanzo motioned me to go first and then fell in behind me, with Ong guarding our rear. We didn’t even shut down the machines.

“Go right!” Julia yelled.

“But that’s not where we came from,” I said, barely able to see their moving figures in the dim light that now receded behind us.

“Sanjuk says the Inquisitors are almost here; she advises going right,” Julia yelled back.

I followed. We made two more turns, leaving me not only in the dark but completely lost. I jumped when something brushed past me, only to breathe a sigh of relief when I realized it was Sanjuk.

She tsked and whispered: “All too blind. I’ll have to teach you some dark steps, so you don’t trip over yourself.”

“Where are they?” Erian whispered to her.

“Behind us. They’re heading for the control room.” A distant

blaster shot echoed its way to us. “And I guess they’ve found Ong’s golems.”

“How appropriate,” Erian said. “Let’s use the diversion to get out of here.”

“This way,” Sanjuk said, moving past Erian and Julia to lead us through the darkness. She had spent much of our time here mapping passageways; I was amazed how quickly she had come to know them. A true Scravens Guilder.

As we moved on, the roar of slug guns joined the high-pitched whine of blaster fire. I didn’t know whose weapons were which, but I certainly did not want to confront Second Republic-era Protector class golems to find out. It was ironic that those who hated technology were now confronting its vanguard.

I said a prayer for them and hoped that, if they survived, they would gain a bit more respect and awe for the works of our ancestors, and not so quickly move to destroy things that could fight back.

We had our treasure, our datafile. Our patron would be glad to get it, and his rewards would fund our passage onwards through the stars, ever seeking the culmination of Erian’s quest, delivered in a vision by the Gargoyle of Nowhere. A quest whose very goal is still unknown to us but whose shape is constantly revealed in clues and mysteries as we seek it out, buoyed and buffeted by the Aeolus Solaris.

(Previous Alustro’s journals, chronicling the adventures of Lady Erian Li Halan’s company, as recorded by Guissepe Alustro of the Eskatonic Order, can be found in most **Fading Suns** sourcebooks. A complete collection, titled “My Time Among the Stars,” in two volumes, can be found as a free download at www.fadingsuns.com.)





Once the suns shone brightly, beacons in the vast night of space, calling humanity onward. The stars symbolized humanity's vast potential, a purpose and destiny revealed in progress, inciting an exodus of unlimited growth to the distant stars. Once people looked to the heavens with hope and longing in their eyes.

Then the suns — and hope — began to fade.

It is the beginning of the sixth millennium and history has come to an end. Humanity's greatest civilization has fallen, leaving ignorance and fear scattered among the ruins of many worlds. A new Dark Age is upon humanity and few believe in renewal and progress anymore. Now there is only waiting. Waiting for a slow death as the age-old stars fade to cinders and the souls of the sinful are called to Final Judgment.

But not all believe in this destiny. A leader has arisen, an emperor sworn to unite the worlds of Human Space together again under one banner. To ignite hope once more in their hearts.

It is a monumental task, for most people have already given up and fallen into the ways of the past, playing serfs to feudal lords. What is hope to them now but a falsehood which leads to pain? Better to leave the hard decisions to their masters and let the Church console their souls.

There are enemies everywhere, those who seek to selfishly profit from humanity's demise: vain nobles ruling far-flung worlds, power-hungry priests who seek dominion over the lives of men, the greedy merchant guilds growing rich from bartering humanity's needs and wants. They are not alone. Others are out there among the darkening stars, alien races angry with humankind for age-old slavery, and enigmatic alien empires with agendas too paradoxical to fathom.

It is in such a universe that individual men and women must live. Only a few of them will question. Fewer still will act on their questions and seek answers, ways to break the grip of custom and law. To free themselves and once more seize the stars — and their destiny.

A Futuristic Passion Play

Fading Suns is primarily a science fiction game, which means that there are starships, blasters, powered armor, alien races, and weird science. But there are also many elements of traditional fan-

tasy gaming: heroic characters and struggles, a feudal sociopolitical structure (noble lords, high priests and headstrong merchants), powerful artifacts and great mysteries. And there is horror: monsters and maddening discoveries revealing terrifying metaphysical truths.

In short, **Fading Suns** is a game which has everything a roleplaying universe needs in order to tell stories of such varied and exotic themes as can be found anywhere — in our very own world here and now. Why should our created universes be more restrictive than the real world? By making them so, we only rob ourselves of the enriching heritage of stories left to us by previous generations from all corners of the earth. We owe it to ourselves to make our worlds as rich, vivid and complex (even maddeningly so) as that outside our doors.

Like all games, **Fading Suns** should be entertaining and fun to play. But roleplaying games can be more than mere pastimes. The players can strive for the same artistic goals as the author of a novel, a film or a play. **Fading Suns** is a passion play of sorts, a story about the triumphs and even tragedies of its characters that takes place in an imagined future. Many possible stories can be told here, from galaxy-spanning epics to the most personal of tales.

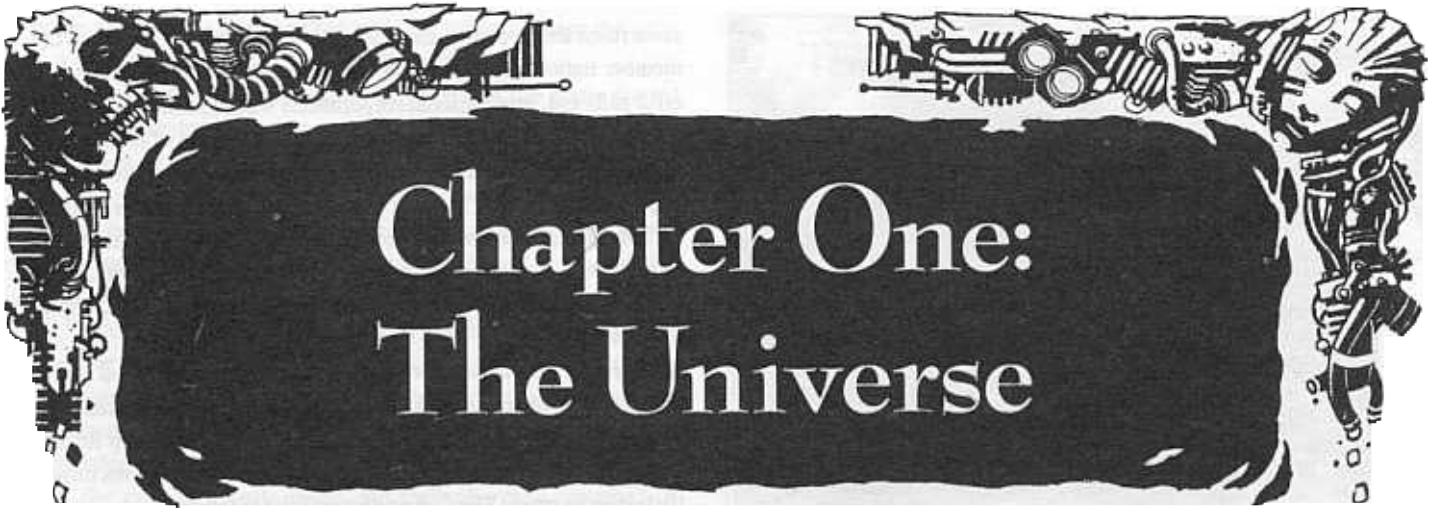
Like medieval passion plays, **Fading Suns** deals with grand themes universal to human experience. Its main theme is the Seeking. This is the mythological role all heroes play: the knight on quest, seeking power to vanquish his enemies or the secrets of self-discovery. Success or failure on this quest is not as important as the insights learned while on it.

The atmosphere of the dramas played out in **Fading Suns** is one of tragic ignorance. Civilization is in decline, and superstition and fear are everywhere. New ideas and frontiers are spurned by a nervous populace, fearful of change for the harm it brings. But it is just this sort of willful ignorance that keeps civilization from rising again. It is such fear that keeps hope buried and great challenges from being met. The player characters represent the heroes who can break the bonds of this ignorance and bring something new and great to their culture, to reawaken and invigorate life.

Without further ado, we give you a glimpse into the tumultuous fate of humankind four millennia from now....







History

The chronicle of humanity's history among the stars is a long one, stretching over two millennia. It is not a quiet story. From the greedy planet grabbing of early colonists to the bloody battles of the Emperor Wars, humans have rarely slept peacefully in the void. They have prospered, suffered defeat, and dared to hope again. And they have not traveled down the paths of history alone; aliens walk among them, with long histories and destinies of their own to complete. To understand where humanity now stands, one must look to the beginning...

Prehistory

Humans know little of interstellar history before they reached space. What they do know comes from the histories of the Ur-Obun, Ur-Ukar and amphibian Oro'ym alien races, along with theories suggested by Second Republic archaeologists and a smattering of phrases from the enigmatic Vau, who may know much they are not telling.

These tales and the evidence cobbled from terraforming digs shows that there were once at least one, although possible two, previously extant though now extinct alien races of incredibly high advancement. One of these presumed races left the jumpgates behind. Little is known about them. Gargoylelike figures — both demonic and angelic in appearance — can be found in many ancient ruins and on the jumpgates.

Together, these two races are called the Anunnaki, or the Preadamites. They are also known as the Ur (proto-race), which is also a prefix used to identify their relics. Scholars believe one of these races — those presumed to have built the jumpgates — is older than the other. This race is called by various names: Jumpmasters, Gatekeepers, Inceptors, Architects, and many more. The presumed younger race is known as the Successors, or Marauders. This latter name comes from alien legends, for their myths speak of two races of gods or elder beings who often warred against each other. One race protected mortals, while the other harassed them. Scholars believe that these "gods" were not mere metaphors, but memories of the Ur.

The idea of a mythical prehistorical war between elder races has some physical evidence to support it. Different digs have revealed ruins of extreme age with architectural motifs resembling those found on certain jumpgates. These ruins were not simply abandoned; they were destroyed in a war. Planetary cataclysms and upheavals cannot explain the devastation clearly wrought by high-tech weaponry, perhaps fusion guns and bombs. This great war was surely the cause for the disappearance of these two races, who leave the stage of history, abandoning their caretaking or harassment of the Children of the Ur some time around 100 AD.

The Children of the Ur are not the only races to have been touched by these precursors. Their mark is found in every system that bears a jumpgate, not only in the gate itself, but on nearly every planet in the system. While some of their remains may be only survey markers, others are more extant, from small cities to whispers of their behavior in the mythologies of most sentient races. Indeed, most races, including humans, believe that they were visited and affected by the Ur at some point early in their development. For what purpose, none can say.

The Anunnaki's only seeming legacy is their technology. The jumpgates opened space for humans, the Children of the Ur and the Vau. But they also left a mystery behind. People still gaze in wonder at the enigmatic Gargoyles jutting from ancient ruins or from the edge of jumpgates.

The First Republic

Humanity's dream of a united, one-world government was finally realized by the beginning of the twenty-second century. Decades of strife and war by extremist but minority political factions left the mass of world citizenry desperate for peace. The price of this peace was freedom, and the people, exhausted after years of global violence, gladly paid it.

The First Republic, also called the Human Combine Age by Second Republic historians, was created by a conglomeration of mercantile leaders, ardent capitalists made rich from years of war who had come to realize that overt war (and increasing anarchy) was hurting profits and growth. Banding together to back a world government initiative begun by the United Nations, these "zaibatsu"





soon ruled the Republic. Representatives, originally elected by UN member nations, were nothing more than shells for the most powerful zaibatsu, international corporations whose money kept these troubled nations alive. Eventually, even the illusion of elected representation was dissolved, and the duly enfranchised leaders of the Republic were overtly made up of corporate heads. Corporate policy became government policy. The hallmark of united and stable government was built on a foundation of vast police powers and conditional civil rights. Nonetheless, the First Republic took humanity to the stars.

Certain visionaries within the government recognized that a new frontier was required to channel the energies and aggressions of the populace and to garner new resources to make up for the dwindling resources of the overdeveloped Earth. Corporations turned their eyes to space. The first project was the moon, and a moonbase was quickly established. Next came Mars. After initial disasters, humanity finally landed on the red planet and found it relatively hospitable. Colonization followed, along with massive resource extraction industries. The rest of the solar system followed in the following centuries.

The lure of yet more distant stars initiated an ambitious long-term program: the launching of "slow ships." These starships traveled below the speed of light and would take generations to reach even the closest star system, but people lined up anyway to volunteer for these expeditions outward to new horizons. There were two types of slow ships, the Generation Ships (where the crew lives awake for their journey, sealed inside a Dyson sphere) and Deep Sleep Ships (where the crew is frozen to be thawed on arrival). Relatives bid their loved ones goodbye, knowing they would probably never see them again, but hopeful that their descendants would one day meet on distant worlds. The ships were sealed and launched, and began their journey through the void toward distant lights.

Then, soon after the turn of the twenty-fourth century, the jumpgate was discovered. Floating at the edge of the solar system, past Pluto, was an amazing alien artifact from a race long gone.

The Jumpgate

The jumpgate was a monumental curiosity. It was the first sign of alien life and technology yet encountered by humanity (excepting the controversial remains left on Mars, long covered up and unknown to the public). And it was baffling. Long "powered down," the gate showed no sign of activity. Its function was hotly debated. Finally, a team of scientists working long shifts triggered the power and activated the gate. The space inside the hoop of the gate warped as light was bent in an inward spiral — and then opened onto alien vistas, a view of a distant star system.

This was the first sure sign humanity had of the Anunnaki and their works. The realization that humans were not the only race to reach the stars was a humbling experience, but one which many frontier-minded humans quickly got over. The zaibatsu saw opportunity where others saw awe.

Data was quickly retrieved from the powered-up gate and translation began. Soon, enough theoretical knowledge about the gate's technology existed to allow manufacture of a proto-jump engine. It was bulky and huge. Attached to an unmanned probe, the Republic prepared to launch it into the new infinity. This was a major unifying event, bringing people all over the world together in rapt expect-

tation as the probe's retros fired and sent it hurtling into the gate. In a flash, it was gone. Now, the waiting commenced.

Three months later, the gate activated and the probe floated back into Earth's solar system, transmitting its image data collected in Unknown Space. A solar system waited, with a habitable planet similar to Earth. It wasn't long before the First Republic had volunteers lining up across the globe to be the first to see another world. A crew was selected, trained over long months and finally readied for launch.

Again, the world gathered to see it. The intrepid crew took off, shooting through the fiery glow of the alien jumpgate — and no one expected what came next. Each astronaut experienced a sublime moment of ecstasy and profound remembering of some deep truth once known and since lost. When they arrived on the other side, the memories again faded, but their afterglow remained. A religion was born, named after the word left on the lips of all the astronauts: Sathra.

The new world had no sentient life, and was ripe for colonization. It was called Sathra's Boon (since renamed Sutek). Soon, the exodus — and the conflicts — began. Internal, covert war ignited among the zaibatsu, as corporations fought for control of space's new riches. Most citizens were unaware of the conflicts exploding in the corridors of power on Earth, Mars and on Sathra's Boon.

The First Republic found the religion of Sathraism to be an annoyance. Pilots who had "found God" were harder to control. In addition, the pilots sought to undergo more jumps than were necessary, risking their health (and thus their ships). Sathraism was outlawed, but to little effect. Only when the Republic managed to design a force field buffer preventing the Sathra experience did the religion suffer a serious setback. Ships were built with integral buffers; any attempt to dismantle the buffer disabled the engines. The mystical visions were over; without communion, many pilots could not maintain their zeal and lapsed from their mystical convictions, so easily forgotten anyway, like a dim dream. Many Sathraists tried to build their own ships, and still received their visions for many years. But the Republic was ruthless in hunting down rogue ships and destroying them. Within a matter of years, Sathraism was forgotten, an underground religion with few converts (although it would briefly surface again in the coming age of exodus).

Progress and expansion pushed on. Further study of the jumpgate revealed new routes to yet more worlds. The wagon train was on. With people spreading so far so fast, and with the zaibatsu busy attacking and defending their own, the discontents and idealists slipped away into the night and seized the stars for themselves. The First Republic's New Frontier had become the means to its own end. The Diaspora, and the fall of the First Republic, had begun.

Diaspora

The first colonists were mainly workers from the many corporations involved in resource extraction, but among them were those seeking escape from the corporate control and centralization which had so long strangled Earth. The First Republic had become an oppressive institution serving the best interests of a top elite, deaf to the pleas of the common man. But once the jumpgate allowed entry to other worlds, each with new jump routes leading to a staggering array of still other worlds, the First Republic could no longer control

Timeline

Date	Event
BC 40,000	Date for oldest known Anunnaki ruin
AD 100	Anunnaki disappear from history as they abandon the Ur-Obun and Ur-Ukar
1800	Vau reach space
2100	First Republic, humans develop solar system
2305	Humans discover the jumpgates
2500	First Republic collapses, nobility rises up
2500-3500	Diaspora
2700	First Contact with the Shantor
2723	Prophet sees the Holy Flame; Age of Miracles
2730	Shantor Revolt leads to creation of alien reservation system
2845	First Contact with the Vau
2849	Death of the Prophet; Age of Miracles ends
2855	Ukar War. The Church unites humanity against invading Ur-Ukar
3500-4000	Merchant interests combine forces to create Second Republic with capital at New Istanbul (later Byzantium Secundus), massive terraforming
4000	Mass unemployment, intensified by fading suns phenomenon and increased religious millennialism, leads to collapse of Second Republic. Nobility leaps in, seizes Byzantium Secundus, and ensures that the Republic cannot be saved
4000-4986	Dark Ages
4525	Barbarian Invasions. Human star-nations unaligned to the houses, Church or League ally to plunder Known Worlds and are beaten back after many casualties on both sides
4540	Vladimir begins uniting stars through his campaign against the barbarians
4550	Vladimir is crowned emperor and is assassinated. A regent, elected every 10 years by electors (composed of major houses, the Church and the League), stands in the emperor's stead
4900	Symbiot Wars begin. Symbiots attack outlying worlds. Their parasitic forces convert many planets, eventually forcing the human populations to evacuate. They are halted at Stigmata
4956-4995	The Emperor Wars
4992	Kurga Conflict on Hazat border begins
4993	Alexius Hawkwood crowned Emperor
4995	All five Royal Houses finally concede victory to Emperor Alexius
5001	Period of Consolidation as Emperor Alexius attempts to cement his gains

their citizenry. They were free among the stars.

An age of Balkanization and independence began, as tight-knit special interest communities took off on ships of their own (the jumpgate engine technology was "leaked" by a cabal of anar-



chists). Many of the worlds they landed on saw new experiments in government; the early homogeneity of these colony worlds ensured that some of these experiments worked. Where hostile conditions or hostile colonists would not allow it, worlds fell into survivalist barbarism, as the First Republic refused their pleas for aid, too busy itself fighting to maintain control over Earth's solar system. On many of these worlds, governments grew up around strong individualist leaders who left the reins of power with their progeny, creating royal lineages. These noble houses become the main means of the zaibatsu's downfall, as they began small wars, seizing First Republic resources here and there, whittling down the dwindling Republic.

The untrammled richness of some of the worlds allowed the colonists to create mini-mercantile empires of their own, while other places saw colonists fight bitter and violent wars for poor resources. But everyone wanted a piece of the action, a world they could call their own.

The Prophet and His Church

Amid this exuberant chaos, the Prophet began his sermons. Traveling from world to world, this religious figure of immense power single-handedly created a new monotheism.

The discovery of greatly advanced alien races (the Ur jumpgate makers) changed everything humanity had ever assumed about its own origins and spiritual destiny — humans were no longer unique for their intelligence and tool-using capability. In light of irrevocable proof of intelligent life in outer space, the leaders of the major religions of Earth were too backward looking to advance their churches into the new era of space travel. As humans left for the stars, they left their gods behind to search for new ones.

During the Diaspora, human colonies fractured their ties to central government, society and religion. Ancient Earth religions long dead, many of them polytheist and pagan, were resurrected by colonists desperate to escape the materialistic technocracy which they believed was strangling their destiny. A new age of spiritual diversity began, bringing with it tribalism, dogma and fanaticism.

But old religions and archaic forms of worship rang hollow amid the stars. Something new was required. Something which would address both hope and grief, as did all the great religions. Into this void of belief came the Prophet. Much has been said or written about him since, and many divergent beliefs are professed by different peoples as gospel, as is the way with all true prophets.

His name was Zebulon, a Catholic or Orthodox Christian priest (argument continues as to which) fascinated with the new potential opened up by the jumpgates. He went to the stars in search of more evidence of their makers. He found something greater by far. All laymembers know the litany: "In 2723, the Prophet saw the Holy Flame." On a frontier world (lost now amid the fading stars), Zebulon was gifted by God with a mystical vision of the Holy Flame residing in the Empyrean. God gave the Prophet new words for his children, to take them into the new age of space exploration. But he was also given a vision of hell, revealing that demons lurked in the "dark between the stars" seeking to snuff the Holy Flame. Church heads say that the suns grow cold as the demons and the sins they awaken in humanity block the light of the Holy Flame from the universe.

The Virtuous Disciples

Eight disciples gathered about the Prophet one-by-one during his early Questing; actions they displayed during this sojourn became the basis of their saintly purviews in the post-Fall Church. Each saint oversees and protects a particular virtue of the Church; a pilgrim involved in one of these activities usually asks the saint to look down upon him from the Empyrean and aid him in his task. There are also lesser saints, usually deceased patriarchs of the Church, each with a virtue or activity to oversee. Tight-knit families or groups often seek to declare their loyalty to one another under the patronage of a saint.

The major virtues of the Church, as supremely displayed by the Disciples, are:

Virtue	Disciple
Questing	Paulus the Traveler
Loyalty	Lextius the Knight
Compassion	Amalthea the Healer
Protection	Mantius the Soldier
Justice (Retribution)	Maya the Scorned Woman
Wisdom	Horace the Learned Man
Humility	Hombor the Beggar
Discipline	Ven Lohji the Ur-Obun

There are also certain sins that were abhorred by the Prophet above all others. Sin darkens the light of the Holy Flame and causes the suns to fade. The major sins are Pride, Greed, Lust, Envy, Sloth, Wrath, and Oathbreaking. There are other sins that have since been proclaimed by the Church but were not mentioned by the Prophet. These are Usury (moneylending) and Invention (the Pancreator's creation is fixed — who are we to add to it? That was the sin of the Second Republic).

Zebulon began to preach his vision throughout the frontier, creating a new religious movement. He spoke of evil hidden among the stars, demons whose shadows blocked the light of the Holy Flame. He spoke of the need to expand outward and explore, gathering the marvels that were found into cathedrals. He spoke out against the soullessness of machines and the nihilistic effect they had on humanity, in defiance of the reigning technofetishism among Diasporans.

Zebulon searched holy texts and teachings from Earth and elsewhere for wisdom, realizing that only by uniting all of humankind's wisdom could humanity's faith thrive under the pressures of their star sojourn. As the Prophet revised his teachings, he introduced ideas from a variety of religions. He called God the Pancreator and revealed that this was the same God spoken of in all religions, and that only now, once humans had reached the stars, could the creator of the universe — of all the worlds and creatures therein — reveal him/her/itself in full glory. The suns were not only potent symbols of the Pancreator's divine light, they were material manifestations of divine spirit, of the Holy Flame which quickens all life.

The Prophet gathered many faithful under his banner, but there were seven special disciples honored by the Prophet above others.



These have become saintlike figures by the time of Emperor Alexius, with many legendary parables and powers attributed to them. There was actually an eighth disciple, an Ur-Obun, but she has been ignored by the Church and is recognized only by a few, although she created an Ur-Obun sect of the Church which still thrives on Obun.

During the Prophet's time, Sathraism experienced a silent resurgence as engineers dismantled the field buffers that prevented jump ecstasy. With no Republic to stop them, pilots again began their communions. But the Prophet stood against them, opposing the hallucinatory ecstasy of unfettered jumps. As the Universal Church gained power, Sathraism again went into decline. Soon, ship owners, often devout Church members, forbade anyone to shut down the Sathra dampers on their ships. Eventually, all ships were again fitted with dampers from their factories, and Sathraism was dead.

The Prophet died in a jumpgate accident while trying to plead for peace with the Vau, who were enacting punishment for violation of their space. His Church blamed the Vau for years, although many have realized that the Prophet's final mission to them was for peace and have since sought conciliation. The symbol of the Church is still a modified jumpgate, the sign of the Prophet's death and his message of questing.

The exceptionally long life of the Prophet is a source of awe for the faithful, who attribute his near-immortality to faith, while others believe it a testament to longevity drugs. Regardless, the years of his life are seen as an Age of Miracles by post-Fall humanity, a time when any person of faith could work wonders. It is said that the first theurgic rituals were codified then, although their practice waned during the Second Republic such that the existence of such magic was considered a hoax by some. Its return in the Dark Ages, however, has renewed the simple folks' faith in miracles.

After the Prophet's death, his core teachings were collected into one book titled the Omega Gospels. Church theologians argue that there are two phases to his teachings, the early Omega Gospels, teaching about warding evil and cultivating the virtues, and the later Compassionate Truths, mystical teachings about understanding and love. Over the millennia since the Prophet walked the stars, the Church has grown and developed its own answers to theological questions raised in the Prophet's teachings. By the time of Emperor Alexius, theology is a thorny and many-sided issue argued over by many different sects and orders.

The Universal Church was formalized after the Prophet's death by one of the Prophet's followers, Palamedes, a son of House Alecto. Palamedes gathered the disparate faithful together against the threat of the Vau and the Ur-Ukar, cementing the burgeoning religion into a political force. It was Palamedes' place in Church history that later helped Vladimir I gain the Church's help in his bid for empire. The creation of the Church was by no means sudden and clear. Other followers of the Prophet went off in their own directions with their own ideas for a Church. But in the end, Palamedes' religion won out, although with certain exceptions (the sects and orders).

Palamedes declared himself patriarch, the spiritual and temporal head of the Church, and set forth guidelines on how future patriarchs were to be chosen (by a college of archbishops). Since then, the Church has been led by a long list of venerable men and women (women can hold the office of patriarch, and may elect to be called matriarch if they wish). The Church guided humanity through

the Fall (although they aided in engineering its start) and now holds a steady front against evil from within and without.

First Contact: The Shantor

Amid the territorial struggles of the Diaspora, humanity encountered its first sentient race. The Shantor of Shaprut were an equinelike race who had achieved a degree of civilization despite their limited tool-using capabilities. Living on the vast grass plains of Shaprut, they celebrated a culture that valued strong family ties and romantic relationships, although this also enforced a fierce tribalism which often led to conflicts with other tribes. Indeed, clan warfare was common and good soldiers were the most honored members of a tribe. However, no soldier was long respected if he did not revere his family or play out the elaborate rites of courtship with his spouse. The Shantor also practiced a religion akin to sun worship.

But their world was rich in minerals, and their indigenous cultures stood in the way of extraction. In the Diaspora, interplanetary supremacy depended on resources. The feeling of the Shaprut colonists was that if they did not take the bounty, someone else would. In addition, the Shantor could not communicate with humans without technical assistance, such as computer voiceboxes. All too often, they were viewed as little more than smart animals. For these reasons, most humans did not feel responsible for displacing the Shantor. They even saw themselves as a necessary civilizing influence on the horselike race, providing them with jobs in the mines, although with often grueling, laborious tasks.

Many Shantor revolted. Those who still lived on the plains led assaults on colony mining operations. The large and clever Shantor are dangerous when riled, and the loss of life and property they caused summoned the wrath of the colony leaders. Armies descended onto Shaprut to put the unruly rebels down. A guerrilla war ensued, but the result was never in question. The broken Shantor rebels were herded up and shipped off-world, scattered onto reservations throughout human space, sometimes onto worlds hostile to their way of life. Families were separated, their members never to see each other again.

The great shame of humanity's first contact has haunted many humans for centuries. The Prophet was only beginning his questing as the Shantor's culture was dismantled, but he spoke out against the tragedy. However, he had too few followers then, and no power to change the course of history as yet. Restitution has yet to be made to the surviving Shantor. Certain people believe that if the Prophet had not died such an untimely death in Vau Space, the fate of the Shantor and other sentients to follow them might have been different. But Palamedes, first Patriarch of the formalized Universal Church of Celestial Sun, concerned himself little with the injustices committed against politically impotent alien races.

And so the fate of most sentient races encountered by humanity followed that of the Shantor. Regardless of their tenacity and degree of technology, they soon came under human rule. While some live in peaceful coexistence with humans, such as the Ur-Obun, Vorox and Gannok, others resisted human encroachment bitterly. The programs of forced relocation and land grabbing were to cause centuries of bad relations with the most advanced power in the known universe: the Vau.



The Vau

A newly discovered jumpgate delivered humanity onto a small but lush world they called New Monaco (now called Apschai). It was the home of the G'nesh, a quiet, insectoid alien race who spent most of their time making elaborate and beautiful plant and tree sculptures linked by organic webbing. They ignored the new colonists at first, but when the colonists forced some G'nesh from their gardens and claimed the land for themselves, the G'nesh became quite indignant. All they would say was, "It is not allowed. Please leave." Of course, the colonists scoffed. These weak gardeners offered no threat to them.

But their patrons did.

A massive starship appeared through the jumpgate, a ship whose like had never been seen before. Harnessing a great ball of raging plasma energy, this dreadnought destroyed the human fleet placed around New Monaco. Small ships disengaged from its hull and went hurtling to the planet below, there dropping off vicious cargo: Vau soldiers.

These soldiers systematically began wiping out all the human colonists encountered. The minor house officials in charge of the planet desperately tried to surrender before the greater and technologically superior forces, but their cries went unheeded. The Vau killed everyone.

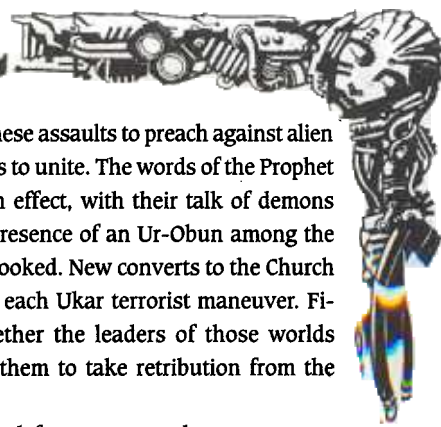
Afterwards, they boarded their ships and left. The G'nesh went back to gardening. The only thing the Vau left behind was a message: "Leave this planet alone. It is the property of the Vau Hegemony. Do not follow the jumproads from this gate further."

Of course, humanity did go further, seeking retribution for their loss. What they found were more Vau worlds, worlds of vastly superior technology. Few returned to tell the tale; those that did were "allowed" to return. Finally, the Vau accepted a human diplomat, Benjamin Verden of House Justinian. Benjamin returned from his first sojourn overwhelmed by the superiority of the Vau. He was thankful for one thing he had become convinced of on his trip: The Vau were non-expansionist. Their very political structure sought and upheld stability over all other virtues. Their empire and way of life had changed little in the last few centuries, following the dictates of their first space emperor.

Benjamin discovered that the G'nesh were a conquered race. The Vau dealt with their subjects in very different ways than humans. The G'nesh put up a valiant fight against the invading Vau. Upon surrender, the general of the G'nesh, having learned Vau culture well, demanded the Vau give him "face" before he could stop the war. This is an important concept to the Vau: Honor and dignity come before life itself. For the general to willingly suffer such a shame as defeat the Vau had to also sacrifice something: They gave the G'nesh long life and peace in return for submission. In other words, the G'nesh live under a socialized retirement granted by their conquerors, all because their general had understood the Vau social system.

This insight was to help humanity well in dealing with the Vau in centuries to come, but for now, the Vau made it clear that they had no interest in the "pollutant" that was humanity. Relations were distant and formal for centuries. It was clear that, while the Vau did not want foreign ideas to infect their society, they also did not want humanity to get too close a look at their technology.





The encounter with the Vau bolstered the power of the Church, especially after the death of the Prophet in a jumpgate accident in Vau Space. Humanity trembled before the threat of a technologically superior (though non-expansionist) alien race. Palamedes' Church drew them together and bolstered their confidence. Humanity was, after all, chosen for the stars. It was its destiny. To turn back now would be to fail the Pancreator. The urgings of the priests gave humanity a unifying creed, a universal doctrine of excellence with which to move forward in the face of defeat. It is ironic that it was the Church that gave humans the prod to reach so high; the same Church which centuries later would admonish them for such a sin.

The event that would finally cement the power of the burgeoning Church arrived before word of the Prophet's death had spread to all the worlds.

The Ukar War

The Ur-Ukar had struggled through centuries of internal conflict on their hostile and subterranean world of Kordeth before finally reaching the stars. They colonized three planets near their system, Okh'cha and Kradle (later called Aylon and Istakhr), and Ustar (now a Lost World), and were ready to expand still further when they encountered humans on Criticorum. It was hate at first sight. The vain Ukar saw a world for conquering and a race to enthrall. They attacked with little warning and took the main capital on Criticorum. Human response was swift. Noble families on Shaprut and New Istanbul formed a fleet to retake the planet. A long and bitter war ensued, taking place on almost every planet or moon in the system.

The revolt spread as Ukar slipped onto other planets and began guerrilla assaults. Soon, humans on nearly a dozen worlds had suffered from the aliens. The Ur-Obun, who had been encountered soon after the Shantor, quickly recognized their ancient brethren and spoke out against them, joining the humans in condemnation of the Ukar tactics. The Obun's anti-Ukar speeches helped gain them the greater sovereignty status they still enjoy in Emperor Alexius' time.

Then, an Ukar on Shaprut used his psychic powers to force the Shantor to revolt. The Shantor broke from their reservation and stormed across the villages and towns that sat on the Shantor's once-open plains. The retribution was fierce and decisive; nearly a quarter of the Shantor were killed before the remainder surrendered. When it was discovered that Ukar psionics had been responsible, Patriarch Palamedes raised the fist of the newly formed Universal Church.

Psychic powers had developed strongly in humanity after the first sojourn through the jumpgate, and the practice slowly grew, with new powers being developed as the years and generations passed. With the suppression of Sathraism, the advent of new psychic powers slowed. Rarely during any of this time, however, were psychics viewed as particularly dangerous. Rather, humanity was fascinated with the new potentials revealed. All that changed when the Ukar arrived.

The Ukar were advanced psychics from birth, but they had little compunction governing the use of their powers. When they employed mind tricks against the Shantor, humans began to fear them and no longer sought a peaceful end to the Criticorum conflict. Humanity could not rest until these mind controllers were in chains.

Patriarch Palamedes used these assaults to preach against alien dangers and the need for humans to unite. The words of the Prophet seemed eerily designed for such effect, with their talk of demons and evil among the stars. The presence of an Ur-Obun among the disciples was conveniently overlooked. New converts to the Church grew every day, especially after each Ukar terrorist maneuver. Finally, Palamedes gathered together the leaders of those worlds harmed by the Ukar and sent them to take retribution from the them first-hand.

Using information gathered from some unknown source, Palamedes sent the fleet to the Ukar homeworld of Kordeth, whose location had been previously unknown. Spiraling out of the jumpgate, the fleet split up and began hitting any ship they came across. The surprised the Ukar — the ill-prepared system defenders retreated and formed a phalanx around their homeworld. A standoff began.

On the planet below, panic broke out and old Ukar clan rivalries ignited. Kept in check by the powerful Overlord and his expansionist campaign, enemies of the ruling family rose up and sabotaged the planetary defense. Pilots loyal to the minor clans heeded the calls and broke off from the phalanx, leaving the planet defenseless against the assault. The human fleet rushed in and began bombing the surface of the planet, unaware that most Ukar cities were deep underground.

The fleet sent in a landing party to seize the surface capital, home of the Overlord. The Overlord surrendered while his rivals hid in the caverns below, knowing that they would inherit the planet once the humans had gone. Their plan did not go as well as they had wished. The humans did not leave, but only came in greater numbers until all Ukar resistance was squashed. Nobles and merchant leaders of numerous worlds came to ensure that the Ukar would not rise again. Ukar colony worlds were seized and eventually sold to noble families, while Kordeth itself was sold to powerful mercantile consortiums.

In the later times of the Second Republic, the Ukar would sue for greater freedom from the domination they suffered for their mistaken acts, and they would be given such freedom, but for now, they were a kept people.

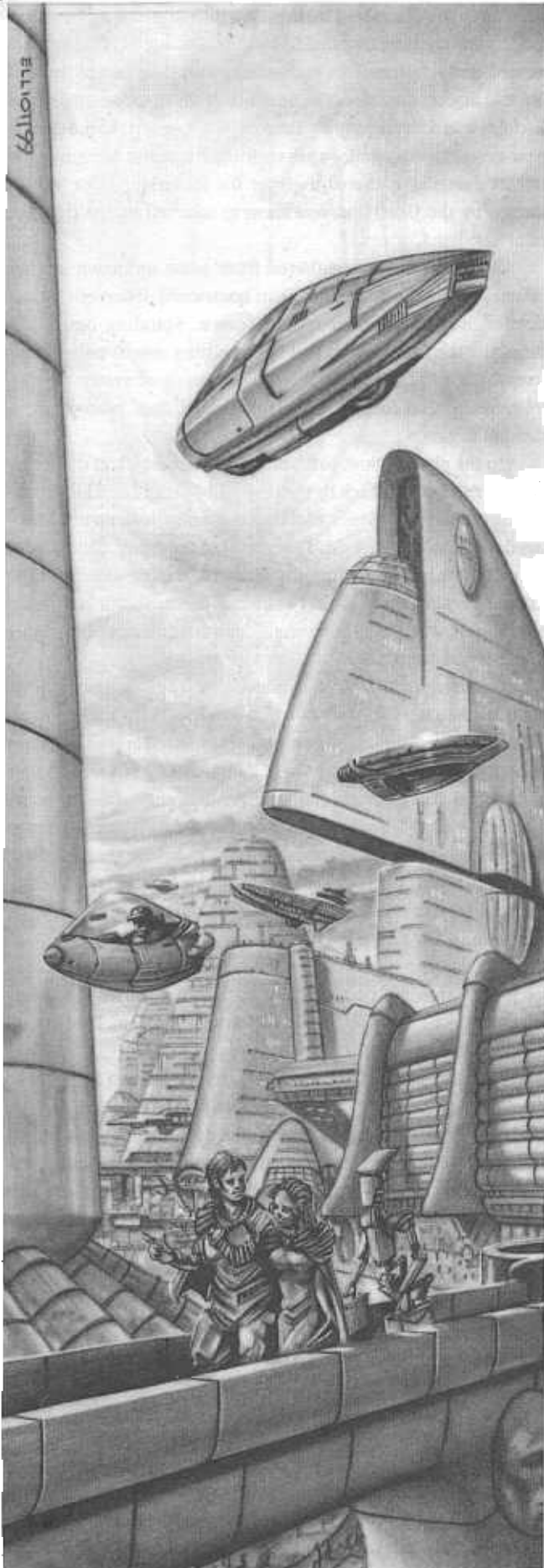
Palamedes' victory ensured the safety of Human Space, or so the Church preached. The bold event was trumpeted to people on worlds far from Kordeth who had suffered little from the war, but it still had an effect. The fear of alien invasion was imminent everywhere, and a Church which had proven itself effective against such enemies was a beacon shining in the night.

Order From Chaos

New technology progressed quickly, as scientists made amazing discoveries by observing phenomena on other worlds, or by taking lore from alien races (occasionally sharing it). Incredible advances were made, but they were not spread equally among the commonwealth of humanity. There was no central unity by which the whole of humanity could prosper from the work of the many worlds.

As some worlds prospered (most often those with strong, hereditary leadership: the nobles), they subsumed others under them, and soon many star-faring, interplanetary governments flourished. The heart of all these operations, however, was commerce. Some





planets had certain resources in abundance while lacking others. Trade was necessary for the betterment of life everywhere. The greedy, overarching attitude of the zaibatsu and the new royalty could not long maintain a foothold in the new sprawl of worlds, where another choice always existed. Eventually, the worlds did come together again. A new mercantile alliance was formed with great democratic ideals, temporarily silencing the resentful royalty by strength of numbers. The Second Republic was born.

It is again ironic that it was the Church's teachings of a humane and ethical philosophy that gave rise to an institution that was to eclipse the Church's role. Indeed, under the Republic, humanity's yearning for spiritual answers was drowned by the array of material comfort and sensual stimuli available to every citizen. The Church would soon revise its previous philosophy and adapt one much harsher to human luxury.

Second Republic

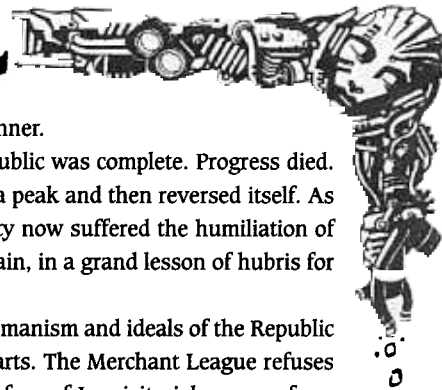
Some thinkers at the close of the twentieth century believed that liberal democracies were the ultimate progression of government, that, after such a form of governing becomes universal, no further progress is possible. Perfection of governance will have been achieved. Many citizens of the Empire believe these thinkers were right. But hindsight, as they say, is 20/20.

Humanity reached its pinnacle in the form of the Second Republic, a time of quick progress and amazing changes. The standard of living for the average citizen was raised on all worlds. Technology knew no limits. With the vast resources of other worlds and a unity of purpose, nothing was impossible. All was to be achieved.

It was a time of genetic engineering, curing many diseases and deformities but often leading to the creation of freakish, near-human races. A time when terraforming was all the rage, when almost every world in humanspace was "fixed" to be more Earthlike, to make better homes for humanity (wiping out native ecosystems in the process, along with the natural habitats of many alien races). A time when the threat of physical danger was a myth, and accidental death a nearly forgotten idea. Sports of extreme danger were practiced readily, for a personal energy shield or MedPac was always around to protect or revive the victim of even fatal accidents.

The citizenry soon forgot the traumas and triumphs that had forged their way of life. Existing in an unbroken bubble of prosperity, they forgot what it was to be human, to strive, to love and to sacrifice. And to hate.

The bubble soon burst from within. The Republic had grown too far and too fast in technological mastery. Many of its wonders were introduced with no consideration for their effect on the wider populace. Most technology displaced workers, and soon there was no need for work. But the economy did not keep up with these changes, and people still needed money to live. But where to get it? The welfare system of the Republic was grand but not built to uphold the sheer number of citizens displaced from their livelihoods by technology (or cheap alien labor). As this reality was sinking in, unknown terrorists managed to sabotage the central computer net controlling welfare information. Anarchy ensued on many worlds as citizens were denied money. Riots began.



Divestiture

The nobility of many worlds, weak but still extant, saw their chance. They began orchestrating deals with the overextended central Republic government for more local power to crush riots in return for increased tax revenues, all the while refusing to pay out welfare money. This begins a period later historians term Divestiture, for as the Republic ceded out power, it lost more and more control over the bureaucratic beast the government had become. Finally, massive corruption in the central government, along with the increased tax burden, caused outlying worlds to secede. These Rogue Worlds, typically under the power of noble families, were too powerful to put down; the Republic was forced to deal with them on their own terms.

Then the stars began to darken. Only after three suns with populated planets noticeably dimmed did people begin to realize that the fading suns phenomenon was not going away. But what was causing it? Many disgruntled and discontented people had their own answers: "The Republic is to blame; some damn experiment gone wrong!" "The scientists are responsible; their technology's doing this!" "It's the aliens' fault, some sort of cruel revenge."

The Universal Church began to preach, explaining why the suns were fading: Humans were sinful and had, in their pride, overreached, claiming the powers of the Pancreator for themselves. The Pancreator chose to take their power from them by taking the very light of the worlds away. This message hit the right nerves, and a vicious millennialism was born. People needed reasons to hate, and a target to direct it toward. While the Church fathers were genuinely concerned with the souls of a largely unspiritual populace, they could not help falling into old habits. They took humanity's discontent and directed it at the Republic, the source of the Church's own problems.

In an attempt to recapture support, the Republican president made a deal with the Orthodox sect of the Church. In return for the Church's open acceptance of the Republic's secular authority, the Republic would declare Orthodoxy the official and only recognized sect of the Church. This ignited religious wars as breakaway sects — and religions wholly unaligned to the Universal Church — fought for their rights.

It is during this time that the legendary Saint Rasmussen spoke his famous lament: "Oh that my head were water, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for lost humanity! Tremble, ye sinners, for the long night is upon us and the suns themselves are seen to fade. Repent, and know salvation. Repent, or die!" He was torn apart by a rioting crowd of zealots as the words left his lips.

The nadir of this conflict came when certain Rogue Worlds, with the support of alien races, arrived through Byzantium Secundus' jumpgate to seize control of the government. This surprise assault took the Republic off-guard, and Byzantium fell to the rebels. As word spread to the worlds of the Republic, utter chaos ensued. The major noble houses knew their chance had come at last, that all they had worked toward over the years had finally come to fruition.

Ten houses banded together and sent a fleet to retake Byzantium Secundus. With their now-vast military might, gathered through the years of Divestiture, they retook the capitol with little resistance. As the smoke in the presidential palace cleared, the

Ten Houses raised their own banner.

The Fall of the Second Republic was complete. Progress died. History worked its way toward a peak and then reversed itself. As the Church proclaimed, humanity now suffered the humiliation of reliving its past failures over again, in a grand lesson of hubris for a fallen race.

But many remember the humanism and ideals of the Republic and hold them close to their hearts. The Merchant League refuses to relinquish them, even in the face of Inquisitorial censure from the Church or military might from the houses. An ideal is not reality, however, but a guiding light. Many have been lost in the darkness even while standing in the light. So it was with the citizenry of the Second Republic. The lights were dimmed. The New Dark Ages had begun.

The New Dark Ages

The ten triumphant noble houses soon gained the backing of the Church, for they supported (for political purposes) the Republic's recognition of Orthodoxy. They also officially accepted the tenet that humanity was sinful and that the Church had righteous power over the lives of the sinful. In return, the Orthodox patriarch backed the houses, finding many lines in scripture to prove the nobles' case against the godless Republican senators. Besides, the Rogue World rebels had many sectarian leaders among them; they could not be allowed to build a new government on Byzantium Secundus that might defuse the new power of the Orthodoxy.

The Church moved quickly to stamp its doctrine on all it could. Its main tenet was that technology was evil. It had caused the downfall of humanity, and so humans must not respect or practice it. The noble houses agreed, seeing a method by which their new populace could be kept in line. They, of course, sought an exception to the anti-technology creed. The Church resisted, and thus began decades of squabbling between the noble houses and the Church. The Church would excommunicate a house member for technological practice, while a house would seize a Church world, destroying a cathedral as a "casualty of war."

Both sides finally came to a necessary agreement. The Church needed some measure of tech for itself, and had to concede some to the houses. So, the nobility was conceived to be in a form of "extreme penance," "to compassionately take on sinful tasks to save the common man from such stain." Thus, the use of technology (and the powers of rulership) were seen as necessary evils, and nobles were martyrs seeking to save humanity from again staining itself (sins for the few, saving grace for the masses). The Church also claimed a saintly role in this, decreeing it to be the duty of priests to guard the commoners from tech. For this purpose, the priests must be knowledgeable in recognizing tech, but if they were penitent enough, their souls would remain pure on Judgment Day.

But this sharing of power between the two forces was not complete. The guildsmen who possessed what technological knowledge remained made their bid for power. They formed the Merchant League from the remaining Republic senators and corporate heads and refused to hand down their knowledge of technology. Without them, starships could not long run; military battle armor and weapons could not long operate. And Church communications would be cut.



The houses began a reign of terror, hunting down and imprisoning anyone who claimed to be a guildsman. The Church began excommunicating the leaders of the League, forcing the loyal to refuse them succor. To no avail. The League had too many starships and worlds of its own. And they had trade. Without their jumpmaps and know-how, the supply of many necessary materials to Church and house worlds would be cut off. Indeed, many worlds had already purposefully sealed their jumpgates, and disappeared into the long night of history. The priests and nobility were forced to give the League a cut of the action.

And so formed the triune government of the Dark Ages, an uneasy and fractured alliance which often broke out into open conflict between the parties, causing much suffering among the common human and alien. The Ten elected one among them as council leader, but these leaders always had enemies, and rarely ruled for long. In addition, membership among the Ten was fluid; houses rose and fell over the years, with only the strongest or craftiest maintaining their positions for long. The Church patriarch continually tried to cement political power in the hopes of building a theocracy to replace the sorry government that ruled in place of the Second Republic, but there were always too many heresies and sectarian conflicts to squash instead. The guilds of the League sought to claim restless worlds or recapture the Rogue Worlds, but they were often outmaneuvered by the nobles.

Into this fractious universe came the barbarians.

Barbarian Invasions

After the Fall, the borders of the Known Worlds shrank. Some worlds deliberately cut themselves off from jumpravel by blockading their gates and attacking anyone who tried to enter their systems. Others lost their ability to reach space as civil wars destroyed starships and the factories to repair them. Most worlds were too busy to aid the small backworlds and, after years of dealing with their own struggles, they often forgot about these worlds or had lost the jump coordinates to reach them in the massive data purges of the Church Inquisitors.

Certain worlds "sealed" their jumpgates, cutting themselves off from the madness going on around them for an unknown amount of time. Those with the technical know-how and a detailed understanding of jumpgates can seal a gate — that is, shut down all travel from one or more directions. However, once this is done, no one can control when the gate to those directions can be opened again. The seal may last a week or it may last for centuries; no one knows. The time is governed by an internal mechanism in the gate which is too arcane to be understood. Some of the worlds which sealed themselves off during the Fall have yet to reappear.

Untold numbers of planets were cut off from humanity's central civilization, some to be rediscovered later, others to disappear from history forever. Who knows how many lost planets in the depths of space still support human life? In addition to the worlds of the Second Republic — worlds reached only by jumpgate — there are thousands of star systems without jumpgates, with unknown residents. Some of these stars — those nearest to Earth in light years — were the targets of First Republic slow ships. But these generation ships were forgotten after the jumpgates were discovered, and none has ever reached the Known Worlds. Indeed, few people in the Empire pay attention to stellar distances such as light years; such

details became unnecessary after the jumpgates, as travel across vast distances became possible in the blink of an eye.

In this environment of fractured roadways, not all worlds were claimed by the houses, Church or League. Many forgotten planets began independent governments of their own. Most of these governments remained hostile to their neighbors, fighting centuries-long feuds, and some looked upon the riches of the Known Worlds and lusted for them. Cut off from the center of the Republic, many of these worlds slowly lost technology, devolving into Diaspora-level conditions or worse.

A few leaders of such forlorn worlds who still had starships were able to form a coalition and raid the Known Worlds, targeting those worlds that they could sweep onto, pillage and escape from before aid could arrive. The barbarians were no longer at the gate — they were through it and plundering.

Delphi, House Hawkwood's homeworld, suffered the worst of these assaults. House Hawkwood was able to gather troops with the aid of its minor house allies, and after a bloody battle, fended off the assaults to their homeworld. However, it was no major military victory, for the bulk of the barbarian army had already left with its loot.

The Ten knew that the raiders' success would soon cause more barbarians to break through. But its internal squabbling prevented it from forming a united front against the invaders.

The barbarians, as expected, did return, and this time in greater numbers. Two large star-nations united to lay claim to outlying worlds. They succeeded. Years of simmering battle began, whereby the noble houses would reclaim their worlds for a few months, and the barbarians would seize them yet again.

A disunited, selfish nation cannot long survive such outside pressure. One person was needed to unite it and send its enemies running.

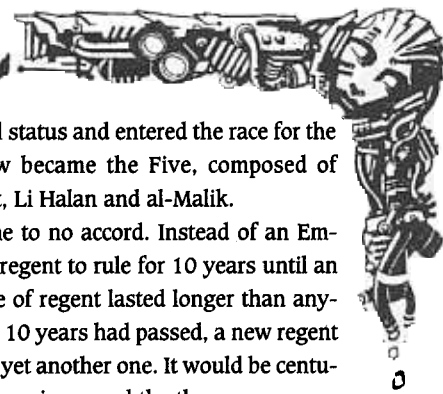
Vladimir Unites the Stars

The problem of a united front against the barbarians was keenly felt by Vladimir Alecto, the recently elected leader of the Ten. Vladimir saw that the far-flung and fractured commonwealth of humanity would soon crumble before the might of its enemies if someone did not act to bring the Known Worlds together. His primary aim, of course, was power. The welfare of humanity may have been secondary, but important nonetheless, for it was the fuel which drove him (or so he told himself).

Pledging to lead the Known Worlds to victory and reclaim the embattled worlds, Vladimir began gathering allies. A military genius, he had a strong following among all the minor noble houses and five of the Ten. (The Ten at that time were Alecto, Justinian, Gesar, Van Gelder, Windsor, the Hazat, al-Malik, Li Halan, Hawkwood, and the tenth, the Decados.) He also gained the support of the Church and the League. He won these allies easily, for the barbarians threatened commerce, souls were in danger, and he promised the owners of the worlds that he would return the planets to their power rather than claiming them for himself.

After years of battle, the barbarian invaders were broken and forced back to their own worlds. The jumproads connecting entry into the Known Worlds were often sealed or hidden to prevent future sorties. But Vladimir did not keep his promises in full. For those major houses who had not fully supported him, he claimed





their worlds for himself. Civil war erupted.

The Gesar, Windsors, Van Gelder, Decados and certain minor houses were turned against him, along with many sects and guilds. But the rest of the Known Worlds were behind him. The war was bloody. Years after it had begun, Vladimir accepted the surrender of the rebel houses and declared himself Emperor. He introduced the Great Charter, instituting the office of the electors, those who could vote on his successor. Each elector was given a scepter — a vote rod — as proof of office, and Vladimir distributed these scepters to all his allies in the houses, Church and League.

A great coronation ceremony was held on Byzantium Secundus when Vladimir arrived to take the throne. But as he placed the crown upon his head, fire erupted from his eyes and he fell dead to the floor. Years of hard-won victory ended in seconds. The assassin behind the deed has never been revealed, and many whisper that demons were at work.

Vladimir had no blood successor. A race was on to claim the throne after him. House Alecto, weak from the expenditure of its resources during Vladimir's campaigns, fell to the status of a minor house. Unfortunate deaths and assassinations soon destroyed the remainder of its royal line, and the house became extinct ten years after Vladimir's death.

The Gesar and Windsors also became extinct, too weak from their recent surrender to carry on. They had all lost too many sons and daughters to Vladimir's war and soon lost those few who remained. Van Gelder held onto their power and became a minor house only by allying with the Decados. With this extra power, the weak Decados, using blackmail to influence other minor houses and even

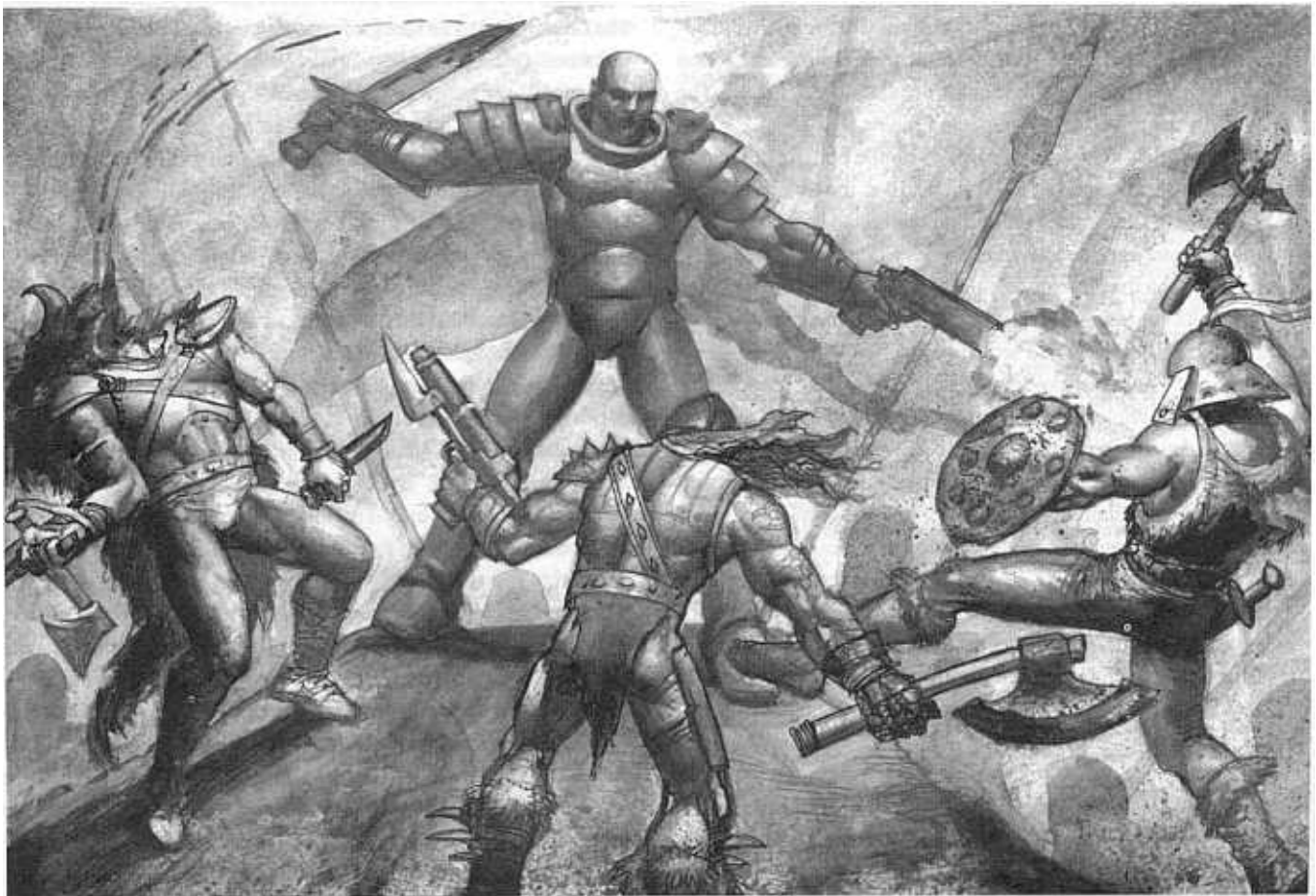
the League, maintained its royal status and entered the race for the Imperial Throne. The Ten now became the Five, composed of Hawkwood, Decados, the Hazat, Li Halan and al-Malik.

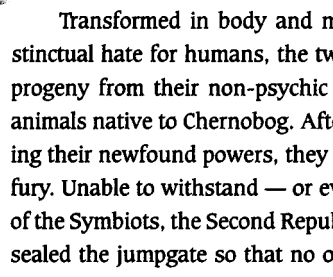
But the electors could come to no accord. Instead of an Emperor, they elected a temporary regent to rule for 10 years until an Emperor was chosen. The office of regent lasted longer than anybody had planned, for when the 10 years had passed, a new regent was elected. And 10 years later, yet another one. It would be centuries until a new Emperor would again ascend the throne.

Symbiot Wars

The Second Republic had its secrets and at least one of these came back to haunt the Known Worlds. Not all citizens of the Republic appreciated the massive terraforming program whereby all worlds were slowly transformed into human (Earthlike) environments, with the subsequent upheaval of native alien races and the disappearance of unique flora and fauna. The Republic suffered its share of ecoactivists and terrorists.

One such cabal of ecoterrorists eked out a precarious existence in the jungles of Chernobog, harassing the Second Republic terraforming engineers. After a particularly successful sabotage of machinery, they retreated into unexplored jungle to avoid the authorities' intensive search. There, they disturbed a previously unknown alien race. The Xolotl were awakened from hibernation and began parasitically infesting the humans in an attempt to breed. Two of the terrorists had occult powers (psi and theurgy), and the result was explosive: A new race of beings, neither Xolotl nor human but something unique — a Symbiot.





Transformed in body and mind, infused with an almost instinctual hate for humans, the two quickly bred, creating Symbiot progeny from their non-psychic fellows, and from the plant and animals native to Chernobog. After gathering strength and practicing their newfound powers, they assaulted the human capital with fury. Unable to withstand — or even comprehend — the weaponry of the Symbiots, the Second Republic retreated from Chernobog and sealed the jumpgate so that no one could get onto or off the contaminated world. The Republic then worked to hide news of the event from the citizenry; the last thing they wanted was an alien threat to cause more chaos (those who argued that such a threat was exactly what was needed to unify the fractious Republic were laughed at). They managed to hide the secret so well that the planet of Chernobog and its alien residents were entirely forgotten. The Known Worlds entered the Dark Ages blissfully unaware of the terrible threat waiting beyond their borders.

Nearly a millennium after the Fall, the Symbiots returned. Sometime in the intervening years, they had attained jump capability in their organic ships, although even now no human understands how this is possible. Unable at first to break through the sealed jumpgate to Stigmata, the Symbiots had expanded out and away from the Known Worlds. The Imperial Eye is still unsure how many worlds they hold in the space past Chernobog.

It was only a matter of time until they came back to their point of origin. A Symbiot ship passed through the jumpgate at Absolution and landed in an outlying city. Its crew began slaughtering the residents without warning. The Symbiot's organic tech was astonishing — living ships, battle armor and even guns. The very thought of these things repulsed the human defenders even as they died fighting against them. The Symbiots did not capture the world — that was never their intent. But they left the resource extraction industry in shambles and the human population decimated. The attack was a warning. More would soon follow.

Daishan and Stigmata, other worlds on the borders of Human Space, became wary and ready for attack. But the Symbiot forces did not arrive in fleets. They moved in mysterious ways, attacking through the least expected avenue: the very flora and fauna of the planets turned on the human "colonists." The Symbiots had planned their assaults for years, having finally broken the jumpcodes to these worlds earlier. They had secretly converted whole ecosystems under the very noses of the ignorant colonists. Humans found it hard to fight off whole forests or herds of predatory beasts working in teams to devour scout units.

The humans, as expected, resorted to firebombing and ecodestruction to eliminate their opposition. But even this did not destroy the Symbiots; their seeds lay deep in the organic structure of their chosen planets. The new growth over the charred forests strangely grew more quickly than it should have, and this time stronger, more resilient to fire damage. The Symbiot planet forces learned from their failures and grew defenses against them. The colonists of Daishan were forced to evacuate the planet, giving it over entirely to the Symbiots.

It was clear that the Symbiots were masters of guerrilla warfare against a technologically superior force. While they could not immediately seize the worlds for themselves, they could ensure the humans a costly defense and an eventual route. But not without a

final gesture — the human fleet defending the retreat bombed the planet from orbit with all its might, leaving the world a scorched, uninhabitable rock.

The regent moved quickly to defend Stigmata, the system the Symbiots would have to pass through to reach the rest of the Known Worlds. The Imperial Fleet was dispatched and the battles began. Things did not go well for the Imperial forces. While they had more advanced weaponry than the Symbiots, the parasites were tenacious. While the Symbiots made few advances, neither could they be easily beaten back. The regent formed a new office to handle what was turning into a long-term situation, that of the Stigmata Garrison Commander, in charge of a vast amount of Imperial military resources.

Finally, in one area, surprisingly and for no apparent reason, the tide was turned and the Symbiot forces pushed back. Upon investigation, it was discovered that two people were largely responsible: Friar Berthold of the then-heretical Eskatonic Order and Damiana, a Charioteer trader. These two were unusual in that they were both practicing occultists: Berthold was a theurgist and Damiana a powerful psychic. They were residents of the planet before the Symbiots had arrived, joined together in a secret coven. They had gathered other local residents together to mount a guerrilla defense against the Symbiot invaders, a rebellion which went on unnoticed by the Imperial fleet. The friar's litanies and Damiana's psionics succeeded where military might could not.

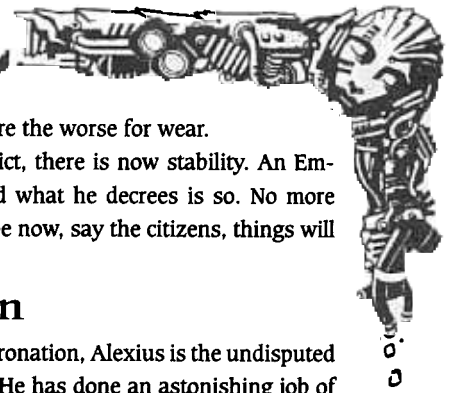
They had discovered the key to fighting the Symbiots on something close to even terms. However, psychic powers — once the high science of the Republic — were outlawed by the Church. Covert deals had to be made before occult powers would be accepted. The Church had to be brought in and given credit for the affair. The Eskatonic Order had to be accepted into the fold. It would later become one of the major sects vying with the Orthodoxy for control of Church resources.

Once all was agreed upon, the Church unleashed other Eskatonic Order priests and rogue psychics (promised absolution for their service) onto Stigmata. They were contracted Inquisitors given the power to cleanse the taint in any way they saw fit. It worked. Where science could not clean out the parasites, psychics and theurgists did. From then on, the Eskatonic Order heralded theurgy as the replacement of science. Only here could man look to see wonders, they claimed, but only the holiest and most penitent of priests could work such magic.

Centuries after it had begun, the Symbiot War was brought to an uneasy standstill. The Symbiots still held some territory, but gained little new ground. The long, protracted guerrilla battle on the frontier was at an end, and an uneasy silence descended upon the front.

Magic had gained a foothold on human consciousness again, one that the houses, Church and League soon found hard to control. Covens, underground organizations of psychics, began to operate openly, with agendas in conflict with the powers that be. Individuals seeking power turned to forbidden paths, asking aid of invisible entities whose names were whispered in occult circles. These Antinomists risked their souls and those of their fellow humans in their bids for power, and not the least of them were members of the Five Houses who sought imperishable power against their enemies.





The Emperor Wars

The office of regent could not last forever without some challenge. While individuals had tried short-lived bids for the title of Emperor at various times during the Dark Ages, none had come close to succeeding.

Fifty years after the Symbiot Wars had calmed, leaving a tense and fearful populace waiting for the next alien expansion, House Hawkwood made its bid for power. Darius Erik Hawkwood made overt offers to the Church and League electors for increased power in return for their votes. This set off a flurry of counter-offers from the other houses, each fighting to gain scepters. Decades of political, military and social struggle began, a struggle that oftentimes threatened the borders of the Empire.

The houses were not the only forces seeking the Imperial Throne. The patriarch, fearful of giving the nobility too much power, moved to gain worlds of his own, pursuing the Church's ancient desire for a theocracy. He was largely unsuccessful, but powerful enough to force certain noble houses in the race to recognize the superiority of the Church.

The Merchant League sought a chance for increased power amid the chaos. Years of war among the nobility had turned the populace against the families. The League sought to use this hatred to kick the royals out. They sought to gain enough worlds to secede and declare a Third Republic. They, like the Church, were unsuccessful, for a popular figure arose to appease all the quarreling forces.

A master diplomat and military tactician, Alexius of House Hawkwood had taken up where Darius, his uncle, had left off. He eventually claimed enough hold on a number of worlds to meet the final challenge. With the grudging backing of the patriarch (who finally saw which way the wind was blowing) and the hesitant backing of the Leaguemeister, Alexius Hawkwood claimed the Imperial Throne. A short, quick battle broke out at the Imperial Palace on Byzantium Secundus, but Alexius was prepared. Hidden Hawkwood forces and mercenary fleets moved in and stifled all opposition. The opposing houses were forced to retreat. On that very day, Alexius was crowned Emperor of the Known Worlds, and no assassin's trick could stop him.

At first, only House Hawkwood, the Li Halan and the al-Malik conceded (the latter were Alexius' main allies in the war; the Church and the League respectively, had already recognized the Emperor, and they could do little but follow), but the Decados and the Hazat both refused to recognize the claim. Years of fighting ensued, this time more vicious than before.

The Decados gave in sooner than anyone expected, surprising all and causing people to wonder whether they had seen the writing on the wall or were plotting some as-yet-unrevealed scheme. A barbarian border war on the Hazat's borders weakened that family's forces enough that, following the Decados' recognition of Alexius' claim, it was also forced to capitulate. It claims that it willingly recognized Alexius in return for his aid in the war and his recognition of their claim to the barbarian world.

The Emperor Wars were finally at an end, although they had lasted far too long. Almost two generations of open conflict had taken its toll on the Empire. Planets were ravaged and many starships lost beyond repair. While the borders remained steady (at great cost),

the lives of Imperial citizens were the worse for wear.

But where there was conflict, there is now stability. An Emperor sits upon the throne, and what he decrees is so. No more arguing, no more stalling. Maybe now, say the citizens, things will get done.

Consolidation

Nearly a decade after his coronation, Alexius is the undisputed Emperor of the Known Worlds. He has done an astonishing job of consolidating power under his rule, and has brought a stability to the Empire unknown for centuries. While his work is not complete, for many factions still vie against him in hidden, shadowy ways — and some even openly — most recognize that even death may not topple his throne. Although he has no heir as yet, should he produce one, that son or daughter will surely assume his rule (especially with the five vote scepters set aside for him or her — as many as the noble houses combined).

Nonetheless, his popularity — while stronger than it was even three years ago — is not universal. The wars still haunt many who lived through them. The bloody battle for the throne left many people landless or without families; they bear deep grudges against the man they consider to be a tyrant. And peace is not fully assured yet — new conflicts constantly threaten.

The Hazat fight a war against the barbarian Kurga Caliphate over ownership of a Lost World called Hira, a war that threatens to draw in more factions if the Hazat are successful in petitioning the patriarch to declare their cause a Holy War. The Kurgans are alleged to follow a heretical version of the Prophet's teachings, scripture which the Orthodoxy does not want tainting the souls of Known Worlders.

The barbarian Vuldrok Star-Nation has increased its raiding of Hawkwood worlds of late, and seems to be itching for a confrontation with Alexius — whether to test his mettle and resolve or to provoke a full fledged war is unknown.

The Symbiots, however, seem to have retreated from the frontlines on Stigmata. They have withdrawn into their territories for now, although the meaning of this move — uncharacteristic for the chaotic shapeshifters — is hotly debated. Are they building their strength for a greater assault? Or have they recognized defeat? Rumors persist of high-level contact between supposedly sentient Symbiot leaders and Imperial Eye agents hinting at peace initiatives, but most doubt such fables. How can there be peace with mindless animals?

And what of the Vau? Distant and aloof for years, their requests for diplomatic visits have increased of late, although their dialogues are seemingly meaningless, consisting of elaborate discussions of the weather or gardening tips. Some pundits whisper that the enigmatic aliens are sizing the Empire up, prepared either for a new expansion or new trade.

But border conflicts and high-level intrigues matter little to the common man. Most people are once again proud. Under Alexius, their destiny again seems assured. The jump routes have opened to an unprecedented degree, reuniting worlds long sundered by war and factionalism. Interstellar trade is strong again, and with it an increasing network of news and gossip. Even here the Emperor has displayed power, using guilds of canny marketers to careful control his image.



Alexius has declared a new age of discovery and offers rich rewards or even peerages (or more powerful titles) to those who can reopen the paths to the Lost Worlds and riches of the Second Republic. He has instituted the Order of the Phoenix — the Questing Knights — to spread word of his rule and law to outlying regions and even into barbarian space. Their ranks are swelling, causing grumbling among the elite of the houses as second and younger sons and daughters — fearing to inherit little glory and wealth from their own families — seek to win it from the Emperor through adventure.

In addition, Alexius has opened the ranks to the guilds and sects, creating the role of Imperial Cohort, aide and companion to his knights. Cohorts are promised a share in the spoils of Imperial adventures — the chance for wealth and fame or the ability to spread the good word. This gesture to the League and Church is yet more proof to many that Alexius understands the multi-faceted nature of power in the Known Worlds.

The Church, however, frowns on Alexius' emphasis on questing and rediscovery of the past's riches, seeing once again the march of humanity's folly. The Orthodoxy suspects that the Questing Knights' true mission into barbarian space is an elaborate land-grab for the Empire, a way to give Alexius more worlds than the other houses combined. Of course, no crusade against barbarian powers could succeed without noble and Church support, but the question of fair division of spoils already worries the patriarch.

The Merchant League, however, sees opportunity in the opening of new jump routes and the consolidation of existing routes (and even the hope of deposing Alexius and declaring the Third Republic on top of his reforms).

Time

Time is a tricky issue in the Known Worlds. Each world has its own method of measuring time; the terraforming efforts of the Second Republic failed to change the rotational inconsistencies of all the planets. Some worlds have longer days than others, while some have longer nights. Each world also has its own native system of marking months, although such local chronological systems were spurned by the Second Republic, who instead relied on perfect nuclear clocks. Most starships (and noble mansions and merchant agoras) are equipped with nuclear clocks set at the same second as the central clock on Holy Terra. Thus, although time is relative, clocks are not.

The Empire uses a central calendar based on Holy Terra's solar and lunar cycles. Citizens of the Empire keep two times: their local time and Empire time. But most peasants live solely by the local seasonal cycles on their homeworlds. They measure time in spans — the time it takes for a celestial body (the sun or moon) to traverse the sky by the length of an adult hand held up to it. This might seem to make for a highly subjective judgment except that there is usually a central sun dial or water clock to declare the exact number of spans in a day or night; the peasant matches his own internal clock to the local, official clock.

Never since the Fall has there been such opportunity for advancement and power by the common man. Rarely has human destiny stood in such balance: to fall back or go forward.

Society

There are two main social classes in the Known Worlds: freeman and serf. Seventy-five percent of the Known Worlds populace are serfs, the common folk working the fields on far-flung planets. Their lives are regimented and unchanging; few ever leave their home village. Of the twenty-five percent of freemen, eighteen percent are yeomen, folk of low class but more socially mobile than serfs. They do not necessarily owe allegiance to anyone, and if they do, it is usually through a willing contract of service. Artisans, learned scribes and rural officials make up this class. The remaining seven percent of the populace are nobles, Churchmen and Leaguemembers.

Player characters in *Fading Suns* are usually freemen. They are not forced by birthright into an unwilling servitude to a noble lord, a Church sect or a guild. Instead, they can choose their own destiny — as far as they are willing to fight for it. Most of the power struggles within the Known Worlds are played out by freemen, especially that seven percent of especially privileged nobles, priests and merchants. These are the movers and shakers, those who can leave their homeworlds to visit other peoples and places.

Life Among the Fading Suns

The average person born in the Known Worlds is a peasant or yeoman. Unfortunate enough to have been birthed after the Fall of the Second Republic — the pinnacle of human civilization — all that is left to her are the crumbs of previous progress. Her world is in decline, not just technologically, but spiritually. Regardless of the rise to power of a Universal Church, the energetic and invigorating spirit of questing and questioning which marks healthy spirituality is largely absent. Instead, there exists a concern that the soul be "in order," ready for judgment (and probably found wanting). There is no place for risk-taking; all things belong in their place, and to overreach is folly, risking not only an individual soul but the entire commonwealth of lost humanity. To the peasant: the fields. The yeoman: the workshops. The guildsman: the agora. The priest: the chapel. The noble: the palace. And to the Emperor: the stars.

The loss of a scientific method or point-of-view among the common populace has helped to keep technology in decline, creating a scavenger mentality for the things of the glorious past. In addition, the nobles want the commoners to stay in their place; to question is to invite revolt. The Church blames technology and science for humanity's predicament, and thus represses the very basis of science: questioning. And the Merchant League wishes to keep what secrets it has for itself, sharing only with those willing to give their money or their service to the guilds. These forces together help to keep civilization from rising.

While many in *Fading Suns* seek the rebirth of civilization, civilization in and of itself is not valuable. It is what people do with it that makes it worthwhile. A false civilization's "worth" can be seen in the weary eyes of the enslaved and subjugated alien races, whose cultures have been outlawed and dismantled by the empire of humanity.





The Nobility

Erian Li Halan sighed, looking back over the past, over moments of past betrayal. Well she remembered the day her father died, bequeathing all to her hated older brother, leaving nothing for her, not even a manor or other minor holding. He had not cared for her ideas — to radical for the Li Halan aristocracy.

Rather than accept the shame and unbearable charity of living off her brother — who would make each day of her existence a living Gehenne — she chose to forge her own life, far from the place she once considered home. With her had come her most cherished friends: her bodyguard Cardanzo, confessor Brother Guisseppe Alustro of the Order Eskatonic, and her old childhood friend, Julia Abrams, now a pilot with the Charioteers.

None of them were safe on Midian, not with her brother as baron — he could use the resources of the house to enact his hatred against her and her entourage. So they had rocketed into the darkening sky for distant stars and sights untold.

Her destiny had been revealed countless times since, in occult prophecies from Ur artifacts, dreams or strange coincidences. They led her farther and farther from home. But her brother followed. He would not allow Erian to gain honor and prestige at his expense. He unleashed countless assassins and Inquisitors upon her, but she always managed to stay a step ahead.

One day, however, there would be a showdown, and they would then see whose royal blood won out...

The Houses

Today's Royal Houses are the descendants of the nobles who rose up to claim planets during the last years of the First Republic and who reigned supreme on these worlds during the Diaspora. The Second Republic never succeeded in completely eliminating them, and when it collapsed, the nobles seized control of their planets, ensuring that the Republic would be unable to bring events back under control. As the Republic spiraled out of control, the nobles claimed more and more authority, and the disenfranchised masses fervently supported them in exchange for food and work.

A few of the noble families managed to lay claim to more than one planet or jumpgate. Based upon spurious claims of descent from earlier royalty, they began to call themselves Royal Houses. When the Republic lay in its death throes, they began jockeying for position among one another, and dozens rose and fell during that time. Ten houses claimed the most worlds, and formed an alliance of convenience. They called themselves the Ten, and most minor houses were forced to ally with one or more of them to maintain their own claims.

Five of these houses fell or became extinct during Vladimir's rise to power. Now five remain in power as the major houses, though many more remain as minor ones. The big five — Hawkwood, Decados, the Hazat, Li Halan and al-Malik — rule, in one way or another, almost all the Known Worlds. The Emperor controls a few other planets, and the Church and the League have theirs. Other than those, the Royal Houses own the stars.

Hawkwood

During its history, House Hawkwood has seen more ups and downs than a prostitute in zero-g. In its earliest days it was the leading house, and the one everybody expected would declare itself emperor. Then, a consortium of other houses, led by the Decados, combined forces to bring it crashing down. It collapsed almost to the point of extinction, but one member managed to revive its fortunes and rebuild it. Within generations it had again become one of the greatest houses... before the first barbarian invasion broke through at Delphi and devastated the house's holdings. Other catastrophes have come and gone, but House Hawkwood has survived them all.

House Hawkwood is once again on an upswing, much to the delight of both the family and its subjects. House Hawkwood has long relied on the goodwill of its people, rewarding them well during the good times and protecting them during the bad. However, family members have had the house's past drummed into their heads, and go to extremes to live up to the standards they believe their ancestors set.

Right now the house is at a crossroads. Its leader has just become emperor, but he is distancing himself from the very force that brought him to power. The new head of the house, Victoria Hawkwood, has made no comment on this, but lower-level leaders seem to find this detachment galling. A number of landed Hawkwood barons have become especially vocal in their complaints, noting that despite their sacrifices during the Emperor Wars, the Emperor has not split the rewards of empire with them. They have not received additional lands or even a break in their taxes since he became emperor.

On the other hand, a number of landless Hawkwood knights have found a place under the Emperor as Questing Knights. They have flocked to his banner and serve in a number of capacities, not all of them militaristic. They help administer the Empire, explore its darkest boundaries and bring back crucial information.

Leading Hawkwoods: Emperor Alexius, Princess Victoria Hawkwood (current house leader), Baroness Morgein Hawkwood (famed diplomat and adventurer), Duke Alvarex Hawkwood (Alexius' brother, often at odds).

Roleplaying Notes: Starting the moment a new Hawkwood is born, the house surrounds her with evidence of her inevitable destiny. By the time she turns five she can rattle off the deeds of leading Hawkwoods from centuries past. By the time she's 12, she realizes just how critical House Hawkwood has been in humanity's progress. By the time she reaches 16 years old, she has no doubt but that every action she takes will have critical importance to everyone in the Known Worlds.

Yes, some Hawkwoods rebel against or break under the strain the family puts them under, but these weren't true Hawkwoods anyway. Real Hawkwoods can deal with anything. Real Hawkwoods never doubt themselves. Real Hawkwoods know that their blood makes them able to face any enemy, overcome any obstacle. Real Hawkwoods know that failure of any kind is not acceptable. And most Hawkwoods often find themselves doubting that they are real Hawkwoods.

Still, this background enforces a certain air of superiority. Hawkwood nobles can be vain, headstrong and bigoted, but they

can be equally courageous, charitable and progressive. Having a Hawkwood in charge means it is just as likely that he will be extremely capable as there is that he will be oblivious to his many faults.

This background also means that Hawkwood nobles are extremely conscious of honor, and house leaders readily voice their approval of dueling. Backing down from a challenge is not acceptable, but finding an equitable solution to the dispute (other than fighting) is. Emperor Alexius certainly became famous for his ability to compromise, but not all Hawkwoods have developed this talent.

Character Stereotypes: Explorer (Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton), military officer, populist leader, duelist, diplomat, heir to greatness, second (+) child out to prove him/herself, inbred prince/princess, spoiled brat.

Typical Classes: Noble, Soldier.

The Decados

House Decados was the last of the Royal Houses to join the alliance against the Republic, known as the Ten (they were the tenth). However, it claims to be one of the oldest royal houses, long existing incognito. Its founders claimed descent from the Russian czars through Princess Anastasia. Such claims have often been denounced, in part because the first members of the house came from the intelligence services of a number of different planets and initially had no familial ties. Only after several generations of interbreeding could most of the Decados legitimately claim to be related to one another.

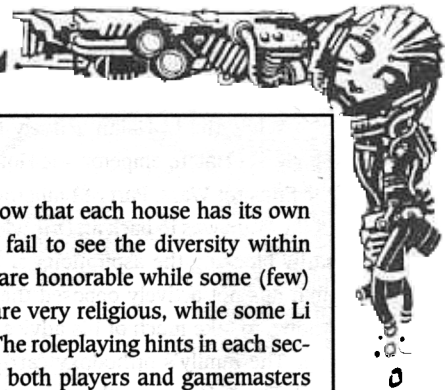
This interbreeding has continued through the years, and no one will deny that House Decados is an odd group of people. The Decados claim that this eccentricity is the prerogative of those destined to rule, while their detractors say it is the sign of sick and deranged minds. Whatever the case, their parties are the subject of much gossip for months afterward (though this is not always a good thing).

Still, House Decados has always been one of the most influential, if least trusted, Royal Houses. Its role in finally overthrowing the Republic is well-documented, though scholars still argue just how extensive it was. In any case, House Decados has long been an insurmountable barrier to anyone with democratic ideals.

It has also proven a barrier to other houses, and is a fierce and intractable foe. Its spies and assassins roam the Known Worlds, and Decados leaders have an uncanny knack for knowing everything about their foes — even things the enemy is unaware of. Additionally, the Decados have mastered the arts of body manipulation and alteration. Their Jakovian Agent spies are said to pass as anyone they desire, and even change appearances numerous times while on a single assignment.

That they lost the Emperor Wars despite this advantage surprised a number of observers. Indeed, the Decados seemed to have the upper hand until a stunning series of Hawkwood advances carried the day. That the Decados were unable to predict the Hawkwood maneuvers has struck many people as odd. The additional fact that the Decados have been, of all things, good losers, has struck them as even odder. Rumors abound as to what the house's motivation may be, but no one seems to know for sure.

Leading Decados: Prince Hiram Decados (house head), Duchess Salandra Decados (second-in-command, alleged sometime par-



amour of Alexius), Baron Nicolai Decados (lost final battle against Alexius, not seen since).

Roleplaying Notes: Think of decadent Renaissance Italian nobles, such as the Borgias, and add an element of Oriental exoticism. Decados are classic two-faces, with an act they put on for everybody else, but a secret, true face they hide underneath. The real skill in dealing with Decados machinations is discerning this hidden face (the most dangerous Decados are those who can project many layers of masks).

Decados, like Hawkwoods, enjoy dueling, but they tend to cheat. Of course, that goes for everything the Decados do. All's fair in love, war and everything else. Poisoned stilettos, fencing foils that project false images of where they are, shield dampers, psychic attacks — anything they can get into the dueling arena will do. Any advantage they can get in any other arena will also be taken.

On top of all the stories about Decados decadence is the rumor that the Decados are secretly Antinomists, making pacts with demons to gain the emperor's throne. But then, every vile rumor that could be made about the Decados has been made, much to the house's enjoyment.

Character Stereotypes: Cruel overlord, oily spy, determined Machiavellian prince/princess, decadent caliph, disgraced son/daughter (disgraced for trying to reform the house), fallen noble, curious investigator, cruel duelist, vain ambassador.

Typical Classes: Noble, Knave, Soldier.

The Hazat

Once the advisors to the now-extinct Chauki Royal House, the Hazat overthrew their masters, ejecting the last Chauki from an airlock, and soon helped to engineer the Fall. Since then the Hazat have tried to spread their influence, and have been repeatedly stymied.

The Hazat have always relied on force of arms, and defeated House Chauki by turning the army against it. In the process the Hazat found themselves forced to promise the army a significant role in ruling their domain — a role that has only grown over time.

This deal means that the Hazat couldn't curtail their military buildup even if they wanted to. It also means that almost all young Hazat go through extensive military training throughout their childhood. Of course, even when the Hazat begin their military training at around five, they are trained for a command position. During the Emperor Wars, it was not uncommon for 12-year-old Hazat knights to lead forces of hardened veterans.

By the same token, the Hazat go to great extremes to prove their courage and ability. Just tell a Hazat that no one has ever successfully wrestled the great-tusked otter of Leminkainen, and the Hazat will be on the next space ship out. The al-Malik used this fact to great effect during the Emperor Wars when they spread a rumor that a newly opened planet featured an unbeatable type of wild bull. The house captured a dozen Hazat who rushed into space to be the first to fight these animals.

While jokes about Hazat intelligence are therefore relatively common, no one can deny their ability in the field — or the effect they have on their soldiers. While the Hazat may be even more condescending to serfs than anyone else, they empathize with their soldiers and do everything they can for them. Retired soldiers in Hazat society occupy a place of honor, and have even been known

Stereotypes

While most outsiders know that each house has its own distinct character, they often fail to see the diversity within each one. Not all Hawkwood are honorable while some (few) Decados are. Some al-Malik are very religious, while some Li Halan have become heretics. The roleplaying hints in each section provide a brief guide for both players and gamemasters who want to add these nobles to a game, but they should not feel forced to follow these guidelines. Create characters who do what you want them to do regardless of anyone else's pre-conceived notions.

to veto actions by the local Hazat ruler. Distinguished service by freemen within the Hazat military is often rewarded with money. Serfs may even become freemen, and freemen may get grants of land.

Despite this, word has gotten out about at least one insurrection within the Hazat army since the Emperor Wars ended. Hazat nobles express both surprise and indignation at the very idea that such a thing could have occurred, but the rumors persist nonetheless. Still, no one is able to advance a good reason as to why the Hazat army of all armies would mutiny.

Leading Hazat: Prince Juan Jacobi Nelson Eduardo de Aragon (head of the family), Duke Jose Alfonso Louis Eduardo de Aragon (Hazat ambassador on Byzantium Secundus, one of the most respected diplomats in the Known Worlds), Baroness Lucinda Dulcinea (current Stigmata Garrison Commander).

Roleplaying Notes: Members of the Hazat pride themselves on their honor and ability, and a slight to either will not be forgiven. By the same token, these are the traits they most value in others, and anyone they see with these qualities will quickly earn their respect. While sons and daughters of the Hazat all train in leadership and military skills, they also admire people who have developed other skills, like diplomacy, theology and such. Still, the surest way to a Hazat's heart is through skill at combat.

Despite this, the Hazat do not go for the dueling fad as much as the other houses, since too many nobles hide behind their shields. A Hazat duel is fought shieldless and with heavier weapons.

Character Stereotypes: Military officer, second (or later) son/daughter, soldier of fortune, bodyguard (attendant to the royal house, trained as a Hazat), commando, peacekeeper, Sheriff of Nottingham.

Typical Classes: Noble, Soldier.

Li Halan

House Li Halan is an old and distinguished one, but its current prestige belies its sordid past. Once renowned for its extreme debauchery and callous disregard for its subjects, modern historians agree that its bacchanals put those of House Decados to shame. Rumors of traffic with demons were among the milder accusations.

Then, during the Barbarian Invasions, House Li Halan found the Pancreator. The entire family converted in a single night, and several prominent members were immediately sent off to monasteries, never to be seen again. Since then the family has been the height of orthodoxy, battling heresies and even blocking attempts at change within the Church itself.



While the Li Halan actively tried to make one of their own, Flavius Li Halan, emperor, the House expressed no regret at losing the Emperor Wars. Part of Emperor Alexius' concessions at the end of the Wars was to back an Orthodox Patriarch, thus at least temporarily blocking the aspirations of the other sects. While the patriarch has not actively opposed the Emperor in any dealings, he is known to take much of his advice from the Li Halan.

The family's orthodoxy carries into all other areas of life as well. The Li Halan are the strictest adherents to the nobles' code of etiquette, and proselytize on these areas just as much as they do on religion. The house itself is rigidly structured, with each member of the family having no question as to where her place is. Observers have a more difficult time uncovering internal dissent within this family than in any other, rumors of occasional internal purges notwithstanding.

The planets of the Li Halan have also become far more structured. It is almost unheard of for a serf on a Li Halan planet to become a freeman, and freemen find it extremely difficult to obtain land. On the other hand, serfs and freemen rarely complain about their lot, for the house provides far more services to its people than does any other (with the possible exception of the Hawkwoods). Of course, priests on Li Halan planets stress the need for people to stay in the niches that the Pancreator has ordained for them, and tradition has caused Li Halan society to begin resembling an extremely intricate caste system. To do any work other than what ones parents did, or to marry outside of that occupation, is becoming rarer and rarer.

Leading Li Halan: Flavius Li Halan (family head, resides on Kish), Cardinal Fang Li Halan (main advisor to the Patriarch), Duchess Fativa Li Halan (has land holdings second only to the Emperor).

Roleplaying Notes: Li Halan nobles are usually strict adherents to orthodoxy in all its forms. Royals have high Faith, and for this reason, few have good Tech. They, like the Church, do not approve of dueling, but this has not stopped a Li Halan or two from becoming renowned duelists, much like Aramis of *The Three Musketeers*. House leaders deny this, of course.

Of course, just because the Li Halan maintain firm beliefs does not mean they are dogmatic and stupid. They have more in common with Joan of Arc, Thomas à Becket, or any number of noble saints than televangelists. Additionally, no few Li Halan have explored the mystical teachings of the Prophet and delved into theurgy.

Character Stereotypes: Crusader, pious knight or musketeer, saint, martyr (give up all worldly goods and family position), incognito friar (posing as common man), Fisher King, sectarian rebel (non-orthodox), secret pagan priest or demonist (Gile deRais).

Typical Classes: Noble, Priest, Soldier.

al-Malik

This house is easily the least accessible and most rarely encountered. Its members live apart from the people they rule, keeping an air of distance about them even on those rare occasions when they tour their domains. During these times, they even speak in elegant metaphors that only fellow al-Malik understand. It seems the only time an al-Malik family member feels comfortable is when she is meeting with the members of the Merchant League, the house's historical allies.

House al-Malik has always been tied to the guilds, and some historians have hypothesized that it bought its position as a Royal House using money from banking and trade, and might still be involved in these endeavors. House al-Malik actively discourages such speculation, however, and its trained enforcers are more than capable of squelching such rumors.

House al-Malik can almost always count on League support, and al-Malik mansions are almost always filled with technological wonders. An al-Malik's shield is sure to be in working order, her rapier may well vibrate when it hits an opponent's flesh, and some even carry personal think machines (which the al-Malik cryptically call "computers").

The al-Malik do not appear to have any special deals with any individual guilds, and in fact the guilds lay less exclusive claim to al-Malik planets than they do to those of other houses. In fact, the bazaars on Criticorum and Istakhr are second only to the one on Leagueheim itself. Everything is for sale at these places, and there is a buyer for everything. Of course, there are parts of the bazaars where pious visitors do not go.

These connections between the al-Malik and the guilds have attracted no small amount of Inquisition attention. Indeed, the al-Malik are undoubtedly the most investigated of the royal houses. However, aside from a few reprimands for low-level nobles, the house has never been officially accused of anything. The al-Malik often joke about paying their tithe directly to the Inquisition.

Leading al-Malik: Duke Hakim al-Malik (head of house), Duchess Yusara al-Malik (Duke Hakim's wife, leading patroness of the arts), Baronet Salome ab-Rashman (famed explorer).

Roleplaying Notes: Many nobles consider the al-Malik to be the most passionate of the houses. They throw vibrant parties, like good times and own the most interesting devices. Members of this house have a good deal of substance to back up their flash and glitter, however. An al-Malik is likely far better educated than other nobles even if she has less combat training. The al-Malik have no common opinion on dueling; some like it, some don't.

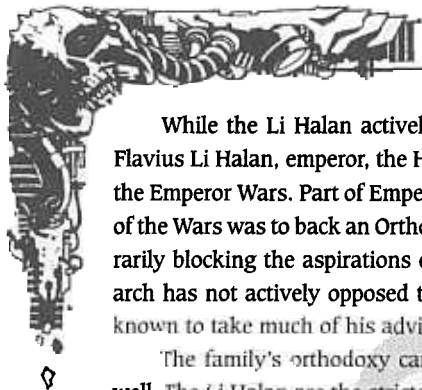
Additionally, despite their reputation, the al-Malik do not dislike the common people. If anything, they like them too much. They tend to hearken to latter-day Second Republic socialist philosophies, even though they are ardent capitalists. Their wealth affords them the dilettante pastimes of imagining a better world, a Utopian Third Republic — heresy, of course, so they deny such rumors. But the house's enemies whisper that it has teamed up with the League in building for such a future. Others argue that the al-Malik love commoners because they rarely see them up close.

Character Stereotypes: Patron to adventurers, adventurer, Third Republic architect, historian, beloved (or hated) dictator (Castro or Stalin), political reformer, webspinning spy (building network of loyal non-royal contacts).

Typical Classes: Noble, Knave, Soldier, Techie.

The Minor Houses

A number of other houses have risen and fallen through the years, some never expanding beyond one planet, while others almost named one of their own Emperor before fading away. Most of these still have descendants in positions of power, though some, such as the Alecto, Gesar and Windsors, are believed to be completely extinct.





ruling family at one point or another. Some of these families managed to extend their reach, taking over one or two other planets, marrying into other families and getting planets through dowries and inheritance, or allying with another family to share a planet. Others never left their homeworld and have slowly become less and less a factor. Almost every planet has several minor houses with interests and representatives on it.

Some of the minor houses that still exist, like the Sacrananka, have descended to the point of complete insignificance, their last survivors living in squalor or reverting to serfdom. Others, like the Keddah of Grail, remain the primary power on their own planet, above and beyond the Royal Houses or the Emperor.

Almost all of the remaining minor houses owe fealty to one of the five Royal Houses, though these chains of command are often intricate to the point of incomprehensibility. For instance, long before the Emperor Wars, House Torensen gave one of its planets to House Keddah in exchange for the Keddah pledging fealty in the event of war with the al-Malik. Before this pledge could be fulfilled, House Dextrite forced the Torensens to pledge fealty to them. Then the Dextrite were, in turn, subsumed by the Masseri. When the al-Malik declared war on the Masseri, the Masseri had the power to force House Keddah (by then a minor house) to abide by its centuries-old pledge to the almost-extinct house Torensen. The war severely weakened the Masseri, but before the war could be concluded, the Decados conquered the Masseri and have never allowed

remnants of House Keddah bound to them for almost a century.

Still, not all of the minor houses are on the decline. Several came into being in the last few centuries, and one, House Shelit, made its appearance recently when the Hazat discovered a jump route to its world (Hira, currently the source of the Kurga Conflict). Since then, House Shelit and the Hazat have maintained close ties, but Shelit nobles have spread their influence and wealth around the Known Worlds. House Shelit also has access to some lost think machine technology, and has jealously guarded its knowledge.

Despite their subservient role, the minor houses play an important part in the Known Worlds. The Royal Houses do not have enough members to oversee every part of their domains, and the minor houses still appear to rule in a number of places. On other planets they often own much of the land and industry, and house members are both the cultural and civic leaders.

Indeed, were all the minor houses to unite, they might very well be able to overthrow the Royal Houses. The likelihood of this is infinitesimally small, but it does provide extra impetus for the Royal Houses to keep the minor ones in their collective place. While members of some of the minor houses have managed to make names for themselves, the Royal Houses have prevented the complete resurrection of any of the minor ones. As long as the minor houses are busy carrying out the Royal Houses' wishes, they will never be free to plan their own rise. What follow are some of the more prominent minor houses.



Minor Houses

Juandaastas (long-standing ties to alien races, especially the Ur-Obun)

Justinian (once major, lost badly when Vladimir died)

Keddah (rulers of the planet Grail, bound to Decados by treaty, warring with al-Malik)

Masseri (conquered by Decados and on decline)

Shelit (newly discovered house with odd technological ties)

Thana (supported psychic research many years ago)

Torenson (strong proponents of rigid rules of etiquette)

Trusnikron (renowned beast tamers, strict adherents to their own code of honor)

Van Gelder (once major, now allied to Decados for survival)

Xanthippes (an ancient matriarchy with strict control over its own territory)

Extinct Houses

Alecto (Vladimir I's house, lost last sons in first Emperor War, a number died in odd accidents)

Chauki (overthrown by the Hazat)

Gesar (allied to Vladimir, lost last sons in first Emperor War)

Windsors (allied to Vladimir, lost last sons in first Emperor War)

The Entourage

Nobles do not spend all their time cloistered away in dark, dank castles, scheming and brooding. They often take their scheming and brooding on the road. They tour their domains, visit other nobles of their own or other houses, look for mates, try and expand their holdings and sometimes even seek to help their subjects. Of course, no noble would be so foolish as to travel alone. Not only is such a practice unsafe, but a noble caught without an entourage would be immediately suspect or a laughingstock.

Common hangers on for nobles include bodyguards (usually battle-hardened veterans but sometimes also members of military orders), religious advisors or confessors, intelligence advisors (actually called spies or assassins if they work for the Decados), a dueling partner, pilot or chauffeur, and hangers-on who give the noble additional prestige — paramours, aliens, entertainers, scholars, noted explorers, sycophants, etc.

One of the odder situations is when two (or more) nobles from different houses travel together. Either they will each bring their full entourage in an effort to intimidate each other or else, for the sake of their mutual sanity, will pare it down to just the essentials — a single bodyguard, trusted servant or valued confidant.

Traveling groups composed of nobles from different houses are not at all rare. The peasantry might be amazed to see a Decados and a Hawkwood strolling along arm in arm, but other nobles would not give it a second thought. In fact, many older nobles encourage the practice, hoping that their progeny will form lasting alliances and perhaps bring back important information. At the very least, the nobles will get to know their future enemies.

Noble Etiquette

Intricate rules of conduct affect all aspects of noble and royal society, governing everything from the clothes they wear to what they say when they kill one another. These rules have grown out of

centuries of custom and practice, and the nobles rigidly enforce their code. Those who violate these policies do so at risk of condemnation, ostracism and even death. Still, some cynics insist that the only reason to have these laws is so the nobles will have something to break.

Most non-nobles think of these rules mainly in regard to hospitality and courtly love. These are certainly the two best-known areas, for the bards sing of both — courtly love (for the great songs it inspires) and hospitality (for the great meals it gets them). These two areas are certainly important aspects of noble etiquette, but they are by no means the only ones. Dueling is illustrated as an example of another area of etiquette.

Of course, these rules only apply to how nobles deal with each other. No noble would ever allow any rules to limit how she can treat her social inferiors. Peasants murdered, priests ridden down and traders plundered — all these are fair play for a noble. On the other hand, addressing a planet's governor as "my lord" when a duke of the owning house is present is a most unpardonable sin.

While each house has its own take on these conventions, time has codified enough of them to give all nobles a firm set of guidelines. The punishment for etiquette violations is nowhere nearly as rigid, being at least partially determined by how important the offending noble is, but no one — not even the prince of a Royal House — can get away with one. In extreme cases, the violator will find herself challenged to a series of duels. At the very least, an offender will be ignored at parties. Fellow nobles who used to spend hours in conversation with her barely spend five minutes. Others who would have said hello ignore her completely.

If the offending noble is not crucially important, then other nobles will stop involving her in social functions entirely. No more invitations to tea parties, no more alien hunts, and no more masquerade balls. This social ostracism can be bad enough, even driving some nobles to suicide, but that is not the worst punishment. The noble is cut off from her main source of gossip, and for nobles, information is second in importance only to status. Not knowing who is hating whom and, more importantly, who is hating *that* noble, can be maddening.

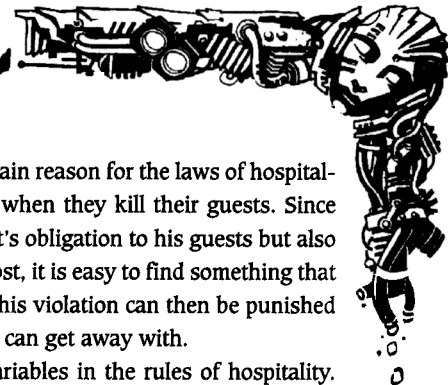
Nobles who have violated social decorum may never be fully

Inside the Noble Mind

In *Fading Suns*, nobles are the biggest celebrities, the richest moguls, the most powerful politicians and the greatest sports stars all rolled into one. Whether a noble has ever done anything worthwhile or not, he expects to be treated as if the suns only shine at his sufferance. And, for most of his life, that is how he has been treated.

Seeing everyone fall to their knees at his approach does something to him. Having peasants wet themselves when he addresses them cannot help but affect his mind. He becomes sure of his superiority, and everything around him reinforces this belief. The best nobles use this to bolster their parental feelings toward others and feel that they must act to help the less fortunate. Baser nobles see these events as confirming their own unaccountability and their right to do as they please.





accepted back into proper society. No matter what they do, that element of suspicion can linger forever, coloring everything they accomplish. Only the greatest of exploits, the strictest adherence to etiquette, or the most stunning social endeavors can wipe the slate clean again.

Courtly Love

The official rules for love and marriage within the nobility have nothing to do with one another. Arranged marriages, weddings of convenience, mandatory divorces — all are part and parcel of being a noble. The structure surrounding marriage is rigid, and only rarely do these lead to satisfying monogamous partnerships with committed participants. Far more common is the joining of two people who could care less about each other, grow to hate each other, and carry on constantly with other people.

The bards have noticed this and turned it into a central facet of noble life; probably the only facet of which all nobles are proud. For a man or woman to commit totally and completely to another person is an important moment, one that has inspired more songs than any other subject.

Not all sexual relationships between nobles involve courtly love. In fact, courtly love is somewhat rare despite all the great songs devoted to it. Nobles are as susceptible to momentary infatuation as anyone else, and dalliances are a common occurrence. Those involving courtly love, however, are far more interesting.

Tabitha al-Malik is often held up as a model of courtly love. Tabitha, who lived centuries ago, married Lars Hawkwood while engaged to Juan Alecto while wooing Justine Decados. In one year she provided the bards with more material than most nobles can inspire in a lifetime.

As Tabitha taught, the wooing process begins slowly and carefully, no matter how smitten the suitor might be. Rushing this point of the relationship cannot help but ruin the courtier's chances. The process differs only slightly if one (or both) of the participants are married to someone else. Then the romance begins a little more quietly, but then nobles generally try to begin these as subtly as possible, for fear that word of rejection might cause them to be laughed at by their peers.

The initial overtures include the traditional flowers, poems and gifts, all carried by intermediaries and seconds. Public meetings between the two romantics should be calm and subdued, giving little hint to those unfamiliar with the relationship that anything is out of the ordinary. Of course, those wise to the ways of etiquette will immediately notice the feigned coolness and understand the true situation.

Private meetings between the paramours should be both tense and exciting. Their conversation will be laden with innuendo and laced with hidden meaning. At this point, physical contact is discouraged, but often happens nonetheless. Its presence is a sure sign that the first stage is over.

Once both parties are sure of the other's interest, their relationship becomes a matter of public record. Their dealings become more passionate, more chaotic and, for outsiders, more interesting. Those lovers burdened by the unfortunate baggage of marriage try to act discretely in public, but this requirement is often ignored — much to the bards' delight. Of course, the bards delight even more in the next step — the break up.

Hospitality

Some cynics say that the main reason for the laws of hospitality is to give nobles protection when they kill their guests. Since these laws detail not only a host's obligation to his guests but also the guests' obligation to their host, it is easy to find something that one or the other has violated. This violation can then be punished as the injured party sees fit and can get away with.

There are a great many variables in the rules of hospitality. Was the guest invited? Did she bring an entourage? Was she ever romantically involved with the host? Just how important is she? The fact that each house, and each branch of each house, has its own take on these rules makes hospitality even more complex.

Some things, however, are sacrosanct. Once a guest is invited into a noble's home, no matter what the guest's rank, the host is obligated to protect her from all harm, no matter where it might come from. Additionally, he should go to great ends to ensure that her stay is at least pleasant, if not luxurious. Being known as a generous host is extremely important to almost all nobles.

By the same token, guests may take no actions that might bring scorn upon their host. Should a host ask something of them, they must oblige, unless it would put them at risk. For instance, should a host ask some traveling nobles to escort his daughter to an Imperial ball, they should feel obliged to do so. Of course, if the host just happened to forget to mention that his daughter had recently offended the Ur-Ukar ambassador, then so be it. That shouldn't necessarily lead to trouble.

Other rules of hospitality detail how fine a gift should be given to the host's family based on both the giver and the recipient's social status, how good the hospitality should be for each visitor, and even how long visitors should stay. Commoners are usually completely befuddled by these practices. Just why does a duke have to give a knight a more valuable present than a baron must give a marquis?

Duels

The Church strongly opposes duels as well as the ceremonies and rituals that have grown up around the practice, but this has done little to stem their popularity. Nobles who feel they have been grievously offended and don't have access to an assassin can have their closest friends (or expendable underlings) approach the offender and denounce the crime. The offending noble then draws his sword with a great protestation of innocence and threatens to run the accuser through. At this point the accuser will quickly proclaim that there is someone who has been more severely wronged than he, and that this victim seeks redress. The accused makes a big show of his innocence and says that he will do anything to clear his name. The two then come to agreement about a time and place to "resolve this horrid situation."

At the appointed time and place, both parties will appear with sword in scabbard and dueling shield turned on. There are no such things as dueling pistols; nobles consider it far more honorable to stab an unarmed opponent in the back with a poisoned dagger than to shoot her from 40 paces. The shield requires nobles to use all their skill to do less damage than the shield blocks. After all, nobles do not necessarily feel the need to fight to the death. If an opponent surrenders, the victor will usually not kill him. Indeed, etiquette requires that a duelist allow a disarmed opponent to regain his blade



(though most nobles will expect an “accidental” follow up attack while disarmed), let a fallen foe stand up (again, with the possibility of an accidental hit), and hold off if an enemy’s shield fails (accidental attacks in this instance are often fatal).

Any violation of the code will not go unnoticed. Duels draw large crowds and are often overseen by priests, despite the Church’s opposition to the practice. Each fighter will bring along as many friends and allies as possible, all to ensure that nothing goes awry. Other nobles who have heard about the duel will come just for the fun of it. Local authorities, however, will not attend, finding business as far away as possible. A noble’s duel is not open to any inferiors outside of the noble’s own entourage.

Note that the duelist’s code does not require that the victor accept his adversary’s surrender. A noble who gets a reputation for fighting to the death, however, will make even more enemies and will find it hard to stop a duel he is losing. Additionally, some nobles will make a point of snubbing one of their own who is too violent — at least, one who is too violent to other nobles.

The Emperor

The most powerful individual in the Known Worlds is Emperor Alexius, once the head of House Hawkwood. While he still maintains strong ties with his house, he has renounced its leadership in order to establish the role of emperor free and clear of past entanglements. Alexius’s critics say he is merely trying to establish two powerful forces to ensure his rule — one being the armies of the Emperor and the other being his loyal house legions.

Alexius now makes his home on Byzantium Secundus, the historic center of interstellar politics. While he officially rules fewer planets than do any of the houses, his actual powers are exceptional. The most obvious manifestation of this might is the Imperial Guard, some of the best-trained and equipped troops in human history. His other strengths are more subtle — and more powerful.

Emperor Alexius officially controls the empire’s tax collection network, its army of scholars and historians busily trying to reconstruct old technologies, its many law enforcement and espionage agencies, and the largest collection of Philosophers Stones (powerful Ur artifacts) in the Known Worlds. All of the Royal Houses have pledged their loyalty and are obligated to provide him assistance whenever he requests it. What form this assistance may take, however, has not been determined.

Alexius is still defining his role as emperor. He has announced plans to consolidate more power in his position and has been laying the groundwork for war against the barbarians — a war he would lead, and whose troops would be beholden to him. The Royal Houses have no intention of giving him permanent control of their troops, so no one knows exactly what will happen. The events of the next few years will have a powerful impact on the balance of power for years to come.

To aid him in this endeavor, the Emperor has put out a call for landless nobles to join him, implying that they may find new territory on unexplored planets. So far his call has mainly attracted his old allies in his family, but some members of other houses have come on board as well. A few members of minor houses have also shown up, hoping for the chance to rebuild their own dynasties under his banner.

There is an underground group of mystics, soldiers and citizens of all classes who see Emperor Alexius as their God-Emperor, their savior and the one who will reignite the dying stars. The emperor is silent on the matter, but the Church has made it clear that such views are heresy; Inquisitors are searching for the leaders of this cult.

The Imperial Eye

Before his assassination, Emperor Vladimir established a fact-finding and intelligence-gathering organization called the Imperial Eye. He brought in nobles from a number of royal and minor houses, gave them extensive budgets to establish the agency, and then died. The Eye lived on, however, serving the stewards and regents who took over after Vladimir’s death and before Alexius’ rise.

Officially this organization serves Alexius by gathering and analyzing information. It maps out new jump routes, tracks economic development on the recovering worlds and has one department dedicated to discovering why the stars are fading. During the chaos and confusion of the Emperor Wars, however, the Eye found itself accused of activities outside the scope of its original charter.

Accusations of activities like spying, smuggling and even assassination rarely came to anything, and when an agent was tried, the agency always managed to show that he was acting outside the bounds of the Eye. No evidence ever appeared that the Eye had actually tried to make one of its own patriarch. The leaders of the Eye hold themselves up as selfless servers of humanity. Its detractors (usually the Emperor’s enemies) denounce them as self-serving manipulators who plot and scheme against everybody. Whatever the case, the Eye has a reputation among the common folk as an organization to avoid second only to the Inquisition.

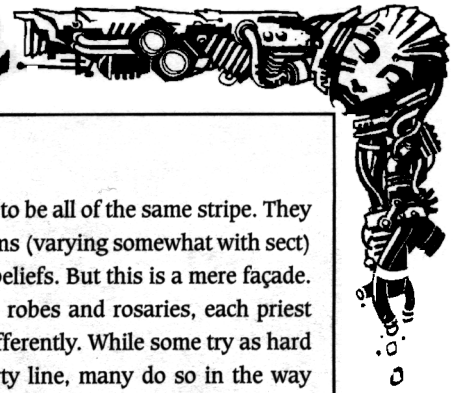
The Universal Church of the Celestial Sun

Adept Guiseppe Alustro wiped the sweat from his brow. He drew his cowl closer over his face and clutched his charred book sack tightly to his side as he shoved his way through the filthy, brute-cart laden street. If he could reach the royal berths of the starport before he was sighted again, he might just make it off-planet alive.

Curse those meddling Avestites! he thought as his eyes darted about warily, searching for signs of the heavy robes and smoking guns. When would they accept that Eskatonic priests were God-fearing members of the Church just as they were? But no use griping — sectarian conflict is not what this witchhunt is all about. No, Erian Li Halan’s brother has called them against me, attempting to discredit Erian since I am her confessor. If I am deemed heretic for my studies, then she will also be tainted with the charge.

He turned the corner of the final lane and saw the entryway a mere five strides ahead. He pushed forward, shoving artisan hawkers aside — but then halted, staring at the back of the robed woman rushing to reach the gates before him. Smoke rose up about her torso from the muzzle of the flamewgun she slung low.





Alustro shut his eyes for only a moment, sending a silent prayer to the Pancreator, and then ran forward as fast as he could, knocking the Avestite to the manure-stained cobblestones. Then he was past her and running. A yell behind and the sound of air igniting, and Alustro could smell the hairs on the back of his head burning...

Sects and Orders

No single institution has as much impact on day-to-day life in the Known Worlds than does the Church. Despite the Church's many factions and sects, the average peasant sees it as a giant monolith, dedicated to saving humanity from the evil inherent in the universe. As far as commoners can tell, all priests, bishops, archbishops and patriarchs work toward the same goal, hand-in-hand, fighting evil together. Never mind the fact that they call one another heretics; the Church itself is good. The peasants' view only changes when someone tries to replace the sect of their ancestors with a new one.

The Universal Church is not so universal; it is deeply divided by sectarian conflicts. It would have fractured into multiple churches long ago were it not for a string of extremely strong Orthodox patriarchs who held it together—that and a need for unity against the nobility and the merchants.

There are five major sects and dozens of minor ones. Some get along; most don't. A lot of the minor sects are branches from the major ones, but others have alien, local or even historical roots.

Urth Orthodox

Orthodox priests represent the old, authoritarian guard of the Church, maintaining stability while fighting off heresies. They are also those most concerned with temporal power. Traditionally (with few exceptions), the patriarch has been Orthodox.

They believe, following key bulls set out in the New Dark Ages, that grace is achieved through working within the structure set forth by the patriarchs, who follow in the footsteps of the Prophet. The Pancreator works not through inner visions but through real works, duties performed in the material world. He shows his will through sacramental forms: rituals, artifacts, stations of office, etc. Wavering from time-tested doctrine in this time of darkening light is dangerous and foolhardy. One fool can hurt many good people; all must walk the proper path and follow the correct guidelines. Those who don't may damn us all.

Despite their political bent, they are nonetheless fervent believers and moral guardians. They aim to give succor and comfort to all who need it, including serfs. The Orthodoxy is the only large organization in the Known Worlds that cares enough about the livelihood of the commoners to aid them, live among them and even educate them (although they do not seek commoner emancipation). Through these good works, they have nearly seventy-five percent of the Known Worlds populace behind them. The fact that this populace has no legal power does little to quell the noble's fear of riots and uprisings, and thus everyone heeds the Orthodoxy's desires.

Membership in the Orthodox Church is open to all, although applicants for priesthood must undergo years of training in ritual and doctrine.

Leading Orthodox priests: Patriarch Hezekiah the Elder (current head of the Church on Holy Terra), Hierophant Palamon (Arch-

Stereotypes

Priests may seem at first to be all of the same stripe. They usually wear the same uniforms (varying somewhat with sect) and preach the same overall beliefs. But this is a mere façade. Looking past the catechisms, robes and rosaries, each priest approaches his or her faith differently. While some try as hard as they can to follow the party line, many do so in the way they best see fit. Not all Avestites are screaming fanatics; some may be calm and introspective, truly compassionately worried about the collective sins of the universe. Likewise, not all Orthodox priests are intolerant to non-doctrinal points of view; some are fascinated with the new ideas and perspectives cropping up on the many worlds of the Pancreator.

Despite the Church's often iron-handed role in politics, the priests who preach at the cathedrals throughout the Known Worlds are, for the most part, truly devout and unconcerned with worldly power. It is the state of the soul they concentrate upon, and the fate of the soul as it leaves its mortal coil. Without the selfless acts and counsel of Church priests, the populace of the Known Worlds would surely be worse off and deeper in despair.

bishop of Byzantium Secundus), Archbishop Sigmund Dual (syneculla — right-hand man — to the patriarch)

Roleplaying Notes: While the Orthodox stance may seem suffocatingly authoritarian in theory, in practice it allows its priests much leeway to choose their own means and even to interpret doctrine in their own way. The Church is built upon the ongoing creation of the Pancreator and humanity's participation in that creation, seen as a sort of passion play. The darkening light of the suns is due to humanity's sins in overreaching their part in the play. Through humility and good works, humanity can part the curtains that block the light from the stars and again take part in the revealed light of creation. But until that time, humans are on probation and must temper their actions.

Each person can experience his or her role in the Pancreator's creation. It is the duty of the Church to aid in separating right experience from wrong perception. Demons can fool people, and only Church doctrine can guide in seeing past false experience by providing a time-proven guideline. Priests are needed to provide witness to the Church's truth for the Pancreator's creations. However, there are many worlds, each with their own particular problems. Lack of rapid communication prevents direct answers from Holy Terra. The training a priest receives is designed to give him a broad framework with which to interpret any of the myriad trials of life; it is a priest's responsibility to have the courage to make his own interpretations based on experience, with doctrine as guidance. Those priests whose answers to religious problems are most in line with the current patriarch's beliefs (some say political needs), are those who rise the highest in the Church hierarchy.

Nonetheless, while a priest owes respect and obedience to those above him, she has the duty to rely on her own experiences and convictions (as long as she does not slip too far into mysticism). Creation is ongoing, and the Pancreator reveals himself to his chil-





dren in different ways at different times. Priests must be ever alert for these omens and be ready to provide the correct interpretation of them for the leity. Others look to the Church for answers; a priest must be prepared to give them boldly.

Character Stereotypes: Confessor (perhaps personal confessor to a noble or a rich merchant), community leader, elder, wiseperson, healer, missionary, monk, pilgrimage guide, penitent, diplomat.

Typical Classes: Priest, Theurgist.

Brother Battle

Throughout history, monastic battle orders have existed within organized religion: the Knights Templar, Hospitalers, Shaolin priests, Jannisaries, and others. In the Known Worlds, there are the Brothers Battle, said to be the most elite combat corps in history. Fanatically dedicated to defending the Prophet's faith with might and force of arms, the Brothers of this exclusive order are respected — and feared — by most Known Worlders.

The order began early in the New Dark Ages, when the need for hard-line and able defenders of the faith was greatest. They personally defended the life of the patriarch from an assassination attempt on Holy Terra. In return for their service, the patriarch ordained the order, giving it special powers within and without the Church, conceded to by the noble houses, who were trying to cover up their role in the assassination attempt. Since then, the order has grown in skill and influence, building upon martial techniques created by previous Brothers. These techniques are kept secret. Those who have been ousted from the order are not allowed to teach them;

if they are caught revealing them to others, the penalty is death.

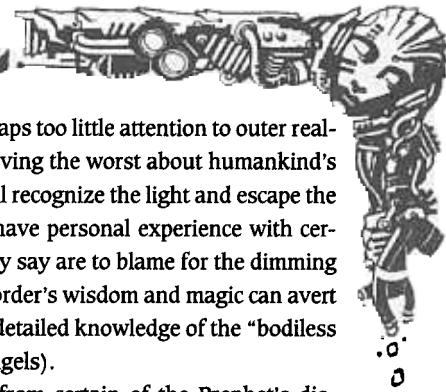
Brothers adhere to strict discipline and suffer harsh penalties for breaking their vows. Oathbreakers must undertake dangerous penance quests that many do not survive. There is a strong support network from Brother to Brother, although monks are often sent on individual missions across the Known Worlds, spreading their network thin.

The order does not work well with other units in the secular military chain of command. Brothers will not take orders from any but their superiors within the order, so they are rarely used as common soldiers, instead being employed as commandos and special tactics units.

Membership requirements are strict. Only youths under ten years old are accepted, although the order adopts many orphans. There have been very few exceptions to this rule throughout the order's history, although the handful of older individuals who have been accepted provide hope for many petitioners. New members are sent to the monastery on De Moley, there to spend the next ten or more years of their lives in rigorous training and spiritual contemplation. Local peasant mothers on De Moley often leave their newborn children on the monastery's doorstep, hopeful that their offspring will be taken in and be given a better life and opportunity than a peasant's son or daughter would otherwise have. However, the order does not accept every child left on its stoop. Many are left to survive or die outside the gates. Those who live longer than expected are often accepted.

The Brother Battle order wields much power, and many Orthodox patriarchs have felt threatened by their strength. Their piety





and military might are needed by the emperor on the Symbiot and Barbarian fronts, and while they have rarely used the political power gained through this, the Orthodoxy anticipates the day they must clash, fearing that Brother Battle will win out. Thus, the order is under increased scrutiny for heresy and any other slip-up that could lead to their dissolution.

Despite the name, women may join, although it is rare.

Leading Brothers: Master Claudius of De Moley (head of the order), Adept Falkner of Stigmata (leader of the Brother Battle unit on the Symbiot front), Adept Aaron of Urth (currently the Brother Battle representative on Holy Terra).

Roleplaying Notes: Supreme martial discipline is the hallmark of a Brother Battle. Exercises are performed religiously, designed to maintain both body and spirit. Once a Brother Battle has been given a holy task, he will ignore all other considerations that impede or distract from that task. For this reason, the brothers are desired as elite guards or commandos by anyone who can afford them — their price, however, is not coin, but glory to the Pancreator. If the task has no religious purpose, it is deemed unworthy of attention. However, their interpretation of religious matters is broad enough to include many things, and any task that aids the Order is deemed worthy.

One of these tasks is to guard the pilgrimage routes from planet to planet. In so doing, they often guard the money and valuables of their charges — for a tithe, of course. This has led to a growing network of money-exchange that threatens the hegemony of the Reeves in such matters and has levied accusations of usury at the Order.

Young brothers, newly ordained, are urged to leave the monastery for an extended pilgrimage through the Known Worlds. Since Brother Battle is in one sense the worldliest of orders, Brothers should know the worlds they may be called on to fight one day. They are also urged to mix with other sects and orders to better understand them, for the order is called to fight for them often. Likewise, personal understanding of nobles, merchants and other freemen is deemed wise. It is common for these wandering Brothers to attach themselves to certain groups as bodyguards or even leaders before eventually returning to their monastery for further duty.

Character Stereotypes: Holy warrior, elite commando, smiter of heathens, kung-fu master, ex-gunfighter (trying to hang up his guns)

Typical Classes: Brother Battle.

Eskatonic Order

An extremely mystical and occult order, the Eskatonics seek to guard the light of the Holy Flame from the impending eschaton, or apocalypse. They are engaged in a personal and individual pursuit of the holy. Unlike the Orthodox Church, they believe there is a spark of the Holy Flame in each person, and that it is the duty of the enlightened (those fully conscious of the Holy Flame within them, made aware through a personal vision) to cultivate this flame and fan it into a fire. Their main means to this end is theurgy.

Their exclusive entry requirements, however, ensure that they have the smallest membership of any order, and thus the smallest support network. But their occult practices temper each member into a powerful and noteworthy priest. They emphasize inner mys-

teries and philosophy, with perhaps too little attention to outer reality. They are doom-sayers, believing the worst about humankind's fate. In their view, only a few will recognize the light and escape the Final Darkness. They claim to have personal experience with certain vile demon sultans who they say are to blame for the dimming stars, and believe that only the order's wisdom and magic can avert the final doom (they also claim detailed knowledge of the "bodiless powers of the Emphyrean", or angels).

They claim direct lineage from certain of the Prophet's disciples, to whom the Prophet gave secret lore, wisdom that the early Eskatonics were given the responsibility of safeguarding. They were an underground, secret society of Church priests until the Symbiot Wars, where they were allowed to operate openly only by grace of their own theurgy. Eskatonic magi proved to be one of the few effective weapons against the Symbiots when they attempted to move past Stigmata. The patriarch had to ordain them or risk losing more worlds to the parasitic invasion. Since then, the Eskatonics have been very careful to behave (or at least hide their excesses well) lest they suffer official censure and be forced underground again. But the common populace often fears them, and they are constantly at risk for Inquisitorial searches and heresy declarations.

Rank within the order is built around the slow dissemination of secrets and occult techniques. The order's fathers created a carefully wrought system of study, whereby a student would only be exposed to lore he was capable of understanding. Rank is awarded only to those who have proven themselves mentally and spiritually worthy of it. Then, the secrets of that rank are taught slowly and, once mastered, the student is ready for the next rank.

Humility is all-important during training and ordination. No priest is allowed to rise in rank without first confessing, and those priests who do not undergo confession on a monthly basis are shamed until they learn to do so. The practice of flagellation, the wearing of hair-shirts and other self-inflicted tortures are also encouraged. The order believes that these extreme measures prevent hubris, for the history of the order tells of priests whose pride grew, and whose sins caused whole worlds to perish. While they have managed to keep the truth behind these dead worlds from the populace and the Church at large, there is good reason these magi are feared.

Leading Eskatonics: Magus Moore of Pentateuch (head of the order), Magister Osanto of Manitou (keeps tabs on psychic covens), Philosophus Antonia de Cadiz (Hazar wizard), Provost Alustro (young nephew of Orthodox Hierophant Palamon)

Roleplaying Notes: Eskatonics are the most curious of priests. Most are impatient to learn the secrets hidden in the universe, and since their strict tutelage regimen prevents them from learning whatever they desire, they often leave their cathedrals for pilgrimages across the stars searching for secret lore. This is fully in line with the Prophet's exhortations for questing. Indeed, higher-ranking priests often become jealous and protective of their hard-won lore and are loathe to hand it down to students, all the more reason for the student to seek on his own.

But it is a dangerous universe out there, so few Eskatonics go alone. Most attach themselves to a retinue, either a noble entourage, a merchant caravan, or some motley group of people powerful enough to help her search for the lore she seeks.



While the Eskatonics are few in number and sometimes jealous of one another, when they meet among the stars, they are often eager to exchange lore, for they inevitably become lonely for others who can understand the profound thoughts going on in their heads.

Character Stereotypes: Wizard, philosopher, doomsayer, occult investigator, demon-hunter, artifact hound

Typical Classes: Priest, Theurgist.

Temple Avesti (Avestites)

Inquisitors. The fanatic and disciplined Avestites are the hard-liner arm of the Church, often too regressive for even the patriarch's tastes, although he is often thankful for the power to unleash them on victims. While not all Inquisitors come from this sect, most do (the Avestites long ago gained most of the chairs on the Inquisitorial Synod).

Temple Avesti began as a breakaway movement from the Orthodoxy, composed of puritans who felt that the Church was not stern or strong enough in punishing the excesses of its members (to the Avestites, everyone is a member of the Church whether they like it or not). These extremists built their temple in the burning desert on the planet Pyre. Pledged to punish sinners lest they corrupt the faithful, the Avestites embarked from Pyre on expeditions to cleanse other worlds. Their violent and unannounced terrorist attacks on "sinners" angered the often-powerful victims of these attacks: nobles and rich merchants. After too many incidents with no response from the Orthodox Church, royal fleets arrived off Pyre to destroy these uncontrollable zealots. But the patriarch's fleet also arrived and ordered the nobles to halt their assault. The Archbishop of Urth went to Temple Avesti and explained to the sect leader the terms of the sect's surrender to patriarchal authority. If they did not submit, the Church would depart and leave them to their fate before the royal fleet. After short consideration, the temple master relented and threw himself on the mercy of the Church.

Since then, the Avestites are considered penitents, owing duty to the patriarch and his bishops. While they can act on their own, they must also heed the call of the Orthodox priests when they require it. However, the extremes to which Avestites take any task often tempers the frequency of their use by the bishops. They are called on official business only when all other methods have failed.

Hopeful Avestites must petition for membership into the sect, and only those who can prove that they are sinless — or *extremely* repentant — are given entry. Only the ignorant or unlearned are allowed, for education is seen as a burden on the soul that is hard to extinguish. Thus, their membership comes from the poorest peasants, the lowest classes who often seek revenge for their lack of empowerment. Most members never again leave the temple on Pyre; they spend their lives in prayer or hard labor for the temple. Those who prove their prowess in sniffing out sinners are promoted as pilgrims, those who will deliver punishment to sinners across the Known Worlds. The best pilgrims are granted Inquisitorial seals and eventually become ordained Inquisitors.

Avestites are often bigoted and anti-alien, but can likewise be pillars of nobility and kindness — to those deserving of it. Aliens are allowed in the sect if they can prove their faith like all other applicants. To the sinless, Avestites are perfect gentlemen, having learned the lesson of temperance from the sect's humble downfall. To those they deem sinners, however, no amount of cruelty is

enough. They take the Prophet's words about sinners and burning quite literally, and their heavy flame-retardant robes and cowls are instantly recognizable. Their high priests even prefer to carry flamerguns to enact a literal punishment on sinners.

Their symbol, the flame, is borne on pendants that, with the flick of a switch, become searing brands with which they mark sinners' foreheads. Those peasants who bear this brand are shunned by their fellows (it takes months to heal for those who cannot afford tissue regenerative serums), although the upperclasses unfortunate enough to suffer such humiliation often receive pity and commiseration from their friends, though not publicly.

Leading Avestites: Archbishop Dolmen of Pyre (leader of the sect), Bishop Gondo Ortiz de Aragon (head of the Inquisitorial Synod), Canon "Loose" Buchanan of Shaprut (overlord of local cathedral, thought responsible for massacre of refugees from Stigmata)

Roleplaying Notes: Avestites are extremely concerned about the level of sin going on around them and find it hard not to interfere. They are nosy busybodies who believe that everyone's business is their business. To an Avestite, individual values such as privacy are seen as excuses to hide sin. Avestites are allowed little privacy among their own kind, living in common bunkrooms, eating together, working together, praying together. Never (or rarely at best) is there time for private contemplation. Perhaps this is why Avestites are so eager to get off Pyre on lone pilgrimages.

But Avestites are not liked by the common folk. While they are feared, a lone Avestite can still easily find himself ganged up on by a bold mob and dragged into an alley for a vicious beating or worse, hearing cries of: "This is for Uncle Lon (kick), who you burned for supporting Obun rights! And this is for Cousin Jocko (punch), tortured for buying ham on Restday!" For this reason, even lone Avestites will attempt to attach themselves to a retinue, claiming to seek comrades against sin, but in actuality seeking strength in numbers.

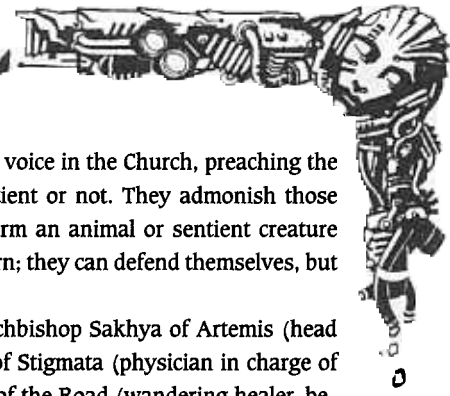
Character Stereotypes: Inquisitor, fanatic preacher, cult leader, arson, religious terrorist, political activist (arguing for theocracy), missionary, far missionary (bringing the word and the flame to heathens beyond the borders), border guard (defending the border from aliens and barbarians), renegade cultist (thinks Avestites go too far), spy (disguised as member of other sect/order), bounty hunter

Typical Classes: Priest, Soldier.

Sanctuary Aeon (Amaltheans)

Sanctuary Aeon is a healing order, seeking to bring grace and mercy to all. While its membership is open to anyone, few people volunteer for this selfless duty. The priests of Sanctuary Aeon may be few in number, but they are beloved by all. The love the common folk bear them for their selfless sacrifices have provided them practically ironclad protection from Inquisitors and heresy police: When Sister Vermidian was accused before a crowd of peasants on Criticorum of consorting with demons, the peasants rose up and tried to hang the Inquisitor as the heretic.

The order was begun by Amalthea, a physician who became one of the Prophet's disciples. After the Prophet's death, she tried to forge his sayings into a Church different from that which Palamedes



Alecto was forming. Her Temple of Eternal Sanctuary was almost as popular as Palamedes new Universal Church. But in the end, the Universal Church appealed more to people's need for authority, power, guilt and redemption. However, the Eternal Sanctuary, or Sanctuary Aeon as it eventually became, still had a strong following, especially in the aftermath of harsh wars. The Sanctuary was eventually incorporated into the Church, and today stands as a strong voice for mercy and compassion before the patriarch's often stern bulls.

The order's head monastery is on Artemis, and all initiates must go there for their initial training in healing bodies, minds and spirits. The planet is flooded with the sick and injured who can afford the journey, but there are never enough Amaltheans to help them all. Once ordained, priests are expected to return to their homeworlds and bring their skills to bear in relieving suffering there. Otherwise, they can choose to stay on Artemis or travel as mendicant healers. Some are sent by the order to aid on the war fronts, never as soldiers, but as healers or even diplomats.

Because their numbers are small, they demand penance from those they aid, asking for them to perform tasks to relieve other suffering souls, thus increasing compassionate acts tenfold more than their order could perform alone. While Amaltheans will aid others without a promise of a penance task, they are bid by the order's leaders to enact this promise whenever possible. The nature of the promise is up to the healer enacting it, and there is no set guideline for the difficulty of the task compared to the healing. An Amalthean will generally ask for what she feels is the promiser can achieve, but she is free to enact a harsh task if she feels the suf-

ferer needs it.

The Amaltheans are a rare voice in the Church, preaching the rights of all living beings, sentient or not. They admonish those who seek their aid to never harm an animal or sentient creature even if it threatens them in return; they can defend themselves, but must avoid killing.

Leading Amaltheans: Archbishop Sakhya of Artemis (head of the order), Bishop Deander of Stigmata (physician in charge of war relief), Canon Teras Myrin of the Road (wandering healer, beloved by many), Cardinal Oma of Apshai (ambassador to the Vau)

Roleplaying Notes: Amaltheans fight against their own negative thoughts. Like everyone else, they know anger, hate and fear. Unlike everyone else, they are often punished severely for such thoughts. Instead of giving vent to these emotions, they are taught to suppress them. At the same time, they are compassionate and non-judgmental of other people's failings. This duality has created a lofty martyr complex among many Amaltheans, whereby they believe that their sins are worse tenfold than those of other people, and so they must shut them out (or in) and even hide them from themselves and others. This tends to make hubris even worse for them, as they have no healthy way of confessing their guilt.

Nonetheless, those Amaltheans who have effectively wrestled with their own imperfections have become powerful forces for change in the Known Worlds. It was the unyielding hunger strike of Sister Ananda that finally convinced Patriarch Jacob to reword his bull concerning the harsh punishment of certain sins against the nobility (a bull believed to have been paid for by the nobility).

But their own sense of deep sin causes many to fear being



alone, believing that the presence of others will somehow prevent their committing deeper sins, or at least distract them from themselves. Thus, wandering Amaltheans seek out others travelers, and few people refuse the chance to add a physician to their retinue.

Character Stereotypes: Doctor, counselor, shaman, peace activist, war medic, diplomat, ambassador, iconoclast (resisting militant society), apologist (defending militant society)

Typical Classes: Priest, Theurgist.

Mendicant Monks (Hesychasts)

Some faithful do not involve themselves with the hierarchical orders within the Church and instead become monks, retreating as hermits to the wilderness, as cenobites to the monastery or as mendicant, wandering friars. While these monks do not answer to any direct authority, neither do they partake of the full benefits of a sect or order. They have exchanged the restrictions of ordained membership for freedom to seek the Pancreator in whatever way they will — as long as it does not smack of heresy.

Distanced as they are from the center of the Church, they rarely have any input or effect on theological or doctrinal issues. But the occasional mystic has come from the wilderness to impress all with his insight, causing a stir and a genuine revival within the Church. But this rarely lasts more than a generation or so, as the Church hierarchy again takes precedence over subjective viewpoints. Some mystics, if popular enough, are enshrined as a saints after death, allowing the Church to claim that it is a living tradition open to new insights from the Pancreator or his chosen prophets.

Hermits usually stake out a territory in the wilderness of a distant planet, one far from Empire and Church politics. They often become the protectors of these wilds, disturbed only rarely by a local peasant seeking a cure for warts or a love philter. Monastery monks rarely leave their chosen abode, instead spending their lives in contemplation or performing scriptorial duties, copying Church documents for posterity. The recent Emperor Wars took a toll on certain monasteries, leaving some in ruins with monks left to wander in search of a new retreat.

Mendicant friars are those who have taken the word of the Prophet on the road, to deliver it to the places furthest from Holy Terra and bring salvation to the ignorant souls who dwell there. Being near penniless, as scripture requires of most monks, they must rely on the kindness of others to get where they are going. This often involves making deals with League merchants for passage in exchange for prayer services, or wheedling into a noble's entourage in exchange for confessional services (although not all monks are necessarily ordained to give confession). Friars tend to be resourceful types, and know that scripture must sometimes be placed aside toward the greater good of getting the word out to the people.

Renowned Hesychasts: Brother Hedrick the Bear (friar tending to the Kurgan border), the Hermit of the Nowhere Wastes (madman believed to be an oracle for angelic beings), Brother Aris of Maelestron Monastery (renowned mystic and philosopher whose works are becoming highly influential among young Orthodox priests)

Roleplaying Notes: Hesychasts want nothing of the squab-

bling going on back on Holy Terra, with all the abstract arguments over the inheritance of the Holy Flame in the soul or the proper way to sit at morning prayer. To them, it is direct experience of the Pancreator's creation — whether in raw nature or among the peasantry — that reveals best the *skopos*, or purpose, of creation. Monasteries can help weed out the useless chatter of the world and reveal the true light.

Character Stereotypes: Mad hermit, quiet monk, enlightened mystic, jolly friar, lazy ex-priest, iconoclast, detective (Sean Connery in "The Name of the Rose," or Brother Cadfael)

Typical Class: Priest.

Sectarian Conflicts

The Church was very involved in the Emperor Wars. The patriarch tried to institute a theocracy to replace the Empire, but he received too little support. After long negotiations with the five Royal Houses, he eventually declared the Church's support for Alexius Hawkwood, giving him much needed popular approval in his bid for the seat of the Empire.

However, the political struggles the bishops and priests involved themselves in caused a backlash of disillusionment against the Church among the populace at large. People looked to new sects or orders and turned away from their traditional (sometimes many generations-long) allegiances to their previous sects. The Orthodoxy suffered a decline in membership as other sects swelled, setting the stage for a behind-the-scenes conflict throughout all levels of the Church, from the grand cathedrals to tiny shrines in backworld hamlets — the struggle to save the souls of Human Space has heated up.

But this cross-sectarian shift is caused not only by the bishops' nasty political dealings: growing apocalyptic fear has caused many to desert the past and throw their lot in with any who can promise instant salvation before the suns die out. Fear of final judgment is in the back of everyone's minds, and those who can most readily address this fear — with more fear and guilt or by compassion and understanding — benefit the most.

More information on Church theology and cosmology can be found in CHAPTER SIX: OCCULT POWERS.

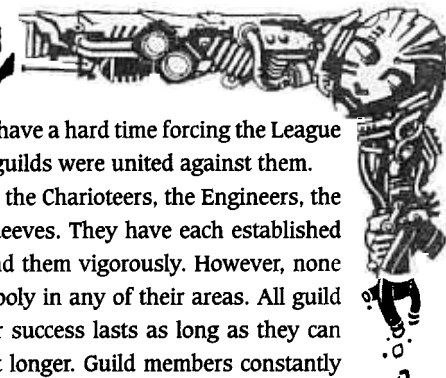
The Inquisition

The Inquisition is perhaps the most feared organization in the Known Worlds. Even the Emperor's mighty legions, as deadly as they are, do not stir the fears of the populace as much as a single Inquisitor knocking at the door.

The Inquisition is empowered to scour the universe for anything that might pose a danger to the souls of humanity, as decided upon by the Church. Such things include proscribed technology, demon-worship, psychic powers, pagan cults, strange alien goings-on, and people who pose a political danger to the Church.

Yet despite what peasants and sinners believe, the Inquisition is not everywhere. It takes a special meeting of the Inquisitorial Synod (council of priests) to award an Inquisitorial Seal to a priest (or group of priests), and each seal usually has a specific mission attached to it; the performance of unassociated missions does not necessarily have the backing of the Church. With Church backing, Inquisitors are nigh immune to punishment for any action they undertake while inquisiting. Without such backing, disgruntled or





insulted nobles or merchants can handle the transgressor however they see fit — within the limits of the law, of course.

A seal can be stripped from its bearer by the synod, the patriarch or the council of archbishops. If a seal was awarded by a lesser synod (a meeting of local synod members, not comprising the full council), it can be nullified by the planet's archbishop. Such lesser synods are often convened to try local affairs not important enough to summon the whole council. Calling the full synod together takes time, for the members must travel from their various worlds to the synod chambers at Holy Terra. Only grave and long-term threats suffer from full synod scrutiny.

Inquisitorial seals can be awarded to anyone the synod deems worthy, not only priests but nobles or any freeman. However, such privilege and power is rarely handed to those who have not proven themselves loyal to whatever political cause the synod pursues.

Then there are full-time Inquisitors, those who have been given broad seals with lifetime durations. These dangerous enforcers have an extreme degree of power, able to cruise the universe at will dispensing justice however they see fit. While they are officially immune from any but Church prosecution, some of the more overzealous or impolitic Inquisitors have suffered tragic but unexplained "accidents."

The Merchant

League

Julia Abrams cursed up a storm and steered the starship towards the jumpgate. The radio buzzed and a voice came through:

"You have more lives than a shazzle, Abrams. I don't care how long it takes, but I'll get paybacks for all you done to me! Those lousy, fake Obun prayer bowls made me the laughing stock before the Vau! You can't understand what it's like to have a Vau sneer at you! By the Pancreator's blue ba—"

Julia cut off the transmission. She couldn't help it if the bowls weren't genuine. They were sold to her as the real deal, and her Ukari shipmate even confirmed it. She slapped her own forehead then at the stupidity of it all, and then turned on the loudspeakers throughout the ship.

"Hey, Sanjuk, you lousy Ukari!" she screamed into the voicebox. "You knew those bowls were fake!"

A voice came through from the engine room: "You trust an Ukari to identify an Obun toy? Who's the fool here? The merchant or the buyer?"

Julia fumed. She had to be more careful with her sources. Another deal gone bad would ruin her rep in the Li Halan Fiefs and make her a laughing stock among her fellow Charioteers. She grimaced; she'd always been more pilot than merchant anyway, but in her guild, you often had to play both roles to get anywhere.

The Guilds

All that remains of the massive conglomerates that once ruled the Second Republic are the merchant guilds, grudgingly united in the Merchant League. Five guilds have risen to prominence, but none of them has enough authority alone to control the entire League. In fact, despite their prestige, even if they worked together

(an unlikely event) they would have a hard time forcing the League to do anything if all the lesser guilds were united against them.

The five leading guilds are the Charioteers, the Engineers, the Scravers, the Muster and the Reeves. They have each established their own specialties and defend them vigorously. However, none of them hold a complete monopoly in any of their areas. All guild members understand that their success lasts as long as they can make it last and not a moment longer. Guild members constantly seek out ways to expand their reach, and if that means undermining their brothers and sisters, then so be it.

The main guilds have carved out their own hegemonies, be they in territory, product or service. On some planets a number of different guilds get along fine, each catering to their own customers and engaging in friendly rivalries. On other planets, the same guilds fight it out tooth and nail, using every weapon in their arsenal to destroy the competition.

Still, no matter how fiercely they compete with one another, they all understand that they have common enemies. Should nobles or Church leaders attempt to take advantage of the League's internal squabbings, the guilds will do their best to put up a united front. By the same token, if a League member is being unjustly threatened by outsiders, other guild members may act to protect her. Of course, if they feel they have nothing to gain and everything to lose, they will abandon her without a second thought and only slight regret.

Guild leaders, called deans, try to maintain some sort of order within the league, but trying to get this many strong-minded and competing individuals to agree on anything is a task. Each Leaguemeister, the official head of all the guilds, comes to power with a pledge to lead all the guilds in harmony, but somehow this never seems to work out.

Charioteers

The Charioteers hold the most prominent position among the guilds because they control the roads to the stars. Any citizen who wants passage on a ship must go through the Charioteers (or Travelers Guild, as they are also called). They own most of the jump routes and maps, and woe be to those who muscle in on their territory. The Charioteers are what most common folk think of when they talk about the guilds.

Most common merchants are members of this guild or its subsidiaries. They are the most well-known traders, and their traveling "medicine shows" and bazaars are a popular seasonal feature on many worlds. The Charioteers began as a star pilots guild. Many Second Republic citizens owned and flew their own ships and began their own trading businesses between the worlds (one of the more popular start-ups at the time); many of them sought entry into the guild. This transformed the Charioteers into a more active merchants guild.

The leadership of the guild is perhaps the most active in the Known Worlds. Even its oldest deans continue to cruise the trade routes, buying low and selling high. Most people have seen at least one of its members, dressed in clothes which could only have been designed to attract as much attention as possible, standing in a town square, making the guild's clarion call, "You want it, I got it!"

People friendly with the Charioteers can buy almost anything from them, and its guild members have access to one of the great-



Stereotypes

The guilds got where they are today by attracting a certain type of members, but that membership has become more varied as time has passed. The roleplaying hints in each section provide a brief guide for both players and gamemasters who want to add these guild members to a game, but they should not feel forced to follow these guidelines. Create characters who do what you want them to do regardless of anyone else's preconceived notions.

est information networks in existence, allowing them to sell knowledge as well as goods. However, its members are renowned for giving lip service to whatever religion will get them the most sales that day, and often attract unwanted attention from the clergy.

Some nobles seem to believe that the Charioteers support the creation of the Third Republic and are secretly behind building it. While no evidence has yet been uncovered, merchants of the Charioteers are often watched carefully. On the other hand, commerce between the stars would stop completely if anything happened to this guild. They own far more ships than any other single group, and while they may not have as many warships as the Hawkwoods or the Decados, their small merchant vessels are sometimes surprisingly well-armed.

Leading Charioteers: Dean Zale Gailbreath (head of guild, rumored advocate of Republican ideals), Consul Kris Chartash (renowned trader, head of one of the largest shipping organizations) Consul Lillian Staggs (well-known explorer, now runs the extremely famous passenger service called Stagg Lines — "We'll Take You Anywhere").

Roleplaying Notes: Other guilds like to jokingly refer to the Charioteers' split personalities. On the one hand, they are the most friendly, outgoing traders in the universe. They seem sure that everyone is their friend, that everything is wonderful and that the only thing that can make life better is for you to buy their merchandise. On the other hand, don't even think about crossing them on their own spaceships. These are the taciturn, no-nonsense pilots who care much more for their machines than any human.

This perception is partly the result of a growing split within the guild between its best traders and its best pilots. While in the past the Charioteers' leaders have been talented in both areas, its consuls have become more and more specialized of late. The same is becoming true of the rank and file. Dean Gailbreath has only recently begun battling this trend, and has tried to promote more members skilled in both areas.

Character Stereotypes: Pilots or vehicle operators of any type, merchants, archaeologists or artifact dealers, wandering teachers, carry attractions (traveling freak show owners or participants).

Typical Classes: Guildler, Techie.

The Supreme Order of Engineers

High technology is at a premium in the Known Worlds, for those who understand it are few. Many of them are members of this guild. When a starship needs to be constructed or repaired, when a

personal shield has burnt out and needs fixing, when an arm has been blown off and needs replacing, an Engineer is the only one to summon.

This is one of the least-known guilds, for it makes no effort to sell product to the peasantry. Instead it has concentrated its efforts on developing new technologies and ensuring that no one else makes the same discoveries. Its hidden labs and concealed factories have churned out extraordinary innovations in cybernetics, genetic engineering, explosives, space flight, medicine and other areas. The Engineers have in turn made the results of these breakthroughs available to the rich and powerful, for only the wealthiest can afford them. Additionally, the Engineers have gone to great lengths to ensure that their customers do not try to duplicate the technical innovations.

For this reason, there are many who refuse to deal with the Engineers — or at least that's what they say. Others note that the Engineers appear to be their own best customers, and that is extremely unnerving to many. It is rare to meet an Engineer who has not used his own body altering technology on himself, giving himself cybernetic implants, physical modifications or strange cosmetic additions. A first meeting with an Engineer is guaranteed to be at least unnerving, if not downright petrifying.

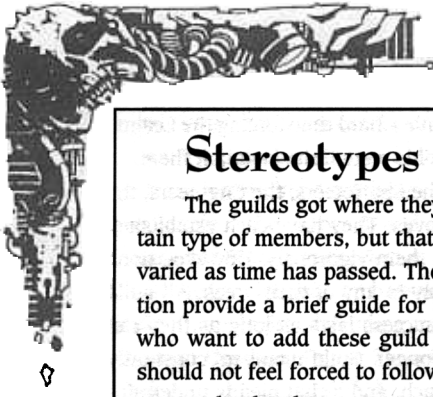
An additionally upsetting aspect of the Supreme Order of Engineers is its connection to the Church. No one, either in the Church or in the order, will deny that almost 1000 years ago the Engineers were once either a holy order or part of a holy order. Whatever happened in those ancient times remains a mystery today, but Church leaders have done little to either discipline this group or bring it back into the flock. Some guild members worry that the Engineers have maintained their ties to the Church. Some Church officials worry about the same thing and whisper that the holy order the Engineers broke away from still exists in secret.

Their worries are heightened by the fact that the Supreme Order of Engineers is also one of the most secretive guilds. Getting information from the Engineers is next to impossible, and even other League members find it difficult to communicate with them. The Engineers have structured their guild in such a way that new members know almost nothing, and discretion is a key component to advancement.

Leading Engineers: Master Malifice Hereditus (head of guild, never seen but rumored to be far more machine than human), Crafter Wavefinder Luceta (Expert with thinking machines, unnaturally beautiful), Crafter Philius Mordela (former priest, guild ambassador to Holy Terra).

Roleplaying Notes: While Engineers are renowned for their standoffishness, this in no way diminishes their value to others. Many nobles consider it a point of prestige to have an Engineer in their entourage, and even priests recognize their occasional usefulness. Still, many Engineers are more than a little inhuman and can disquiet even their best friends.

Most Engineers seem driven to advance within the guild. The two quickest routes are through service or invention. Protecting guild secrets can be as valuable to promotion as creating new innovations. Guild leaders do seem to have their own criteria, however, and most low-level members do not know exactly what will bring them favor, so they do their best at both.



Character Stereotypes: Starship engineers, inventors, scientists of all types (including mad scientists), repairmen, weaponsmiths, crafters, cyberfetishists

Typical Classes: Guilder, Techie.

Scravengers

Scravengers hide behind a veneer of “respectability” in the form of a scavengers guild. They make their mark by recovering and refitting derelict spacecraft, patching together Second Republic artifacts everyone else deemed beyond redemption, and by finding artifacts where no one thought any could be. But this is only one part of their interstellar enterprise.

Anything the Charioteers or Engineers can't sell legitimately somehow ends up in the Scravengers' hands and passes through their vast network with no questions asked. When casinos appear on a planet, they are probably owned by the Scravengers'. If a brothel appears protected from both the law and the Church, it probably belongs to the Scravengers. If peasants begin organizing and demanding better wages, nobles blame the Scravengers. The Scravengers have mastered the art of finding income everyone else has passed on.

They tend to hide behind the cover of various sub-guilds and are master spies. They have dirt on just about every major political figure imaginable, and are ready to use it if the nobles, priest, etc. try to squash them. The occasional crime clean-up effort is allowed, but no real attempt to destroy this guild is tolerated. They operate an underground network of spies and assassins for hire to the royal houses.

Most citizens really don't link the scavengers to the mob, since high-profile crime trials have cleared the scavengers guild of wrongdoing (sure, there are always stories about rigged trials, but most peasants trust the law because they're medieval innocents, not twentieth century deconstructionists). The Scravengers have their hands in most of the usual guild businesses, but they continue to specialize in repairing and reselling old and (usually) abandoned equipment. Buying from a Scraver means paying a cheap price but getting what you pay for.

Scravengers also have strong investments in gambling facilities, and some of their largest rehabilitated ships have become their interstellar casinos. In space they escape the scrutiny of the antigambling sects, and this also allows them to pick up high rollers from every planet. Of course, their gambling ties also mean that they are constantly accused of having ties to every organized crime figure in the Known Worlds — a charge they only half-heartedly deny.

The Scravengers are made up of many small local groups paying fealty to deans, but each claiming a lot of autonomy. They must pledge their loyalty both to their local organization but also to the umbrella group. This is a blood oath; joining one branch is for life, and a hidden tattoo is required as a mark of loyalty. Thus Scravengers can find welcome everywhere, albeit a suspicious one.

Leading Scravengers: Dean Benita “The Fox” Ivankov (head of guild, only dean of a major guild who does not live on Leagueheim), Consul Carlos “Two-Time” Ong (head of the Leagueheim Bazaar), Consul Oliver Lords (uncovered Second Republic military depot and sold it to Hawkwoods; now League ambassador to Emperor).

Roleplaying Notes: “Anything for a Bird” could be the motto of this guild. While its members are fiercely protective of their own operations, they have no compunctions about muscling in on other

people's projects. They can also find innovative ways to make money from someone else's job. If an Engineer runs a spaceship repair station, he's probably paying a Scraver for parts. If a Charioteer needs a warehouse, he's probably paying a Scraver to have his goods loaded and unloaded.

By the same token, Scravengers are famous for the risks they take in search of profit. They are more than willing to put their own lives (or anyone else's) on the line. Rumor of a cache of Second Republic vases will send them scurrying into the heart of an unexplored jungle. Tell them that the head-hunting Vorox guarding the vases like to gamble will send them there twice as fast.

Character Stereotypes: Smugglers, archeologists, gangsters, scavengers, assassins, information brokers, hit men, gamblers, extortionists (Royal Houses are dangerous but rewarding targets), pirates.

Typical Classes: Guilder, Knave, Techie.

The Muster (Chainers)

While most guilds make their money off of goods and services, the Chainers make theirs off living beings. Their ships ferry mercenaries, technicians, animals, foodstuffs and, some say, slaves to their many customers. People who buy from them find themselves constantly able to acquire skilled help for almost any situation. They may also find themselves shanghaied or facing the wrath of those who miss the skilled help.

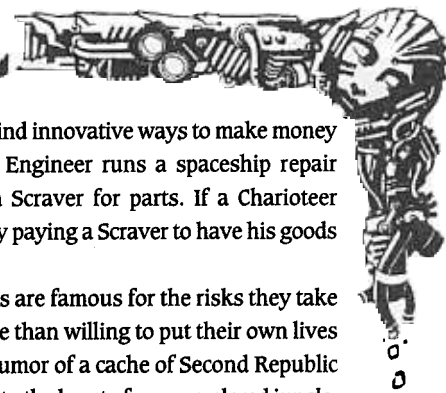
The Muster is the freeperson's labor guild, providing trained (but union-regulated) labor for freepersons to various contractors. Since skilled and trained talent is not easy to find since the Fall, if you want a job done right, you must go through the Muster. The guild was begun long ago as a soldier's rights group for mercenaries; in the centuries since the Fall, it has become the union for all laborers.

However, this does not mean they are liberal watchdogs looking out for human rights; the only rights sacred to them are those of guild members (only freepersons can apply). It is one of the hardest guilds in which to gain membership, because members (skilled labor) get good benefits and security for the rest of their lives. The Muster drives hard bargains for its skills.

For most Muster contracts, the work force is made up of “temps” hired by the guild, with the sweet, managerial positions going to Muster guildmembers. This is usually a good place for characters to find a job when all else fails. However, the Muster prefers not to pay its labor base at all, and for that reason it acquires slaves. This has given it the nickname “Chainers.” Slaves rarely provide more than grunt labor, but there's a lot of that needed in the wide universe. Chainers are well-known among the peasantry for kidnapping people on small worlds and shipping them off far away where they'll never be recognized. The Church frowns on this and punishes it when discovered.

Chainers tend to wear armor and armorlike clothing, and most carry weapons wherever they go (even today, the high-ups in the guild are usually ex-mercenaries). They often travel in packs and rarely pass up an opportunity to raid for slaves. They are also thought to dabble in psychological conditioning, and to have modified their merchandise accordingly.

Leading Chainers: Dean Kryanida Halostro Sekimen (head of guild, master military strategist), Consul Erwin Gerhardt (leader of



the famous Desert Tigers armored legion and teacher of tactics at the League Academy), Consul Tereza Solace (rumored to be both psychic and head of the guild's slave operations; sometime called the cruelest person in the universe).

Roleplaying Notes: Members of the Muster are extremely proud of their skills and abilities, about the records of Muster mercenary units and artisans, and about the variety of contracts they can fulfill. They are much less willing to talk about the slaves who make much of what they do possible. They may enjoy the fear their reputation causes, but it often seems they would prefer not to have that reputation at all.

This has made the Muster extremely League conscious. Muster leaders reinforce the guilds' unity at every opportunity. No member of a guild is to be injured if it is at all avoidable. Other guilds get huge discounts on Muster services. No guild member will be enslaved. Of course, if someone takes untoward advantage of the Muster's good nature...

Character Stereotypes: Professional mercenaries, ex-soldiers looking for work, freelance jack-of-all-trades, artifact hunters, adventurers for hire, ex-slave given membership for saving owner's life, slavers (human hunters, "most dangerous game"), professional tradesman (yeomen of all types), psychologists.

Typical Classes: Guildler, Soldier.

The Reeves (Gray Faces)

The Reeves hold the reins of commerce and economy. They are the Known World's bankers. They also govern higher learning and education, producing lawyers and philosophers. Many non-papal courts require a Reeve to preside. In addition, the current Leaguemeister is a Reeve (as was the last one).

The Reeves also provide some of the most talented advocates for helping decide important matters. Church leaders will usually accept a Reeve to defend a heretic when they would accept no one else. Nobles caught up in disputes with one another are happy to have a Reeve hear their disagreement, but would prefer to have one on their side. Of course, in a League dispute, any guild would like to have a Reeve advocate on its side.

The Reeves do not engage in trade nearly as extensively as the other families do, but they are recognized as one of the leading guilds primarily for their incredibly extensive money-lending operations. Long ago their ancestors crafted special agreements between themselves and some of the Royal Houses to ensure that the houses would borrow from no one but them. While most of these houses have since faded to irrelevance, the Reeves have grown in prominence, often ending up with most of the houses' possessions when they fail to pay off their loans. Those allied with the Reeves do not receive much in the way of trade benefits, but they get their loans at extremely low rates. However, the Reeves are very quick to mobilize the League Fleets or other enforcers at the first sign of someone going into default.

Of course, money is not the only thing Reeves demand in exchange for their loans. They have been known to delay or even cancel required payments, but then get the debtor to do certain favors for them. These favors have ranged from simple labor to obtaining party invitations to attacking enemies to obtaining noble titles to, as the story goes, influencing the vote that made Alexius emperor.

Publicly the Reeve leaders appear to be the most conservative of the League leaders, but more than one has gotten into trouble with the various sects for acts considered extremely unorthodox. Usually the Reeves manage to get these incidents covered up, and do their best to maintain a staid and discreet appearance. Never expect a Gray Face to wear the gaudy cloaks of the Charioteers or the ominous robes of the Engineers.

By the same token, the Reeves have gone to great lengths to suppress stories that would cast doubt on their legitimacy. The one which gains the greatest credence, and which seems to drive Reeve leaders into fits of indignation, is that the earliest Reeves made their money as pirates and their first loans were in fact ransoms. No one can prove that this was the case, but neither can the Reeves disprove that ships under their protection are the least likely to be attacked by corsairs.

Leading Reeves: Leaguemeister Tyrus Spear (head of the League, renowned jurist and advocate), Dean Melissa Winters (leading banker, one of the richest people in the Known Worlds), Consul Carmichael Yoster (Admiral of the League Fleet, of questionable military ability).

Roleplaying Notes: There are many stories as to how the Reeves acquired the nickname Gray Faces, but the most common one has to do with how fervently they strive to avoid controversy. They have a reputation for composing arguments and opinions with so many exceptions that they can mean anything. Even when you hire one of the famed Reeve advocates you have no way of knowing that he will support you the next time this issue comes up.

A growing number of Reeves are fighting this old caricature, however. They have become more active in League politics and in affairs outside the guilds, seeing it as their duty to show people how to better resolve their differences. Leaguemeister Spear has not officially endorsed their activities, but younger Reeves say he supports them. Older Reeves, however, mutter about this unseemly behavior and meet behind closed doors.

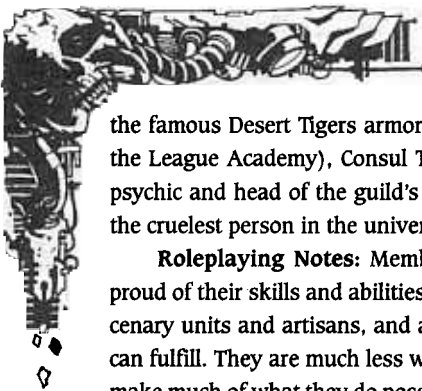
Character Stereotypes: Wealthy adventurer, lawgiver (sheriff, deputy for hire), philosopher, gentry wanna-be (seeks landed title, such as baronet, laird, etc.), Third Republic architect, loan enforcer, statesman, royal chamberlain, seneschal, crusading advocate, ardent capitalist (hires other characters to help out with get rich quick schemes).

Typical Class: Guildler.

The Lesser Guilds

Nobody knows just how many guilds exist throughout the Known Worlds. At least two hundred are part of the League, and many more have no official sanction. Many of these only exist on one planet, and often only in one city on that planet. Still, any activity a freeman might want to engage in probably has a guild to support him.

Some of the better known of these lesser guilds cater to artists and entertainers. Musicians and troubadours have two extremely influential alliances — the Masque and the Carnivalers — allegations of psychic training notwithstanding. They, and several other guilds, have forced the renowned League Academy to provide facilities for its members. Even the court jesters have a small but venerable guild, and one of its finest members is on the Academy faculty.





Lesser guilds have made their mark on the League in a number of ways. For instance, a printers guild has done much to preserve non-religious books, though it has been careful not to disseminate anything of which the Church might disapprove (Church criticism, information on technological developments or accurate histories). Not all of the printers' work is in print, however. They have also begun transcribing old documents kept in an electronic format.

Some of these guilds provide a wide variety of functions but limit their activities to a small area. For instance, the Morticus Guild of Tethys originally began as a family bakery several hundred years ago. Its members became wealthy enough (and their liege impoverished enough) that they were able to buy their freedom. Now they control a number of different trades on Tethys, including labor on new buildings, hauling goods between its two main cities, providing workers for artifact recovery and overseeing all transactions between the planet's human and native alien populations.

A few guilds limit their activities to Leagueheim itself. Since Leagueheim's population is made up primarily of freemen, most of its people have joined guilds. Thus the Courtesan Guild, Ancient Society of Sacred Alchemists and the Purloiners Guild may have branches elsewhere, but they usually deny it. They can be found on Leagueheim, however, displaying their goods and services proudly.

Independents

Not all freemen belong to a guild. Some have either lost their guild affiliation or never had one to begin with. These independent agents often work for the guilds, but sacrifice the protection and

stability such an organization offers for freedom and autonomy. They cannot call on back up when they are in trouble, but they also do not have to submit to someone else's commands. This arrangement is far from the norm in the Fading Suns, for almost everyone is beholden to someone else. Independent agents are the only people without a liege of some kind (though even they must profess allegiance to the emperor).

While the guilds provide these independent agents with most of their work, they are not the only customers who take advantage of these unique arrangements. Nobles will seek them out, especially when they do not want the guilds to become aware of certain tasks or if they want to be able to deny any involvement. The Church supports the feudal order even more fiercely than the nobles do, but it uses free agents in its fight against heresy. After all, better that someone living on the outskirts of society risk her soul than someone at its heart.

A player interested in taking on the role of an independent agent should determine not only what skills his character has developed, but why he has become an independent agent. If one of the guilds kicked him out, then does he maintain any ties to the League? If a noble recently made him a freeman, then why, and what obligations does he still have to that noble? If the character ran away from his previous obligations, be they to a noble or to the Church, then does his previous master still pursue him?

An independent agent takes a great deal of risk in making his way through the Known Worlds. These characters are best suited for life on the outskirts of civilization, perhaps near the barbarian worlds or on newly rediscovered planets. The closer an independen-

Guild Safe Houses

The Merchant League has no illusions about its popularity in the Known Worlds. Nobles tax almost everything it does, peasants look for every opportunity to steal from its shops and the Church condemns its very existence. So the League makes friends the only way it knows how — it buys them.

Almost every planet has at least one non-League person who, at guild expense, will take care of League members or goods. Most planets have one in every major city. This person usually keeps his ties to the League secret, but provides essential services. He will store guild merchandise, hide people on the run, arrange clandestine meetings, and help guild members in trouble.

Sometimes one guild pays his expenses and other times a number contribute to the pot, but either way, that person will usually do what the League needs done. The trouble comes in finding this person. No registry of these agents exists. If the Charioteers have paid for someone on Cadavus to look after their interests, then they are unlikely to tell other guilds about it.

A problem the League often faces with these agents is that they often believe that the League will sanction their activities, no matter what they might be. At least one of these safe houses turned out to be home to a coven of warlocks, and the League has since tried to be more careful about who it pays off. Of course, there is no way for the League to ever be completely confident.

dent gets to the heart of civilization, the more pressures he will feel to commit to a master.

Guild Territoriality

While most people know better than to trust a trader, few understand just how deep the League's involvement throughout the Empire goes. Most people only see guildmembers visiting a planet, setting up a small shop and selling their wares. The guilds actively try to maintain this view of their operations, concealing their massive installations and armies of mercenaries. Those in the know believe the Merchant League has committed itself to bringing about a new republic. Others point to guild involvement in sabotaging technical research and restricting planetary production as signs of a more sinister goal.

Most of the guilds have a monopoly on at least one resource or device. They guard these areas zealously, going to extremes to ensure their continued mastery. For instance, the Engineers have long been the sole provider of Lypee-55, a key ingredient in longevity serums. Rumor has it that at one point House Li Halan began synthesizing the liquid in their labs on Manitou. The Engineers uncovered what the house was up to and offered the Li Halan a huge sum of money for it to stop. When the Li Halan made it clear that they would do no such thing, the Engineers offered them a Philosophers Stone. When that didn't work, a number of Manitou's power plants malfunctioned and exploded. Only one was nuclear, but it took out the main laboratory complex — and the neighboring city of 100,000

people. The Li Halan have made no further study of Lypee-55.

Additionally, individual guilds often battle each other, both militarily and financially. Alliances within the League seem to shift with the solar winds, and today's ally becomes tomorrow's stepping stone. While most of the guilds have staked out the area they claim as their own, providing a variety of goods and services within that region, the boundaries are rarely fixed. It is not uncommon for a Royal House to "request" that a guild set up shop in territory previously controlled by another guild. This creates competition within that territory, driving down prices and stimulating the local economy. It can also have the unintended effect of creating violent competition, wrecking the local economy and killing scores of innocent bystanders.

The guilds usually hire outside agents to handle these matters, preferring to keep their most loyal forces engaged against non-merchant opponents. Freelancers can earn a great deal raiding enemy guild warehouses, stealing their secrets and assassinating key people. These same freelancers are often the first ones sacrificed when the guilds make up or need to cover their tracks.

Academy Interatta

Despite the incessant battles between the guilds, when they have worked together they have accomplished some incredible feats. One of these is the mighty League Starfleet. Another, and perhaps more important, achievement is the Academy Interatta, the only major educational facility not under the Church's control. Located on Leagueheim, the Academy is the one place where guildmembers can meet peacefully, get to know each other before learning how to stab one another in the back.

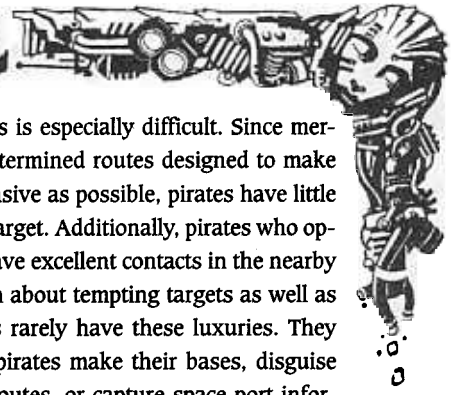
While this is the view most people have of the Academy Interatta, others tell a darker story. No research is forbidden at the Academy, they say, and its teachers and students have delved into the darkest areas of knowledge. Of course, the guild dismisses such stories as Church propaganda, but the legends persist. Tales of researchers whose hair turned white overnight, professors who went mad after viewing vile videotexts in its famous library and students sacrificed to dark gods abound.

Other people say that these reports grew out of the constant politics that go on between and within the Academy's many departments. Professors and department heads have accused each other of everything from body odor to plagiarism to pederasty to murder to genocide. Sometimes the accusations are true; usually they are just additional weapons in the battle for Academy funding and prestige.

While the politicking within the Academy is usually related to the different departments and not the different guilds, individual guilds certainly make their presence felt. The Muster has ensured that the Academy fund a military affairs department with ties to the League Starfleet. The Engineers influence much of the technical research carried out at the Academy. Even the Courtesans Guild had amazingly little difficulty in adding one of its members to the faculty.

The Academy itself is a sprawling entity, with classes and research taking place all over Leagueheim and even at a few locations off planet. Students and guilds pay the professors directly, and the professors pool much of their income in order to maintain and upgrade the facilities. Much of the Academy's best features have been





donated directly by one guild or another.

Indeed, the entire League backs the Academy Interatta to an extreme degree. Many League leaders spent at least some time as students at the Academy, and most of these have fond memories of their time there. They also recognize its need as a central storehouse for knowledge. One of the Academy's strongest departments, as well as the one which appears most free of guild meddling, is the Reclamation Department. This agency is dedicated to finding and recovering lost wisdom, and it receives incredible amounts of funding for this purpose. While it usually pays for lost data, it has been known to send heavily armed mercenary teams to recover ancient records and old spaceship logs. Since these operations tend to upset priests and nobles wherever the mercenaries go, the Reclamation Department only resorts to such efforts when it feels the need is greatest — or when it can get away with it.

Piracy

None of the powers in the Fading Suns officially condones piracy, but it continues nonetheless. Nobles blame the guilds, the guilds blame the nobles and everyone casts a worried eye at some of the more fervent sects. No one can deny that the problem grew during the Emperor Wars and continues at high levels. The Emperor has said he will bring it under control but has committed most of his resources to his new wars against the barbarians. What little he has sent against the pirates has not met with much success.

The League would seem to have the most to lose from the pirates, but has done little more than the Emperor. Aside from some highly publicized attacks on freelance pirates, the guilds seem to prefer paying ransoms to mounting pirate-hunting expeditions. This does nothing to quell tales of guild-financed pirates or ambushes carried out by one guild on an enemy within the League.

Of course, everybody tries to pass the blame off on barbarians and aliens. In fact, both barbarians and aliens have been captured raiding merchant vessels. Some of the most extreme alien-independence organizations have even attempted to license privateers or raid shipping on their own. These have raised an immediate hue and cry from the nobles and guilds, who combined forces to drive these pirates from the stars.

Contrary to popular belief, the pirates' general strategy is not to attack a merchant ship with blaster cannons blazing. This creates far too much risk of losing valuable cargo. Pirates infinitely prefer fast ships to heavily armed ones, and they close with their targets as quickly as possible, broadcasting threats of what they will do to anyone who resists them.

Most ships have only minimal crews anyway, most of whom have little to lose if pirates take the ship. Pirates rarely kill ship crews, only punishing them if they resist. Most crewmembers prefer to surrender at once or after putting up only a token resistance. The pirates board at will, take the cargo (and the ship if they have enough men) and set the crew adrift in lifecraft.

There are exceptions to this rule. Mad Carnegie Jones gained a reputation for torturing and killing the crews of the ships he captured, jettisoning their bodies off into space. His career ended shortly before the Emperor Wars when a merchant ship resisted and ended up ramming his craft. The attack destroyed both ships, and Jones was left to die in space.

Searching out space pirates is especially difficult. Since merchants tend to fly certain predetermined routes designed to make space travel as fast and inexpensive as possible, pirates have little problem ambushing a suitable target. Additionally, pirates who operate in certain areas seem to have excellent contacts in the nearby space ports. These can tell them about tempting targets as well as possible threats. Pirate hunters rarely have these luxuries. They have to try to discover where pirates make their bases, disguise themselves and sail the trade routes, or capture space port informants. Then they have to defeat the pirates in battle.

Aliens

Onganggorak smiled, a gentle gesture but one which appeared vicious and gruesome to the poor serf who had stumbled upon the giant Vorox by the woodland stream.

"Aaah! No eat! No eat!" the serf cried, dropping his walking staff and holding his palms out to show he was unarmed. He knew better than to try an outrun a Vorox.

Ong's brow wrinkled in consternation and he shook his head, disappointed in the human. "I have no intention of eating you. I'm simply gathering water for my Lady Erian Li Halan and her entourage."

The serf looked puzzled. "So you're tame, then?"

Ong's eyes rolled and a grunt escaped his throat. "Tame?! Is that what you call it when a Vorox acts civilized?!"

The serf took a step back, but realized that the Vorox had no intention of harming him. "But... most Vorox are... feral. Aren't they?"

The Vorox nodded his head as he stood, his height truly startling the peasant again. "There are those on Ungavorox who have yet to learn the benefits of civilization. I am not one of them. Now, good day to you, human."

"Wait!" the serf cried. Ong stopped and looked expectantly at the man. "Uh... is that one that's been killin' babies in the next village, feral, then?"

Ong simply sighed and walked away. It was a worn-out routine to blame Vorox for every disaster to strike from the wilds. Surely some local predator had claimed the small prey instead.

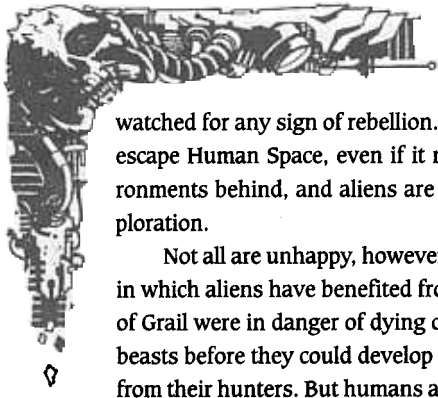
The serf persisted, following behind. "You know, the one they say calls himself Adanga Unga?"

Ong spun around and stared at the peasant, as if his stare could root out a lie. Adanga Unga here? On Grail? How did that villain get so far from Ungavorox? Ong snarled; he would have to investigate now. He couldn't let his old rival run free to ruin the Known Worlds, Ong's adopted home...

Known Worlds Races

There are a number of sentient races living in the Known Worlds. Almost all of them have suffered some indignity at the hands of humans. For most, it was the claiming of their homeworld by human colonists, and the resulting terraforming which utterly changed their ancestral home. Many of these races became homeless refugees, herded onto reservations a mere fraction of the size of their previous homes — or worse, onto different worlds entirely. For others, it was the wars that decimated their populations, leaving the survivors to eke out a living from human charity, carefully





watched for any sign of rebellion. Most of these poor souls yearn to escape Human Space, even if it means leaving their natural environments behind, and aliens are in the forefront of new space exploration.

Not all are unhappy, however. There are more than a few cases in which aliens have benefited from human intervention. The Etyri of Grail were in danger of dying out due to the predation of vicious beasts before they could develop sufficient tech to save themselves from their hunters. But humans arrived, recognized the Etyri's sentience, and built safe reservations for them, also providing weapons which more than evened the odds against their predators. (The fact that their predators might also have been sentient did nothing to stop humans from aiding their extinction.)

Three other major races claim some political, economic or military power, and are granted certain concessions from the Empire, giving them more rights and freedoms on their homeworlds than most aliens enjoy. While they have all been under human rule since the Diaspora (Second Republic at the latest), they accept this for the most part, although there are those individuals who chaff under such "bondage." These three races are detailed below.

The Children of the Ur

The Ur races (also known as the Anunnaki) are the oldest known races. They disappeared before humans reached the stars, leaving behind many powerful artifacts, including the jumpgates that make star travel possible. Their purpose is a mystery, as is the nature of their legacy: What happened to them? Did they intentionally leave the jumpgates for the younger races to use? Too many questions remain unanswered.

The Ur are known to have interfered with certain races before these races achieved solar system or star travel, and many believe that they directly helped the Vau to reach the stars. Humans argue about their secret influence in ancient human affairs, although there is no definitive proof of this. Their influence in the Known Worlds can most clearly be seen in the cousin races, the Obun and the Ukar. These young races are called the Children of the Ur, or more simply, the Ur-Obun and the Ur-Ukar.

While these Ur Children know very little of the Anunnaki, their myths and legends tell of godlike beings who shaped their cultures, weaving the fates of Obun and Ukar alike for good or ill in a sort of cosmic chess match. One pantheon of gods is believed to have won out over their rivals, with the result that the rivals' pawns were removed from their homeworld and placed in a vicious, adversarial environment to rebuild their tattered and displaced culture: the Ukar. The Obun, pawns of the victorious gods, enjoyed a golden age of peace, learning and spiritual study.

Then, the gods withdrew from the lives of mortals, leaving the Obun and the Ukar to develop on their own. That was many millennia ago, and the two races have traveled down radically different paths since. During this time, the Obun fell back into barbarism, but regained their civilization through a renewal in spiritual doctrines and discipline. The Ukar have had a warlike and aggressive culture ever since the gods betrayed them.

Regardless of the vast amount of time that passed during their separation, the Obun and Ukar language has remained similar enough that fluent speakers of one tongue can sometimes under-

stand the other. The appearance and design of their tech shows obvious Ur influence, but is rarely more advanced than current Known Worlds standards.

Ur-Obun

The Obun had not explored beyond their solar system before the Second Republic arrived to usher them into the commonwealth of Known Space. They were treated better than most alien races due to their obvious link to the Ur, but they were no longer the masters of their own destiny.

One of the first Obun to explore the stars was Ven Lohji, who became one of the Prophet's eight disciples, and returned to Obun after the Prophet's death to preach her message, creating what would become the Obun sect of the Universal Church (Voavenlohji in the Obun language). However, an unfortunate incident during the Dark Ages involving an Ur-Obun priest and a Church bishop resulted in a religious war that wiped out a large part of the Ur-Obun population. They live now exclusively on their homeworld of Velisimil, governed by House Hawkwood.

Obun have few strictly defined family units. They honor their mother and father, but every Obun takes up the task of raising a child. An uncle or aunt will often take charge of a child's schooling, but all Obun have a responsibility to the child. When an Obun goes bad (becomes a criminal or murderer), those Obun involved in his upbringing blame themselves and usually retreat from their worldly duties for spiritual contemplation or pilgrimage, pondering what they did wrong.

The Obun have a government composed of an elected Ruling Council called the Umo'rin. Candidates must volunteer for public duty, and must pass the "Ordeal": a rigorous test of the applicant's physical, mental and spiritual capabilities. Once the candidate has passed this test (most do not), his or her seat on the council is rarely contested. They are one of the very few races in the Known Worlds who do not have a noble, although there are levels of rank in the Ruling Council that are somewhat equivalent.

Leading Ur-Obun: Soleel HanSeer (head of the Ruling Council), Bishop Forsti HanKavak (head of the Obun Church), Bran Botan vo Karm (Emperor Alexius' left-hand counsel).

Character Stereotypes: Diplomat, mystic, priest, pilgrim, curious merchant, archaeologist, angry iconoclast (looked upon as deranged by Obun society).

Typical Classes: Priest, Psychic, Theurgist.

Ur-Ukar

The Ur-Ukar obviously did not belong on the planet from which they began their star-faring. The surface of Kordeth is hostile to life and the Ukari are forced to live beneath the surface in a network of tunnels circling the globe. Their legends speak of a great wrong done by one of their kind in "heaven," and they were banished by the gods to this hell in retribution.

The Ukar achieved space travel before their cousins, the Obun, but were blocked by the Second Republic after colonizing only three other systems. A blockade war against the Ukari homeworld lasted for decades, with the Ukari finally suing for peace and accepting reservations on their claimed worlds while the Republic took over the governance of these planets.

Traditional natives of the Ukari homeworld live the first five years of their lives in near or total darkness. At age six, they are





"brought to the light," or slowly acclimated to light and surface living. Due to their lightless beginnings, touch is more important to them than sight, although their sight has never become atrophied. They carve their bodies with raised tattoos or carvings (called *baa'mon*) spelling out their names (on their faces) and their deeds (on their chests, arms and legs). Ukarish as a written language is a sort of short-form Braille, meant to be "read" off someone's skin (although the language has been adopted for books).

Ukar from reservations on other worlds have similar traditions, but they often live in light since birth and usually do not read Ukar tattoos as easily. There is often a low-level but mutual disdain between homeworlders and "rez" Ukari.

They come from strong family clans and wage feuds against rival clans. These feuds began when the early Ukari fought over limited resources, but resentment has been handed down generationally even in times of abundant resources. Certain clans hold leadership positions over other clans because they were able to convince human noble houses to recognize them over other clans, although they do not seem well liked by the "lesser" clans.

Leading Ur-Ukar: Torquil oj Borduk (chief of ruling clan, recognized by the empire as leader of the Ur-Ukar), Baal oj Ak (infamous psychic terrorist), Domina "Many-Scars" Corduvan (leader of FAR)

Character Stereotypes: Thief, assassin, repair technician (the grimiest work in the tightest spaces), terrorist, bitter diplomat, optimistic leader (fighting against ingrained resentment and tribalism).

Typical Classes: Guildler, Knave, Psychic.

Vorox

Multi-limbed monstrosities. The ultimate predators on their homeworld, the Vorox should never have achieved sentience. All the known rules about natural selection deny it. But they did, and with seemingly no coaxing from without. Certainly, it is a crude and unsophisticated sentience, but this may simply be due to the limitations of their crude culture. Critics debate: Are Vorox the equal of human intelligence? Evidence suggests not, but those few who have escaped the bonds of their violent culture have proven otherwise.

They have colored fur and are immune to many poisons (a by-product of their very toxic, nasty evolutionary environment) and they can't eat vegetables. They can walk on two legs (leaving four arms free), four legs (leaving two free), or six legs for the best speed.

There are two types of Vorox: feral and civilized. Feral Vorox are not unintelligent; they simply do not have the benefits of a technological society. They are not allowed off-planet, for they are considered brutal and dangerous. Civilized Vorox are those who have had their claws cut, and are thus "tamed." This cutting usually takes place at puberty and the Vorox is then educated in what culture and learning exists in their crude society. Civilized Vorox are allowed off-world and perform a variety of functions for Known World governments. The de-clawing ceremony began as a ritual imposed on Vorox culture by humans, but eventually became a source of pride for the civilized Vorox, a sign that they had evolved past their brutal cousins of the jungle. They have an odd religion (although no theurgy) which guarantees a soul only to those Vorox who have accepted civilization — the rest are believed to be feral animals



trapped in a cycle of meaningless eating and being eaten.

The royal caste of Vorox are allowed to keep one claw, which secretes a poison deadly to humans and Vorox. This potent symbol of their rule has often gotten them in trouble off-world.

Leading Vorox: Kummanga (king of ruling caste), Urgumantangu (shaman of Vorox church), Arng-arng-arng (warrioress famed for Symbiot kills)

Roleplaying notes: Vorox are like hyperactive teenagers in puberty — they are passionate, quick to anger or play, rowdy and wide-eyed. Most Vorox find this whole culture thing, with its rules and regulations, to be a burden, but some find it a challenge.

They seem to have an instinctual respect for power and an urge for clannishness (feral Vorox hunt in packs — called *angerak* — for their planet's other predator are more than a match for a single Vorox), which helps to uphold their ruling families and leaves them somewhat in awe of upper-class Known Worlders. They seem to crave respect and want desperately to be considered members in good standing of whatever group they join. Many a Church patriarch has upheld Vorox as pillars of loyalty, one of the Prophet's primary virtues. Indeed, Vorox are fiercely loyal to their friends, family or group (guild, house, sect, etc.). But there are no set guidelines for resolving conflicts between allegiances, and many Vorox have gone mad trying to decide which takes precedence when these groups are at odds. Passionate tragedies have been written about noble Vorox raised to civilization against harsh odds brought low when forced to choose between royal family and chosen friends, or friends and sect loyalties.

Vorox are highly sought by humans as shock troops or guerrilla warriors. They were gleefully dropped on Stigmata during the Symbiot War, but when converted Vorox returned with Symbiot abilities, they wreaked more havoc than could be imagined. They aren't allowed near Symbiots anymore.

Character Stereotypes: Warrior, bodyguard, gladiator, jungle guide, explorer, League stevedore, fanatic priest, incognito feral, cultured orator (trying to break down anti-Vorox stereotypes), famed athlete, traveling companion.

Typical Classes: Soldier.

Other Races

There are numerous other sentient races in the Known Worlds. Almost every planet with a jumpgate seems to host an intelligent race in varying degrees of advancement, although only the Children of the Ur (and perhaps the Oro'ym) had achieved space travel by the time humans encountered them. Some of these races were dislocated from their homeworlds by landgrabbing humans, but most still have a reservation or two on their planet of genesis. Below are some of the more well-known aliens, even though they are rarely met away from their homelands.

Gannok: These squat, monkeylike beings are from Bannockburn, near the Symbiot frontier. Bannockburn hosts some of the strangest Ur ruins known; the Gannok lived among these ancient monoliths, building odd devices from the leftover technology. Scholars believe the Gannok are somewhat new to sentience, since little evidence of previous cultures exist on their world. They have little native tech of their own, but they are clever tool-users, with an amazing inclination for invention. For this reason, they are prized as starship engineers, as their physiques (including short,

prehensile tails) allow them to crawl into cramped spaces. The outer layer of skin on their arms, legs and back exudes an oily substance similar to tissue regenerative serum, giving them remarkable immune systems and healing faculties. However, they also have a prankster's way about them, but little common sense.

Shantor: An ungulate race from Shaprut. The passionate Shantor were victims of humanity's First Contact; they now live on reservations scattered across the Known Worlds and are few in number. They have a warrior culture that highly values family ties and worships a solar deity, although they believe this deity resides in their homeworld's sun. They cannot speak Urthish, and their spokesmen wear specially made voiceboxes (called *dolomet*) that allow them to simulate human vocal cords.

Ascorbites: Bloodsuckers from Severus. The carapaced but humanoid Ascorbites had little time to develop a civilization of their own before humans arrived and relegated them to the status of primitives and savages. They have since lived up to these designations, refusing to live in cities and running wild in the jungles of Severus. Some claim, however, that they have villages deep in the wilderness, and have developed strange psychic powers, plotting to use these against humans.

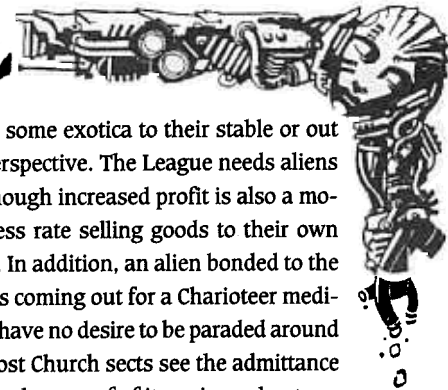
Hironem: The reptilian Hironem are from Cadiz, although a reservation is all they have left of the continent they once ruled. Scholars believe that the Hironem were within a century of space-travel when they were encountered by Diaspora colonists, as they had already sent manned ships to investigate their moon. Little of their native tech is left, however, as human tech quickly became the norm on colonized Cadiz. Their reservation is built around their former capital city, where sits the throne of their God-King. Some believe that their culture was influenced early on by the Vau, as they have a similar caste-system. Many study Hironem culture hoping to get some insight into the Vau.

Etyri: An avian race from Grail. The flying Etyri survived fierce competition against their land-based predators only with the aid of human technology. One of the least populous sentient races, the Etyri are highly religious, deeply concerned about the afterlife and what form it takes. Few Etyri leave their homeworld; those who do are often considered insane by their brethren. But they are sometimes deemed heroes, questing for the secrets waiting beyond death to pave the way for Etyri to come.

Oro'ym: An amphibian race from Madoc, the Oro'ym were simply a myth for most of the Dark Ages before they revealed their hidden, underwater colonies to humankind. The seabed of their homeworld contains numerous ruins pointing to a once-glorious past millennia ago, and their legends imply that Oro'ym once traveled the stars serving the Anunnaki. They are mere primitive now, however, happy for what human tech they can barter for. Primitive does not mean stupid — they are crafty and highly intelligent, and their underwater abilities make them highly prized sailors or artifact hunters.

Xenophobia

For most people living on the worlds of the *Fading Suns*, anyone different is immediately suspect. This includes those who manifest psionics, cybernetics, magic, genetic alterations, odd languages, odd knowledges, or is a member of an alien race. People stare at them in the streets, avoid them, refuse to deal with them, report



Racism

Fading Suns does not condone racism. The appearance of racist or bigoted characters or policies by human or alien governments is meant to reflect and address issues of bigotry that take place in the real world. It is a method of introducing dramatic issues into the passion play of the game universe, to be used or discarded in stories as the gamemaster and players see fit.

them to authorities or even attack them.

Most people, be they peasants, artisans, serfs, nobility, clergy or merchants, live in the same place their entire lives. Traveling to another city, much less another planet, is a significant event. Those who stand out, or who travel regularly, tend to stand apart from the rest of the population and, at the same time, gravitate to one another.

Alien races are treated with suspicion and even outright fear by the peasants of the Known Worlds. Aliens receive a more enlightened reception among freemen and the educated class, but there is suspicion even there, for fear or guilt over human treatment of aliens and the simmering bitterness displayed by these second-class citizens often leads to a separatist mentality.

Most aliens have suffered under humanity's rule. Some suffer in silence, but others take every opportunity they can to reclaim their lost heritage or take some measure of revenge against the race that so dominates their lives. There are a number of aboveground alien rights groups, and even more alien independence and supremacy organizations. By the same token, there are a number of secretive human groups that seem intent on suppressing or even destroying non-human races as well as those derived from humans.

The best-known alien organization is the Frontier for Alien Rights (FAR), which works with several guilds to make aliens the legal, political and economic equals of humans. FAR's opponents waver between calling it a pawn of the League and an organization dedicated to destroying humanity, but most people see it as a well-meaning but impotent group. Those in the know point to its constant success in rescuing and relocating refugees as proof that it either has strong allies or more power than it admits.

The Sargonites used to be a powerful organization dedicated to driving indigenous races off planets where humans wanted to live, but was believed destroyed during the Second Republic. Recent assassinations and harassment of leading alien activists by people claiming to be Sargonites has led to concerns that this cult might have reappeared — or might never have been destroyed at all. It has been most active in areas under Hazat control, but word of its activities has begun to come from across the Known Worlds.

Alliances

For aliens traveling off their homeworlds, it is a practical necessity to join or ally with a powerful group. In the fractured world of the **Fading Suns**, the person who stands alone often suffers for it, either from the machinations of rivals and their allies or because he has no one to stand beside him against the angry mob.

Members of noble houses often seek out aliens to join their

entourage, either hoping to add some exotica to their stable or out of a genuine desire for a new perspective. The League needs aliens for much the same reasons, although increased profit is also a motive: aliens have a higher success rate selling goods to their own kind than do human merchants. In addition, an alien bonded to the League seems safer to the yokels coming out for a Charioteer medicine show, although most aliens have no desire to be paraded around as freaks from foreign lands. Most Church sects see the admittance of aliens as a victory for the Church, a proof of its universal nature, and are eager to ordain them. However, most human peasants don't want an alien preaching at them, which leaves alien priests to either preach to their own, join a monastery or seek their calling among the stars.

Even for those who are members of a power group, it always helps to have friends to guard one's back. Tight-knit gangs or bands of chosen friends are common in the Known Worlds and aliens far from home need them more than most. Few do not benefit from an alien bandmate: Vorox are renowned for their loyalty no matter how badly they are treated (although trust is another matter entirely); Ur-Obun are well-respected for their wisdom and always seem to have some insight unavailable from other sources; and Ur-Ukar have bad temperaments and are hard to win over, but once won, they value friendships highly, especially because they are so hard to achieve in this conflictive world.

When traveling the worlds of the **Fading Suns**, only a fool goes alone.

Beyond the Borders

There are two major alien races outside of Human Space: the Vau and the Symbiots. The Vau are the oldest and most advanced race yet encountered (the Ur are older, but a living Ur has never been met, and nobody even knows what they looked like). The Symbiots are the newest star-faring race, born from a melding of human and Xolotl (a parasitic entity), although they have "converted" other races since their genesis and seem intent on claiming many worlds within humanspace.

The Vau

(Pronounced "Vow," heavily nasal at the end.)

The Vau are an ancient race who first achieved star travel in the 1800s (human time). Very little is known about their ways, and they purposefully keep it that way. The Vau actively guard their borders against human intrusion, but they rarely enter Human Space themselves. They seem to view Known Worlders as unwelcome children, although they are rarely overtly hostile to them. The philosophy seems to be, "As long as they stay on their side of the fence, we'll get along fine."

They have a caste society, with a peasant class on the bottom, a soldier class above, an artisan class above that, and a mandarin class (including priests) at the top. Little detail of the intricacies of Vau culture is understood, for few humans have been firsthand witness to it. The mandarins are not the leaders, but they are the only diplomats humans are allowed to meet. They seem to be bureaucrats for the most part, ferrying messages back and forth from the true Vau leaders, who have yet to be encountered.

There are three worlds along the borders of Known Space where



Vau maintain some form of presence, although humans are rarely allowed to see too deeply into their activities there. The fact that the Vau eventually allowed humans to colonize these worlds caused many to believe that the Vau were finally beginning to accept humans, but more cynical people (the colonists among them) claim that colonies were only allowed because the Vau want to scrutinize humans for weaknesses.

Appearance: The Vau are tall (averaging seven feet in height) and thin. Their skin is somewhat wrinkled, and they have nostrils in place of protruding noses. Their eyes are pupilless, although they vary in color, unlike those of the Children of the Ur. They dress in different fashions depending on their caste status: Soldiers invariably wear segmented and lacquered armor with an energy pike while mandarins wear long and ornate robes with elegant shoulder and headpieces.

Tech: Vautech is elegant and aesthetic, with graceful curving lines and seductive sigils. Most devices involve energy of some sort, even simple tools. Their technology was superior to humanity's during the Diaspora, but the Second Republic exceeded it in some areas. However, since the fall of the Republic, the Vau are again in the lead. They do not have a progressive society, and their technology has changed little since before the Second Republic. The basis of their tech, like their religion, medicine and culture, is energy. They are masters of forces. Energy shields were created from stolen Vautech; if you want a first-class shield, a Vau engineer is where you go to get it. However, since the Vau are forbidden to trade technology to humans, this is a secretive black market.

Symbiots

Shapeshifters. Parasites. Godless beasts who turn friends into foes. These are some of the various facts and/or beliefs humans have about Symbiots, but little is really understood about this new race and great threat to human hegemony over the Known Worlds.

The Symbiots claim to perceive a "lifeweb" stretching across space, knitting and weaving deeply into planets and across the stars. They are apparently out to claim supreme hunting rights over their food chain, or are protecting it from harm. Each Symbiot is a unique creature, and finds it hard to confederate with fellow Symbiots. Nonetheless, tribes or clans have developed among them, but nothing is known by humans about these family groups. They breed among themselves, creating bloodlines by selecting strong genetic traits, but also by parasitically "converting" other races (human, Ur-Obun or Ukar, Vorox). They claim the conversion is voluntary once the target has seen the Lifeweb, but Known Worlders don't believe this claim for a moment — they've seen firsthand what happens when friends and family have been converted: they turn into bestial killing machines or seductive parasites.

Symbiots have a "motherform," the base shape that they are most in tune with, and this is usually tied to a particular species of flora or fauna, such as an oak or a bear. They are molecularly amorphous (shapeshifters) and claim to have a special, mystical relationship with the universe. Some claim that they have awakened their cellular consciousness and exist in more than one dimension.

The Xolotl, the race that co-created the Symbiots, are believed to be extinct; those encountered on Chernobog are thought to have

been the remnants of a previously extant star-faring race, or the "pets" of an extinct star-faring race who seeded them throughout many worlds (fossil remnants have been discovered). No Xolotl has been encountered since the initial Symbiot conversion, although the Imperial Eye is said to be desperate to find one that they can study, hoping to glean a weakness with which to attack the Symbiots.

Appearance: A Symbiot's motherform is an organic blend of human/animal or human/plant, with a definite emphasis on the human side. A human Symbiot can pass among other humans as long as no one gets a real good look at him, but he will often be revealed if seen naked in full light. Some feature always betrays his true race, be it fur, carapace, fangs, claws, cat-eyes, leaves and branches, horns, tail, etc. But they are shapeshifters, and can take on different shapes as needed. Alien Symbiots, such as Ur-Obun or Vorox, look like representatives of their race with animal or plant feature exceptions.

Tech: Symbiot technology is organic and alive: living guns and bullets, swords and Krinth-flesh armor, acid-spitting Shexeez snakes, etc. They grow this nonsentient equipment from plants or raise them as animals. Each tribe has its own methods and special organic technology. Even their spaceships are organic (though few people have seen their weird, insectlike hulks).

Myths and Legends

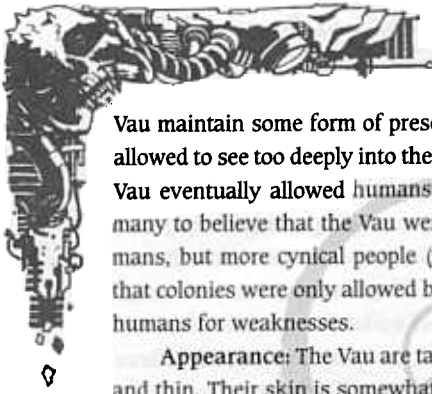
In an atmosphere of superstition, many myths and legends have arisen. The interpretation of strange and alien phenomena by authority figures is often considered more important than the phenomena itself. Fact is rarely separated from opinion, for the perceptions of the qualified observer (i.e., an Inquisitor) are considered part of the truth. The question becomes not whose facts are right or wrong, but whose are more valuable, worthwhile or "safe." The Church is the near-universally acknowledged leader in this arena. Non-Church approved interpretation of phenomena can be dangerous, and those spreading it may find themselves sought by the Inquisition.

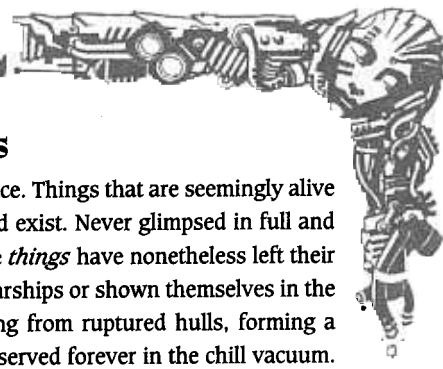
Below are some of the more prevalent mythologies of the people who populate the Known Worlds.

The Fading Suns

It is a true and universally acknowledged fact that the suns are fading. Even the Vau recognize this. But why? There are as many answers as there are opinions. The Church is undecided, and many sects battle over interpretation. In general, however, a consensus emerges: The suns are dying because history is over. The passion play is coming to an end. Man's time in the universe is nearly done, and what he has done with it will be tallied at the end and judged for good or ill. Many fear it will add up to more ill than good. Thus, humanity must unite to save itself, to show a united front of penance — hence, the importance of the Universal Church.

But different voices whisper other meanings when the Inquisition's collective back is turned. Some say the Vau or Symbiots are causing the suns to fade, and that their secrets should be wrested from them. Others dare to say it is the jumpgates that are at fault, that with every jump a star loses its vital energy and begins to die.





The Reborn Sun

A heresy is at work among the people, spread by a mysterious and mystical sect. It dares to bring hope to the people — but a hope, says the Church, clothed in dreams of Imperium and totalitarian rule. For this heresy says that, upon the day of the Emperor's coronation, a distant star was reborn. A sign of renewal amid the dying of suns, this star has become a symbol of rebellion for many disgruntled people.

Fierce arguments can be heard across the Known Worlds: This supposed star is small and insignificant. Some say it did not exist before, and that its birth was only happenstance. Others, using ancient lore to back them up, claim that the star's distance belies any direct involvement, for its birth/rebirth would have happened many years ago, its light only now reaching the Known Worlds. Others, also claiming ancient lore, say that all things are interconnected in nonlinear time, and that events today could influence events of yesterday. Star maps are consulted proving the star did not exist before, while other maps clearly show it did. Some maps show that the star has always been as bright as it is now, while some records note its dimming.

The birth of this "new sun" remains a confusing and as-yet unprovable issue. Whichever side one stands on, one is sure to make enemies.

Warlocks

Strangers are rarely welcome in most villages in the Known Worlds. Peasants are often violently superstitious, and all-too-ready to punish a stranger for some freak misfortune or turn of luck, from earthquakes to a string of gambling losses. Those strangers who betray psychic powers or even theurgy are especially feared. They are blamed for nearly all the evil that occurs in the lives of the unfortunate. When a famine lasts too long or a child dies, a warlock is surely at work. When a cow gives bad milk, it's a sure sign that a warlock has been prowling around the farm.

Those individuals who are blessed with occult powers — whether psychic abilities or divine magic — bear a sign that usually betrays their status as "different." These signs vary, and can be anything from an odd birthmark to religious stigmata. How the local peasantry reacts to such signs depends on how good or bad their fates have been of late, but it usually ranges from cold to hateful.

Those occultists accused of bad deeds are called warlocks, witches, sorcerers or black magicians. Even worse are those accused of demon worship, dubbed Antinomists by the Church. To be declared any of these terms is to be reviled and chased out of town — or worse. Most towns have hanging trees or burning poles for the punishment of such people.

In such an atmosphere, the development of psychic powers, once believed to be the next evolutionary step for humans, is rare. When a person discovers she has psychic powers, it is often cause for horror and shame. Those who seek to develop these powers must do so in secret, usually with the aid of underground covens.

Void Krakens

There are... *things*... in space. Things that are seemingly alive in the void, where no life should exist. Never glimpsed in full and never leaving direct proof, these *things* have nonetheless left their mark on the hulls of battered starships or shown themselves in the sea of floating crewmen flooding from ruptured hulls, forming a graveyard of unburied dead preserved forever in the chill vacuum.

Perhaps as a result of humankind's reacquaintance with magic, or perhaps merely as a delayed reaction to the Second Republic's vast expansion, these creatures began to appear between the stars in the very void of space soon after Alexius' coronation. Monsters came from out of the inky blackness and devoured starships whole, or left little behind to tell the tale. A new terror descended on humanity; space was no longer safe.

Once the matter had been researched, it was discovered that these mysterious ship destroyers had been around for a long time. Reports of disappearing ships were common during the Diaspora, but the voices of the few witnesses claiming to have seen monsters were unheeded, considered but the prattling of insane minds suffering from oxygen deprivation. The reports soon died down, but they reappeared during the Second Republic's frontier search and terraforming craze. Again, the crazed eyewitness accounts were unheeded. Instead, Vau were believed to be the culprits, using ships of a new, unknown design. Before the matter was ever resolved, the attacks ceased.

But now, in an age of extreme superstition, the new reports traveled among the populace like wildfire, igniting fears and legends. Some are convinced that these assaults are the work of a mysterious new race from worlds far from Human Space. Their cyclic activity implies that they either leave for long periods or go into hibernation. Whatever the reason, they have either returned or are again awake.

Vau have been questioned (diplomatically, of course), but they know no more than humans. It is clear, however, that they have suffered similar assaults throughout history and have many of the same questions as humanity.

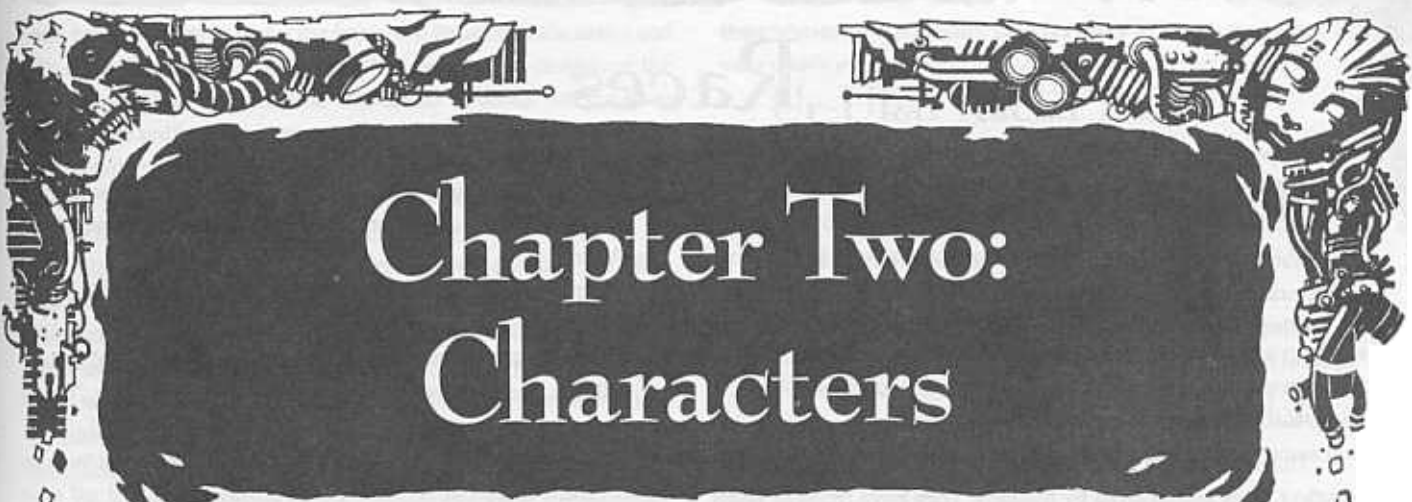
The stars lanes are now deadly paths to tread.

The Final Act

Big changes are at hand for the Known Worlds. Emperor Alexius has declared a new exodus, a search for the Lost Worlds of the Second Republic. A search for hope and a new beginning. He offers great rewards for those few who are bold enough to seize destiny. On the new frontier, humans and aliens face challenges never before seen. Noble or priest, guildsman or alien; all have an equal part to play in the next great act of history. The lights dim, the darkness deepens. The final passion play begins...







Chapter Two: Characters

Fading Suns can be played in any number of ways: As a hard-sci-fi game, with an emphasis on reality and science; a space opera with near-superheroic characters; or something in between — something more like the action and adventure epics seen in movies. In the variety of **Fading Suns** sourcebooks published by Holistic Design, this style is emphasized — something between reality and heroics, allowing room for both.

Characters come from a wide variety of backgrounds, worlds and experiences. It's rare to find someone who spends all his time focusing on just one lifestyle. For instance, a Hawkwood noble whose passion is dueling may only have one or two levels of the Noble character class; he spends the rest of his experience as a Soldier to gain that class's superior fighting feats. A Jakovian spy for House Decados may have most of his levels in Knave, but he may also be a Psychic — using levels from that class to perfect his mind-reading powers.

To reflect the diversity of backgrounds exhibited by Known Worlds adventurers, we suggest allowing characters to begin play at 3rd level. This gives them a broad multiclass array if they desire

to use it (although some characters — like the Brother Battle warrior monks — will focus all their levels on just one class). Beginning the game with 3rd-level characters also allows players to play 1st-level Vorox (as a two Hit Dice creature, a Vorox who gains a 1st-level character class is considered to have a total of three levels).

Gamemasters who prefer to run space opera-style epics may want to begin characters at even higher levels, while those seeking more down-to-earth dramas might begin lower.

Optional Rule: Armor Class Bonus

All characters receive a +1 AC bonus at 3rd level and another +1 bonus every three levels thereafter (6th, 9th, 12th, 15th, and 18th). These bonuses stack. This modifier represents a certain degree of wariness gained through experience.

Races

Human

Humans are by far the most populous interstellar race. The spora spread humanity to hundreds of star systems. Humans **Fading Suns: d20** have the same stats as in the basic d20 term rules.

Ur-Obun

The peaceful and philosophical Ur-Obun were among the first sentient races encountered by humans. They have received better treatment than most, although they still suffer the stigma of being non-humans — natural Psychics or Theurgists, at that — and usually suffer some degree of prejudice by unlearned peasants and the superstitious. However, thanks to Ven Lohji, an Ur-Obun who became one of the Prophet's disciples, the Obun escape the worst excesses of anti-alien bigotry.

Their mythic legends are rife with tales of ancient gods and their interventions into mortal lives, especially during a massive conflict that resulted in their cousins, the Ur-Ukar, being removed from Velisimil, the Obun homeworld, by a group of defeated deities. Imagine the Ur-Obun's surprise when they encountered their long-remembered cousins once more during the Ukar War.

These "gods," as evinced by the ruins they left behind on Velisimil, are surely none other than the mysterious Anunnaki megatech builders. For this reason, the Ur-Obun and Ur-Ukar are often called the "Children of the Ur."

Personality: The spiritual Ur-Obun are sought out as third-party diplomats and peacemakers. Unlike their aggressive brothers the Ukar, Obun culture values learning and philosophy over all other pursuits, and Obun have a knack at answering questions that have long plagued others.

Physical Description: Obun tend to be taller and thinner than humans, but not dramatically so. Their eyes have no irises, instead being "pools of ebon darkness, in which one can read either mystery — for the Obun — or menace — for their cousins, the Ukar." Ur-Obun rarely have facial or body hair, although they do grow dark brown or black manes. Their skin is usually bronze, brown, red or black.

Relations: Obun for the most part like humans, although they are often dismayed when humans' individualistic tendencies override their more communitarian values. They tend to be advocates for peace among all races. As for their cousins, the Ur-Ukar, they pity them but are nonetheless wary of the angry and violent exiles.

Religion: Obun follow two forms of native religion: Bintaru, a pre-contact spirituality; and Voavenlohjun, a revisionist mix of Bintaru animism and the teachings of Ven Lohji, one of the Prophet's disciples. Voavenlohjun is an officially recognized sect of the Church, but it is rarely practiced off Velisimil or by humans.

Language: Ur-Obun speak Lojmaa (also called "Obunish"), and most offworld Obun also speak Urthish and Uryari (Ukarish).

Names: Lojmaa, the Ur-Obun's main native language, is the

most common, with rarely any other cultural sounds.

Male Names: Amaar, Botan, Hulli, Omas, Romas, Sama, Thung, Vaar.

Female Names: Elaa, Freil, Lin, Maal, Neme, Oni, Tira, and S.

Family Names: Dzan, Elmaas, Lhast, Karm, Traam and Varzan.

Titles: Certain prefixes are added to a family name: "ma" = honored speaker, usually a priest; "vo" = noble scion (rare).

Alignment: Ur-Obun are usually lawful and they tend toward good alignments. Most Obun that are found off their homeworld (Velisimil) are less likely to follow the norm and vary widely in alignment.

Ur-Obun Racial Traits

- +2 Wisdom, -2 Constitution: Ur-Obun are very spiritual and serene, in tune with their minds. They tend to be frailler than humans.

- Medium-size: As Medium-sized creatures, Ur-Obun have no racial bonuses or penalties due to their size.

- Ur-Obun base speed is 30 feet.

- Ur-Obun receive the Gifted feat for free, choosing either psi-kinetic or telepathy. As a race, the Obun have awakened the powers of the mind. Unlike members of other sentient races who exhibit occult stigmas, Ur-Obun do not have occult stigmas (although almost everybody knows they are either psychic or capable of practicing sorcery).

- -2 penalty for Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidation (shared with humans, Uryari, and other alien races on Velisimil and Ur-Ukar). This penalty can be negated for a particular race by using the Xeno-Empathy feat.

- +2 racial bonus to mind-affecting effects: The Obun have developed strong minds through their years of battling the Ukar.

- +2 racial bonus on Concentration checks: The Ur-Obun prize meditation and teach it to offspring at an early age.

- +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against the Ur-Ukar: The Ur-Obun once fought the Ur-Ukar on their homeworld, an experience that teaches them the weaknesses of their cousin race.

- Proficient in all laser weapons: laser pistol, assault laser rifle, and laser rifle. Ur-Obun developed their own laser weapon technology before First Contact with humans.

- Automatic Languages: Urthish and Lojmaa (Obunish). Bonus Languages: All human dialects, Uryari (Ukarish), Etyri, Shantor, and Velisimilian (understand, not speak), and the Iëthi (marking language).

- Favored Class: Any.

Ur-Ukar

The Ur-Ukar built their own star-faring empire before meeting humans. Their First Contact resulted in the years-long Ukar War, a conflict wherein the Ukar pitted their cruel tactics and psychic powers against a scattered and divided humanity. But humankind

was brought together under the banner of Patriarch Palamedes and his newly founded Universal Church, following the gospels of the Prophet and his disciples. The war ended in defeat for the Ukar against the unified and more populous humanity. It has been one long defeat ever since, as Ukar society, confined to offworld reservations or the underground tunnels of its homeworld of Kordeth, turned against itself in internecine clan wars.

Ukari myths tell that their courageous gods, defeated in a battle against the Ur-Obun's sinister deities, rescued the Ukar from a terrible fate on their homeworld and placed them on Kordeth, a harsh, bitter world of endless caverns, so that they might grow strong and hard, warriors capable of fighting a final battle for liberation from all false powers. Xenologists assume that these "gods" were the Anunnaki.

Personality: Cousins to the peaceful Ur-Obun, the Ukari are bitter, violent criminals — or so most Known Worlders believe. They have suffered great oppression, due in part to their war with humanity upon the two races' first contact. The bitter Ur-Ukar fight in internecine clan wars amid the subterranean caves of their homeworld. Traditionally raised Ukari rarely even see light until age three or five, and are thus at home in dark, cramped spaces. Those who escape such bloody conflicts by going offworld often hire themselves out as assassins or mercenaries. Their subterranean origins give them an edge in nocturnal activities.

Physical Description: Like their Ur-Obun cousins, Ukar tend to be tall and thin, and their eyes are without irises. Unlike the Obun, Ukari are pale white in skin and hair. They adorn their bodies with *baa'mon* — scars, skin-carvings and tattoos that tell the personal history of each individual. They often come together in the dark to read one another's stories with their sensitive hands.

Relations: Traditionalist Ukar ally with outlaw clans and revile the allied clans, those who share power with the Merchant League and al-Malik nobles. Those Ukari who escape their homeworld or offworld reservations usually join a guild as a means of power and protection in a human-dominated universe. They tend to be fierce advocates of alien rights, to the point of demonstrating their views through violence.

Religion: Ukari can follow any sect of the Universal Church, but their native religion, Banjak, is considered horribly primitive and pagan by most Church priests. Banjak worshippers pay heed to the old gods, who even the Ukari now believe are the Anunnaki. Unlike most humans, however, they believe that these Ur beings live on, and can still be called to interfere in mortal affairs by those bold enough to call on them.

Language: Ur-Ukar speak Uryari (also called "Ukarish"), and most offworlders also speak Urthish and Lojmaa (Obunish).

Names: Modern Uryari sounds somewhat similar to Obunish Lojmaa, but it is more guttural.

Male Names: Burvak, Gulvak, Gunta, Omlak, Sadar, Tarka and Taudwon.

Female Names: Arba, Bwelpu, Funta, Lubuk and Urta.

Clan Names: *Allied* — Borduk, Malak, Morwec, Nolent, Suderik, Va T'laka; *Outlawed* — Feldak, Gotek, Miharshun, Siddir, Thlowyn, Tontha.

Alignment: Ur-Ukar are usually chaotic, and they tend toward neutrality or evil alignments. Most Ukar who are found off

their homeworld (Kordeth) are less likely to follow the norm, and vary wildly in alignment.

Ur-Ukar Racial Traits

- +2 Dexterity, -2 Charisma: Ukar are quick and agile, but their reputation as psychics and their cultural body scarifications scare and intimidate others.

- Medium-size: As Medium-sized creatures, Ur-Ukar have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

- Ur-Ukar base speed is 30 feet.

- Ur-Ukar receive the Gifted (Psi) feat for free. As a race, the Ukari have awakened the powers of their minds. Unlike members of other sentient races who exhibit occult potential, Ur-Ukar do not have occult stigmas (although almost everybody knows they are psychic).

- -2 penalty for Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Sense Motive checks against humans, Vorox, and other alien races (not Ur-Obun). This penalty can be negated for a particular race by taking the Xeno-Empathy feat.

- +2 to Spot and Listen checks. Ukari spend a lot of time in dark, underground caverns and have developed very keen senses.

- +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against the Ur-Obun: The Ur-Ukar once fought the Ur-Obun on their original homeworld of Velisimil, and legendry teaches them the weaknesses of their cousin race.

- Automatic Languages: Urthish and Uryari (Ukarish). Bonus Languages: All human dialects, Lojmaa (Obunish), Etyri, and Shantor Windspeech (understand, not speak).

- Favored Class: Any.

Vorox

Native sentients of the brutal world of Ungavorox, these multilimbed monstrosities are highly valued as shock troops or guerrilla warriors. Only "civilized" Vorox are allowed to leave their homeworld, for the "feral" kind are considered too unruly and dangerous. But most Known Worlders are hard-pressed to tell the difference between the two. Civilized Vorox have their poisonous claws removed to prove their commitment to civilization. Noble Vorox are allowed to keep one claw as a sign of their rank. Civilized Vorox societies are proud of these declawing ceremonies, and view the sacrifice of their native weaponry as a true sign of civilization — by forcing themselves to depend on tools (swords, guns, etc.) to defend themselves against Ungavorox's hideously dangerous lifeforms, they prove over and over how technology trumps nature. Feral Vorox — those who live in the jungles, heedless of humans and their civilization — consider it a mark of weakness to lose one's claws.

Personality: Civilized Vorox pride themselves on their abilities to mimic human customs. Those from families boasting multiple generations of civilized Vorox are usually cultural leaders whose families have contributed distinct and unique elements to the Vorox's own civilized culture. Ferals live in the jungles and disdain all forms of human-derived behavior.

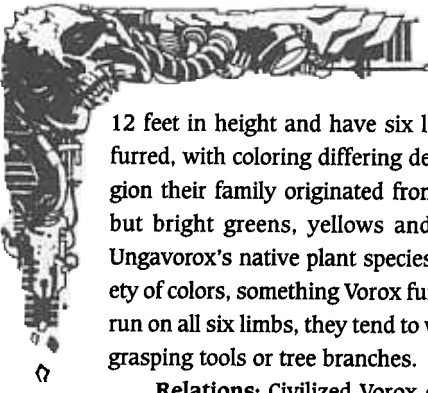
Vorox traditionally run in packs, called *angeraks*. Even under civilized influence, they feel the need for constant companionship, even from non-Vorox.

Physical Description: Vorox tend to stand between nine and



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12 feet in height and have six limbs. Their bodies are completely furred, with coloring differing depending on the Ungavoroxian region their family originated from: usually brown, black or white, but bright greens, yellows and oranges are not unknown, for Ungavorox's native plant species display a wide and intense variety of colors, something Vorox fur seems to mimic. While Vorox can run on all six limbs, they tend to walk on two and use the others for grasping tools or tree branches.

Relations: Civilized Vorox culture shows the early influence of the Li Halan, the noble house closest in proximity to Ungavorox. They were the first (after early Second Republic xenologists) to attempt to socialize what they deemed to be savages. Hence, Vorox get along well with humans and respect them, sometimes even inviting humans into their *angeraks*.

As large and dangerous as a Vorox is, there is a reason they run in packs: the native predators of their homeworld are even larger and more dangerous (the dreaded megafauna grackle fox, for instance). Vorox not only need packmates for tactical survival strategies, but also for emotional support and comfort. A Vorox without *angerak* mates becomes somewhat manic and unhinged, until he finds a pack to surround himself with.

Religion: Most civilized Vorox follow the ways of the Orthodox sect of the Universal Church, as taught to them by members of House Li Halan. Some Vorox follow a syncretic mix of native shamanism and Pancreator worship called *Badaswaba*.

Language: Vorox speak Voroxish, and most offworlders also speak Urthish.

Names: Voroxish imitates the native sounds of Ungavorox, formalizing them into an onomatopoeic structure. Since some of the original sounds are quite alien to humans, Voroxish tends to sound like a jumble of repeating vowels, broken only by occasional consonants.

Male and Female Names: Bolobanga, Balbalba, Galagadang, Grontagar, Lalangra, Kadang Kadang, Krumunga, Mongomok, Onggngarak, Pulbapar, Umugtar.

Alignment: Vorox can be of any alignment, although feral Vorox and even civilized Vorox raised on Ungavorox tend to be chaotic. Those who attempt to emulate their closest human neighbors, the human Li Halan, strive to be lawful.

Vorox Racial Traits

- **Base 2 Hit Dice:** +2d8. As a 2 Hit Dice creature, a Vorox who gains a 1st level in a character class is considered to be a 3rd-level character. His level equivalent is class level +2.

- +4 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Intelligence, -2 Charisma: Vorox are tough, but they don't tend to hone their minds and manners as much as their bodies.

- +2 base attack bonus.

- +2 AC natural armor: A Vorox's hide is tough.

- **Large-size:** As Large-sized creatures, Vorox suffer a -1 AC penalty when fighting Medium-sized creatures, but they gain increased reach: 10 ft. In addition, they gain the following benefits: +4 grapple against Medium-sized targets, +4 Strength checks for bull rushes and trips against Medium-sized targets. However, they also suffer the following drawbacks: -4 Hide (they're just too big to effectively hide), and suits of armor cost double and weigh twice as much.

- **Six limbs:** Vorox have six limbs, four of which can be used as arms while standing upright on the remaining two. Vorox, like humans, can use one extra limb as an off-hand, but they suffer the normal penalties for doing so. Those who study the Graa martial art can learn to use their additional limbs to make extra off-hand actions. See the Drox and Throx feats in the FEATS chapter for more details.

If a Vorox gets down on four or six legs, he gains a +4 stability bonus against bull rush and trip attacks.

- **Vorox base speed is 40 feet or 50 feet when on all sixes.** When climbing, a Vorox can move at half his speed (20 ft.) as a full-round action, or half that far (10 ft.) as a move-equivalent action. If he devotes all six of his limbs to the climb, his gets his full base speed (40 ft.) as a full-round action and half that (20 ft.) as a move-equivalent action.

- **Vorox train in the following skills at an early age, augmented by instinct:** Climb +3, Listen +3, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +3.

- **Scent Ability:** Vorox can discriminate others by their scent or track them by their scent trails. Vorox can identify familiar odors just as people identify familiar sights. The range for detecting another by smell is 30 ft. (60 ft. if you are upwind from the scent's source, or 15 ft. if you are downwind of it). This range is doubled for strong smells (such as smoke) or tripled for overpowering smells (skunk musk, etc.). You can detect the presence of someone or something within the above ranges, but not its location, unless it is within 5 ft. of you. You make Wisdom checks to track others by their scent trails. The DC for a fresh trail is 10, but this can be positively modified by strong odors or the passage of multiple people in a group, and negatively modified by time (-2 per hour since the trail was made). Otherwise, use the rules for the Track feat, but ignore surface conditions and visibility modifiers. Water wipes out a scent trail (which is why the pursued often try to cross streams, to throw off the hounds). False odors — deliberately planted to throw off or confuse pursuit — make the DC 20 for any Wilderness Lore checks.

- **Noble and feral Vorox can deliver poison with a claw attack;** non-noble civilized Vorox are declawed. To retain a claw, noble Vorox must take at least one level in the Noble character class and gain the Noble Claw feat.

- **Vorox cannot naturally awaken psychic powers or practice theurgy** (although they may become Beastfriends). Hence, they may gain the Gifted feat (the prerequisite for occult powers) only with gamemaster permission. Possible methods of awakening include exposure to Soul Shards, Philosophers Stones or even miracles.

- -2 penalty for Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Sense Motive checks against humans, children of the Ur, and other alien races. This penalty can be negated for a particular race by taking the Xeno-Empathy feat.

- Vorox are proficient in using glankesh swords.

- **Automatic Languages:** Voroxish and Urthish. Bonus Languages: All human dialects, Latin, Lojmaa (Obunish), Uryari (Ukarish), Etyri, Shantor Windspeech (understand, not speak).

- **Favored Class:** Any.



Character Classes

Beastfriend

The Vuldrok barbarian common folk tell of some who can speak to animals, who learn from them the secrets of nature. Be they hermit, woodsman or even shaman, these rare individuals are called Beastfriends, for they always travel with a bonded animal, a peculiar or alien creature that might otherwise hide from humans — or try to eat them.

While such people are known among the Vuldrok, they are practically unheard of in the Known Worlds. They do, however, exist even there, but are not often recognized as such, for peasants and inquisitors are a superstitious lot. Liable to condemn such witchery without fully understanding it. Hence, Known Worlds Beastfriends tend to travel under other guises, as guildsmembers or freemen, labeling their unique companions as “trained pets” rather than the wild but loyal beasts they are.

Adventures: Most Beastfriends live simple lives in deep wildernesses, usually known to fellows of their race as recluses or hermits. Some, however, brave the dangers of space travel to find fortune among the stars, taking their animal cohorts with them. Indeed, rarely is a Beastfriend ever separated from his animal cohort.

Characteristics: Beastfriends bond with a single animal, usually one that has peculiar or unique abilities, such as the uncanny luck of the malador phantom or the psychic tracking sense of the zargat. As their bond deepens over time, they gain supernatural abilities to communicate with or borrow characteristics from their cohorts. High-level Beastfriends can even assume the shapes of animals.

Background: The Vuldrok barbarian cultures recognize Beastfriends and respect them, viewing them as those gifted with power by the spirits or the natural world — to anger them is also to anger the spirits, which brings bad luck. Known Worlds, however, have no interstellar traditions concerning them; although a few backwoods communities recognize them by various names (“animal-folk,” “were-kin”).

Their status has caused a bit of controversy among Church clerics who are aware of them, initiating debates as to their spiritual status: Do they serve good or evil? Some priests claim that Saint Ven Lahji, the Ur-Obun disciple of the prophet, was a Beastfriend, as was the legendary Saint Mynah of Grail. Others, however, perhaps fearful of some of the creatures known to travel with Beastfriends, recommend forcing them to become Penitent, as the Church does with psychics. The issue is undecided as yet, al-

though those who view the Beastfriends favorably are in the majority — for now.

Races: Members of any race can become Beastfriends. Ur-Obun, usually those who still practice the native religion of Bintaru, are specially accepting of them, as are Vorox, who respect anyone who can tame a wild beast.

Alignment: Beastfriends tend toward neutrality, viewing questions of good and evil as issues for overly civilized beings to quibble over, not the true domain of nature, which recognizes none, if any, moral distinctions.

Other Classes: The Beastfriend makes a good scout, for her animal cohort can provide stealthy advance information on a region. Those with animals who pick locks (shazzles) make good thieves. Beastfriends are easily accepted into guilds, and there are no classes specifically opposed to them. Vuldrok Starwolves may extend special respect toward them.

Game Rule Information

Beastfriends have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Charisma and Wisdom are important for a Beastfriend.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d8.

Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Beastfriend's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (Nature) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Swim (Str), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points for 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the Beastfriend.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Beastfriend is proficient with the use of all simple weapons and light and medium armor. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synth silk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Life Sense: At 1st level, a Beastfriend can detect the presence of animal life (including people but not plants) in a 10-foot radius around her (+5 feet per level). To do so, she must spend a Wyrd point and make a Concentration check as a standard action against DC 20. Weakened, wounded, hibernating or



Art by Arva Natalia



TABLE 2—1: THE BEASTFRIEND

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Life Sense, Wyrd
2 nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Animal Cohort
3 rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Communion
4 th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Wild Sense
5 th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
6 th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Symbiosis Immunity
7 th	+5	+5	+2	+5	Wild Gift
8 th	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6	Bonus social feat, Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked)
9 th	+6/+1	+3	+3	+6	Venom Immunity
10 th	+7/+2	+7	+3	+7	Wild Mind
11 th	+8/+3	+7	+3	+7	Bonus social feat
12 th	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8	
13 th	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8	Wild Cry
14 th	+10/+5	+9	+4	+9	Bonus social feat
15 th	+11/+6/+1	+9	+5	+9	
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	Wild Body (cohort form)
17 th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	Bonus social feat
18 th	+12/+8/+3	+11	+6	+11	
19 th	+12/+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	Wild Body (any form)
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+12	Bonus social feat

dying beings are harder to sense (DC 25). Dead bodies cannot be sensed. Discriminating lifeforms, however, is not so easy. A Knowledge (nature) check may be required to distinguish the lifeforce of a swarm of bees from the small shazzele hiding in the undergrowth. This is a supernatural ability.

Wyrd: At 1st level, a Beastfriend gains Wyrd points. The amount is equal to her Wisdom ability modifier. Every time she rises in a Beastfriend level thereafter, she gains an additional amount of Wyrd equal to her Wisdom ability modifier. If this ability modifier is altered, the Beastfriend's Wyrd points also increase or decrease accordingly.

If she trains in another class, she gains only one new Wyrd point per each level advancement in the other class (unless it is the Psychic or Theurgist class, in which case she gets her full Wisdom modifier per level).

Animal Cohort: At 2nd level, a Beastfriend gains an animal cohort, an empathically bonded animal with whom she can easily communicate. This is a 3 Hit Dice creature, although it could be more than one creature, as long as each animal has at least 1 Hit Die and the total Hit Dice for the group does not equal more than three.

Until she gains the 3rd level Communion ability, she must speak to the animal to communicate with it. It will understand general commands from her even if it is not trained to know them. It will never attack her (unless coerced to do so by an occult power, although it gets a Will save to resist) and will attempt to save her from harm. It behaves well around those she indicates as friends, but is not necessarily friendly to them.

The Beastfriend gains a +2 bonus to any Animal Empathy or Animal Handling checks attempted with animals of the same spe-

cies as her cohort.

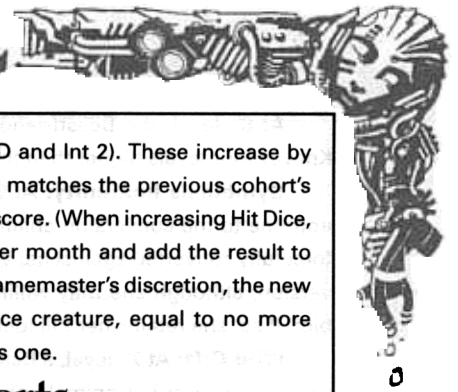
We recommend that players choose from the list of 3 Hit Dice animals in the sidebar. GMs may create their own additions to this list.

Choosing an Animal Cohort is a supernatural ability.

Communion: At 3rd level, a Beastfriend's bond with her cohort deepens, allowing her to impart unvoiced telepathic commands to it. The range for this communication has a similar progression to occult powers (see *Range* in the OCCULT POWERS chapter). It begins at medium range and increases by one measurement for every two levels the Beastfriend progresses (long range at 5th level, extreme range at 7th, grand range at 9th, planetwide range at 11th, solar-system-wide at 13th, and unlimited at 15th). Use the Animal Empathy skill for the skill ranks. The Beastfriend activates this power by performing a standard action and spending one Wyrd point. Communion lasts 10 minutes plus one minute per skill rank in Animal Empathy (no skill check required). Once activated, it is a free action to send a telepathic command.

In addition, a Beastfriend can lend two different abilities to her cohort at the same ranges — breathing and hit-point stabilization. If the animal is trapped in an airless environment, she can breathe for it. If it suffers negative hit points, she can expend one of her own hit points to stabilize it (she does not have to wound herself; she simply marks off the point). Either activity is a full-round action requiring concentration (this must be kept up for as long as the animal breathes its Beastfriend's air, but it takes only one round to stabilize it). There is no Wyrd point cost, nor is any skill check necessary. (Note: The cohort cannot lend its breathing or hit-point stabilization until the Beastfriend has gained the 7th level Wild Gift ability.)





Animal Cohort Basics

Animal cohorts have the following special considerations:

Hit Dice: Once the Beastfriend reaches 3rd level, treat her cohort as equal in level (for effects related to Hit Dice).

Hit Points: Each time the Beastfriend gains a level, her cohort can roll its hit die type (d6, d8, etc.) and add the result to its hit points.

Attacks: Use the Beastfriend's base attack bonus, but add the cohort's Dexterity or Strength modifier (whichever is higher) to get its melee attack bonus for unarmed attacks. Damage is normal for a creature of its kind.

Saving Throws: Use the Beastfriend's base saving throw bonuses if they are better than the cohort's.

Intelligence: An animal cohort begins with normal animal intelligence (Int 2), but it gets smarter as its Beastfriend rises in level. For each level the Beastfriend gains after adopting the cohort, raise the cohort's Intelligence by one. Its maximum Intelligence is equal to the Beastfriend's.

Improved Evasion: If the cohort is subjected to an attack that allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, it takes no damage if its save is successful, and only half damage if it fails. This is an extraordinary ability.

Losing a Cohort

Beastfriends are intimately tied to their animal cohorts, emotionally becoming as one creature. The loss of a cohort can leave a Beastfriend despondent, levying a -2 morale penalty on all attacks, skill checks, etc. This does not often last too long, however, for the Beastfriend is tied to life and cannot help but go on living. Eventually, a new cohort will come to her, attracted by her need, and offer itself for adoption. This could be a sibling or offspring of the lost cohort, or an entirely new creature. It will appear within d%+30 days after the loss of the first cohort. Once a new cohort is adopted, the morale penalties go away. (Note: This arrival is not supernatural; a cohort cannot travel between the stars to reach its new Beastfriend. It could, however, be part of a traveling circus troupe or other similar animal transport group.)

A second cohort does not immediately inherit its predecessor's Hit Dice and other level bonuses. It takes time for its bond to grow strong enough to match its Beastfriend's power. Although the cohort uses its Beastfriend's full attack and saving throw bonuses, it has half the Hit Dice and Intelligence of

its predecessor (minimum 3 HD and Int 2). These increase by one per month until the cohort matches the previous cohort's Hit Dice and Intelligence ability score. (When increasing Hit Dice, roll the proper die type once per month and add the result to the cohort's hit points.) At the gamemaster's discretion, the new cohort can be a greater Hit Dice creature, equal to no more than the Beastfriend's level plus one.

Animal Cohorts

Stats for the following creatures may be found in the **GAMEMASTERING** chapter.

Chervin: A blend between a goat-analog and horse-analog, the Chervin is native to Hira. It is considered to be a light warhorse.

Doggoth: A doglike creature bred to sit fat and content at a noble's table — and to suddenly leap at enemies with hidden bundles of muscle.

Evik: A hawklike bird native to Grail, with beautiful plumage, deadly claws and keen eyesight.

Feshaal: A Severan snake. It is poisonous and has camouflage scales.

Gurdvulf: Once thought extinct, this wolflike animal native to Byzantium Secundus has been rediscovered in Vuldrok space on the worlds of Wolf's Lament. A few have made their way back by to the Known Worlds as favored pets of Vuldrok pirates. They have strong tracking and combat skills.

Malador Phantom: Native to Pentateuch, these unusual animals were spread throughout the Known Worlds by the Merchant League. They look like white-furred monkeys with blue faces and two pairs of red eyes. The Eskatonic Order considers them somewhat holy. Phantoms seem to experience uncanny luck and can learn simple sign language.

Shazzle: A raccoon/minklike animal (pictured on the shoulder of the lady at the beginning of this chapter). They can be trained to pick locks, open lids and turn knobs. Once native to Aragon, they were spread across the Known Worlds during the Second Republic as pets.

Skerra Cat: A large green tiger, genetically bred from Urthish tiger stock on Aylon, but spread to other al-Malik worlds. They are good hunters.

Zargat: A batlike animal native to Pandemonium, the Zargat was once believed extinct — until the Cataclysms revealed that they were just hiding. It is practically blind; instead of sonar, it possesses a psychic tracking ability to sense obstacles and prey (usually insects).

Communion also allows the Beastfriend to make Animal Empathy skill checks against any animal as a full-round action (rather than the one-minute time usually required). In addition, penalties do not apply for non-native animals, regardless of the Beastfriend's homeworld. Finally, skill check retries against the same animal may be attempted (+5 DC each successive attempt).

This is a supernatural ability.

Wild Sense: At 4th level, a Beastfriend gains the ability to see, hear and feel her cohort's sensory perceptions. The cohort must be within Communion range (see above, although the maxi-

mum range for this ability is solar-system-wide). The Beastfriend activates this power by performing a standard action and spending one Wyrd point. It lasts 10 minutes plus one minute per skill rank in Animal Empathy (no skill check required). Once activated, it is a free action to sense the cohort's perceptions.

Uncanny Dodge: At 5th level, a Beastfriend gains the extraordinary ability to sense danger before it strikes. This animal-like intuition allows her to retain her Dex bonus and never be caught flat-footed, even when attacked by invisible enemies. She loses her bonus if she is immobilized.



At 8th level, the Beastfriend cannot be flanked (except by Knaves four levels higher than the Beastfriend).

Symbiosis Immunity: At 6th level, a Beastfriend becomes immune to the conversion abilities of Symbiots. She cannot be forcefully converted against her will or tricked into accepting conversion, although she may willingly choose to become a Symbiot. If so, she retains her full identity and memories.

Wild Gift: At 7th level, a Beastfriend gains the ability to borrow a trait from her animal cohort (at the same range as Wild Sense), such as scent, nightvision, stealthiness, natural weaponry, etc. She cannot borrow a trait her cohort does not possess. The Beastfriend activates this power by performing a standard action and spending two Wyrd points plus one per extra trait borrowed. Wild Gift lasts 10 minutes plus one minute per skill rank in Animal Empathy (no skill check required). The type of action required to use the trait depends on the trait; see the cohort's description.

Also at this level, the animal cohort can breathe for the Beastfriend and stabilize her hit points, as described in Communion, above.

Bonus Social Feat: At 8th level, and every three levels thereafter (11th, 14th, 17th, and 20th), a Beastfriend gains a bonus social feat. These feats can only be chosen from the social feat group. (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels; a Beastfriend is not limited to social feats when choosing those feats.)

Venom Immunity: At 9th level, a Beastfriend becomes immune to organic poisons and toxins, including the deadly poison of the Ungavoroxian Grackle Fox. This does not include mineral poisons or gases.

Wild Mind: At 10th level, a Beastfriend gains the ability to command other animals to do her bidding. As with Communion, commands can be conveyed telepathically, although the Beastfriend must see the animals he wishes to command (he may use Wild Sense for this). Animals cannot resist this order unless they are psychically or theurgically protected (or are another Beastfriend's cohorts), in which case they get to make Will saves (DC = 10 + 1/2 Beastfriend levels + Wisdom modifier).

Wild Mind is a full-round action during which the Beastfriend must concentrate. She must spend two Wyrd points per round and can issue a new command each round she does so. The effect of each command lasts until the commanded animal has executed it (or tried to the best of its ability to do so). She can affect one creature for every one of her Beastfriend levels.

Wild Cry: At 13th level, a Beastfriend can summon animals from the region to her aid. The range is the same as her Communion ability. She can call 13 Hit Dice worth of creatures: either one large 13 Hit Dice beast or many smaller animals. She can add one Hit Die to this total per level after 13th.

She must spend three Wyrd points and make an Animal Empathy skill check; the result is compared against the animals' initial indifferent attitudes to determine their new attitudes toward her. A 15 makes them friendly (they will defend her but not initiate attacks for her), and a 30 makes them helpful (they will attack for her). Some animal types (predators, malign alien beasts) may be considered initially unfriendly or even hostile; unless won over to at least friendly, they will not respond to the call.

Those answering the call travel at their top speeds, arriving within 1d4 rounds per 10 feet away they were when the cry goes out. (The GM can determine the initial distances for each creature by rolling d% and multiplying the result by 10.) The GM should devise encounter charts for different regions and biomes, providing random samplings of local fauna that can respond to the call. Such charts will appear in future sourcebooks or on Holistic Design's website (www.fadingsuns.com).

The effect lasts for one hour plus one per Beastfriend level, after which time the creatures will run away unless one additional Wyrd point is spent every hour afterwards.

Wild Body: At 16th level, a Beastfriend gains the ability to shapeshift into the form of her animal cohort, gaining all the abilities of that creature (including extraordinary ones). Shapeshifting is a full-round action requiring the expenditure of four Wyrd points. The new shape lasts until the Beastfriend chooses to revert to her normal shape.

At 19th level, the Beastfriend may shapeshift into any animal form, so long as the animal has equal or fewer Hit Dice than her level.

Brother Battle

The monks of the Brother Battle order are reputed to be most disciplined and competent warriors in the Known Worlds. Their rigorous training begins in childhood and continues without abatement for the rest of their lives. Those who leave the order are rare, but such a thing has been known, especially for those who join other Church sects. The special martial techniques, weapon masteries and theurgic rites of the order are forbidden knowledge for those outside the order, and anyone caught teaching them is dealt with severely.

Adventures: The order is called upon by many factions to defend various sites from enemy assault or from evil. It provides elite ground forces, often relying on the orbital bombardment capabilities of the Muster guild to weaken opposition before storming in. Brother Battle monks also guard many pilgrimage routes, defending pilgrim starships from boarding actions or planetary pilgrimage sites from thieves or despoilers.

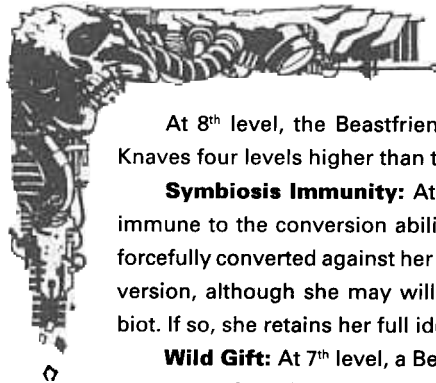
It is not unknown for a warrior-monk to join a noble entourage for the express purpose of defending it against danger, or to even travel alone, righting wrongs.

Characteristics: Brother Battle monks spend years training to become the most effective agents of the Pancreator's justice in the sinful universe. Their strict discipline and martial training make them efficient soldiers, although they rarely heed secular military commands. Despite the order's name, women can become monks.

Master of martial arts, weapon attacks, firearms, and even theurgic rites, the Brother Battle monk does it all. However, they rarely multiclass, for to do so is to leave the order (see below).

Background: Most Brother Battle monks are handed over by their parents during infancy to be raised by the order. Upbringing is harsh and disciplined but not with a certain degree of comradeship. A monk is taught early on to work together with fellow members of the order and to oppose a fellow Brother Battle only if the need is dire.

While it is possible to join the order after adolescence, such



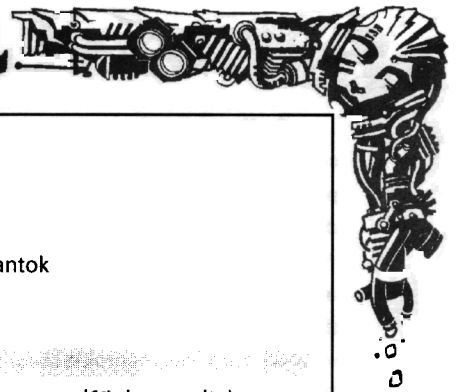


Table 2—2: The Brother Battle

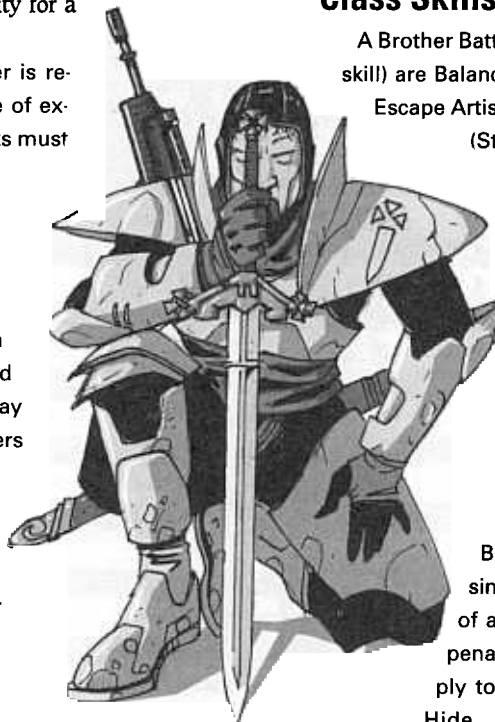
Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Unarmed Damage	Special
1 st	+1	+2	+0	+0	1d3	Ordination (Apprentice) Mantok
2 nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	1d3	Bonus social feat
3 rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	1d3	
4 th	+4	+4	+1	+1	1d3	Athletic Prowess
5 th	+5	+4	+1	+1	1d4	Theurgy (choose primary canon and 1 st -degree rite)
6 th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	1d4	Divine Courage
7 th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+2	1d4	Primary theurgic canon's 2 nd -degree rite, bonus social feat
8 th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+2	1d4	Divine Endurance
9 th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+3	1d4	Primary theurgic canon's 3 rd -degree rite
10 th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+3	1d6	Bonus social feat
11 th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+3	+3	1d6	Secondary theurgic canon and 1 st -degree rite
12 th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+4	+4	1d6	Lethal Touch (1/day)
13 th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+4	+4	1d6	Secondary theurgic canon's 2 nd -degree rite
14 th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+4	+4	1d6	Bonus social feat
15 th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+5	+5	1d8	Secondary theurgic canon's 3 rd -degree rite
16 th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+5	+5	1d8	Lethal Touch (2/day)
17 th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+5	1d8	Tertiary theurgic canon and 1 st -degree rite
18 th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+6	1d8	
19 th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+6	1d8	Tertiary theurgic canon's 2 nd -degree rite
20 th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+6	1d10	Lethal Touch (3/day), bonus social feat

monks rarely rise high in rank or level, finding it hard to catch up to those who have learned to fight since childhood.

Races: It is rare for anyone besides a human to join the order. While alien children are sometimes accepted, they are just as often rejected if the monks feel they are incapable of raising them properly away from their own kind. While Vorox Brother Battle monks are extremely rare, they are not completely unknown; their pack instinct is a highly desired quality for a Brother Battle.

Alignment: The Brother Battle order is renowned for its stern discipline in the face of extreme danger. Brother Battle warrior-monks must be lawful.

Other Classes: Unlike certain other Church clergy members, Brother Battle freely use high-tech weaponry, such as artillery, tanks and even blasters. They do so, however, as a special dispensation toward battling evil. While they don't tend to look down on Guilders and Techies the way other priests do, they often feel that members of those classes succumb to the sin of technosophy — excessive love of technology. They, like Priests, are wary around Psychics, and they distrust Knaves. Otherwise, they work well with other classes.



Acolyte Osho Sanzi

Game Rule Information

Brother Battle monks have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Strength, Dexterity and Constitution all help a Brother Battle in combat.

Hit Die: d10.

Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Brother Battle's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Escape Artist (Dex), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Military, Religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Occultcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), Use Rope (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points for 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of a Brother Battle.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Brother Battle is proficient with the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of armor and shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synth silk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.



Ordination: Apprentice: At level, a Brother Battle gains the social feat Ordination, gain

nal details.

Mantok: All Brother Battle warrior monks are trained in the use of Mantok, a unique unarmed fighting style named for Mantius, the Prophet's disciple (also known as "The Soldier") whose purview is Protection. Mantok is taught only to members of the Brother Battle Order. There are harsh penalties for teaching its secrets to outsiders.

A Brother Battle fighting unarmed gains the benefits of the Improved Unarmed Strike feat and thus does not provoke attacks of opportunity from armed opponents whom she attacks. The damage that his unarmed attacks inflict is normal instead of subdual, unless it is specified as subdual before an attack is made.

In addition, Mantok practitioners gain a +2 bonus to one chosen physical action skill or perception skill when performed in combat. A practitioner may choose one of the following: Balance, Climb, Jump, Listen, Spot, Swim or Tumble.

Bonus Social Feats: A Brother Battle monk receives a bonus social feat at 2nd, 7th, 10th, 14th and 20th levels. These feats can be chosen only from the social feat group. (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels; a Brother Battle is not limited to social feats when choosing those feats.)

Athletic Prowess: At 4th level, a Brother Battle monk gains the feat from the following list (choose one): Endurance, Iron Will, or Run.

Theurgy: At 5th level, a Brother Battle monk gains the ability to perform theurgic rites. He does not need the Gifted feat; he

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amount is equal to his key ability modifier for his primary theurgic canon, and is raised by that amount each level thereafter. If this ability modifier is altered, the Brother Battle's Wyrd points also increase or decrease accordingly.

Some canons have a rare 4th degree rite; this may be learned after the Brother Battle has gained the canon's 3rd degree power, at 10th and 16th levels (this is in addition to the 10th level bonus social feat and the 16th level Lethal Touch).

Divine Courage: At 6th level, a Brother Battle monk gains immunity to fear (occult or otherwise).

Divine Endurance: At 8th level, a Brother Battle monk gains a +2 to all checks for performing a physical action that extends over a period of time (running, holding your breath, swimming, etc.). This bonus stacks with the Endurance feat and any Mantok

Lethal Touch: A Brother Battle with this ability can make a normal unarmed attack as a touch attack, denying the target any Armor Class bonus from physical armor. In addition, touch attacks do not activate energy shields. This ability can be used once a day at 12th level, and an additional time per day at 16th and 20th level.

Ex-Brother Battle Monks

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Table 2—3: The Guilder

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
2 ^d	+1	+2	+2	+2	Guild Affiliation, (As: Bonus social feat
	+2	+2		+2	
4 th	+3	+3	+3	+3	Bonus social feat
5 th	+3	+3	+3	+3	Bonus social feat
6 th	+4	+4	+4	+4	
	+5	+4	+4	+4	Bonus social feat
8 th	+6/+1	+5	+5	+5	Bonus social feat
9 th	+6/+1	+5	+5		
10 th	+7/+2	+6	+6	+6	Bonus social feat
11 th	+8/+3	+6	+6	+6	Bonus social feat
12 th	+9/+4	+7	+7	+7	
	+9/+4	+7			Bonus social feat
14 th	+10/+5	+8	+8	+8	Bonus social feat
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+9	+9	+9	Bonus social feat
17 th	+12/+7/+2	+9	+9	+9	Bonus social feat
18 th	+13/+8/+3	+10	+10	+10	
19 th	+14/+9/+4	+10	+10	+10	Bonus social feat
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+11	+11	+11	Bonus social feat



Guilder

The guilds may be all that remain of the giant corporations of the Second Republic, but they have carved out an important place in the Empire. While nobles may snub them and priests may call them sinners, the merchants know they provide a necessary service — one neither the houses nor the sects could get along without.

The guilds of the Merchant League are many and pervasive, but only five of them have achieved status as interstellar power-brokers: the Charioteer star-pilots and merchants marine, the high-tech Engineers, the black-market Scavengers, the mercenary soldiers of the Muster, and the bureaucratic Reeves. These five hold the reins of power within the League and present a united front against the combined power of the noble houses and the Church. Without their support, no other faction could long maintain interstellar sway. The guilds are thus the powers behind the throne, kingmakers but not rulers themselves — at least, not yet....

Adventures: Guilders hire themselves out to other factions as pilots, engineers, thieves, bodyguards, advocates (lawyers), or any other type of trained labor imaginable. Those who work on their own, plying the stars as free traders or guns-for-hire, seek out exciting situations — that's where the money is.

Characteristics: Guilders are specialists in their areas of expertise, be it piloting or driving vehicles or hawking wares in an open market. Their broad array of skills allows them to take on any number of jobs or missions.

Background: Guilders are freemen or serfs freed from servitude. They can come from a variety of backgrounds, either high-tech urban cities or rural hamlets. Most join the guild as apprentices during their teen years, achieving full guild member status when they come of age. As freemen or commoners, Guilders tend either to root for or support the common man over the interests of nobles, or else despise the weakness of the lower classes, using their guild status to get as far away from their upbringing as possible.

Races: Guilds accept members of any race into their ranks. They are the most egalitarian institutions in the Known Worlds as far as membership is concerned, even more so than the Church, although they often hold their privileged status over others.

Alignment: Guilders tend to be pragmatic and materialistic, shunning ideology (although some are known to support the cause of a democratic Third Republic). As such, they tend towards neutrality.

Other Classes: Guilders work well with all classes. Indeed, the guilds strive to complement the needs of any client or customer.



Genin Kalana Miharshun (Ur-Ukar)

Game Rule Information

Guilders have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Intelligence and Dexterity are important to many of a Guilder's class skills. A high Intelligence score also gives the Guilder more skill points.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d8.

Starting Money: 1500 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Guilder can choose any 10 skills (except occult powers) to be class skills, plus the class skill from his Guild Affiliation. These skills can be skills exclusive to some other class, or from those exclusive to the Merchant League. In addition, all Knowledge skills are considered to be class skills to the Guilder.

Skill Points for 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the Guilder.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The Guilder is proficient with the use of all simple weapons and with all types of armor but not shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synthsilk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Guild Affiliation: The character is a member of a guild in the Merchant League. Each guild has a special knack that provides a bonus to a skill in a particular situation. Each also has a special class skill. (Note: If the character does not choose the blessing's skill as a class skill, it is considered a miscellaneous bonus to a cross-class skill, untrained unless skill ranks are assigned to it.)

Charioteers: Some Charioteers claim they own the space lanes, and their claim is not far off. Master pilots and master traders both, they fly from star to star with cargo, sometimes illegal, but always highly prized.

Knack: +2 Drive with a particular vehicle type (gas-powered landcraft, anti-gravity aircraft, explorer class starships, etc.). Class skill: Diplomacy.

Engineers: More than just mechanics, the Engineers re-create old tech, discover their own innovations, and merge them all into their lives and (sometimes) bodies. The Engineers do not offer their services to everyone, and even those they do help often wonder if it was worth the cost.

Knack: +2 Craft with a particular kind of device (swords, pistols, hologram projectors, etc.). Class skill: Appraise.



Scrapers: This guild got its start recovering old technology, but the uses it found for these artifacts gave it a whole new role. Now it has casino space stations, slot machines, pharmaceutical labs and more, all protected by some of the best enforcers in the business.

Knack: +2 Gather Information to learn rumors. **Class skill:** Bluff.

The Muster: The Muster is the kind of bogeyman parents use to scare children: a guild that specializes in the trade of people. While their main role is to act as agents for skilled workers like mercenaries, technicians, engineers, and occasional entertainers, they've also picked up a (well-deserved) reputation as slavers.

Knack: +2 Intimidate when threatening violence. **Class skill:** Listen or Spot (choose only one).

Reeves: Often acting quietly behind the scenes, the Reeves have a reputation as the richest and most avaricious guild members. It is not a reputation they fight. They do fight anyone who tries to take their money away.

Knack: +2 Sense Motive when cross-examining others. **Class skill:** Appraise.

Minor guild: There are a number of minor guilds specializing in all sorts of trades, from the Apothecaries (doctors) and the Purgers (janitors) to the Prospectors (asteroid belt miners).

Knack: Choose a skill appropriate to the guild's activities and give the minor Guilder a +2 bonus in a certain situation. **Class skill:** Choose a skill appropriate to the guild's activities.

Commission: Associate: At 1st level, a Guilder receives the social feat, Commission, granting him the rank of an associate in his guild (some guilds have different titles for this beginning rank). See the description for the Commission social feat for additional details.

Bonus Social Feats: A Guilder receives a bonus social feat at 2nd level and every level in which he does not receive a normal feat. These feats can be chosen only from the social feat group. (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels; a Guilder is not limited to social feats when choosing those feats.)

Bonus Languages: A Guilder can substitute Urthtech and Computer Languages for any of the starting bonus languages available at character creation.

Knave

No society, no matter how advanced, is without its underworld, a place where the repressed or shunned thrive, feeding off the underbelly of society, taking from rich and poor alike to further their own survival in the dog-eat-dog world of crime. In such a seedy environment, even Guilders often fear to tread. Not so the Knave, an expert in navigating the deadly realm of cutthroats and backstabbers — whether they be thieves, spies or even noble lords.

Adventures: Spies, thieves, and con artists

— all are considered knavish professions by Nobles, Priests and even Guilders. However, this doesn't prevent certain nobles, guild deans or even bishops from hiring people skilled in the arts of knavery. No noble house can long stand without a corps of elite intelligence agents, and no guild could long maintain its monopoly without undercover operatives and sneak thieves. Even the Church needs invisible eyes and ears to uncover misuses of technology. For all these tasks, the factions turn to the Knave, expert in all manner of unsavory skills.

Characteristics: Knaves have a wide range of skills available to them, and quickly learn how to take out their enemies unseen.

Background: Knaves are usually freemen who are either raised for a life of crime, choose such a life as soon as they can run away from home, or are chosen to become agents by the elite. They tend to have ambivalent attitudes toward class struggles.

Races: Any race can be a Knave, although Vorox secret agents are rare. Ur-Obun do not usually approve of the secrecy and unethical acts associated with spying, but individual members of that race can certainly hold different attitudes. Ukari are naturals for such work, especially those of the outlaw clans on Korderth, who are practically raised as Knaves.

Alignment: Knaves tend toward neutrality or evil, although some can be good — honorable spies doing dirty work so that the innocent may sleep better at night, unaware of the secret battles they fight to keep the worlds at peace.

Other Classes: Knaves can provide vital skills to any noble entourage or adventuring group, working as scouts or spies. While Priests and Brother Battle monks may look askance at such skills, certain Nobles — especially the Decados — prize them.

Game Rule Information

Knaves have the following game statistics:

Abilities: Dexterity affects many of the Knave's skills and provides a bonus to AC for better protection. Charisma, Intelligence and Wisdom are important to many of the Knave's class skills. A high Intelligence score also gives the knave more skill points.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d8.

Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

The Knave's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Cipher Script (Int, exclusive skill), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Literacy (exclusive skill), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Pick Pocket (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read Lips (Int, exclusive skill), Ride (Dex), Search (Int),



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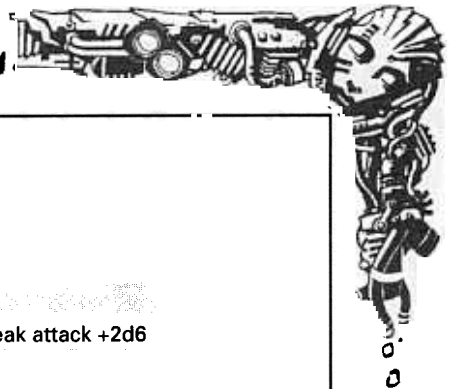


Table 2—4: The Knave

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Sneak attack +1d6, Chemical Use
2 nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Evasion
3 rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Sneak attack +2d6
4 th	+3	+1	+4	+1	
5 th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Sneak attack +3d6
6 th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked)
7 th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Sneak attack +4d6
8 th	+6/+1	+2	+6	+2	
9 th	+6/+1	+3	+6	+3	Sneak attack +5d6
10 th	+7/+2	+3	+7	+3	Improved Evasion
11 th	+8/+3	+3	+7	+3	Sneak attack +6d6, bonus social feat
12 th	+9/+4	+4	+8	+4	
13 th	+9/+4	+4	+8	+4	Sneak attack +7d6
14 th	+10/+5	+4	+9	+4	
15 th	+11/+6/+1	+5	+9	+5	Sneak attack +8d6
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+10	+5	Bonus social feat
17 th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+10	+5	Sneak attack +9d6
18 th	+13/+8/+3	+6	+11	+6	
19 th	+14/+9/+4	+6	+11	+6	Sneak attack +10d6
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+6	+12	+6	Bonus social feat

Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), Use Rope (Dex), and Use Think Machine (Int).

Skill Points for 1st Level: (8 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 8 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of a Knave.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The Knave is proficient with the use of all simple and martial weapons and with light armor but not shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synthsilk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Sneak Attack: As the Sneak Attack ability.

Chemical Use: A Knave is trained in the use of chemicals to always get the desired result. As such, a Knave never suffers a chance to accidentally apply any drugs or poisons to herself.

Evasion: As the Evasion ability.

Uncanny Dodge: As the Uncanny Dodge ability.

Improved Evasion: As the Improved Evasion ability.

Bonus Social Feats: A Knave receives a bonus social feat at 11th, 16th and 20th levels. These feats can only be chosen from the social feat group. (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels; a Knave is not limited to social feats when choosing those feats.)

Living Weapon

In many places, noble lords forbid freemen and commoners to carry weapons. And yet, bandits and outlaws hold to no such dictates, terrorizing the defenseless. Tyrannous dukes or petty barons take advantage of these prohibitions to wage campaigns of terror

against any who would speak against oppression.

Some people fight back. Since they cannot carry weapons, they train to become weapons themselves. Martial artists' very hands and feet become as deadly as knives or swords. Woe unto any tax collector or bandit who tries to accost a Living Weapon.

Adventures: Living Weapons often travel the Known Worlds seeking out other martial artists, challenging them to duels or requesting training, all in a desire to hone their bodies and minds into a disciplined whole. Martial arts tournaments attract Living Weapons from across the Known Worlds, as fighters vie to be recognized as the ultimate fighter of their martial style. Living Weapons also work as bodyguards for nobles, priests or anyone who needs such fighting expertise.

Characteristics: Living Weapons are always in training. Every move, be it a tightrope walk or a simple walk down the street, is a new chance to study how to better hone the body. Living Weapons begin their training with one particular martial style, but they learn new styles as they progress. They can perform feats of body control that are unavailable to others.

Background: While anyone from any level of society can become a Living Weapon, the most ardent tend to be from the lower classes, honing their bodies and wills as an escape from poverty.

Races: Living Weapons can be from any race, as each race has its own martial arts styles.

Alignment: Living Weapons tend to be lawful, but there are certainly those who are chaotic, such as the Ukari Jox Boxers.

Other Classes: Living Weapons make very good bodyguards for other classes, especially those who need protection from assassins in situations where carrying weapons is disallowed, such as at the masquerade ball or ambassadorial dinner.



Game Rule Information

Living Weapons have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution and Wisdom are all important for the Living Weapon.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d10.

Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Living Weapon's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Escape Artist (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points for 1st Level: (4 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Living Weapon is proficient with the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of light armor but not shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synthsilk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Martial Art: There are many types of martial arts in the Known Worlds: the disciplined fists of the noble's Shaidan, the sudden holds of the Muster's Iron Heel, the sneaky Ur-Ukar's Jox Kai Von, the cunning tricks of Koto, and the subtle mysteries of the Ur-Obun's Bharata zhoVeda. A Living Weapon is trained in one of these unarmed combat styles (choose one from the *Martial Arts Styles* sidebar), and gains that style's particular bonus. At every four levels after 1st level (4th, 8th, 12th, 16th and 20th), he may choose an additional martial art, although he must state that he is training in it well before he gains the new level. This may require first finding a teacher.

A Living Weapon fighting unarmed gains the benefits of the Improved Unarmed Strike feat; he thus does not provoke attacks of opportunity from any armed opponent he attacks and he still gets an attacks of opportunity against opponents who make unarmed attacks against him. His unarmed attacks inflict normal damage (instead of subdual), unless he specifies damage as subdual before making an attack. He can use his unarmed attack rate of attacks per round while grappling.

A Living Weapon's unarmed damage and number of unarmed attacks depend on his level

(see the chart above). His attacks may be made as fists, kicks, elbow blows, shoulder strikes, etc. Offhand attack rules do not apply to a Living Weapon when he fights unarmed.

Combat Awareness: A Living Weapon is aware of his surroundings and enemies during combat, allowing him to avoid attacks made against him. This allows a Living Weapon to add his Wisdom bonus to his Armor Class during combat. Initially, however, armor of any kind prevents the Living Weapon from using this bonus (although the bonus does work with energy shields). At 6th level, he can wear light armor and still retain his Combat Awareness bonus. At 12th level, he can wear medium armor and use a shield. At 18th level, he can wear heavy armor. This is an extraordinary ability.

Kippup: A Living Weapon with this ability can stand up from prone as a free action.

Martial Throw: When grappling, a Living Weapon can use a throw maneuver instead of establishing a hold. This is resolved the same as if he were attempting a hold, but if he is successful, the Living Weapon may throw the target 10 ft. in any direction. If the thrown target strikes an unyielding object — such as a stone floor or wall — he suffers damage as if falling 10 ft. (1d6). Thrown targets end up prone. If the target is thrown into an occupied square, the occupant(s) must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or be knocked prone (but suffer no damage).

Turnabout: If attacking unarmed, a Living Weapon can force his target to trade places with him (especially useful when fighting on the brink of a cliff or on a bridge).

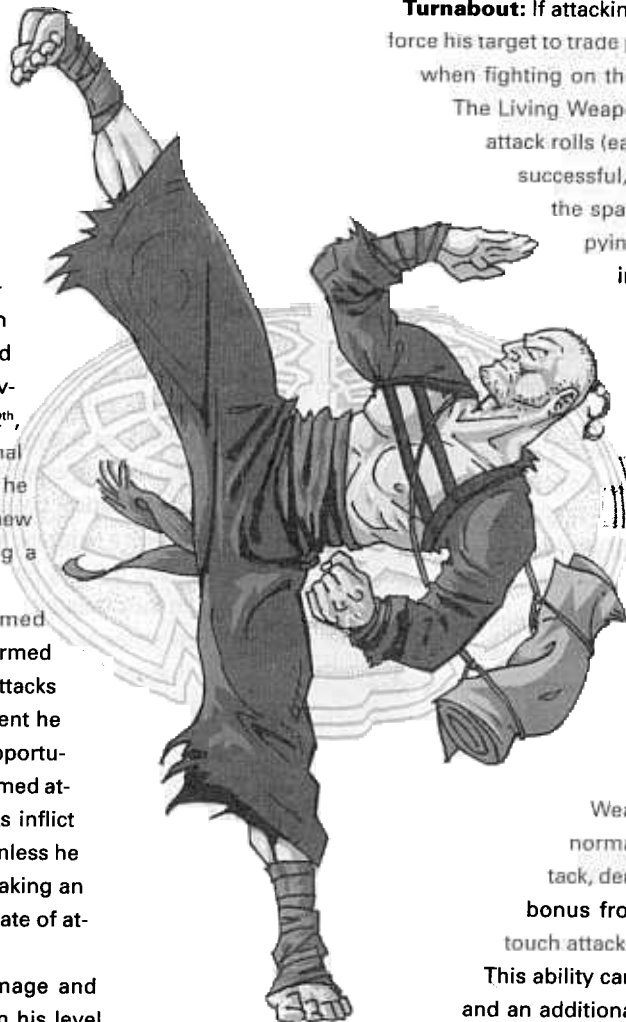
The Living Weapon and the target make opposed attack rolls (each with normal bonuses). If he is successful, the target is forced to move into the space the Living Weapon was occupying while the Living Weapon moves into the target's previous space.

This action (and the movement associated with it) does not provoke attacks of opportunity from the target or any other opponents threatening the Living Weapon. This is a full-round action.

Iron Fist: At 6th level, a Living Weapon's unarmed attacks (with fists, kicks or any part of his body) are considered for all purposes to be piercing and slashing, in addition to bludgeoning.

Lethal Touch: A Living Weapon with this ability can make a normal unarmed attack as a touch attack, denying the target any Armor Class bonus from physical armor. In addition, touch attacks do not activate energy shields.

This ability can be used once a day at 7th level, and an additional time per day at 10th, 13th, 16th, and 19th levels.



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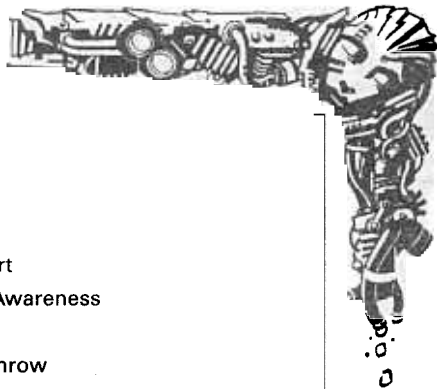


TABLE 2—5: THE LIVING WEAPON

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Unarmed Attack Bonus	Unarmed Dmg	Special
1 st	+0	+2	+2	+0	+0	1d3	Martial Art
2 nd	+1	+3	+3	+0	+1	1d6	Combat Awareness
	+2	+3	+3	+1	+2	1d6	Kippup
4 th	+3	+4	+4	+1	+3	1d6	Martial Throw
5 th	+3	+4	+4	+1	+3	1d8	Turnabout, Iron Fist
6 th	+4	+5	+5	+2	+4/+1	1d8	Lethal Touch (1/day)
7 th	+5	+5	+5	+2	+5/+2	1d8	Far Throw
8 th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+2	+6/+3	1d8	Bonus social feat
9 th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+3	+6/+3	1d10	Lethal Touch (2/day)
10 th	+7/+2	+7	+7	+3	+7/+4/+1	1d10	Vital Strike (unarmed critical 19-20)
11 th	+8/+3	+7	+7	+3	+8/+5/+2	1d10	Serpent Strike
12 th	+9/+4	+8	+8	+4	+9/+6/+3	1d10	Lethal Touch (3/day),
13 th	+9/+4	+8	+8	+4	+9/+6/+3	1d12	
14 th	+10/+5	+9	+9	+4	+10/+7/+4/+1	1d12	Lethal Defense
15 th	+11/+6/+1	+9	+9	+5	+11/+8/+5/+2	1d12	Lethal Touch (4/day)
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+5	+12/+9/+6/+3	1d12	Bonus social feat
17 th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+5	+12/+9/+6/+3	1d20	Vital Strike (unarmed critical 19-20/x3)
18 th	+13/+8/+3	+11	+11	+6	+13/+10/+7/+4/+1	1d20	Lethal Touch (5/day)
19 th	+14/+9/+4	+11	+11	+6	+14/+11/+8/+5/+2	1d20	Iron Body
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+12	+12	+6	+15/+12/+9/+6/+3	1d20	Mortal Combat

Far Throw: At this level, a Living Weapon can use the throw maneuver to throw an opponent farther. This works just like the throw ability (above), except the Living Weapon can hurl a target up to 30 ft. If the target hits an unyielding surface, he suffers damage as if he had fallen 30 ft. (3d6).

Bonus Social Feat: A Living Weapon receives a bonus social feat at 8th level and again at 16th level. These feats can only be chosen from the social feat group. (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels; a Living Weapon is not limited to social feats when choosing those feats.)

Vital Strike: At 10th level, a Living Weapon increases his critical range with unarmed attacks to 19-20. This increases again at 17th level to 19-20/x3. This bonus does stack with the Improved Critical feat (to a maximum of 18-20 at 10th level, or 18-20/x3 at 17th level).

Serpent Strike: At this level, a Living Weapon does not provoke an attack of opportunity from any target he attempts to grapple.

Lethal Defense: A Living Weapon can ready a deadly blow by first exposing himself to attack. As a free action, a Living

Weapon can take a penalty to his Armor Class (up to his total Armor Class bonus from Dexterity, Combat Awareness, and Defense Bonus — but not from armor or shield) to make an attack of opportunity on any target that successfully attacks the Living Weapon in melee. This attack gains normal bonuses for an attack of opportunity, but the Living Weapon adds damage equal to the penalty taken on his Armor Class.

Iron Body: At this level, the Living Weapon gains damage reduction equal to his Strength modifier. Damage from weapons that receive a +1 or better bonus due to high-tech materials, supreme or better masterwork, or occult enchantment is not reduced.

Mortal Combat: A Living Weapon can make a coup de grace maneuver against a non-helpless, active target. He must still make an attack check to hit, but any hit is automatically considered a critical (delivering the Living Weapon's x3 Vital Strike damage). Even if the target survives the damage, he must make a Fortitude save to avoid death, although the DC is not the same as a normal coup de grace. Instead, it is simply equal to the damage dealt (the 10 is not added). Energy shields do not protect against Mortal Combat blows.



Martial Arts Styles

In the Known Worlds, martial stylists proudly advertise their affiliations and engage in fierce rivalries with other stylists. Grand tournaments are held to determine whose style is best. But, in the end, it is usually not the style that determines the outcome of a fight, but the fighter herself. Below is a list of the more famous martial styles. Others exist, but teachers are rare.

Bharata zhoVeda: A synthesis of Ur-Obun martial and bodyworking techniques with old Urth fighting systems from the Indian subcontinent. It is a free-flowing art that focuses on avoiding blows and turning an attack back onto an aggressor. Experts in Bharata zhoVeda know a variety of somatological techniques, and direct their attacks at prime meridians for devastating effects. Practitioners learn to master not only their bodies but also their minds.

Specialty: +1 Reflex saves in combat.

Graa: Practiced only by Vorox, this art teaches Vorox to better use their multiple limbs in combat.

There are a number of feats associated with Graa (see the FEATS chapter); they are not required but can prove useful. Specialty: +4 to Balance checks made during combat.

Jox Kai Von (Jox Boxing): A nasty and dirty Ur-Ukar art with no holds barred — eye gouges, groin punches, ear pulls, etc. It is a close-in fighting style, and thus relies on few kicks. Although the Grand Master is an Ur-Ukar, this art is popular among the Decados as a sport against freemen and serfs (they

rarely use it against fellow nobles).

Specialty: +2 Escape Artist when wriggling free of grapples and pins.

Iron Heel: An art practiced by the Muster. It is a down-and-dirty commando art that recognizes the necessity of incapacitating an opponent over the need for honor. The art specializes in kicks and holds, the former for their reach, the latter for their ability to hold an opponent long enough to cuff him.

Specialty: +2 Intimidate to get targets to stop resisting you.

Koto: A tricky art using misdirection to deliver unexpected blows onto an opponent. The style is named after a mythological trickster bird from the folklore of the planet Aylon. The current Grand Master is Baron Jamal al-Malik, a student of Count Rumi al-Malik. Jamal inherited the title after the mysterious disappearance of his master. The art is steeped in weird mystical philosophies involving riddles and deconstructive ontology. Count Rumi's students teach the art to anyone who proves worthy, and are said to teach even serfs (a crime on some worlds).

Specialty: +2 Bluff when feinting.

Shaidan: A no-nonsense power form similar to ancient Urth karate. The Grand Master of this style is Duke Enrico de Aragon, a Hazat noble. He has spread the popularity of this art far and wide, and it is now considered the art of choice for people of class and distinction. Honor is highly valued and underhanded fighting tactics are frowned upon — such maneuvers are for peasants, not noble lords.

Specialty: +2 Sense Motive against Bluff feints. You always get to oppose feints as a free action.

Vorox Living Weapons

As if the idea of a large creature whose every limb is a deadly weapon wasn't scary enough, Vorox Living Weapons gain extra unarmed attacks. TABLE 2—6: VOROX EXTRA LIMB UNARMED ATTACKS shows how many extra attacks may be made per round — in addition to those listed on TABLE 2—6: THE LIVING WEAPON — and the bonuses for those attacks. The damage each unarmed limb delivers is the same as any unarmed attack the Vorox Living Weapon makes.

Note: A Vorox with Drox and Throx feats cannot use these to gain extra Living Weapon unarmed attacks; extra Living Weapon attacks are level-based only. He can, however, use these feats with normal unarmed attacks (doing 1d3 damage with each fist), but not in the same round he makes his Living Weapon unarmed attacks.

TABLE 2—6: VOROX EXTRA LIMB UNARMED ATTACKS

Living Weapon Level	Extra Limb Unarmed Attacks
7 th	+1
8 th	+2
9 th	+3
10 th	+4/+1
11 th	+5/+2
12 th	+6/+3
13 th	+6/+3
14 th	+7/+4/+1
15 th	+8/+5/+2
16 th	+9/+6/+3
17 th	+9/+6/+3
18 th	+10/+7/+4/+1
19 th	+11/+8/+5/+2
20 th	+12/+9/+6/+3



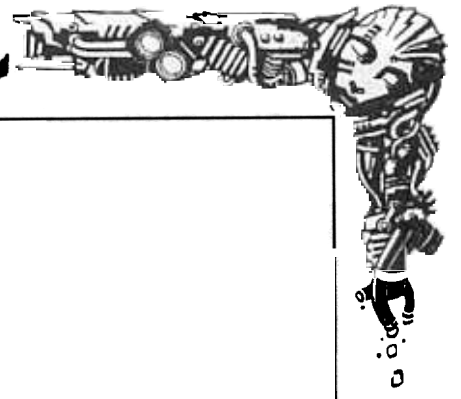


TABLE 2—7: THE NOBLE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+2	House Affiliation, Noble Title (Knight)
2 nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Bonus social feat
3 rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	
4 th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Bonus social feat
5 th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Bonus social feat
6 th	+5	+5	+2	+5	
7 th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+5	Bonus social feat
8 th	+6/+1	+6	+2	+6	Bonus social feat
9 th	+7/+2	+6	+3	+6	
10 th	+8/+3	+7	+3	+7	Bonus social feat
11 th	+9/+4	+7	+3	+7	Bonus social feat
12 th	+9/+4	+8	+4	+8	
13 th	+10/+5	+8	+4	+8	Bonus social feat
14 th	+11/+6/+1	+9	+4	+9	Bonus social feat
15 th	+12/+7/+2	+9	+5	+9	
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	Bonus social feat
17 th	+13/+8/+3	+10	+5	+10	Bonus social feat
18 th	+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+11	
19 th	+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	Bonus social feat
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+12	Bonus social feat

Noble

Depending on whom you talk to, the noble is the epitome of all that is regal, honorable and wise — or base, petty and selfish. In fact, Nobles, like anyone, can be all these things. They are the undisputed rulers of the Known Worlds, their families holding titles to vast lands and ownership of serfs (descendants of those who signed generation protection contracts during the Fall of the Republic).

Adventures: While some Nobles must stay at home to manage and rule their fiefs, their brothers, sisters, sons and daughters often find the boredom of castle life too great, and so run off to see the universe, gathering what friends and bodyguards they can to accompany them. Whether seeking social interaction, notoriety, glory, fame, treasure or the secrets of the universe itself, these Nobles become the subjects of saga and song.

Characteristics: The role of the Noble is to be the master of all things: accomplished ruler, skilled warrior, able diplomat, gifted artist, vigorous worker and so on. The reality is often far different, but the goal is still worth striving for. All houses, whether royal or minor, share certain characteristics, but all are very different.

Nobles are trained in a wide variety of skills, for they must know the rules of etiquette and be able to execute their house's will in times of war. Towards these ends, they also call upon any number of social connections, whether it be a network of allies or gossip, or a Church confessor to cleanse their souls.

Background: Nobles are born to noble families of a particular noble house, whether it be one of the five Royal Houses or any number of minor houses. Due to the chaotic rise and fall of fortunes



Class Skills

A Noble's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Arts (Wis), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Geography, History, Local and Nobility) (Int), Listen (Wis), Literacy (exclusive skill), Perform (Cha), Read Lips (Int; exclusive skill), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language, Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points for 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the Noble.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Noble is proficient with the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of armor and shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synthsilk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

House Affiliation: The character is a family member of one of the five major noble houses. Each house has a special knack and a special class skill. The skill bonuses are miscellaneous modifiers and do not represent training or ranks in the listed skills. Note: These knacks and class skills apply only to characters born into the house; non-family members who receive a battlefield knighting or political admittance do not gain them.

House Hawkwood: The Hawkwoods are proud that one of their own has become emperor, but all believe they are destined for greatness. It is both their privilege and their duty, and they act accordingly.

Knack: +2 Sense Motive when attempting to determine the truth of a statement. **Class skill:** Concentration.

Decados: The family that many observers believed would win the Emperor Wars, the Decados are praised for their sophistication, wit and charm, but feared for their malevolence, fury and treachery. To befriend a Decados is to ally with a viper.

Knack: +2 Bluff when lying. **Class skill:** Escape Artist.

The Hazat: A Hazat's pride in her soldiers is surpassed only by her pride in herself. Trained since birth to lead soldiers, she is as at home in an army sleeping bag as in a feather bed. Still, the Hazat are extremely aware of their role in society, and will never let their inferiors forget it.

Knack: +2 Intimidate when dealing with those of lower rank. **Class skill:** Knowledge (Military).

Li Halan: Once renowned as the most decadent house, House Li Halan is now the most tied to the Church. Li Halan elders give readily to Church charities, and younger members of the house are the first to join crusades and serve in the Orders of Battle. While most Nobles owe their loyalty primarily to their own house, the Li Halan owe it only to the Pancreator.

Knack: +2 Arts with one specified medium (calligraphy, illumination, painting, poetry, etc.). **Class skill:** Knowledge (Religion).

al-Malik: Some observers have suggested that the al-Malik grew out of a Second Republic merchant family, but now the house strives for nobility in all things. Of course, that doesn't keep its

members from accumulating some of the best collections of Second Republic artifacts to be found this side of Leagueheim.

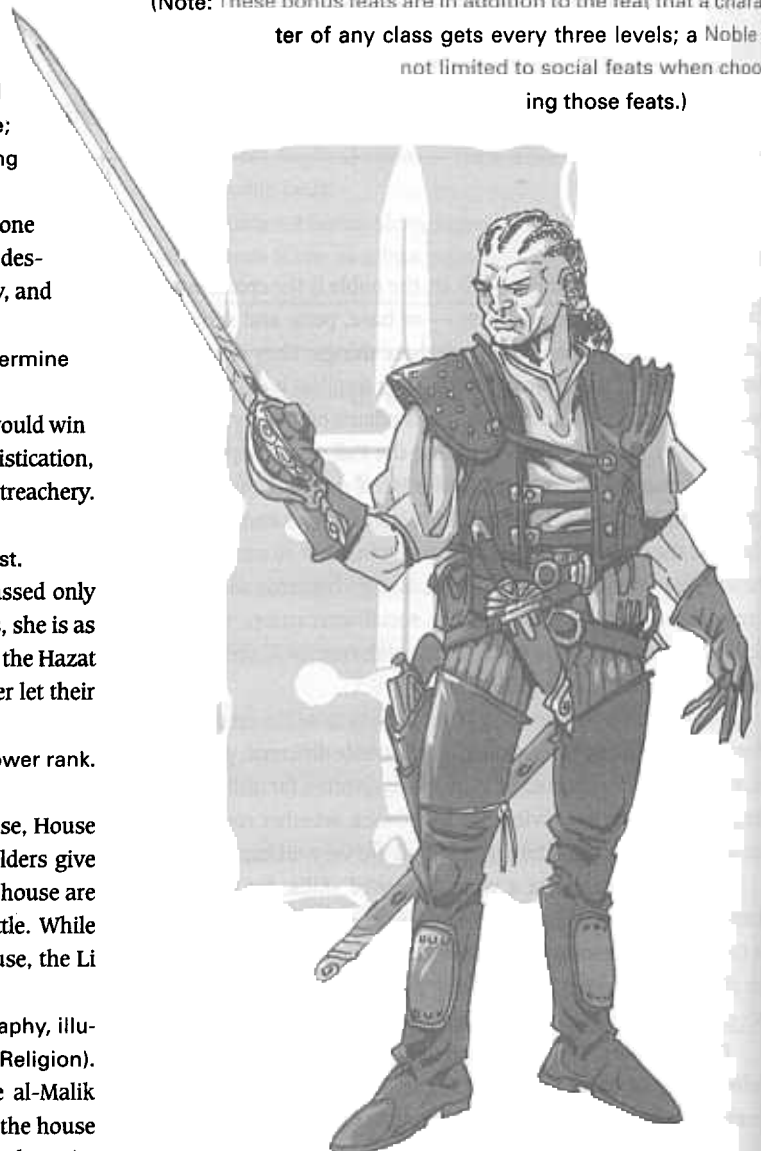
Knack: +2 Disguise when traveling incognito (does not apply to impersonating a specific person). **Bonus Language:** The Graceful Tongue.

Minor House: In addition to the five Royal Houses, there are innumerable minor ones. Some of these used to be big, some are on their way up, and some have never gotten anywhere and probably never will. Thus, minor houses range from the most virtuous to the most vile.

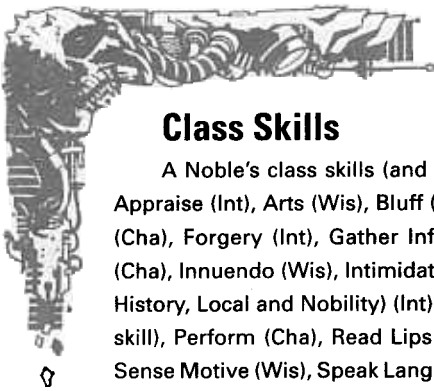
Knack: Choose a skill appropriate to the house's values and give the minor Noble a +2 bonus in a certain situation. **Class skill:** Choose a skill appropriate to the house's activities.

Noble Title (Knight): At 1st level, a Noble receives the social feat, Noble Title, granting him the rank of a knight or dame (sir or lady) within his particular house. See the description of the Noble Title social feat for additional details.

Bonus Social Feats: A Noble receives a bonus social feat at 2nd level and every level in which he does not receive a normal feat. These feats can be chosen only from the social feat group. (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels; a Noble is not limited to social feats when choosing those feats.)



Sir Antonio Eduardo Cervantes de Justus Hazat



Priest

No single institution has as much impact on day-to-day life in the Known Worlds as the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun. Despite the Church's many factions and sects, the average peasant sees it as a giant monolith dedicated to saving humanity from the evil inherent in the universe. As far as they can tell, all the priests work toward the same goal, hand-in-hand, fighting evil together. Never mind the fact that they call one another heretics; the Church itself is good. The peasants' view changes only when someone tries to replace the sect of their ancestors with a new one.

Of all the factions in the Known Worlds, few are so beloved — or feared — as Priests, those who provide succor to the souls of the weary and oppressed or abjure heretics for their evil. While some Priests spend their days politicking to increase the Church's power or hunting for alleged heretics among the faithful, others strive to improve the lot of all sentient beings through the universe, through either good works or mystical meditations.

Adventures: Priests are usually associated with a particular see, cathedral or parish, but many become mendicant, traveling the Known Worlds, seeking to spread the word of the Prophet or ease the sufferings of others — or to sniff out evil wherever it may lurk. Nobles often bring a confessor with them on their travels, to protect their souls from the many trials they will face among the stars.



Novitiate Paul Haven

Characteristics: Priests have a good number of skills, all useful in their ministries or travels, and often build networks of social connections they can call on in times of need.

Background: Priests are often freemen or even serfs, raised in villages, towns or cities. Upon reaching adolescence, they are usually given by their families as apprentices to the Church, or choose the way of the Church by their own inclinations. Upon reaching adulthood, or even earlier in some cases, they are officially ordained as Priests in their particular sect or order.

Sometimes, Nobles become Priests, especially those sons or daughters who expect to inherit no lands or duties.

Races: Ur-Obun can become Priests, although they are most often found in the Voavenlohjun sect, the Eskatonic Order or Sanctuary Aeon. Ukari are rarely seen in the priesthood, although it is not unknown. Vorox can become Priests, usually Orthodox, although they rarely minister to any but other Vorox.

Alignment: Priests can be any alignment, although most of them are good. Alas, a few are evil. Members of the Urth Orthodox sect and the Temple Avesti Order tend to be lawful (sometimes excessively so), while Eskatonic Order monks and Sanctuary Aeon healers tend to be either neutral or chaotic.

Other Classes: Priests work well with most other classes, although they tend to dislike Knaves and distrust or even fear Psychics (unless they are Penitent — working for the Church). Priests will often take it upon themselves to personally ensure that any Techie in the entourage does not indulge in too much technosophy.

Game Rule Information

Priests have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Charisma, Intelligence and Wisdom are important for many of a Priest's class skills. A high Intelligence score also gives the Priest more skill points.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d8.

Starting Money: 1500 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Priest's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Academia (Int), Alchemy (Int), Arts (Wis), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Bureaucracy, Geography, History, Local, Nobility, Known Worlds, Religion) (Int), Perform (Cha), Occultcraft (Int), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), and Speak Language.

Skill Points for 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of a Priest.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Priest is proficient with the use of all simple weapons and with all types of armor but not shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synth silk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.



TABLE 2—8: THE PRIEST

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+2	+2	+2	Sect Affiliation, Ordination (Novitiate)
2 nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	Bonus social feat
3 rd	+2	+3	+3	+3	
4 th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Bonus social feat
5 th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Bonus social feat
6 th	+4	+5	+5	+5	
7 th	+5	+5	+5	+5	Bonus social feat
8 th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+6	Bonus social feat
9 th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+6	
10 th	+7/+2	+7	+7	+7	Bonus social feat
11 th	+8/+3	+7	+7	+7	Bonus social feat
12 th	+9/+4	+8	+8	+8	
13 th	+9/+4	+8	+8	+8	Bonus social feat
14 th	+10/+5	+9	+9	+9	Bonus social feat
15 th	+11/+6/+1	+9	+9	+9	
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+10	Bonus social feat
17 th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+10	Bonus social feat
18 th	+13/+8/+3	+11	+11	+11	
19 th	+14/+9/+4	+11	+11	+11	Bonus social feat
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+12	+12	+12	Bonus social feat

Sect Affiliation: The character is a member of a Church sect or order (Priests must have at least one level in the Brother Battle class to join that order). Each sect/order has a special knack that provides a bonus to a skill in a particular situation. Each also has a special class skill.

Urth Orthodox: Orthodox priests spend their time tending to the spiritual needs of their flock and defending the faith from outer and inner evil — whether it be aliens, barbarians or the heresies of other sects.

Knack: +2 Sense Motive when extracting confessions. Class skill: Innuendo.

Eskatonic Order: Eskatonic priests scour the universe for mystical lore to help defend the faithful from evil. Their questing has led to many new discoveries that may better life for all — or open a Pandora's Box of secrets best left hidden.

Knack: +2 Alchemy. Class skill: Learn any Knowledge as a class skill.

Temple Avesti (Avestites): The heavy robes of these fanatics are instantly recognizable — as are the smoking flamerguns they bear to enact a literal punishment on the sinful. This sect long ago gained most of the chairs on the Inquisitorial Synod, much to the regret of its political enemies.

Knack: +2 Intimidate when extracting confessions. Class skill: Knowledge (Torture).

Sanctuary Aeon (Amaltheans): This healing order was founded by Saint Amalthea after her travels with the Prophet and has continued since then to bring grace and mercy to all. Amaltheans are deeply beloved by the peasants they selflessly aid.

Knack: +2 Heal for those who swear a favor to the order in return. Class skill: Learn any Profession as a class skill.

Voavenlohji: Usually practiced only by Ur-Obun, this sect follows the teachings of Saint Ven Lohji, the Ur-Obun disciple of the Prophet. It displays elements of its animistic beginnings in the native religion of Bintaru.

Knack: +2 Concentration when casting theurgy. Class skill: Wilderness Lore.

Mendicant Monks (Hesychasts): Some priests want nothing to do with Church politics and join monasteries far from the centers of Church power — or live in huts in the wilderness seeking mystical visions or quiet lives of contemplation. Some friars take to the road to spread the gospel among the common folk whom the Church has ignored or forsaken.

Knack: Choose a skill appropriate to the monk's beliefs and give him a +2 bonus in a certain situation. Class skill: Choose a skill appropriate to the monk's activities.

Ordination (Novitiate): At 1st level, a Priest receives the social feat, Ordination, granting him the rank of a novice. See the description for the Ordination social feat for additional details.

Bonus Social Feats: A Priest receives a bonus social feat at 2nd level and every level in which he does not receive a normal feat. These feats can be chosen only from the social feat group. (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels; a Priest is not limited to social feats when choosing those feats.)

Literacy: Priests receive Literacy for free, since they are taught to read in seminary.

Bonus Language: Priests receive Latin as a bonus language.

Psychic

When humanity spread out among the stars, it awakened more than just a yearning for new worlds — it also awakened the powers of the mind. Psychic powers became more than just a debate between New Agers and scientists: they became a reality. The Second Republic Phavian Institute began the scientific study of such phenomena and made significant advances in understanding them. But then came the Fall, and with it a fear of Psychics among the common folk, who distrusted such powers and soon came to blame them for everything wrong in their lives. The Church fomented such bigotry and soon psychic powers became outlawed, with Psychics hiding their abilities from others and gathering in secret covens to further their training, away from the sight of other men.

Eventually, the Church recanted somewhat and accepted Psychics — but only those who became Penitent and threw themselves on the mercy of the Church. While this allows many to walk openly as Psychics, it also leads to abuse, as priests with legal power over these gifted few used them to spy or steal — all in the name of the Pancreator, of course.

Adventures: Psychics reveal their powers only to those they trust, for the fires of Inquisition are ever well-stoked against psychics. They often find it hard to stay in one place for long, for they have to move on when a local discovers their status. Some join covens, networks of fellow Psychics who help such social exiles in their travels and even provide training opportunities.

Nobles often seek out Psychics as members of their entourages, for not only does it give them an edge, it gives them something to talk about at parties.

Characteristics: Psychics awaken psychic powers, grouped in paths. One such path is learned in the early stages of training, but others can be awakened as the Psychic progresses. These powers must be trained much like skills, but they are formidable when wielded properly.

Background: Psychics can come from any social class, usually sharing the same background as Guilders.

Races: The Ur-Ukar are born with the potential to awake psychic powers, but they must gain levels in this class to do so. Some Ur-Obun have the same inborn potential, while others tend toward theurgy instead. Vorox cannot naturally awaken psychic powers.

Alignment: Psychics can be of any alignment. Those who join the Favyana coven tend to be good or neutral, while those who join the Invisible Path tend to be evil or neutral.

Other Classes: Psychics are usually nervous around Priests, but have no other preset prejudices as a class. How well they mix depends on the individual. Their powers provide a potent complement to any entourage.



Vaar Elbari (Ur-Obun)

Game Rule Information

NOTE: The Gifted feat is a prerequisite for all psychic paths. A Psychic must spend one of his starting feats on the Gifted feat or inherit it as a racial ability (the Ur-Obun and Ur-Ukar).

Psychics have the following game statistics.

Abilities: The mental abilities — Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma — are key to a Psychic's skills.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d6.

Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Psychic's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Innuendo (Wis), Knowledge (Arcana) (Int), Occultcraft (Int), Psi skills (by power, see below), Sense Motive (Wis), and Speak Language.

Skill Points for 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following are class features of the Psychic.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Psychic is proficient with the use of all simple weapons and light armor. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synth silk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Psi: At first level, you develop a primary psychic path (choose from the list below). This path allows you to train its associated 1st-degree power. At second level, you can train its 2nd-degree power, and at third level, its 3rd-degree power. The paths are:

- Bedlam (Str) — psychic athletics
- Far Hand (Dex) — telekinesis
- Omen (Wis) — divination
- Psyche (Cha) — telepathy
- Sixth Sense (Wis) — extrasensory perception
- Soma (Con) — mind over body
- Vis Craft (Int) — energy manipulation

At higher levels (5th, 9th, 13th, 17th), you can learn additional paths and powers. Some paths have a rare 4th-degree power; this may be learned after the Psychic has gained the path's 3rd-degree power and in place of the bonus occult feat gained at 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th levels.

Wyrd: At first level, a Psychic gains Wyrd points. The amount is equal to his key ability modifier for his primary path. For instance, if his primary path is Far Hand, then his Wyrd points are equal to his Dexterity modifier.

Every time he rises in an occult class level thereafter, he gains an additional amount of Wyrd equal to his ability modifier in the same ability. If the Far Hand Psychic's Dexterity is 16, then he gets +3 Wyrd



Table 2—9: The Psychic

NOTE: The Gifted feat is a prerequisite for all psychic paths. A Psychic must spend one of his starting feats on the Gifted feat or inherit it as a racial ability (the Ur-Obun and Ur-Ukar).

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Primary psi path and 1 st -degree power, Wyrd
2 nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Primary 2 nd -degree power
3 rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Primary 3 rd -degree power
4 th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Bonus occult feat
5 th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Secondary psi path and 1 st -degree power
6 th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Secondary 2 nd -degree power
7 th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Secondary 3 rd -degree power
8 th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Bonus occult feat
9 th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Tertiary psi path and 1 st -degree power
10 th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Tertiary 2 nd -degree power
11 th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Tertiary 3 rd -degree power
12 th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Bonus occult feat
13 th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Quaternary psi path and 1 st -degree power
14 th	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9	Quaternary 2 nd -degree power
15 th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	Quaternary 3 rd -degree power
16 th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Bonus occult feat
17 th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Quinary psi path and 1 st -degree power
18 th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Quinary 2 nd -degree power
19 th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Quinary 3 rd -degree power
20 th	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Bonus occult feat

TABLE 2—10: THE SOLDIER

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus feat
2 nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Bonus feat
3 rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	
4 th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat
5 th	+5	+4	+1	+1	
6 th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	Bonus feat
7 th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+2	
8 th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+2	Bonus feat
9 th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+3	
10 th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+3	Bonus feat
11 th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+3	+3	
12 th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+4	+4	Bonus feat
13 th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+4	+4	
14 th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+4	+4	Bonus feat
15 th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+5	+5	
16 th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+5	+5	Bonus feat
17 th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+5	
18 th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+6	Bonus feat
19 th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+6	
20 th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+6	Bonus feat

points. If this ability modifier is altered, the Psychic's Wyrd points also increase or decrease accordingly.

If he trains in another class, he gains only one new Wyrd point with each level advancement in the other class (unless it is the Beastfriend or Theurgist class, in which case he gets his full primary path key ability modifier per level).

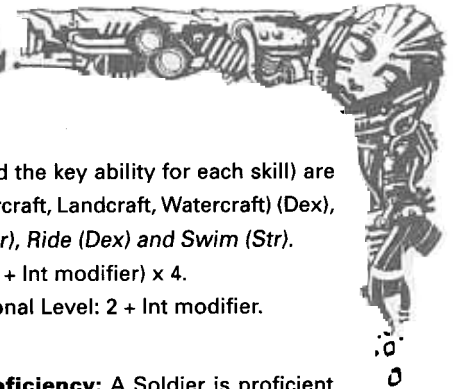
Bonus Occult Feat: You can choose a feat from the following list, assuming you already have the required prerequisites: Attune Fetish, Combat Casting (Psi), Coven Membership, Imbue Tabernacle, Enlarge Psi, Extend Psi, Multiply Psi, Spell Focus (Psi), Spell Power Penetration (Psi).

Soldier

In the aftermath of the decades-long Emperor Wars, many hardened combat veterans have mustered out of their units and now seek adventure among the stars. Some crave the adrenaline rush of combat, an addiction they can't shake. Others seek only to gain honest work with their skills as mercenaries or bodyguards.

Soldiers aren't always combat veterans, however; they can be city guards, police, bounty hunters, or any profession that requires combat expertise.

Adventures: Soldiers are found just about anywhere conflict exists. No Noble dares travel the stars without someone to protect his back, and a Soldier is a good candidate for such a post.



Characteristics: Soldiers excel in one thing: fighting. They may be melee experts or gunslingers, but they sure know how to fight.

Background: Soldiers can come from any background or social class. Muster Guilders who specialize in mercenary operations will probably multiclass as Soldiers. Nobles who prefer dueling to court life might multiclass as Soldiers.

Races: Members of any race can become Soldiers. They are rare among the Ur-Obun, but not unknown (the Champions of Vhem).

Alignment: Soldiers can be of any alignment.

Other Classes: Soldiers complement any entourage that often gets itself into danger.

Game Rule Information

Soldiers have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Strength is the primary ability of a Soldier. A high Constitution also provides bonus hit points.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d10.

Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.



Almongadar (Vorox)

Class Skills

A Soldier's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Drive (Aircraft, Landcraft, Watercraft) (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points for 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Soldier is proficient with the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of armor and shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synthsilk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Bonus Feats: These feats must be chosen from the following list: Ambidexterity, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Crack Shot (Armed to the Teeth, Two-Gun Fighting), Dodge (Mobility Spring Attack), Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Expertise (Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Whirlwind Attack), Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike (Deflect Arrows, Stunning Fist), Mounted Combat (Mounted Archery, Trample, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge), Parry (Cloak Fighting, Improved Feint, Riposte), Point Blank Shot (Far Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Reload, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run), Power Attack (Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Sunder, Great Cleave), Quick Draw, Subtle Strike, Two-Weapon Fighting (Improved Two-Weapon Fighting), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (Deflect Missiles), Weapon Specialization.



Starwolf

Beyond the borders of the empire, other worlds exist, remnants of the fallen Second Republic now descended into barbarism. The people of these worlds — the Vuldrok — are bloodthirsty raiders, descending like hawks onto innocent merchants plying their wares between the stars, boarding their ships and stealing everything — including the ships. They have no mercy or scruples.

Or so most peasants believe. In truth, Vuldrok are a clan-oriented people descended from the anarchic and communistic societies that broke away from the Second Republic even before it collapsed. They value freedom and might over all else. Their piracy, however, is quite real. With few high-tech resources of their own, they rely on stealing those of others.

The epitome of Vuldrok ideals is the Starwolf, pirate, raider and loyal friend *par excellence*.

Adventures: Starwolves occasionally find their way into Known Worlds society, hiring themselves out as warriors, bodyguards or steady shield-arms for Soldiers. Like most Vuldrok, they are intensely loyal to their friends and vicious to their enemies. Those Nobles who admit them into their entourages may have a hard time controlling them, for they rarely accept authority, but they might gain a staunch friend who will stand beside them to the last.

Characteristics: Since a Starwolf's usual battlefield is aboard a ship during boarding actions, they tend to favor melee actions over gun battles. Their exultant howls can freeze the marrow of their enemies, allowing them to close the distance with a terrifying charge. They also gain some of the extra combat tricks known to Soldiers.

Background: Vuldrok within the Known Worlds usually hail from the small population on Leminkainen, or from Hargard, just outside the borders of the Empire. They are usually raised in conditions similar to those known by a Known Worlds serf, except that they have much more freedom and self-respect. They have learned to take what they need rather than wait for handouts.

Sometimes, a Noble or Guilder travels into barbarian space, seeking either to revenge himself against a Vuldrok raid or to sell trinkets to the yokels. He may become so impressed with the chaotic and individualistic life of the Vuldrok that he throws off the ways of civilization and joins them on their raids, becoming a Starwolf. Even when he returns to the Known Worlds, he carries his newfound wild ways with him.

Races: It is rare to find any Starwolf who is not human. There are few Obun or Ukari in Vuldrok space, and even fewer Vorox.

Alignment: Starwolves are always chaotic. They may follow certain honor-bound codes toward guests and friends, but not in a slavish, ordered way.

Other Classes: Starwolves are good to have around in mass melees, or if the ship is boarded by raiders — who better to foil a raider than another raider?

Game Rule Information

Starwolves have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Strength is the primary ability of a Starwolf because it helps him kill and cow his opponents. A high Constitution also provides extra hit points and longer battle howls.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d12.

Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Starwolf's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Drive (all crafts) (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), Starship Gunnery (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points for 1st Level: (2 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Starwolf is proficient with the use of all simple and martial weapons and with all types of armor and shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synthsilk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Fearsome Strength: A Starwolf can use his brawn and weapon skill instead of strength of character when cowering opponents. The Starwolf can choose to use his Strength modifier instead of his Charisma for all Intimidate skill checks.

Daunting Charge: A Starwolf's charge attack is so fearsome that opponents cannot exploit an opening in his defenses. A Starwolf never receives an armor class penalty when performing the charge combat action.

Battle Howl: When entering combat a Starwolf can begin to howl or scream so terrifyingly that enemies are unnerved. As a free action, the Starwolf makes an Intimidate skill check and begins his primal scream. He can keep this up a maximum number of rounds equal to Starwolf level + Con modifier. The Starwolf's opponents must make a Will save (DC = Starwolf's Intimidate skill check) or suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attacks and damage against the Starwolf. An opponent suffering this effect can strengthen his resolve as a full-round action and attempt another save



Uvar Hawksbane



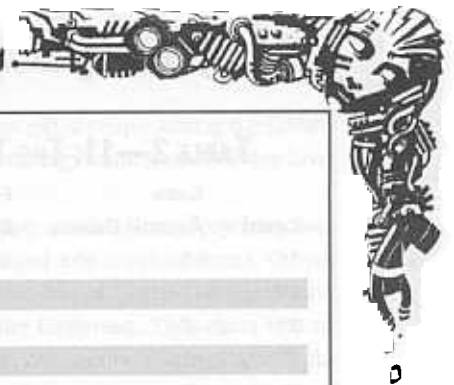


TABLE 2—13: THE STARWOLF

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Fearsome Strength, Daunting Charge
2 nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Battle Howl (1/day)
3 rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
4 th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Overwhelming Rush
5 th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Battle Howl (2/day)
6 th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	
7 th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+2	Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked)
8 th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+2	Battle Howl (3/day)
9 th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+3	
10 th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+3	Bonus combat feat
11 th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+3	+3	Battle Howl (4/day)
12 th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+4	+4	
13 th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+4	+4	Bonus combat feat
14 th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+4	+4	Battle Howl (5/day)
15 th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+5	+5	
16 th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+5	+5	Bonus combat feat
17 th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+5	Improved Battle Howl (6/day)
18 th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+6	
19 th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+6	Bonus combat feat
20 th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+6	Improved Battle Howl (7/day)

0

at +2. The howl can be used once a day at 2nd level and again at every three levels (5th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, 20th).

Uncanny Dodge: As the Uncanny Dodge ability.

Overwhelming Rush: At 4th level, a Starwolf is considered one size category larger when determining the result of a bull rush combat action.

Bonus Combat Feat: At 10th level, and again at 13th, 16th, and 19th, a Starwolf gets a free bonus feat from the following list (regardless of prerequisites): Armed to the Teeth, Crack Shot, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical, Improved Disarm, Improved Feint, Improved Trip, Instinct Shot, Parry, Riposte, Sunder, and Two-Gun Fighting.

Improved Battle Howl: At 17th level, the penalties opponents suffer from the Starwolf's Battle Howl increase to -4 morale penalty to attacks and damage.

Techie

Although the Church may decry high technology, this rarely keeps the bold or curious from tinkering away at it anyway. While many of the secrets of high technology were lost after the Fall, there are always those rare individuals with the knack for figuring out how things work. These Techies often join guilds — such as the Engineers or Scavengers — and scour Republican and Anunnaki ruins, seeking to unlock the secrets of the past.

Adventures: Techies often adventure as reclaimers or ruin raiders, using their special skills and ingenuity to rescue lost tech from the ashes. Nobles often seek them out to help maintain their starships or protect them from traps set by their rivals.

Characteristics: Techies are very good at fixing or manufacturing tech, as well as jury-rigging it to exceed expectations. They

can usually answer any question put to them about science or technology, and experienced Techies can quickly sabotage devices or equipment.

Background: Techies often share the same background as Guilders. While they are usually associated with a particular guild, they don't necessarily hold rank in that guild.

Races: It is rare to find Vorox techies, but Ukari are often attracted to the field, being curious about ancient technology.

Alignment: Techies, like Guilders, tend to be pragmatic, and are thus usually neutral.

Other Classes: Techies not only complement most entourages, they may be a necessity if the entourage regularly travels in its own spaceship.

Game Rule Information

A Techie has the following game statistics.

Abilities: Intelligence is vital to a Techie, for it not only governs the prerequisites for some of the tech feats, it provides him with extra skill points. Dexterity is also useful.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d8.

Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Techie's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Academia (Int), Appraise (Int), Craft (Int), Disable Device (Int), Drive (choose craft) (Dex), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (area of scientific specialty) (Int), Listen (Wis), Open Lock (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Use Artifact (Wis), and Use Think Machine (Int).

Skill Points for 1st Level: (8 + Int modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 8 + Int modifier.



TABLE 2—11: THE TECHIE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Guild Affiliation, Security Systems, Bonus Tech Feat
2 nd	+1	+0	+3	+1	Evasion, Bonus Social Feat
3 rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Encyclopedic Mind
4 th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Bonus tech feat
5 th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Ingenuity
6 th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Instant Knowledge
7 th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Bonus social feat
8 th	+6/+1	+2	+6	+2	Bonus tech feat
9 th	+6/+1	+3	+6	+3	Skill Mastery
10 th	+7/+2	+3	+7	+3	Bonus social feat
11 th	+8/+3	+3	+7	+3	Sabotage (1/day)
12 th	+9/+4	+4	+8	+4	
13 th	+9/+4	+4	+8	+4	Bonus tech feat
14 th	+10/+5	+4	+9	+4	Bonus social feat
15 th	+11/+6/+1	+5	+9	+5	Sabotage (2/day), Skill Mastery (choose additional skills)
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+10	+5	Bonus tech feat
17 th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+10	+5	Bonus social feat
18 th	+13/+8/+3	+6	+11	+6	
19 th	+14/+9/+4	+6	+11	+6	Sabotage (3/day)
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+6	+12	+6	Bonus tech feat

Class Features

The following are class features of a Techie.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Techie is proficient with the use of all simple weapons and light armor. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synthsilks apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Guild Affiliation: The Techie receives a Guild Affiliation. See the Guilder class for details. Note that this does not grant him a rank in that guild (he is assumed to be a journeyman); for that, he must gain the Guild Commission social feat.

Security Systems: Techies can use the Search skill to detect security measures or traps even if their DC is higher than 20. Security measures include (but are not limited to) such high-tech devices as pressure-sensitive floor plates (designed to set off an alarm if any weight is applied), invisible beams (which trigger an alarm if anything blocks or passes through them), or motion sensors (which detect movement in an area).

Bonus Tech Feat: A Techie receives a bonus tech feat at 1st level and at 4th, 8th, 13th, 16th and 20th. These

feats can be chosen only from the tech feat group (which includes the Comprehend Tech Level feats and tech creation feats). (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels.)

Evasion: As the Evasion ability.

Bonus Social Feats: A Techie receives a bonus social feat at 2nd level and at 7th, 10th, 14th, and 17th. These feats can be chosen only from the social feat group. (Note: These bonus feats are in addition to the feat that a character of any class gets every three levels; a Techie is not limited to social feats when choosing those feats.)

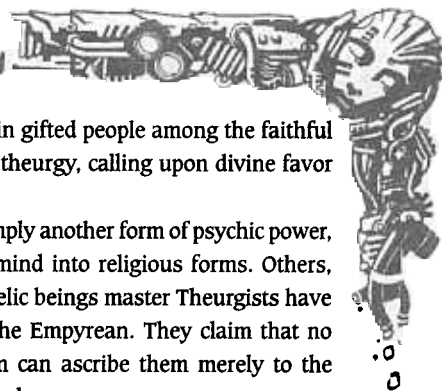
Encyclopedic Mind: At 3rd level, the Techie has enough experience with various technologies that he can answer just about any question concerning them with some degree of accuracy, even if he has no trained Knowledge skill concerning the topic or science. This acts like the Well-Traveled feat, but applies only to science and technology topics. If he already has or later gains the Well-Traveled feat, he gains a +2 bonus to his checks when they concern science and technology.

Ingenuity: At 5th level, the Techie gains an incredible knack for jury-rigging devices to get more out of them. He can make a Craft skill check to temporarily en-



Apprentice Andrea Shelit





hance a technological device. The amount of time for the check varies, but it's usually anywhere from 1 round (a full-round action) to 1 minute, but rarely longer. A DC 15 yields a masterwork device. A DC 20 yields an exemplary device. A DC 25 yields a supreme device. (See the EQUIPMENT chapter for details.) Any wonderworking requires some degree of tools, although these could be simple — a stick of gum, a bent paperclip, etc.

After 10 minutes of use (10 rounds for a weapon), the device returns to normal, its improvements — a wad of gum in the intake valve, a paperclip bridging the fusion gap — worn out or used up. The Techie can attempt ingenuity on the same device again with another Craft skill check.

Alternatively, the Techie may try to temporarily simulate the effects of a device he doesn't have using simple, readily available materials. For instance, with materials from the janitorial supply closet, he may be able to rig a bomb or small cannon. Details on the workings of these devices are left to the imagination of the Techie and the credulity of the GM. Use this rule: If MacGuyver could do it, so can the Techie.

Instant Knowledge: At 6th level, the Techie gains 4 ranks in a Knowledge skill in which he had no ranks.

Skill Mastery: At 9th level, the Techie selects a number of skills (equal to 3 + Int mod) for which she can take 10 even during stressful situations. At 15th level, she can select new skills (equal to 3 + Int mod).

Sabotage: At 11th level, the Techie gains the ability to instantly sabotage, break or shut down any object he touches once per day as a full-round action. Use the usual rules for striking an object, but if the Techie hits it at all, the device must make a Fortitude saving throw not to shut down, seize up or malfunction. (A device's base save bonus = 2 +1 per tech level above 4. +1 for masterwork, +2 for exemplary masterwork, +3 for supreme masterwork). The DC is equal to the Techie's level + Str modifier. The Techie must have a tool of some sort with which to touch the device, such as a wrench, hammer or screwdriver.

Note that this works only against mechanical or technological devices; a Techie cannot sabotage a sword or chair. In addition, sabotage does not necessarily benefit the Techie — a sabotaged lock does not necessarily open; it usually becomes stuck so that keys won't work in it (it can still be lockpicked, however).

Sabotaged items can be repaired using the Craft skill, but this requires no material costs (no replacement parts are necessary).

At 15th level, a Techie may perform a sabotage twice per day, and three times per day at 19th level.

Theurgist

When the Prophet walked the stars, he and his disciples performed miracles. Since that time, the Church has sought to make a heritage of the miraculous, handing down carefully codified rites that preserve some of the powers origi-

nally performed by saints. Certain gifted people among the faithful can learn to practice the rites of theurgy, calling upon divine favor to work wonders in the world.

Some say that theurgy is simply another form of psychic power, channeled by the unconscious mind into religious forms. Others, however, whisper about the angelic beings master Theurgists have been known to summon from the Empyrean. They claim that no one who has looked upon them can ascribe them merely to the inner workings of the mortal mind.

Adventures: Theurgists most often reside in monasteries, studying their art. Some, however, recognize that their rites are needed in the world, and so go forth to use them in faithful deeds. Some join Noble entourages as the best means for doing this.

Characteristics: Theurgists learn specific canons of rites. They begin with but one canon, but can progress on to learn others. Their rites are awe-inspiring, and are often designed to aid others — unlike the "selfish" powers of the Psychic.

Background: Theurgists often share the same background as priests. While they are members of a particular sect or order, they are not necessarily ordained as Priests, and so are not necessarily allowed to minister to others.

Races: Certain Ur-Obun are born with the potential to practice theurgic rites, although they must gain levels in this class to train them. Vorox cannot naturally learn theurgy.

Alignment: Theurgists can be of any alignment, but they are rarely evil. Those who fall into evil ways usually become Antinomists, following a different path to power.

Other Classes: Theurgists are a potent addition to any entourage or troupe, for their rites can often heal others or aid their attack rolls.

Game Rule Information

NOTE: The Gifted feat is a prerequisite for all theurgic canons. A Theurgist must spend one of his starting feats on the Gifted feat or inherit it as a racial ability (the Ur-Obun).

Theurgists have the following game statistics.

Abilities: The mental abilities — Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma — are key to a Theurgist's skills.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d6.

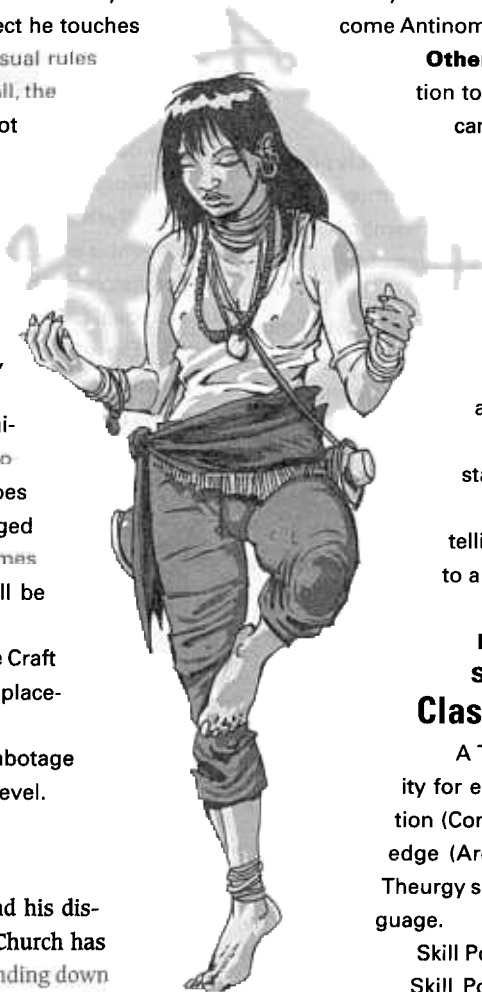
Starting Money: 1000 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

A Theurgist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (Arcana, Religion) (Int), Occulcraft (Int), Theurgy skills (by rite, see below), and Speak Language.

Skill Points for 1st Level: (6 + Int modifier) x 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int modifier.



Provost Fortuna



Table 2-12: The Theurgist

NOTE: The

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1 st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Sect Affiliation, primary theurgic canon, 1 st -degree rite, Wyrd
2 nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Primary 2 nd -degree rite
3 rd		+1			Primary 3 rd -degree rite
4 th	+2	+1		+4	Bonus occult feat
5 th				+4	Secondary theurgic canon
6 th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Secondary 2 nd -degree rite
7 th	+3	+2			Secondary 3 rd -degree rite
8 th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Bonus occult feat
9 th	+4	+3	+3		Tertiary theurgic canon and 2 nd -degree rite
10 th	+5	+3	+3		Tertiary 2 nd -degree rite
11 th	+5	+3	+3		Tertiary 3 rd -degree rite
12 th	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Bonus occult feat
13 th	+6/+1	+4	+4		Quaternary theurgic canon
14 th	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9	Quaternary 2 nd -degree rite
15 th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	Quaternary 3 rd -degree rite
16 th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Bonus occult feat
17 th	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Quinary theurgic canon and 1 st -degree rite
18 th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Quinary 2 nd -degree rite
19 th	+9/+4	+6	+6		Quinary 3 rd -degree rite
20 th	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Bonus occult feat

Class Features

The following are class features of the Theurgist.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Theurgist is proficient with the use of all simple weapons and light armor. No

Once you have trained one of the accepted canons as your primary canon, you can then choose to develop your own successive canons, picking rites to fulfill your 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-degree list. More details are provided in Table 6—4: Canons and Rites.

Wyrd: At first level, a Theurgist gains Wyrd points. The amount is equal to his key ability modifier. For instance, if his primary canon is Mystery, his Wyrd points are equal to his Intelligence score.

Every time he rises in an occult class level thereafter, he gains an additional amount of Wyrd equal to his ability modifier in the same ability. If the Mystery Theurgist's Intelligence is 16, then he gets +3 Wyrd points. If this ability modifier is altered, the Theurgist's Wyrd points also increase or decrease accordingly.

If he trains in another class, he gets one point per level advancement in the other class (unless it is the Beastfriend or Psychic class, in which case he gets his full primary canon key ability modifier per level).

Bonus Occult Feat: You can choose a feat from the following list, assuming you already have the required prerequisites: Church Ordination, Combat Casting (Theurgy), Consecrate Vestment, Imbue Tabernacle, Invest Phylactery, Righteous Sermon, Sanctify Arms and Armor, Spell Focus (Theurgy), Spell Power

pick pocket, and tumble.

Sect Affiliation: The Theurgist receives a Sect Affiliation. See the Priest class for details. Note that this does not grant him a rank in that sect (he or she is assumed to be a lay brother or sister); for that, he must gain the Church Ordination social feat.

Theurgy: At first level, you adopt a primary theurgic canon (choose from the list below). This canon allows you to train its 1st-degree rite. At second level, you can learn its 2nd-degree rite, and at third level, its 3rd-degree rite. The

- Mystery (Int) — Scry the occult.
- Piety (Cha) — Exemplary faith.
- Protection (Con) — Defend against evil.
- Restoration (Wis) — Heal wounds of body and mind.
- Revelings (Int) — Reveal hidden things or the future.

- Wrath (Str) — Holy warrior.
- Zealotry (Con) — Inquisitorial witchhunting.

At higher levels (5th, 9th, 13th, 17th), you can learn additional canons and rites. Some canons have a rare 4th-degree rite; this may be learned after the Theurgist has gained the canon's 3rd-degree power and in place of the bonus occult feat gained at 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th levels.





NPC Class: Yeoman

(Freelancer)

Since serts seem to believe that almost anyone involved in trade is a guild member, a number of freemen have taken advantage of this fact. They may do any kind of work, they may work with the guilds, they may pretend to be full members, but really they are beholden to none.

Game Rule Information

Yeomen have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Varies.

Alignment: Any.

Hit Die: d6.

Starting Money: 500 firebirds per level.

Class Skills

The Yeoman can choose any 10 skills to be class skills. Up to two of these can be skills exclusive to some other class.

Skill Points for 1st Level: $(6 + \text{Int modifier}) \times 4$.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: $6 + \text{Int modifier}$.

Class Features

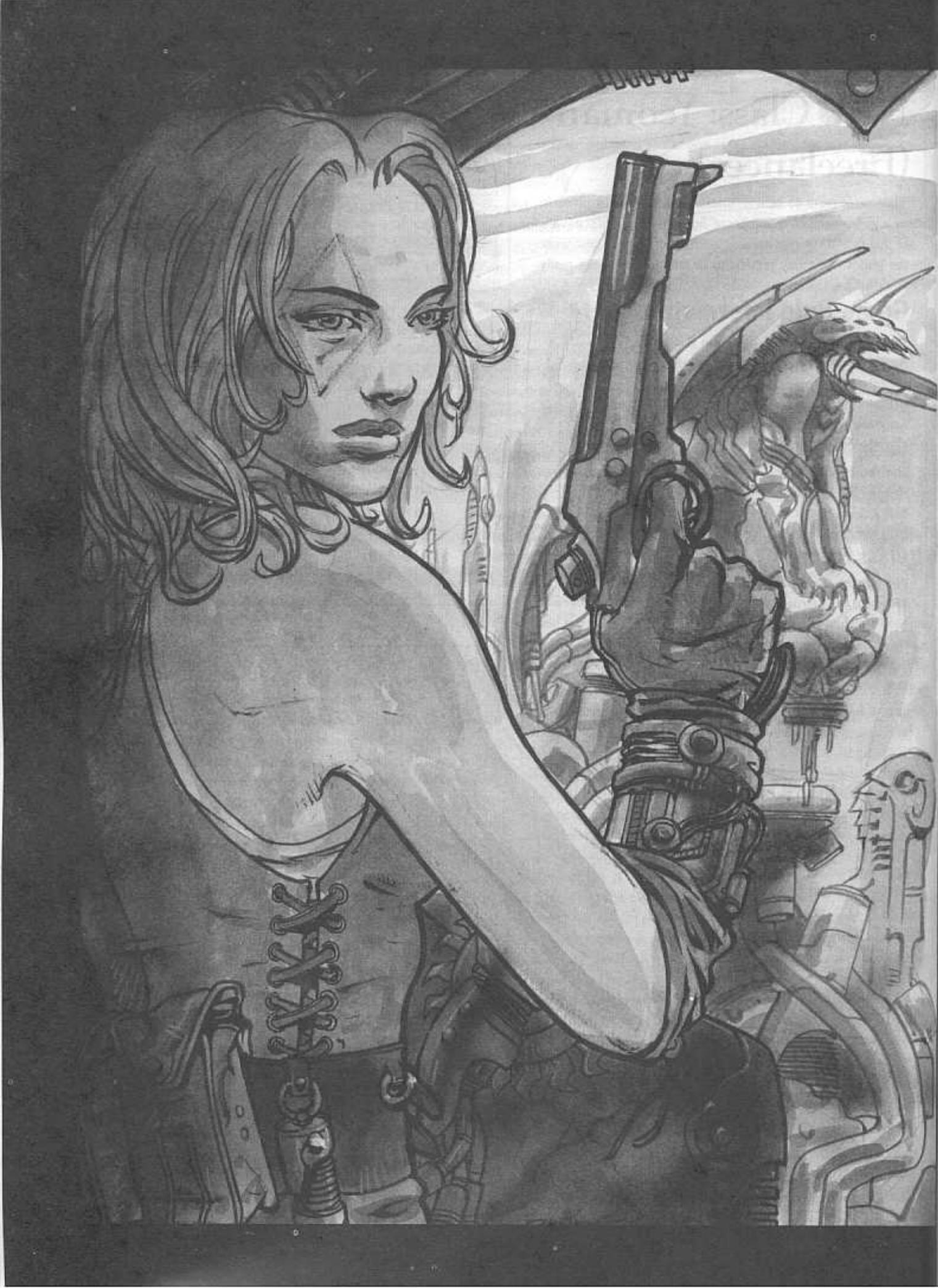
The following are class features of the Yeoman.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A Yeoman is proficient with the use of all simple weapons and with light armor but not shields. Note that armor check penalties for armor heavier than synthsilk apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

TABLE 2—14: THE YEOMAN

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save
1 st	+0	+0	+0	+2
2 nd	+1	+0	+0	+3
3 rd	+2	+1	+1	+3
4 th	+3	+1	+1	+4
5 th	+3	+1	+1	+4
6 th	+4	+2	+2	+5
7 th	+5	+2	+2	+5
8 th	+6/+1	+2	+2	+6
9 th	+6/+1	+3	+3	+6
10 th	+7/+2	+3	+3	+7
11 th	+8/+3	+3	+3	+7
12 th	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8
13 th	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8
14 th	+10/+5	+4	+4	+9
15 th	+11/+6/+1	+5	+5	+9
16 th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10
17 th	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10
18 th	+13/+8/+3	+6	+6	+11
19 th	+14/+9/+4	+6	+6	+11
20 th	+15/+10/+5	+6	+6	+12





Chapter Three: Skills

Modified Skills

Alchemy (Int; Trained Only)

Vorox receive a +2 smell bonus when making Alchemy skill checks.

Task	DC	Notes
Make setchakah	20	See Craft skill
Make plox blade venom	25	See Craft skill
Make grix blade venom	25	See Craft skill

Animal Handling (Cha; Trained Only; Any Class)

When trying to handle an alien animal or beast, you suffer a -4 penalty unless you are familiar with the creature (i.e., it is native to your homeworld or was historically introduced there).

Craft (Int)

When working with low tech (TL3 or lower), use such skills as Armorsmith, Bowmaking and Weaponsmith. When working with high tech (TL4 or higher) use the following specialties:

Mechanical (Mech): Repairing or manufacturing mechanical and moving parts. If the parts are metal, you can gain a +2 synergy bonus if you have five or more ranks in Profession (Blacksmith). If the parts are wooden, you can gain a +2 synergy bonus if you have five or more ranks in Profession (Woodcutter).

Volt: Electrical circuitry or powered items. You can gain a +2 synergy bonus if you have five or more ranks in Knowledge (Physics).

High Tech: Extremely complex and/or immaterial tech: such as devices that operate on magnetism or other fields. Various sciences specific to a particular high technology may add synergy bonuses, at the DM's behest.

The tech level (TL) and complexity of an item determine its DC. The higher the TL and/or the more complex its parts, the more difficult it is to manufacture or repair that item. (Note: This rule is often reversed for repairing certain types of Second Republic-era consumer items, such as toys or tools. The higher the TL, the easier it is to repair, since most such technology was built to be extremely

durable and easy to use — but it is hard to find the right materials anymore.)

This skill does not confer the ability to manufacture items of each levels 5+. The lost know-how for much of this technology is are, and requires special lore. You may learn various versions of the Comprehend Tech Level feat (one per TL up to 8), allowing you to make such technology.

Disable Device (Int; Trained Only)

Most technological devices have difficulties of Wicked (25) and take 2d4 rounds.

Decipher Script (Int; Trained Only; Nobles and Knaves Only)

Use this skill for cryptography. Most noble houses have their own codes for various tasks, from military defense to simple fief management. Hence, anyone seeking to learn a rival's secrets may need to first break the codes he uses to communicate orders to householders.

Escape Artist (Dex; Armor Check Penalty)

Technological restraints are harder to break than traditional rope.

Restraint	DC
Plastic handcuffs	20
Metal handcuffs	30
Net Jacket	35
Muster Chains	40

Forgery (Int)

You must have at least one rank in Use Think Machine skill to forge data documents (those viewed on a think machine, such as email or computer security clearances). Consider it a Trained Only skill otherwise (you cannot even make a Forgery skill check if you don't have Use Think Machine skill).

Heal (Wis)

To perform surgery or cybernetic implantation, you must also have the Physick feat.



Intimidate (Cha)

If you have five or more ranks in Knowledge (Torture), you can gain a +2 synergy bonus when employing torture tactics.

Intuit Direction (Wis; Trained Only)

You can use this skill to realign yourself with "up" in weightless conditions. Note that sometime there really is no "up."

Open Lock (Dex; Trained Only)

High-tech locks are harder to open than traditional key locks.

See *Security Systems* in the EQUIPMENT chapter.

Knowledge (Int; Trained Only)

In addition to the standard Knowledge topics, **Fading Suns: d20** provides the following:

- Bureaucracy (bookkeeping, data filing, household logistics)
- Guilds (Merchant League, minor guilds, commerce)
- Known Worlds (other planets, the Jumpweb)
- Military (tactics, legendary soldiers and units)
- Torture (extracting secrets, pain centers)

There are also a number of sciences:

- Anthropology (the study of culture)
- Archaeology (the study of the past through its relics)
- Astronomy (the study of the stars)
- Biology (the study of living creatures)
- Chemistry (the study of chemicals)
- Cybernetics (the study of man and machine meldings)
- Engineering (architecture, fortifications)
- Genetics (the study of DNA)
- Geology (the study of land, terrain, and rock formations)
- Meteorology (the study of weather)
- Physics (the study of objects in motion and their relations)
- Terraforming (the study of worldcrafting)

New Skills

Academia (Int; Trained Only)

Much like the Gather Information skill, except Academia allows you to research topics in a library or some other form of data archive, including Knowledge skill topics you have no training in. Information is gold in the New Dark Ages, especially since so much of it has been lost since the Fall of the Second Republic. You must be literate in the languages the archives you wish to research are written in.

Check: It usually takes about half a day spent among the archives to make a check. The DC varies with the obscurity of the topic you are researching and the quality of the archives you search.

Note that most Church, guild or noble family archives require some form of permission before access is granted. A priest rank is usually good enough for admission to Church records, but sensitive records or secret files requires high-level permission (or the Legate feat). Rank in a guild grants access to your guild's files, and can also usually get you into other League member guild archives. Noble family archives are usually quite personal and require the permission of the family head, even if you are a fellow house member.

Synergy: If you have five or more ranks in the Knowledge

skill related to the topic you are researching, you gain a +2 synergy bonus.

Retry: Yes, but it takes half a day per check. Many Church and guild libraries have set hours of operation. On off-hours, you must have special permission to access the archives.

Arts (Wis)

You are skilled in creating pieces of art in a particular medium: painting, sculpture, calligraphy, etc. This could also include musical composition, but not the actual performance of that symphony (use the Perform skill for that). Your work is not simply a piece of craftsmanship but an **aesthetic statement** capable of emotionally affecting others, adding to the beauty of the universe or making viewers question some aspect of it.

Check: There are two stages to any piece of art: making it and displaying it.

Making art: Making the piece of art requires time and materials (paint, carving tools and marble, etc.). The materials cost varies with the size of the piece, but it is usually only 10-100 firebirds for a painting or 50-200 for a sculpture. Rare or prized materials (Apshei pigments or Ravenan marble) may add to the price by 10% to 30%.

Once the materials are at hand, you may begin work. First, figure out the theme of the piece you wish to make, such as a portrait of a noble or a depiction of "humanity's suffering among the stars." The DC depends on just how recognizable the theme or how tough the effect is to achieve.

Theme	DC
Still life or portrait	10
Monument	15
Well-known idea (beauty, suffering, faith)	15
Difficult idea (transcendence, enlightenment)	20
New idea or style	+3
Unique materials	-1 to -3

One skill check may be made per week. If the DC is not achieved, you may keep working at the piece each week until it is. Simply achieving the DC, however, is not always enough; it means a successful piece, but not a masterpiece — for that, a higher DC must be achieved. For every five results you achieve over the required DC, the more masterful the work.

Check Result	Quality
Standard success	Routine work.
+5 over required DC	Notable work.
+10 over required DC	Great work.
+15 over required DC	Sublime work.
+20 over required DC	Masterpiece.

Displaying art: Once completed, the artwork may be unveiled before the public. Those witnessing it make opposed Wisdom checks (or Art skill checks, if they are trained in the skill) against a DC dependent on the quality of the work. Success means the work has no effect on them; failure means they experience the reactions listed below. These reactions assume an appreciative crowd with the means to patronize art; hanging a painting at the local pub may not garner the same results (add +5 to +10 to the DC).

Note that, once a work is completed, it continues to affect its viewers regardless of the activities of its maker — artists are mortal, art is immortal.



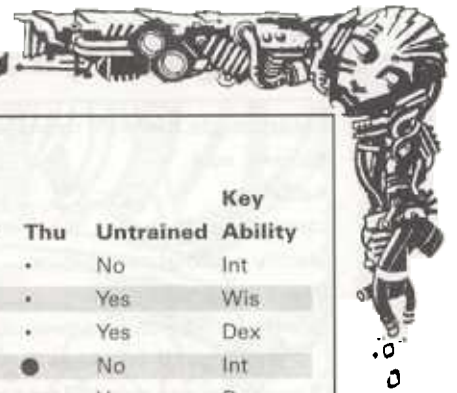


Table 3—1: New Skills

Skill	Bst	Bro	Gld	Kna	Liv	Nob	Pri	Psi	Sol	Stw	Tec	Thu	Untrained	Key Ability
Academia	●	.	.	.	●	.	No	Int
Arts	●	●	Yes	Wis
Drive	●	●	●	.	Yes	Dex
Occultcraft	.	●	●	●	.	.	.	●	No	Int
Starship Gunnery	●	.	.	Yes	Dex
Use Artifact	●	.	Yes	Wis
Use Think Machine	.	.	.	●	●	.	No	Int

● Class skill.
 ◦ Cross-class skill.
 * Guilders choose 10 skills as class skills; these can be any of the skills listed above.

DC Artwork

- 10 Routine work. A standard still life or depiction of an overdone historical or religious event. Buyers will offer to pay double the materials cost.
- 15 Notable work. The artist has brought something new to tired themes. Buyers will offer to pay five times the materials cost.
- 20 Great work. The piece turns even the heads of those who don't normally have an appreciation for art. Buyers will offer to pay 10 times the materials cost and perhaps purchase any other works the artist may have. The piece may well be displayed in a prominent place, such as a noble's home.
- 25 Sublime work. The piece is breathtaking in its beauty or insight — viewers gasp upon seeing it and may stand transfixed for hours looking at it. Buyers will offer to pay 50 times the materials cost, and seek to commission new works from the artist. The piece may be displayed in a prominent public place, such as a church.
- 30 Masterpiece. The piece is the definitive modern statement on the theme. Critical studies and appreciations of the piece will appear in print and the artist's name will be known in the interstellar art world. Buyers will offer to pay 100 times the materials cost and seek to patronize the artist for the next few years (if not for the rest of his life), covering all his living expenses. The piece may be displayed in the most high of places, such as in the Emperor's throne room or personal residence.

Playing music: If the work of art is a musical composition, its performer gains a +2 bonus to his Perform skill when playing or conducting great work, a +4 bonus for sublime work and a +6 bonus for a masterpiece

Drive (Dex; Trained Only — except for landcraft)

Choose either aircraft, landcraft, watercraft, or spacecraft (spacecraft is exclusive to Guilders, Techies and Starwolves).
Check: Simply driving down the street in a gas-powered jalopy or cruising the clouds in a flitter requires no skill check (although you must at least have training in the type of vehicle, unless it is a landcraft, in which case no training is required). It's only when things get complex or harried that checks are required. Failing a check does not necessarily mean a crash; it simply means

the stated maneuver did not succeed. Failing a check by more than 10, however, results in a crash (or significant loss of altitude for a flying car — you may get one or two retries before you hit the ground, depending on how high you were before falling).

Manuever	DC
Catch another vehicle*	15
Hairpin turn	20
Bootlegger reverse	25
Canyon running**	30
Speeding ***	+5
Reckless driving ****	+10
Straightaway/smooth sailing	-5†
Slick road/stormy weather	+5†

* This is an opposed check against the other vehicle's driver.
 ** Speeding through a canyon with multiple curves or hairpin turns.
 *** Traveling more than half the vehicle's maximum speed.
 **** Traveling more than three-quarters of the vehicle's maximum speed.
 † Basically, any environmental condition that might affect a landcraft, aircraft or watercraft. Stackable with other mods.

Losing someone who's tailing you: You can try to outrun, outdistance or outfox someone who is chasing or tailing you in another vehicle. In general, reverse the DC modifiers listed above, so that it is harder to lose someone on a straightaway (-5 DC) and easier in stormy weather (+5 DC). Generally, you and your chaser make a series of opposed checks. If you win, you successfully lose the tailing vehicle. If he wins, he gains on you such that it becomes impossible (unless conditions change) to lose him.

Retry: Yes, as long as the craft hasn't crashed.

Occultcraft (Int; Trained Only)

You can identify occult powers, such as psychic effects or theurgic rites. Unless you have some special ability that allows you to actually see the normally invisible occult spectrum, you must deduce the use of such powers. This skill allows you to make such deductions.

Check: A skill check allows you to identify an occult power effect.

You can also attempt to detect the use of supernatural powers in the immediate vicinity even when there is no direct sign of them. This is done through deducing various subtle clues associated with the invisible effect (odd behavior in psychically con-



trolled people, the slight movement of air around telekinetic phenomena, etc.).

Activity	DC
Identity occult power	15
Identity supernatural creature	20
Detect occult power use	20
Detect unknown occult power use	25+

Synergy: If you have five or more ranks in Knowledge (Arcana), you can gain a +2 synergy bonus when trying to identify a power.

Retry: Yes, but only if some other clue arises or is revealed about the use or features of the power.

Starship Gunnery (Dex; Trained Only)

You can fire a deck- or turret-mounted gun on a spaceship. This usually involves strapping yourself into a massive rotating chair and gripping trigger-equipped handles while viewing the ship's external camera views.

Check: Use your Starship Gunnery skill ranks + Dex mod as an attack bonus when firing shipboard weaponry. The DC depends on the weapon and the target (its maneuverability, its range, etc.).

Retry: A shot either hits or misses. Most guns have unlimited ammunition as long as the starship generators keep providing energy.

Use Artifact (Wis)

You have some experience with strange artifacts, either the wondrous and now-incomprehensible artifacts made by certain Second Republic geniuses or the even more awe-inspiring artifacts left behind by the Anunnaki.

Check: With this skill, you can attempt to activate and wield a strange artifact. Second Republic artifacts include Psi Clinics (facilities with devices used to enhance psychic power or chain the Urge), paraphysics drivers (machines allegedly capable of opening portals to other dimensions), and any number of forgotten and unique inventions made by the many geniuses that lived in that era. Anunnaki artifacts include Soul Shards, Philosophers Stones, Gargoyles and jumpgates (you can try to open a gate to someplace without a jumpkey).

Artifact	DC
Psi Clinic	20
Soul Shard	20
Paraphysics driver	25
Philosophers Stone	25
Gargoyle	30
Jumpgate (open a known route)	35
Jumpgate (open a lost route)	40

Retry: Yes, but usually only after a day of studying the artifact.

Use Think Machine (Int; Trained Only)

Operating and programming computers. You must also know a programming language before you can program or hack software written in that language.

Check: Simply using a think machine to bring up its stored data may not require a skill check, but more complex tasks, such as creating a word processing document or graphic file, do require a Use Think Machine check. In addition, using an unfamiliar machine or operating system may require periodic checks.

Hacking: Hacking allows you to access a program or file to which you normally don't have access, either because you lack security clearance, a password or the proper encryption key. A static data file is stored in a think machine's memory banks; you must beat the program protection's DC before you can access the file. A dynamic file is stored on a think machine network monitored by other users, who may attempt to prevent you from gaining access, in which case your hacking check is opposed by the defender's check.

A hacking check usually takes anywhere from one round to one minute. For complex programs, it may even take 2d4 minutes.

Success means you access the file. Failure means you gain no ground. Failure by five or more points means you have been kicked off the server by the defender. Successive attempts to rejoin the server or access the program are now at +5 DC, and may still be opposed.

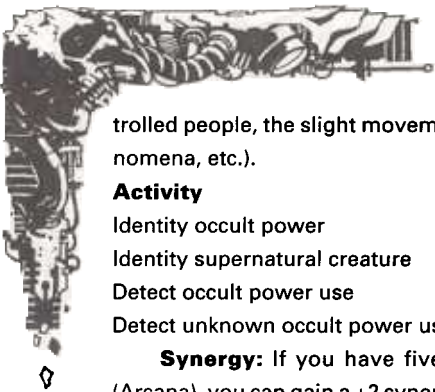
Some think machines are sentient — that is, they have sophisticated artificial intelligences. When hacking these entities, all checks are opposed by the AI's checks.

Task	DC
Hack into static data files	20
Hack into dynamic data files	20 and/or opposed
Security protection	+5
AI protection	opposed

Programming: Writing a new program, or even modifying an existing one, is a time-consuming task. Only one programming check may be made per week of work. To retool existing software, the DC is 15. Programming new software is DC 20 or even higher, depending on the complexity of the program. With each check, you may accumulate your results (assuming you achieved the required DC) toward the total points needed to program the software.

Software	Total Points
Retool a word processor or database	15
Retool a graphics/art program	25
Retool a security system	40
Retool citywide power grid controls	50
Create golem routine programming	75
Create simple AI programming	100+

Retry: Yes, as long as your access has not been severed by security measures.



Programming Languages

There is a wide array of unique programming languages still used, especially for those who want to encrypt their data — breaking the code requires understanding the language. Think machines are notorious for their difficult operating systems and programming languages. Each programming language must be learned separately.

The skill Use Think Machine is used to interface with and program computers.

Turing: This is the premiere high-tech coding language of the Empire, an artificial language constructed by the Engineers. Since only members of that guild are familiar with this language, computers that are completely reprogrammed by them can only be fully accessed by their members.

Constantinople: The Reeves Guild has developed its own language as well, although it is used mainly to store records and financial data. Since only a handful of these bureaucrats have the knowledge to construct data systems, they've done a shockingly poor job. Any system using Constantinople is more difficult than it needs to be (DC +5), and only other members of the Reeves guild can easily decode these arcane operating systems (Reeves do not suffer the higher DC penalty).

Lex V.V: The Church has sanctioned and developed this cumbersome programming language. Take the crude raw data language of the First Republic, translate it into Latin, require a system of declensions for different situations, and you'll be decoding the Tetragrammaton in no time.

Iê: This programming language of the Ur-Obun was developed completely independently of human society. It reflects the cultural preferences of that race, and humans find it annoying at an almost instinctual level.

Link: Golems (robots) have their own various computer languages within their data matrixes. Link is a meta-language that applies to most of them. Explorers who find ancient golems have a better chance of kick-starting them if they understand it.

Suprema: This is the original form of Turing, present in many computers. Its raw data format makes it easy to translate into other languages. Subtract two from the DC of any task performed on a machine running Suprema. The Church is notorious for capturing these machines and modifying them to allegedly work better under Lex V.V.







Chapter Four: Feats

Types of Feats

There are a number of new feat categories with special con-

MetaPsi

These feats allow those with psychic powers to alter their effects, increasing either range, duration or number of targets.

Details can be found in each feat's description or the OCCULT POWERS chapter.

Social Feats

Social feats are much like normal feats except that their ef-

fects tend to be limited in scope, to either particular situations or to roleplaying effects. Also, most character classes receive social feats more often than normal feats. A character is free to choose a social feat in place of a normal feat, *but not vice versa*.

Social feats represent special abilities or social connections you acquired during your upbringing, apprenticeship and/or early career. They are often stackable (extra versions of the same social

feat provide greater scope to the topic, such as a more powerful Ally or a larger Gossip Network).

Unless stated otherwise in a social feat description, bonuses from different feats do stack. In other words, a noble baron (who gets +3 Diplomacy among other nobles) who uses his veteran status to gain a favor (this gives him +2 Diplomacy) has a total Diplomacy bonus of +5.

Tech Item Creation Feats

Tech item creation feats allow you to create high-tech items.

Unlike magical or occult item creation, tech items do not require the expenditure of XP. Instead, each item is created just like any other item made with a Craft skill. Certain Knowledges or skills can provide synergy bonuses to the feat's skill check; any such skills are listed in each feat's description under the heading: **Syn-**

Items created with these feats can usually be repaired without the use of the feat needed to manufacture it. However, you must still make the proper Craft skill check and perhaps spend a portion of the item's material costs to replace broken parts.

Manufacture of high-tech items first requires that you be conversant with the item's tech level (abbreviated TL). All tech item creation feats have as their prerequisites the relevant Comprehend Tech Level feat. Tech levels are not simply designations of complexity or the historical era in which an item was first invented; they are hallmarks of paradigm shifts in scientific understanding. Each tech level represents not simply an improvement in material sciences but also an expanded understanding of the hidden laws that govern material and energetic interactions in the universe. For instance, at tech level 8, a scientist can begin to understand parapsysics, a Second Republic-era science concerned with the penetration of multiple dimensions into the space/time continuum. For more information on tech levels, see the EQUIPMENT chapter.

Modified Feats

Combat Casting [General]

This feat must be learned separately for psychic powers and theurgy.

Spell Focus [General]

This feat must be learned separately for psychic powers and theurgy.

Benefit: Choose a psychic path or theurgic canon to focus on. Add +2 to the Difficulty Class for saving throws from the path or canon you focus on.

Spell Power Penetration [General]

This feat must be learned separately for psychic powers and theurgy.



Table 4—: Feats

General Feats

Armed to the Teeth

Cloak Fighting

Crack Shot

Deflect Missiles

Drox (Graa)

Garza (Graa)

Glangarza (Graa)

Improved Feint

Instinct Shot

Parry

Rapid Reload

Riposte

Stri

Throx (Graa)

Tw

Item Creation Feats

Attune Fetish

Consecrate Vestment

aberr

rest Phylactery

and A

MetaPsi Feats

Enlarge Psi

Extend Psi

Multiply Psi

Social Feats

Alien Friend*

Ally**

Alternate Iden

Assets**

Chartophylax

Church Ordination**

Comeliness

Comprehend Tech Level

Prerequisites

Base attack bon +6

Crack Shot

Parry, Riposte

Dex 16+, base attack bonus +6 or higher, Parry, Weapon Focus (flux sword)

Vorox, base attack bonus +3 or higher

Vorox, Dex 15+

Vorox

Bluff skill 7+ ranks, Parry

Wis 13+, Alertness

Dex 13+, base attack bonus +2 or higher, proficient with weapon

Quick Draw

Base attack bonus +6 or higher, Parry

Dex 13+, base attack bonus +3 or higher

Vorox, base attack bonus +6 or higher, Drox

Base attack bonus +6 or higher, Crack Shot

Prerequisites

Psychic level 10+

Theurgist level 4+, Brother Battle level 9+

Psychic or Theurgist level 5+, Brother Battle level 10+

Theurgist level 9+, Brother Battle level 14+

Brother Battle or Theurgist level 7+

Prerequisites

Gifted (Psi)

Gifted (Psi)

Gifted (Psi)

Prerequisites

Xeno-Empathy

Noble Title, Church Ordination or Guild Commission

Church Ordination rank 2+

Brother Battle, Priest or Theurgist level 1+, any class 4+

Int 13+ (TL5), Int 15+ (TL6), Int 20+ (TL8)

Coven Membership

Diplomatic Immunity

Embargo

Enthrall

Epiphany

Etiquette

Family Ties**

Gifted*

Gossip Network**

Guild Commission**

H opha

Holier Than Thou

Householder

Imperial Charter

Imperial Cohort Badge

Impulse Buy

Incite Passion

Inquisitorial Seal

Legate

Military Rank**

Noble Claw

Noble Title**

Passage Contract

Peasant Hero

Physick

Purgation

Rabble Rouse

Reeve Advocate

Reputation**

Retainer

Righteous Sermon

Saint

Savoir-Faire

Secret*

Secret Agent**

Smear Campaign

Steady Hand

Streetwise

Trendsetter

Veteran**

Withering Insult

Well-Traveled

Xeno-Empathy*

Psychic level 1+

Noble Title, Church Ordination or Guild Commission

Guild Commission rank 3+

Perform skill 6+ ranks

Wis 15+, Knowledge skill related to topic 6+ ranks

Int 13+

Guider or Techie level 1+, or any class level 4+

Priest level 7+, Knowledge (Religion) 10+ ranks

Church Ordination

Noble Title

Any class level 3+, except those with Noble Title

Church Ordination rank 4+

Church Ordination rank 3+

Officer: Noble Title; Enlisted: Any class level 1+

Vorox, Noble level 1+

Noble level 1+, any class level 4+

Wis 13+, Heal skill 5+ ranks, Guild Affiliation or Sect Affiliation

Wis 13+, Sect Affiliation class ability

Cha 15+, Enthrall

Assets (Well-off or better)

Perform skill 6+ ranks

Good alignment, any class level 18+

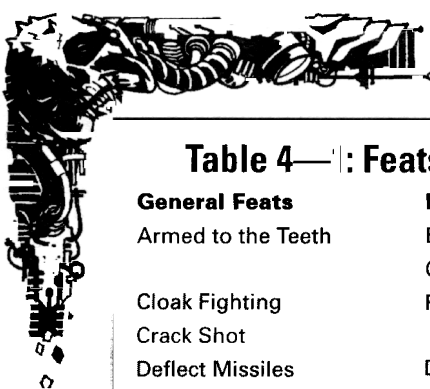
Cha 15+

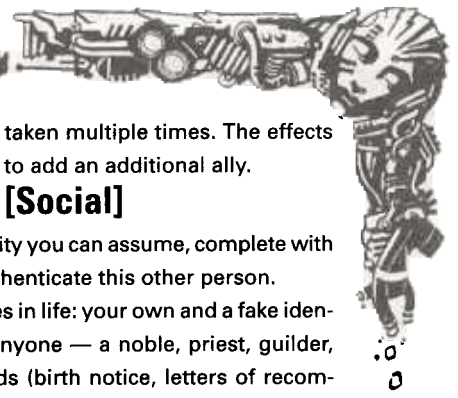
Knave level 1+, any class level 4+

Cha 13+

Int 13+

Any cla: level 3-





Tech Item Creation Feats	Prerequisites
Concoct Elixir	Comprehend TL7, Alchemy skill 5+
Craft Energy Device	Comprehend TL6+, Craft (High Tech) skill
Craft Wondrous Tech	Comprehend TL5+, Craft (High Tech) skill

* This feat can be gained multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each additional feat is applied to a new topic.

** This feat can be gained multiple times. Its effects stack.

New Feats

Alien Friend [Social]

You are a known friend to a particular race.

Prerequisites: Xeno-Empathy.

Benefit: When dealing with members of the race to which this feat applies, you gain a +2 Diplomacy and Gather Information check bonus.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times. The effects do not stack; another race must be selected each time this feat is taken. Common choices for the feat are: Children of the Ur (both Obun and Ukar), Vorox, Etyri, Gannok and Shantor.

Ally [Social]

You have a close relationship with someone in a position of power, and that person will often go out of his way to help you.

Benefit: Your ally holds a noble title, Church ordination, guild commission, or some other rank that provides him a degree of power over others of his kind. The ally's actual rank is equal to the second degree of rank for someone of his faction (noble baronet, Church canon, guild chief). This feat is stackable and may be taken multiple times to increase the rank level of the ally or to add a new ally. For instance, three levels of this feat can allow for a noble earl ally.

To gain the ally's aid, you must address him personally or get a message to him. The GM then makes an Ally check. To the roll result, he adds 10 + your Charisma modifier + any modifiers based on the situation. If you have recently done the ally a favor, you may get a +2 on the check. If you recently risked your life for him, you may get a +4 or +6 on the check (GM's discretion).

The DC depends on the type of aid asked. If it's a simple request for a flitter ride or dinner invitation, the DC is 10. Asking your ally to introduce you to one of his friends or even rivals might be DC 15 or 20. Request for military aid would be 25 or higher, depending on the nature of the ally (priests can rarely supply troops).

You may make a request of the same ally once per month. Two successive months of such requests causes the DC to rise for each successive attempt. Should the DC ever get as high as 40, that ally will no longer heed your requests until at least a year has passed during which he has no requests from you, but he might ask you to perform favors to bring the relationship (and the DC) back to normal.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times. The effects stack to raise the ally in rank or to add an additional ally.

Alternate Identity [Social]

You have an alternate identity you can assume, complete with all the records necessary to authenticate this other person.

Benefit: You have two roles in life: your own and a fake identity. This fake identity can be anyone — a noble, priest, guildler, etc. You have a sheaf of records (birth notice, letters of recommendation, etc.) to prove your existence as this false person. If you attempt to appear as both yourself and the fake identity among the same social crowd, you may have to adopt a disguise for the fake identity lest someone catch on to your act. It's best to keep your identities' social cliques separate. However, you do receive a +2 Disguise bonus when assuming your fake identity.

Synergy: If you have five or more ranks in a Knowledge skill relevant to your fake identity (i.e., Religion for a priest), you gain a +2 synergy bonus to Bluff or Diplomacy skill checks when convincing another person of your authenticity.

Armed to the Teeth [General]

You can use a melee weapon in your primary hand and a pistol in your off-hand to gain an extra attack.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6 or higher, Crack Shot.

Benefit: When attacking with a melee weapon in your primary hand and a firearm in your off-hand, you gain a free attack with the pistol. Standard penalties for two-weapon fighting (and firing a pistol in melee, if applicable) apply, except you halve the two-weapon penalties (just as with the Two-Weapon Fighting feat).

Assets [Social]

You rule a fief or run a business, providing you annual income.

Prerequisites: Noble Title, Church Ordination, or Guild Commission.

Benefit: You have real wealth, as opposed to mere savings or wages: land rulership or control of a business. This asset provides you with regular income and is usually tied to your rank and affiliation. You don't actually own the land or business — your house or guild does — but through birthright, luck or hard work, you have gained control over it and thus reap its benefits (and suffers its responsibilities). You cannot sell the business, but may abdicate your position or temporarily place someone else in charge; during this time, you do not gain the income associated with the asset.

This feat provides you with an income and responsibilities. Each time you take this feat (maximum of five times), it increases the amount of your income. The money is listed in firebirds: this is how much the asset brings the character in yearly income after paying expenses, barring no disasters or dramatic changes in circumstance for good or ill. It also provides a small amount of extra starting money.

1st feat = Good Assets (3000 fb yearly income/+300 starting fb).

2nd feat = Well-off (5000 fb yearly income/+500 starting fbs).

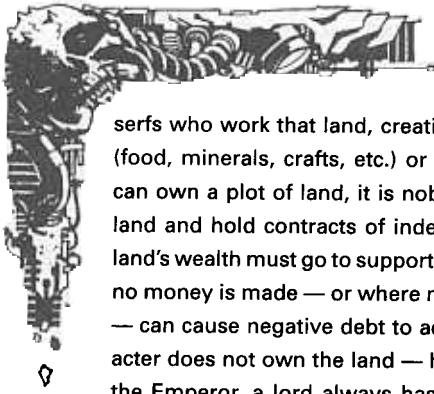
3rd feat = Wealthy (10,000 fb yearly income/+1000 starting fb).

4th feat = Rich (15,000 fb yearly income/+1500 starting fb).

5th feat = Filthy Rich (20,000 fb yearly income/+2000 starting fb).

Fief: You rule or own a substantial portion of land and the





serfs who work that land, creating wealth from its commodities (food, minerals, crafts, etc.) or by taxation. While any freeman can own a plot of land, it is nobles who own the most valuable land and hold contracts of indenture on serfs. A portion of the land's wealth must go to support these serfs, and bad years where no money is made — or where natural disasters destroyed crops — can cause negative debt to accumulate. Technically, the character does not own the land — his noble house does. Except for the Emperor, a lord always has a lord above him to whom he must answer; misuse of lands is often cause for loss of rank. A lord does not necessarily oversee the daily demands of the fief; usually seneschals or chamberlains undertake this task.

The size of a fief is not the most important factor determining its value; its resources — from raw minerals to manufacturing capability — must also be considered. A small parcel with a single gold mine might be as valuable as an entire province of prime farmland. While there were once rank requirements to rule the most valuable properties, the chaotic land-grabbing of the Emperor Wars has left knights in charge of fiefs once ruled by counts, while certain dukes now rule lands once considered barely fit for baronets. While such extreme cases are the exceptions, it shows that your rank is not necessarily a determination of your wealth. Nonetheless, suggested traditional ranks are listed with each fief size.

In some places, the Church owns and operates fiefs; priests are placed in charge of such assets.

A 1st Asset feat might provide a shire or village (usually lorded by a baronet), with tenant farms as its resources. A 2nd Asset feat might provide a borough or town (baron) with a silver mine. A 3rd Asset feat is worthy of a province or city (earl or marquis) hosting prime farmlands. A 4th Asset feat is a county or capital city (count) that derives most of its wealth from taxation. A 5th Asset feat is a continent or moon (duke) hosting raw or refined resources (mineral or otherwise).

Business: You own a business that creates wealth for you. This usually means that you employ a number of people in a variety of positions to keep the business running, from manual laborers to accountants. Bad business can mean the firing of employees and even loss of assets, or you must throw all your profits back into the business just to keep it alive. This is a risky but potentially very good investment. You do not necessarily oversee the daily operations of the business; you can leave that in the hands of a trusted employee or partner.

A 1st Asset feat business might be a hospital, catering to those who can afford medical care (rather than stand in line with the serfs at the local parish). A 2nd Asset feat might signify the crafting or manufacture of luxury items. A 3rd Asset feat could be a weaponsrafter mill that produces firearms or artillery. A 4th Asset feat suggests a high-tech manufacturing plant, perhaps a ceramsteel smelter, think machine mill or fusion generator supplying power to a local grid. A 5th Asset feat is usually reserved for the highest-profile businesses, such as a starport, shipyard or starbase.

Special: See the *Source of Wealth* sidebar for more information on assets.

Sources of Wealth

There are a variety of ways to accumulate wealth in *Fading Suns*. Noble houses get most of their money from the ownership of land and all the resources associated with it — including serfs. The chain of rulership of these lands descends from the head of the house down to dukes, counts, earls and baronets, each of whom may maintain a fief for their family lord. Profits from fiefs are divided in unequal portions throughout this chain. Many minor houses or smaller families within the major houses, divested of their land due to war or debt, maintain their wealth through the ownership of proprietary manufacturing processes or the selling of services.

The Church gains its primary wealth from tithing the faithful, which includes nobles, merchants and freemen. Serfs are also expected to tithe, but the most destitute can instead volunteer labor (with their lords' permission). However, the Church also owns its own lands and indentured service contracts, and maintains these much like noble fiefs. Another method of income is the selling of relics and pilgrimage site entry fees.

Guildsmembers gain their wealth through a number of means, from employment contracts to other guilds, priests or nobles, to the ownership of businesses and the tendering of loans to certain parties. While some may own lands and the resources thereon, they cannot own serfs. They can pay their employees criminal wages such that there is little difference.

Attune Fetish [Item Creation]

You can enhance an item, allowing you to use your psychic powers with it to perform otherwise impossible feats.

Prerequisites: Psychic level 10+

Benefit: By spending experience points and materials costs, you can psychically attune an existing item. The item to be attuned must be of at least masterwork quality. Attuned items can be used as channels for psychic power. They are rated by the attunement level required to easily use them for psychic purposes. When attempting to use a fetish with an attunement level higher than your Psychic class level, you must make an attunement check. Roll 1d20 and add your level. The DC is equal to the fetish's attunement level +1.

Costs: The base cost is equal to the fetish's attunement level squared x 1000 firebirds. To attune a fetish, you must spend 1/25 of this base price in XP and use up raw materials costing half the base price. It takes one day per 1000 fb in the base price.

Weapons: The most legendary example is the mist sword, a psychically attuned flux sword. However, any weapon can be made into a fetish, as long as the maker has the required Psychic level to attune the weapon type. He may have more levels than required, but he does not have to make an item at his maximum level, only the minimum required for that weapon (it's cheaper to make lower-level fetishes).

Weapon	Attunement level
Small melee weapon	5+
Medium melee weapon	7+
Large melee weapon	9+





Tiny slug gun	6+
Small slug gun	8+
Medium slug gun	10+
Large slug gun	12+
Tiny energy weapon	7+
Small energy weapon	9+
Medium energy weapon*	11+
Large energy weapon	13+

* The level required to make a flux sword into a mist sword.

A weapon fetish allows you to increase your base attack bonus and/or weapon damage by one point per Wyrd point you expend, up to a maximum amount equal to your primary psychic power's key ability modifier. It is a free action to do so.

Armor: Any armor can be made into a fetish, as long as the maker has the required Psychic level to attune the armor type.

Armor	Attunement level
Light	5+
Medium	9+
Heavy	13+
Buckler or small shield	5+
Small shield	9+
Large shield	13+
Standard or dueling energy shield	9+
Assault energy shield	13+
Battle energy shield	17+

Your fetish armor's armor class or an energy shield's activation roll can be boosted by one per Wyrd point you expend, up to a maximum amount equal to your primary psychic power's key ability modifier. It is a free action to do so.

Tools: Your fetish tool gains a +2 skill check bonus for each Wyrd point you spend, up to a maximum amount equal to your primary psychic power's key ability modifier. It is a free action to do so, and the effects apply only to the next skill check you make with the tool.

Other Items: All sorts of items can become fetishes — medpacs, flitters, starships, etc. The GM should figure the specific effects but limit them to a single use per Wyrd point expenditure. For instance, a fetish starship might provide a bonus to Drive Spaceship skill checks, or to Starship Gunnery checks. It cannot be used to boost thrust rating or maneuver speed.

Special: This feat can be gained multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each new feat applies to a new fetish.

Chartophylax [Social]

You have access to Church records normally forbidden to others, even other priests without such privilege.

Prerequisites: Church Ordination rank 2+ (canon, oblate or provost).

Benefit: You may gain access to protected Church libraries. You do so by presenting yourself to the head librarian and requesting to view the archives. No skill check is required. You can also access secure Church data files (you have a legitimate password to bypass Church data encryption, normally a DC 30+ Use Think Machine check).

Others may attempt to access archives by bribing the librarian (Diplomacy check against DC 25) or fooling him into thinking they have permission from the bishop (Bluff check opposed by



Sense Motive). However, failure may mean Church authorities are alerted to the presence of potential heretics.

Church Ordination [Social]

You are a recognized member of the Universal Church.

Prerequisite: Brother Battle, Priest or Theurgist level 1+, any class level 4+.

Benefit: You bear a Church rank. Its title depends on how many levels of this stackable feat you possess. Each successive level raises you in rank one title (see the chart below).

In addition, each rank grants you +1 Diplomacy among the faithful (all believers, even those of other sects). This bonus is stackable with each successive rank (i.e., a canon gets a +2 Diplomacy bonus).

Orthodox/Avesti/Aeon	Brother Battle	Eskatonic
1 st = Novitiate	Apprentice	Novitiate
2 nd = Canon	Oblate	Provost
3 rd = Deacon	Acolyte	Illuminatus
4 th = Priest	Adept	Philosophus
5 th = Bishop	Master	Magister
6 th = Archbishop	Grand Master	Presbuteros

Cloak Fighting [General]

You can use a cloak or cape in your off-hand to harass your opponent.

Prerequisites: Parry, Riposte

Benefit: As your free-action riposte, you can attempt to disarm your opponent with your off-hand cloak. Unlike a normal disarm action, this does not provoke an attack of opportunity. A cloak or cape is a Large weapon.

Note: You suffer normal off-hand weapon penalties, which you can lessen with the Ambidexterity and Two-Weapon Fighting feats. A cloak is considered to be a light weapon for you, for the purposes of figuring off-hand penalties only.

This feat is popular among nobles who suffer ruffian assaults while traveling incognito.

Comeliness [Social]

You are well-groomed and/or have an attractive appearance, either naturally or through surgery.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to Charisma-based skill checks in situations where your appearance matters (such as in seducing others).

Comprehend Tech Level [Social]

You can understand the complexities of a particular tech level, and thus create technology of that tech level. This feat is often abbreviated Comprehend TL (rating). Example: Comprehend TL5 for the Comprehend Tech Level 5 feat.

Prerequisites: This feat is stackable. Each higher level requires the lower levels as prerequisites. For instance, Comprehend TL5 (the first) is required before you can learn Comprehend TL6, and Comprehend TL6 is required for you to learn Comprehend TL7, and so on up to Comprehend TL 8, the highest level a human can know without significant exposure to Anunnaki science.

In addition, there are the following Intelligence ability prerequisites: TL5 (Int 13+), TL6 (Int 15+), TL7 (Int 17+), TL8 (Int 20+)

Benefit: You can manufacture items rated at the tech levels that you can comprehend. You do this by making a Craft skill check (the type depends on what item you're making — Mech for mechanical tech, Volt for electrical devices, etc.). You follow the guidelines given in the Craft skill description for the materials cost and the amount of time it takes to make the item.

Comprehend Tech Level also gives you one of the prerequisites needed for learning various tech item creation feats, such as Craft Energy Device, etc.

Concoct Elixir [Tech Item Creation]

You can make doses of Elixir, the wondrous Second Republic flesh-regenerating drug.

Prerequisites: Comprehend TL7

Skill Check: Alchemy

Benefit: The number of doses you can make per skill check is equal to your Dexterity modifier but is always a minimum of one. It costs 50 firebirds per dose. It takes one day to concoct a batch of elixir doses.

Potency: The potency of each dose depends on the DC result.

DC
20
25
35

+2 synergy

robes, censer,

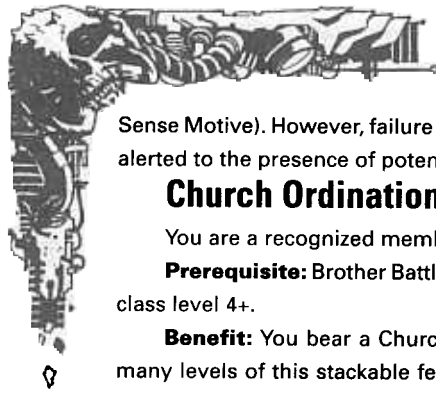
Theurgist level 4+ or Brother Battle level 9+

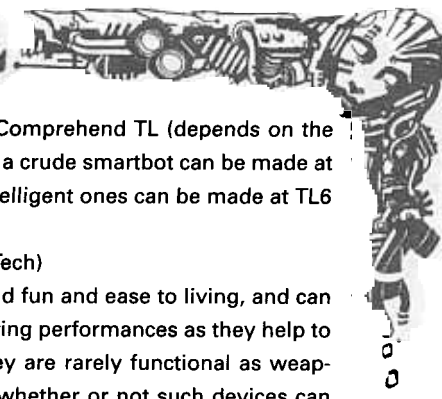
Benefit: Vestments provide a bonus to the activation checks of rite within a particular theurgic canon. Only certain items can be invested to enhance certain canons, as listed below.

Vestment	Effects
Censer	Benedictions
Cassock	Wrath
Crosier	Piety
Jumpgate Cross	Protection
Miter	Revealings
Omega Gospels	Zealotry or Piety (choose one when the vestment is made)
Robes	Protection
Rosary Beads	Mysteries
Water	Restoration

The total bonus a vestment consecrator may impart depends on his Theurgist or Brother Battle levels. More than one vestment may be worn at the same time, although bonuses to the same canon do not stack.

Theurgist Level	Brother Battle Level	Maximum Bonus
1-4	1-9	1
5-8	10-12	2
9-12	13-15	3
13-16	16-18	4
17-20	19-20	5





It takes one day to consecrate a vestment. The base price for a vestment is its bonus squared x 2000 fb. To consecrate a vestment, you must spend 1/25 of its base cost in XP and use up raw materials equal to half its base price.

Coven Membership [Social]

You have allies in a psychic secret society, and thus have access to training and potential aid from persecution.

Prerequisites: Psychic level 1+

Benefit: Covens are secret societies hidden from the sight of a condemning Church. Its members use code words or signs to signal meetings. You can recognize the signs and codes for the particular coven to which you belong, and thus answer the call to a meeting or convene one yourself.

The two main covens operating on an interstellar level in the Known Worlds are the Favvana, a society of psychic friends eager to change the psychics' bad reputation (and hence they urge their members to act honorably), and the Invisible Path, a cutthroat group of psychics convinced that they are the heirs of evolution, ascendant over humanity.

Crack Shot [General]

When wielding a pistol, you are considered "armed." You threaten your adjacent areas and can thus make attacks of opportunity against those who leave them.

Benefit: You can threaten a 5-ft. area around you in any direction with a pistol, just as with a melee weapon.

Craft Energy Device [Tech Item Creation]

You can manufacture an energy weapon (laser, blaster, stunner, flux sword) or an energy shield (standard personal, dueling, assault and battle, or starship-grade shields).

Prerequisites: Comprehend TL6 (lasers and stunners), Comprehend TL7 (blasters), Comprehend TL8 (energy shields, flux swords).

Skill Check: Craft (High Tech)

Benefit: It takes one day per 100 fb cost to make an energy weapon. Typical costs are listed in the EQUIPMENT chapter. You use up raw materials equal to half the weapon cost. You must have access to electrical or fusion power during the entire crafting time period. Any interruption in power will delay the making of the device.

Synergy: Five or more ranks in Knowledge (Physics) provide a +2 synergy bonus to most devices, except energy shields. Five or more ranks in Knowledge (Paraphysics) provide a +2 synergy bonus for energy shield manufacturing.

Craft Wondrous Tech [Tech Item Creation]

You can make wondrous gadgets, toys or entertainment devices, such as the amazing consumer items built during the Sacred Republic: tri-vee suits (holographic projection clothing), smartbots (robots that travel around you cleaning up your mess or folding your clothes), antigravity shoes (they don't let you fly, but you can glide an inch or two off the ground—takes a load off the feet!), and more. Your imagination (and the GM's decision) is the only limit.

Prerequisites: Relevant Comprehend TL (depends on the item: a tri-vee suit is TL7, while a crude smartbot can be made at TL5, although smaller, more intelligent ones can be made at TL6 or 7).

Skill Check: Craft (High Tech)

Benefit: These devices add fun and ease to living, and can even help you make money during performances as they help to dazzle the crowd. However, they are rarely functional as weapons. It is up to the GM to decide whether or not such devices can add bonuses when used in particularly clever ways during combat (such as using a tri-vee suit to distract a foe).

The base cost is usually 1000 per tech level over 4, although specific items may be listed in the EQUIPMENT chapter; use their costs instead. It takes one day per tech level over 4 to make the item and costs half the base price in raw materials.

Deflect Missiles [General]

When wielding a flux sword, you can attempt to deflect weapons fire directed at you.

Prerequisites: Dex 16+, base attack bonus +6 or higher, Parry, Weapon Focus (flux sword).

Benefit: By readying an action to parry, you can attempt to deflect with your flux sword any ranged weapon attack that targets you. After a successful ranged attack is made against you, make a parry check using your base attack bonus + Dex modifier. If the result is higher than the result of the attack against you, you deflect the attack and it misses.

Special: This does not work on non-targeted attacks or area-effect attacks.

Diplomatic Immunity [Social]

You have a certain immunity from legal prosecution for acts committed while on business for your affiliated faction.

Prerequisites: Noble Title, Church Ordination, or Guild Commission.

Benefit: If you commit a crime while on official business, you cannot be prosecuted for it. You can still be expelled from a city or even a planet (depending on whom you wronged), but you cannot be jailed, fined or sold into slavery for your action. This includes even such acts as spying or murder.

However, this does not make you immune from the condemnation of your own superiors. If your little deed caused them a great deal of trouble or lost political lucre, you may find yourself out of favor or even stripped of rank. Sure, you've avoided jail time, but Diplomatic Immunity is not an excuse to open a can of worms on your enemies and get away scot-free.

Drox [General]

As a Vorox, you have trained in the Graa martial art to master using your multiple arms in combat. You gain one additional off-hand attack.

Prerequisites: Vorox, base attack bonus +3 or higher

Benefit: Like any two-limbed humanoid, you can use a primary hand for attack and make an off-hand attack, suffering normal penalties for doing so. With Drox, you can also make an additional off-hand attack with a third limb, at the normal penalties for off-hand attacks and/or two-weapon fighting.





Embargo [Social]

You have the power to declare a League trade embargo against a particular individual.

Prerequisites: Guild Commission rank 3+ (commander, fellow, boss, lieutenant or manager)

Benefit: You can prevent any member of the Merchant League from selling to the individual you declare an embargo against. Since at least 70% of trade in the Known Worlds is conducted through the auspices of the Merchant League, this could prove crippling to someone who needs high-tech supplies or a steady stream of goods. He can still trade and barter with local, independent merchants, but they usually provide only food or basic craft goods. He could perhaps try the black market, but much of that is run by the Scravers Guild, a member of the League.

The League does not like calling embargoes, because it causes ill will with their other customers and loses them money. You'd better have a good reason for wielding this power or else it could cost you future promotions or even a loss of rank. Nonetheless, the League feels it must act quickly, decisively and brutally against those who attempt to spurn League monopolies. League officials urge those calling embargoes to negotiate an end to whatever conflict caused it as soon as possible, although not by compromising the League's power. An embargo can always be reversed by one's superiors.

Enlarge Psi [MetaPsi]

You can enlarge the range of your psychic powers.

Prerequisite: Gifted

Benefits: For each extra Wyrd point spent above a power's base activation cost, you can improve the range type by one level. See *Using Powers* in the OCCULT POWERS chapter for a list of the range types.

For example, a Psychic using the Lifting Hand power, which has a range of Close, can improve the range type to Medium by spending one extra Wyrd point. His base distance changes from 25 feet to 100 feet.

You must declare how much Wyrd you are spending before the check is made. If the check fails, the extra Wyrd must still be spent.

Some powers cannot be enlarged or have an upper limit to how far they may be enlarged; see power descriptions. Powers with a Personal range cannot be enlarged.

Enthrall [Social]

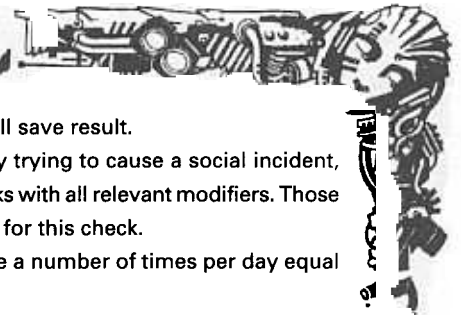
Your singing, orating or performing fascinates others, distracting them from other concerns.

Prerequisites: Perform 6+

Benefit: Those people listening and watching you whom you can see, and who are within 90 ft. of you, may become completely enthralled by your performance, ignoring all else except life-threatening combat going on around them.

Make a Perform check. Each person in the audience makes a Will save; if successful, there is no special effect other than the usual Perform effect (although you may not try to enthrall them again for 24 hours). All who fail will sit and listen rapturously for one round per your total character level. Their Spot and Listen checks suffer a -4 penalty. Any possible threat allows the enthralled





person another save attempt against a new Perform check result. An obvious threat automatically ends the effect.

While performing, you must concentrate as a standard action for the entire performance.

Epiphany [Social]

You can deliver an uncannily apropos statement about a topic that stuns others into a sublime understanding of something they didn't realize before.

Prerequisites: Wis 15+, Knowledge skill related to topic 6+.

Benefit: Like a legendary Zen master or divine fool, you can issue a single-sentence statement once per day about a topic with which you are familiar. You must have at least six ranks in a Knowledge skill related to the topic at hand, although you can state an epiphany about any topic for which you have the proper Knowledge skill ranks. Those hearing it must make Will saves (DC 15). If they fail, they do not understand the wisdom of your statement and so do not benefit from it. Those that succeed find the doorways of perception opening in their minds just long enough to gain some vital understanding of the topic at hand. The catch is that you must also make a Will save to benefit from your own statement—these words simply occur to you, dredged from your unconscious or gifted by the muse; you don't necessarily understand them better than others.

The effects of an epiphany vary, but it's usually enough to grant an aware listener (one who made his save) a +2 bonus on any checks concerning the topic commented upon. For instance, if you make a statement about the odd religious practices of a particular sect (the Knowledge: Religion skill), others who understand your utterance might gain a +2 bonus to Diplomacy or Sense Motive checks when dealing with members of that sect.

The effects apply only for one encounter following the utterance. Using the example above, if the epiphany is spoken upon witnessing an Eskatonic Order pilgrim coming your way, whoever understood your utterance gains the bonus for that encounter. Once parted with the pilgrim, however, the effect ends.

Etiquette [Social]

You can use your knowledge of proper manners to smooth over social blunders.

Prerequisites: Int 13+.

Benefit: You may attempt to smooth over bad feelings from a social faux pas and/or vulgar breach of etiquette, committed either by you, your compatriots, or someone you feel sorry for. You cannot undo the mistake, but you can erase the social stigma from whoever committed the error.

For instance, if Dame Chingmy inadvertently insulted Baron Esquival by mistaking him for the stable boy, you can step in to cool rising tempers or tarnished pride by quoting maxims from Count Edvard Torenson's *The Nobility of the Steed and its Admirers*, a classic volume expounding on the important relationship between a master horseman and his staff (not to mention his horse). Hence, you can convince them that there is no shame in such a mistaken identity (as long as it does not occur again...

Etiquette may also be used to counter a Withering Insult feat directed at you or others. You make a Will save and if it is higher than the target's save, he uses yours instead. If the insult is di-

rected at you, add +2 to the Will save result.

If someone is intentionally trying to cause a social incident, make opposed Diplomacy checks with all relevant modifiers. Those with Etiquette gain a +2 bonus for this check.

You can use your Etiquette a number of times per day equal to your Charisma modifier.

Extend Psi [MetaPsi]

Your psychic powers can last longer than normal.

Prerequisite: Gifted.

Benefits: For each extra Wyrd point spent above a power's base activation cost, you can increase the duration increment by one level. See *Using Powers* in the OCCULT POWERS chapter for a list of the duration increments.

For example, a Psychic using the Lifting Hand power, which has a duration of Concentration, can increase the duration to one turn by spending one extra Wyrd point. This way, he no longer has to concentrate on the power to keep it going.

You must declare how much Wyrd you are spending before the check is made. If the check fails, the extra Wyrd must still be spent.

Some powers cannot be extended or made permanent; see power descriptions. Powers with an instantaneous duration cannot be extended.

Family Ties [Social]

You have strong ties to your blood kin, such that they would delay important tasks to come to your aid.

Prerequisites: None.

Benefit: Blood can be thicker than wine. You can draw on some exceptionally loyal allies of similar status to yourself. Of course, this cuts both ways — if someone kills your father, you will have to hunt him down to the farthest planet.

To gain your family's aid, you must address a member personally or get a message to him. The GM then makes a Family Ties check. To the roll result, he adds 10 + your Charisma modifier and any modifiers based on the situation. If you have recently done a favor for your family, you may get a +2 on the check. If you recently risked your life for them, you may get a +4 or +6 on the check (GM's discretion).

The DC depends on the type of aid asked. Asking to vacation at a relative's house might be a 10 or 15, depending on how well he knows you or how much he owes your side of the family. Requesting your brothers and sisters to meet you in Cady's Hollow with guns for a midnight raid on your rivals might be a 15 if it's part of an ongoing feud or 20 if not. Asking them to help you kidnap the local lord and hold him for ransom might be 30 or 35, and could get you disowned if it failed.

Your family may not have the high status or power that the ally feat provides, but they are more loyal and persistent.

A request may be attempted from the family only once per month. Two successive months of such requests cause the DC to rise for each successive attempt. Should the DC ever get as high as 40, the family will no longer heed your requests — you are an ungrateful, whining black sheep for the next year. However, you can perform favors to try and lower the DC to normal.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times. The effects



stack to raise the status of the family (or involve higher-level family members who could not be bothered with you at lower levels).

Garza [General]

As a Vorox, you have trained in the Graa martial art to master using your multiple arms in combat.

Prerequisites: Vorox, Dex 15+

Benefit: You ignore all penalties for using an off hand (you would normally suffer a -4 penalty). Garza applies to any off-hand attack made with the Drox and Throx feats.

Special: This feat replaces the Ambidexterity feat for Vorox.

Glangarza [General]

As a Vorox, you have trained in the Graa martial art to fight with a weapon in each of your four hands. Your penalties are lower when making attacks with each weapon.

Prerequisites: Vorox

Benefit: Your penalties for fighting with multiple weapons are reduced by two (normal penalties are -6 for your primary hand and -10 your secondary hand). Glangarza applies to any weapon attack made with the Drox and Throx feats.

Special: This replaces the Two-Weapon Fighting feat for Vorox. The Garza feat further reduces off-hand penalties.

Gifted [Social]

You are awakened to a type of occult energy, either psychic powers or theurgic rites.

Benefit: You can develop your latent occult power by taking levels in the Psychic or Theurgist classes. This feat is a prerequisite for taking levels in those classes.

Drawbacks: You also gain a stigma, a sign that marks you as an occultist. (See *Stigmas*, in the OCCULT POWERS chapter.)

Special: You can gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to one of the following: psychic powers, theurgic rites, or some as-yet-to-be-detailed occult power (such as Antinomy).

Gossip Network [Social]

You have a series of informants who keep you up to date on certain areas of information.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to Gather Information checks for subjects within your network's reach. Your informants may be cackling old nobles who let you know which lords have committed breaches of etiquette, merchants who let you know who is buying what, or farmers who are more than glad to tell you who has gone through their area recently.

This feat may be bought multiple times to enlarge your network's area (successive levels do not increase the Gather Information bonus, but do enlarge the area your check can draw information from).

1st feat = Country- or continentwide (checks take one day)

2nd feat = Planetwide (checks take one week)

3rd feat = An entire Royal House's holdings (checks take one month)

4th feat = The Known Worlds (checks take three months)

Guild Commission [Social]

You belong to one of the guilds that make up the Merchant League.

Prerequisites: Guilder or Techie level 1+, any class level 4+.

Benefit: You bear a Guild rank, its title dependent on how many levels of this stackable feat you possess. Each successive level raises you in rank one title (see the chart below).

In addition, each rank grants you +1 Diplomacy among fellow League members, regardless of guild. This bonus is stackable with each successive rank (i.e., a chief gets a +2 Diplomacy bonus).

Charioteers	Engineers	Scravers	Musters	Reeves
1 st = Ensign	Apprentice	Associate	Private	Associate
2 nd = Lieutenant	Entered	Genin	Sergeant	Chief
3 rd = Commander	Fellow	Boss	Lieutenant	Manager
4 th = Captain	Crafter	Jonin	Captain	Director
5 th = Consul	Engineer	Consul	Major	Consul
6 th = Dean	Master	Dean	Colonel	Dean

Hierophant [Social]

You are recognized by the Church as a worthy theologian, and your views influence Church policy.

Prerequisites: Priest level 7+, Knowledge (Religion) 10+.

Benefit: You can introduce new interpretations into Church discourse, influencing the opinions of those who make policy. In such a way, you can attempt to transform heresies into mere differences of doctrine, and hence save their believers from inquisitorial persecution.

First, you must formulate your doctrine. Make a Knowledge (Religion) skill check. The DC is 20 or 25 for beliefs that fit well with the current Church opinion, but 30 or 35 for beliefs wildly divergent from current thought. Beliefs that clash with core Church values (such as the distrust of technology) may face DC 40+.

Once formulated, your doctrine must be promulgated through oratory. Make a Diplomacy skill check, opposed by those listening. Those who fail against you are converted to your doctrine and may begin to spread it (using their own Diplomacy skills).

You may eventually be invited to argue your doctrine before distinguished (higher-skill-ranked) theologians, who will attempt to reveal the flaws in your beliefs. This initiates a new Knowledge (Religion) contest, but you can add +1 to your check for every 100 people you have converted. If your views hold out, your work will enter the canon of currently debated theology.

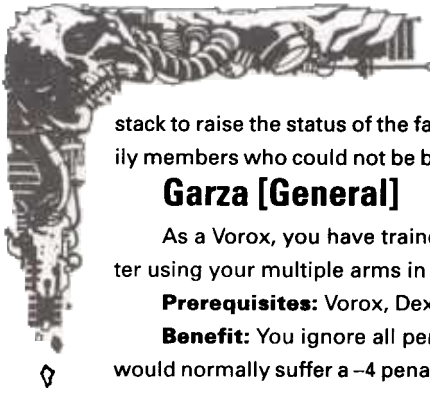
You may then be invited to argue your doctrine before the College of Ethicals, who determine Church doctrine. If you win here, your belief becomes a standard teaching of the Church — unless the current Patriarch dislikes it. He may challenge you to a new debate, one in which he gains a +6 bonus for his status. If you win this one, your doctrine is set for at least the next two or three generations.

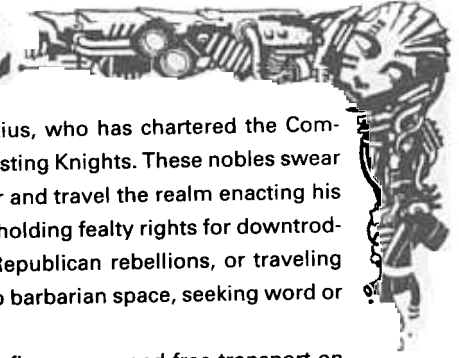
Holier Than Thou

You can stave off attacks by exploiting another's fear of the Pancreator.

Prerequisites: Church Ordination.

Benefit: By exclaiming your holiness to others, you can protect yourself from their ire. You must, as a free action, first declare your holiness before them; anyone in earshot is affected as long as they can hear you (there isn't a lot of noise to drown you out) and understand the language you speak.





Anyone who hears this declaration must then make a Will save before initiating an attack against you. The DC is 10 + your level. If he succeeds, he does not need to make a save to attack you anytime during that encounter. If he fails, he cannot attack you that round but make another saving throw the next round and every round thereafter until he succeeds, after which he may then attack you.

Householder [Social]

You work for a noble house but are not an actual member of the family: a servant, seneschal, bodyguard, etc. This allows you some privileges with regards to that house.

Benefit: You are considered to be a freeman in voluntary employ to the house, and gain a limited degree of protection from that house. You gain a +1 to Diplomacy and Bluff checks against members of that house. This represents their increased trust in you. Should you betray that trust, punishment can be harsh — possible expulsion from house employ and or even enforced serfdom or slavery for extreme treason.

Imbue Tabernacle [Item Creation]

You can imbue an item with psychic or theurgic energy.

Prerequisites: Psychic or Theurgist level 5+ or Brother Battle level 10+.

Benefit: A tabernacle acts as a Wyrd pool, storing Wyrd points. You may use these points as a free action to fuel your occult powers. Each tabernacle is imbued either for psychic power or theurgic rites, but not both. A Psychic can use a psychic tabernacle but not a theurgy tabernacle, and vice versa.

The maximum that may be drawn in any action is equal to your primary path or canon's key ability modifier. The tabernacle can hold a maximum number of Wyrd points equal to its maker's level. Once a tabernacle's stored points have been used up, you can recharge them with your own Wyrd points. This requires an hour-long ceremony and a Will saving throw (DC = 15 + Wyrd points invested); the maximum that may be stored during that ceremony is equal to your Wisdom modifier, up to the maximum number the tabernacle can store.

You may only carry or own one tabernacle at any time. If it is lost or destroyed, you can create another, but doing so means you cannot use the previous tabernacle again if it is ever found. You can also use one you've commissioned or found as treasure; it requires an hour-long ceremony to attune yourself to it, culminated with a Will save (DC = 10 + maker's level). If successful, you may use it and store Wyrd in it normally.

It takes one day per Wyrd point invested into the tabernacle to make the relic. Its cost is equal to its caster level x 2000. You must spend 1/25 of its cost in XP and half the cost in raw materials.

Special: This rite must be gained separately for psychic tabernacles and theurgic tabernacles.

Imperial Charter [Social]

You are a Questing Knight in the service of the Emperor.

Prerequisites: Noble Title.

Benefit: Not all nobles have a respectable place in their family's fiefs. Second or third sons and daughters don't have much to inherit and must thus seek out their own opportunities. Many

of them look to Emperor Alexius, who has chartered the Company of the Phoenix — the Questing Knights. These nobles swear a term of fealty to the Emperor and travel the realm enacting his new vision — whether it be upholding fealty rights for downtrodden peasants, putting down Republican rebellions, or traveling beyond the Known Worlds into barbarian space, seeking word or evidence of Lost Worlds.

You gain a stipend of 300 fb per year and free transport on any Imperial Navy ship. In addition, the charter gives you rights to inspect public Church or League records. You may cross feudal boundaries and are immune to prosecution (all charges are brought before the order's council instead of the ruling body, whether it be noble or Church). However, you must uphold a code of behavior and duty. You can never operate against Imperial interests, and can be called upon to undergo any number of missions for the order or the Emperor. To refuse a mission, or to be caught breaking this code of behavior, can mean imprisonment or death.

Imperial Cohort Badge [Social]

You are an Imperial Cohort, an *aide de camp* to one of the Emperor's Questing Knights.

Prerequisites: Nobles cannot be cohorts, but anyone else of level 3+ can.

Benefit: You gain a small stipend of 100 fb per year and free transport on any Imperial Navy ship. In addition, you can cross feudal boundaries free of taxation and are allowed free counsel in case of legal prosecution. However, you must uphold a code of behavior and duty. You can never operate against Imperial interests, and can be called upon to undergo any number of missions for the Order of the Phoenix or the Emperor. To refuse a mission, or to be caught breaking this code of behavior can mean imprisonment or death.

Guilder Cohort: Emperor Alexius has extended his call for duty to guildsmembers, to offer aid and assistance and be staunch helpmates to his Questing Knights. In return for offering their skills and fealty, they reap the rewards of first claim on the merchant routes into newly explored territories. While this may earn a Guilder new enemies, it also brings new opportunities to one's guild.

Priest Cohort: Some priests hear the call to more worldly duty, inflamed by the values and vision espoused by Emperor Alexius. To these few is open the role of Imperial Cohort to Alexius's Questing Knights. A priest accepted into this august company gives spiritual succor and advice to a knight, and accompanies him on his travels into dire lands far from the bosom of the Church. She gains the unprecedented opportunity to preach to new converts and provide sterling example to all — even if it costs her the ire of the more politically ambitious Church priests, ever opposed to Alexius's ascendancy.

Special: See the Imperial Charter social feat to better understand a Questing Knight's duties and privileges.

Impulse Buy [Social]

You can fast-talk others into making purchases they might not make were they to think rationally about them.

Benefit: You can more easily convince others to buy your wares, gaining a +2 Charisma modifier for any skills involving



selling things (Bluff, Diplomacy or even Intimidate). In addition, you can try to jack up the price by 10% for every five levels you gain over the required DC. No matter the skill used, an impulse buy can be opposed by a Sense Motive check.

Improved Feint [General]

You have mastered the art of tricking your opponent into making a mistake and then exploiting that mistake.

Prerequisites: Bluff 7+, Parry.

Benefit: You can make a feint action as a move-equivalent action instead of a standard action.

Incite Passion [Social]

Your mighty passions become the stuff of legend.

Benefits: You are a hothead, but this can work to your advantage. In times when your dearest desire or lifelong goal is threatened, your passion can inspire you to amazing accomplishments in its defense. This feat is stackable, but a different desire or goal must be declared each time it is taken. Examples are: Keep your lady love from harm, vanquish evil (*real* evil, such as demons, not tax collectors), revenge your father's murder, etc.

You may incite your passion as a full-round action once per day. The GM deems how well the circumstances warrant it. For instance, if the love of your life is about to be burned by inquisitors, it is a good excuse for a passionate response. If, however, he or she is simply being fast-talked by a merchant, it's a pretty slim excuse for an overreaction. Nonetheless, you can always attempt to incite passion when your goal is threatened, no matter how slim your chances.

To incite passion, you make a Will save. Success means you gain bonuses to any successive checks made toward the achievement of your goal: rescuing your lady love, trouncing your rival, saving the village from evil, etc. This effect (considered extraordinary) lasts for 10 minutes, after which the bonuses go away.

How well your passion aids you depends on the DC you achieve.

DC	Bonus
10	+1
15	+2
20	+3
25	+4
30	+5

Special: You cannot use the Incite Passion and Steady Hand feats at the same time; their bonuses do not stack.

Inquisitorial Seal [Social]

You are a member of the Inquisition.

Prerequisites: Church Ordination rank 4+ (priest, adept, philosophus).

Benefit: You bear an Inquisitorial Seal, granted by the Inquisitorial Synod. Unlike most such seals, which are handed out temporarily on a per mission basis, this one is permanent, allowing you to perform inquisitorial duties full-time and without the need to consult superiors as regards situations that may arise during such duties. This does not mean, however, that you are free to act however you desire; your actions can still be judged by the synod.

Instinct Shot [General]

You can take a shot even when surprised.

Prerequisites: Wis 13+, Alertness.

Benefit: When you have a pistol in hand and ready, you can take a partial action to fire even if surprised. However, the target is treated as having total concealment (50% miss chance).

Invest Phylactery [Item Creation]

You may invest an item with one or more theurgic rituals, usable by anyone wielding the phylactery who can cast theurgy.

Prerequisites: Theurgist level 9+ or Brother Battle level 14+.

Benefit: A phylactery is an item invested with one or more theurgic rituals. Any theurgist wielding one can cast its rites even if he has not trained in them. A phylactery's level is equal to its maker's skill ranks in the rite invested. When wielding a phylactery, you can either use your own skill ranks in the rite (if you have any) or the phylactery's ranks, which are equal to its level. The maximum number of rites that can be invested into a single phylactery is equal to the key ability modifier for the maker's primary canon.

It takes one day per rite degree for each rite imbued to make the relic. The base cost is rite degree (if imbuing more than one rite, use the highest degree) multiplied by skill ranks multiplied by the total number of rites imbued multiplied by 500 fb. You must spend 1/25 of its cost in XP and half the cost in raw materials.

Legate

You are a Church ambassador to a noble house, guild or planet.

Prerequisites: Church Ordination rank 3+ (deacon, acolyte, illuminatus).

Benefit: As an official representative of the Church, you are accorded a degree of respect by your hosts, although you must earn their trust on a personal level for them to see you as anything but a spy for the Patriarch. Nonetheless, you gain a +2 Bluff and Diplomacy bonus on checks involving official Church business.

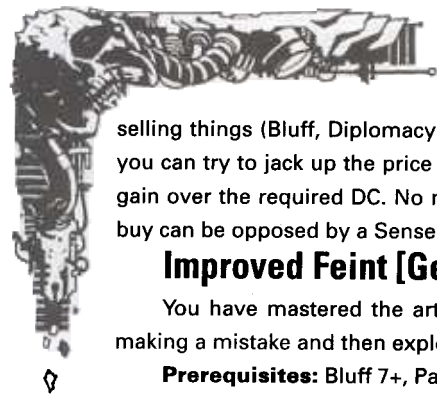
In addition, you may cross feudal boundaries free from taxation or tithe. You may request to participate in diplomatic events your host holds, such as conferences or parties, although he does not have to invite you (but doing so would be a *faux pas* in the eyes of your superiors). You have the right to provide character testimony for a plaintiff or defendant in a legal case and be heard. You can also request an investigation from the Church concerning specific matters or mysteries (but be prepared to provide evidence or a good reason for your beliefs).

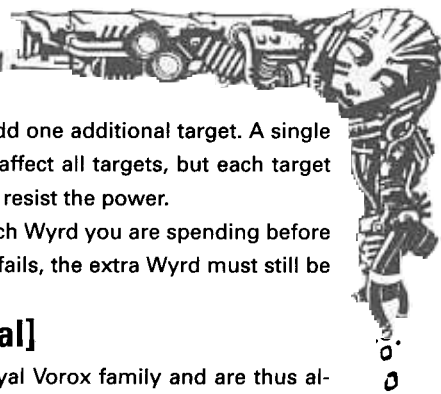
Military Rank

You have served in the armed forces and have the rank to prove it.

Prerequisites: Church Ordination, Guild Commission or Noble Title (for officer ranks), or any character level 1+ (for enlisted).

Benefit: You bear a military rank in the armed or space naval forces of a noble house, a League guild, a Church order, or some other military organization. Your title depends on how many levels of this stackable feat you possess. Each successive level





raises you in rank one title (see the chart below). Titles provide different benefits for officers and enlisted.

Officers: Each officer rank grants you +1 to your Leadership score. This bonus is stackable with each successive rank (i.e., a Major gets a +2 Leadership bonus).

Enlisted: Each enlisted rank grants you +1 to any Gather Information checks performed wherever soldiers or sailors hang out (in the barracks or a bar popular among mustered out or retired troops). Your rank more easily provides you the necessary background to mix with troops and loosen their lips. This bonus is stackable with each successive rank (i.e., a Corporal gets a +3 Gather Information bonus). The drawback is that you may be called back to active duty in times of crisis. Refusing such a call is grounds for a court-martial and removal of rank.

Enlisted (Householder/Guild/Church)*

Officer (Noble)

Officer (Noble)		Enlisted (Householder/Guild/Church)*	
Army	Space Navy	Army	Space Navy
1 st = Lieutenant	Midshipman	Private	Starman
2 nd = Captain	2 nd Lieutenant	Private 1st Class	Able Starman
3 rd = Major	1 st Lieutenant	Corporal	Mate
4 th = Colonel	Captain	Sergeant	Master
5 th = General	Admiral	Staff Sergeant	Master of the Ship

* Note: Muster guild mercenaries rate themselves with guild commission ranks instead of military ranks.

Multiply Psi [MetaPsi]

Your psychic powers can affect multiple targets.

Prerequisite: Psychic level 4+.

Benefits: For each extra Wyrd point spent above a power's

base activation cost, you can add one additional target. A single activation check is required to affect all targets, but each target makes his own saving throw to resist the power.

You must declare how much Wyrd you are spending before the check is made. If the check fails, the extra Wyrd must still be spent.

Noble Claw [Social]

You are a member of a royal Vorox family and are thus allowed to retain a single poisonous claw.

Prerequisites: Vorox, Noble level 1+.

Benefit: One of your hand attacks can be made with your poison claw. This claw delivers 1d4 + Str modifier as damage, plus Vorox claw poison, a slow-acting paralytic. *Type:* Injury DC 14; *Initial Damage:* 2 Dex; *Secondary Damage:* 2d4 Dex.

Noble Title [Social]

You were born a member of a noble family or have been knighted as a lord of a noble house.

Prerequisites: Noble level 1+ or any character class level

Benefit: You bear a noble rank, its title dependent on how many levels of this stackable feat you possess. Each successive level raises you in rank one title (see the chart below).

In addition, each rank grants you +1 Diplomacy among other nobles, even those of rival houses. This bonus is stackable with each successive rank (i.e., a baronet gets a +2 Diplomacy bonus).

Nobles have the right to impress any serf beholden to their house into temporary combat service. Most serfs are poor combatants, however, and will usually run from a fight the first chance



Allies receive a +1 morale bonus to saving throws, attack rolls and weapon damage rolls. Only allies who believe in the teachings of the Prophet gain this bonus, although they don't have to follow a particular sect or order's teaching. Righteous Sermon is an extraordinary ability.

Riposte [General]

After parrying an attack, you may quickly follow through with your own attack.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6 or higher, Parry.

Benefit: After a successful parry attempt, you get an attack as a free action at your base attack bonus. You may only perform one Riposte per round.

Saint

You have achieved sainthood in the eyes of many people, who treat you like a messiah.

Prerequisite: Good alignment, any character class level 18+.

Benefits: You are considered holy by a certain segment of the population. Whether it is their collective belief that makes it true or some personal virtue recently awakened, you do indeed exhibit holy powers.

Once per day, you may perform a miracle. You make a Wisdom check and compare the result against the DC listed below. The effect and extent of this is ultimately determined by the gamemaster.

DC Miracle

- 10 Simple fortuitous events which could just as easily happen without divine intervention, but are especially beneficial for you: finding a needed item or bit of information; bumping into the very person who can help out the party; timely intercession by parents, mentors, lieges, etc.
- 15 Less likely events: a runaway vehicle collides with an assassin; an attacking beast is calmed or frightened away by a certain color worn by a character; an Amalthean punches out an evildoer; the check clears the bureaucratic red tape in time to save the orphanage, etc.
- 18 Extreme long shots that are not impossible but highly improbable: lightning strikes an attacker; all shots in a close firefight miss the characters, etc.
- 21 Minor impossibilities: a broken machine runs one last time; a Reeve gives away his riches to charity; a disinterested passerby decides to trust you without being fast-talked or duped, etc.
- 25 Strange unexplainable events: omens, visions and revelations; voices from the sky; a mysterious stranger who saves the day then vanishes, etc.
- 28 Deeply profound, soul-stirring events: mass visions; parting seas; new constellations in the heavens; an Avestite judge shows clemency, etc.
- 30 Totally undeniable impossibilities: raising the dead; halting the sun; surviving the vacuum of space, etc.

In addition, you may request succor (food, water, basic medical aid, temporary lodging) from any of these people at any time. You may also claim canonical status for one particular belief of yours, even if others consider it heresy. The Church will not move against you or any followers who hold this belief, although they

may issue a bull against it upon your death to prevent others from spreading the belief. Nonetheless, your belief has been enshrined in the hearts of thousands, who ever after dedicate an order to you (or continue an order you have established). What's more, if you are a Theurgist, you may develop a new theurgical canon around your belief.

Special: If you consistently act contrary to your good alignment, you lose this feat until you have atoned.

Sanctify Arms and Armor [Item Creation]

You can bless a weapon or suit of armor, empowering it with divine grace.

Prerequisites: Brother Battle or Theurgist level 7+.

Benefit: You can enhance an existing weapon's attack and damage bonus, or an existing suit of armor's armor class. The weapon or armor must be of at least masterwork quality.

Weapons: You can add an attack and damage bonus to a weapon equal to half your Brother Battle or Theurgist levels, up to a maximum of +5. It takes 1 day per bonus to sanctify the weapon. Its base price is equal to the enhancement bonus squared x 2000 fb, plus the cost of the masterwork weapon.

Armor: You can add an armor class bonus to armor equal to half your Brother Battle or Theurgist levels, up to a maximum of +5. It takes 1 day per bonus to sanctify the armor. Its base price is equal to the enhancement bonus squared x 1000 fb, plus the cost of the masterwork armor.

Savoir-Faire [Social]

You have a certain flair, dashing style, élan, or bravura that marks you as someone special.

Prerequisites: Cha 15+.

Benefit: Everything you do is done with style, whether it be entering a room and turning heads, carving your initials into a tapestry with your rapier, or even savoring a meal at a banquet to impress the host.

You can intentionally attempt to impress others with your style in any task. You make any required checks normally, but if your result is five or more levels higher than the required DC to succeed at the task, you have performed the deed with stunning flair. The GM is free to dictate any rules effects from this, but possible outcomes are: You gain an initiative bonus on successive actions or a bonus to Charisma-based skills to further impress those who witnessed your deed.

It is very hard to embarrass you, for you can turn even a pratfall into an elegant dance. Anytime you fail very badly at something, you can make a Bluff skill check as a free action to mitigate the failure and make it look intentional. The DC depends on the nature of what you've done wrong, but it's usually 15 or 20. The higher your result, the better your reaction to failure appears.

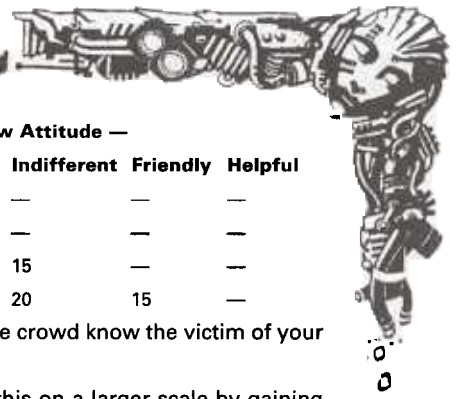
As a free action, you may make a Diplomacy check to oppose anyone trying to embarrass you, even if you are unaware of what's going on (the GM can make the roll for you).

Secret [Social]

You know something that most others do not.

Benefit: The secret you know can range from blackmail on a minor noble to the location of a forgotten planet. The GM should





work closely with you to ensure your secret fits into the game he wants to run.

Special: you can take this feat multiple times. It does not stack. Instead, each time this feat is taken, a new secret is learned.

Secret Agent [Social]

You are a spy working for an intelligence agency, gathering information or sabotaging rivals' works

Prerequisites: (nave level 1+ or any character class level 4+.

Benefit: You bear a commission as an intelligence agent, its rank dependent on how many levels of this stackable feat you possess. Each successive level raises you in rank one title (see the chart below).

In addition, each rank grants you a +1 Innuendo bonus when communicating with fellow agents or trying to read the secret signs of rival agents. This bonus is stackable with each successive rank (i.e., a field agent gets a +3 Innuendo bonus).

- 1st feat = Recruit
- 2nd feat = Agent
- 3rd feat = Field Agent
- 4th feat = Supervisor
- 5th feat = Spymaster

In addition, the secret agent chooses his affiliation. Each agency specializes in some role that allows agents to gain bonuses to certain skills

Imperial Eye: Experts in covert information gathering. +2 Open Lock.

Hawkwood Rooks: Experts in methodical information gathering. +2 Search.

Decados Jakovians: Experts in sensing others weaknesses. +2 Sense Motive

Hazat Archons: Experts in decrypting enemy communications. +2 Decipher Script.

Li Halan Hidden Martyrs: Experts in rooting out treason. +2 Gather Information.

al-Malik Mutasih: Experts in high-tech surveillance. +2 Use Think Machine.

Church Synecullum: Experts in falsifying documents and records. +2 Forgery.

Charioteer Killroys/Engineer Harbingers: Experts in protecting guild patents. +2 Disable Device.

Other agencies will be detailed in future sourcebooks.

Smear Campaign [Social]

You can attempt to ruin another's good name or instill hostility toward him in certain people.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+.

Benefit: You can change others' attitudes toward someone by spending time bad-mouthing him. It usually takes at least one evening of carousing with the targeted audience, similar to making a Gather Information check. Characters normally make Charisma checks to alter someone's attitude for the better. You can alter it for the worse with your own Charisma check. Whenever the object of your smear campaign arrives, people's initial attitudes toward him are whatever you influenced them toward. The audience does not need to personally know the person; reputation and name is enough.

Initial Attitude	— New Attitude —				
	Hostile	Unfriendly	Indifferent	Friendly	Helpful
Unfriendly	15	—	—	—	—
Indifferent	20	15	—	—	—
Friendly	25	20	15	—	—
Helpful	30	25	20	15	—

Note: Add +5 if people in the crowd know the victim of your smear campaign personally.

Special: You can attempt this on a larger scale by gaining this feat multiple times. Each successive feat increases the area in which you can cast your net.

1st feat = City (checks take one evening) or continentwide (checks take one day)

2nd feat = Planetwide (checks take one week)

3rd feat = An entire Royal House's holdings (checks take one month)

4th feat = The Known Worlds (checks take three months)

Steady Hand [Social]

You remain preternaturally calm during crises that cause hysteria in others.

Benefits: In situations where chaos reigns, you can focus and block out distractions, becoming a still point in a sea of confusion — to summon a steady hand while defusing a bomb in the middle of a firefight or panicking populace. This is more than a simple Concentration check to maintain your action. Instead, it can add bonuses to the chosen undertaking.

You may steady your hand as a full-round action once per day by making a Will save. Success means you gain bonuses to perform a particular, non-combat task — defuse the bomb, fix the starship engines, etc. This effect (considered extraordinary) lasts for 10 minutes, after which the bonuses go away.

How well you steady your hand depends on the DC you achieve.

DC	Bonus
10	+1
15	+2
20	+3
25	+4
30	+5

Special: You cannot use the Incite Passion and Steady Hand feats at the same time; their bonuses do not stack.

Streetwise

You know your way around the black market and organized crime.

Benefit: You are familiar with underworld and criminal activities. You know how to contact the criminal underworld or acquire illegal goods or services, including black-market items. No skill check is required, just the courage to walk the shadier streets in search of the right places.

You can attempt to hire an illegal or shady service (leg-breaking, breaking and entering, murder, etc.). Make a Gather Information check to find the right man for the job (usually DC 20), and then a Diplomacy or Bluff check to successfully hire him at the going rate (DC 25). If he is caught in the act, he will finger you as his boss, unless your check result was at least five levels higher than the required DC.



You can attempt to fence illegal or stolen goods on the black market. Make a Diplomacy or Bluff check to find a buyer who will give you the going rate for the item (usually DC 20). Results higher than the DC may bring you a higher price, while results lower may bring less or nothing at all.

Subtle Strike [General]

You can attempt to avoid activating an opponent's energy shield with a particular weapon.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, base attack bonus +3 or higher.

Benefit: Before making any attack rolls for the round, you can subtract an amount equal to your base attack bonus or less from all your melee attack rolls with your chosen weapon, and then subtract that amount from all energy shield activation rolls your attacks induce. This amount cannot be higher than your base attack bonus. The penalty applies until your next action.

Special: This feat may be gained multiple times. The effects do not stack. Instead, each additional feat allows you to choose a different weapon.

Throx [General]

As a Vorox, you have trained in the Graa martial art to master using your multiple arms in combat. You gain one additional off-hand attack.

Prerequisites: Vorox, base attack bonus +6 or higher, Drox.

Benefit: You can now make an additional off-hand attack with a fourth limb (a total of one primary attack and three off-hand attacks), at the normal penalties for off-hand attacks and/or two-weapon fighting.

Trendsetter [Social]

You are the epitome of fashion. Whatever you wear quickly becomes fashionable everywhere, and your interests soon become the "next big thing."

Benefit: Others seek you out for fashion advice or tips on what one should be reading or thinking this season. Even if you don't go out of your way to impart this wisdom, others will copy you. Being seen at a particular magic lantern show is enough to ensure it's a hit. Your presence at a party is enough to make it notable in the society pages. Your public approval of a painting is enough to launch an artist's career.

You can almost always get into any party of high-class affair to which you have not been invited. You can take a number of people with you equal to your Charisma modifier. In public places where you have specifically been barred from entering, you can still get in by making a Charisma check (DC varies with how hostile the host is toward you).

In addition, it is rare for an NPC you have never met to have a hostile attitude toward you.

Two-Gun Fighting [General]

You can use one pistol in each hand with fewer penalties.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6 or higher, Crack Shot.

Benefit: When attacking with two firearms in each hand, you can fire both in the same round as a full-attack action. Standard penalties for two-weapon fighting (and firing a pistol in melee, if applicable) apply, except you halve the two-weapon penalties (just as with the Two-Weapon Fighting feat).

Special: This only applies when using two firearms. To use a melee weapon and a firearm, you need the Armed to the Teeth feat.

Veteran [Social]

You are known for your prowess at a significant battle, and may even bear a medal proving it.

Benefit: You may invoke your past to change others' opinions about you and solicit their aid. This may be used against the same person only once. It allows you to gain a +2 Diplomacy or Gather Information checks against that person. In addition, you are considered (for just this one-time request) to be one rank higher than normal, including gaining any skill bonuses the higher rank imparts.

Special: This feat may be bought multiple times. The effects stack, representing a greater deed performed in battle or a more important medal. Two levels of this feat provides +4 to Diplomacy or Gather Information checks and two additional (temporary) rank levels, and so on with each additional level.

Withering Insult [Social]

You may deliver an insult practically guaranteed to get a rise out of your rival.

Prerequisite: Int 13+.

Benefit: Social rank and the respect it provides are vital to survival in the chaotic world of the Fading Suns. People are rather protective of their reputations and don't take kindly to people disparaging them. However, most people can readily choose which insults to challenge or ignore. Nonetheless, some villains are particularly good at baiting their rivals; their foul words rarely fail to get a passionate response.

Once per day, you may deliver a withering insult to someone. That person must fight to control his temper or lose all self-control, discarding all norms of social propriety and common sense until he has extracted an apology from you.

The insulted person must make a Will save. The DC is equal to your Charisma modifier + your level.

Success means he can choose to deal with the insult however he likes, although he cannot pretend it wasn't vile. Failure means he loses control and immediately seeks satisfaction from





you: either challenging you to a duel, hooting you then and there, whistling for his gang of street toughs to descend on you, etc.

He will stop whatever he is doing, as long as doing so doesn't put him in obvious danger. In other words, he won't turn his attention from the rampaging grackle fox just to deal with an insult. However, the insult still hurts, and he will deal with it as soon as the danger has passed.

Example: A Hawkwood noble is constantly baited at a social affair by a slimy Decados, who keeps implying that the Hawkwood's intimate undertakings are a joke. Finally, the innuendoes are too much to handle. The GM asks the Hawkwood's player to make a Will save to avoid throwing down a gauntlet then and there, challenging a rival who to all appearances is a better fencer than himself.

Well-Traveled [Social]

You have been there and done that. You know a lot of things about the places and people you've seen, although you can't necessarily remember them when you need to.

Prerequisites: Any character class level 3+.

Benefit: Acts as the Bardic Knowledge ability. You may make a knowledge check modified by level + Int mod to see whether you know relevant information about a person, place or thing. The DC varies with the obscurity of the topic.

Xeno-Empathy [Social]

You have studied a race and know how to interact with and read that race.

Benefit: This feat negates the -2 penalty for Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Sense Motive checks against the type of alien selected when this feat is taken.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times. The effects do not stack; another race must be selected each time this feat is taken. Common choices for the feat are: Children of the Ur (both Obun and Ukar), Vorox, Etyri, Gannok and Shantor.







Chapter Five: Equipment

Life in the **Fading Suns** universe is diversified. From one dwelling to the next, family lifestyles can differ greatly. While there is little to separate a serf's existence from that of a pauper in the Middle Ages, for those with a little money, the entire world can change. In **Fading Suns**, the difference between living in a hovel with a haystack for your bedding and living in an air-conditioned apartment with a waterbed is the amount of money you can spend.

Sadly, this discrepancy goes far beyond mere dwellings. For most serfs, anything even close to advanced medical care is legendary, the stuff of kings. Poultices and home remedies are the rule, surgery and antiseptic are the exception.

In this chapter are a few examples of what **Fading Suns** characters might be able to afford to add to their accouterments, depending on how successful they are. The costs listed are averages on the open market; better-designed or manufactured versions will be more expensive. These are mere samplings of the vast amount of gear available in the Known Worlds. If a piece of equipment is not listed here, the gamemaster should feel free to come up with it on his own.

Technology

There are a number of reasons why technology is rare in the Known Worlds. Perhaps the greatest cause is the Church. After the misery of the Fall, the Church zealously readopted their old, Diaspora-era doctrine of anti-technology. Church inquisitors are always on the look out for what they deem to be dangerous innovations, and they routinely proscribe certain "forbidden" tech, policing this with martial search-and-destroy missions.

Woe be it to those wily Engineers who are vain enough to believe that their secret labs are safe from the law of the Pancreator's army. When inquisitors find a secret lab or research outfit, they send their troops in and blow the place to smithereens. Usually, the culprits behind the forbidden tech are first given the chance to surrender and recant, but since this usually involves a "cleansing" session (torture), most renegade scientists attempt to flee the scene of the crime. Some even escape — but they spend the rest of their lives looking over their shoulders, waiting for the tread of the inquisitors' boots.

In addition, many groups (especially the guilds, but the houses as well) jealously guard their own tech advances, going so far as to assassinate anyone else who discovers them. Technology is power, and he who has the edge wins. At least, this was the case during the Emperor Wars. Now that Alexius is in charge, he is attempting to consolidate technology under the office of the Emperor. Most houses have agreed — in principle, at least. But everyone knows each group still has its own secret labs, developing new and old tech for the next bid at the Emperor's throne.

Another stumbling blocks on the way to high technology is data. Most high-tech information was lost after the Fall. Some of it was intentionally destroyed; other data was simply buried and has yet to be rediscovered. As the Known Worlds culture was rebuilt, it rebuilt around new computer languages, and the old knowledge stored on old operating systems was lost or is now irretrievable. In additions, computers were often the first targets in any war.

In the martial atmosphere of the empire, so soon after the Emperor Wars, current tech research concentrates on wartime advances and limits the study of non-war applications. War tech is usually more advanced than the common everyday tools of life. While a militiaman on a backworld may have a laser, his wife still cleans the shirts on the rocks by the stream, hanging them out to dry and dreaming of the luxurious washing machines of the rich merchant families.

Finally, the difficulty of interstellar communication slows the spread of new tech (and thus progress). All these factors (and more) make innovation and new research a challenge.

Money

The basic unit of commerce since Alexius took the throne is the "firebird" (abbreviated "fb"), so called because it bears his phoenix crest on one side and his portrait on the other. This unit is broken into quarters ("wings") and halves ("crests"). Firebirds are minted only on Byzantium Secundus using a unique metal called prismium, which requires Second Republic tech to forge (this tech is heavily protected by the Imperial Eye, making it extremely hard to counterfeit). Its value is actually equal to the coin it represents — one coin holds about one firebird in value in its metal alone.



Tech Level Chart

Tech Level	Era	Item
0	Stone age	Flint dagger
1	Medieval	Swords, wagons
2	Renaissance	Gunpowder
3	Victorian	Electricity
4	Mid-20th century/ Fading Suns era	Aircraft, early computers
5	Diaspora	Spacecraft, ceramsteel
6	Early 2nd Republic	Advanced starships, advanced computers
7	Second Republic	Shields, robots (early A.I.)
8	Vautech/ Late 2nd Republic	Terraforming, adv. A.I.
9	Lesser Urtech	Soul Shard
10	Urtech	Jumpgate

Masterwork Levels

The high-tech science of the Second Republic developed all sorts of ways to improve craftsmanship. This is represented in **Fading Suns: d20** by three different levels of masterwork:

1 = Masterwork. (Craft DC 20) Add +350 to weapon cost, +1 attack bonus and 1 hit point. Add +150 to armor cost, -1 armor check penalty. Add +50 to tool cost, +2 nonstackable circumstance bonus to a related skill check.

2 = Exemplary. (Craft DC 25) Add +1400 to weapon costs, +2 attack bonus and 2 hit points. Add +600 to armor cost, -2 armor check penalty and -5 lb from the weight. Add +200 to tool cost, +4 nonstackable circumstance bonus to a related skill check.

3 = Supreme. (Craft DC 30) Add +5600 to weapon costs, +3 attack bonus and 3 hit points. Add +2400 to armor cost, +1 max Dex bonus, -3 armor check penalty and -10 lb from the weight. Add +800 to tool cost, +6 nonstackable circumstance bonus to a related skill check.

Throughout the book, costs for items are given in firebirds (1/4, 1/2 or whole). When converting from modern, 21st-century U.S. currency, figure that one firebird is worth roughly 10 dollars. A crest is worth about five dollars, and a wing is worth about one dollar.

There is no central stock exchange for the Known Worlds. The Empire tries to set a fixed firebird rate for certain items, such as military construction contracts, but outside of Byzantium Secundus or Tethys, merchants and manufacturers can charge whatever they think they can get away with.

The advantage the League has over local guilds is that they can set their own fixed rates across the Known Worlds, providing interstellar travelers some stable spending base — as long as they trade with League merchants. On certain worlds, they will even lower their prices somewhat to compete with local prices. However, since they are interstellar and depend on repeat business, they rely in-

Converting Currency

When converting from costs given in other d20 System publications, use the following guidelines.

1 firebird = 1 gold piece

1 crest = 5 silver pieces

1 wing = 2 silver pieces and 5 copper pieces

1 talon = 1 silver piece and 2 copper pieces

stead on more expensive but dependable goods. Travelers cannot be sure what they are buying when they buy local

The cost listed for items in most **Fading Suns** sourcebooks represents this fixed rate set by the League, although costs will fluctuate somewhat with local supply and demand.

Rogue Coinage

The farther one gets from Byzantium Secundus, the more varied the coinage one encounters. While, strictly speaking, alternate coinage to the firebird is illegal (Alexius has declared his firebirds to be the only legal tender throughout the empire), they are often accepted anyway. However, the value of these rogue coins varies radically. The guilds are under strict watch on valuation of the firebird, but few can keep track of black markets.

While rogue coinages vary, their uses are usually very similar. They can be broken down into two different types: talons (purely local lucre, from a single fief or city) and house coins (usable only within that house's fiefs).

Talons come in many varieties, from the Madoc Coral (made of rare coral found only on that world, requiring special skills to carve properly) to the Tethys Matriarch (gold coins with the profile of Baroness Felicity Hawkwood, found only in one fief in the distant Grampas Mountains). While their value varies radically, they are considered the lowest class of coinage acceptable for trade. The Reeves call these coins "talons," since you can usually exchange one firebird for eight of them (the firebird depicts a phoenix with eight talons). One wing will yield two talons and one crest will yield four talons.

Among the varied house coinages are "mantises" (House Decados coins, with its crest stamped upon them), "claws" (the Hazat), "crosses" (Li Halan) and "sparklers" (al-Malik). "Black lions" were once minted by House Hawkwood, but they now support Alexius' demand for one firebird. Most house coins are now valued similarly to talons (eight house coins are equal in value to one firebird).

Weapons

There are all manner of weapons used in the Known Worlds — from swords and bows to frap sticks and slug guns.

Melee weapons saw a resurgence after the Fall, since energy shields are common among the nobility and those who can afford them. However, the needs of internal starship combat also helped promote their return. The ranged weapons necessary to penetrate space marine armor risk damaging a ship if they hit a key component. Thus, marines and pirates have turned to melee weapons when





onboard ships. The nobility's adoption of a dueling culture only adds to excuses for carrying melee weapons.

Firearms

Slug Guns

Bullet-firing guns are not exactly rare in the Known Worlds, but they are outlawed among the peasantry. Thus, the majority of the Known Worlds population is forbidden to handle a gun, leaving the sport up to freemen and nobles. And a sport it is, for the nobles demand that their guns be elegant and a nice accessory to their outfits. The slug guns of the Empire are designed for looks and functionality. Noble slug guns tend to resemble Renaissance dueling pistols but act like advanced 21st-century firearms. While many guns are still factory manufactured, nobles insist that theirs be hand-made by master craftsmen. This takes longer, of course, but usually creates a superior gun. The profession of weaponsmith to royalty is an important and lucrative one.

There are two different types of slug gun pistols: revolvers and autofeed guns.

Energy Guns

Most energy guns came from Vautech filtered through Second Republic manufacturers. At the height of the Second Republic, some of these weapons were even improved beyond the Vau's own level of design, but that was a long time ago. Most of these are still manufactured, but they are very expensive, well out of the range of most buyers.

Fusion cells are required for most of these guns.

Firearms Rules

There are a few special rules to consider when using firearms.

Using Pistols in Melee

Pistols are ranged weapons but, unlike other ranged weapons, they do not provoke attacks of opportunity when used in melee. Combatants using pistols in melee do not get to make attacks of opportunity with them; pistols just don't threaten and hold a foe the same way waving a sword does. The Crack Shot feat does allow a character to threaten adjacent areas with a pistol.

A pistol used in the off-hand is considered to be a light weapon. It only levies two-weapon fighting penalties in the round that it is actually fired. Once fired, penalties for two-weapon fighting and off-hand weapon apply. If it is never fired, no penalties are levied.

Maximum Range Increments

A firearm may fire up to 10 range increments, the same as projectile weapons.

Attacking Objects

Firearms (including slug guns, blasters and lasers) do not have their damage when applied against an object's hardness. They inflict full damage against objects.



TABLE 5— I: WEAPONS

Weapons	Cost†	Damage	Critical	Range	Weight††	Type	Ammunition†††
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Simple Weapons — Melee

Tiny

Dagger, spring		1d4	19-20/x2	10 ft	1 lb.	Piercing	
Shocker*	+100 (sf)	+1d6			+1 lb.	+ Electricity	15 (sf)
Vibro Blade*	+120 (sf)				+2 lbs		25 (sf)

SIMPLE WEAPONS — RANGED

Tiny

Autofeed, Lt.	150 (5/1)	1d6	x2	20 ft	2 lbs	Piercing	17 (.32)
Derringer, autofeed	60 (5/1)	1d6	x2	10 ft	1 lb.	Piercing	5 (.32)
Derringer, revolver	50 (5/1)	1d6	x2	10 ft	1 lb.	Piercing	2 (.32)
Laser, Palm	200 (sf)	1d6	19-20/x3	20 ft	1 lb.	Piercing	7 (sf)
Revolver, Lt.	100 (5/1)	1d6	x2	20 ft	2 lbs	Piercing	6 (.32)
Stunner*	300 (sf)	2d4 §	19-20/x3	20 ft	2 lbs	Bludgeoning	10 (sf)

Small

Autofeed, Med.	250 (3/1)	1d8	x2	30 ft	4 lbs	Piercing	14 (.40)
Autofeed, Hvy.	300 (1)	1d10	x2	40 ft	5 lbs	Piercing	10 (.47)
Laser Pistol	400 (sf)	1d10	19-20/x3	40 ft	3 lbs	Piercing	15 (sf)
Revolver, Med.	200 (3/1)	1d8	x2	30 ft	3 lbs	Piercing	6 (.40)
Revolver, Hvy.	250 (1)	1d10	x2	40 ft	4 lbs	Piercing	6 (.47)

Martial Weapons — Melee

Medium

Frap Stick*	100 (sf)	1d6 (+1d6)	x2		4 lbs	Bludgeoning + Electricity	15 (sf)
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Martial Weapons — Ranged

Small

Blaster Pistol*	700 (sf)	2d6	x3	30 ft	5 lbs	Piercing	10 (sf)
SMG(A)*	350 (3/1)	1d8 +1	x2	30 ft	6 lbs	Piercing	32 (.40)
Splinter Pistol(A)*	200 (5/1)	1d6	x3	30 ft	4 lbs	Piercing	7 (flechette + sf)

Medium

Laser, Assault	700 (sf)	2d6	19-20/x3	90 ft	8 lbs.	Piercing	20 (sf)
Rifle, Assault(A)*	500 (2/1)	1d12	x3	60 ft	10 lbs	Piercing	30 (10mm)
Shotgun (buckshot)	300 (5/1)	3d4	x3	20 ft	8 lbs.	Piercing	7 (buckshot)
Shotgun (slug)	300 (1)	1d10	x3	40 ft	8 lbs.	Piercing	7 (.47)
Splinter Carbine(A)*	400 (5/1)	1d10	x3	40 ft	10 lbs	Piercing	13 (flechette + sf)

Large

Blaster, Rifle*	1000 (sf)	3d6	x3	80 ft.	13 lbs	Piercing	15 (sf)
Blaster, Shotgun*	1500 (sf)	3d6	19-20/x3	30 ft.	15 lbs	Piercing	8 (sf)
Laser, Rifle	1000 (sf)	2d8	19-20/x3	120 ft	10 lbs	Piercing	23 (sf)
Rifle, Imperial	200 (3/1)	1d10	x3	100 ft	10 lbs	Piercing	10 (.40)
Rifle, Sniper*	700 (2/1)	2d8	19-20/x4	120 ft	12 lbs	Piercing	5 (13mm)

EXOTIC WEAPONS — MELEE

Medium

Flux Sword*	30K (sf)	2d8	19-20/x3		3 lbs	Piercing and Slashing	30 (sf)
Glanckesh Sword	20	1d8	19-20/x3		6 lbs.	Slashing	
Wireblade*	10K (sf)	1d6	18-20/x4		3 lbs.	Slashing	30 (sf)

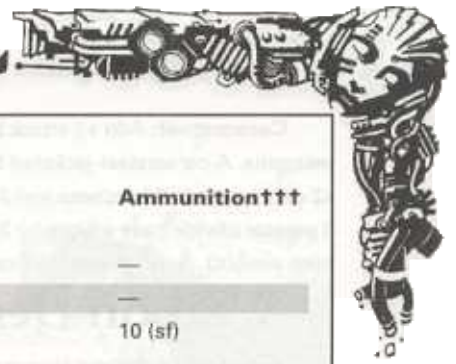
Autofire

Some weapons are capable of autofire — spurting a hail of bullets with one pull of the trigger. With an autofire weapon, you may make up to two additional attacks per round at your normal attack bonus (three additional attacks if you have the Rapid Shot

feat). All attacks for the round suffer a -6 penalty. Each attack uses up three bullets (or charges, if it's an energy weapon).

All autofire guns (except machine guns) can also fire single shots, so you don't always have to make an autofire attack.





Exotic Weapons — Ranged

Weapons	Cost†	Damage	Critical	Range	Weight††	Type	Ammunition†††
Small							
Whip, Barbed *	30	1d4	x2	15 ft.*	3 lbs.	Slashing	—
Whip, Snickersnee *	75	1d6	x2	15 ft.*	3 lbs.	Slashing	—
Whip, Suresnake *	+100 (sf)	—	19-20/x2	15 ft.*	+1 lb.	Slashing	10 (sf)
Medium							
Flamegun*	150 (1+sf)	1d10	19-20/x3	30 ft.	10 lbs.	Fire	10
Large							
Futhanga bow, Lt.*	100	1d8	x3	100 ft.	5 lbs.	Piercing	—
	Arrows (20)	1	—	—	—	3 lbs.	—
Futhanga bow, Hvy.*	120	1d10	x3	110 ft.	6 lbs.	Piercing	—
	Arrows (20)	1	—	—	—	3 lbs.	—

Sf = Small fusion cell.

† Costs are in firebirds. The cost in parentheses is amount of ammunition bought per firebird.

†† Weight includes a full load of ammunition. Weights for ammunition types are given in the ammunition descriptions.

††† Ammunition lists the amount of shots the gun can hold in its cylinder, magazine or fusion cell before it must be reloaded. The number in parentheses is the type of ammunition the gun fires.

* See the description of this weapon for special rules.

‡ The weapon deals subdual damage rather than normal damage.

Aimed Shots

You can take a full-round action to aim a gun, using the gun's iron sights to get a better bead on your target. On the following round, you can then fire at the target as a full-round action (you cannot move in the same round in which you take an aimed shot).

An aimed shot gets a +1 attack and damage bonus.

Scopes

Rifles often have scopes — telescopic lenses that magnify your view of your target and offset some of the range increment penalties. Scopes are rated by the amount they increase a gun's range increment.

Magnification	Range Increment	Bonus	Weight	Cost
5x	+10		+1 lb.	50
10x	+20		+1 lb.	75
20x	+40		+2 lbs.	100

Firing a gun while using a scope is a full-round action (you cannot move and use the scope in the same round). As usual, you provoke attacks of opportunity for firing a ranged weapon.

If you wish to use a scope for an aimed shot, you must spend two full rounds lining the target up through the scope (first round) and catching him in the crosshairs (second round) before firing (third round).

A Knave who spends the proper amount of time aiming a weapon through a scope suffers no range limitation for a Sneak Attack.

See a weapon's description to see if it can be fitted with a scope.

Laser Sights

Small, Medium and Large guns (but not Tiny) can be fitted with laser sights, beams of light that help you line up your shot on a target. A sight usually consists of a small pointer above or below the barrel that projects a red circle or crosshair onto what-

ever objects the barrel is aimed at.

A laser sight allows you to take an Aimed Shot as a move-equivalent action instead of a full-round action.

A laser sight uses a tiny fusion cell that lasts for 24 hours of continuous use. The cost is 200 firebirds.

Silencer

Attached to a slug gun, a silencer muffles at least some of the noise made by a shot. Silencers vary just as much as any other technological artifact in the Known Worlds; some completely deaden the noise and make a gun more accurate, while others barely do anything and burn out after only a few uses. An average silencer requires anyone not near the shot (in the same room or within 20 meters) to make a Listen check to hear the gunshot and know what it is. These are illegal on most planets. Cost: 15 firebirds. Weight: 1 lb.

High-Tech Weapon Materials

Weapons made from high-tech plastic and metal alloys have special considerations.

Plasteel: Halve weapon weight. Melee weapons and guns may be made from plasteel, but not bullets. Plasteel guns can evade low-tech detection devices (TL 5 devices and below only detect for metal). Nonconductive. Cost x2.

Hephaestium: Add +1 attack bonus and +1 damage to melee weapons. A hephaestium-jacketed bullet gets +1 attack bonus and +1 damage. Add 2 hardness and 1 hit point. Cost x4.

Mercurium: Add +2 attack bonus and +1 damage to melee weapons. A mercurium-jacketed bullet gets +1 attack bonus and +1 damage. Add 2 hardness and 1 hit point. Weapon weight is 1/3 less (divide base weight by 3, round down, and subtract result from base weight). Cost x6.



Ceramsteel: Add +3 attack bonus and +2 damage to melee weapons. A ceramsteel-jacketed bullet gets +2 attack bonus and +2 damage. Add 5 hardness and 3 hit points. Weapon weight is 1/3 greater (divide base weight by 3, round down, and add result to base weight). Nonconductive. Cost x10.

Weapon Descriptions

Autofeed: Autofeed slug guns carry ammunition in spring-loaded clips or magazines. When the gun fires, another bullet is automatically fed into the chamber for the next shot (manually engaging the slide will also load a bullet into the chamber). It is a move-equivalent action to reload an autofeed gun with a new clip or magazine.

Autofeed guns jam whenever the person firing it rolls a natural "1" — the bullet is caught between the clip and the chamber. Until the jam is cleared, the gun will not fire (clearing a jam takes one action).

Light: Equivalent of a twentieth century .32 automatic or a Walther PPK. The most well known in the Empire is the Mitchau .32 Rumbler.

Medium: Think of a 9mm Browning or similar 20th/21st-century pistol. The Known Worlds equivalent is the Mitchau .40 Ripper.

Heavy: Similar to a .455 Desert Eagle or other heavy 20th/21st-century pistol; the Known Worlds equivalent is the Sumpter .47 Urthquake.

Blaster (TL7): These marvels of technology generate plasma from fusion cells using a mysterious transference chamber stolen from Vau weaponry. Only a few people in the Known Worlds understand these things, and they are usually master weaponsmiths for the guilds, revealing their secrets only to loyal apprentices after years of study.

When the trigger is engaged, a force field forms about the plasma and is violently ejected down the barrel. It begins exploding once it exits the barrel, leaking through the field. Once it hits a physical object (the target, hopefully), the field disintegrates, losing the full force of the plasma.

Blasters can leak through energy shields — a shield's damage reduction is lessened against blaster hits. See *Energy Shields*, below.

Pistol: The only reliable blaster pistol that nobles trust is the Alembic, manufactured by the Supreme Order of Engineers under various contracts.

Rifle: The best-known model is the Crucible.

Shotgun: An awesomely deadly weapon, firing a scattering discharge of plasma balls with one pull of the trigger. The Volcano is the model feared by anyone with an ounce of sense.

Dagger, spring: The "spring knife" has the same traits as any other dagger, but the blade stays concealed in the hilt until its user presses a button and brings it into play. Some of these are exceptionally well-concealed, being worked into belt buckles and jewelry, but these are even more expensive than the normal ones. Needless to say, possession of one of these is a crime in many cities — these aren't tools.

Derringer: A palm-sized gun designed to be hidden in a boot or other concealed but easy-to-reach spot. This gun can be either a

revolver (2 shots) or autofeed (5 shots).

Flamegun (TL5): A popular weapon among Avestites, a flamegun holds a canister of Ka-plant oil (an alien plant native to Pyre). With the pull of a trigger, this highly combustible oil is sprayed past a spark at the tip of the barrel, igniting into a flume of burning and smoking oil. The Ka oil is kept cool by refrigerants in the canisters, which are powered by fusion cells (considered to last for 10 shots, until the canister is empty), but after even two firings, the oil heats up enough to send billows of black and awful-smelling smoke pluming out of the barrel. It is this smell that often reveals the impending presence of the Inquisition.

Flameguns delivers fire damage as a ranged touch attack (ignore armor bonuses to AC unless the armor is fire-retardant). For the next two rounds, the target takes an additional 1d6 of damage. He can take a full-round action, attempting to extinguish the flame before the damage is inflicted — this requires a Reflex save (DC 15). If he rolls on the ground, he gets a +2 bonus. Leaping into water automatically snuffs the burning Ka oil.

Flux Sword (TL8): An energy sword. Flux swords — like most Second Republic energy tech — were developed from stoien Vautech. At the flick of a switch, a sword-shaped force field is created which instantly fills with plasma. Like blasters, flux swords can leak through energy shields. These swords are powered by a fusion cell, which lasts for 30 turns. Flux swords are rarely made today; the technical know-how is arcane.

Frap Stick (TL4): A light mace with a built-in shocker (see below).

Its additional 1d6 damage is rolled *after any energy shield activation roll* (this damage does *not* modify the activation roll). Its small fusion cell holds 15 charges. Each hit releases one charge.

Futhanga Bow: A special longbow, made to accommodate a Vorox's size and multiple limbs.

A futhanga requires at least three limbs (and a Large-sized creature) to use it: two to hold it and one to draw an arrow. The bow has two strings running parallel to one another, each of which can be nocked and drawn at the same time, although this requires the use of a fourth limb to hold the additional arrow.

Two arrows can thus be fired with one release of the bow, allowing its user two bow attacks. If you also have the Rapid Shot feat, four attacks can be made, but each suffers the -2 penalty.

A heavy futhanga bow requires a Strength of 14 or higher to draw its string(s); those with lower Strength scores suffer a -1 attack penalty for every two levels less.

Glinkesh Sword: A deadly crescent blade resembling a Chinese deerhook sword. These blades were invented by civilized Vorox to make up for their lack of claws (feral Vorox spurn these swords). While they are one-handed swords, Vorox warriors usually use one in each of their four-fighting hands. The crescent shape allows them to create a circle of death around their bodies as they slash the swords about with all arms.

These swords are almost sacred to some Vorox warriors, who painstakingly engrave them with sigils of victory and hang "trophies" from the handles (enemies' teeth, hair, etc.). They don't like it when someone touches their glinkesh without permission.

Laser (TL6): Lasers fire beams of coherent light.

When firing through thick fog or smoke, or anything which





could scatter or defuse the coherent beam, subtract one point from the damage (although the minimum is always one point).

Assault: A laser carbine, designed for urban or short-range combat. The Varsten Blacklight carbine competes with the Martech Red for popularity. The Varsten rifles are manufactured by House Decados, and the Martech guild is not happy about this, especially since certain royal troops seem to prefer Varsten lasers.

Palm: A derringer-sized laser, used for self-defense when it is not possible to carry a larger gun. The Martech Midget is the most popular model, manufactured by Martech, a sub-guild of the Engineers.

Pistol: About the size of a medium autofeed slug gun, the Martech Gold (so called because it emits a yellow beam) is the standard laser handgun of the Known Worlds.

Rifle: The Martech Indigo is the most popular laser rifle model, about the size of a sniper rifle.

Revolver: A revolver is a slug gun that holds its ammunition in a rotating cylinder; each pull of the trigger cocks the hammer and fires a bullet. Another pull fires again by recocking and rotating the cylinder where the next bullet is in line with the hammer; the gun can also be manually recocked by pulling down the hammer with the thumb.

Bullets are loaded into the cylinder one by one or with a speedloader (a cylinderlike device which itself must be loaded one by one but which can be carried preloaded). It takes a full-round action to fully reload a revolver by loading the bullets one by one; it is a move-equivalent action to reload with a speed loader.

Revolvers do not jam (there is no special penalty for rolling a natural "1" when firing a revolver).

Light: These small pistols are popular as civilian sidearms. One model is the Mitchau .32 Protector, manufactured by the Mitchau family under the patronage of House Hazat.

Medium: Much like a 20th/21st-century .38 special. The Mitchau .40 Thunderer is popular.

Heavy: Like the 20th/21st-century .44 magnum, these heavy guns can bring down large animals. The most popular Known Worlds models is the Sumpter .47 Ulik (named after a vicious Malignatian mammal), manufactured by the Sumpter family under the patronage of House al-Malik.

Rifle: There are a variety of different rifle types.

Assault: Think of any number of 20th/21st-century assault rifles, from an M-16 to an AK-47. There are many Known Worlds models, such as the Masseri 10mm Stomper or the Van Gelder Thracker (named after an astonishingly quick reptile from Vorox). All assault rifles are autofeed guns, and most of them are capable of autofire.

Imperial: Alexius' generals are trying to standardize the Empire's weaponry. The standard armored trooper is given this cheap but well-manufactured assembly-line rifle. Nearly a dozen guilds and an equal number of Imperial armories are making these cheap, low-quality rifles. The rifles are now finding their way into the black markets of every planet where there is an Imperial military base.

Sniper: These sleek and accurate rifles come in many varieties with many add-ons (sights, silencers) and some can break down to



be carried in a suitcase for assembly at the sight of the intended kill. Most sniper rifles use bolt action (each shot must be chambered manually). The Radir family handcrafts the most sought-after sniper rifles, under the patronage of House Decados.

Shocker (TL5): This small electrical unit can be applied to any melee weapon (craft DC 20), as long as it is made of conductive materials (no plasteel or ceramsteel). It releases an electrical shock upon whomever it impacts. Its additional 1d6 damage is rolled *after* any energy shield activation roll (this damage does not modify the activation roll). The shocker is powered by a small fusion cell that holds 15 charges. Each time it releases a shock, it uses one charge.

Shotgun: Like 20th/21st-century models, most shotguns throw an arc of pellets (buckshot) rather than a single slug, although some models can fire either shot or slugs. Most Known Worlds models are pump loaded, but there are automatics and two-shot double barrels. Best known is the Dreskel Boomer, manufactured by Ariman Dreskel under exclusive contract to the Scravers.

Splinter gun: These guns fire flechettes, tiny shards of metal (sometimes plastic). They each use a fusion cell to empower a magnetic field that propels a stream of metal shards down the barrel with each pull of the trigger. Each cell lasts for 10 full clips' worth of shots, after which they must be recharged or replaced by fresh cells. Splinter guns are capable of autofire.

Splinter guns are designed to use specifically made flechettes, although pistol and carbine flechette ammo is interchangeable. A splinter gun can be loaded with a handful of unprepared sabot (crude metal shavings, for instance), but firing such sabot will harm the barrel. Only one such shot can be made; after that, the gun must be repaired or the barrel replaced before it will fire even regular flechettes again. Two types of special flechettes, thorns and fangs, are detailed in *Ammunition Descriptions*, below.

Pistol: One famous model is the Reznor Nail Gun, utilizing cheap ammunition shaved from recycled metal implements.

Carbine: The only model currently being manufactured is the Reznor Model IX.

Stunner (TL6): Stunners emit a concussive force field that causes nervous system shock, effectively stunning a target or knocking her unconscious.

If a target takes *any* damage from a Stunner, he must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + subdual damage delivered by the stunner). If successful, there is no further effect, although the gun's subdual damage is still taken. If the save fails, he is stunned for one round, in addition to taking the gun's subdual damage. A natural 1 on the save check means he falls unconscious.

These were Second Republic riot police weapons. Due to the constant lawsuits brought against police by stunner victims, it became illegal to manufacture stunners with too much power. It is rumored that the Engineers have developed a more powerful version which can easily render a target unconscious. The most popular regular stunner is the Arbogast Sleeper.

Submachine Gun: A fully-automatic gun similar to 20th/21st-century Uzis or Macs. The Jahnisak Muffler Gun is perhaps the most widely used in the Known Worlds, although the Lank Stinger is

apparatus so that, when a switch is flicked, the blade vibrates minutely but very quickly, allowing it to interfere with energy shields.

An energy shield's activation DC against a vibro-blade attack is 20. When the vibration is inactive, the sword is not as firm (it jiggles a little in its mounting), delivering one fewer points of damage. A humming sound always accompanies an active vibrating blade. Activation requires a fusion cell, which can last for 25 rounds. Switching the blade on and off does not require an action.

Whip: Standard whips are made of leather.

barbed: Sharp spikes along the length of the whip allow it to inflict normal damage instead of subdual. Additionally, it affects targets regardless of their armor bonuses. **Mighty barbed whips** allow users to add their Strength bonuses to damage.

Snickersnee: Sheathed in sharp metal scales, a snickersnee whip inflicts normal damage instead of subdual. Additionally, it affects targets regardless of their armor bonuses. **Mighty snickersnee whips** allow users to add their Strength bonuses to damage.

Suresnake (TL6+): This can be any of the whip types listed above, but a special tracking wire has been threaded throughout the length of the whip.

The tip of the lash holds a nanite computer that can home in on a chosen target; the tip must first be aimed at the target, then "locked down" on that target with a flick of a switch in the handle (this takes one standard action). As long as the target does not disappear from the computer's sight for more than three rounds, the whip gains a +3 competence bonus to hit its chosen target.

These whips are popular among the Chainers, who use them to keep "special" cargo in line. A fusion cell is required; it can perform up to 10 different lock downs before needing recharging.

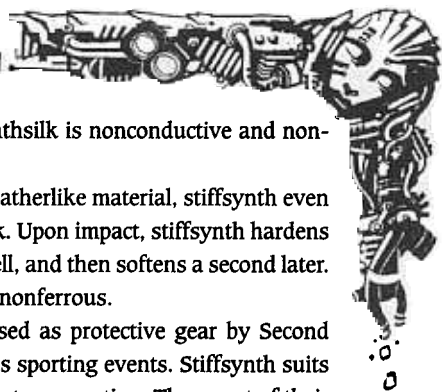
Wireblade (TL8): A monomolecular blade — the height of Second Republic weapon technology. When activated, the monofilament blade slides out of the handle and is surrounded by a corona of faint light (the only way to see the blade with the naked eye). Wireblades can be deadly to their users if they get careless, for the blades will cut through flesh with no hindrance, as if slicing through air. A fusion cell powers the light and lasts for 30 rounds. If the cell runs dry with the blade extended, things could get tricky — there is no easy way to see the blade, and people may walk into it accidentally.

A wireblade ignores armor and enhancement bonuses to AC, easily passing through physical objects. It also ignores object hardness.

Ammunition Descriptions

There are a variety of slug calibers and types of slugs, from slappers (riot ammo) to needlers (armor-piercing) to blast capsules (explosive).

Blast Capsule (TL7; +7 fb): Blast capsules have a special charge of stored plasma that is released upon impact. Add +1 damage. Blast capsules inflict piercing and fire damage, and leak through energy shields like fire. They cannot be made in calibers below .40.



Slapper (TL5; +3 fb): Meant for use against rioting crowds, slappers knock people down but don't damage them as much as most slugs. The slug is made of a viscous plastic that balloons out as it flies through the air, impacting the target on a wider area but with little penetration. The target feels as if he's been walloped by a Vorox's left hook.

Slappers inflict subdual damage rather than normal damage, but they increase their weapon's threat range by 1 (a 20 becomes a 19-20 range, a 19-20 range becomes 18-20, and so on).

Sunder Slug (TL8; +10 fb): Ceramsteel fragments in a gel medium, encased in steel. +2 attack and +2 damage.

Vorox Claw (TL5; +7 fb): An expanding bullet that opens into a five-claw blossom upon impact. +2 damage.

Special Flechette Ammunition

Thorns (TL4; +2fb): Jagged-edged flechettes. +1 damage.

Fangs (TL7; +10 fb): Ceramsteel flechettes. +2 attack and +2 damage.

Standard Ammunition

Standard ammunition costs depend upon the availability of the ammo and caliber (size). The cost of clips or magazines to hold the ammo is usually 1/10th the cost of the gun.

Caliber	Bullets per Cost per		Weight
	firebird	clip*	
Light (.32 caliber)	5	2	1 lb. per 4 clips
Medium (.40 caliber)	3	4	1 lb. per 3 clips
Heavy (.47 caliber)	1	8	1 lb. per 2 clips
Assault Rifle (10mm)	2	10	1 lb. per 3 clips
Rifle (13mm)	2	10	1 lb. per 2 clips
Submachine gun (.40)	3	6	1 lb. per 3 clips
Shotgun (buckshot)	5	4	1 lb. per 3 clips
Splinter gun (flechette)	5	6	1 lb. per 4 clips
Energy gun (fusion cell)	—	1 cell/20 fb	—

* Per magazine/clip or speed loader

Armor

Everyone needs a little protection from time to time, especially when traveling offworld. Naturally, most of the protective gear available comes in the form of heavily padded clothing or leathers enhanced with metals and plastics.

Armor Materials

There are a few high-tech materials that have proved particularly useful as armor.

Polymer Knit (TL5): A plastic-and-cloth weave highly resistant to bullets. Civilian-grade polymer knit can be worn with an energy shield. Polymer is nonconductive and nonferrous.

Synthsilk (TL8): One of the finest inconspicuous armors, synthsilk is comfortable and lightweight. Used for construction and utility worker uniforms during the Second Republic, it comes in a variety of colors, but is quite expensive. Most of the synthsilk made today is manufactured using precariously maintained Second Republic textile mills. Synthsilk was first designed and used in the Diaspora era. Later improvements allowed for thinner, lighter materials until, by the time of the Second Republic, the fabric was as light as cotton and just as comfortable to wear. Synthsilk can be

worn with an energy shield. Synthsilk is nonconductive and nonferrous.

Stiffsynth (TL6): Heavy, leatherlike material, stiffsynth even looks like leather until it is struck. Upon impact, stiffsynth hardens temporarily into an inflexible shell, and then softens a second later. Stiffsynth is nonconductive and nonferrous.

Stiffsynth was originally used as protective gear by Second Republic athletes during vigorous sporting events. Stiffsynth suits are passed down from generation to generation. The secret of their manufacture has been lost (except perhaps among a few secret guilds). Most existing suits still bear the insignias of various sporting teams. Stiffsynth is stretchable and can fit just about anyone of the same relative height it was originally manufactured for.

Plasteel (TL6): A semi-flexible, lightweight, high-impact resistant plastic. Plasteel is nonconductive and nonferrous.

Hephaestium (TL6): A high-tech metal alloy that is tougher than steel. Hephaestium is conductive and ferrous (it is adversely affected by electrical and magnetic attacks).

Mercurium (TL7): A lightweight, high-tech metal alloy that is tougher than steel. Mercurium is conductive but nonferrous (it is adversely affected by electrical attacks but not magnetism).

Ceramsteel (TL8): The strongest known substance, made from a high-tech blend of special alloys and ceramics. This heavy duty, thick-formed armor is designed to withstand amazing impacts. It is composed of the high-tech ceramics and metal combination used to make starship hulls. Most suits are lacquered or painted by the owner to represent their house, sect or guild affiliation. Ceramsteel is nonconductive and nonferrous.

Fire-Retardant

Fire-retardant armor gains its armor bonus against fire touch attacks that normally disallow it (such as against a flamethrower).

This could be anything from Pyrian jurba gel smeared over the armor (it must be reapplied daily at a cost of 3 fb per medium-sized suit) to Ymir knit threads woven into the armor (soft or fabric armors only, add half again the armor's cost) to Brimstone ceramic plating (hard armors only, double the armor's cost).

Spacesuits

Spacesuits are designed to protect their wearer from the harmful effects of a vacuum. They not only maintain steady pressure in different environments, they keep the wearer warm. If damage is inflicted on a character wearing a spacesuit, the suit may become breached. If the damage delivered exceeds the spacesuit's hardness (based on the materials it is made from), the suit's hit points are damaged and the suit is considered breached.

A character in a breached suit can take an immediate move-equivalent action to patch it with hardgel (if he has patches — most suits provide 10 of them; extras cost 1 firebird each). If he already acted that round, he can still take the action, but he may not then take any actions the next round.

If he is in a vacuum environment and can't patch the suit the same round it is breached, he suffers damage at the beginning of the next round: 4d6 damage per round as his suit loses pressure. He can make a Fortitude save to take half damage. If he cannot seal the suit within 10 rounds, he dies.

Standard Spacesuit: A standard spacesuit is made from



TABLE 5—2: ARMOR

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	— Speed (30 ft.)	(20 ft.)	Weight
Light armor							
Polymer knit, civilian*†	300 fb	+1	+8		30 ft	20 ft	10 lbs
Synthsilk†	2000 fb	+4	+6	0	30 ft	20 ft	10 lbs
Chain shirt							
Plasteel	400 fb	+4	+5		30 ft	20 ft	15 lbs
Hephaestium	800 fb	+5	+4		30 ft	20 ft	25 lbs
Mercurium	1200 fb	+5	+5		30 ft	20 ft	20 lbs
Medium armor							
Spacesuit, standard**	300 fb	+3	+4	-3	20 ft	15 ft	20 lbs
Polymer knit, riot*	500 fb	+3	+4	-3	20 ft	15 ft	20 lbs
Stiffsynth	1000 fb	+5	+4	-3	20 ft	15 ft	25 lbs
Scale mail							
Plasteel	200 fb	+	+		20 ft	15 ft	20 lb
Hephaestium	600 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	30 lb
Mercurium	1000 fb	+	+		20 ft	15 ft	25 lb
Chain mail							
Plasteel	600 fb	+		-	20 ft	15 ft	30 lb
Hephaestium	1000 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	40 lb
Mercurium	1500 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	35 lb
Breastplate							
Plasteel	1100 fb	+	+		20 ft	15 ft	20 lb
Hephaestium	1600 fb	+	+		20 ft	15 ft	30 lb
Mercurium	2000 fb	+	+		20 ft	15 ft	25 lb
Ceramsteel	3000 fb	+	+		20 ft	15 ft	35 lb
Heavy armor							
Spacesuit, armored**							
Plasteel	1500 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	25 lb
Mercurium	3000 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	30 lb
Splint mail							
Plasteel	800 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	35 lb
Hephaestium	1200 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	45 lb
Mercurium	2200 fb			-	20 ft	15 ft	40 lb
Banded mail							
Plasteel	1000 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	25 lb
Hephaestium	2000 fb	+	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	35 lb
Mercurium	2600 fb	+	+		20 ft	15 ft	30 lb
Half plate							
Plasteel	2200 fb	+				15 ft	40 lb
Hephaestium	3500 fb	+			20 ft	15 ft	50 lb
Mercurium	4000 fb	+			20 ft	15 ft	45 lb
Full plate							
Plasteel	4400 fb	+8	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	40 lb
Hephaestium	5000 fb	+9	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	50 lb
Mercurium	6000 fb	+9	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	45 lb
Ceramsteel	9,000 fb	+10	+	-	20 ft	15 ft	60 lb

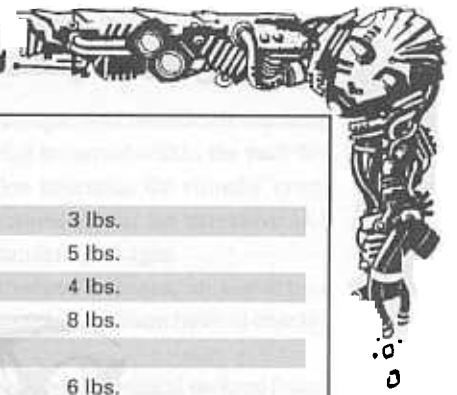
either thick, padded leather (TL4 or 5) or a synthsilk-like wear (TL 6+). Its hardness is 4 and it has 8 hit points. Standard or dueling energy shields will not operate on standard spacesuits, but an assault energy shield will.

Armored Spacesuit: A standard TL 6+ spacesuit with the addition of plasteel or mercurium plates for added protection. Its

hardness is 8 (plasteel) or 15 (mercurium) and it has 20 (plasteel) or 30 (mercurium) hit points. Standard, dueling or assault energy shields will not operate on armored spacesuits, but a battle energy shield will.

Self-Sealing Suit: For an additional 100 firebirds, a TL 6+ suit (standard or armored) can be made self-sealing. It instantly





Shields							
Buckler/small							
Plasteel	50	+1	—	0	—	—	3 lbs.
Hephaestium	150	+2	—	-1	—	—	5 lbs.
Mercurium	200	+2	—	0	—	—	4 lbs.
Ceramsteel	500	+3	—	-2	—	—	8 lbs.
Large							
Plasteel	200	+2	—	0	—	—	6 lbs.
Hephaestium	500	+3	—	-2	—	—	15 lbs.
Mercurium	700	+3	—	-1	—	—	10 lbs.
Ceramsteel	1000	+4	—	-4	—	—	20 lbs.

* Civilian polymer knit provides damage reduction 2 against bullets; riot polymer knit provides damage reduction 4 against bullets.

** See a spacesuit's description for details.

† These armors can be worn with standard and dueling type energy shields.

TABLE 3—3: ENERGY SHIELDS

Type	Cost	Weight	Hits	— Damage Reduction —		— Resistance to Energy —	
				Physical attacks	Blasters	Fire	Electricity
Standard (ST)*	2500	3 lbs.	10 (mf)	15	7	10	15
Dueling (DU)*	3000	1 lbs.	15 (mf)	15	7	10	15
Assault (AS)**	15,000	5 lbs.	15 (mf)	15	7	10	15
Battle (BA)***	30,000	7 lbs.	20 (mf)	15	7	10	15

Mf = Medium fusion cell.

* Only padded, leather, synthsilk and civilian polymer knit armors can be worn with these shields. Any other armor type will prevent the shield from activating (no activation check is allowed).

** Most forms of light and medium armor may be worn with an assault shield; they will not prevent shield activation.

*** Most forms of light, medium and heavy armors may be worn with a battle shield; they will not prevent shield activation.

seals any breaches automatically as soon as they occur. It can do so 25 times before its hardgel sealant needs replenishing (1 firebird per patch).

Frictionless Gel

This amazing TL7 substance was first created during the Second Republic for use as a frictionless oil in advanced engines. However, someone early on realized its potential as a toy, and began marketing it as a "slimy fun gel for slick, slippery play." It is applied to a surface (such as a piston or gear, existing suit of armor, or human skin); after an hour of drying, its dried surface becomes frictionless. Obviously, this can avoid a lot of kinetic damage, but if misapplied, can lead to pratfalls. Gamemasters and players are encouraged to get creative with the possibilities. The effects only last for a day before the substance dries out completely. Frictionless gel can be smeared over any type of armor; modifiers stack.

Add +2 AC to any armor (or person) smeared with frictionless gel. The cost is 500 for enough to cover a medium-sized humanoid for one day.

Energy Shields

Energy shields are not uncommon in the Known Worlds. Anyone involved in dangerous work has one. Dangerous work can be anything from adventuring into Unknown Space, to spying on en-

emy installations, to being a diplomat to a rival house or sect.

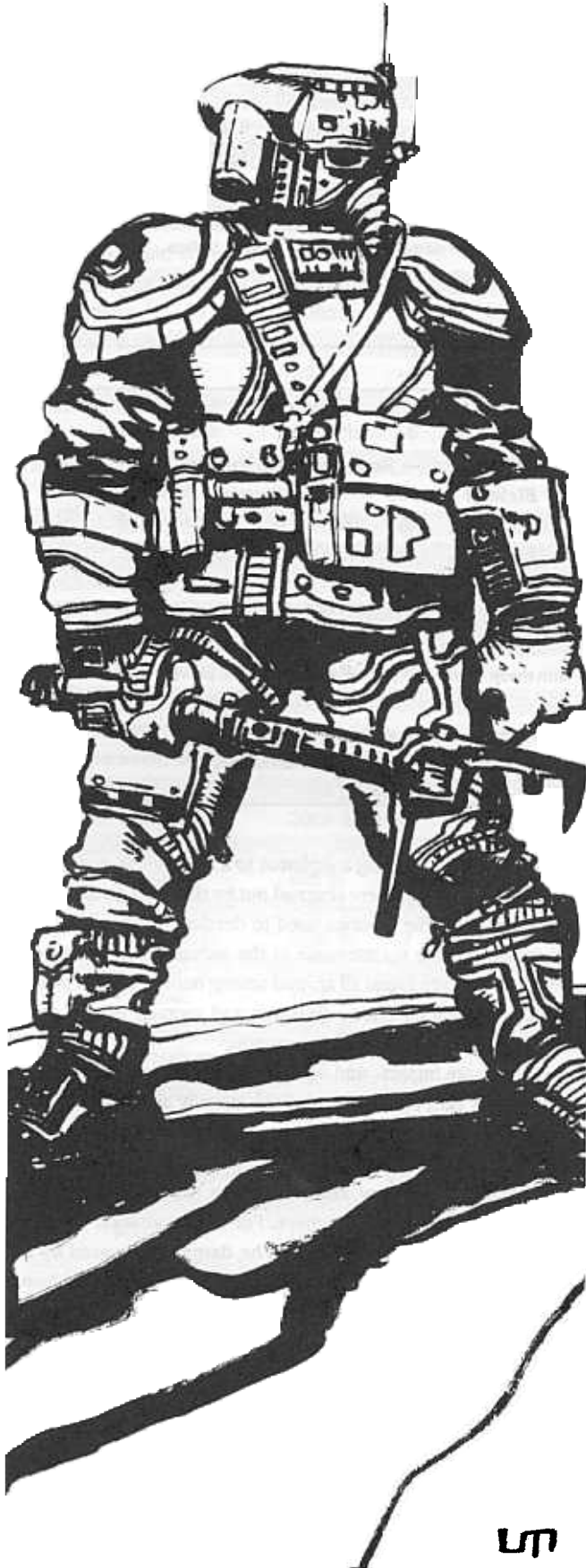
Although shields were churned out by the millions during the Second Republic, the theories used to develop energy shields are now secret, but the maintenance of the technology is fairly common, since they are found all around among nobles, Church priests, guilders and military forces. Peasants and yeomen would love to have them, but they're not *that* common.

Shields are impact- and energy-activated, meaning that they automatically turn on when their field (usually an inch around the body) is compromised by a kinetic or energetic force of a certain magnitude.

Activating energy shields: When hit, the energy shield wearer makes an activation check. For melee attacks, the DC is 17. Ranged weapon fire DC is 15. The damage delivered by the attack acts as a positive modifier to the roll. For instance, if a heavy revolver does 7 points of damage, that number is added to the result of the roll. If the check is successful, the shield activates and provides its damage reduction and/or resistance to energy against the attack.

Example: A heavy autofeed slug gun hits Aleister MacNab for 12 points of damage. He is wearing an energy shield, so he makes his shield check, adding 12 to the roll. He rolls a 10, which makes for a total result of 22. The DC for ranged weapon fire is 15, so the shield activates and blocks 15 points of damage (the amount





of its damage reduction). Old MacNab doesn't suffer a scratch and cackles as he lets loose with his submachine gun.

Features: Because of the preponderance of shields (designed to defend against firearms and energy weapons), a dueling culture has arisen, where swords are the main method of attack. The skill in fighting is to nick an opponent without activating his shield — the more damage delivered, the more likely the shield will activate.

Shield cores are small devices that can be placed in many different receptacles (which must be designed for this purpose). Nobles prefer gilded brooches or amulets, while soldiers prefer belt buckles. Cores are bulky and obvious to all who know what to look for, although some models (dueling shields) are concealable in a small piece of jewelry or wristwatch.

Shields use medium-sized fusion cells. Since they are activated only when field integrity is breached, they are rated by number of hits they can take. Each time a shield blocks damage, mark it; when it takes more hits than it has, its battery is dead and the field is shut down until a fresh cell is placed in the device (a standard action).

The drawback to a shield is that the field maintains integrity only within an inch or so of the body. Thick clothing or armor may destroy that integrity, causing the field to shut down. These things were designed by Second Republicans for sport and play, to accompany fashionable clothing; the know-how to adjust the field range has been lost. Assault and battle shields are exceptions (see Table 5—3: Energy Shields).

Burn out: Shields are designed to activate for direct impacts in a small area — a bullet, sword point or even an axe blade, for instance. The force field hardens only at the point(s) of impact. When confronted with a broad-area impact (or energy dispersal) — such as hitting the ground after leaping off a building — the shield may burn out. Roll the activation check normally to see if the shield activates to reduce the damage, but also make a burn out check. This is a Reflex save against DC 20. Modifiers may be added for shield quality (+1 for masterwork, +2 for exemplary work, +3 for supreme work).

If the burn-out check succeeds, the shield works (and will continue to work) as normal. If it fails, the shield will work for this impact only and then burn out for 10 rounds, after which it can be used again. If the roll is a natural "1," the shield burns out immediately (fusion cell dead) and will not even block this impact.

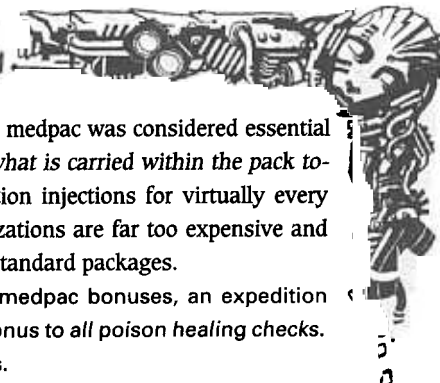
Shield Damper

It makes sense that someone would eventually figure out the best way to disable an energy shield. The most common method is a shield damper, a device that sets up a field disturbance on the same vibrational frequency as most energy shields. Since shields were developed from stolen Vautech, few people really understand why and how they work. The frequency is invisible to most current tech devices designed to measure energy fields.

When activated, the damper will shut down all energy shields in its area of affect. Different models have different areas (minimum 10 feet, maximum 200 feet). However, the larger the area, the more energy used. Generally, a damper will work for one hour, but less if it covers a larger area. After the time is up, it burns out, and exchanging batteries will not make it work again; only a repair session with high-tech tools will do so.

Shield dampers are extremely rare and quite illegal — no noble





likes to think he can be assassinated by any common thug with a shield dumper. *Nonetheless, they are sought out by nobles to use against their rivals. Using a dumper on a starship can cause damage to the stardrives or even jumpdrives -- penalties for doing so usually involve being tossed from an airlock.*

Costs vary, but the average is no less than 5000 firebirds. Weight: 10 lbs.

Energy

The Second Republic standardized its power needs for most consumer devices into the fusion cell. These rechargeable batteries come in various sizes, depending on their intended use, but they can all be recharged at a standard fusion power station. The Merchant League has kept some of the old fusion stations running, and there is one to be found on nearly every agora on every planet in the Known Worlds. However, prices for use vary, depending largely on the demand and how well maintained the station is. Some stations are gleaming, spotless paeans to Second Republic durability, while others are still running only on spit and gum, and occasional explosions are not unknown.

Fusion Cell (TL6): This was the standard battery used by most Second Republic tech, and is still used in Alexius' time. They come in all shapes and sizes and can be recharged at any fusion charging station, which usually have adapters for any size cell. See Table 5—5: Fusion Cells. Cost: 20 firebirds each (average 5 firebirds to recharge a cell).

Size	Weight	Equipment types
Tiny (the head of a pin)	—	Whisper pin
Small (AAA or AA battery)	—	Energy guns (blasters or lasers), flux sword
Medium (two C size batteries)	1/2 lb.	Energy shields, squawker radios, portable think machines
Large (car battery)	5 lbs.	Small skimmers or hoverbikes

Medical Gear

Medical supplies are a necessity for most adventurers. The availability of quality medicine is good for those with money, as there are apothecaries on all of the Known Worlds. But the better the medical care, the more rare and expensive it is.

Elixir (TL7): Tissue regenerative serum. Normal doses of Elixir heal 3-10 (1d8+2) points of damage, but some weak doses heal only 1-4 (1d4) points, while particularly potent batches can heal 4-18 (2d8+2) points or more. Elixir was the original Second Republic name for this popular tissue-regenerative serum. Cost: 50 per dose, 10 for the injector. Weight: Negligible.

Expedition Medpac (TL5): These stainless-steel, airtight canisters contain enough cotton gauze and tape to keep a small army well-bandaged. They also contain antiseptics, burn ointments and real medicines. Among the special equipment is a collection of antivenoms for virtually every form of poisonous animal venom found on the planet of manufacture (the kits can be purchased for particular worlds) and five water purification tablets. The tablets are designed to treat as much as 50 gallons of water each, and are essential for offworld travelers. Also included in the kit is a 100-count supply of antihistamine tablets, more than enough to allow most people time to adjust to new environments.

At one time, the expedition medpac was considered essential or space travel. In addition to what is carried within the pack today, there were also immunization injections for virtually every planet. These days, the immunizations are far too expensive and are too unstable to add into the standard packages.

In addition to the normal medpac bonuses, an expedition medpac provides a special +4 bonus to all poison healing checks. Cost: 300 firebirds. Weight: 7 lbs.

Medpac (TL4): A standardized first-aid medical package found among military troops, in starship lockers, and carried by most medics. The white plastic box contains sterilized gauze, alcohol, medical tape and burn ointment.

Medpacs provide a +2 enhancement bonus to combat medicine healing checks in addition to the bonus for stabilization and long-term care checks. A medpac has enough supplies for 30 healing checks before needing to be replenished. (Note: The standard healer's kit only helps stabilization and long-term care checks.) Cost: 100 firebirds. Weight: 1 lb.

Nanotech Medpac (TL7): These high-tech medpacs are a rarity and are normally available only to the highly influential. Some of the finest nano (miniaturized) robot technology available is used in the production of these medical miracle kits. If there is a medical crisis, this kit has the nanite for the job. From major burns to blood transfusions, from shattered bones to nerve-cell reparation, this is the best medical assistance that money can buy. Even optical nerves can be rebuilt with a nanotech medpac. For instance, nanite bone weavers (miniature robots programmed to reset fractured or broken bones by attaching themselves to the bones and aiding the body to regulate healing) are extremely delicate and complex to manufacture, but when used properly can reknit a broken bone in a matter of hours.

However, this device does not come with an instruction book and can safely be administered only by a qualified surgeon (Physickat required). The label on the airtight briefcase clearly explains that nanotech (the original Second Republic manufacturer) will not accept responsibility for deformity or injury caused by the improper use of the medpac.

In addition to the normal medpac healing checks bonuses, successful long-term healing made with a nanotech medpac quadruples the normal healing rate of the patient. Once the wounds are healed, the nanites will eventually exit the body through the patient's waste. Surgeons often keep nanite patients under watch until all the nanites have been recovered, although reclaiming the robots in working condition once they've made their journey is rare.

NanoTech Corporation was once the very pinnacle of medical emergency technology manufacturers. The company is long gone now, as is the easy availability of their equipment. House al-Malik continues to fund the manufacture of these kits today, but very few outside of a noble house can afford one. Many of the finest and most expensive surgeons have access to these kits, but the cost to their patients is exorbitant. Replacements for the items in the kit are expensive.

Cost: 1000 firebirds. Weight: 3 lbs.

Surgery Kit (TL5): This collection of surgery supplies includes painkillers in both pill and injection form, stainless-steel surgical tools, a cauterizer laser (instantly staunches bleeding), a stitcher



(automatically sews wounds, with eight prethreaded needles for sutures), and inflatable bone splints. This collection also includes everything found in the medpac. These kits were once the standard for high-risk planetary exploration. But it is too high-tech to be common anymore.

Surgery kits provide a +2 bonus to all surgery healing checks. Cost: 200 firebirds. Weight: 3 lbs.

Drugs and Poison

The Known Worlds are full of assassins with poison-dripping knives, alien beasts with venomous fangs, soldiers with chemical bombs, and merchants dealing in illicit substances. Drugs and poisons come in many varieties; some samples are listed below. The gamemaster should feel free to get creative with drugs and poisons.

Grixi: A deadly Ukari poison, Grixi is made from the distilled blood of a solka (an odd, albino apelike creatures from Kordeth) mixed with various Kordethian herbs. It is a greenish, slick paste that causes excessive bleeding in wounds. This poison is especially hated by nobles, if for no other reason than that it soils finery with excessive bleeding. One dose (enough to coat a dagger) cost 500 firebirds.

Type: Injury DC 17; Initial Damage: 1d4 Con; Secondary Damage: 2d6 Con.

Plox Blade Venom: An Ukari poison. This sticky, clear paste (made from ground *boca'ti* seeds and oils, found only in certain subterranean tunnels on Kordeth and Aylon) causes paralysis when exposed to the blood.

It requires the Alchemy skill to manufacture Plox (in addition to raw *boca'ti* seeds, found only in certain subterranean tunnels on Kordeth and Aylon). One dose (enough to coat a dagger) costs 200 firebirds.

Type: Injury DC 13; Initial Damage: Paralysis; Secondary Damage: 0.

Selchakah: Among House Decados' most popular — and equally contraband — exports, is the Severan opiate poppy, which produces *selchakah*: an extremely addictive narcotic which is illegal outside Decados holdings. Users proclaim that the bliss and joy delivered by *selchakah* is unequaled in this world. The extremes addicts will go to obtain more of the drug are likewise unequaled — murder and high treason are not unknown. It is rumored that the Decados intentionally addict nobles and high-ranking Church or League members to the drug, and then constrict their supply, doling out the desperately desired drug only in return for secrets. Cost: 50 (although dealers usually sell initial doses for 3-7 firebirds, to create “consumer demand”).

Type: Ingested, inhaled, injury DC 15; Initial Damage: 1d4 Wis and 1d4 Dex; Secondary Damage: 1d4 Wis and 1d4 Dex.

Vorox Poison: The poison from a Vorox's claws is a slow-acting paralytic. Some have adapted it for use as blade venom or to coat darts with — or even as a food additive (this requires a Cooking Profession check to hide the smell). Vorox poison can't be manufactured; it must be collected from either a Vorox noble or a feral Vorox. Sometimes, it can be found for sale, in which case, the usual cost is 100 firebirds per dose.

Type: Injury DC 14; Initial Damage: 2 Dex; Secondary Damage: 2d4 Dex.

Communications

Squawker (TL4): This radio, or “Squawker” as it is sometimes called, is the finest long-range radio currently manufactured. It is used by Muster Guilders to coordinate their mercenary and slaver activities, so it's got to be reliable. Lightweight and durable, the Squawker is capable of receiving and transmitting on over 200 channels (although, in Alexius's time, there's not an awful lot of chatter on most of these bands), and has an effective range of 50 miles. The two most common models either strap onto a belt or fix to a helmet. A more expensive model (TL5; +30 fb) can be worn around the wrist.

Using a squawker in combat is a move-equivalent action that provokes an attack of opportunity.

The squawker is powered by a medium fusion cell that must be recharged after 24 hours of continuous use. Cost: 50 firebirds. Weight: 3 lbs.

Whisper Pin (TL5): This miniature radio can be hidden in just about any inconspicuous object, from a lapel button to an earring. It usually comes in two pieces: a transmitter worn somewhere near the owner's throat (lapel or ear) and a receiver hidden in the owner's ear. The transmitter is programmed to hear only the owner's voice and can pick up and transmit even a slight whisper from him, and sends a signal on a special tight band with a range of 15 miles. The receiver must be worn in the ear since it releases only faint vibrations, which the owner must be trained to interpret.

House Decados controls the technology for these useful spy radios and is very picky about whom they sell them to, but each house, sect or guild that uses them has its own vibration code by which they send messages to their spies.

Using a whisper pin in combat is a free action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

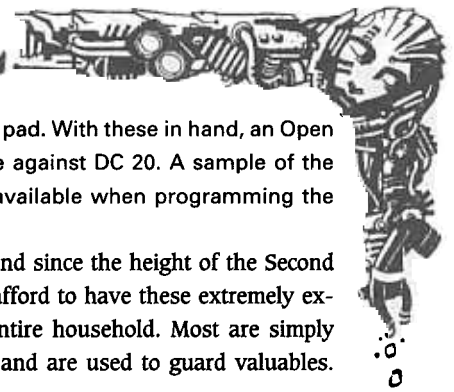
The Whisper Pin is powered by a tiny fusion cell that must be recharged after five hours of continuous use. Cost: 100 firebirds. Weight: Negligible.

Starlight LRCB (TL5): The Starlight Long Range Communication Device is a heavy but portable military field radio designed for protected planet-to-starship communication in adverse conditions. The briefcase-sized radio is encased in a heavy-duty carrying unit (usually plasteel, mercurium or ceramsteel) and is powered by a standard, rechargeable fusion cell. Starlight LRCBs are expensive to manufacture, and are licensed exclusively by the Imperial Navy to various houses.

Using a starlight LRCB takes a full-round action.

The high cost of the LRCB reflects the fact that the technology is not only rare but amazingly useful. LRCBs send messages in a series of tachyon pulses, allowing for extremely short response times. Cost: 300 firebirds. Weight: 7 lbs.





Light

Fusion Torch (TL5): The standard light source for Second

Republic citizens; a fusion torch is available in all sizes.

Size	Duration*	Weight	Area Illuminated
Pen-light	24 hrs (tf)	—	10 ft. forward
Flashlight	24 hrs (sf)	1 lb.	50 ft. forward in a cone
Lantern	48 hrs (mf)	2 lbs.	100-ft. radius

* Continuous use.

TL = Tiny fusion cell.

SF = Small fusion cell.

MF = Medium fusion cell.

Tools

Mech Tools: A standard kit of wrenches, screwdrivers, hammer, and other tools necessary for handling most minor mechanical tasks. Without these tools, some jobs may be impossible (you cannot turn a Phillips-head screw with your fingers). They are used to perform Craft (Mech) checks. Cost: 5 firebirds. Weight: 5 lbs.

Volt Tools: A standard kit with a soldering iron and solder, volt meter, wire cutters, wire, tape and other tools to aid in electrical repair work. Without these tools, fixing faulty wiring may be impossible (although a little spit and gum may hold those wires together long enough to make it through the iumogate). They are used to perform Craft (Volt) checks. Cost: 7 firebirds. Weight: 3 lbs.

Hi-Tech Tools: There is no standard kit for working with high-tech devices; each device has its own arcane requirements. Characters who want to repair tech will want to collect tools as they find them; some examples are given below. Such tools may include a fusion siphon for preventing explosions when working with fusion cells or blasters, a field emitter and meter for calibrating energy weapons, spectrum goggles for seeing energy leaks, or just about any other tool imaginable. These items usually cost anywhere from 5 to 10 firebirds apiece. They are used to perform Craft (High Tech) checks.

Energy Kit: Tools useful for repairing energy weapons or energy shields. Also includes all the volt tools listed above. Cost: 70 firebirds. Weight: 3 lbs.

Hovercar Kit: Tools useful for repairing hovercraft, like skimmers or hoverbikes. Cost: 30 firebirds. Weight: 6 lbs.

Stardrive Kit: All the basic tool necessary to temporarily fix and repair starship engines. More permanent repair may require tools available only at starnorts or spacedocks. Cost: 100 firebirds. Weight: 10 lbs.

Security Systems

Gen-Lock (TL6): Gen-Locks are the very finest security locks available. Created during the Second Republic, the locks are specifically designed to scan the genetic code of anyone requesting entry into a building. The entire person is examined on a molecular level by a scanning laser. If one of its preprogrammed genetic code files is not met, the entrance remains barred. If anyone attempts forced entry, the Gen-Lock immediately sends out a piercing alarm.

Baffling a Gen-Lock requires a custom-made think machine program (designed to match one of the lock's preprogrammed

genetic codes) and a scrambler pad. With these in hand, an Open Locks skill check may be made against DC 20. A sample of the proper genetic code must be available when programming the think machine software.

Gen-Locks have been around since the height of the Second Republic. Very few people can afford to have these extremely expensive locks throughout an entire household. Most are simply placed in certain key locations and are used to guard valuables. Cost: 1000+ firebirds.

Magna-Lock (TL5): Magna-Locks are heavy, durable locks that, when activated, are capable of resisting almost any force. These ceramsteel devices come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and all require a power source. Magna-Locks were first used during the Diaspora Era. These locks are strong enough to resist 2,000 pounds of pressure, and are still used on most spacecrafts. They cannot be picked with physical picks, but require a Scrambler Pad or similar device. Cost: 150+ firebirds.

Scrambler Pad (TL6): Scrambler pads are small boxes with a number of attachments for fitting into powered locks. These devices are designed specifically for forcing entry into high-security buildings. The Scravers are responsible for the first scrambler pads, but their popularity has led to several models being designed and sold by various manufacturers.

Scrambler pads allow Open Lock checks against electronic locks. Cost: 100 firebirds. Weight: 3 lbs.

Wellesley Lock (TL4): A bulky, metal lock with protection against prying. Small spring-loaded steel plates make it difficult for a thief to break into these locks with his picks. The Wellesley steel used in manufacturing these locks makes them tough enough to discourage most efforts with anything short of a welding torch. Wellesley Forges is best known these days for the metals its smiths forge and sell, from weapons manufacture to starship repairs, but the firm got its start making fine locks for valuables. Most locks encountered in the Known Worlds are of this make. What most people don't know is that the Scravers secretly design these locks and know all the tricks to disable them.

Open Lock DC 25. Scravers get a +4 competence bonus to open Wellesley Locks. Cost: 80 firebirds.

Restraints

Muster Chains (TL6): These handcuffs are the finest personal restraints in the Known Worlds. They are lightweight, remarkably durable, and come complete with a pain-inducing shocker. The shocker is activated with a remote control device (which also controls the locks) and causes no real damage, but will drop almost anyone unfortunate enough to be wearing the chains to the ground, writhing in pain (they are considered dazed). Since the cuffs are made of a ceramsteel alloy, nothing found to date can break Muster Chains without also damaging the wearer. The locks are incredibly sophisticated and can only be opened with the proper code sent by a companion remote control unit (only a cuff's particular unit can open the cuffs — although a scrambler pad allows characters to make Open Locks checks against a DC 40). Any non-Muster guildmember caught possessing these chains is likely to end up on the auction block. Muster Chains are usually not sold, but a few have found their way to the black market. Cost: 300 firebirds. Weight: 5 lbs.



Wet Jackets (TL7): When activated, these silvery sheets of hard metal expand to cover an opponent and then contract to bind him. These nanotech devices are no longer manufactured, but are still fairly common (many were made during the Second Republic and they are almost indestructible). Each jacket is attuned to a specific control device, which is small enough to fit into a pocket. Wet jackets were originally designed to peacefully restrain aliens resisting removal to reservations. Cost: 600 firebirds. Weight: 5 lbs.

Think Machines

Computers were once so commonplace even a child could use one. This is no longer the case. These high-technology machines are largely proscribed by the Church, although they are allowed in approved libraries and for necessary uses, such as plotting jump coordinates. Nowadays, those who use computers — called think machines by most people — must be ever-watchful for roving inquisitors.

Using a computer does not always require a skill check. Those with at least one skill rank in Use Think Machine can turn a think machine on and run simple programs with no problem, no check required. Doing anything more than reading existing documents, however, requires a Use Think Machine check. Creating new documents, saving them and even printing may require a single check.

Computers are extremely expensive, beginning at 500 firebirds for the clunkiest models. All starships have think machines as a necessity, and Drive (Starship) skill allows a pilot minimal use of the computer, but only for piloting tasks.

At low tech levels (4 or 5), computers are not much different from those used in the late 20th century, although they may be more or less advanced. At tech level 6, different substances can be used, such as the superior silicon-like substances found on Shaprut or other worlds. At tech level 7, truly advanced or wondrous materials can be introduced, such as pygmalium, necessary for artificial intelligence neural networks. In addition, as the tech level increases, different methods of information storage and retrieval may be used. Some advanced computers store their data through coherent light or sound rather than magnetic scribbles. These advanced methods require advanced understanding of their workings — one of the many reasons data from the Second Republic is so hard to retrieve. Once a light or sound think machine has broken down or been corrupted, many do not know how to retrieve the raw data that may still be stored within the machine or on disks.

Most think machines store removable data on laser disks (or crystals), which come in a variety of sizes and require a variety of media to read them. There are three main standards — or sizes — to most Diaspora and Second Republic-era disks: mini, standard and mega. The mini is a tiny disk meant to fit into wristwatch-style think machines; the standard is the most common size, a bit smaller than a late-20th-century compact disk but capable of holding more memory; and the mega is a large cassette which holds an immense amount of memory. There are other disk standards, but they tend to be unique to rarer think machine systems.

Some think machines can link up with other machines to share data or programs. Such networking is rare in modern times, but is known, especially among the Engineers or Reeves. Usually, models produced by the same guild will network with each other, but not

necessarily with the machines of a competing guild. Almost all Second Republic computers can network with other computers of the same era.

All think machines require a power source. Most built during or after the Second Republic use small- or medium-sized fusion cells. One cell will power a think machine for about one week's worth of continuous use. Certain high-tech cities on Byzantium Secundus, Leagueheim and Criticorum still maintain a fusion power grid into which a think machine can plug.

NOTE: The bonuses provided by certain think machine models listed below assume that the user has at least one skill rank in Use Think Machine. Those who have no such training do not get the bonus.

Accountant (TL4): Accountancy engines were once an integral part of Republic businesses, but the average modern merchant considers them to be far more useful as paperweights. Detailed programs integrate a host of factors, including depreciation of goods, loss of income from funds that could have been gathering interest in Republic banks, opportunity costs, and shortcuts in long-since defunct tax codes. Users that can silence these babbling subroutines, however, will be able to keep track of their business with double-entry bookkeeping and a basic adding machine. The Reeves have the current patent on this type of machine, although their reprogrammed versions are very difficult to use. Only desktop models are known, which store data on internal drives or standard discs.

Users gain a +2 bonus to any math-based or mercantile skill checks. Most programs run on Constantinople or Suprema. Cost: 600.

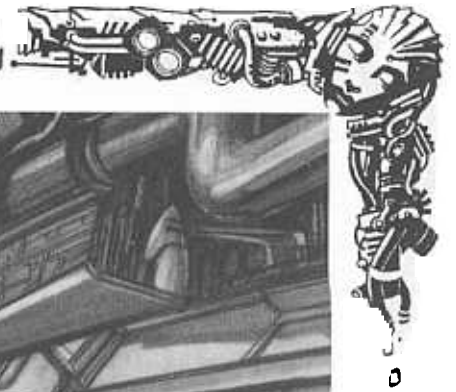
Mapper (TL5): Learning the proper use of this laptop machine takes a little bit of work, but the rewards are worth it. Travelers venturing over long distances, either on foot or by vehicle, can input details they encounter along the way into a personalized mapper think machine. The result is a slowly growing map of the planet the travelers are exploring. Some machines require the user to take snapshots of the stars to help figure their position; others contain preprogrammed disks (standard size) with maps of the more popular worlds. The most sophisticated come with a light pen that can be used to detail the streets and byways of urban areas.

This machine greatly magnifies an entourage's ability to learn the geography of a new planet or town (+2 to skill checks involving navigation, such as Intuit Direction or even Wilderness Lore). It can also provide a detailed database on particular locations mapped into its logs (+2 bonus to any Knowledge [Known Worlds] checks involving those places). However, the machine is not without its risks. A failed roll on a Use Think Machine check can result in a poorly constructed map or a woefully lost group of travelers.

Most mappers are programmed in either Turing or Suprema. Cost: 700.

Facial Scanner (TL5): This simple hand-held device makes social intercourse much easier. It can store the images of over a thousand human and alien faces, recording not only the identity of an individual, but also notations that the user wishes to remember. For instance, if a merchant runs into a noble and his entourage, the scanner can retrieve the noble's name, his proper title, notes on his proficiencies and weaknesses at fencing, records of his last three affairs, the identity of his bodyguard, and highlighted notes on which





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archbishop's name one should never repeat in his presence.

The device is stored in a small satchel that is worn over the shoulder. It is equipped with a discreet lens for observing, a microphone for recording, an earphone for advising, and a rechargeable solar battery pack. Noble families have also been known to hand them down from generation to generation. In game terms, this allows the gamemaster to feed a great deal of information to players who prefer intrigue-oriented plots. Cost: 700.

Tracker (TL5): This device was once common on many fringe worlds. Upon arrival, a bounty hunter or law-enforcement official could obtain a few data files on escaped criminals and wanted renegades. The tracker would retain information on fingerprints, footprints, height and weight, scent, and distinguishing characteristics. The tracker can also be programmed in the field (Turing or Suprema).

If the user can converse with an individual for at least two minutes, the machine will note and store all relevant details about that person. As a result, the user can later gain a +2 bonus on any checks to find that individual (Diplomacy checks against his friends. Gather Information checks around town, etc.). Cost: 700.

Journal (TL6): The wealthy were once able to indulge their egotism by extensively and tediously documenting all details of their lives. As a result, there are a variety of think machines that are constructed to chronicle all aspects of an expedition or all the minor details in the life of an adventurer. A journal is a multimedia think machine that records written text, visuals, sounds, scientific data, and other sensory data. The information is organized and retrievable in formats that can be edited either for academic purposes or

personal pleasure. The most expensive version of this device uses high-quality disks that are less prone to decay. The Academy Teratta is slowly building a library of journal entries to document their expeditions (or, more precisely, the expeditions that survive and return with their sanity intact). Most are programmed in Turing. Cost: 1000.

Hierarchy (TL7): A hierarchy wrist computer is intended to be the ultimate in personal data management. The user can recite any information that comes to mind and even store small segments of visual information. The trick is in retrieving the information later. If the user is curious about anything he has previously encountered, he can ask the hierarchy a few simple questions, and theoretically, the artificial intelligence within the device will organize it in a format accessible to the user. There's even a small video screen or magic lantern displays. The memory is seemingly limitless, but the tech is old enough and delicate enough to eventually lose information.

The user can make a Use Think Machine check in place of any Knowledge skill check for topics recorded in the Hierarchy's tabanks. A failure, however, may make it harder to retrieve any data at all for the next day (-2 to all subsequent checks using the Hierarchy for that day). Users can resort to the built-in help option, the annoying Rhetorical Hierarchy, a program responds to any question with another question that may help clarify the problem. Doing so allows a check without penalty, but it takes twice as long to retrieve information.

The usual programming language is Turing. Cost: 1500.



TABLE 5—4: HIGH-TECH SUBSTANCES

Substance	Hardness	Hit Points
Plastiglass	4	5/inch of thickness
Maxicrete	7	15/inch of thickness
Plasteel	9	20/inch of thickness
Terracite	10	20/inch of thickness
Hephaestium	14	30/inch of thickness
Mercurium	15	35/inch of thickness
Ceramsteel	20	40/inch of thickness

Walls

Wall Type	Thickness	Break			Climb DC
		DC	Hardness	Hit Points	
Plastiglass	3 in.	17	4	15	25
Maxicrete	1 ft.	35	7	180	15
Plasteel	6 ft.	30	9	120	25
Terracite	1 ft.	50	10	240	20
Hephaestium	3 in.	35	14	90	25
Mercurium	3 in.	40	15	105	25
Ceramsteel	3 in.	60	20	120	25
Bulkhead*	1 ft.	60	20	480	25

* Starship bulkheads and outer hulls are most often ceramsteel, while inner walls are usually plasteel or steel (use iron stats).

Doors

Door Type	Thickness	Hardness	Hit Points	Break DC	
				Stuck	Locked
Plasteel	2 in.	9	40	25	30
Airlock (plasteel)	1 ft.	9	240	25/30*	40
Airlock (ceramsteel)	1 ft.	20	480	25/30*	70

The first number is for a sliding door, the second is an iris valve.

Library (TL7): In a world where scientific knowledge is rare, this is one of the most valuable of think machines. Library devices are designed to interface and download with practically any repository of data (they can read most programming languages). Much of the tech relies on translators to incorporate the data into the proper format, artificial intelligence circuits to organize it, search engines to retrieve it, protocol circuits to negotiate access, and antiviral programs to stave off contamination. If everything works properly, this personal solar-powered device, about the size of a paperback book, will retrieve the information verbally specified by the user. If something goes wrong, random files within the machine will be corrupted. Cost: 2000.

Advisor (TL8): This is a crude artificial intelligence that can offer advice on any number of subjects. It does far more than store and retrieve information. It interprets, extrapolates, compares and contrasts, and even offers personal opinion. It is, for all intents and purposes, a sentient think machine. This is balanced by its temperamental nature, the random short circuits in its pygmalium circuitry matrix, and its occasional psychological quirks. Each advisor develops its own personality, which can consist of anything from a fictional archetype to an officious mediator.

Unfortunately, a malfunctioning advisor can be a pain. It might say that it does not want to reveal an answer (for the user's own good, of course) or engage in frustrating demands for more information in exchange. ("Quid pro quo, citizen. Quid pro quo!") Like a wide variety of surviving TL8 devices, it is despised by its owners almost as much as the Inquisition. This has reduced its price considerably. With the pragmatism of the modern age, many devotees of tech state that they would rather follow their own advice.

Using an Advisor normally requires a Use Think Machine check, but Diplomacy or even Bluff checks may be required for recalitrant models. Cost: 3000.

High-Tech Substances

There are a number of substances created through high-tech processes that are unknown to low-tech or medieval cultures. Rules for these substances are provided in Table 5—4: High-Tech Substances.

Ceramsteel (TL8): The strongest known substance, made from a high-tech blend of special alloys and ceramics. It is used to make starship hulls.

Hephaestium (TL6): A high-tech metal alloy tougher than steel.

Maxicrete (TL5): Synthetic concrete that is lightweight, easy to shape and resistant to the elements.

Mercurium (TL7): A lightweight, high-tech metal alloy tougher than steel.

Plastiglass (TL5): A lightweight plastic stronger and sturdier than most normal plastics. It can be made transparent, translucent or opaque.

Plasteel (TL6): A lightweight yet sturdy plastic. It can be made transparent, translucent or opaque.

Terracite (TL7): Lighter, stronger and more durable than maxicrete. It is also rarer and more expensive.

Vehicles

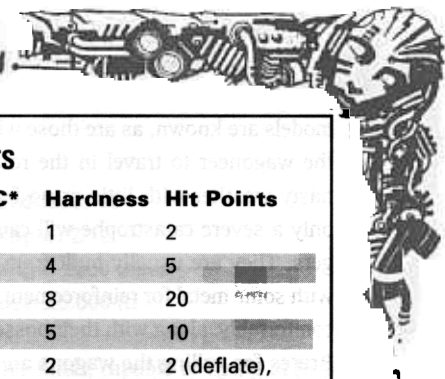
It is not uncommon for the serf taking his goods to market in a beast-drawn cart to look up and see his lord flying overhead in a skimmer. The serf knows that there is no way she will ever be able to afford anything better and accepts that as the way things are. Characters, on the other hand, almost never accept such discrepancies, and the following section covers many of the vehicles they may find themselves in — or under.

Driving

Drivers with the appropriate Drive skill do not need to make checks to handle normal driving conditions. Gamemasters should force checks only when they try to do something special (jump over a herd of brutes) or something unexpected happens to them (someone has cut the air brakes on their flitter). Failed Drive checks can mean anything from losing a race to going off the road to running into a mountain. See the Drive skill for suggested modifiers.

Driving is a move-equivalent action unless a Drive check is called for, in which case it is a full-round action.





Attacking Vehicles

When attacking a vehicle, characters have the option of aiming for a vehicle part or the occupants. Occupants gain the vehicle's cover and a +1 armor class bonus for every extra 10 mph of speed they are traveling relative to the attacker. If the attacker's vehicle is going 50 mph and the target vehicle is going 60 mph, that's a difference of 10 mph; those in the target vehicle gain a +1 AC bonus.

Misses have no effect on the occupant or the vehicle, except to break out a window if the gamemaster likes. Attacks that hit within the vehicle's cover range are applied to its hardness; any damage points that exceed the hardness are inflicted on the character targeted.

You can also target specific parts of a vehicle to attack. The most commonly targeted vehicle parts are the tires on a ground craft or repulsor pads on a skimmer. See Table 5—5: Vehicle Parts for the statistics for certain parts, and then the descriptions of those parts for any effects gained by damaging them.

Window: A darkened or coated window prevents anyone outside from targeting anyone inside. Targeting such a window may break it, but it will not damage passengers within. Once a window is broken, passengers can be seen (unless they are ducking or hiding), and can then be targeted (they still gain their vehicle's cover protection).

Wheels/tires: If penetrated, the tire deflates or, if enough damage was done, blows up. The driver has to make an immediate Drive check to stay in control, and this and all future rolls are at -2. Each extra tire that is taken out levies an additional -2 penalty (a car that has lost two tires suffers a total Drive skill penalty of -4). A ground craft can continue driving with all its tires blown out, but it will be at -8 to any Drive checks and will suffer permanent damage. Its top speed will be 10% of what it normally is.

Axle: Axles are used only on wheeled vehicles. Damaging an axle causes a -2 penalty on all Drive checks until it is repaired (this is stackable with penalties for driving without damaged tires). A ruined axle causes all the tires to fall off — the vehicle comes to a wrenching halt and will not move anymore.

Repulsor pad: Used to lift skimmers and hoverbikes. If a repulsor pad is damaged, the vehicle begins to wobble, levying the same penalties for the driver as deflated or lost tires. A ruined repulsor pad cuts down the vehicle's top speed: A vehicle with four pads will lose a quarter of its speed, while a vehicle with six will only lose one-sixth. Each additional ruined pad reduces speed by the same amount, until the vehicle has no speed left, at which point it falls from the sky.

Steering vane: Used on certain flitter and hopper models (TL6 and below). If a steering vane is destroyed, the flying vehicle can no longer be steered, but its altitude can still be controlled.

Gas tank: Internal gas tanks can't be targeted for attacks. External gas tanks (rare, but some utility vehicles, like the Scrapper open-back scrounger, below, have them) will explode if they suffer more than half their hit points in damage from a single hit. Anyone in the vehicle takes 4d6 fire damage, plus 1d6 fire damage each turn thereafter as the wreck burns (they are not on fire

TABLE 5—5: VEHICLE PARTS

Part	Break DC	AC*	Hardness	Hit Points
Window, glass	7	10	1	2
Window, plastiglass	12	10	4	5
Window, plasteel	25	10	8	20
Wagon wheel	10	11	5	10
Rubber tire	20	11	2	2 (deflate), 6 (ruin)
Large rubber tire	25	10	4	4 (deflate), 8 (ruin)
Axle (wood)	15	21**	5	20
Axle (metal)	30	21**	10	60
Repulsor pad	25	12	8	40
Steering vane	25	12	10	50
Gas tank, external	30	11	10	***

* Add +1 per 10 mph speed faster than the attacker.
 ** Axles are in the undercarriage and are considered to have nine-tenths cover against any attacks not delivered from directly below. If attacked from below, the AC is only 11.
 *** 10 hp: leak — lose 1/10 fuel per round; 20 hp: rupture — lose half fuel instantly; 30 hp: ruin —no fuel.

and can escape the damage by exiting the car). Anyone within 10 ft. of the exploding vehicle takes 2d6 fire damage. Needless to say, the vehicle is probably totaled.

Vehicle Traits

Fading Suns rates vehicles for a number of different factors. Speed rates the vehicle's top level (listed in mph, or miles per hour), followed by how fast it can go each round, accumulated each round until it reaches its top level (for instance, a hoverbike can go 240 ft. on the first round, 480 the next, and 720 the next — at which point, it really doesn't matter anymore for combat purposes; the bike has exited the scene). Hardness represents how tough the vehicle's chassis is; its rating is the amount of damage that must be exceeded before anyone inside is affected. Cover shows how much protection it provides its occupants. The People rating shows how many people are needed to drive the craft and how many can ride in it under normal conditions. Fuel lists what powers the craft, while Range refers to how far it can go on a full tank, fusion cell or before its team has to rest. The Cargo trait details just how heavy a load a vehicle can carry.

Beast Craft

The most common vehicles in the Known Worlds are powered by the muscles of beasts, slaves and serfs. These include brute carts, carriages, and Li Halan rickshaws. On poorer planets, even nobles use these vehicles more than any others.

The common form of transportation for most serfs is the wagon or cart — a four-wheeled wooden box drawn by an animal (usually a brute, but horses and oxen are also common). Most wagons are actually very well manufactured, but they are hardly works of art. On many planets, wagons function as roving homes. More durable



models are known, as are those with collapsible roofs, which allow the wagoneer to travel in the roughest terrains or through truly nasty weather with little or no fear. Most are designed such that only a severe catastrophe will capsize the wagon and its passengers. They are usually built from local resources, primarily wood with some metal for reinforcement. An average wagon can carry six comfortably, along with their possessions and ample food supplies. Brutes for pulling the wagons are sold separately, some assembly required.

Wagons have been a staple on many of the more remote worlds for a long time. Having learned from their ancestors' hubris, many cathedrals created local laws minimizing the use of mechanized flight and ground transportation — for serfs at least; most freemen suffer under no such law. Tech levels 1-4. Cost vary.

Brute Cart

TL1, huge wagon

Speed: 4 mph/120 ft.	Hardness: 5
Cover: One-quarter	People: 1/12
Fuel: Feed	Range: 32 miles
Cargo: 1 ton	Cost: 10 fb

This rugged cart appears anywhere brutes are found and is a preferred means for getting crops to market. Most serfs who own one built it themselves or inherited it from their parents. They yoke a team of two to eight brutes to the cart and away they go. The above traits are for an unloaded cart with a two-brute team. Extra brutes will not increase the cart's speed (brutes can only run so fast), but they will increase the amount of cargo they can pull.

Landcraft

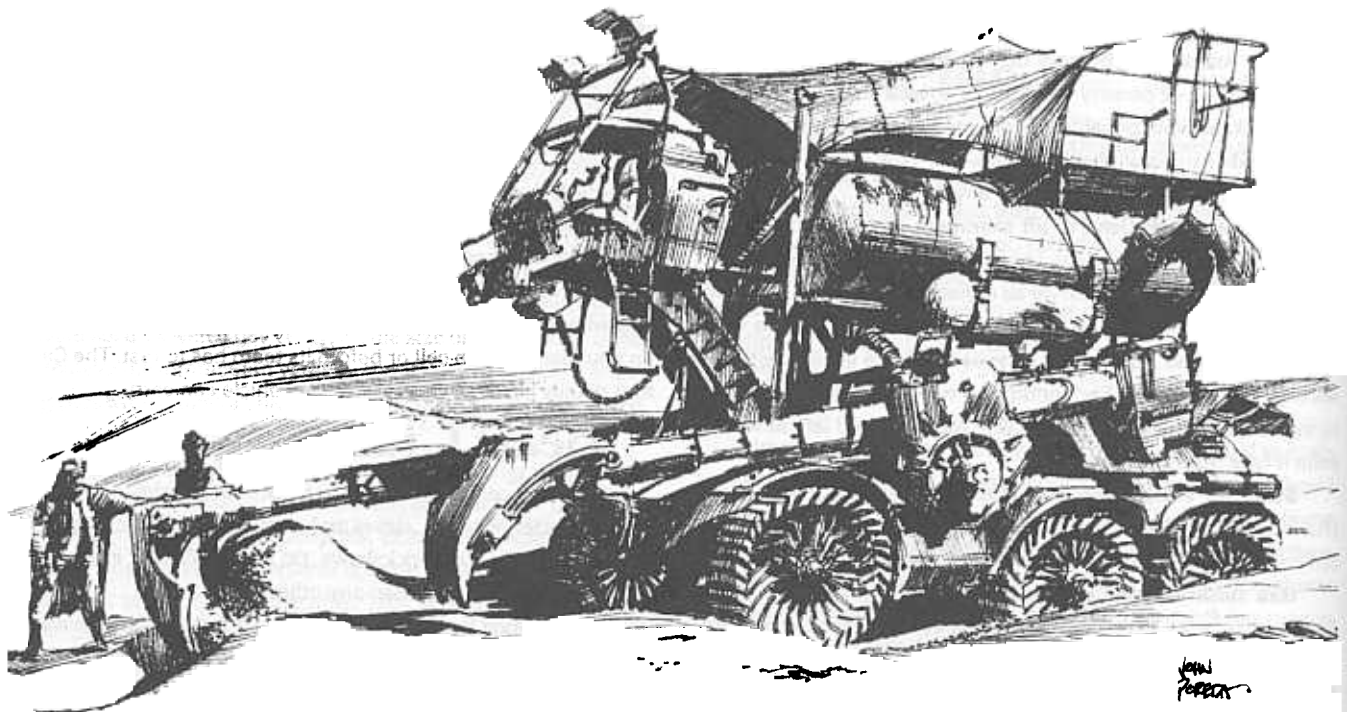
These vehicles appear most frequently on planets with good road systems — a distinct minority of the Known Worlds. They may be powered by the wind, steam, fossil fuels, electricity, fusion cells or solar power, and use either wheels, tracks or skis for movement. The guilds use more of these vehicles than does anyone else, relying on them to move goods and people from place to place. Nobles prefer skimmers, which cost more and carry less.

Scraver Open-Back Scrounger

TL4, huge four-wheeler

Speed: 60 mph/160 ft.	Hardness: 10
Cover: Nine-tenths	People: 1/9
Fuel: Gas	Range: 400 miles
Cargo: 1200 lbs.	Cost: 3000 fb

The Scravers developed this vehicle ostensibly for artifact hunting in areas where roads are bad, but have found it very useful in smuggling goods along back roads. It features a sturdy cab that can seat up to three people, an open cargo area in back, oversized tires for off-road driving and large, side-mounted gas tanks. These are the most dangerous parts of the vehicle, for they risk blowing up if punctured. Critics say this is actually a positive feature, for it gives Scravers an easy way to destroy the evidence.



Skimmers

Most popular among the nobility and rich League members, skimmers (hovercars) travel at heights of up to 600 feet and at speeds of several hundred miles per hour. While they zip over all kinds of terrain, drivers still need to be careful because sudden terrain changes can send a skimmer plummeting. For this reason pilots rarely fly them high over cities, for fear that the streets and buildings may act as canyons. Most people in skimmers prefer to follow roads, and only the cockiest will speed over unfamiliar terrain.

Hoverbike

TL5, large skimmer

Speed: 170 mph/240 ft.

Cover: —

Fuel: Large fusion cell

Cargo: 45 lbs.

Hardness: 8

People: 1/1

Range: 300 miles

Cost: 9000 fb

Young nobles are the biggest fans of hoverbikes, racing one another wherever they meet. Peasants are the biggest enemies of hoverbikes, as they are often run down by racing nobles. In any case, these small, fast craft are fairly rare, having been produced infrequently since the Second Republic. They provide very little armor, for their pilots sit on them, not in them. Most of their parts also have very little protection.

Hoverpack

TL6, small backpack

Speed: 80 mph/160 ft.

Cover: —

Fuel: Medium fusion cell

Cargo: —

Hardness: —

People: 1/0

Range: 50 miles

Cost: 7000 fb

These extremely rare devices have not been manufactured since the time of the Second Republic. They feature extremely small hover engines, marvels of miniaturization the likes of which have never been equaled, and a fuel cell protected by the engine. The hoverpack straps on to a user's back like a backpack, and she controls it via two levers. The one on the right controls up/down movement while the one on the left controls left/right movement. A button on the right determines acceleration while the one on the left handles braking.

Hoverpacks take a lot of getting used to and require their own special Drive skill: Drive (Hoverpack). Controlling one without any training can be next to impossible — but a lot of fun to watch.

Flitters

A custom flitter is the surest sign that a noble has made it. These expensive flying machines make jaunts around a planet take no time at all, and these are the machines peasants think of when they hear about nobles traveling around their fiefs. While this category includes everything from propeller-driven biplanes to custom antigrav yachts, most people think of the grand noble air yacht when they think of these vehicles.

Air Yacht

TL6, gigantic flitter

Speed: 500 mph/240 ft.

Cover: Total*

Fuel: Huge fusion cell

Cargo: 2 tons

Hardness: 10

People: 2/12

Range: 2000 miles

Cost: 25,000 fb

* Nine-tenths cover for the pilots and anyone standing by a window.

The air yacht is a true luxury flitter, capable of flying at high speeds or hovering imperiously off the ground. Its crew consists of a pilot and copilot, both of whom need the Drive (Aircraft) skill. While one person can pilot it in a crisis, two are always recommended. It can seat 12 passengers in extreme comfort, and more if needed. Of course, an air yacht's traits hardly reflect its true value. Its primary purpose is to impress other nobles, and to this end its owner will customize it in a dozen different ways — reentry ability, gold trim, retractable roof, arboretum, in-air torture chamber, etc.

Hoppers

The guilds' answer to the flitters, hoppers are far more utilitarian than are flitters. Most consist of little more than engine, wings, fuel tanks and as much open cargo room as possible. They reach altitudes of almost 20 km, and pilots have been known to transfer cargo from space landers to hoppers high above the prying eyes of customs officials. Very few nobles would agree to ride in one of these dirty, oil-streaked monstrosities, but members of the League swear by them — maybe because the nobles won't get in them.

Wagon of Paulus

TL5, gigantic flitter

Speed: 300 mph/200 ft.

Cover: Total

Fuel: Huge fusion cell

Cargo: 20 tons

Hardness: 10

People: 1/20

Range: 3500 miles

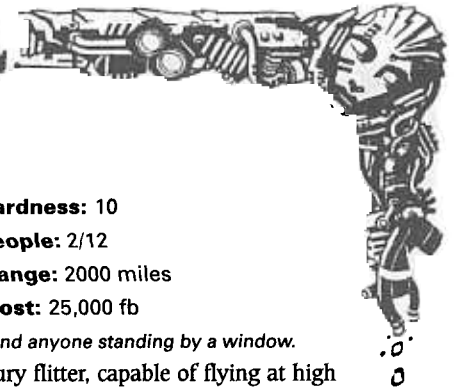
Cost: 15,000 fb

The price given above is for a used Wagon of Paulus, because new ones, while occasionally made, are rarely for sale. Most of the wagons date back to the Second Republic, when they were known by a variety of names. The guilds found it useful to rename the entire class after Paulus, the saint of travelers, and these hoppers have proven themselves almost miraculously reliable. While the Wagons of Paulus may have built up centuries of grime, they have continued to run no matter what. The most vulnerable machinery tends to be their life support, especially worrisome for merchants who use these to ferry goods down from orbit.

War Vehicles

The Emperor Wars saw all kinds of war vehicles come into use, ranging from steam-powered self-propelled guns to fusion-powered assault hovercraft. Armored battles became all the rage during the 4970s, but proved far too expensive. Instead, armored units served primarily as infantry support, though a few nobles (especially among the Hazat) preferred to lead their troops from a tank at the front of the battle.

These vehicles are far too difficult for most individuals to own or maintain. Some mercenary groups own their own, but most are the property of houses or guilds. Of course, the Church has its own collection of war vehicles, as does the Brother Battle order.



With the decline of transportation technology, many nobles have taken to sending their troops into battle on animalback. Horses have made an especially significant comeback, and nobles from all the royal houses claim to be the best mounted warriors in the Known Worlds. Other animals have also come into common use, with the Pheriza lizards being an example.

Pheriza ("Spitter")

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 4d8+12 (30 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)

Attacks: Bite +1 melee

Damage: 1d4+2

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Heat Resistance, Scent, Water Conservation

Special Attacks: Spit acid (non-domestic breeds)

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 13, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 5

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7

Feats: Endurance

Climate/Terrain: Hot desert

Organization: Semi-domesticated

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

Pherizas are native to Kish and serve as the preferred mounts and burden beasts for desert travel. These eight-foot long greenish-brown lizards possess suckerlike pods on their toes that allow them quick travel through sand or even along walls and ceilings (only the strongest can bear riders while walking slowly up walls). Their sturdy frames, legendary stamina, tolerance for heat and infrequent need for water enable them to survive for weeks at a time in the deep desert. They have been domesticated by the Li Halan and are now bred for both stamina and speed. Some of these have found their way to other desert environments, such as Pyre, where they thrive even near the famous Burning Desert.

Pherizas live to be about 40, breeding between the ages of 10 and 30, when they lay two to six eggs each year. Those that have been domesticated have the caustic sacs removed, which must also be done to newborns sometime after their first year of life. The main danger unaltered pherizas pose is to those unfamiliar with them. The lizards are notoriously cranky, spitting at anyone who disturbs them when they are resting or feeding or doing nothing at all, but just feeling out of sorts. It is not unheard of for some altered pherizas to grow back their caustic sacs and those who deal with the creatures on a daily basis walk slowly and talk softly around them... just in case.

COMBAT

Heat Resistance: Pherizas can withstand more heat than most creatures. They need make a Fortitude save only once per day in very hot conditions, and only once per hour in extremely hot conditions. They also receive a +5 Fort save bonus against heat.

Water Conservation: Pherizas need less water than most non-desert-dwelling creatures. They can go without water for five days plus a number of hours equal to their Constitution score before needing to make Constitution checks.

Spit Acid (Ex): Called "Spitters," wild pherizas have sacs along their inner jawline containing a caustic acid, which they use to wound prey and to break down its tough hide to reach the meat inside. They can spit this liquid up to 30 feet (5 ft. high, 5 ft. wide) once every hour; damage 4d4, Reflex half DC 14.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a pheriza is up to 250 pounds; a medium load, 251-500 pounds; a heavy load, 501-700 pounds. A pheriza can drag 4,000 pounds.

Cost: 3,000 firebirds (for a trained war-pheriza)

Cybernetics

Cybernetics in *Fading Suns: d20* is the science of installing tech inside the human body. This can be desirable for any number of reasons, ranging from altruistic motives for enhancing the human body to deviant urges of cyberfetishism and criminal tendencies. The simplest cybertech might be little more than a plastic device grafted onto human flesh or a small smuggling compartment hidden inside a human body. The most elaborate coordinate a number of high-tech devices and may involve the installation of a valuable think machine.

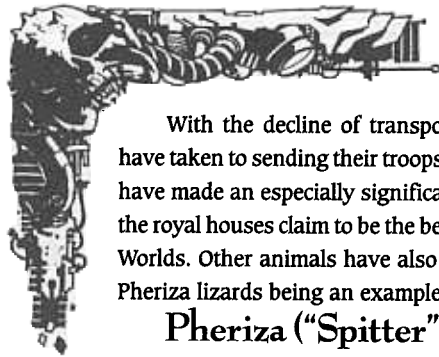
Cybernetic devices are often surgically attached to a character and do not usually come off without further surgery (see the *Physick* feat description, in the *FEATS* chapter). They can include a whole gamut of technological sophistication, from a clunky and obvious vision enhancement lens attached to a character's eyesocket to sleek synthetic eyes that can pass for organic ones, or from noisy and bulky mechanical limbs to cyberlimbs sheathed in synthflesh or actual flesh and blood. Second Republic-era cybernetics can still be found and are by far the most advanced and expensive. Later cybertech is somewhat clunky but usually reliable.

A character who possesses cybernetic implants has a stigma attached to him and may even be killed on sight in some places. It is best to hide these devices from others.

Incompatibility and Cyber-Sin

Cybernetics, needlessly to say, are not natural. Not everyone adjusts well to having a machine in his body. Sometimes, the implantee's mind and body are simply unable to integrate the excess foreign elements and will physically and psychologically reject them. Some people even develop psychoses. You can only possess so many cybernetic devices before your mind or body rejects them. The higher your Constitution, the higher the rejection threshold.

Each feature in a cybernetic device is rated for its Incompatibility. Add the Incompatibility ratings from all your devices; the total you can safely handle depends on your Constitution, as listed in the chart below. Johanna the Scraver, with a Constitution of 13, can possess up to 23 Incompatibility modifiers (in any combination of devices) without suffering any ill effects.



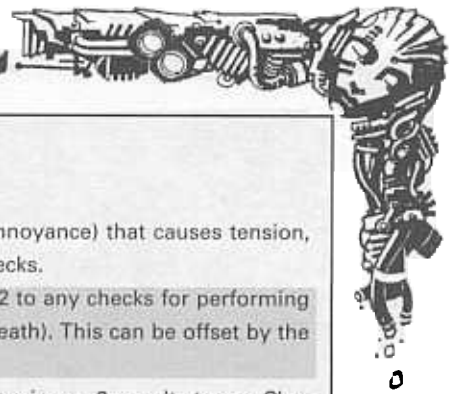


Table 5—6: Cyber-Sin

Level	Sin
1	Distractions: A glitch in the device causes an ultrasonic or subsonic whine (or other annoyance) that causes tension, ringing in the ears, headaches, lack of sleep or grinding teeth. -2 to all Concentration checks.
2	Fatigue: Your sleep suffers as your body's natural biorhythms are thrown off balance. -2 to any checks for performing physical actions that extend over a period of time (running, swimming, holding your breath). This can be offset by the Endurance feat (which then provides only a +2 bonus).
3	Annoyance: The distracting whine is loud enough that it affects others subconsciously, levying a -2 penalty to any Charisma-based checks.
4	Disfigurement: The cybernetics have decayed to a point where they are leaking fluids or shorting out. Blemishes, bruises or other minor physical effects appear. These don't necessarily lead others to notice incognito or hidden devices; they may just think you're diseased.
5	Impairment: The problems have become severe enough to cause a physical impairment, such as a limp (-10 ft. base movement), arthritically gnarled hands or shaking palsies (-2 to any checks involving fine manipulation), etc.
6	Delirium: The body's immune system attempts to reject the implant, producing delirium. You may suffer temporary hallucinations or vertigo, seeing and hearing things that aren't there or radically misunderstanding what others say.
7	Anima Mort: Soul Death. Beneficial theurgic rites do not work on you. The theurgic rite Unveil shows a "wrongness" in you, as does the psychic Sixth Sense power Second Sight.
8	Cyber Psychosis: You cannot mentally adjust to your implant(s) and therefore suffer a permanent neurosis or psychosis. Whenever confronted with the object of your mental disease, you cannot act, and must either flee or freeze in terror.
9	Body Rot: The body completely rejects the cybernetic part. The flesh around the device begins to rot, fester and stink. You lose 1d3 points of Constitution until this Cyber-Sin rating is redeemed.

Redeeming Cyber-Sin

You can learn to psychologically adjust yourself to the invasive implant(s). Losing Cyber-Sin ratings requires a quest or great deed of some sort. Once completed, you may make a Will save. If you succeed, you lose one Cyber-Sin rating.

Deed	DC
Exposure to Soul Shard or Philosopher's Stone	10
Remove cyberdevice*	10
Session of cybertherapy (usually conducted by guild specialists)	15
Checkup at a high-tech repair clinic	20
Forsaking cybernetics**	20
Merchant League or Church special dispensation	25
Discovering lost tech (restores your faith in technology)	25

* If removing the device lowers your Incompatibility to acceptable levels, you lose two Cyber-Sin ratings instead of one.

** Do not use any cyberdevice for three game sessions.

Incompatibility	Constitution
1-5	1-2
6-8	3-4
9-11	5-6
12-14	7-8
15-17	9-10
18-20	11-12
21*-23	13-14
24-26	15-16
27-29	17-18
30-32	19-20

* Cyborgs with more than 20 Incompatibility modifiers (64% loss of original physical form) are considered "soul dead" by fanatical members of the Church

If you have a higher incompatibility than your Constitution allows, you must make a Will save every time you use any of your cybernetic devices. If you succeed or even fail, nothing unusual occurs. If your result is a natural 1, you gain a rating in Cyber-Sin.

Also colloquially known as "soul rot," this is the nickname given by the Church for the natural decay of cybernetics. It is the mark of the inevitable breakdown of mechanical devices and a reflection of how far the New Dark Age has fallen from Second Republic wonders.

Unlike psychic Urge, Cyber-Sin errors are persistent — they are always active until ratings are lost through redemptive deeds (see below). Once gained, they do not automatically go away even if you lower your incompatibility by removing cyberdevices (although you no longer need to make a save to avoid gaining Cyber-Sin if your incompatibility is in safe limits). See Table 5—6: Cyber-Sin.

Cybernetic Devices

Following is a list of cybernetic devices players can purchase and install in their bodies. Costs include surgery expenses.





Aqua-Lung

TL5 **Incompatibility:** 2 **Cost:** 1420 fb

Artificial gills that can extract oxygen from water. More advanced versions are known that hide the gills (Search DC 25, +1 Incompatibility, TL6, +200 firebirds).

Arm Harpoon

TL5 **Incompatibility:** 3 **Cost:** 725 fb

The arm harpoon is similar to the centurion (see below), but it is used as a missile weapon. A groove in the forearm is concealed (Search DC 20) by a layer of fake skin (TL6 versions have synthflesh, Search DC 25), and five specially modified steel bolts can be loaded into the device at a time. Upon activation (a standard action), the internal mechanism launches a bolt (treat as a hand crossbow) through the palm of the hand.

Centurion Knife

TL5 **Incompatibility:** 2 **Cost:** 365 fb

Centurions and vipers (see below) are the best examples of simple holdout cybernetic weapons. The centurion stores a dagger-sized blade in a concealed (Search DC 20) flesh cavity in the forearm along the ulna. Upon activation (a free action), the blade springs up through the palm, where it can be grasped by a simple hilt. The blade is not actually attached to you: it is simply stored in the cavity.

Engineer's Eye

TL6 **Incompatibility:** 6 **Cost:** 2590 fb

These devices are popular with many guild Engineers, who are often seen scrutinizing people through the large lens. They look like monocles studded with wires and small lights attached over the left (or right) eyesocket. At higher tech levels, the artificial nature of the eye becomes less obvious (at TL7, it looks like a normal eye).

It provides a magnifier/telescope (10x: +2 to Appraise checks or +20 to weapon range increments; it is a standard action to switch modes), a +4 Spot modifier, and darkvision.

Ether Ear

TL6 **Incompatibility:** 4 **Cost:** 1515 fb

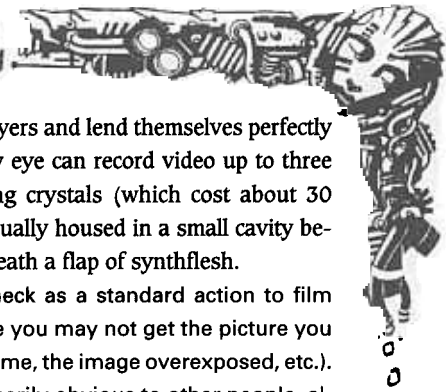
A radio concealed (Search DC 30) in the character's inner ear. It is the equivalent of a squawker. You must make a Listen check as a standard action to tune in on a desired frequency or to receive transmissions, or else you may not get the band or frequency you want (you get the Charioteer muzak meant for the local market instead of the Charioteer pilot chatter). Use of the radio is not necessarily obvious to other people, although the Ether Ear skill can help in concealing any of the radio listener's telling behavior when tuning into transmissions.

Goliath Skin

TL5 **Incompatibility:** 3 **Cost:** 4840 fb

This device is a sheath of synthetic muscles surgically implanted into the owner, replacing many of his natural muscles. The model detailed above replaces only muscles involved in lifting (biceps, triceps, deltoids, hamstrings and quads, etc.). Other models replace all surface muscles (TL6 or higher) or are strong enough to protect the owner from damage or pain (armor). The above model does not conceal the muscles; they are bulkier than natural muscles and have a metallic sheen and ribbing, instantly recognizable as cybernetic.





It provides a +4 Strength bonus.

Jonah

TL5 **Incompatibility:** 4 **Cost:** 750 fb

A slightly more expensive version of the arm harpoon (see above) involves a cable attachment and an internal retrieval mechanism. Citizens on water-worlds refer to these as "jonahs," since they're popular among fishermen. The internal winch is capable of pulling up to 200 pounds. To capture a person with the jonaah, you must first hit a target (treat bolts as a hand crossbow) and then win an opposed Strength check.

Lithe Wire

TL6 **Incompatibility:** 3 **Cost:** 4840 fb

This device is a network of synthetic nerves crawling over and inside the owner's body, connected to hubs up and down the spine and augmenting the nervous system. It allows for superb motor control, including manual and fine dexterity. These cables are not concealed, although they are durable enough (encased in flexible metal sheaths) not to break when hit.

It provides a +4 Dexterity bonus.

Oxy-Lung

TL7 **Incompatibility:** 7 **Cost:** 5540 fb

The Oxy-Lung is a device that allows humans to survive for long periods without an outside oxygen source, such as in deep space. One lung is replaced with an efficient recycling system that allows the body to convert carbon dioxide back into oxygen for one hour per Constitution rating you have. However, you must still have a spacesuit to protect your body from a vacuum.

Second Brain

TL6 **Incompatibility:** 9 **Cost:** 5315 fb (+1200 fb for standard program kit)

A computer surgically hidden in the skull allows you to access its skill programs as a full-round action as if they were your own trained skills. Only mental skills can be used this way; it requires both a second brain and a lithe wire (see below) to use physical skill programs.

It can be accessed for maintenance by removing a flap of synthflesh and bone at the base of the skull. Programs can be loaded by slipping chips into a socket usually placed behind the left ear (again, hidden beneath synthflesh). It uses the Suprema programming language and requires the Use Think Machine skill for even basic uses (the standard program kit includes that skill). It is powered by a tiny, self-charging fusion core that never needs to be replaced.

It provides a +4 bonus to any Intelligence-based check (but not the ability itself).

Standard program kit: Knowledge (choose a subject) 4, Knowledge (choose a second subject) 4, Use Think Machine 4

Spy Eye

TL6 **Incompatibility:** 5 **Cost:** 2925 fb

A video camera hidden in a synthetic eye. The character's natural eye (right or left) has been removed and replaced with this device, which resembles his original eye. The recording medium is a tiny crystal requiring a special player to view the images, although they can be transferred from the player to larger media. These crystals were developed in the Second Republic for wristwatch enter-

tainment cameras and music players and lend themselves perfectly for hidden surveillance. The spy eye can record video up to three hours in length before changing crystals (which cost about 30 firebirds each). The crystal is usually housed in a small cavity behind the left or right ear underneath a flap of synthflesh.

You must make a Spot check as a standard action to film images with the camera, or else you may not get the picture you want (the target will be out of frame, the image overexposed, etc.). Use of the camera is not necessarily obvious to other people, although the spy eye skill can help in concealing any of your telling behavior.

The lens also provides a magnifier/telescope, allowing you to zoom in or pull out on certain scenes (10x: +2 to Appraise checks or +20 to weapon range increments; it is a standard action to switch modes).

Viper Sword Arm

TL5 **Incompatibility:** 3 **Cost:** 740 fb

An extendible fencing sword (treat as a rapier) surgically attached inside the forearm along the ulna (hence, it cannot be disarmed and is concealed, Search DC 20). Once the telescopic blade is extended and locked in position (which takes one standard action), you have an elegant blade at your disposal. Installing the blade back into the compartment takes one standard action, although it is wise to clean it with alcohol first. Careless practitioners of this art will require daily maintenance to prevent disease and infection.

Starships

Starships are built to last, and many of the ships plying the jumpgates in Alexius's time were actually built during the Second Republic — or even during the Diaspora in some cases. It takes a core of dedicated technicians to keep them running, but since League trade, noble power and Church influence all rely on space travel, these techies are well-paid. If they were to slack off on their jobs, vital information might not make it to its destination in time or important shipments might arrive too late to be of use. Most important shipboard positions are taken by hired guildsmembers; free-men or serfs make up the bulk of the crew complement.

The technical details of most starships are unknown to most people; all Known Worlders usually know about ships is that they go up and out through a jumpgate and sometimes come back again. More advanced knowledge is usually confined to specialties: a ship pilot may know little about the engine or its needs, and a captain may not know how to fly the thing if the pilot has a seizure.

What is known by all is that these things can be broken fairly easily — a stray shot from a slug gun or blaster could foul up the life support system or blow a hole in a bulkhead. No matter how good the technician, it might take days to fix such problems, by which time all on board could be dead. Everyone is expected to be on their best behavior on a starship. Of course, this rule is rarely heeded by villains and player characters. See Table 5—7: Starship Damage for possible results.

Ship Classes

Starships are rated by their class, dependent on hull type. The smallest interstellar vessel is the explorer, designed to hold a small crew of merchants or adventurers. (Shuttles and fighters are smaller,

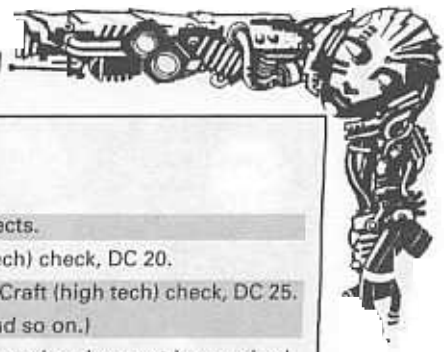


TABLE 5—7: STARSHIP DAMAGE

When fighting with firearms aboard a starship, missed shots hit walls or doors behind the target. First, determine what substance the wall is made from, using Table 5—4: High-Tech Substances. If any shot overcomes the hardness and inflicts damage, it has punctured the wall; see below for effects.

Area	Damage Effects
Bridge	Stray shots may hit delicate controls. Ignore hardness (in this section only). If any damaged is delivered in this section, roll 1d20:
1-3	Internal communications: No communication between this section and other decks and sections except by personals squawker until repaired with a Craft (high-tech) check, DC 15.
4-5	Damage degrades deck walls. Do not ignore hardness. If inner wall, roll again (below). If an outer hull wall takes hit point damage, it is breached — automatic systems will seal the room within one turn; anyone still in it after the doors close is exposed to vacuum, unless they are in working spacesuits.
1-5	No effect except to degrade wall hit points.
6-10	Short circuit or mishap: GM determines effect
11-14	Door jams until repaired with Craft (volt) check, DC 20.
15-16	Waste removal duct breached: Those within 10 ft. sprayed with waste.
17-19	Electrical fire: Those within 5 ft. suffer 1d6 electrical damage while it burns (1d4 rounds).
20	Bad electrical fire: Those within 10 ft. suffer 2d6 electrical damage while it burns. Automatic fire control systems shut off all power (including lights and life support) to the section within one turn; power is restored 1d4+4 rounds later.
6-9	Piloting controls: -4 penalty on all piloting checks until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 20.
10-11	Minor explosion in piloting: Those within 10 ft. suffer 2d4 fire damage. Ship cannot be controlled until repaired with a Craft (high-tech) check, DC 20.
12	Major explosion in piloting: Those within 10 ft. suffer 4d4 fire damage. Fire burns for 2d4 rounds, dealing 1d4 heat damage to anyone within 10 ft. Ship cannot be controlled until repaired with a Craft (high-tech) check, DC 30.
13-16	Sensors: Ship flies blind until repaired with a Craft (high-tech) check, DC20
17-18	Minor explosion in sensors: Those within 10 ft. suffer 2d4 fire damage. Ship is blind until repaired with a Craft (high-tech) check, DC 20.
19	Major explosion in sensors: Those within 10 ft. suffer 4d4 fire damage. Fire burns for 2d4 rounds, dealing 1d4 heat damage to anyone within 10 ft. Ship is blind until repaired with a Craft (high-tech) check, DC 30.
20	Life support systems: No more oxygen is pumped into the room until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 20.
Gun deck	
1-3	Internal communications. See description in Bridge (above).
4-8	Damage degrades deck walls. See description in Bridge (above) for possible effects.
9-12	Gun damaged: -4 penalty on all Gunnery checks with that gun until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 20.
13-15	Gun destroyed: That gun cannot be fired until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 25.
16-18	Gun explosion: Those within 10 ft. of that gun suffer 3d4 fire damage. Gun is destroyed and cannot be repaired.
19	Chain reaction explosion: A gun explodes (as above) and causes an adjacent gun to explode on the following round. Those within 10 ft. suffer 4d4 fire damage. Fire burns for 2d4 rounds, dealing 1d4 heat damage to anyone within 10 ft. Guns cannot be repaired.
20	Life support systems. See description in Bridge (above).
Engines	
1-3	Internal communications. See description in Bridge (above).
4-8	Damage degrades deck walls. See description in Bridge (above) for possible effects.
9-12	Engines damaged: Ship can only accelerate/decelerate at half its speed until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 25.
13-15	Engine explosion: Everyone in the engine room suffers 3d4 fire damage. Generator is damaged (as above). Ship cannot accelerate/decelerate until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 30.
16-19	Engine breach: Everyone in the engine room suffers 4d4 fire damage and 1d4 heat damage for every round thereafter. Automatic fire control systems signal that the room will be voided of air and pressure within one turn. Anyone still in the engine room after the doors close dies, unless they are in working spacesuits. Ship cannot accelerate/decelerate until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 50.
20	Life support systems. See description in Bridge (above).





Area	Damage Effects
Manuever	1-5 Internal communications. See description in Bridge (above).
	6-10 Damage degrades deck walls. See description in Bridge (above) for possible effects.
	11-14 Jet damaged: -4 penalty on all piloting checks until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 20.
	15-17 Jet destroyed: Ship can only rotate at one-quarter its speed until repaired with a Craft (high tech) check, DC 25. (Note: If two jet sections are destroyed, the ship can only rotate at half-speed, and so on.)
	18-19 Jet explosion: Those within 10 ft. of that jet suffer 3d4 fire damage. Jet is destroyed and cannot be repaired; ship can only rotate at one-quarter its speed. (Note: If two jet sections are destroyed, the ship can only rotate at half-speed, and so on.)
20 Life support systems. See description in Bridge (above).	
Cabins	1-5 Internal communications. See description in Bridge (above).
	6-19 Damage degrades deck walls. See description in Bridge (above) for possible effects.
	20 Life support systems. See description in Bridge (above).
Cargo	1-5 Internal communications. See description in Bridge (above).
	6-10 Damage degrades deck walls. See description in Bridge (above) for possible effects.
	11-19 Cargo damaged; use its hardness and hit points.
	20 Life support systems. See description in Bridge (above).

but they are at most involved only in interplanetary travel within the same solar system.) Next in size is the raider, a vessel designed specifically to target lone freighters or other likely prey for piracy ventures. For this reason, freighters are usually accompanied by escorts designed to defend against piracy.

Larger than an escort is the standard gunship, the frigate, a versatile vessel designed for limited engagements and boarding actions. Above the frigate is the galliot, a troopship specifically built to deliver a host of marines in a boarding action against a target vessel. Next are the destroyer, designed for all-out gun battles in space; and the assault lander, a troopship built to deliver a host of troops onto a planet.

Then there are the capital ships, the military behemoths of the space lanes. Cruisers and dreadnoughts are the bane of any invading fleet, with their massive arrays of guns and meson cannons.

Detailed rules for starships and starship combat will be provided in a future sourcebook.

Interstellar Travel: Jumpgates

Jumpgates are giant, hoop-shaped artifacts in space, most of them as large or larger than a moon. They are the devices that allow travel between the stars. A starship must have a jumpdrive to use them, and the workings of these complex engines are closely guarded by the guilds.

Each system in the Known Worlds has one working jumpgate through which all traffic must pass. A ship preparing to jump sends system coordinates to the gate, which opens a passage in space to that system. The ship then enters the hoop and exits from another jumpgate in the desired system. Making a jump requires a jumpkey, a small metal cylinder invented during the Second Republic that holds complex, preprogrammed coordinates. Each key usually holds coordinates for one destination, although keys with multiple jumproutes are known. Without the proper coordinates, a jumpgate will not open; anyone passing through its hoop will not leave the system.

The Known Worlds are formed by the Jumpweb — the known routes between jumpgates in systems. If one of these routes were lost or a system's gate sealed, that world would be cut off from the rest of spacefaring civilization. Most worlds host multiple jumproutes (Byzantium Secundus has nine from its jumpgate), but some have only one known route (Nowhere), making them vulnerable to imprudent loss.

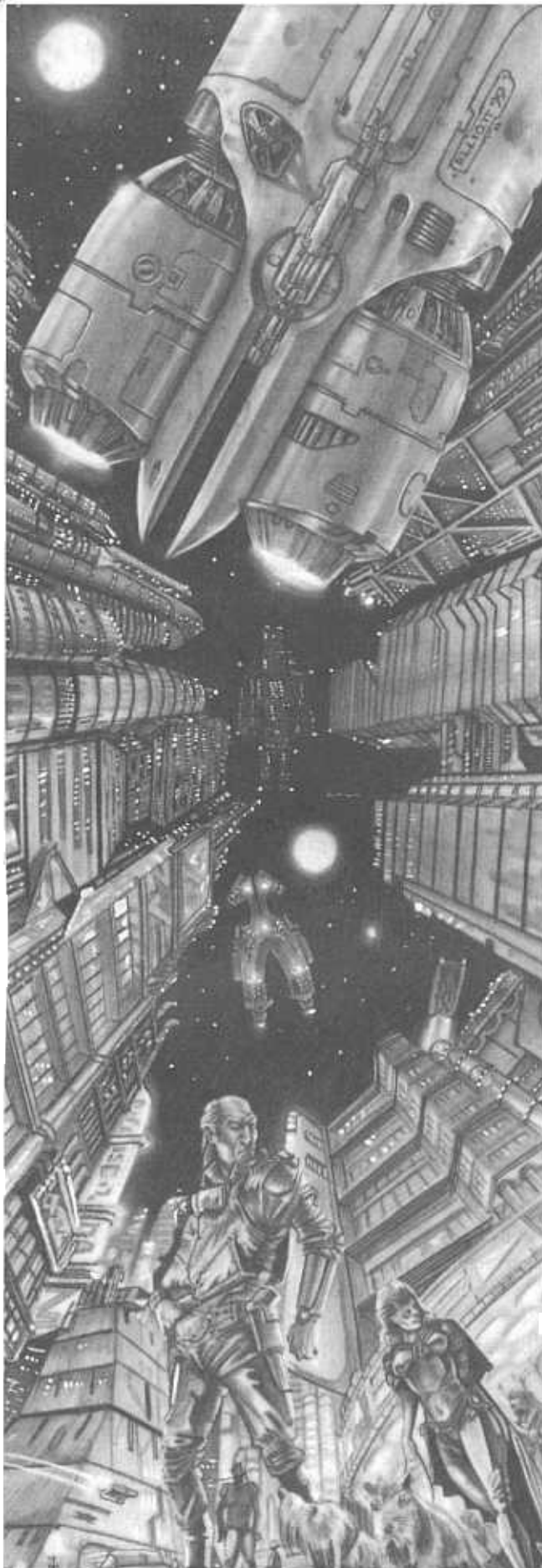
When a ship approaches a jumpgate, the jumpkey to the desired location is inserted into a computer panel, which relays the information to the jumpgate in a series of light transmissions. If the coordinates are correct, the gate opens. The singular nature of each jumpkey makes them valued commodities. The measure of a Charioteer is often the number of jumpkeys she carries. Jumpkeys are a favorite booty of pirates, who always seek new jumproads to plunder.

Only the Charioteers know how to make these keys, and they guard the tech fanatically. A "Chauki stride" into the vacuum of space (i.e., being thrown out of an airlock) is the usual fate of those who try to bootleg jumpkeys, and thereby threaten Charioteer hegemony over the jumproads.

The cost of a jumpkey varies radically, since they are not for sale. They are given to Charioteers who earn them by working their way up the ranks of the guild. Assume that a Charioteer character has one jumpkey for each rank he attains past the first (he gets his first jumpkey when he becomes a lieutenant). These keys hold one jump coordinate each (such as Byzantium Secundus to Pyre).

Nonetheless, the black market does support a trade in these goods, whether stolen or bootlegged. It would be a lucky day to find a common, single route key (Byzantium Secundus to Criticorum) for only 3000 firebirds. Jumpkey traders can smell a client's desperation from leagues away, and will jack their prices up accordingly. There is obviously no guarantee that a black-market key will work or even get the buyer to the promised destination.

Without a jumpkey, it might take days to program the proper jump coordinates into the ship's think machine (a programming task requiring Use Think Machine skill: DC 20; a total of 25 points is required; one check may be made per day of work). This as-



sumes the rough coordinates are known; most ships do not keep libraries of this data, as the Charioteers are highly protective of such lore. This guild is the exclusive manufacturers of new jumpkeys, and its members do not appreciate illegal keys or data files.

Jumpgate Reset

Using a jumpgate to leave a system is considered an active jump; arriving in another system is considered a passive jump. It takes a jumpgate a variable time to reset itself after an active jump. No active jumps can be made while the gate resets itself, although ships can exit from the jumpgate at any time (passive jumps). For this reason, fleets tend to jump together, all ships synchronized to go through the gate at once rather than spread out in a long line. Second Republic engineers solved the problem of gate resetting, but it requires a special key in addition to the destination jumpkey. These keys are especially rare and held only by a few. Certain Charioteers or Engineers travel from system to system selling the use of their reset keys, and most ships of the Imperial Fleet have them. Some Inquisitors also have them, to the dismay of those trying to escape their fury.

To figure out how long it will take for a gate to reset for another active jump, roll 1d20 and compare the results to the chart below:

Roll	Jumpgate Reset Time
1-5	1 minute
6-10	10 minutes
11-14	30 minutes
15-17	1 hour
18-19	1 day
20	1 week

Pursuit

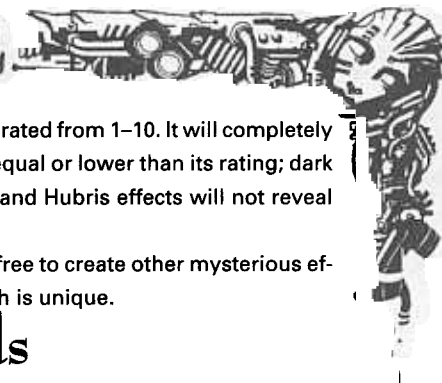
It is not easy to determine the location to which a previous ship might have jumped. This requires experience with jumpgates and their routes — a successful Knowledge (Known Worlds) check vs. DC 20. Obviously, if a jumpgate only provides one road out (as is the case with Nowhere, which leads only to Stigmata), it is easy to figure where a previous ship went.

Passage Costs

Characters who do not own or work on spacecraft one must pay for passage. Cost varies by type of ship, the accommodations accepted and the length of the journey. Most ships do not allow passengers to carry weapons on board; they will confiscate them at the beginning of a journey and keep them in a weapons locker until arrival.

Tramp freighter: The worst accommodations available — crammed into a cargo box with a bunch of other passengers. Most people stake out a corner or imaginary square; on long journeys, territorial squabbles and fights are not unknown. There is little or no privacy under these conditions (blankets hung from the rafters at best). Sometimes, passengers share the space with cargo and are considered responsible for any damage to that cargo. This can be especially uncomfortable if the cargo is live animals. Bare rations are provided. The cost for this type of travel is usually 20 firebirds per person per jump, more if a lot of personal effects come along.

Transport: Better than a tramp freighter, the transport option



is still not grand. While the passenger gets a room, he has to share it with nine other people. Most people get bunks, but at least three people get the floor (or hammocks). Unappetizing food staples are served in a common mess. The cost is usually 50 firebirds per person per jump.

Stateroom: A passenger shares a room with at least one other person. The room is not spacious, but it is far better than sharing the same room with eight other people. Good meals are served in a cabin with the ship's crew. The cost is usually 100 firebirds per person per jump.

Luxury Liner: The best kind of travel. A spacious, comfortable stateroom is shared with no one (except, of course, those the passenger invites). Meals are either shared with the ship's officers in their dining room, or are served in the room itself, freshly cooked (well, as fresh as space food can get). Minor entertainments are usually available, in the form of magic lantern shows or live plays. The cost is usually 300 firebirds per person per jump, but this can be much higher for higher-quality liners.

Alien Artifacts

The universe is full of the remains of earlier civilizations, both human and alien. Some of these are truly unique and even magical. Psychics swear that occult power seeps from certain structures found in ruins, while the Church whispers about demonic or angelic powers.

Gargoyles

These brutish beasts are found in ruins throughout the Known Worlds and beyond, and are always associated with the artifacts of the Anunnaki. They come in many forms, most notably statuary or bas-relief, but their images adorn many Ur ruins. They are known to be efficacious against evil occult effects, and are now often placed on buildings or on the prows of starships to defend against evil influence. Sensitive psychics and theurgists all aver to a Gargoyle's power. Indeed, no ship with a Gargoyle prow has yet encountered a Void Kraken.

They are rare but are still found occasionally, sparking a fight for ownership between emperor, nobles, priests and merchants. They can be sold for many firebirds to just about anybody, but those who don't get the Gargoyle will hold a grudge against the seller — a good way to make enemies.

Scholars disagree about the purpose of these Gargoyles. Some claim they are depictions of the Anunnaki themselves. Others say they are images from the Anunnaki's fancy. Some claim they are images of horrors which the Anunnaki fought, while others say they are guardians against even worse horrors.

Characters with some form of mystical vision (the Unveil theurgic rite or the Second Sight psychic power) can tell that Gargoyles are not merely stone or alloy; they exude a mysterious, unreadable aura. They also hamper the actions of Urge and Hubris, although to a varying degree: some Gargoyles are more efficacious than others. The most legendary Gargoyle, found in the wastes of Nowhere, is said to generate omens to certain individuals, and people come from all over on pilgrimages to it, despite the dangers of the nearby Stigmata system.

The power of a Gargoyle is rated from 1–10. It will completely lampen Urge or Hubris levels equal or lower than its rating; dark wins will be put back to sleep and Hubris effects will not reveal themselves.

Gamemasters should feel free to create other mysterious effects for certain Gargoyles; each is unique.

Soul Shards

These psychic crystal shards are powerful artifacts. They were studied extensively by Second Republic scientists of the Phavian Institute and were deemed to be not alien-made artifacts but elements. Arguments ensued over how such elements were created: are they naturally occurring, or do they require an alchemical process using Preadamite superscience? Evidence exists for both arguments, although the evidence for the former occurs only near Ur ruins.

These crystals are highly sought after by not only Psychics but also the Church, which seeks to hide them.

Soul Shards act as Wyrd batteries just like a Wyrd Tabernacle (see the Imbue Tabernacle feat in the FEATS chapter), although the limit to Wyrd storage depends on the size of the crystal: A hand-held shard can hold up to 20, while a menhir can hold over 100.

In addition, each shard acts as an already attuned fetish (see the Attune Fetish feat in the FEATS chapter) and will boost any use of powers. A hand-held shard will add +2 to psychic power checks, while a menhir may add +6.

Finally, Soul Shards are known to be helpful in healing psychological wounds or neuroses. They can aid in balancing an unbalanced personality, but such uses have no firm rules. The gamemaster should feel free to create rules for particular situations.

Philosophers Stones

The most powerful of all Preadamite artifacts is a Philosophers Stone. This is a catch-all term for a class of powerful items which come in many shapes and sizes but universally allow their wielders to break the laws of reality. Each stone is unique; all are greatly sought after. Gamemasters should use Philosophers Stones in whatever way they see fit, realizing that they are neither strictly technological nor purely occult but something transcending both paradigms.

Each stone should be allowed one power, but this can be an incredible one. As an example, the most sought-after stone yet was found by Emperor Vladimir. It allowed any ship it was placed on to jump between stars without the use of a jumpgate — a never-before-known phenomenon. The stone was instrumental in allowing Vladimir to create the office of the emperor. It was hidden by him before his coronation and has yet to be discovered again.

Philosopher's Stones are worth any price; rumors exist of crafty peasants lucky enough to uncover one in some forsaken alien ruin who have attained peerage (noble status) by gifting it to a lord with the power to grant such boons. But most people believe that anyone finding such a treasure would be killed as others rush to seize







Chapter Six: Occult Powers

With the fading of the stars, the denizens of the shadows have returned: aliens, monsters, beasts of all shapes and sizes — and magic. The superstitious and miraculous aspects of human consciousness have become real in the *Fading Suns* universe. Like the legends of old, humans can work magic and marshal amazing powers with thought alone, and make pacts with invisible entities best left to themselves.

Is magic just science from another perspective? Or is it something else entirely? Something antithetical to the rational repetitiveness of science. Is it a thing of chaos, untamed? Or is it part of the deep unconscious of humanity's mind, ready to be tamed only by those who are willing to abide by its rules?

Whatever it is, the supernatural is a reality in *Fading Suns*, although one whose main tenet is mystery: the unknown, the unobtainable, the ever-enticing carrot drawing one forward. The occult is not all light and crystals: it is more often dark and wild, sparking unforeseen reactions, often terrible to the initiator. This is especially so for Antinomism, which relies on pacts with entities of mysterious, non-local power. But psychic powers and theurgy can be just as retributive. The mind's powers often reveal that they are greater than the ego that rules them, with wants and desires often at odds with their ruler. Theurgy can cause the initiator to lose grip with his finiteness, his smallness before creation, causing "god complexes" and religious tyranny.

In the end, the measure of an occult power's good (or ill) effects is the person using them. However, unlike most tools, they are not neutral in their use. They enforce an ethical code, and can exact a moral price deeper and more obvious than a common tool. The user must be wary and on guard, lest his power control him.

Occultists

Occultists are those, such as Psychics and Theurgists, who wield strange powers. Psychics have awakened latent abilities of the mind, such as psychokinesis or telepathy. Theurgists perform rites to channel divine power. These classes are presented in the **CHARACTERS** chapter.

Other occultists lurk among the scattered worlds of the fading

suns: Antinomists, those who call upon dark powers, and pagan shamans, who perform rites to commune with nature spirits. For now, these are NPC classes, although more details may appear in future *Fading Suns* d20 system sourcebooks.

Stigma

Each occultist bears an occult stigma, a sign of his or her supernatural differences from common humanity. This stigma does not necessarily have to be connected to the use of her powers, although it is often a metaphor for those powers. For instance, a Psychic trained in Sixth Sense may have an odd and uncontrollable tic which makes him blink in one eye when using his powers, or a Psychic trained in Psyche powers may uncontrollably whisper when giving psychic commands to his targets, possibly revealing himself as the cause of the townsfolk's woes.

Psychic stigmas are somewhat like medieval folk superstitions: A man with hair between his eyebrows or an odd birthmark that happens to resemble a pentagram when looked at from the right angle is surely a werewolf, while a man with hair on his palms and a pale complexion is a vampire (and, of course, the most famous vampire was a noble lord—a revealing clue about peasant superstitions and their intended targets).

Theurgic stigmas, however, tend to be more religious in nature. Those bearing a theurgic stigma are often held in awe by peasants, although fear is also a common response (the Theurgist may be holy, but trouble tends to follow such chosen ones). Some examples are:

- Lash marks on the arms and back (sympathy with the Prophet's own beating by Diasporan nobles)
- All clothing worn eventually stains red (sympathy with the blood-stained Mantius, also known as the Soldier)
- Unnaturally long beard which, when cut, grows back to its full length the next day (sympathy with Horace, also known as the Learned Man) — rarely found among women
- Occasionally speaking in nonsense tongues (sympathy with Hombor, also known as the Beggar)
- Tears run down the cheeks at inappropriate times (sympathy with Amalthea, also known as the Healer)



- Sleepwalking (sympathy with Paulus, also known as the Traveler)

You can choose your own stigma, but the gamemaster has the right to veto any he feels is not severe enough.

Using Powers

Occult powers (the collective term for both psychic powers and theurgic rites) are manifested through special skills. You have to awaken a psychic path or study a theurgic canon before you can train in the skills associated with that path or canon. These skills are called powers or rites and are ranked by degrees. For instance, the Far Hand psychic path grants you telekinetic powers. These powers are manifested through three skills: Lifting Hand (1st degree), Kinetic Strike (2nd degree) and Force Wall (3rd degree). Each skill provides a different telekinetic effect. Lifting Hand allows you to lift things with your mind — including yourself. Kinetic Strike allows you to lash out at others with mentally shaped fields of force, and Force Wall allows you to create barriers and force fields with willpower.

Using a psychic power or theurgic rite requires a skill check and the expenditure of Wyrd points. It costs one Wyrd point per degree of the power/rite. For example, a Psychic using the 2nd degree Kinetic Strike power would spend 2 Wyrd points to activate it.

The activation check involves your skill ranks plus ability modifier plus any miscellaneous modifiers based on the situation. The result is compared to the DC required of the task (listed with each skill description).

1d20 + power modifier

(Power modifier = power skill rank + ability modifier + miscellaneous modifiers)

Activating an occult power requires concentration. If something disturbs your concentration, you must make a Concentration check or lose the power. Some powers take one action to activate while others require one full round or more. See the power's description for details.

Unless noted otherwise, using occult powers provokes attacks of opportunity.

An occult power can be dismissed at will as a standard action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Range

Each occult power lists its default range. These include the following measurements:

1. **Personal:** The power affects only you.
2. **Touch:** You must touch the target to affect him.
3. **Close:** You can reach up to 25 feet + 5 per 2 skill ranks.
4. **Medium:** You can reach up to 100 feet + 10 per skill rank.
5. **Long:** You can reach up to 400 feet + 40 per skill rank.
6. **Extreme:** You can reach up to 1 mile + 1 mile per skill rank.
7. **Grand:** You can reach up to 100 miles + 10 mile per skill rank.
8. **Planetwide:** You can reach anywhere on the planet.
9. **Solar System:** You can reach anywhere in the solar system.
10. **Unlimited:** You can reach anywhere in the universe.

The Enlarge Psi feat allows Psychics to improve their range measurements by spending extra Wyrd points during activation.

See the Enlarge Psi feat in the FEATS chapter for details

To target a person or moving object, you must be able to see or touch it, regardless of the range of the power. The easiest way to target a distant person is through a live television broadcast, a holographic transmitter or other visual transmission device. Certain occult powers, such as the *Far Scry Sixth Sense* power or the *Whispers from Afar* theurgic rite, also let you see your target. The power you wish to use on him, however, must still have the required range to reach him.

To target a location, you must be able to see or touch it, or know where it is. You may know that the castle is three miles away, and so attempt to drain its fusion generators using *Vis Flow* from a distance. But which direction is it from where you're standing now? If you don't have technological aid (a compass, maps, satellite positioning) and knowledge of the proper direction in relation to your own location, you can't target the place. At the GM's discretion, you can make an Intuit Direction skill check to figure out where it is if you are at least somewhat familiar with the region.

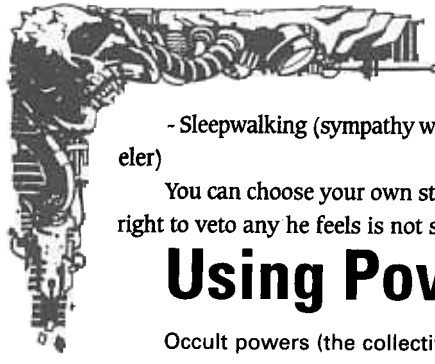
The GM should make this check and keep the result secret from the player. A success means the occultist can successfully target the place. A failure means he's unsure where it is. A critical failure means he is convinced that the wrong direction is actually the right direction; any power he uses has no effect but still costs Wyrd points.

Duration

Each power lists its default duration, measured in increments of time. When the time is up, the power ends. The increments are:

1. **Instantaneous:** The power lasts only for the moment in which it was activated, although its long-term effects (healing, wounding) may last longer.
2. **Concentration:** The power lasts as long as you concentrate on it. This requires a standard action but does not provoke attacks of opportunity. Anything that might cause you to lose concentration requires you to make a Concentration check or lose the power. You cannot activate another power while concentrating on an active one.
3. **1 turn:** The power lasts for 1 turn (1 minute).
4. **Minutes:** The power lasts for 10 minutes (10 turns) per 2 skill ranks.
5. **Hours:** The power lasts for 1 hour + 1 additional hour per skill rank.
6. **Days:** The power lasts for 1 day + 1 additional day per skill rank.
7. **Permanent:** The power lasts until its effect is altered (the *Vis Flow's* energy source is severed) or dispelled (by the *Dispel* theurgic rite or the rare Turning psychic path powers, to be detailed in a future sourcebook).

The Extend Psi feat allows Psychics to increase their duration increments by spending extra Wyrd points during activation. See the Extend Psi feat in the FEATS chapter for details.



Multiple Targets

Most psychic powers affect only one target. The Multiply Psi feat allows a Psychic to add additional targets by spending extra Wyrd points. See the Multiply Psi feat in the FEATS chapter for details.

Theurgic rites also affect only one target, but the Theurgist can add additional targets with check results higher than the required DC. See details under *Theurgy*, below.

Training Powers

Psychic powers and theurgic rites act just like skills. In fact, for most game purposes, they are skills, and conform to all the rules governing skills. You cannot raise a power or rite's ranks more than 3 + your level, the same limit that applies to all skills.

Powers and rites are considered to be exclusive skills only for the purpose of restricting their initial training to the occult character classes. Once you are allowed to train in a power (by the class special ability awards per level), that power is then considered to be a class skill. However, if you later decide to multiclass and spend your experience toward a different character class, your already trained powers are then considered to be cross-class skills. You can still raise their skills ranks, but at double the cost. This is an exception to the normal rule concerning exclusive skills which usually cannot be raised at all, except by level awards in their exclusive class. Note: Guilders cannot choose occult powers for their class skills.)

Resisting Occult Powers

Every living creature gets a save check against occult powers (unless they willingly choose to let the power affect them), even if they are unaware of the power. Some form of innate instinct — a vague sixth sense — allows them a chance to resist occult powers. However, since this save check is instinctual, you are not necessarily aware of why you made it — you may have the sudden heebie-jebbies and shudder (a Reflex check), or feel like someone just walked over your grave (a Will check). You may even feel dizzy for a moment (a Fortitude check) and not know why. Only if you are aware of occult activity in your surroundings (you recognize someone's disfigurement as an occult stigma), or are familiar with its general effects (the Occultcraft skill), can you know what these odd feelings means.

Unless otherwise stated in a power description, the DC for an occult resistance save check is equal to 10 plus half the occultist's skill rank in the power or rite used plus the occultist's key ability modifier for his primary path or canon.

10 + 1/2 occultist's skill rank + occultist's key ability modifier = DC

The type of save (Fortitude, Reflex or Will) depends on the power resisted; see the power description for details.



Psi

The existence of psychic powers was a mystery in the 21st century. During the Second Republic, the mystery was explained: humanity's potential to awaken phenomenal powers with the mind were well-known and documented. Psychic powers became the premier science of the Second Republic, the prestigious profession to which all geniuses turned their faculties. The central forum for this profession was the Phavian Institute, where the "mental sciences" of telepathy, psychokinesis, ESP and other phenomena were widely studied by many experts.

But the Fall changed all that.

Psychic powers, as with technology, were considered by the Church to be one of the causes of humanity's troubles. Unlike theurgy, psychic powers are intensely personal and internal; one can develop one's own powers without the aid of a teacher or — more dangerous — a doctrine. In addition, the common folk who did not possess psychic powers resented those who did. A Psychic "next step in evolution" movement made this worse, painting non-psychics as evolutionary foot-draggers. Hence, the Phavian Institute was disbanded and psychics became the targets of Inquisitorial witch-hunts. These hunts did not stop psychic powers from developing, but it drove some Psychics underground. Others, those who were faithful, bought the Church line that their powers were sinful. Many anguished people, in the grip of their Urges, committed suicide rather than face sin. Others fell on the Church's mercy, begging aid and forgiveness. The Church accepted many of these repentant Psychics and indoctrinated them with a code of behavior when using their powers. These became the Penitents.

Other psychics ran to the League for protection, hoping the Republican sentiment would get them some mileage. It did. The League began a Psychic guild and for years resisted the Church's protests. But the Church won out and the guild was disbanded, leaving psychics with no formal protection. While the Church can hassle League or house Psychics, they cannot formally reprimand them. But Psychics without the protection of guild membership or royal title must hide from the Inquisition. Thus the covens (see the GEMMASTERING chapter).

Paths and Powers

The Gifted (Psi) feat is a prerequisite for all psychic paths.

Effects: Some powers allow you to create one or more different effects. Unless stated otherwise in the power's description, only one effect may be chosen per activation check. You must state which effect you are attempting to invoke before making the check. For instance, the 2nd-degree Bedlam power, Confuse Others, allows you to either perform a Stunning Touch or Confusing Touch. You must choose which one you are attempting before you make the activation check.

4th-Degree Powers: Some paths have a rare 4th-degree power; this may be learned after you have gained the path's 3rd-degree power and in place of the bonus occult feat gained at 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th levels.

Penitents

It is an understatement to say that Psychics are not well-liked by the Church fathers; loathed and feared are perhaps more accurate. But there are exceptions, such as the Penitents — psychics who have thrown themselves on the mercy of the Church. They are often carted off to distant monasteries far from social centers and trained in moral doctrines and behavioral adjustment. If they respond well to these treatments, they are allowed their freedom — with a proviso. They must wear a symbol of their order so that all the faithful realize that they are reformed psychics and they must always obey the dictates of Orthodox priests of higher rank than they (they are under no particular compulsion to obey other sects or orders). Nonetheless, they will be under the occasional watch of Inquisitors.

Recognized Penitents can use their powers freely without fear of Church retribution (although they may suffer politically trumped up charges and trials if their powers are not used for the good of the Church). The penalty for impersonating a Penitent is ritualized torture before a crowd under the close watch of a Theurgist ready to prevent the Psychic from using his powers to escape. From there, the impersonator is offered lifetime imprisonment, slavery at the hands of psychically shielded Chainers, or a chance at reform — a trip to a Penitent monastery for treatment. Despite the rumors of cruelty among the Penitent confessors, most psychics choose reform.

Friends of reformed psychics claim that they return from their sabbaticals changed and scarred. They no longer laugh the way they used to and see sin waiting around every corner. The Church counters this by claiming that the psychic is no longer in the thrall of his own Dark Twin and is less dangerous to others, besides now being a Pancreator-fearing soul. It is true that the Penitent reform process usually purges the Urge, but it is also known to purge Psychic class levels.

Bedlam (Str)

You have awakened your mind and body's pranic (bioenergetic) powers. Bedlam was developed by Dervishes, psychic warriors trained and employed by certain noble houses during the Emperor Wars.

1st Degree: War Dance (Str; Trained Only; Bedlam Psychics Only)

Activation Time: By skill mimicked (see text)

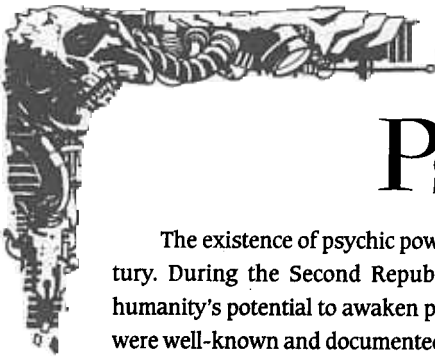
Range: Personal

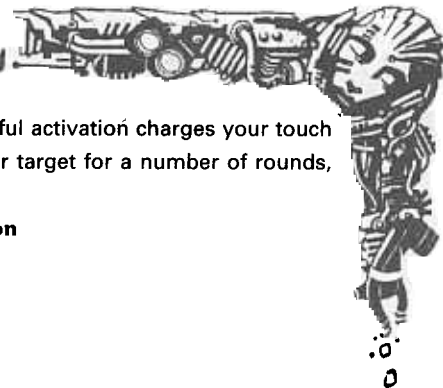
Target: You

Duration: One skill check

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can perform amazing acrobatic acts well beyond the norm. You do not need to make an activation check for this power. Instead, by spending one Wyrd point, you may substitute your War Dance skill ranks and key ability modifier in place of the following skills: Balance, Climb, Jump, Swim, and Tumble (only one skill per activation). The effect lasts for one skill check, and using this power does not provoke attacks of opportunity, unless





the skill substituted for would normally provoke such attacks.

Balance: Using War Dance in place of Balance skill allows you to perform any of the actions normally allowed with the Balance skill, and you may also move your full speed instead of half, without penalty. In addition, you are not considered off balance when doing so (enemies do not get the off-balance attack bonus and you receive your Dexterity bonus to AC).

Climb: Using War Dance in place of Climb skill allows you to climb at your full speed as a full-round action, or half your speed as a move-equivalent action, without penalties. In addition, you can move to avoid a blow (enemies do not get the stunned attack bonus and you receive your Dexterity bonus to AC).

Jump: Using War Dance in place of the Jump skill allows you to make a running jump without moving and the normal maximums for all jumps are ignored. If you are wearing heavy armor, you can make a running jump, but you must move 20 ft. before jumping.

Swim: Using War Dance in place of the Swim skill allows you to move one-half your normal speed as a move-equivalent action, or your full speed as a full-round action. In addition, you only suffer a -1 penalty for every 10 lbs. of gear you carry or wear.

Tumble: Using War Dance in place of Tumble allows you to make checks even when your speed has been reduced by armor or excess equipment. When reducing falling damage, add an additional 10 to the distances listed for the Tumble skill (you can treat falls as if they were 20 ft shorter, and tumble up to 40 feet). Using War Dance in place of Perform checks is a good way to frighten an audience, not entertain them; your obviously inhuman agility is seen as witchcraft.

Retry: Wyrd must be spent to use the War Dance skill, regardless of success (it is still spent for failed checks). If no Wyrd is spent, use the normal skills instead (Balance, Climb, etc.).

Special: None of the synergy bonuses that normally apply to the skills mimicked are added to War Dance checks.

2nd Degree: Confuse Others (Str; Trained Only; Bedlam Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action (see text)

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature touched

Duration: By check result (see text)

Saving Throw: Reflex negates (DC = check result)

Check: You can confuse and stupefy others with a touch. An activation check is made to power your next touch with one of the following effects. Activating this power requires a standard action, but the touch attack is included in the activation and is treated like other charged touch attacks (it does not provoke an attack of opportunity).

Stunning Touch: Successful activation charges your touch with the power to stun a target for a number of rounds, depending on the check result.

DC	Rounds of Stun
15	1 round
20	2 rounds
25	3 rounds
30	4 rounds
35	5 rounds

Confusing Touch: Successful activation charges your touch with the power to confuse your target for a number of rounds, depending on the check result.

DC	Rounds of Confusion
20	1 round
25	2 rounds
30	3 rounds
35	4 rounds
40	5 rounds

3rd Degree: Prana Burst (Str; Trained Only; Bedlam Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action (see text)

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature or object touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half (DC = check result)

Check: You can deliver a pranic blow to someone or something. Activating this power requires a standard action, but the touch attack is included in the activation and is treated like other charged touch attacks (it does not provoke an attack of opportunity).

Prana Strike: You can direct your psychic energy as if it were a weapon. An activation check is made to power your melee attack (either with a weapon or unarmed) to deal extra damage to the target, depending on the check result. This is considered to be a touch attack (ignore the target's armor bonus and energy shield). Base damage is the normal weapon or unarmed damage.

DC	Damage Dice
15	+2d6
25	+3d6
35	+4d6
45	+5d6

Resonant Strike: You can make a Prana Strike (as above) against an object and ignore its hardness rating; damage is delivered directly to its hit points.

4th Degree: Nerve Burn (Str; Trained Only; Bedlam Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action (see text)

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex negates (DC = check result)

Check: You may use your prana to damage another's physical abilities. An activation check is made to power your next touch to damage one of the target's physical abilities, depending on the check result. The ability to be damaged must be stated when the power is activated; Nerve Burn can affect only Strength, Dexterity or Constitution scores. Activating this power requires a standard action, but the touch attack is included in the activation and is treated like other charged touch attacks (it does not provoke an attack of opportunity).

Nerve Burn can be performed against the same target only once per day. It cannot cause an ability score to drop to lower than 1.



DC	Ability Score
20	-2
25	-3
30	-4
35	-5
40	-6

Far Hand (Dex)

You have awakened your mind's psychokinetic abilities. The path of Far Hand, or psychokinesis, was one of the most intensively studied at the Phavian Institute, for many considered it the most "practical" category of psychic powers. Far Hand deals with the manipulation of physical objects and energy fields through the application of pure will.

Although using a Far Hand power does not directly produce obvious occult phenomena, the sight of objects floating through the air unaided is a strong clue that something strange is going on. Far Hand is a psychic power that quickly becomes obvious to even those ignorant of psychic powers (-5 DC on any Occultcraft checks to discern and identify a Far Hand power at work). However, they will not necessarily be able to trace the phenomena back to the Psychic. Most peasants will turn their ire against strangers first.

1st Degree: Lifting Hand (Dex; Trained Only; Far Hand Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action (see text)

Range: Medium

Target: One living creature or object

Duration: Concentration

Saving Throw: Reflex negates

Check: With a successful activation check, you can lift a person or object with your mind and move it around at will. The DC result determines how large or heavy an object you can lift and what you can then do with it. It takes an action to activate the power and an action to maintain it each round thereafter.

Action: Your base DC depends on the action you wish to achieve. When you wish to use Lifting Hand against living things, they get a Reflex saving throw to shake off the invisible fingers of your mind. (Note: You cannot directly damage an object with Lifting Hand; that requires the 2nd-degree Kinetic Strike power. You can, however, harm it indirectly, such as by throwing it.)

DC Action

- 15 Lift an object. You can move it any distance up, down or around as long as you don't exceed the power's range, counted in distance from your location.
- 20 Throw an object 5 ft. +5 ft. per two skill ranks.
- 25 Lift a person or creature. Although you can lift a person into the air, you cannot hold him perfectly still (unless you use the Kinetic Strike crushing grip); he can still wiggle around, although he is considered flat-footed as long as he is lifted. You can move him at a maximum speed equal to 10 + your skill ranks, or double that amount if you spend a full-round action to do so.
You can instead levitate yourself, moving at a maximum speed equal to 10 ft. + your skill ranks, or triple that amount if you spend a full-round action moving.

- 30 Throw a person or creature 5 ft. +5 ft. per two skill ranks.
- 35 Fight with an object: a sword, gun, etc. Once your activation succeeds, use your base ranged attack bonus to wield the weapon anywhere within your range, as long as it is within sight.
- 40 Perform a skill-based task with an object, such as a Craft check to repair a weapon, a Disable Device to defuse a bomb, Open Lock to pick a lock, etc. Once your activation check succeeds, make a skill check using the desired skill, as long as it is performed within your range and is within sight. Delicate work may suffer penalties or a higher DC if you can't get a close look at it.

Weight: If your check achieved the required DC (listed above), you may lift 10 pounds per result. If you rolled a 17, you can lift 170 pounds. You can double this result per extra Wyrd point spent (remember that in the d20 System, doubling something twice means that you actually triple the figure); these extra points do not need to be spent until after the activation check succeeds.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed activation attempts.

2nd Degree: Kinetic Strike (Dex; Trained Only; Far Hand Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Close

Target: One living creature or object

Duration: Instantaneous or concentration (see text)

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Check: You may either strike a target with a psychokinetic bolt of force or grip him in your psychokinetic fist.

Kinetic bolt: You compress a field of energy at a point on or near a target's body and explode it, like coiling a spring and suddenly releasing it. Use your Kinetic Strike activation check as your attack roll, with the DC being the target's armor class. Kinetic bolts are not considered touch attacks.

Damage inflicted is normal, unless you chose to deliver subdual instead.

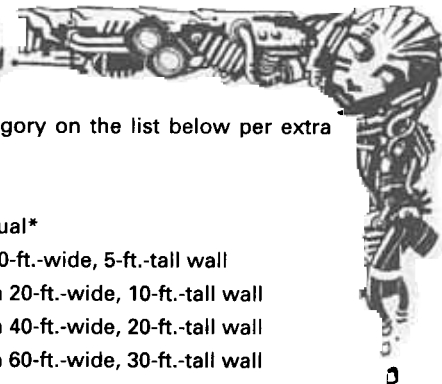
DC	Damage Dice
15	2d6
25	3d6
35	4d6
45	5d6

Crushing grip: Instead of dealing a direct bolt of psychokinetic energy, you can use this power to crush or hold objects or people with your mental grip. There are two stages to consider:

Grab: You first make a ranged grab attack, using your Kinetic Strike activation check as an attack roll. As with melee grab attacks, this is considered to be a touch attack. Your grab does not provoke an attack of opportunity, but activating the power does. In other words, those near you gain opportunity attacks, but those who cannot reach you do not; if the target of your grab is not near you, he does not get an attack of opportunity to resist the grab.

Hold: The target now gets to make a Reflex save to resist the power. This is in place of the normal opposed grapple check. If he succeeds, he has successfully slipped from your mental grasp. If the Reflex save fails, the target is grappled and you can deal damage (as Kinetic Bolt above).





Once the target is grappled, damage can be applied each round and the target is considered pinned (others gain a +4 bonus on attack rolls against him). On the following round after being grappled, he can attempt to escape the grapple as a full-round action with a Strength check against a DC equal to 10 + half your skill ranks. He cannot use Escape Artist skill to wriggle free.

During the turns in which you use your psychokinetic grip, you must concentrate. If the target escapes or breaks your grapple, or you lose concentration, the effect is lost and a new activation attempt must be made to grasp the target again.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

3rd Degree: Force Wall (Dex; Trained Only; Far Hand Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium

Area: Shapeable spread (see text)

Duration: 1 turn

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can create a barrier of psychokinetic force around yourself or an area, providing a degree of cover effective versus ranged weapons and even melee. Note that the range for this power denotes how far you can erect the wall away from yourself, not the area it covers; that is determined by the DC result (see below).

Force Walls offer only one-way protection — they block attacks coming from the outer side, but do not interfere with attacks made from the inner side. In other words, a Force Wall erected around your party allows them to attack outside of it with no interference, but those outside the wall must contend with the cover when attacking those inside/behind it.

You can modulate the intensity of the barrier to allow friends to enter while keeping out foes. This requires a Concentration check and a full-round action. If the check fails, friends must try to pass through the wall like anyone else (see below), unless you later succeed in a retried Concentration check.

Cover: Like normal cover, this invisible-to-normal-sight barrier provides an armor class bonus and a Reflex save bonus. However, attacks that strike the Force Wall (by hitting the AC range provided by the wall's AC bonus) may still overwhelm it. The wall's hardness is equal to your Force Wall skill ranks. Any damage that exceeds the hardness is inflicted on whatever target the attack was aimed at if the attack would otherwise have been successful. Once the wall has been breached by an attack that exceeds the wall's hardness and delivers damage to someone behind it, you must spend a Wyrd point that round or lose the Force Wall.

DC	Cover	AC Bonus	Reflex Save Bonus
15	One-quarter	+2	+1
20	One-half cover	+4	+2
25	Three-quarters	+7	+3
30	Nine-tenths	+10	+4*
35	Total	+13	+5*

* Half damage if save fails, no damage for successful save.

Size: The size of the wall depends on your Force Wall skill ranks. It can be formed over an area in any configuration (circular, square, an enclosed box, etc.). You can increase the size by spend-

ing Wyrd points: add one category on the list below per extra point spent during activation.

Skill Area Covered

1-2	Medium-sized individual*
3-4	5 ft. x 5 ft. area, or a 10-ft.-wide, 5-ft.-tall wall
5-6	10 ft. x 10 ft. area, or a 20-ft.-wide, 10-ft.-tall wall
7-8	20 ft. x 20 ft. area, or a 40-ft.-wide, 20-ft.-tall wall
9-10	30 ft. x 30 ft. area, or a 60-ft.-wide, 30-ft.-tall wall
11-12	40 ft. x 40 ft. area, or an 80-ft.-wide, 40-ft.-tall wall
13-14	50 ft. x 50 ft. area, or a 100-ft.-wide, 50-ft.-tall wall
15-16	60 ft. x 60 ft. area, or a 120-ft.-wide, 60-ft.-tall wall
17-18	70 ft. x 70 ft. area, or a 140 ft. wide, 70 ft. tall wall
19-20	80 ft. x 80 ft. area, or an 160 ft. wide, 80 ft. tall wall
21-22	90 ft. x 90 ft. area, or an 180 ft. wide, 90 ft. tall wall
23	100 ft. x 100 ft. area, or an 200 ft. wide, 100 ft. tall wall

* Energy shields will work in conjunction with a Force Wall.

Passing through: A Force Wall is a physical barrier, considered to be vertical and smooth, and hence cannot be climbed. Anyone, however, can attempt to force his way through the wall with brute strength. He must make a Strength check against a DC equal to 10 + half your Force Wall skill ranks. If he succeeds, he can move through the wall. However, if you spend a Wyrd point to heal the breach (a free action), others cannot follow him through the hole he made (they just make their own checks to get through).

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Omen (Wis)

You have awakened your mind's ability to perceive the future and past. The Omen path seeks to expand normal time-bound human awareness to include perceptions of the past and possible futures, known in the Phavian Institute as postcognition and precognition respectively. Knowledge of past events is a fairly straightforward matter — whatever happened, happened. Visions of the future are trickier, however, since they can represent only the possible results of actions in the present. Knowledge of future events can be used either to prevent them from occurring or to ensure that they will occur. In any case, the gamemaster is advised to keep careful notes and to be ready to improvise... a lot.

1st Degree: Postcognition (Wis; Trained Only; Omen Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Personal

Target: Object touched

Duration: 1 turn of viewing a past moment

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can see, hear and feel what has happened in the past around a particular object. For instance, a knife used in a killing can be "read" to get a vision of the murderer, as well as the room where it took place. However, you cannot necessarily choose the angle of viewing — you may only see a man in a dark, hooded cloak, but not his face. Multiple items may not be selected. You choose the time period, but it can be accompanied with a request for a particular event ("Who used this knife to kill the marquis?"). How far you can see into the past depends on the check result.



DC	Times Past
15	Events that occurred no longer than one year ago
20	Events that occurred no longer than two years ago
25	Events that occurred no longer than three years ago
30	Events that occurred no longer than five years ago
35	Events that occurred no longer than 10 years ago
40	Event that occurred no longer than 100 years ago

Retry: Yes, but you must wait at least one day to attempt to view the same moment or time in the past.

2nd Degree: Precognition (Wis; Trained Only; Omen Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 full round
Range: Personal
Target: Object touched
Duration: 1 turn of viewing a future moment
Saving Throw: None

Check: You can see, hear and feel what will happen in the future around a particular object, place or person (the room a person will be in, who will be with them, etc.). These are shadows of the future, not what *will* happen. Multiple items may not be selected. You choose the time period, but it can be accompanied with a request for a particular event ("Where will the duke hold his birthday ball?"). How far you can see into the future depends on the check result.

DC	Times To Come
15	Events that will occur no more than one month from now
20	Events that will occur no more than two months from now
25	Events that will occur no more than five months from now
30	Events that will occur no more than one year from now
35	Events that will occur no more than 10 years from now

Retry: Yes, but you must wait at least one day to attempt to view the same moment or time in the future (and it may not play out exactly the same way by then, for present events continually change the nature of the future).

3rd Degree: Shadows of the Departed (Wis; Trained Only; Omen Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 full round (see text)
Range: Personal
Duration: Concentration
Saving Throw: None

Check: You can channel the personality of someone who is dead. As in the film *Rashomon*, these ghosts of the past can sometimes be accepted as witnesses in certain murder trials. Ancient or alien personages may require a scholar on hand to overcome barriers posed by dead or unfamiliar languages. The ghost will speak through you long enough to give her tale (game-master's discretion). It takes one full round to activate the power and a full-round action each round thereafter to maintain it.

The base DC is 30. This is modified by the ghost's identity. The modifiers below are cumulative (they stack).

DC	Identity
-5	You know the ghost's name.
-5	You are channeling at the ghost's grave or among his direct descendants.

-5 The ghost has a need to speak (perhaps to reveal a crime or confess its sins).

+5 Per century the ghost has been dead.

The Church claims that these are not departed people but figments of the Psychic's twisted mind or demons parading as dead loved ones; but most people in the Known Worlds believe in ghosts anyway.

Retry: Yes, but you must wait at least one day to attempt to channel the same ghost and the DC increases by 5. If a second attempt fails, that ghost cannot be contacted unless you perform some act of propitiation (present gifts to its grave, aid its descendants, etc.).

Psyche (Cha)

You have awakened your mind's telepathic abilities. The path of Psyche refers to the old Phavian designation of telepathy, the direct transference of thought and feeling from one mind to another. Originally the Institute focused its studies on the more passive and receptive side of telepathy, like Mind Sight, but since the Fall of the Second Republic, the aggressive potential of telepathy, illustrated by powers like Brain Blast and Puppetry, has come to predominate.

1st Degree: Mind Sight (Cha; Trained Only; Psyche Psychics Only)

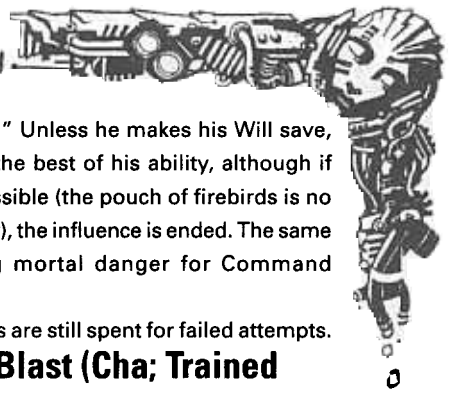
Activation Time: 1 action (see text)
Range: Medium
Target: One living creature
Duration: Concentration
Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You can read a target's mind with a successful check against a DC based on the type of probe desired. It takes one standard action to activate the power and one standard action each round thereafter to maintain it.

DC	Probe
15	Read Emotions. You can sense the target's current emotional state, whether she is angry or sad, happy or confused.
25	Read Thoughts. You can read the target's surface thoughts. Note that surface thoughts are only what is occupying the target's attention at that moment, and rarely involve long-range plans, habitual behavior or detailed recollections. Language barriers can get in the way, as can differences in the psychology of alien races from beyond the Known Worlds.
30	Probe Mind. You can ask the target's mind one question which he must answer regardless of consent (unless he makes his Will save). After he has answered it, the power ends; you must spend more Wyrd and make a new activation check to learn more.
35	Psychic Interrogation. You may ask the target's mind a number of questions equal to half your ranks in the Mind Sight skill. After he has answered them, the power ends; you must spend more Wyrd and make a new activation check to learn more.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.





2nd Degree: Mind Sway (Cha; Trained Only; Psyche Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action (see text)

Range: Medium

Target: One living creature

Duration: Concentration

Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You can influence others' emotions and thoughts, and even control their actions. It takes one standard action to activate the power and one standard action each round thereafter to maintain it.

DC Command

15 Emote. You can project emotions to the target, letting him know how you feel (you can fake emotions with a successful opposed Bluff check instead). The target simply senses the emotion but does not have to react in any particular way to it. The target of this power will know whose emotions he is sensing, although he may not know that his intuition is caused by a psychic power.

20 Mind Speech. You can project your thoughts into the mind of another. You can choose to hide the source of these thoughts, but the target may become aware that something is happening if a thought seems too strange or unfamiliar to him. As with the Mind Sight power, language can be a barrier.

25 Empath. You can telepathically control another's emotions. There are a number of things this allows you to do:

Affect Morale: You can boost the target's morale, giving him a +2 morale bonus for as long as you concentrate, or lower it (-2 morale penalty) for as long as you concentrate.

Change Attitudes: You can improve the target's attitude toward you or a designee by one category (from hostile to unfriendly or from unfriendly to indifferent, etc.) plus one per five skill ranks. Or you can degrade the target's attitude towards whomever you designate by one category (from unfriendly to hostile, etc.). However, if your behavior is contrary to the attitude you're trying to foster, the target gets another Will save to negate the power's effect.

Language is not a factor here, but differences in alien psychology can pose a problem, as is illustrated by the story of the psychic who, in attempting to ingratiate himself to a feral Vorox, accidentally triggered the predator's violent mating behavior.

30 Command. You can telepathically command the target to perform one action that he can complete in a single round. Unless he makes his Will save, he must carry it out to the best of his ability, even if it may harm him. You cannot, however, put him into obviously mortal danger, such as making him walk into an airlock without a spacesuit or leap off a cliff; this will automatically negate the power.

35 Head Shackle. You can telepathically command the target to perform one task that may take a series of actions to complete, such as: "Defend me from those five assailants!" or "Retrieve the pouch of firebirds inside Reeve Manager

Sulak's top desk drawer." Unless he makes his Will save, he must carry it out to the best of his ability, although if the task is proven impossible (the pouch of firebirds is no longer in the desk drawer), the influence is ended. The same limitations concerning mortal danger for Command (above) apply here.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

3rd Degree: Brain Blast (Cha; Trained Only; Psyche Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Close

Target: One living creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: The very force of your mind can cause a target intense agony. Make a Brain Blast check and compare the result to the chart below. The target takes the listed amount of damage unless he makes a Will save. Damage is considered normal unless you choose to make it subdual instead.

DC	Damage Dice
15	2d6
25	3d6
35	4d6
45	5d6

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

4th Degree: Puppetry (Cha; Trained Only; Psyche Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 full round (see text)

Range: Close

Target: One living creature

Duration: Concentration

Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You can telepathically project your will upon a target, dominating him completely and possessing him body and soul for the duration of the power, unless he makes a Will save. You can make him do anything you want, as if his body were your own. The same limitations concerning mortal danger for Command (above) apply here.

It takes one full round to activate the power and one full-round action each round thereafter to maintain it.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Sixth Sense (Wis)

Known in the old Phavian Institute as Extra-Sensory Perception, this path seeks to cultivate modes of perception which are considered to be inherent in all sentient beings, but which are seldom or never consciously accessed.

1st Degree: Premonition (Wis; Trained Only; Sixth Sense Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium

Target: You

Duration: Minutes

Saving Throw: None



TABLE 6—1: AURAS
General Types of Auras

Race/Condition	Aura Type
Human	Simple elongated ovals
Ur-Obun	Exaggerated egg-shapes, with the big end at the top
Ur-Ukar	Exaggerated egg-shapes, with the big end at the bottom
Vorox	Torn, raggedy edges
Vau	Sleek wedges, pointed at the head
Symbiot	Tiny filament-threads stretching out to infinity (which cannot be detected without a critical success)
The Changed	Folded or crimped around the altered body part
Unconscious	Pale, empty aura
Asleep	Pale, empty aura, with all color and activity concentrated in the center
Psychic/Theurgist	Deeper, more three-dimensional

Colors

(seen with all successful checks)

Color	Emotion
Red	Angry
Orange	Repelled, disgusted
Yellow	Happy
Green	Desirous
Blue	Sad
Violet	Satisfied
White	Loving, caring
Black	Afraid
Gray	Indicative of purely abstract thought

Motion

(seen only with a successful Spot check, DC 10)

Motion	State of Mind
Upward	Elated
Downward	Depressed
Inward	Introverted (directed toward self)
Outward	Extroverted (directed toward others)
Vertical spiral	Determined
Horizontal spiral	Confused
Quivering	Excited
Sloshing	Indifferent
Melting	Fatigued, tired

Shapes

(seen only with a successful Spot check, DC 15)

Shape	Thought
Spike	Hatred
Cloud	Doubt
Column	Certainty
Swirls	Whimsy
Veins	Nagging insistent thoughts
Rays	Strongly directed emotion
Hard outer edge	Suspicion, distrust

Check: You can sense danger before it harms you

- DC Warning**
- 15 **Immediate Peril.** You know that danger exists somewhere within the power's range, but not exactly what form it takes. This applies only to immediate peril, such as a weapon aimed at you, a critically overheated stardrive core, or a land mine you are about to step on. You gain a +10 perception bonus to notice the actual danger or avoid surprise.
 - 20 **Exact Danger.** You can pinpoint and identify immediate peril within the power's range before it strikes. You gain a +10 initiative bonus and cannot be caught surprised or flat-footed.
 - 25 **Potential Danger.** You can sense potential danger within the power's range, but not exactly what form it takes. This may be a trap waiting to be set, an unseen creature guarding the room, etc. You gain a +10 perception bonus to notice the actual danger or avoid surprise.
 - 30 **All Danger.** You can predict and pinpoint all immediate and potential dangers within the power's range, allowing you to locate traps, hidden guard dogs, and even assassins that may be stalking you. You gain a +10 initiative bonus against all dangers and cannot be caught surprised or flat-footed.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

2nd Degree: Second Sight (Wis; Trained Only; Sixth Sense Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Long

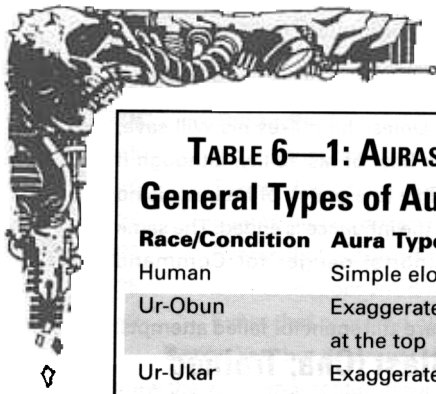
Target: You

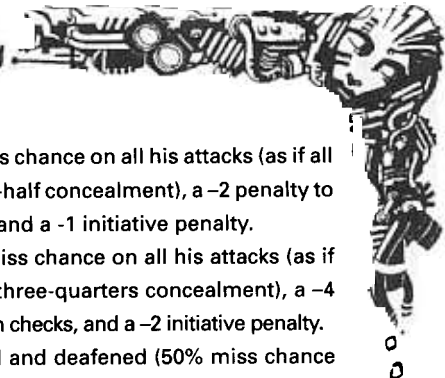
Duration: Minutes

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can perceive beyond the normal spectrum. The effects below are not cumulative; you must declare which sensory effect you are trying to achieve before making an activation checks.

- DC Sensory Effect**
- 15 **Sensitivity:** This power improves the physical senses, allowing the character to see in darker situations (but it does not confer night- or darkvision — you still cannot see in total darkness), hear better, and even smell or taste drugs or poisons in food and drink (at the gamemaster's discretion). You gain +4 to any perception checks.
 - 20 **Darkvision:** You gain the effects of darkvision. This manifests in a variety of ways, including sonar-like acuity of hearing, tactile hypersensitivity to ground vibrations or minute air currents, and using your own biomagnetic field as a kind of radar. Printed words or pictures may not be seen with this kind of darkvision.
 - 25 **Subtle Sight:** You can perceive the psychic auras of others. You gain a +4 Occultcraft bonus to discern and identify occult powers. Auras can reveal general emotions and states of mind, whether someone is human or alien, and if he has psychic powers. Auras cannot reveal specific thoughts. Colors correspond to emotions, movement of the aura indicates general state of mind, and shapes within





the aura can show what types of thoughts the target is thinking. See Table 6—1: Auras.

Wyrd Sight: You can perceive normally invisible occult activity, such as theurgic rites, psychic powers, occult artifacts, etc. You gain a +10 Occulcraft bonus to discern and identify occult powers. This reveals things that do not register at the lower levels. For instance, the aura of a psychic shows a brilliant scintillating white light in the forehead; a beam extending from this light to another person can indicate a telepathic connection or theurgic Congregation rite. Most theurgic activity appears to be enveloped in a large, unflickering candle-flame, the top point of which stretches up to infinity.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

3rd Degree: Far Scry (Wis; Trained Only; Sixth Sense Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Long

Target: You or one living creature (see text)

Duration: Concentration

Saving Throw: None

Check: Occasionally known by the old Phavian designations of clairvoyance and clairaudience, Far Scry allows you to use your sensory perception on a distant place. It takes one standard action to activate the power and one standard action each round thereafter to maintain it.

DC Far Sense

15 Far Sight or Sound. Choose either sight or sound before the power is activated. You can sense things at a distance within the power's range. You can move your point of perspective at your normal speed, traveling along corridors and through walls.

20 Far Sense. You can both see and hear things at a distance.

25 Far Touch. You can see, hear and touch things at a distance.

30 Shared Sense: You can open a direct sensory conduit with a chosen target, and can then see what the target sees, hear what he hears, and so on (the target can resist with a Will save). Shared Sense allows you to use your powers from the target's perspective. In other words, you can sense danger to the target with Premonitions, see from the target's eyes with Second Sight, etc.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

4th Degree: Senses Shock (Wis; Trained Only; Sixth Sense Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Close

Target: One living creature

Duration: 1 turn

Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You can break down a target's natural adjustment of the intensity of sensory input, overloading his senses: mild light becomes blinding, whispers are screams, a massage becomes a pummeling, and so on. If the target fails a Will save, he suffers the following effects, depending on the check result.

DC Effect

5 Target suffers a 20% miss chance on all his attacks (as if all his opponents have one-half concealment), a -2 penalty to Spot and Listen checks and a -1 initiative penalty.

15 Targets suffers a 30% miss chance on all his attacks (as if all his opponents have three-quarters concealment), a -4 penalty to Spot and Listen checks, and a -2 initiative penalty.

35 Target acts as if blinded and deafened (50% miss chance for all attacks, -4 initiative penalty, no Dex bonus to AC, half speed, -4 penalty on most Strength and Dexterity-based skills, others gain +2 attack bonus against him, and he can make no Spot or Listen checks.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Soma (Con)

You have awakened your mind's somatic abilities — mind-over-matter. The path of Soma (also called Prana Bindu) is the culmination of many ancient Urthish techniques of body control, and was one of the earliest established departments in the Phavian Institute. Since the Fall, the majority of this path's practitioners have found employment only as traveling medicine show freaks.

1st Degree: Control Body (Con; Trained Only; Soma Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 minute

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Hours

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can slow down your bodily operations to an almost undetectable rate, feigning death or reducing your need for oxygen.

DC Effect

15 Slow Metabolism. You can go for three days without water or a week without food before requiring Constitution checks (this effects lasts for one week after activation). In addition, for the hours-long duration of the power (or longer, if the Extend Psi feat is used), your need for oxygen is lessened; you can hold your breath a number of rounds equal to triple your Constitution score and you gain a +5 bonus on Constitution checks made to keep from drowning or suffocating. You also do not suffer from altitude sickness due to lack of air.

20 Ignore Cold. You gain a +5 on your Fortitude saves against cold damage while moving, or +10 when stationary.

25 Ignore Heat. You gain a +5 on your Fortitude saves against heat damage while moving, or +10 when stationary.

30 Ignore Poison. You gain a +10 on your Fortitude saves against poisons.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

2nd Degree: Alter Body (Con; Trained Only; Soma Psychics Only)

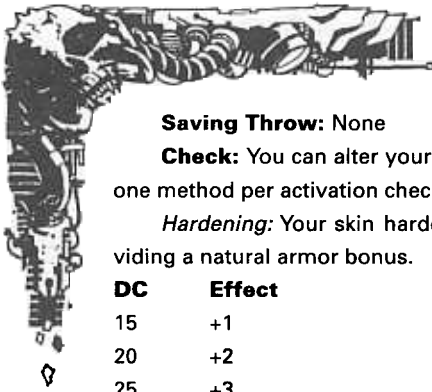
Activation Time: 1 minute

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Minutes





Saving Throw: None

Check: You can alter your body in a number of ways (only one method per activation check).

Hardening: Your skin hardens to a steely consistency, providing a natural armor bonus.

DC	Effect
15	+1
20	+2
25	+3
30	+4
35	+5

Sizing: You can alter your size, become shorter or taller, broader or thinner. This does not affect ability scores, although it may alter your size class (perhaps from Medium to Small, or Medium to Large).

DC	Height		Weight	
	Increase	Decrease	Increase	Decrease
15	+10%	-10%	+20%	-10%
20	+20%	-20%	+40%	-20%
25	+30%	-30%	+60%	-30%
30	+40%	-40%	+75%	-40%
35	+45%	-45%	+90%	-45%
40	+50%	-50%	+100%	-50%

Masking: You can change your facial features (bone structure, eye color, skin color and texture, hair length and color). The number of features you can change depends on the activation result. You can mimic others, although this might require Bluff checks (+2 stackable bonus for each feature you changed).

DC	Effect
15	1 feature
20	2 features
25	3 features
30	4 features
35	5 features

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

3rd Degree: Enhance Body (Con; Trained Only; Soma Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 minute

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Minutes

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can enhance one physical ability score (Strength, Dexterity or Constitution) per each successful power activation.

DC	Enhancement
15	+2
20	+3
25	+4
30	+5
35	+6

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

4th Degree: Recovery (Con; Trained Only; Soma Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can heal damaged hit points every time this power is successfully activated.

DC	Amount Healed
10	1d4+2
20	1d8+2
30	2d8+2
40	3d8+2

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Vis Craft (Int)

You have awakened your mind's ability to control energy. Practically unknown to the researchers of the Phavian Institute, the power of energy control and manipulation is still rare in the 51st century. Vis (Latin for "energy") Crafters can manipulate material energy: kinetic, electric and fusion, and some can manipulate spiritual energies (Wyrd). One cannot work with such power, however, and remain unmoved — Vis Crafters tend to be excitable and passionate people, sometimes twitchy and nervous, unable to stay still for long.

Also, just because a Psychic can manipulate energy doesn't mean she fully understands it; this may require a Knowledge (physics) check.

1st Degree: Vis Eye (Int; Trained Only; Vis Craft Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium

Target: You

Duration: Minutes

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can sense the use of energy around you (a foe's energy shield, a laser sight trained on you, a spy camera filming you), discern the type of energy (electrical, fusion) and trace its source (although this may require a Search check if the source is well-hidden). The DC depends on how hidden the source is. The source must be within the power's range to be sensed.

DC	Source
15	Obvious (an energy shield or energy weapon)
20	Incognito (a dueling shield or inobvious camera)
25	Concealed (a camera hidden behind a two-way mirror)
30	Arcane. You can sense and discern spiritual energies, such as Wyrd, Symbiot Lifeorce or even the strange energy used by Anunnaki tech.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.



2nd Degree: Vis Flow (Int; Trained Only; Vis Craft Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Touch

Target: Object touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can alter the flow of energy to or from an object, either draining or rechanneling it.

DC Effect

20 **Vis Drain.** You can drain or cut off the flow of power to or from various items, such as fusion cells or a building's power grid (this power is not transferred anywhere useful unless the character also uses the Vis Flow power, below). The amount of Wyrd points spent determines how much power can be drained from a source; see Table 6—2: Vis Drain.

25 **Vis Flow.** You can channel incoming energy to charge fusion cells, flashlights or starship engines. You must touch the item to be charged and the source of energy (a sparking live wire, a fusion charging plug, a Symbiot giving its Lifeforce). Mild shocks will not harm you while this power is active, but you are not immune to energy damage or severe power surges. It is possible to use this power when being attacked by lasers, blasters or Vis Shock, but regardless of success on channeling the energy, you will suffer any damage normally. (If an energy shield is used to ab-

sorb the damage, it also absorbs the energy — you cannot transfer this energy.)

Generally, the transfer is power to power: a blaster bolt will charge one use by a blaster on a fusion cell, but this may mean two uses by a laser. The gamemaster should compare the different uses for fusion cells and the total charges allowed per weapon, and be conservative in allowing too many uses from this power.

30 **Wyrd Flow.** You can transfer spiritual energies, such as Wyrd, Symbiot Lifeforce and even Soul Shards to your own Wyrd. However, only energy directed at you — such as through a psychic or theurgic power — may be transferred. You are not an energy vampire — you cannot walk up to someone, grab him, and transfer Wyrd points. However, if you are the recipient of a Revive theurgic rite that heals five hit points, you could choose to channel these five hit points to your Wyrd instead.

35 **Vortex.** You can generate power on your own, which you can use to recharge fusion cells, power skimmers, etc. Use Table 6—2: Vis to determine Wyrd costs to power certain devices.

40 **Primal Vis.** You can tap into an invisible, universal spiritual power grid to replenish spent Wyrd points by an amount equal to your key ability modifier for your primary power. This power may be used only once per day. Some Vis Crafters theorize that the source they are tapping into is a grid that encompasses all of space-time and was erected by the Anunnaki, and that it is this grid that powers de-

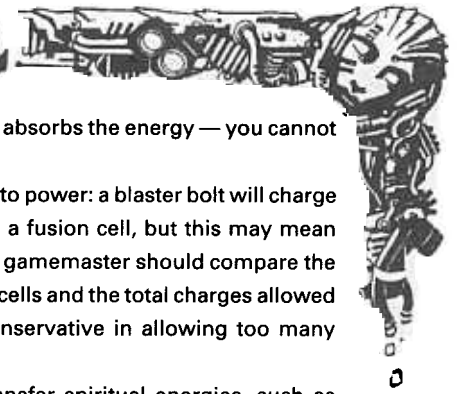


TABLE 6—2: Vis

Wyrd	Power (equivalents)
2*	1 medium-sized fusion cell (or 2 small cells, or 3 tiny cells)
3	10 medium-sized fusion cells (or 5 large cells, 20 small cells, 30 tiny cells; enough energy to power a small building)
4	Enough energy to power a city block or agora-based fusion generator
5	Small-class starship (explorer, escort, raider)
6	Mid-class starship (frigate, galliot, assault lander, freighter)
7	Capital-class starship (cruiser, dreadnought, luxury liner)
8	Capital city
9	Starbase
10	Terraforming engine; Symbiot World Egg

* Base activation cost.

vices like Philosophers Stones and jumpgates.

In times of dire need, however, you may also call on your Urge for aid: you gain an extra amount of points equal to twice your Urge levels. You can do this even if your Vis Flow activation result was only 15. You must make a Will check to resist its awakening; failure means that the Urge is awake. Even if you have no score in Urge, you may elect to take one level to gain two Wyrd points. Regardless, any Wyrd points replenished with the Urge's aid are also tallied into the Dark Twin's Wyrd pool with which it builds its psychic body (see the level 4 Urge power Wyrd Drain).

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

3rd Degree: Vis Shock (Int; Trained Only; Vis Craft Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Touch or Close (see text)

Target: One living creature or object

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Check: You can transform your bioelectrical field into two types of high-voltage discharge.

Shocking Touch: An activation check is made to power your next melee attack (either with a weapon or unarmed) to deal electrical damage to the target, depending on the check result. If you hit, add the Vis Shock damage only after any energy shield activation check is made (just like with a shocker weapon attachment). Base damage is the normal weapon or unarmed damage; the Vis Shock damage is electrical.

DC	Damage Dice
15	+2d6
25	+3d6
35	+4d6
45	+5d6

Shocking Arc: You can send a bolt of electrical energy at a target within close range. Use the Vis Shock activation check as

the attack roll. It is considered to be a ranged touch attack (ignore the target's armor bonus) and the damage is electrical.

DC	Damage Dice
15	2d6
25	3d6
35	4d6
45	5d6

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

4th Degree: Vis Shield (Int; Trained Only; Vis Craft Psychics Only)

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Until its hits have been used

Saving Throw: None

Check: If you make a successful activation roll against DC 20, your bioelectrical energy erects a personal energy shield around you. This acts similarly to a standard energy shield (ranged activation DC 15, melee activation DC 17; DR 15 — even against blasters), although it does not burn out even with broad-area impacts and cannot be foiled by shield dampers. In addition, the field fluctuates at need, so you can wear any form of armor you desire without compromising the field. The Vis Shield supersedes and cancels out existing energy shields — you gain the power's protection instead of your own energy shield. Once the power's last hit has activated, other shields will work normally.

Note that this field does not interfere with the Vis Flow power (above); attacks absorbed by this power can be transferred elsewhere.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Urge

Every Psychic exists with the threat of his dark side. As you awaken the powers of your mind, you also empower parts of your psyche that you would rather not even acknowledge exist.

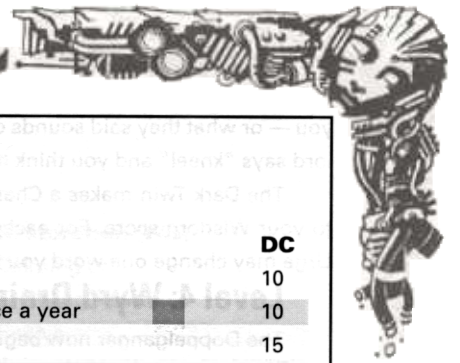
Psychics begin play with no Urge levels. Many lucky Psychics may even survive their entire careers without once feeling the shadowy presence of the Other flitting through their minds. The chances of the average adventurer being so blessed, however, are slim. Too many actions cause us to compromise our lofty ideals, and too many dangers lurk in the dark, whispering to our dark natures.

Gaining Urge

Whenever you perform an evil deed or suffer an encounter with an evil presence, you risk gaining a level of Urge. Even if your alignment is evil, you suffer this Achilles heel. To avoid empowering Urge, you must make a Will save. The DC depends on what disturbed the Dark Twin. See Table 6—3: Urge. If you fail to match the listed DC, you gain one level of Urge.

Once you have gained even a single level of Urge, a doppelganger personality begins to grow in the shadowy places of your mind. This Dark Twin remains buried in the unconscious most of the time. However, certain events or actions can awaken it and allow it full access to your consciousness and control over your actions. Every time you roll a natural 1 on a Psychic power





check, the Urge may awaken and come out to play. For the effects of an awakened Urge, consult the level descriptions below.

As soon as you gain an Urge level, record the Urge's stats on your character sheet. This is a record of how powerful the Dark Twin gets as it grows in level.

Losing Urge

After performing sufficiently contrite tasks or encountering wondrous Urtech, you can attempt to erase Urge levels. See Table 6—3: Urge. If you complete one of the listed tasks, you can make a Will saving throw. If your roll matches the DC for the task, you lose one level of Urge. In addition, for every five results you rolled over the required DC, you lose one extra level of Urge.

For instance, upon becoming a Penitent (giving yourself over to the Church), you can make a Will save against a DC 15. If the result is 15-19, you lose one level of Urge. If the result is 20-24, you lose two levels of Urge. A result of 25-29 erases three levels of Urge, and so on. If you rolled below 15, you do not lose any Urge.

Urge Levels

If you have Urge levels and roll a natural 1 on a psychic power check, your Dark Twin may awaken. Make a second roll for the power; if it succeeds normally, the Dark Twin does not awaken. If it fails, the Urge stirs and causes havoc. It can use the effects of the highest Urge level you possess and all the levels below it. Whenever it needs to make a check, it uses your stats.

An awakened Urge stays active for only 10 minutes per Urge level, after which it retreats back into the deep unconscious until it is awakened again.

As your Jungian Shadow (or evil twin, if you will), the Urge seeks to break down the good and moral parts of your mind, often forcing you into situations where you must either act on your negative impulses or break your own personal code of morality in order to succeed or even survive. Generally, an Urge will take whatever action it can to foul up your life, usually employing your most closely guarded secrets, repressed desires and rivalry among peers.

The awakened Urge is played by the gamemaster, who should remember that, while it may be fun to turn a character's dark side against him, everything the Urge does should be in the interest of the overall drama. Don't let cruel fun with the Urge get in the way of the main plot.

Resisting the Urge: If you do not want to perform the action the Urge demands, you can resist by spending a Wyrd point. This Wyrd point goes into the Doppelganger's pool (see Wyrd Drain) and no action is performed that round. If this keeps up, the gamemaster may require a battle of wills between you and your twin: you makes a Wisdom check, while the twin (using your stats) makes a Will save. If you win, the Urge is put back to sleep; if the Urge wins, you may not resist its actions for this period of awakening.

Maximum Levels: The maximum levels of Urge that you

TABLE 6—3: URGE

Gaining Urge

Taboo	DC
Stealing	10
Missing confessional more than once a year	10
Refusing sacrament	15
Declaring a vendetta	15
Rebellion against your liege lord, Church or emperor	15
Suffering inquisitorial torture	20
Exposure to an evil creature or artifact	20
Murder (justifiable in others' eyes)	20
Excommunicated	25
Exposure to another Psychic's awakened Urge	25
Exposure to a demonic presence	30
Murder (cold-blooded)	30
Committing rape	35

Losing Urge

Deed	DC
Pilgrimage	25
Performing Church mission	25
Performing dangerous mission for others (no personal gain)	20
Selfless sacrifice (throwing oneself in harm's way for others)	20
Church mercy (becoming Penitent)	15
Exposure to Second Republic Psi Clinic	15
Exposure to Soul Shard	15
Exposure to Philosophers Stone	10
Exposure to celestial presence	10

can have at any time are equal to your total character levels. Hence, if you are a 4th-level Psychic, you cannot suffer the 5th-level of Urge until you gain another level. If you are a 3rd-level Psychic and 2nd-level Knave, your total character levels are five, and so you are vulnerable to gaining Visions, the 5th-level of Urge.

Level 1: Speak in Tongues

As the Dark Twin awakens, it gains the ability to speak. You becomes prone to Freudian slips, especially dangerous ones that may reveal your powers. (e.g., "We cannot stand against them, my lord, due to your marital shortcomings — er, I mean, *martial* shortcomings!")

The Dark Twin makes a Charisma check against a DC equal to your Wisdom score. For each result gained over the DC, the Urge may change one word you say.

Level 2: Misdirection

The Dark Twin begins to flex its psychic muscles, causing you to accidentally use your powers on an unintended target. The Dark Twin makes a Charisma check against a DC equal to your Wisdom score. If successful, your action is redirected toward a neutral target like an innocent bystander. If the result was 10 points higher than the DC, the action is redirected toward a friendly target such as another player character.

Level 3: Voices

You begins to hear voices, sometimes those of friends or nearby people, and may think they've actually said something to

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you — or what they said sounds different to you. (e.g., The noble lord says “kneel” and you think he said “steal.”)

The Dark Twin makes a Charisma check against a DC equal to your Wisdom score. For each result gained over the DC, the Urge may change one word you hear.

Level 4: Wyrdrain

The Doppelganger now begins to collect the energy needed to build its psychic body. The Dark Twin makes a Charisma check against a DC equal to your Wisdom score. If successful, it instantly drains a number of your Wyrdrain points and stores them in its own pool. Keep a tally here — every point drained by Wyrdrain builds into a pool which is later used against the Psychic if his Dark Twin ever separates (write the Wyrdrain pool on the back of the character sheet). The Doppelganger may attempt only one Wyrdrain per day it is awake.

DC	Wyrdrain Drained
10	-1 Wyrdrain point
15	-2 Wyrdrain points
20	-3 Wyrdrain points
25	-4 Wyrdrain points

Level 5: Visions

You begin to see things that are not really there, but which are quite convincing at the moment they occur. Visions cannot harm you or anyone else, but can convince you that you have been injured or trick you into harming yourself or someone else. The Dark Twin makes a Charisma check. If successful, you hallucinate.

DC	Vision
10	The Urge induces hallucinations involving simple objects (e.g., making you think your gun is not in your holster when it really is, or that it is when it really isn't, or making you think it is a banana instead).
15	The Urge can do the same thing as above with multiple objects or a single person.
20	Multiple people can be targeted as above (e.g., you see a pursuing horde of snarling hungry feral Vorox behind the prince instead of your retinue).
25	The Urge can conjure up an entire illusory environment in which you appear to find yourself.

Level 6: Urges

The Dark Twin takes a more active role in your internal life, causing you to feel emotions you do not necessarily want, like anger, hate, fear, etc. Note that this is *not* permanent, lasting only for the time in which the Doppelganger is active. The Dark Twin makes a Charisma check. If successful, you suffer a penalty to any Charisma-based skill check.

DC	Penalty
10	-1
15	-2
20	-3
25	-4

Level 7: Dementia

As the Dark Twin's influence increases, you develop a permanent neurosis or psychosis, such as intense paranoia, schizophrenia, the need to kill people in a serial fashion, etc. The Dark

Twin makes a Charisma check. The result determines the degree to which this mental illness affects you.

DC	Effect
10	You may be annoying or disruptive.
15	You are actually counterproductive to the task at hand.
20	You are driven to destructive acts that can endanger friends and allies.
25	You may be driven to self-destructive acts.

Note that this *is* permanent, and can be gotten over therapeutically only if your Urge rating is reduced to lower than 7

Level 8: Outer Child

The Doppelganger has grown strong enough to project its psychic body outside of you, and goes out for occasional jaunts. This is only an illusory projection, and the Dark Twin is incapable of taking direct actions against other characters, other than simply appearing and speaking. With regard to you, however, this projection is as real and solid as anything else. The Dark Twin makes a Charisma check. The result determines how far away from you it may project itself. When appearing in your presence, others suffer a penalty on Spot checks to tell the difference between the real you and your Dark Twin.

DC	Range	Spot Penalty
10	Long	-2
15	Extreme	-4
20	Grand	-6
25	Planetwide	-8

Level 9: Doppelganger

This is the true birth of the Doppelganger; the Dark Twin is finally realized and becomes a separate, physical being, able to run around the universe all it desires. It has exactly the same stats as you (although it has no Urge), but its Wyrdrain rating is equal to the pool it has been developing out of your own mistakes (see Wyrdrain, above). The one benefit you gain from this is that your Urge levels are completely eliminated (although you can begin gaining Urge again by any of the methods given in Table 6-3: Urge — and even build another Doppelganger).

The Dark Twin makes a Charisma check. The result determines the penalty others suffer on Spot checks to tell the difference between the real you and your Doppelganger. The Doppelganger is permanent and real, subject to all the things that will kill a living person.

DC	Spot Penalty
10	-2
15	-4
20	-6
25	-8

Theurgy

Theurgy is the channeling of divine power or miracles through rituals. These rituals have been carefully maintained by Theurgists over the centuries. While they are not as flexible as psychic powers (their ranges cannot be enlarged and their durations cannot be extended by spending extra Wyrdrain, unless noted otherwise in a ritual's description), their effects are broad and often designed to affect



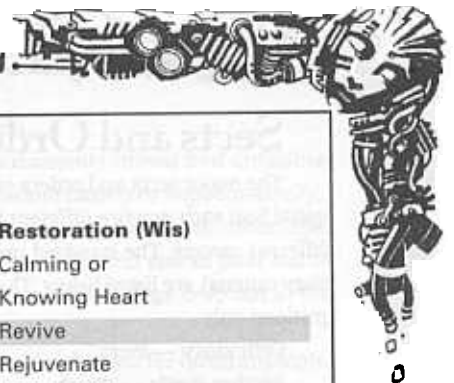


TABLE 6—4: CANONS AND RITES

— Canon —				
Degree	Mystery (Int)	Piety (Cha)	Protection (Cha)	Restoration (Wis)
1 st	Refine Essence	Bounteous Harvest or Illumination	Cleanse	Calming or Knowing Heart
2 nd	Unveil	Deliverance	Banish	Revive
3 rd	Dispel or Divine Revelation	Commandment	Sanctuary	Rejuvenate
4 th	—	Armor of the Pancreator	Armor of the Pancreator	—
Degree	Revealings (Int)	Sendings (Wis)	Wrath (Str)	Zealotry (Wis)
1 st	Scent of Deception	Entreaty	Bodily Temple or Congregation	Condemn the Machine or Scent of Deception
2 nd	Divulgence or Unveil	Congregation	Fearsome Majesty or Righteous Fervor	Censure
3 rd	Enigmatic Key	Whispers from Afar	Smiting Hand	Commandment or Flagellation
4 th	—	—	Armor of the Pancreator	—
Benedictions (by canon)*				
1 st	Cleanse			
2 nd	Revive			
3 rd	Providence			

* Special: At any degree, you can choose to train one of the Benediction rites instead of your canon's rite for that degree. The Benediction rite's key ability is still determined by your canon.

others within an area. Even those that do not have areas can affect multiple targets with expert castings.

Multiple Targets

Theurgic rites affect only one target (unless it states otherwise in the rite description). However, additional targets can be added by raising the required DC. For each extra target declared before the casting, add +3 to the DC.

For example, the Censure rite normally affects one target, causing him to suffer a morale penalty. Before casting, however, you can declare that you are attempting to affect three people (+9 DC). This means that you must now achieve a DC 24 to inflict a –1 morale penalty on the three targets, rather than the normal DC 15.

A single activation check is required to affect all targets, but each target makes his own saving throw to resist the power.

Canons

The Gifted feat is a prerequisite for all theurgic canons.

You must train in one of the accepted canons as your primary canon. The accepted canons are those listed in Table 6—4: Canons and Rites. Some canons offer a choice of more than one rite per degree. You must choose only one of them, and can train only that chosen rite.

A special Benedictions canon presents rites common to all sects and orders of the Church. At any degree, you can choose to

train one of the Benediction rites instead of your canon's rite for that degree. The Benediction rite's key ability is still determined by your canon.

Once you attain 5th level and can train a secondary canon, you can choose either to develop another of the listed canons, repeat the same canon (if it has at least one extra rite choice per degree; gaining the ability to learn the same rite twice has no effect), or create your own personal canon. Canons are simply collections of rites based upon a theme. You are free to develop your own theme and choose which 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-degree rites from the list in *Rites*, below) make up its theurgic curriculum — with the GM's permission, of course. A GM is free to veto any new canons if he feels they don't fit the game or abuse the system.

Key Abilities: The key ability for a rite is determined by the canon in which the rite is learned. There are many different ways of casting the same effect, represented by the different theurgic canons.

4th-Degree Rites: Some canons have a rare 4th degree rite. This may be learned by Theurgists after they have gained the canon's 3rd degree rite and in place of the bonus occult feat gained at 4th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 20th levels. Brother Battle warrior monks may learn 4th degree rites after they have gained the canon's 3rd-degree power, at 10th and 16th levels (this is in addition to the 10th level bonus social feat and the 16th level Lethal Touch).



Sects and Orders

The major sects and orders of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun each practice different forms of theurgy, represented by different canons. The standard canons (i.e., the most common primary canons) are listed below. These are not required, but are suggestions only.

- Orthodoxy — Piety
- Brother Battle — Wrath
- Eskatonic Order — Mysteries
- Temple Avesti — Zealotry
- Sanctuary Aeon — Restoration
- Voavenlohjun — Sendings

Rites

Components

Rites have one or more of the following three components used during the casting (not duration) of the rite:

- **Liturgy (L):** Words must be spoken. Some rites call for long orations, others for a simple benediction or a short hymn.
- **Gestures (G):** Symbols and signs must be traced in the air or on the object of the ritual. This could be a simple cross or a complex rune.
- **Prayer (P):** The priest must meditate to cast the rite. This is more than the usual concentration required of ritecasting. The Theurgist must at least partially close his eyes and block out external distractions. He suffers a -1 penalty on any Spot or Listen checks during the round in which he casts the rite.

A ritual can be performed without its components, but the Theurgist suffers a -2 penalty to his rite check. A Theurgist can thus still cast liturgical or gestural theurgy when bound and gagged.

1st-Degree Rites

Bodily Temple (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: G

This rite provides the same benefits as the Bedlam psychic power War Dance.

Bounteous Harvest (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G, P

Activation Time: 1 minute

Range: Long

Target: Varies (see text)

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can pray to increase the bounty of a crop, miraculously multiply existing substances, or create food and water from nothing.

Bless Crops: Following the traditional role of the priesthood in agrarian cultures, you can purify or enrich an amount of food in pounds equal to an amount dependent on your casting result. Crop blessing will neutralize impurities and organic poisons, re-

store perishable foods within two days of their having spoiled, and, in the case of untainted foodstuffs, make them more nutritious and fulfilling by 50% (e.g., a 10 day supply of rations can be stretched out to 15 days). This effect is very valuable on many worlds, where the fading suns fail to nourish crops

Fruitful Multiplication: Most often used to help feed famine areas, this effect increases the mass of a single targeted substance (such as food, water, cloth, building materials, breathable air, etc.) by a factor dependant on your casting result. This will not replicate manufactured items, only basic materials. Attempting to use this effect on money or precious metals is grounds for excommunication.

Manna from Heaven: This effect creates an amount of food sufficient to feed 10 adults for one day per point of Wvrd spent. The quality and variety of food created is dependent on your casting result.

DC	Bless Crops	Multiplication	Manna Quality
10	5 lbs.	—	—
15	10 lbs.	x2	a chewy dense substance somewhere between jerky and old bread
20	20 lbs.	x3	simple but hearty assortment of meats and vegetables
25	30 lbs.	x4	fully prepared meals
30	40 lbs.	x5	gourmet quality

Retry: Yes, but Wvrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Calming (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Personal

Area: 10 ft. + 5 ft./skill rank radius emanation from the ritecaster

Duration: 1 turn

Saving Throw: Will partial

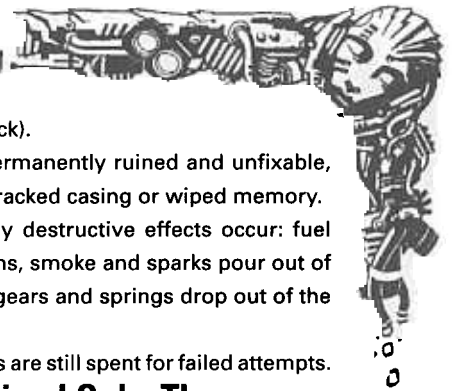
Check: By making a successful casting check against DC 20, you disperse the negative energies of rage, hate, fear and even less negative (but sometimes equally destructive) simple excitement. This rite has prevented many confrontations from escalating to violence, which accounts for the Amaltheans' reputation as diplomats.

Those within its area must make Will saves to attack or even intimidate others (although they can defend themselves). Even if they make their saves, they are treated as exhausted while trying to commit violence (half normal movement, -6 Str and Dex).

In addition, Calming may be effective for targets who are psychically manipulated or possessed by demons; while it does not actually cure or prevent these conditions, it may aid the target by, for instance, silencing the possessed so that an exorcism may continue uninterrupted. Such targets may make Will saves each round to avoid committing violent acts demanded of them by their possessors.

Retry: Yes, but Wvrd points are still spent for failed attempts.





Cleanse (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G, P

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature or object touched

Duration: Hours

Saving Throw: Will negates.

Check: Cleanse may be used to target people as well as

objects, purifying them from evil taint or influence. The Cleansed person resists being affected by Antinomy, Urge or Hubris, gaining a saving throw bonus based on the activation result against these powers attempting to affect the target. This rite has also proven effective in treating wounds when no antiseptic is available. Some Amatheans perform this rite daily as part of their regular devotional ceremonies. A Cleansed person participating in a rite adds a +1 bonus to the rite's activation check, but he must have some knowledge of theurgy, if not actual ability, in order to really participate. ("Hand me that crosier," does not count.)

DC	Bonus
15	+1
20	+2
25	+3
30	+4
35	+5

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Condemn the Machine (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Close

Target: One object

Duration: Varies (see text)

Saving Throw: None

Check: Developed soon after the Fall, this rite targets a high-

tech device and causes it to malfunction. Normally used against personal technology (blasters, comlinks, a single think machine terminal, a robot of human size or smaller), this rite can be used to target larger machines with an additional Wyrd expenditure based on size and complexity (+1 for Large size, +2 for Huge, +4 for Gargantuan, +6 for Colossal, +1 per tech level above 4).

The severity of the malfunction is based on casting result.

DC	Effect
15	Mishap. The object suffers a simple mishap that takes only an action or a few rounds to correct, such as a misfire or jam.
20	Warped. The object levies a -4 penalty for any checks made while using it. The effect lasts for one round per skill rank.
25	Damaged. The object levies a -8 penalty for any checks made while using it. It can be repaired with a Craft skill check (it takes an hour of work to make the check). This could also result in a dead battery, overheated motor, a system crash, etc.
30	Seriously Damaged. The object will not work at all until a successful Craft skill check is made to fix it (it takes a day

- 35 Ruined. The object is permanently ruined and unfixable, with a broken chassis, cracked casing or wiped memory.
- 40 Destroyed. Spectacularly destructive effects occur: fuel leakages, core meltdowns, smoke and sparks pour out of the control panel while gears and springs drop out of the bottom of the console.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Congregation (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G, P

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Long

Duration: Minutes

Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You can easily communicate with, or feel the emotions of, chosen targets, allowing the formation of a telepathic network among non-Theurgist characters. However, use of this rite actually makes it harder to manipulate or control these targets (-4 on all checks to do so). Not just any target can be chosen, however. It must be someone who has pledged a common cause with you, such as a boon traveling companion.

Any Congregationalist who steps outside of the rite's area drops off the network, although his telepathic connection is restored if he reenters the area (as long as the rite's duration is still ongoing).

The number of Congregationalists who can be included (in addition to you) depends on the casting result. You can decide who among a group is chosen after the casting check, but you cannot then change Congregation members unless you cancel the rite and make a new activation check.

DC	Congregationalists
10	1
15	4
20	8
25	16
30	32

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Entreaty (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, P

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Extreme

Target: One living creature per skill rank

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can send a plea for help over great distances. This plea can consist of one short sentence ("We are being held prisoner by Duke Glams!"), and the targets (one per skill rank) will hear this plea in their minds and know your location at the time you sent the plea. You do not have to be familiar with the targets, although you must know their rank or station (the town guard, the local magistrate, any Avestite within range, the adventuring party seen at the bar the other evening, etc.). They get a quick mental glimpse of you, but if they don't know you already,



they won't know who you are (they can maybe guess from your dress and supernatural plea that you're a priest of some sort).

You can increase the range by spending one extra Wyrd point per extra category (1 pt. for grand range, 2 pts. for planetwide, etc.).

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Illumination (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Varies (see text)

Target: Varies (see text)

Duration: Varies (see text)

Saving Throw: None or Reflex negates (see text)

Check: You can create light or fire. You must state which of the following effects you are trying to achieve before casting the rite.

Light: You create a supernatural glow, casting enough light to read by.

DC Effect

- 15 **Lantern.** You create a glowing insubstantial sphere in your palm or on a touched object. It casts light in a 10-ft. radius. This radius can be extended by up to 5 ft. per skill rank. The duration is 10 minutes per 2 skill ranks, or one hour plus one additional hour per skill rank if one extra Wyrd point is spent when casting.
- 25 **Blinding Flash.** You create an instantaneous bright flash to blind a target within close range. If he fails to make a Reflex save, he is blinded (suffering the standard penalties) for one round, and dazzled (-1 attack penalty) for the next turn.
- 35 **Empyrean Glow.** You can summon the light of the Holy Flame, creating a miniature sun in the sky or hovering above you along the ceiling. The radius is the same as a Lantern (above) but the duration is one turn. Anyone or anything caught in its radiance is affected. Anyone faithful to the Universal Church or the Celestial Sun gains a +2 morale bonus while it shines. Psychic Urges are immediately put to sleep for the next hour, and Hubris is also abated for the hour.

Flame: You can create fire. You must state which of the following effects you are trying to achieve before casting the rite; if you do not achieve the listed DC, the rite fails (you cannot try for Torchbearing and get a Hearthfire if you do not achieve DC 20).

DC Effect

- 15 **Hearthfire.** Favored by missionaries on uncivilized worlds, a hearthfire creates what appears to be a campfire, generating enough light to see in a 30-ft. radius, and enough heat to boil water or cook food. However, the flame created is not a natural fire; it is not hot enough to fire pottery or smelt ore, and cannot be used to start other fires or ignite flammable materials. No fuel is needed, but a cleared space must be prepared for the Hearthfire. The range is touch and the duration is one hour plus one additional hour per skill rank.

- 20 **Torchbearing.** You can create a flame without using lighters, matches or flint and steel. After the first 10 rounds, the fire will need fuel to burn like any other, but it can be kept burning without fuel by spending one Wyrd point for each extra turn.

- 25 **Distant Torch.** You can create flame as with Torchbearing (above) but do so at medium range.

- 30 **Conflagration.** You can create flame as with Torchbearing (above) but do so at medium range and over an area spread equal to 5 ft. per skill rank. Anyone in the area or trying to pass through it suffers 2d6 points of fire damage +1 point per every two caster skill ranks; use the normal rules for catching on fire. Anyone standing in the area when the rite is cast can make a Reflex save to take half damage that round (and then hopefully try to get out of the area as soon as possible). Those within 5 ft. of the conflagration's outer area suffer 2d4 points of fire damage from the heat. The duration is Concentration.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Knowing Heart (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: P

This rite provides the same benefits as the Psychic power Mind Sight.

Refine Essence (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

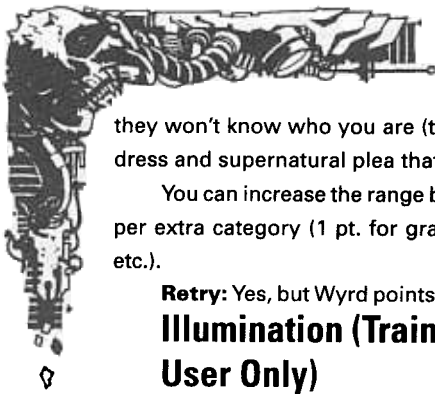
Check: You can alter the alchemical properties of an object or creature.

Refinement: You can cast out impurities or non-essential elements from an object or living creature, its size dependent on the casting result. Refinement may be used to purify fuel, strengthen building materials and detoxify food, water or the atmosphere of an enclosed and sealed space. Refinement may be used on living beings for beneficial effects, such as poison resistance (+2 to any saves). However, benign drugs and medicines, and even undigested food, will also be forcibly expelled from the target's body.

DC Target

- 15 One Large-sized or smaller object
- 20 One Medium-sized or smaller living creature
- 25 One Huge-sized or smaller object
- 30 One Large-sized or smaller living creature
- 35 One Gargantuan-sized or smaller object
- 40 One Huge-sized or smaller living creature

Transmutation: By calling upon the transformative powers of your own indwelling portion of the Holy Flame, you can transform the very substance of an object into a different material. You could turn a rope into wood, a linen shirt into iron, or a plasteel bulkhead into glass. The object or body of substance must be less than or equal in weight to 10 lbs. per skill rank. (Additional mass can be bought at 10 lbs. per Wyrd point.) The DC is equal to 20 +



Church Cosmology

Humanity will be judged by the fate of the stars. A sun must burn to birth light. When your passion burns, you give off light. You are born in light but travel in darkness. Beware the dark between the stars. Bring a lantern to it.

—The Prophet's words, from the Omega Gospels

The Prophet preached about a Holy Flame, a Celestial Sun which mystically burns at the center of the universe, providing light and life for all souls. Since this is holy light, it cannot be perceived with gross (material) senses. The light of this ever-burning sun flows outward and touches everything — except the darkness emanating from the demons, whose shadows blot the light. Since this fire is mainly spirit, actions of the spirit nourish or damage it.

The Avestites take this flame very literally, especially the Prophet's words about burning out sin, which they attempt to do with flamerguns. Less zealous priests claim that the Prophet was speaking metaphorically, that sin would be burnt out as darkness before a revealed light.

The material world is the reflection of the Holy Light. Evil stands between the Light and the material world, blocking the light that reaches mortal beings. This is why other points of light and reflections within the material world are so important, since they reflect the Light from other directions, not just directly from before. The virtues polish the soul to reflect the light, making the soul a beacon or lantern in the night of shadows. This holographic web of lights can thus be stronger in the material world than the direct ray of light itself, which is too often blocked by evil.

The Pancreator resides in the Empyrean, the seat of the Holy Flame. It is a place of pure spirit and light, nigh unimaginable to our sin and shadow-stained minds. It is from here that the light of the Holy Flame shines into all dimensions of existence. Some say that it is not above the world, but central to all worlds (although the idea of many worlds is still an argued tenet). Others say it is above all, that its light is sent by the Pancreator downward into the world of matter. This is called the Descent of Grace. When grace is accepted, the soul becomes a mirror, reflecting back the light of the Holy Flame. This is called the Luminous Return (the souls of the faithful return to the Empyrean with the light after death, and thus a bright soul is all-important to cast a powerful enough light back to heaven; if not, the soul may not reach all the way, falling off like weak light, getting lost in the darkness).

Each soul is meant to be a mirror for the light so that it can be reflected in all directions throughout the world(s). But sin blackens the soul. Enough sin will eventually shut out the holy light, leaving the sinful one's soul a black blotch of shadow —

pure evil, the stuff of demons, who cloak themselves in fogs of shadow. Sin is like verdigris on the mirror of the soul. To remove the sin, the soul must be polished, and there are many methods for this, differing with each sect. In general, however, the eight major virtues represent the necessary steps to polishing the soul.

Certain sects (Eskatonics among them) believe that everyone is born with a spark of the Holy Flame. The purpose of the Church is to fan this flame into a fire. This is best done through exposure to the supreme Holy Flame through mystical illumination or meditation. Thus, certain faithful are not merely mirrors but beacons themselves. The Orthodox Church believes this idea may be heretical, that the best humans can hope for is to be reflectors, not generators, of divine light. The former tend to seek inward for grace, while the latter look to external actions for grace, although both honor meditation, for it is known that in contemplation, the Holy Flame can be glimpsed.

Astrology: In the Diaspora, the Church taught that the stars were material manifestations of the Holy Flame. It was natural for people to yearn for distant stars; the Diaspora was an extension of humanity's search for the Pancreator. A whole new field of astrology became popular in occult circles, categorizing stars by the quality of their energy. People born under certain constellations would thus behave in certain ways, as ordained by the qualities of the Holy Flame being projected from these stars on the night of a person's birth. Pilgrimages became popular to certain systems known for a particular energy quality, such as healing or insight.

Moons had particular qualities of their own, being reflectors of the Holy Flame. The light they gave off was an alchemical result of the sun's light and the moon's own energy. Occult powers could be gained from certain moonlight.

After the Fall, the Church ignored the "star as Holy Flame" doctrine (the Doctrine of the Embodied Flame) and spurned Church astrology. It taught instead that each person must be content with the sun he was born under. Emperor Alexius is attempting to revive the Embodied Flame doctrine to spur new discovery.

Geomancy: This obscure philosophy is still studied by the Eskatonic Order. Each planet's molten core is believed to be, like a star, a piece of the Holy Flame. The energy of this fire escapes to the surface in certain ways, creating magical sites and ley lines. It is believed that the terraforming architects of certain planets knew this geomantic science and built the worlds to take maximum advantage of it. The Eskatonics believe that Pentateuch is one such place, as is Byzantium Secundus. Holy Terra is special, for it is the cradle of humanity and is thus rich with natural ley line energy. Geomancers are desperate to find untouched, unterraformed worlds to investigate, hoping to prove their theories.

the object's current hardness. Wood, for instance, would be DC 25, but glass would be only DC 21. Ceramsteel, however, would be DC 40. (See the EQUIPMENT chapter for the hardness ratings of high-tech substances.)

Transmuted objects do not necessarily cease to work; they may simply become more fragile or stronger. Devices with deli-

cate moving parts will probably break down — you can't turn a blaster into mercurium and expect it to still work; it has to be manufactured for such metal.

Ur-artifacts are not affected by this rite, and masterwork- or better-quality items get a saving throw (base save bonus = 2 + 1 per tech level above 4, +1 for masterwork, +2 for exemplary mas-



terwork, +3 for supreme masterwork). Living organic tissue cannot be affected.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Scent of Deception (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium

Area: 10 ft. + 5 ft./skill rank radius emanation centered on the ritecaster

Duration: Minutes

Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You can detect lies or sniff out evil. Choose only one option before casting the rite.

Knowing the False Heart: You can act as a human lie detector. Since this focuses only on intentional dishonesty and deliberate untruthfulness, it is possible for the targets (anyone within the area of the rite) to dissemble, hiding or twisting the truth with a Bluff check, opposed by your Scent of Deception check. Targets can receive a -2 penalty if they are trying to hide their own sins, or a +2 bonus if they are protecting an innocent under suspicion.

DC Result

- 15 Detect outright lies
- 25 Detect half-truths
- 35 Guess a half-truth's exact nature

Scent of Evil: You can "sniff out" acts of Antinomy, the actions of a psychic's Urge and the presence of demons or alien artifacts with a negative influence.

DC Warning

- 15 You can sense evil residue within the power's range, but not exactly what form it takes. "Evil has been here, but it is now gone."
- 20 You know that evil exists somewhere within the power's range, but not exactly what form it takes. "There is evil in this house!" You gain a +10 perception bonus to avoid surprise from any action the evil presence takes against you.
- 25 You can pinpoint the source of immediate evil within the power's range, but not identify what type of evil it is. You gain a +10 initiative bonus against the source and cannot be caught surprised or flat-footed by it.
- 30 You can pinpoint the source of immediate evil within the power's range, and identify what type of evil it is — Antinomistic, psychic Urge, heretical Theurgist, etc. "J'Accuse! Antinomy most foul!" You gain a +10 initiative bonus against the source and cannot be caught surprised or flat-footed by it.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

2nd-Degree Rites

Banish (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: 10 ft. + 5 ft./skill rank radius emanation centered on the ritecaster

Duration: 1 turn

Saving Throw: None

Check: By making a successful casting check against DC 20, you act as a kind of physical repulsion field against certain servants of evil, such as the husks of the dead (see the GAMEMASTERING chapter), the Doppelgangers of psychics, those under malicious influence from a negative Ur-artifact, etc. Evil minions cannot enter the area of the rite. If they are already within this area when the rite is cast, they are considered frightened and must flee outside the area. Additionally, they cannot easily use ranged attacks against anyone within the area of the rite; they must make successful Will saves to do so. The DC is 10 + 1/2 the ritecaster's skill ranks + his key ability modifier.

The duration of this rite can be extended by spending one Wyrd point per additional turn. These points do not need to be spent until the rite's duration is ready to expire, and no new casting check need be made.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Censure (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium

Target: One living creature

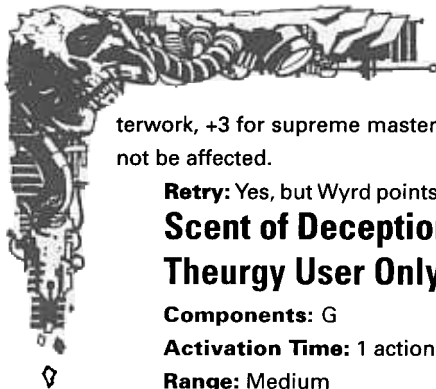
Duration: Varies (see text)

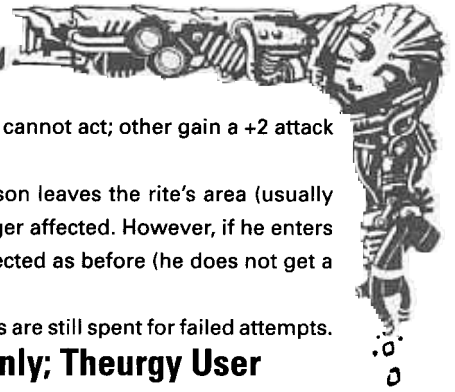
Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You give an enemy of the faith a taste of divine displeasure by repeating the first two lines of the Prophet's Admonishment of the Unbelievers and making the sign of the barred jumpgate in the target's direction. The target suffers a morale penalty (on attack rolls, damage rolls and saving throws) for one turn.

DC	Morale Penalty
15	-1
20	-2
25	-3
30	-4
35	-5

Sting of Conscience: Instead of Censuring the target, you can direct a verbal harangue against him, making him feel guilty about some past sin or misdeed. If he does not make his Will save, he will feel compelled to confess and beg mercy for his transgressions. During this time, he is considered dazed (he can take no actions except to defend himself). The condition lasts for a number of rounds depending on the casting result.





DC Rounds of Dazed

15	1 round
20	2 rounds
25	3 rounds
30	4 rounds

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Deliverance (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, P
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Medium
Duration: 1 turn
Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You can call upon divine grace to protect a target from harm. For the duration of the rite, he gains a bonus to his saving throws and armor class.

DC Save and AC bonus

15	+2
20	+3
25	+4
30	+5
35	+6

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Divulgence (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: P
 This rite provides the same benefits as the Psychic power

Mind Sight.

Fearsome Majesty (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Area: 5 ft./skill rank radius emanation centered around

ritecaster

Duration: 1 turn
Saving Throw: Will partial
Check: This rite causes fear of the Pancreator to clutch the

heart of any enemy within the area of the rite (although you cannot affect more people than your Fearsome Majesty skill ranks). Those who make their Will saves are shaken for their next action following the rite casting, but recover afterwards and suffer no penalties for the following rounds (unless the rite is cast again and they fail their saves).

DC Effect

15	Those affected are shaken (-2 morale penalty on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws).
25	Those affected are frightened (they must flee as best it can; if unable, they fight shaken).
35	Those affected are panicked (they must flee in a random direction with a 50% chance to drop what they are holding, suffer a -2 saving throw penalty, and cower if cornered).
45	Those affected must cower (they are frozen in fear, losing

Dex bonuses to AC, and cannot act; other gain a +2 attack bonus against them).

Once an affected person leaves the rite's area (usually by fleeing), he is no longer affected. However, if he enters the area again, he is affected as before (he does not get a new Will save).

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.
Revive (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: P
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: One living creature
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: None

Check: By calling upon Amalthea, Patron Saint of healing and compassion, disciple of the Prophet, you may bring comfort to an injured creature by touching his wounds.

DC Amount Healed

10	1d4+2
15	1d8+2
25	2d8+2
35	3d8+2

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Righteous Fervor (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G
Activation Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Varies (see text)
Saving Throw: None

Check: Your righteousness can either guide your weapon hand or gird your mind against distractions. You must choose only one of the following options before casting.

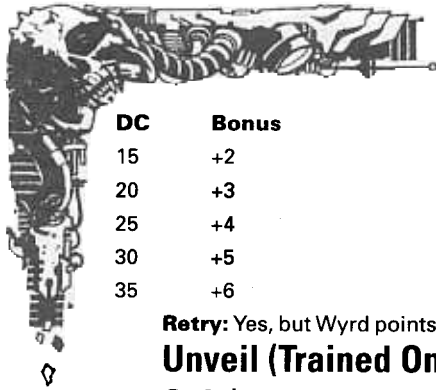
Rightfully Guided Hand: By calling on the Pancreator to steady your hand, you gain a bonus to your attack rolls for one turn.

DC Attack Bonus

15	+1
20	+2
25	+3
30	+4
35	+5

Righteous Resolve: You can resist all temptation, persuasion, fast-talk, etc., that would sway you from your duty for one hour plus one hour per skill rank. During casting, you declare your duty ("No harm shall come to the bishop under my watch," or "I shall safely deliver the writ to the hierophant on Byzantium Secundus."). If the casting is successful, you are especially resistant to any mental or social obstacles that would hinder your duty, gaining a bonus to oppose skill checks (such as Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidation) and occult powers whose aim is to divert you. In addition, you receive the same bonus to perception checks to notice possible physical obstacles to your duty (cutpurses, Decados assassins sneaking through the crowd, etc.).





DC	Bonus
15	+2
20	+3
25	+4
30	+5
35	+6

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Unveil (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: P

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Personal

Target: You

Duration: Minutes

Saving Throw: None

Check: This effect provides all the benefits of the Sixth Sense psychic power Second Sight, except that at the Subtle Sight level (DC 25) the auric image that you actually perceive is based on the Church conception of the soul. Unveil shows the actual "mirror" reflecting the light of the Celestial Sun, the Holy Flame of the spirit, centered on the heart region within the conventional aura. The size of the reflected Flame indicates the target's faith; for the devout, the Flame is large and bright, filling the surface of the "mirror," while in the spiritually lax it shows up as a candle flame seen at the end of a dark corridor. Because this "mirror" can be "tarnished" by sinful actions and intentions, you may guess at the type and extent of the target's sinful ways by examining the condition of the target's "mirror."

Sin	"Tarnish"
Pride	Narrow vertical streaks
Greed	Broad horizontal streaks
Lust	Violet bubbles rising from bottom
Envy	Greenish streaks pointing inward from outer edges
Sloth	Thick bluish bubbles rolling down from the top
Wrath	Reddish streaks radiating from the center
Oathbreaking	Cracks; one for each oath broken, with size of crack equaling importance of oath

In addition, at the Wyrd Sight level (DC 30), you see occult effects with an emphasis on the moral forces at work in the targeted viewing area. You may see a Psychic's Urge, for example, as a dark fetal form in the Psychic's brain (at lower levels) or as a fully formed shadow that moves independently of the Psychic casting it. This effect also reveals the presence of demonic influence, with their dark forms hovering in the air around an Antinomist, or coiled up in the body of someone who is possessed.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

3rd-Degree Rites

Commandment (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium

Duration: By check result (see text)

Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: You can command another person to either truthfully answer your queries or perform a task.

DC Result

- 20 **Questioning.** You can ask the target one question, which he must answer regardless of consent (unless he makes his Will save). Questions must be answered fully, completely and honestly, without evasion or trickery. He must be able to understand the question; if you do not phrase it in a language he understands, he is unaffected. After he has answered it, the rite ends; you must spend more Wyrd and make a new activation check to learn more.
- 25 **Interrogation.** You may ask the target a number of questions equal to half your ranks in the Commandment rite. Once again, language can be an obstacle. After he has answered them, the rite ends; you must spend more Wyrd and make a new activation check to learn more.
- 30 **Commandment.** You can verbally command the target to perform one action that he can complete in a single round. Unless he makes his Will save, he must carry it out to the best of his ability. Language can be an obstacle.
- 35 **Geas.** You can telepathically command the target to perform one task that may take a series of actions to complete, such as: "Defend me from those five assailants!" or "Retrieve the stolen letter from inside Reeve Manager Sulak's top desk drawer." Unless he makes his Will save, he must carry it out to the best of his ability, although if the task is proven impossible (the letter is no longer in the desk drawer), the influence is ended.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Dispel (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G, P

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Medium

Target: One currently active occult power

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Check: You can cancel another occultist's currently active power. Your Dispel check is opposed against the power's activation check; if you win, the power is canceled immediately. If you lose, the power is unaffected by your attempts to dispel it. This can be used against theurgic rites, psychic powers, Antinomist spells, etc. You can gain +2 bonus if you first make a successful Occulcraft check to identify the power.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Divine Revelation (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: P

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Personal

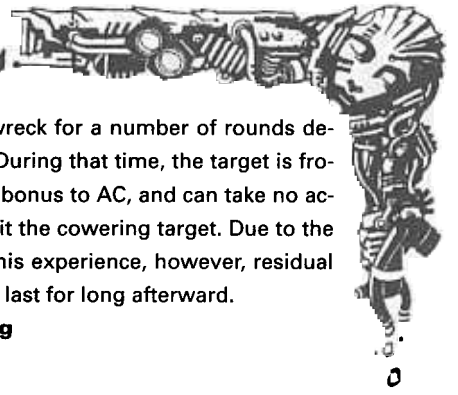
Target: You

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Check: Developed from the common prayer for guidance, this rite guarantees you some kind of significant insight into what-





ever problem is vexing you. The degree of insight depends on the casting result.

DC Result

15 Clue. An image or phrase that might not seem important but which reveals something about the topic in question (an image of the unknown villain's footprint or the word "old," referring to the villain's age). This may provide you with a +2 bonus for Academia, Search or Gather Information checks when researching the topic.

25 Indication. An image or phrase that points more directly to the topic (the villain's silhouette or suit jacket hanging in a closet, or the phrase "wretched apothecary," referring to his profession and reputation among those who know him). This may provide you with a +4 bonus for Academia, Search or Gather Information checks.

35 Answer. An image or phrase that reveals the exact nature of the topic (the villain's sneering face or recognizable voice). This may provide you with a +6 bonus for Academia, Search or Gather Information checks.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Enigmatic Key (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: P

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Personal (see text)

Target: You

Duration: 1 turn

Saving Throw: None

Check: This rite reveals hidden things — traps, secret doors, or hidden compartments. Make your Enigmatic Key check and record the result. For the duration of the rite, the gamemaster compares the result against the DC of any secret or hidden object that is within Medium range of you (even objects DC 20 or higher). If the result matches or exceeds the DC, you notice the object; it glows with a dim nimbus visible only to you. You cannot necessarily identify the object; Enigmatic Key does not tell you what kind of trap it is or how to open the concealed door, only that it is there.

You can detect only objects with this rite; it will not reveal living creatures, such as hidden assassins or lurking predators.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Flagellation (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Close

Target: One living creature

Duration: By check result (see text)

Saving Throw: Will negates

Check: This rite floods a target's mind with images of Gehenne (hell). These visions may take the form of Orthodox and Avestite description, burning hellfire or numbing cold lasting (or at least seeming to last) for eternity, or may take a more personal form, the reliving of a traumatic event or seeing one's greatest fears come to pass, or some amalgamation of both. In either case

the target will be a cowering wreck for a number of rounds depending on the casting result. During that time, the target is frozen in fear, loses any Dexterity bonus to AC, and can take no action. Foes gain a +2 bonus to hit the cowering target. Due to the deep psychological nature of this experience, however, residual effects (such as dementia) may last for long afterward.

DC Rounds of Cowering

20 1 round

25 2 rounds

30 3 rounds

35 4 rounds

40 5 rounds

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Providence (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium

Target: One living creature or area (see text)

Duration: 1 turn or concentration (see text)

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Check: You can bless a target or a host of the faithful with divine luck.

Prophet's Blessing: By tracing the Church's symbol on a target's forehead or in her general direction, you may bless her. The target gains a morale bonus that lasts for one turn.

DC Morale Bonus

15 +1

20 +2

25 +3

30 +4

Liturgy to the Faithful Host: You can instead recite a liturgy from the Omega Gospels, inspiring morale in those targets you choose before beginning the rite. They must each be within the rite's area (10 ft. + 5 ft./skill rank radius emanation centered on the ritecaster), and you cannot affect more targets than your Providence skill ranks. For as long as you continue to read your liturgy (a standard action that requires concentration), all targets within the area (and who can hear you) gain the morale bonus listed above, depending on the casting result.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Rejuvenate (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G, P

Activation Time: 1 full round

Range: Touch

Target: One living creature

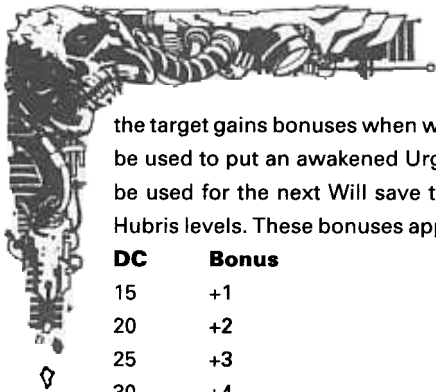
Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)

Check: You can ease others' psychological suffering, cure disease and neutralize poison, and even regrow severed limbs. You must choose only one of the following options before casting the rite.

Sooth Suffering: A target's emotional turbulence can be soothed; the symptoms of neuroses or psychoses are abated and





the target gains bonuses when working toward recovery. This can be used to put an awakened Urge to sleep, and the bonuses can be used for the next Will save the target makes to lose Urge or Hubris levels. These bonuses apply only to the next checks made.

DC	Bonus
15	+1
20	+2
25	+3
30	+4
35	+5

Neutralize Toxins: By achieving a DC of 20 or more on the casting check, you can restore a body's spiritual humours to their proper balance: diseases can be cured and poisons expelled. Damage from these ills is not healed but the cause of the problem is removed, allowing patients to recover normally. In the case of disease, the patient's own immune system wins over the virus, while poisons are expelled from the body, leaving evidence that may be analyzed by investigators attempting to trace the poisoner.

This effect also neutralizes the poison in a poisonous creature or object. A creature replenishes its poison at a normal rate.

Regenerate: By reciting the names of the Pancreator from the Compassionate Truths, you may perform miraculous healings. In addition to the effects listed below, the target also heals 1d8+2 hit points.

DC	Effect
20	Reattach severed limb, remove deeply embedded shrapnel
25	Restore diseased organ, expel insidious parasites
30	Regrow new limb in place of severed one

If a severed limb is held next to the wound, it is fully reattached within one round. A limb that must be regrown takes 2d10 days before it can be used normally.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Sanctuary (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium

Area: 10 ft. + 5 ft./skill rank radius circular or square spread

Duration: Hours

Saving Throw: None

Check: Acts just like the 2nd-degree Banish rite, except that it applies to all enemies, not simply evil. Anyone you do not specifically admit through the rite's area cannot enter into it or must flee from it if the rite is cast while they are within its area. The same ranged attack penalties for Banish apply to enemies outside the Sanctuary.

In addition, the perimeter of the Sanctuary gains the benefits of a Force Wall, just like the Far Hand psychic power. Compare the casting result to the cover DC in that power's description to see what armor class bonus is provided. The wall's hardness is equal to your Sanctuary skill ranks. However, you do not need to spend a Wyrd point to maintain the Sanctuary wall if it is breached by an attack. Enemies cannot attempt to pass through it unless they make a successful Will save each round they attempt it or are within its area.

The duration cannot be extended by spending Wyrd points; the rite must be cast anew to provide any new protection.

Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Smiting Hand (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G

This rite provides the same benefits as the Bedlam psychic power Prana Burst.

Whispers from Afar (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: P

This provides the same benefits as the Sixth Sense psychic power Far Scry. You may enlarge the range by one category per Wyrd point spent at the time of casting.

4th-Degree Rites

Armor of the Pancreator (Trained Only; Theurgy User Only)

Components: L, G

Activation Time: 1 action

Range: Personal or targets (see text)

Target: You and others (see text)

Duration: Each shield lasts until 15 hits have been used

Saving Throw: None

Check: Your faith erects personal energy shields around yourself and others. These act similarly to standard energy shields (ranged activation DC 15, melee activation DC 17; DR 15 — even against blasters), although they do not burn out even with broad-area impacts and cannot be foiled by shield dampers. Each shield allows 15 hits per power activation. The Armor supersedes and cancels out existing energy shields — those affected gain the rite's protection instead of their own energy shield. Once the rite's last hit has activated, other shields will work normally. Normal armor does not interfere with the Armor of the Pancreator; anyone affected can wear any type of armor.

You can decide who among a group gets Armor after the casting check, but you cannot then give it to others instead unless you cancel the rite and make a new activation check.

DC	Number of Others
15	Yourself only
20	2
25	4
30	8
35	16

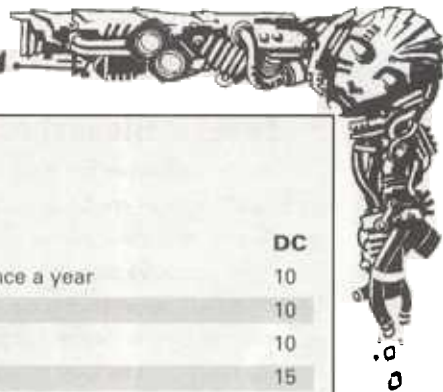
Retry: Yes, but Wyrd points are still spent for failed attempts.

Hubris

Few mortals can channel divine power without succumbing to some sense of ego inflation, a belief that they are themselves gods. Such overweening pride before the Pancreator leads to ruin for yourself and others.

Theurgists begin play with no Hubris levels. Many devout Theurgists may even survive their entire careers without once suc-





cumbing to overweening pride and the ruin it brings. The chances of the average adventurer being so blessed, however, are slim. Too many actions cause us to compromise our lofty ideals, and too many dangers lurk in the dark, whispering to our dark natures.

Gaining Hubris

Whenever a Theurgist performs an evil or heinous act, she may gain Hubris. Unlike psychic Urge, Hubris is with you always — the effects lasts until you have lost the level of Hubris that empowers them (unless stated otherwise in the description). Hubris comes in many forms, but the levels listed below are the most common.

Hubris is not a split personality or a dark entity growing inside you: it is your own human fallibility before the divine. Lack of humility leads to overweening pride at your ability to call forth miraculous powers, powers which are supposed to be the Pancreator's gift, not your own will exerting itself

Hubris is gained through roleplaying. Certain acts or deeds that you undertake may cause your Hubris to grow, and from there to slowly build if you keep performing similar deeds. What are such prideful acts? Breaking Church taboos. As a practitioner of theurgy, you have agreed to certain precepts of your religion, and you believe heartily in these precepts. Breaking the rules of the religion have consequences

See Table 6—5: Hubris for typical taboos and the Will save DC to resist gaining Hubris for committing them. Certain barbarians and aliens have different religions, and thus different precepts.

Losing Hubris

You can learn humility, although it is tough to regain squandered Grace; losing Hubris levels requires a quest or great deed of some sort. See Table 6—5: Hubris for typical deeds and the Will save DC to lose Hubris for completing them

Hubris Levels

Unlike Urge powers, which represent specific actions taken by the Dark Twin, the powers of Hubris represent the changing relationship between the Theurgist and the Pancreator — which is to say, between the Theurgist and the universe at large. Most are permanent, or always in effect, once that level has been reached, while others (like levels 2 and 4) require specific circumstances to become active.

Maximum Levels: The maximum levels of Hubris that you can have at any time are equal to your total character levels. Hence, if you are a 4th-level Theurgist, you cannot suffer the 5th-level of Hubris until you gain another level. If you are a 3rd-level Theurgist and 2nd-level Priest, your total character levels are five, and so you are vulnerable to gaining the Dolorous Stroke, the 5th level of Hubris.

Level 1: Avert Beast

Animals fear you: dogs bark at your passing, birds take flight, cats hiss and spit, horses rear and throw their riders, oxen bolt from their harnesses, etc. "Skittish as a Terran cart-mule," is a

TABLE 6—5: HUBRIS
Gaining Hubris

Taboo	DC
Missing confessional more than once a year	10
Refusing sacrament	10
Inventing proscribed tech	10
Declaring a vendetta	15
Rebellion against your liege lord, Church or emperor	15
Stealing	15
Rebellion against sect	15
Suffering inquisitorial torture	20
Exposure to an evil creature or artifact	20
Murder (justifiable in others' eyes)	20
Starting your own sect	25
Exposure to a demonic presence	30
Murder (cold-blooded)	30
Committing rape	35
Excommunicated	35

Losing Hubris

Deed	DC
Pilgrimage	25
Performing Church mission	25
Converting other sects or orders	25
Converting new faithful (heathens, heretics)	20
Renewing the faith of one who had lost it	20
Performing dangerous mission for others (no personal gain)	20
Selfless sacrifice (throwing oneself in harm's way for others)	20
Forsaking theurgy*	15
Exposure to holy relic	15
Exposure to Soul Shard	15
Exposure to Philosophers Stone	10
Exposure to celestial presence	10

* You must not cast any theurgic rites for at least a year, or lost Hubris will be regained.

private joke among rural priests, whose Hubris seems to be kept in check by this "early warning" effect; among the urban Church fathers, Hubris is less likely to be noticed, since they have less direct contact with the natural world.

Level 2: Guilty Soul

You become prone to Freudian slips that reveal your sin — your soul wishes to speak out so that you may recognize your sin and gain humility and thus forgiveness for it. Normally, public knowledge of this sin can endanger your career, so you keep it hidden from others, but your Guilty Soul will speak out at the most inappropriate times and say embarrassing things.

Whenever you roll a natural 1 on a theurgy rite check, your Guilty Soul may take over. Make a second roll for the rite; if it succeeds normally, the Guilty Soul does not speak. If it fails, the Guilty Soul speaks its mind. It uses your own Charisma stat to make a Charisma check against a DC equal to your Wisdom score. For each result gained over the DC, the Guilty Soul may change one word you say. It may do so as many times within the next 10 minutes as the gamemaster deems is necessary.



Level 3: Blemishes

Your pride before the Pancreator soon grows until it cannot cure itself through speaking, so it shows itself physically. Blemishes (warts, splotches, marks, etc.) appear on your face (or hands), signs that you have stepped over the boundaries of the Church. Unlike theurgic stigmas, Blemishes are recognized by the faithful as ominous taints. Some observers of fashion note that the Avestite preference for long robes with concealing hoods and veils dates back to an unusually corrupt period in that sect's history.

Level 4: Flagellation

If the Guilty Soul (above) is left unchecked, it can grow too large for the dark recesses of the your heart, building pressures that could cause it to burst from mere words into actual deeds. Your guilt eats away at you and you begin to perform unintended actions — sometimes dangerous — designed to reveal your guilt.

Whenever you roll a natural 1 on a theurgy rite check, you may Flagellate yourself. Make a second roll for the rite; if it succeeds normally, the Guilty Soul does not act. If it fails, the Guilty Soul acts against your conscious interests. It uses your own Charisma stat to make a Charisma check against a DC equal to your Wisdom score. If successful, it can change one of your intended actions into something else — even something dangerous to yourself, such as having you insult an already angry Vorox or even making you strike him. It may do so as many times within the next 10 minutes as the gamemaster deems necessary.

Level 5: Dolorous Stroke

As the sin of spiritual pride increases, it is accompanied by disdain for the real, the mundane and the physical; the soul is twisted between these extremes, and it twists the body along with it. A process begun with Blemishes (above) is completed as you suffer some crippling affliction, such as painful arthritis (sometimes bending a hand into a claw), a bent back, lame leg, etc. This effect is permanent (unless the Hubris level is decreased), and may often levy a -4 penalty on physical actions (Climb, Swim) or physical ability checks.

Level 6: Faithless

Inflated self-importance eclipses the place of the Pancreator in your heart, and guilt and sin spill out of your own form into the world around you. Your Hubris is too great for you to bear alone, and it begins to taint others. Your sermons, no matter how well or passionately delivered, cause others to feel a deep unease and a resultant loss of faith. They may desert your sect or even the Church itself, and in extreme cases (those who were already depressed), may commit suicide. You suffer a -4 penalty on a Charisma-based checks.

Level 7: Waste Land

As the secret sin grows, spreading from person to person, it begins to settle in the inanimate world as well. Your overweening Hubris begins to taint the earth itself. The local land becomes barren: Crops will not grow, animals will not birth and their milk and meat go bad on the hoof. If you leave and never return, the land may begin to recover, but it is a long and slow process that can be accelerated only with cleansing rites and blessings.

Level 8: Plague

As the faith of the people falters and the land is drained of its vitality, your sin is manifested in the bodies of those around you. A plague is delivered onto the local populace and you are its source. You do not suffer from the disease yourself, but others around may catch it from you.

Level 9: Dead World

Standing at the brink of damnation, your insufferable pride is swollen to encompass your entire planet. The Pancreator has cursed the world on which you preach. The planet you are on when you gain this level of Hubris becomes a wasteland — the entire planet dies. Only when you are healed of your Hubris (all of it) or are dead, will the planet live again. Priests whisper that this was the fate long ago of the planet Nowhere, the reason why so much of the planet — said in Second Republic texts to be lush — is now desert and windblown wastes.



Antinomy

Lurking in the shadows cast by dying stars across a crumbling empire, awaiting the return of a hollow darkened universe, poisoning the ears of high and low with greed, rage and fear, the dark lords of pain engineer the collapse of civilization. Antinomy and trafficking with malefic spirits can be traced back to the prehistory of Ancient Urth and other racial homeworlds, but appeared to have undergone a renaissance with the extinction of Sathraism. Much early Orthodox history contains detailed accounts of the practices and behavior of captured Antinomists, but little has been gleaned of their beliefs or occult techniques.

One document intercepted by Avestite Inquisitors and translated by Eskatonic monks appears to be a round chant purporting to describe the hierarchy of all creation. It is written in an ancient dialect of Kurgan, a fact of which the Hazat never fail to remind Brother Battle troops in their border wars. Beginning with a brief recapitulation of Eskatonic cosmogony, the chant describes the Celestial Sun with its layered Emanations, called Sefiros or "spheres" by the order; each Emanation, through the action of its residing intelligences or "Empyrean angels," reflects the Holy Flame outward until it is buried deep in the Tenth Emanation, or material world. From there the chant proceeds into a heresy long since purged from the Eskatonic Order; beyond the Tenth Sefiros lie ten more planes of existence cut off from the Holy Flame, dark empty snells of the Sefiros, called Qlippoth in the chant.

The progression of Qlippoth twists through nonspace so that the outermost Emanation converges upon a central point, named by old heretics the Infernos Prime, an inconceivably dense orb of black devouring fire, the opposite of the Celestial Sun. Inhabiting the Qlippoth are the hollowed vessels of consciousness known as demons, who yearn to break through ancient barriers confining them to the Qlippoth and consume the never-ending bounty and grace of the Celestial Sun. Since their natural portals to the Sefiros were closed off by a great race in some primordial eon, they must enter the material plane through the heart of a human or other sentient, which can open its own doorways to heaven or hell.

Antinomists work in secret to open the way for the demons, using powers granted to them by their attunement to the Qlippoth, by spreading anger, hatred, mistrust and any manner of corruption which can drive the Holy Flame from within and eat away enough of the soul to enable demonic possession. A gamemaster wishing to use an Antinomit as an antagonist may create Qlippothic equivalents of most of the above occult powers, more intrusive, soul-rending and painful versions, with each level corresponding inversely to the Qlippoth through which the power of the Infernos Prime is accessed (i.e., a 1st-level power derives from the Ninth Qlippoth, a 2nd-level from the Eighth, etc.). Practitioners of Antinomy are often plagued by Fealty ties to a dark lord that create effects similar to Urge and Hubris. Be sure that the Antinomit never takes center stage for too long, however, as their kind prefer to watch from the wings as mastermind manipulators.





BRIDGES 99



Chapter Seven: Gamemastering

Antagonists

The following villains are only a brief sample of those the characters might encounter across the Known Worlds. After all, the Empire is a big place, even if most people never meet anyone outside their own community. Gamemasters should feel free to change these antagonists in any way they want to make them better fit their game.

Known Worlders

Minor

These antagonists are best used for a few stories or as recurring minor characters. Their schemes are unlikely to trouble the characters for too long, but should be very annoying in the short term. They can appear anywhere the gamemaster likes and are easily changed between house, sect and guild affiliations.

Lady Rene Gooddale Hawkwood

While a serf would murder his entire family for the chance to be a noble, nobles do not always find their lives that worth living. Those who encounter such ennui find other ways to occupy their time. Religion, drugs, suicide — these are fine for some nobles, but Rene contemplated all of them and found them lacking. Instead, she decided to become a pirate.

To the eternal shame of her family and house, she sold many of her ancestral lands in order to afford a small frigate. She hired a small crew and took off in the dead of night, leaving her nagging hus-

band behind. Since then she has raided the space lanes incessantly, and her own house has put a price on her head.

Race: Human

Quote: "Excitement, adventure, glory... am I doing this right?"

Description: An attractive woman in her early 30s, Rene no longer wears the clothes of a noble but has yet to adjust to a pirate's rough garb. As a result, her wardrobe is a mish mash, and appears disconcerting to both groups.

Age: 32

Entourage: 20-40 competent pirates

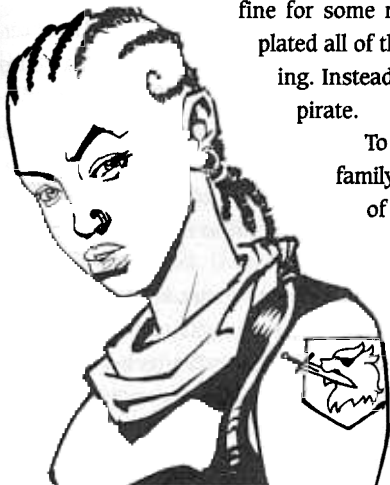
Female Human Nob1/Vul4; CR 5; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 1d8+2 plus 4d12+2; hp 44; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 13, flat-footed 12); Atk +8 Melee (2d4+4/18-20, mercurium scimitar) or +7 ranged (2d6/x3, blaster pistol); SA Battle Howl 1/day, Daunting Charge, Overwhelming Rush; SQ Fearsome Strength, Hawkwood Noble, Uncanny Dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +5, Bluff +5, Craft (high tech) +5, Diplomacy +5 (+6), Disguise +5, Drive (spacecraft) +7, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (nobility) +5, Sense Motive +4; Expertise, Improved Disarm, Noble Title: Knight (Hawkwood), Parry, Quick Draw.

Special Attacks: Battle Howl (Ex): Once per day, Howl for up to 6 rounds, foes within hearing distance make Will saves (DC = Intimidate check), or -2 to hit and damage Vuldrok Starwolf for duration; Daunting Charge (Ex): Suffers no AC penalty when performing charge maneuvers; Overwhelming Rush (Ex): Treated as a large creature (+4) for all Bull Rush maneuvers.

Special Qualities: Fearsome Strength (Ex): Use Strength modifier for all Intimidate Checks; Hawkwood Noble: +2 to Sense Motive checks for detecting falsehoods; Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Retain Dexterity bonus to AC when flat-footed.

Possessions: Leather armor, standard energy shield, mercurium scimitar, blaster pistol, 4 fusion cells, Hawkwood frigate-class starship.



Father Boris Spitteri

A prominent pastor on Grail, Spitteri has spent years ministering to Grail's underclass, getting to know their ways and means. Well, the means are the more important part, for Spitteri serves thieves, pirates and the like financially as well as spiritually. He has become a major part of the world's extensive fencing network, and can unload stolen goods in no time flat.

If he were just a fence for stolen goods, he might not be so bad, but he has extended his aim. He has begun telling his contacts exactly what items he wants — primarily religious relics. Should the characters own such, they may well become targets of his low-life friends.

Race: Human

Quote: "Only a sinful soul could make an accusation like that."

Description: Tall and muscular, Spitteri make an intimidating priest. He avoids violence, but looks like he would have no problem should it come to that.

Age: Early 40s

Entourage: Spitteri has two novitiates who help him with everything, and they are at least as big as he is. Additionally, he can call on numerous underworld figures should he find himself in trouble.

Male Human Pri2/Kna2; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 2d8+8 plus 2d8+8; hp 36; Init +0; Spd 30, AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 12); Atk +4 Melee (1d4+2/19-20, dagger); SA Sneak Attack (+1d6); SQ Sect Affiliation: Orthodox, Chemical Use, Evasion; AL LN; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Academia +6, Appraise +5, Bluff +6, Diplomacy +9 (+11), Forgery +8, Gather Information +10, Heal +6, Innuendo +6, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (bureaucracy) +6, Literacy, Sense Motive +7; Church Ordination: Deacon (Orthodox), Dodge, Gossip Network: Planetwide (Grail).

Special Qualities: Sect Affiliation: Orthodox: +2 Sense Motive when extracting confessions.

Possessions: Standard energy shield, dagger, priest's vestments, expedition MedPac.

Chief Chongho Sook

Characters will rarely encounter Chongho handling his own plots and schemes, but they will run into him nonetheless. Chongho provides muscle for those who need it, muscle capable of handling

the most sordid affairs. Need a witness permanently silenced or a Reeve advocate scared off? Chongho is your man.

His childhood gave no appearances of leading in such a direction. His parents hired laborers for the Muster and assigned them to appropriate positions.

Chongho became a Muster member at eight, running errands for them and other guild members. He became fascinated by the

swaggering guild mercenaries before deciding to emulate them. He found that in order to succeed, he had to be bigger and meaner than the rest, and that he is.

Race: Human

Quote: "My employer requests that you die."

Description: 6'6" of solid muscle, Chongho looks like he can batter his way through a brick wall — and he can. As skilled with his bare hands as he is with weapons, he lets nothing get between him and the completion of a job. He has also learned that looking shocking is often half the job.

Age: Late 20s

Entourage: Whatever thugs his bosses hire for him to work with.

Male Human Gld 1/Sol6; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 1d8+3 plus 6d10+18; hp 59; Init +4; Spd 20; AC 22 (touch 16, flat-footed 18); Atk +12/+7 melee (2d6+7/x3, ceramsteel greatsword) or +11/+6 ranged (2d6/19-20 x3, masterwork assault laser); SQ Guild Affiliation: Muster; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +3, Drive (landcraft) +12, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Heal +5, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (torture) +4, Literacy, Ride +8, Spot +7; Alertness, Guild Commission: Sergeant (Muster), Iron Will, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Subtle Strike (greatsword), Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Special Qualities: Guild Affiliation: Muster: +2 Intimidate when threatening violence.

Possessions: Supreme mercurium chainmail, ceramsteel greatsword, MW assault laser, laser pistol, squawker, expedition MedPac, Muster chains, torture kit.

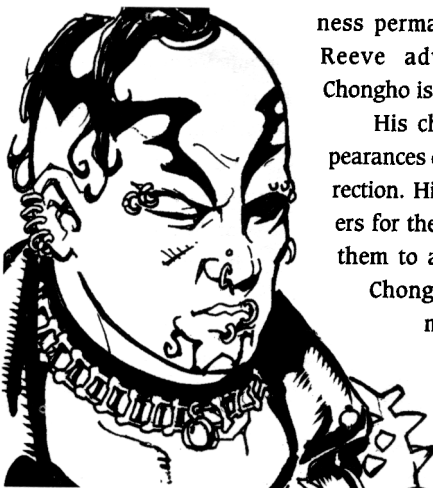
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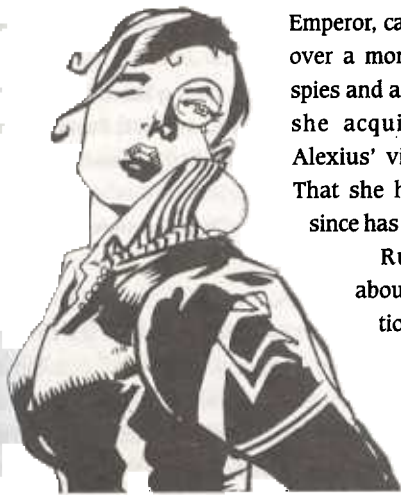
These villains can shape entire epics. Meeting them face-to-face should only occur after a number of other stories which lead up to it. Characters would be wise to avoid attracting their attention as long as possible, and have some powerful allies whenever they finally do. Much of what they are doing is up to the gamemaster to decide. Is Brother Lazio crazy, a pawn of someone else or something far worse? Does Duchess Salandra work for herself, the Decados, the Engineers or something else? Gamemasters should use these characters as they see fit.

Duchess Salandra Decados

Salandra's earliest tutors, servants and slaves whispered nervously to each other about how anyone could be such a perfect Decados. To them, Salandra's nature was the culmination of centuries of Decados' decadence, treachery and madness. Her greatest pleasure came from hurting others, be they her playmates, servants, siblings or parents. By the time she was eight her parents had had enough, and they secretly shipped her off to the Supreme Order of Engineers for discipline.

When Salandra returned seven years later, she no longer went out of her way to hurt others. At least, she was never caught doing so — not even when her parents died a month after her return. She immediately took the reins of the family's planet, scaring off Duke Silen Decados when he tried to claim the world. Her rise through the family has been swift and effective, and no one, not even the





Emperor, can claim to have control over a more effective network of spies and assassins than she. That she acquiesced so readily to Alexius' victory surprised many. That she has been so busy ever since has scared them even more.

Rumors run rampant about her plans and connections. Whether she wants power for some unknown purpose, or just for its own sake, no one knows. That she lusts after power

goes without question, and no one doubts that she would go to extreme measures for it. Many Decados believe she would sell them out without a second's thought if it advanced her cause, and some whisper that despite her family's opposition to Alexius, she and the Emperor have been occasional lovers. Such talk sends good Hawkwoods into paroxysms of horror

Race: Human (?)

Rank/Class: Duchess

Quote: "Kill him."

Description: Salandra's appearance varies from day to day.

She is usually a tall, androgynous woman, but this can change within hours. Even her cybernetic implants are so well hidden that they offer no permanent means of recognition. Duchess Salandra's motives should be well beyond the characters' initial understanding. Her plots are so deep that only the most dedicated digging should get to the heart of them.

Entourage: Some of the leading experts in their field. An Engineer cosmetic surgeon goes with her everywhere, and perfects her look whenever the whim seizes either of them. Her bodyguards can kill with a single motion and her technicians can fix (or destroy) anything.

Female Human Nbl3/Psi11/Kna3/Lwp3/Tec1; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 3d8+12 plus 11d6+44 plus 3d8+12 plus 1d6+4; hp 140; Init +8; Spd 40; AC 31 (touch 27, flat-footed 22); Atk +24/+19/+14 (1d6+2+1d6/15-20, supreme mercurium rapier w/shocker) or +23/+18/+13 (1-4 +poison, masterwork needlegun); SA Poison, Sneak Attack (+2d6); SQ Evasion, House affiliation: Decados, Martial Art: Jox Boxing, Psychic Powers: AL CE; SV Fort +14 Ref +14 Will +19; Str 18, Dex 26, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +18, Diplomacy +20 (+25), Disguise +20, Forgery +18, Gather Information +20, Innuendo +15, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (arcana) +18, Knowledge (nobility) +18, Knowledge (history) +18, Listen +19, Literacy, Occultcraft +14, Read Lips +15, Ride +12, Sense Motive +22, Spot +19; Combat Casting (psi), Comeliness, Gifted, Gossip Network: Known Worlds, Improved Critical: Rapier, Multiply Psi, Noble Title: Duchess (Decados), Parry, Psi Focus (Psyche), Riposte, Reputation (x3), Subtle Strike, Weapon Finesse: Rapier, Withering Insult.

Special Attacks: Poison: Injury DC 17; 1d4 Con; 2d6 Con.

Special Qualities: House Affiliation: Decados +2 bluff when lying, Martial Art (Jox Boxing): +2 Escape Artist when breaking holds.

Psychic Powers: (Wyrd 55) Psyche: Mind Sight (DC 23) +18, Mind Sway (DC 23) +18, Brain Blast (DC 23) +18; Sixth Sense: Premonition (DC 20) +16, Second Sight (DC 20) +16, Far Scry (DC 20) +16; Soma: Control Body +14, Alter Body +14, Enhance Body +14.

Possessions: Synthsilk, Vau energy shield (DC ranged 12, melee 15, DR 20/15/10), supreme mercurium rapier w/shocker, MW needle gun, shield dampener, cybernetics (lithe wire, second brain, engineer's eye), pretty much anything else she wants.

Brother Lazio Urtana

Brother Lazio walked out of the Malignatus wilderness one day and began preaching. Nobody knew where he came from and nobody knew his allegiance, but they listened anyway. In a time of unending war, his words of imminent apocalypse and severe, divine justice found a ready audience. His fiery sermons caught the crowd's attention at once and his doctrine has spread like wildfire around the world. Before the local authorities could react, it had anchored itself firmly into the planet's culture and no one has tried to uproot it yet.

While Brother Lazio has yet to attract inquisitorial attention, his followers are moving out to other planets. Anyone who looks closely at his "theology" realizes that it is a strident indictment of the Emperor and the Church, but no one has raised this point yet. At least, no one has raised it and lived.

Brother Lazio has also incorporated himself deep into Malignatus life. His followers have spread through guilds, Decados fiefs and even other parishes. Some of the planet's Reeves joke that he gets more firebirds from every deal on the planet than they do. As his coffers grow, so do fears of what he might use that money to fund. At least one Questing Knight has tried to find out, only to never be seen from again.

Race: Human

Rank/Class: Novitiate

Quote: "Your sins will rain down fire upon your heads, and your homes will be as blast furnaces if you continue to turn your face from God!"

Description: A middle-aged, bearded man with fire in his eyes. He alternates between wearing the best, most respectable clothing available and the simplest, ugliest robes. Reform-minded characters might be initially attracted to Brother Lazio, but they will soon realize that he only wants to replace the current structure with an even more oppressive theocracy, with him at the top.

Entourage: Brother Lazio has thousands of committed followers and is constantly surrounded. Any skills he might need are at his command.

Male Human Pri14; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 14d8+42; hp 102; Int +0; Spd 30; AC 14 (touch 14, flat-footed 14); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6/x2, quarterstaff); SQ Sect Affiliation: Orthodox; AL N; SV Fort +12; Ref +9; Will +12; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 20.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +22, Heal +18, Gather Information +22, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (religion) +21, Knowledge (local) +21, Listen +18, Literacy, Occultcraft +21, Perform +22, Sense Motive +18, Spot +18; Church Ordination: Novitiate (orthodox), Enthral, Epiphany, Etiquette, Gossip Network: Planetary (Malignatus), Holier Than Thou, Iron Will, Leadership, Peasant Hero, Purgation, Physick, Rabble Rouse, Smear Campaign,



Withering Insult.

Special Qualities: Sect Affiliation (Orthodox): +2 Sense Motive when taking confessions.

Possessions: Dueling energy shield, nanotech MedPac, just about anything else needed is provided by his followers.

Hasaline akir Vetenant

Hasaline's father, a leading Ukari chieftain, had high hopes that his race could learn to live with humans. To prove his point he sent his two children, Hasaline and her younger brother Jekail, to a Church school to learn to be "more human." The children stayed at the school after his death, and after an Avestite became headmaster of the school. Soon almost all the old teachers had left, replaced by his Avestite brothers. Then Jekail was accused of heresy.

Older students seized the child from his bed in the middle of the night and took him to the lowest cellars of the school. Hasaline's attempts to reach her brother were met with sticks, and by the end of the night she was a beaten mass, with blood streaming from every part of her body. She was shipped home the next day and never saw her brother again.

The Vetenant clan had lost a great deal of power by this time, and no official investigation was ever carried out. Hasaline has never spoken of the incident again, and joined the ranks of Ukari diplomats. Her early schooling has proven invaluable, and she is second-in-command to the Ukari delegation on Byzantium Secundus. Now she has begun the tasking of making humanity pay.

She has taken every opportunity to spread dissension and chaos. She and her agents encourage riots, sabotage charity efforts, spread rumors about Questing Knights, and promote the belief that the Emperor is anti-Church. She would like nothing better than to see the Emperor Wars erupt again in all their fury.

Race: Ur-Ukar

Rank/Class: Diplomat

Quote: "Ever so pleasant to meet you. I hope you don't find my species unsettling. Good. Oh yes, I certainly find the Decados more unsettling as well."

Description: Tall and regal. She has less tattoos than many of her people and looks a little more human. She favors human dress, wearing traditional Ukari garb only on special occasions. Hasaline will do everything in her power to appear as a friend to all humans. She constantly praises human culture and practices, all the while striving to turn human against human.

Entourage: A scattering of official bodyguards, but Hasaline associates with no close friends. Her only real friends are being hunted by the Imperial Eye as alien terrorists.

Female Ukar Kna6/Psi6; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 6d8+12 plus 6d6+12; hp 70; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 20 (touch 16, flat-footed 20); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4+1/19-20, dagger) or +11/+6 ranged (1d4+1/19-20, dagger); SA Sneak Attack (+3d6); SQ Chemical Use, Evasion, Psychic Powers, Uncanny Dodge, Ukar abilities; AL NE; SV Fort +6 Ref +10 Will +7; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 17, Wis 11, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +12, Decipher Script +12, Diplomacy +12, Forgery +12, Gather Information +12, Innuendo +9, Knowledge (torture) +12, Listen +9, Literacy, Occultcraft +12, Perform +12, Read Lips +12, Sense Motive +9; Diplomatic Immunity, Etiquette, Gifted, Multiply Psi, Secret Agent: Agent (Bava!).

Special Qualities: [Uncanny Dodge: keep Dex bonus to AC when flatfooted, cannot be flanked.

Psychic Powers: (Wyrd: 24) Far Hand: Lifting Hand (DC 17) +11, Force Wall (DC 17) +11, Kinetic Strike (DC 17) +11; Psyche: Mind Sight (DC 15) +8, Mind Sway (DC 15) +8, Urge: Speak in Tongues, Misdirection.

Possessions: Synthsilk armor, dagger, facial scanner.

Barbarians

Brutal and uncouth, these outworlders lust after the riches of the Empire. Barbarians can be from any number of non-Empire worlds, including those from recently rediscovered Lost Worlds, allied a millennium ago with the Known Worlds but lost after the Fall. They can be Viking types, Mongol types, or Islamic types getting in the way of a holy crusade. How "uncivilized" they are is often a subjective opinion.

The Kurgans

The major current barbarian conflict in the Known Worlds is the Kurgan Conflict on one of the Hazat borders. It is waged against the Kurga Caliphate for rights to a Lost World discovered recently. The citizenry of the world itself is split on ownership issues: some aid the Caliphate, some rebel and aid the Empire. This conflict has devolved into a series of costly and difficult guerrilla-type skirmishes, a situation that has proven extremely profitable for the Muster. Any player characters who are shanghaied by the Chainers will most likely find themselves in the middle of this war.

Many recently mustered-out soldiers and mercs will probably have seen battle in this conflict, and might know some of the Kurgan language and ways due to exposure to the Kurga-influenced natives on the embattled world. Some face charges of heresy for saying that the Kurgan Caliph (who is both political and religious leader to his people) follows a variant interpretation of the same Prophetic teachings as the Orthodox Church. Others have met with unfortunate accidents after repeating the rumor that the Caliphate is harboring a survivor of the old House Chauki lineage.

Zulaykha Turakina

Once the most sought-after courtesan in the Caliph court, Zulaykha Turakina was exiled from Kurgan space when her beauty caused the Caliph's nephew to undertake rash actions. Although embittered, she is still devoted to the Caliph and will do anything to regain his favor. To this end she makes her way to the court of the Phoenix Emperor, keeping ears, eyes and hands open for any information or items she can use to buy her way back into the presence of the Caliph.

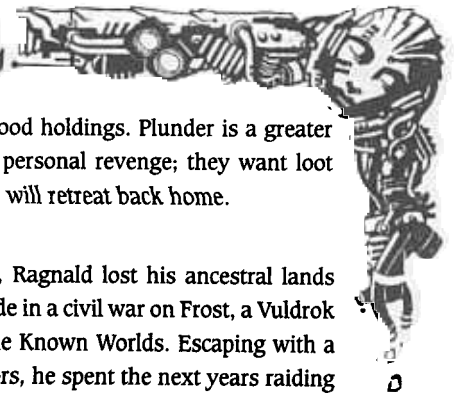
Race: Human

Rank/Class: High Courtesan

Quote: "Never in all of my years have I been experiencing a lovemaking so passionate, and yet so consummately skilled, as yours, O my lord!" (or, "O my lady!" as circumstance demands...)

Description: Very tall for a Kurgan, Zulaykha is taller than most Known Worlds females and many males, a fact she emphasizes with high heels and hairstyles seemingly conceived by late Republican architects. Though slender, her body is taut with well-trained muscle softened by ripe curves only partly attributable to cosmetic surgery.





Her real hair is wavy black with a reddish tint and, when unbound, falls to her ankles. Olive-complexioned, her face combines the finest features of all the various human racial types, especially favoring the Asian, though her almond-shaped eyes are naturally green. The poet Rustam is quoted as saying that her broad pearly smile could melt the polar caps of Malignatius, but is occasionally marred by a bitter scowl — usually reserved for enemies and servants — that once caused a Vorox to soil himself



Roleplaying: All people are your playthings, worshipping your beauty, vying for your glance, craving your touch. And why not — for are you not the most desirable creature in all the universe? Associate only with the richest and most powerful, but know the value of winning over their underlings as well

Entourage: Besides an ever-present train of suitors, admirers and entrepreneurs, Turakina travels with five slaves. Four are female — two clothiers, a hairdresser and a cosmetologist — and, though said to be as lovely as Zulaykha herself, only their dark eyes may be seen peering coyly through their long veiled gowns. The fifth is a huge musclebound albino eunuch with a shaven head and an enormous scimitar. All five are deaf-mutes, communicating only with their mistress through complex hand-escape and body language.

Female Human Nob9; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 9d8; hp 40; Init +2; Spd 30; AC 14 (touch 14, flat-footed 12); Atk +8/+3/+8 melee (1d4/x3; supreme punching dagger x2); SQ House Affiliation: Kurgan; AL LE; SV Fort +6 Ref +5 Will +7; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 22.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +18, Diplomacy +18, Disguise +18, Gather Information +12, Innuendo +18, Knowledge (nobility) +15, Literacy, Perform +18, Read Lips +13, Ride +6, Sense Motive +13, Spot +13; Ambidexterity, Comeliness, Diplomatic Immunity, Enthrall, Noble Title: Courtesan (Kurgan), Reputation, Savoir Fare, Subtle Strike, Trendsetter, Two Weapon Fighting, Withering Insult.

Special Qualities: House Affiliation (Kurgan): +2 Bluff when flattering.

Possessions: Standard energy shield, 2 supreme punching daggers, elaborate wardrobe, aphrodisiacs.

The Vuldrok Raiders

Other barbarians include the Vuldrok Raiders on the Hawkwood border. A loose and undisciplined alliance of minor star nations run by warrior kings, the Vuldrok claim that they were once a Hawkwood protectorate, but that the House abandoned them during a famine caused by a millirice blight. Hawkwood representatives have since tried to explain that the planned shipments of famine aid were interrupted by the collapse and near-extinction of their House, but old resentments harbored through centuries of starvation are hard to quell. The Vuldrok have pirated some Hawkwood ships that they

use to plunder outlying Hawkwood holdings. Plunder is a greater motivation to the Raiders than personal revenge; they want loot and when they don't get it, they will retreat back home.

Ragnald the Red

The son of a minor thane, Ragnald lost his ancestral lands when he supported the losing side in a civil war on Frost, a Vuldrok planet beyond the borders of the Known Worlds. Escaping with a handful of his most loyal warriors, he spent the next years raiding independent worlds near Vuldrok space, making his way eventually to Leminkainen during the middle years of the Emperor Wars. In poor shape after battling Decados fleets, Hawkwood ships could put up little fight. Ragnald landed on the world and stuffed his ship's hold with stolen riches, fleeing just before reinforcements from Ravenna could arrive. He settled on Hargard and took a wife, who gave him many sons. But this life now bores him, and he feels the urge to raid again. He has gathered his warriors and intends an extended trip into the Known Worlds, this time aiming for Byzantium Secundus.

Race: Human

Rank/Class: Warrior-Thane of Hargard

Quote: "If someone attempted to steal our god's treasures, we would form a shield wall and fight to the end!"

Description: A tall, powerfully built man, Ragnald dresses in battle gear and furs, and carries a flux sword inscribed by a Vitki Runecaster so that it has twice as many charges per fusion cell. He wears protective amulets around his neck, and beneath his furs, reflective scales of armor shine through. His beard has begun to gray.

Male Human Srf11; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 11d12+33, hp 105, Init +0, Spd 20; AC 23 (touch 13, flat-footed 23); Atk +18/+13/+8 melee (2d8+5/17-20 x3, masterwork fluxsword) or +13/+7/+3 ranged (1d10/19-20 x3, exemplary laser pistol); SA Battle Howl (4/day), Daunting Charge, Overwhelming Rush; SQ Fearsome Strength, Uncanny Dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +9 Ref +3 Will +2; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Handle Animal +9, Intimidate +19, Sense Motive +4, Wilderness Lore +8; Exotic Weapon (fluxsword), Improved Critical (fluxsword), Leadership, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (fluxsword).

Special Qualities: Uncanny Dodge: keep Dex bonus to AC when flat-footed, cannot be flanked.

Possessions: Supreme mercurium half-plate, small mercurium shield, masterwork fluxsword, exemplary laser pistol, dagger.

Psychic Covens

These secret organizations lurk everywhere in the Known Worlds, harboring outlaw psychics, pagan priests and sorcerers. They are the favorite bugaboo in many peasant conspiracy theories, believed to be the hands behind many disasters, such as cows giving curdled milk or the assassination of Vladimir. In actuality, most of them are simply mutual survival and support networks for those blessed/cursed with occult powers. Some of them, however, really are up to their necks in conspiracies.

Covens come in all sizes and shapes. Most of them are merely local organizations, bound to the planet they exist on. But some of them are interstellar, true guilds of sorts, gathering wayward oc-



cultists from across Human Space (and elsewhere, it is rumored). Some of these major occult covens are detailed below, although many others exist.

The Favyana

This widespread coven acts as a support group for psychics, working to make psychic powers accepted. They provide teaching and advice on how to hide, but ask aid in return — members may get a phone call in the night, requiring them to leave their house, homeland and even planet to perform some secret duty. The Favyana maintain a general attitude of benevolence toward all sentient life, but conflicts with the Church have, in the past, taken on a somewhat vicious edge.

The coven's name is a kind of homage to the Phavian Institute, which flourished during the Second Republic as the finest school for paranormal research and psychic training. While the Favyana have nothing that approaches the facilities enjoyed by their predecessors, they are still the best resource available to psychic player characters wishing to increase their powers.

Mama Rahveloon

Mama Rahveloon has worked for House Juandaastas for most of her life, usually as part of the entourage of their well-traveled daughter Margrita. When traveling, Raveloon seeks out psychics in trouble and often arranges for their passage to the Juandaastas homeworld, where she runs a Favyana halfway house under the guise of a midwifery school.

Race: Human

Rank/Class: Midwife to House Juandaasta

Quote: "There, there, my dearie. Have a sip of this and tell me what is troubling you."

Description: A short matronly woman with olive skin and an open smile, dressed like a cross between Aunt Jemima and Carmen Miranda

Female Human Psi15; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 15d6+30; hp 78; Init +1; Spd 30; AC 16 (touch 16, flat-footed 15); Atk +6/+1 melee(1d4-1, dagger); SQ Psychic Powers; AL NG; SV Fort +7 Ref +6 Will +15; Str 9, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 22, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Concentration + 10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Occultcraft +10; Alien Friend, Alternate Identity, Coven Membership (Favyana), Enlarge Psi, Epiphany, Extend Psi, Gifted (psychic), Householder (Juandaasta), Multiply Psi, Refuge x2, Xeno-Empathy.

Psychic Powers: (Wyrd: 90) Sixth Sense: Premonition (DC 25) +24, Second Sight (DC 24) +22, Far Scry (DC 23) +20; Omen: Postcognition (DC 22) +18, Precognition (DC 21) +16, Shadows of the Departed (DC 20) +14; Psyche: Mind Sight (DC 17) +11, Mind Sway (DC 17) +11, Brain Blast (DC 17) +11, Puppetry (DC 17) +11.

Possessions: Dagger, disguise kit, clothes and other supplies for refugees.

The Invisible Path

This not-so-nice mob of psychics believe they are evolutionarily superior to non-psychics and seek to control the universe. Extremely secret and tightly organized into small cells of only a few members each, the Invisible Path is nevertheless limited in its accomplishments by bitter infighting and factionalism. Ultraconservatives consider normal humans (and aliens without psychic power)

to be no better than animals, while moderates seek a peaceful coexistence with non-psychics (once they learn their place, of course). Rank in the Invisible Path is determined by one's level of psychic power, and conflicts are often resolved by psychic duels.

Some believe that the Invisible Path has infiltrated the Imperial Eye and thus endangers the Emperor.

Gablante

Hiding behind the demeanor of a peaceful Obun priest of Voavenlohji — the Church path of the Prophet's eighth disciple — is the cynical and hateful Gablante. Sick and tired of seeing his psychically superior people belittled by humans, he decided a long time ago to join a terrorist cell on Velisimil, with the intent to shut down that system's jumpgate. Just before joining his comrades on the appointed day of their strike, a premonition warned him away. His cell mates were slaughtered by Imperial Eye assassins. He was the sole survivor of their idealistic crusade.

What sickened him worse was the reaction of his fellow Obun: while they did not condone the violence done to the rebels, they clucked endlessly about their "shameful, conflict-ridden ideology." Pushed too far, Gablante realized that most of his own kind had become trapped by a once beautiful philosophy that now ensured their eventual, evolutionary demise.

He sought out the rumored Invisible Path, and after years of proving himself (and slaying any of his superiors who stood in his way), he now leads coven operations across the Known Worlds, attempting to destroy the Empire's infrastructure so that psychics on a dozen worlds can rise up and seize the reigns of power unopposed by interstellar reinforcements.

Race: Ur-Obun

Rank/Class: Canon (Chief Enforcer in Invisible Path)

Quote: "Turn the other cheek? Only to better unbalance your foe!"

Description: A brown-skinned Obun in priestly robes with a well-read and annotated edition of the Omega Gospels. He has perfected the art of the innocent smile.

Male Obun Psi12; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 12d6; hp 39; Init +10; Spd 30; AC 20 (touch 20, flat-footed 14); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d4+1, masterwork dagger) or +15/+10 ranged (2d4 subdual +stun, supreme stunner); SQ Psychic Powers; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 13, Dex 23, Con 10, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Concentration +12, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Occultcraft +12, Open

Lock +10; Attune Fetish, Alternate Identity x3, Combat Casting (psi), Coven Membership (Invisible Path), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot.

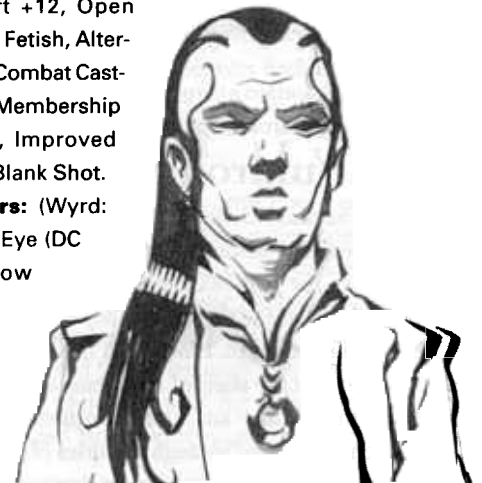
Psychic Powers: (Wyrd:

48) VisCraft: Vis Eye (DC 23) +21, Vis Flow

(DC 23) +21, Vis Shock (DC 20)

+15, Vis Shield (DC 19) +12;

Soma: Control Body +10, Alter



Body +8, Enhance Body +6; Sixth Sense: Premonition (DC 14) +6, Second Sight (DC 14) +4, Far Sory (DC 14) +4.

Possessions: Supreme stunner, palm laser, dagger, exemplary thieves tools, false credentials for three different identities.

Cyberevolutionaries

During the Second Republic, cybernetics became more than a mere fetish for certain forward-looking citizens; they saw in the melding of man and machine a key to the next step in evolution. Some even declared that the Anunnaki were not dead, that the Philosophers Stones and jumpgates were the Anunnaki, a race so melded to its technology that no trace remained of its organic beginnings. Although most scoffed at the preposterous claims of these fanatics, their numbers steadily increased in the latter days of the Republic. "Cyber-evolution" became more than a fad — it was a marketing slogan applied to any cool new technology meant to make interfacing with life easier.

After the Fall and the Church's fierce reprisal against technology — especially those who dared to place it inside their bodies for any but dire medical reasons — certain cyber fanatics refused to simply give in and refute their cherished progressive ideology, which promised, they believed, an escape for all sentients bound into the miserable cycle of merely organic life. Thus began the Cyberevolutionaries, a coven of sorts for the cybernetically enhanced. (Members alternatively emphasize the cybeRevolution and the cyberEvolution.)

Cyberevolutionaries are not pure technosophists, however, for they spurn robots and AI golems — mere machines are not enough. The promise of transcendence comes only with the melding of life and machine.

Baronet Andros Harmonic

A prominent member of the Cyberevolutionaries, Andros lives openly with his philosophy and cyberdevices. The fact that his family is one of the more powerful on Criticorum goes a long way toward protecting him from reprisal. Nonetheless, he has become the target of hateful serfs or freemen who blame "lousy tech-lovers" for all their problems. This does not prevent him from speaking out on the wonders of cybernetics and its potential to aid all races.

Rumors of his involvement in less peaceful pursuits, such as the firebombing of Church cathedrals and libraries (places in turn rumored to hold records on suspected criminals) are unproven as yet. He always has a good alibi (or at least someone prominent willing to cover for him).

Race: (more than) Human

Rank/Class: al-Malik baronet

Quote: "Greetings! (shakes hands) You see — a hand like any other! Little did you suspect the wires and diodes beneath. Cybernetics, my friend, are the answer."

Description: A pale, thin noble who gets too little exercise and sunlight, preferring to stay in darkened rooms interacting with magic lantern holo-partners (virtual reality programs). His unshaven face embarrasses his family members, but his value to the house's technology interests keeps him well in its graces.

Human Nob3/Tch3; Medium-sized humanoid; Hit Dice 3d8 plus 3d6; hp 24; Init +4, Spd 30, AC 16 (touch 16, flat-footed 12); Atk +8 (1d6/19-20 x3, palm laser); SQ Encyclopedic Mind, Evasion, Guild

Affiliation (Engineers), House Affiliation (al-Malik), Security Systems; AL CG; SV Fort +4 Ref +6 Will +7; Str 12, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 19, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Academia +13, Craft (high tech) +13, Diplomacy +8, Gather Information +7, Innuendo +7, Heal +10, Knowledge (biology) +9, Knowledge (chemistry) +9, Knowledge (cybernetics) +13, Knowledge (history) +10, Knowledge (local) +10, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Listen +9, Literacy, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9, Use Think Machine +12; Comprehend TL 7 (x3), Gossip Network: Noble Fiefs (al-Malik) (x3), Noble Title: Baronet (al-Malik), Physick.

Special Qualities: Guild Affiliation (Engineers): +2 Craft Lithe Wire, House Affiliation (al-Malik): +2 Disguise when traveling incognito.

Possessions: Palm laser, nanotech MedPac, lithe wire (+4 Dex), second brain (+2 Int-based checks), stimusim.

The Changed (Genetically Engineered)

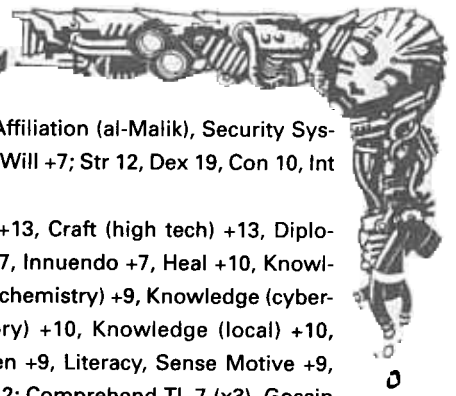
Humans have been tampering with their genetic makeup for millennia, but the practice became especially common during the Second Republic. During this time, corporations and other groups created entire races of genetically altered beings, fine-tuning them for use on uninhabited planets; for use as slaves, warriors and workers; and just for fun. During the decline of the Republic, the Changed became a popular scapegoat as people saw their universe crumble about them. Millions were killed in the ensuing havoc, and most of the rest have been in hiding ever since.

Almost every one of the Changed can be considered part of a secret society, because being revealed as such often leads to death at the hands of the government or scared citizens. While none of the larger sects specifically preach against the Changed, many of the smaller sects do. Even the larger sects see the Changed as something unnatural, perhaps contrary to the Pancreator's will. Thus the changed do their best to stay hidden, quietly remaining in contact with one another in order to keep tabs on whomever is after them now.

Of course, their enemies believe that the Changed are one of the most successful conspiracies, with an eventual goal of subjugating all humanity. These opponents believe the Changed are united under a ruling body, sometimes called The Circle of the Change, which includes incredibly powerful mutants. Few educated people believe in The Circle, but it is a popular bogeyman amongst the peasantry.

The Animalized

During the Second Republic, genetic engineering got... well, out of hand. Scientists experimented on many non-sentient earth animals and alien races, creating all sorts of recreational playmates or sporting targets. However, some scientists didn't know when to stop, and began experimenting with sentient races (almost all of them unwilling victims). The results were whole new races of animal/alien/human combinations, capable of breeding. As soon as the government found out, the experiments were covered up and the new races banned. In other words, they were to be exterminated. But, as is to be expected, some of them escaped. The lucky



ones led their pursuers on mad chases across the stars before finding sanctuary with some odd interest group or other. Enough of them escaped to create a serious ethical issue for the Republic. News of the government's attempted genocide spread like wildfire, and rights to life for what were being called the Animalized were quickly ushered into law. Since the Fall, however, these laws have been ignored.

The Animalized are now few in number, but they have bred and spread across the Known Worlds. They have won the rights of similar sovereign races in the Known Worlds, which means they are "free" only in word, but rarely practice. They are second-class citizens whose very existence is considered blasphemous to many. Their close ties to their animal instincts also make them dangerous, as not a few have reverted to their non-sentient and hungry origins in the midst of a human populace.

Creatures

In the process of colonizing the Known Worlds, humanity encountered several other intelligent races. They also ran across other creatures. Some of these were easily controlled, while some were judged far too dangerous to be allowed continued existence. A few were simply too strange to comprehend. Humanity's indomitable will has proven unhealthy to human and alien beast alike in several cases.

Each world, although similar in political structure and metaculture, has its own array of unique flora and fauna. "Standard" lifeforms, such as horses or other beasts of burden, can vary greatly. The genetic stock was radically altered during the Second Republic, creating all sorts of specialized creatures. After the Fall, the noble families seized the rights to certain stocks, breeding them for profit on their worlds. Thus, Aragon destriers (from the Hazat's homeworld of Aragon) are well known as the best warhorses throughout the Known Worlds; Severan stallions (from the Decados homeworld of Severus) are known to be the smartest; and Qalim (racehorses bred by the al-Malik) are known to be the fastest. The Muster specializes in transporting animals (and people) across the stars, and often ferries these prize stallions from world to world for famous races and contests.

Below are some examples of strange creatures encountered on the planets of the Empire. Most are located on specific planets and are seldom seen elsewhere, while a few tend to pop up in the strangest places. The stats given below represent an "average" member of the species. Stats may be higher for exceptional members of the species or lower for younger members of the race.

Animal Cohorts

The following animals can be found in the wilds or occasionally as pets. They are presented here as candidates for a Beastfriend's animal cohort.

Chervin

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (22 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 60 ft.

AC: 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)

Attacks: Gore +4 melee; 2 hooves +4 melee; bite -1 melee

Damage: Gore 1d6+3; hooves 1d4+3; bite 1d3 +1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6

Skills: Balance +7, Listen +7, Spot +7

Climate/Terrain: Any land, preferably hills and mountain

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

Chervins are hardy goatlike mountain beasts native to Hira, a world currently disputed between House Hazat and the barbarian Kurgan Caliphate. They are easily domesticated and make excellent pack animals and mounts in hills or mountains, their cloven hooves helping them navigate tricky terrain. They can also be trained for war (the stats below are for a war chervin). In addition, they are a good source of milk and cheese and their coats can provide thick wool, ideal for making winter garments or weaving into rugs and blankets.



Carrying Capacity: A light load for a war chervin is up to 230 pounds; a medium load, 231-460 pounds; a heavy load, 461-690 pounds. A light war chervin can drag 3,450 pounds.

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the gore, bite or scent abilities from cohort chervins.

Doggoth

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+12 (25 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural)

Attacks: Bite +4 melee

Damage: Bite 1d6+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Attach, leap

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +4

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Hide +7, Jump +6, Listen +6, Spot +6

Climate/Terrain: Any land



Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —

The Changed come in more than human forms. During the Second Republic many socialites demanded small, innocuous looking protectors. Out of that demand came the doggoth. Doggoths are bred to be small, cute personal defense creatures. Most weigh between 10 to 15 pounds and are fluffy, roly-poly things, similar in size to a Persian cat. They tend to be fat and somewhat spoiled looking. Looks, in this case, are deceiving.



Doggoth muscles are compacted at four times the average for a normal animal of their size. This heavy compaction ratio gives doggoths a great vertical leap and few muscles that make snapping an ankle or wrist a real possibility. It also gives them amazing resilience.

Doggoths are born in litters of one or two but the survival rate is only about 50%. This is due to the extensive mutagen process that created the bloodlines and the current limitations of intense inbreeding. During the Second Republic, there were many bloodlines available, but most have since been lost. No one now knows how to start the mutagen process again; breeders are limited to working with only the remaining stock.

A doggoth may be trained to perform specific, moderately complex tasks. For example: Use a remote control to open doors and turn on lights, run bath water, engage a squawker, or growl in a specific way if a particular person arrives or a pre-rehearsed instance occurs.

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the bite, attack, leap and scent abilities from cohort doggoths.

COMBAT

Attach (Ex): A doggoth that hits with its bite attack latches onto the opponent's body with its jaws and automatically deals bite damage each round it remains attached. An attached doggoth loses its Dex bonus to AC (it has an AC of 13).

Leap (Ex): A doggoth can make a standing jump with a minimum distance of 5 ft., an additional distance of +1 ft./2 point above 10. The maximum distance is height x5 (15 ft.).

Evik

Small Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8 (13 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)
AC: 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks: 1 claws +6 melee; bite +2 melee
Damage: Claw 1d6; bite 1d4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Evasion, superior low-light vision
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 16, Cha 10
Skills: Hide +7, Listen +14, Move Silently +9*, Spot +14
Climate/Terrain: Any forest, hill, mountains and plains.
Organization: Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —

Native to Grail, the beautifully plumed evik is a masterful raptor. Its incredibly sharp claws deliver more damage than most birds its size. What's more, its expert eyesight makes it a deadly predator in day or night. Evik are well respected by Etyri, the native sentients of Grail, who see them as distant cousins and representatives of swift and vigilant justice.

Evik feathers bring about 10 firebirds on the open market. However, it takes an Evik at least a month to grow back plucked feathers, and they cannot grow back clipped or plucked pin feathers (necessary for flight).

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the claws, bite or superior low-light vision abilities from cohort eviks.

COMBAT

Superior Low-Light Vision (Ex): An evik can see five times as far as a human can in dim light.

Skills: Eviks receive a +8 racial bonus to Listen and Spot checks at any time of day. * When in flight, they gain a +8 bonus to Move Silently checks.



Feshaal

Medium-Size Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8 (13 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
AC: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural)
Attacks: Bite +4 melee
Damage: Bite 1d6 and poison
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. (coiled)/5 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Camouflage, scent
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +12 (+20 with camo), Listen +9, Spot +9
Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite)
Climate/Terrain: Temperate jungle or warm land.
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —

One of the strange animals native to Severus, the feshaal is a long snake with glistening, slick scales that can mimic the colors of its surroundings. This amazing ability makes it a prized pet for certain Decados nobles. Like many natives of Severus, the feshaal's bite is especially sharp and its teeth tough, enabling it to pierce the armored hides of many Severan animals. Hence, its bite deals more damage than other serpents its size.

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the bite, poison and camouflage abilities from cohort feshaal.

COMBAT

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 15); initial and secondary damage 1d8 temporary Constitution.

Camouflage (Ex): Feshaal can change the color and appearance of their scales to match their surroundings. This is a standard action and provides a +8 bonus to Hide checks.

Skills: Feshaal receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks. They can use either their Strength or Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is better.



Gurdvulf

Medium-Size Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (22 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)
Attacks: Bite +4 melee
Damage: Bite 1d6+1
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Trip
Special Qualities: Scent
Saves: Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +3
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +1*
Climate/Terrain: Temperate jungle or warm land.
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —

Once thought extinct, this wolf-like animal, native to Byzantium Secundus, has been rediscovered in Vuldrok space on the worlds of Wolf's Lament. A few have made their way back by to the Known Worlds as favored pets of Vuldrok pirates.

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the bite, trip, scent and tracking bonus ability from cohort gurdvulfs.

COMBAT

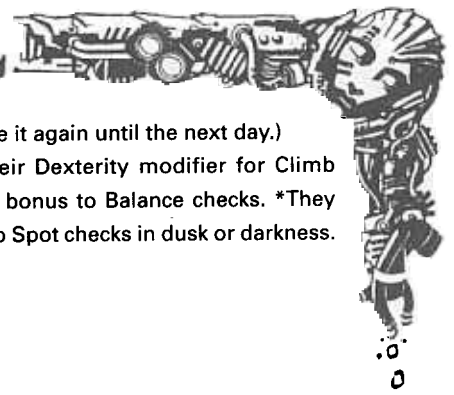
Trip (Ex): A gurdvulf that hits with its bite attack can attempt to trip its opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an opportunity attack. If the trip fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the gurdvulf.

Skills: *Gurdvulfs receive a +8 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

Malador Phantom

Small Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (22 hp)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft.
AC: 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks: 1 claws +4 melee; bite +6 melee
Damage: Claws 1d4; bite 1d6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, luck, scent
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +5





Abilities: Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 12

Skills: Balance +12*, Hide +9, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +6*

Climate/Terrain: Temperate jungle or warm forest.

Organization: Solitary or pack (3-6)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —



This odd, monkeylike animal is thought to be one of the original natives of Pentateuch, a creature either engineered as part of the World Architect Doramos's terraforming plan or existing from pre-terraforming days. It was believed extinct for centuries until a colony was discovered in the forests of northern Malador. Many have been bred in captivity since then, and the race has become popular as pets (especially in monasteries). Many more are believed to exist in the wild.

Eskatonics consider the animals blessed, in some way sacred to the Pancreator's plan for Pentateuch, the order's homeworld. Thus, laws have been passed making it illegal to harm a phantom. In Maladorian monasteries, where the phantoms run wild, occasionally climbing over the walls and into the sanctuaries, they are treated well and fed. Indeed, some believe them to be reincarnations of revered and wise holy men. If a wild phantom appears in a monastery sanctuary, it is considered a very good sign.

Most other Known Worlders think they are just interesting, if unusual, pets. League merchants have spread them throughout the Known Worlds; while they are by no means common (even on Pentateuch), many know what one is.

Appearance: They have white fur, and their long, prehensile tails are also furred, often displaying gray or silver stripes. Their skin is blue, especially visible on their furless faces, and their eyes are red — all four of them (two rows, one atop the other). While the top row somewhat aids peripheral vision, the bottom row is capable of powerful night vision (the phantoms often close these eyes during the day or under bright lights).

They are friendly and well trainable, and behave somewhat like Terran koala bears in most respects. However, they have no known predator. Even predators introduced into the Pentateuch wilds seem disinclined to hunt them, adding to the phantoms' mystique.

They can be trained in simple sign language, understanding and capable of communicating simple concepts such as "danger," "hunger," "hurt," "fun," etc.

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the claw, bite, low-light vision, scent and luck abilities from cohort phantoms.

COMBAT

Luck (Su): Phantoms have eerie good fortune. Once per day they can add a +8 luck bonus to a single attack roll, skill check or saving throw. (If a Beastfriend borrows a phantom's luck and uses

it, the phantom cannot then use it again until the next day.)

Skills: Phantoms use their Dexterity modifier for Climb checks and receive a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks. *They also receive a +4 racial bonus to Spot checks in dusk or darkness.

Shazzle

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8 (13 hp)

Initiative: +4 (Dex)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: Bite +6 melee

Damage: Bite 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Knack, scent

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 11

Skills: Balance +9, Climb +5, Hide +13, Move Silently +10, Spot +5

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite)

Climate/Terrain: Temperate forest, hill, mountains, plains and underground

Organization: Solitary or pair

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

A raccoon/mink-like animal. Once native to Aragon, they were spread across the Known Worlds during the Second Republic as pets. Cute with sleek fur, their antics and pranks are well known, creating many catch phrases: "Cute as a curled-up shazzle," "silly as a slinking shazzle," and "annoying as an Aragon rat."

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the bite and scent abilities or the Balance skill bonus from cohort shazzles.

COMBAT

Knack (Ex): Shazzles are especially easy to train (-5 Handle Animal DC). They can even be taught the Open Locks and Pick Pocket skills. A shazzle's maximum ranks are equal to its Intelligence score. Shazzle cohorts gain a number of skill points each time their Beastfriend gains a level, equal to: 2 + Int modifier. The maximum rank they can have in any trained skill is equal to their Beastfriend's level +3.

Shazzles can also be taught a special Untie Rope skill, which allows them to make a check to untie someone's bonds, as if it were an Escape Artist skill check.

Skills: Shazzles receive a +4 racial bonus to Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks. They use their Dexterity modifier for Climb checks.



Skerra

Medium-Size Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)

Initiative: +4 (Dex)

Speed: 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

AC: 15 (+4 Dex, +1 natural)

Attacks: Bite +6 melee; 2 claws +1 melee

Damage: Bite 1d6+3; claw 1d3+2

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d3+1

Special Qualities: Low-Light Vision, Scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +3

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills: Balance +12, Climb +11, Hide +9*, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Spot +6

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)

Climate/Terrain: Warm forest, plains or desert

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4-5 HD (Medium-size)

Skeera were genetically bred from tigers on Isakhr by the al-Malik. Their grace and strength — along with their red or green coats — are legendary in many songs and sagas of that noble family. The stats below are for a red Skeera, smaller than their more well-known green counterparts.

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the bite, claw, pounce, low-light vision and scent abilities from cohort skeeras.

COMBAT

Pounce (Ex): If a skeera leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the skeera must hit with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can rake.

Rake (Ex): A skeera that gets a hold can make two rake attacks (+6 melee) with its hind legs for 1d3+1 damage each. If the skeera pounces on an opponent, it can also rake.

Skills: Skeera receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks. *In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus improves to +8.



Zargat

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8 (19 hp)

Initiative: +6 (Dex)

Speed: 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)

AC: 17 (+1 size, +6 Dex)

Attacks: Bite +4 melee

Damage: Bite 1d3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Psychic Sonar

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +3

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 22, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4

Skills: Hide +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +6, Spot +9*

Climate/Terrain: Temperate and warm desert or underground

Organization: Solitary or colony (8-16)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —



A bat-like animal native to Pandemonium, the Zargat was once believed extinct — until the Cataclysms revealed that they were just hiding. Practically blind, instead of sonar, they possess a psychic tracking ability to sense obstacles and prey (insects).

Wild Gift: Beastfriends can borrow the psychic sonar ability from cohort zargat.

COMBAT

Psychic Sonar (Su): Zargat can psychically locate living creatures and objects within 140 ft. (Wisdom x10). Despite the name, this ability isn't actually like sonar except that it provides only basic clues about the things sensed — shapes, motion, speed. No fine details can be discerned. This works in all conditions — darkness, rain, sleet, snow, etc — with no penalties.

Beastfriends who borrow this quality — or cohort zargat who develop Intelligence scores of 10 or higher — can make Spot checks to discern some details: Is that a sword or a club in that person's hand? In addition, they can use their own Wisdom score to determine the ability's range.

Skills: *Zargat receive a +4 racial bonus to Spot and Listen checks as long as they can use their psychic sonar.

Alien Beasts

Amen'ta ("Hull Rats")

Tiny Animal

Hit Dice: 1/2 d8 +3 (7 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 15 ft., burrow 5 ft.

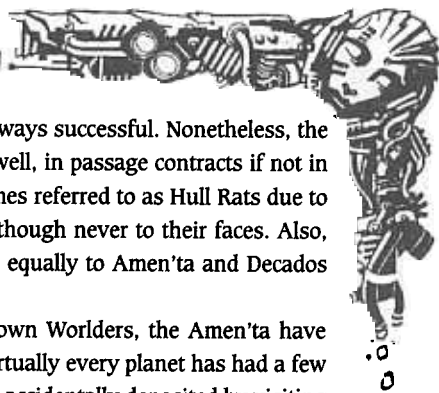
AC: 16 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: Bite +4 melee

Damage: Bite 1d6+1

Face/Reach: 2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./ 0 ft.





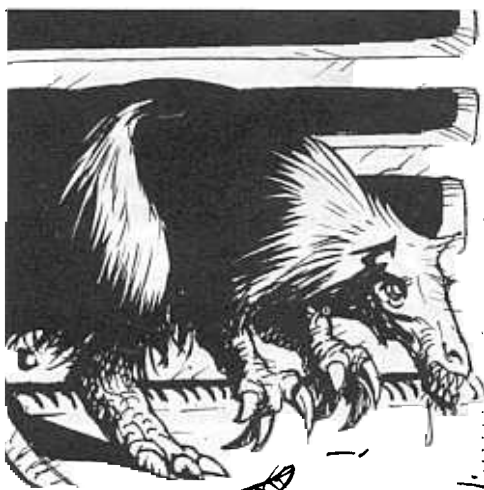
Special Attacks: Burrow
Special Qualities: Poison Adaptation
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities: Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10
Feats: Toughness, Weapon Finesse (bite).
Climate/Terrain: Any land or spaceship
Organization: Swarm (10-100)
Challenge Rating: 1/2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —

Amen'ta were long thought to be myths created by Diaspora merchants until the day they appeared on Criticorum (then capitol of human space). They were first encountered on their native Severus, where their large numbers and feral nature were kept in check by larger and far more vicious predators. They evolved as scavengers preying upon left-over kills, but most of Severus' prey species have thick, armored hides. To obtain their food, most predators evolved into bloodsuckers rather than develop the claws needed to rend their kills. The Amen'ta evolved steel-sharp teeth to gnaw through the left-over kills' hides and reach the meat beneath.

The first human expedition to the planet did not take the cautions of the natives seriously until after the Amen'ta vermin destroyed their Lander. When a relief ship finally arrived, little was left of the scouting mission. They had been picked off one-by-one by predators and their remains devoured by Amen'ta. But the new expedition failed to learn from the failure of the first, and the Amen'ta infiltrated the starship and took off with the expedition to seed the planets of the Known Worlds.

Amen'ta find places to hide within the nooks and crannies of ships, usually deep within the pipes and insulation. They can enter a state of deep hibernation during which their bodies adapt to their new environment. A week after their entry onto the ship, the creatures awaken with a voracious appetite, and begin devouring anything they can find. All too often, they find power cables and circuitry to gnaw on. While their attempts to digest power cables fail, the resulting loss of energy or control of ship systems quickly proves more than simply inconvenient. Attempts to flush them out with poison or gas often result in their disappearance for a week, after which they reappear and start their voracious scavenging all over again.

Amen'ta must be found while they are hibernating; otherwise, they may damage a ship beyond repair. A subguild of the Scravers has developed to specialize in flushing ships of these



vermin, although they are not always successful. Nonetheless, the dirty job is necessary and pays well, in passage contracts if not in hard cash. (Scravers are sometimes referred to as Hull Rats due to their amazing adaptive skills, although never to their faces. Also, the title of "Severan rat" applies equally to Amen'ta and Decados nobles.)

Much to the chagrin of Known Worlders, the Amen'ta have proven remarkably adaptable. Virtually every planet has had a few of these creatures that have been accidentally deposited by visiting ships. Unfortunately, the nasty little mongrels reproduce at a terrifying rate. From time to time, waves of Amen'ta flood through an area, building warrens in the most impossible locations and devouring the local flora and fauna (who usually have little defense against their sharp teeth and numbers) with wild abandon. In rare cases, small outposts and towns have been forced to evacuate their homes as a result of Amen'ta infestation.

Life Cycle: The Amen'tas' ability to adapt is a powerful bonus to their survival. Autopsies of the Hull Rats' bodies have shown two organs seemingly unique to these creatures. The first of these organs is a gland, the Slumber, which releases a powerful hormone that sends the creatures into hibernation. While hibernating, the Amen'ta require almost no oxygen and no source of nutrients. This gland has become a popular "wonder pill" recently, touted by certain unscrupulous merchants as a cure-all. However, if taken in too great a quantity, it can cause severe narcolepsy.

The second organ, a secondary brain, is a miracle of evolution. While in the hibernation cycle, this small brain sends commands to the body on a genetic level, forcing metabolic changes that allow the creature to adapt to virtually any environment. This organ helps the Amen'ta develop immunities to virtually every poison used to destroy them. Worst of all, the immunities are passed on to future generations of Amen'ta. This organ was popular among Second Republic genetic engineers, who are said to have synthesized human versions of the organ allowing for vast adaptability. But that was long ago, and if anyone still knows how, they aren't telling.

Perhaps the most devastating aspect of the Amen'tas' ability to adapt is the overwhelming hunger the creatures feel when they awaken. The biological changes in the animals' genetic make-up requires substantial energy, and they normally lose all of their stored reserves by the time they come out of hibernation. Anything available at the time they awaken is fair game, and ship and crew alike are often in danger when the Amen'ta stowaways revive.

Description: The Amen'ta are like no other vermin. They are less than a foot in length with heavy black fur and hard, scaly skin. More like small armadillos than actual rats, the Amen'ta bear sharp claws and chisel-like teeth that are almost as strong as steel, a result of their native environment on Severus. The pack mentality of these Hull Rats has made them something of a menace. These creatures are naturally cautious and almost impossibly quiet.

COMBAT

Burrow (Ex): A Hull Rat can burrow through just about anything, including ceramsteel hulls.

Poison Adaptation (Ex): A Hull Rat gains a +4 bonus to all saves vs. poison, and gains immunity to any poison it successfully saves against.



Brutes

Large Animal

Hit Dice: 5d8+12 (37 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 13 (-1 size, +4 natural)

Attacks: Butt +6 melee

Damage: Butt 1d6+6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Musk

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 4

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +3

Climate/Terrain: Any land

Organization: Solitary or herd (6-30)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 6-7 HD (Large)

It only took the colonizers of Byzantium Secundus a few months to figure out how to remove the native Brutes' defensive glands. Afterward, they learned that Brutes are very easily trained to perform as both wagon beasts and farm animals. Initially, the animals were easily startled, which resulted in some very foul musk attacks and several disastrous stampedes. But surgery and several generations of captive and docile lives have led to an almost perfect work animal. The rare wild Brutes should be avoided at all cost, however, as they are responsible for a number of accidental sprayings in any given year.

The demand for Brutes has begun to exceed the supply. As a result of rising demand and a substantial increase in the cost of removing the glands from the Brutes, several farmers have begun shipping their livestock with an occasional unaltered Brute in the herd. The results have been nothing short of disastrous.

Description: Not all of the life forms encountered by humans are vicious. The Brutes are a perfect example of this fact. Brutes have low-slung bodies, capable of pulling as much as a ton of weight with little effort. These slow-witted creatures stand on four legs and are roughly six feet tall at the shoulder, with wide legs and equally wide feet. They have short necks and thick shoulders, allowing them little peripheral vision. But they are not defenseless from behind. The Brutes have a natural defense not unlike that of an Urth skunk. Whenever the animal is frightened, pungent musk is emitted from special glands. This musk is so powerful that most people struck by the odor are immediately overcome, and often regurgitate their last meal.

COMBAT

Musk (Ex): A brute can release a musk cloud once per day. All creatures within 10 ft. of the brute must make a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become nauseated for 2-5 rounds.

Weird Monstrosities

There are a host of monstrosities spreading throughout the empire. Born under strange and alien suns, they are the spawn of Second Republic super science and of newly reawakening magic. None of the monstrosities listed here may be used as player characters.

Husks (Zombies)

Medium-Sized Undead

Hit Dice: 4d12+3 (29 hit points)

Initiative: -1

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural)

Attacks: Slam +6 melee

Damage: 1d6+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Undead, immunities

Saves: Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +3

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

Feats: Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Solitary or mobs

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: —

Husks. Scarecrows. Night-crackers. These are but a few of the names serfs give to the walking dead. Husks are clinically dead but animated creatures who quickly become host to all manner of carrion. These zombies are known to haunt the badlands, the most desolate, rural areas on many worlds. They rarely plague urban areas. Most city dwellers think of them as folk stories.

A "zombie plague" first erupts among those on the verge of death — soldiers dying of sword wounds, terminally ill patients in Church hospices, or peasants dying of malnutrition. These near-dead suddenly discover a new hunger for life. Possessed by an unnatural strength and bloodlust, they can carve their way through a rural population in no time. Each person they kill also becomes a husk.

When husks first appeared, the serfs prayed for deliverance — this was a sign of the end times. Some scientific heretics in the Engineers guild scoff at this, believing that the phenomenon has a rational cause. They have yet to find one.

Newborn night-crackers possess exceptional strength and resilience. They also retain all their mental faculties. This does not last long, however. The initial burst of energy quickly fades; within a week they become mentally and physically



lethargic. They still present a threat, however, because they remain hungry for flesh and are difficult to kill. Many of them possess a low, feral cunning. There are stories of some husks who retain their intelligence for longer periods, although even the most degenerate of these creatures may occasionally form a coherent sentence.



Most serfs believe that husks are the souls of the vengeful dead. Aliens are not known to become husks, although zombies will attack aliens and humans alike.

COMBAT

Husks are mindless and attack all living creatures on sight.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain or death from massive damage.

Immunities (Ex): Husks have cold immunity. Husks take half damage from slashing weapons, and only one point from piercing weapons.

Demons

Demons are dark presences that block out the light of the Pancreator. Serfs blame demons for everything from earthquakes to spoiled milk and impotence. Most people are aware of the deepening shadows on their planet; they believe in monsters, aliens and hidden covens. Still, most cannot fully bring themselves to believe in the reality of demons. They are real to the Church, however. Church Inquisitors have documented instances of demonic possession on numerous occasions (some secretly claim there has been an increase since Alexius's coronation). The Eskatonic Order is highly concerned with demon lore and claims to know the names and offices of certain "demon sultans."

Demons only manifest in the material world through possession. Thus, all that is factually known of them comes either the utterances of their receptacles or the mystical visions of priests (which have little to back them up but the priest's own reputation). Some educated folk believe that if demons do exist, they are extra-dimensional aliens or powerful psychics parading as demons. Many serfs believe that there is an infernal hierarchy much akin to that of the human nobility, although this may merely be a projection of their personal prejudices.

Likely targets of possession are murderers, the truly innocent, and willing (though often duped) Antinomists. The Eskatonics say that there are nine circles of demonic power, based on how many "emanations" the demon is removed from its "primeval" source in the infernal realms. The Church maintains that evil is reflected from a prime source, as though through a series of mirrors. Each reflection grows progressively weaker. Thus, a demon of the "ninth emanation" is considered of the lowest order, the least powerful of the infernal hosts.

Possessed victims gain potent powers, called Qlippoth. The number of powers gained depends on the emanation of the possessing demon; the lower the emanation (the closer to the source of evil), the more power provided. One Qlippoth is given at the ninth emanation, another at the eighth, another at seven, and so on, until nine Qlippoths are gained at the first emanation. Thus, a demon of the ninth emanation may provide one Qlippoth, while a demon of the seventh emanation has three.

Darkling energies fuel these powers. Qlippoth increase in strength with each step the demon takes towards the primary source of evil. Through Qlippoth, the possessed may ignore the dualistic balance between the Spirit characteristics. For instance, a possessed person may have a Passion 5 and a Calm 6. This is not healthy, however, for it represents a fracture in the psyche goaded into fur-

ther disharmony by the alien presence. If the person ever escapes possession, it may still take time to regain control over her emotions.

Demonic receptacles (victims of possession) each gain one Infernal stigma for each Qlippoth. Each Infernal stigma makes its victim less human in appearance, ranging from the lowest level of unobtrusive but bizarre stigmas such as mismatched pupils to high level extreme deformities such as scales or lizard eyes. Because of these stigmas, only the weakest (or the most clever) demons can withstand much scrutiny among humans.

It is interesting to note that, while demons can control all the thoughts and actions of their receptacles, they cannot use the receptacle's own occult powers (Psi and Theurgy). They must use Qlippoth instead.

Demons sometimes leave their hosts of their own accord, once their work is done or for other, unknown, reasons. Theurgic exorcisms rites can also drive them out of a host. It is extremely rare, but some instances have been known where demons are tricked out of their hosts through wit alone, but playing mind games with demons is extremely dangerous.

Possessed Priest

Medium Outsider/Human

Hit Dice: 10d8+40 (80 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 21 (+2 Dex, +7 natural, leather armor)

Attacks: 2 Slams +12 melee

Damage: Slam 1d8+8

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Qualities: DR 15/silver, cold and electricity resistance 20, Sect Affiliation (Orthodox)

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +4

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Academia +8, Bluff +17, Diplomacy +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Knowledge (local) +12, Literacy, Sense Motive +12.

Feats: Church Ordination: Priest (Orthodox), Holier Than Thou, Withering Insult

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 11

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: —

Even a minor demon is able to cause great mischief. Lower-order demons typically possess humans to spread carnage or misinformation. A holy person possessed by such a creature may preach false sermons, corrupt his parish or go on a killing spree before the demon returns to the nether regions that spawned it. Demons can stay longest in areas of great brutality.

Quote: "Bless you, my flock. Have I ever related the parable of the corrupt patriarch and the three harlots?"

Description: A receptacle for a lower order demon, this possessed priest is able to pass for human. Even so, his parish may notice he is haggard, and "smells funny."

Rank: Priest (Eighth Emanation demon)



Golems

In a society that barely tolerates technology of any sort, the idea of a mechanical human is blasphemous. Golems rob humans of their sacred place in the cosmos, diminishing and mocking the works of the Pancreator. After the Fall, the Church destroyed artificially intelligent robots (AI, or "smart robots") outright, with little consideration for any sentience they may have displayed. Their anti-robot dogma does not necessarily spread to the many non-intelligent robots throughout the empire.

AI robot brains are a cephalic matrix built from a rare element known as pygmalium. This element simulates the neural pathways of the human brain to a remarkable degree. Smart robots are just as prone to emotions, both good and bad, as humans. A golem may be a benign creature, or a remorseless killer. Most golems have a pre-programmed desire to serve humans. A "behavioral repressor" is the only known way to enforce a golem's servitude, but the golems resent it. (For them, it is similar to electroshock therapy.)

During the Second Republic, robots came in many shapes and performed a wide range of functions (combat, exploration, recreation, research, etc.). Since the Fall, Church Inquisitors have watched robots and their makers very carefully. They are rare now, but not unknown. Some golems are highly mechanical in appearance, while others (those built during the later Second Republic) are almost perfect duplicates of human beings.

Primitive robots are possible at as low as Tech Level 4, although these are little more than toys. At Tech Levels 5 and 6, robots become increasingly sophisticated, but are still not truly sentient. Most robots built currently by the Engineers are at this level. At Tech Level 7 artificial intelligence is possible, although few in the modern empire are able to create such technology. Golems at this level may be vastly intelligent, and may even have some rudimentary emotions. Robots built during the later Second Republic, and by the greatest human roboticists of the present, may reach this level. Advanced AI is only possible at Tech Level 8, or above. Some robots built during the final days before the Fall are of this generation. Advanced AI robots are vastly intelligent, and display a wide range of complex emotions, and are sometimes indistinguishable from humans. AI robots of any kind are very rare.

Because of their superior design and engineering, Second Republic robots are virtually immortal if they avoid destruction and receive regular maintenance. If these robots have an agenda it is unknown.

Modern robots are built by a few eccentric Engineer geniuses in hidden labs. Such work is highly expensive (and often illegal). These Engineers have a near religious fervor for their work.

Both the Ur-Obun and Sanctuary Aeon have shown some public sympathy for the remaining golems. Both groups believe that owning one is akin to slavery, and destroying one is murder.

Traits (Tech 7 AI): Robots may reach, or exceed human norms in mental abilities. Tech 7 robots have rudimentary emotions, but do not always master them. Some of them are a bit "twitchy."

Traits (Tech 8 AI): Advanced AI robots have emotions. Tech 8 constructs have more emotional mastery than their Tech 7 "children."

COMBAT

Construct: Immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, disease and similar effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain or death from massive damage.

The Protector

Large Construct (TL 6)

Hit Dice: 12d10 (60 hit points)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 25 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +14 natural)

Attacks: Blaster rifle +14/+9 ranged; flamewgun +9 ranged; shock fist +12/+7

Damage: Blaster rifle 3d6; flamewgun 2d6; shock fist 2d6+2

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., construct

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +4

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 16, Con —, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 8

Skills: Escape Artist +4, Listen +10, Spot +10

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Solitary or gang

Challenge Rating: 10

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually lawful neutral

Advancement: 13-18 HD (Large), 19-22 HD (Huge)

Made by an entrepreneurial Engineer, the Protector was sold to the highest bidder as a bodyguard. Programmed to protect its new master's safety above all other concerns, the golem may appear brusque to others.

Quote: "You are not permitted here. Leave, or be destroyed."

Description: A clinking, clanking pile of calamitous junk. Pulsing turbines, whirring gears and the smell of burning oil. Black iron plate steel encases its clockwork interior. Two faces, back to back, spin into place as the occasion warrants it. A smiling, vaguely benign face with blinking saucer-plate eyes beams at the world when all is safe. When its master is endangered, however, the golem's head spins in its iron hood, replaced by a fearsome gargoyle's mask. The protector has several menacing weapons built into armatures on its body.

Experience

In addition to awards for defeating non-player characters, creatures, and traps, **Fading Suns: d20** awards challenge ratings for challenging situations.

Noncombat Encounters

Answering the Anunnaki gargoyle's riddle, coaxing the password out of the drunken Scraver, earning the forgiveness of the Avestite Inquisitor, or gaining an oath from a Decados noble to end a feud — all these deeds are challenging and offer some risk of danger. If you answer the Gargoyle wrong, your memory may be wiped clean; if the Scraver realizes what you're up to, you've got a gang war on your hands; the Inquisitor may roast you with his flamewgun; and that particular Decados is well known for poi-





Appendix: Planets

Refer to the map of the Known Worlds to determine the jumproads between certain planets. Below are simple sketches about the planets in the Empire and along the border; gamemasters should feel free to create their own details about these worlds.

Absolution

This world has been compromised by the Symbiots. It is outside of the Stigmata Garrison's direct influence, and the people of Absolution have been abandoned by the Known Worlds. Do people still even exist on this planet? Or are they all Symbiots now? Travel to Absolution (and to all compromised worlds) is forbidden. Any ship caught trying to enter the Known Worlds from these planets is destroyed by the Stigmata Garrison.

Apshai

A joint human and Vau world. Apshai has many citizens of the Empire living upon it, and the Vau rarely leave the one continent they forbid humans to enter, where the G'nesh also live (see Chapter One: The Universe). Human colonization of Apshai was allowed during the Second Republic, a secondary result of years of diplomatic negotiations concerning an affair long since forgotten (surely the Vau remember, but they do not speak of the incident). Empire spies are sent here to observe the Vau, but they are never allowed close enough to see anything of worth. A "mission to Apshai" is equivalent to a vacation or retirement.

Artemis

Home to the head Sanctuary Aeon monastery, Artemis is a holy world with strict immigration policies. While nobles and guildmembers live on Artemis, they must follow Church law, which imposes strict behavioral rules. Every law is designed to minimize conflict, including such penalties as exile to far continents if the two parties cannot govern their relationships with each other. Despite the seemingly harsh rules, the best medical technology in the Empire is found here. The sick and dying who can afford the journey to Artemis for healing usually return whole again (although with a samaritan penance they must perform as payment).

Aragon

The Hazat homeworld has both benefited and suffered from its proximity to Leagueheim and Byzantium Secundus. Both have brought a great deal of wealth to Aragon, but the Hazat nobles

have also spent a lot of their money on those worlds. The Hazat and the wealthiest of their subjects are undeniably well off. The poorest live in squalor. The wealthiest parts of the planet, like the capital and its unparalleled military academy, are second to none. The poorest are among the most dangerous and inhospitable in the Known Worlds.

Aylon

Ruled now by the al-Malik, Aylon was once owned by the Ur-Ukar. It is famed for being the first planet the Prophet set foot upon after his miraculous vision (gained on the now-lost world of Yathrib, beyond Aylon's jumpgate). Pilgrims come from all over annually to see the spot where the Prophet first preached. The rest of the planet is taken up by large reserves, and the al-Malik make a lot of money catering to the interests of off-world hunters and recreationalists.

Bannockburn

The headquarters of the Muster, who coordinate their efforts against both the Symbiots and the Vuldrok raiders from this planet. It is also the homeworld of the Gannok, devilishly clever tricksters with a penchant for invention and high-tech jury-rigging. Most of the inhabited sections of the planet are rugged and craggy highlands with broad moors. Strange Ur ruins can be found in various places, most long since stripped of their valuable artifacts.

Byzantium Secundus

While the capital of the Known Worlds suffered some damage during the Emperor Wars, it no longer bears any signs of the strife. Indeed, Emperor Alexius has embarked on an ambitious building plan, and even more construction is turning what was once known as the "Concrete Capital" back into its old gray, metal-covered self. Every major faction in the Known Worlds (as well as the Vau) maintains a presence on this rainy world, and all have interests at stake on a daily basis. For more information, see the sourcebook *Byzantium Secundus*.

Cadavus

One of the poorer worlds in the Empire, Cadavus fell into Decados' hands during the Emperor Wars. The Decados are only the most recent rulers of the planet; almost every faction of note in the past 2000 years has had an interest in it at one point or another. While the planet has little in the way of industry, mining or agricul-



ture now, it still remains a center for a number of religious groups, whose monasteries maintain records dating back to the beginning of space exploration.

Cadiz

Ruled by the Decados, the great cities of Cadiz are legendary. Second Republic diplomats chose this world as their base for negotiations with the Vau, and the cosmopolitan fervor which gripped the planet caused the rise of many towering metropoli. But the Vau refused to come to Cadiz, and instead demanded that the diplomats come to them on Vrill-Ya. The cities are now teeming with the poor and restless, who crowd into apartments once reserved for the rich. Cadiz also holds the only reservation reserved for the indigenous Hironem aliens.

Chernobog

The Symbiot homeworld. Little is known of Chernobog, for the last humans to set foot upon the world never returned. The jumpgate to Chernobog from Stigmata is blockaded; no one is allowed in or out, although the occasional Symbiot force breaks through nonetheless. It is said that the planet is a steamy jungle teeming with Symbiot lifeforms of all kinds, fighting each other tooth and claw for dominance.

Criticorum

No al-Malik would ever deny this planet's value, nor would they deny the extreme problems it has caused the house. Once considered for the capital of the Second Republic, it has jumprountes to seven other worlds, and travelers from Byzantium Secundus, the Church worlds, the al-Malik planets, the Decados hegemony, the Li Halan worlds and Kordeth regularly stop there. The League has also established a substantial presence here, and the guilds maintain a number of vehicle and weapons plants. As a result, the world hosts legions of ambitious schemers and spies from around the Known Worlds. Intrigues here may lack the subtlety of those on Byzantium Secundus, but they are at least as common.

Daishan

Compromised in the Symbiot War, Daishan was scorched by the Stigmata Garrison. Symbiots cannot grow anything on scorched worlds, but neither can humans. The world is still off-limits, guarded at its jumpgate by a small fleet of Imperial troops. The Imperial Eye is rumored to have sent an expedition to the planet to ascertain the strength of any remaining Symbiot presence. Tales about what the expedition brought back have spread throughout the Known Worlds, but they vary widely: some say nothing was found but an empty wasteland, while others tell campside horror stories about the warped and twisted troops who returned to their Imperial masters, now hungry for human flesh. Strangely, Imperial and Church forces seem to encourage the worst of these stories.

Delphi

The homeworld of House Hawkwood, Delphi has suffered its share of setbacks, but even with the devastation of the Emperor Wars, the Hawkwoods are stronger now than they have been for some time. Imperial support is behind them. Delphi is where the leaders of the house meet to plan the next victories to raise them above all other families — or so they fervently believe.

De Moley

An inhospitable and barren planet, De Moley has little atmosphere (about as much as Mars). Terraforming was incomplete when the Second Republic collapsed. Nonetheless, De Moley is home to the prime Brother Battle monastery. Visitors must negotiate the treacherous paths up the high crags to reach the monastery, since the howling winds are too much for most flitters to handle. The valleys between the high mountains are calmer, hosting the atmosphere domes in which a small populace lives, helping to reap De Moley's resources. A hard life is all the peasants of De Moley know. Those few who escape from this world are valued for their hardiness.

Grail

Ruled by House Keddah (a minor house), Grail's vast forests and mountains are home to the Etyri, a sentient avian race. Grail is where the Prophet was healed by Amalthea of the darkness which had infected his soul on a Lost World beyond the border. The planet's name comes from the symbol for the Amaltheans, and there is a Sanctuary Aeon monastery on the planet at the site of the Prophet's healing.

Gwynneth

Gwynneth has suffered of late from the Vuldrok Raiders' invasions. It is believed to be only a matter of time before the Vuldrok set up a permanent base in the forested wilderness, hidden from easy scrutiny. The Hawkwood rulers voice fears that the long-defiant pagan peoples living in the woods would welcome the Raiders. Muster mercenaries, hired by a Hawkwood lord, have recently come from Bannockburn to defend the planet from further assault, but they seem to concentrate instead on keeping the local populace in line. The Hawkwoods have allowed Vuldrok ambassadors to pass through their space to Byzantium Secundus in the hopes that Alexius will act once he meets the uncouth barbarians face-to-face.

Hargard (Vuldrok)

A number of Lost Worlds exist past the Hawkwood jumpgates which are ruled by a loose confederation of barbarians with jumpdrive capability. Not much is known about the worlds except that their natives are uncouth and savage, occasionally raiding the Known Worlds for plunder. The world immediately past Leminkainen's jumpgate is called Hargard, and is the source of recent barbarian raids. The Hawkwoods are currently hiring mercenaries to take the raiding back to the Vuldrok.

Hira (Kurga)

This world is off the map (it can be reached through Vera Cruz's jumpgate). It is a Lost World being fought over by the Hazat and the Kurga Caliphate (a barbarian regime beyond the Lost World). The world actually has many names, depending on who you talk to (a native, a Hazat soldier, or a Kurgan); whomever wins it will surely rename it anyway.

Holy Terra (Urth)

The capital of the Church and the cradle of humanity. The planet is overcrowded; teeming masses of the faithful squeeze into the cities that dot the globe. This is partly because vast regions are given over to wilderness and allowed to exist in their natural, unterraformed states as an example of the Pancreator's bounty.



D



Permits to visit these wildernesses are allowed, but overstaying one's allotted time is a crime, prompting manhunts for any recalcitrant hermits. Immigration is strictly controlled by the Church, and those born on Holy Terra are given special consideration over foreigners. It is the prime planet for pilgrimages, however, as holy sites important to human history are found on every continent.

The Patriarchal Seat (some say "throne") is always situated here, usually near the birthplace of the reigning Patriarch. If the Patriarch was born elsewhere, he chooses the seat's new location based on rather complex readings of ancient texts and affinities for local saints. Most, however, simply inherit their predecessor's seat which has been in Rio Brasilia for the last century. The Church's grand archives are spread throughout the world.

The planet Mars hosts one of the most popular pilgrimage sites: the alleged birthplace of the Prophet. Little is actually known of Zebulon's early years, and many worlds during the Second Republic claimed his natal spot (Sutek, Grail, Malignatius). During the Dark Ages, however, the Patriarch declared Mars the one and only true site of Zebulon's birth.

Icon

The Li Halan hold Icon sacred, for it is where they announced their conversion to Orthodoxy. The planet was originally valued for its Ur ruins, but those ruins have been scoured inch by inch since, and there are few mysteries left. The Li Halan consider Icon to be a bulwark against the dangerous ideas coming out of Manitou, and they often pester the Inquisitorial Synod with requests for cleansings (with the result that the synod rarely bothers with Icon, a fact which the residents are glad of).

Istakhr

Istakhr boasts not only one of the greatest bazaars in the Known Worlds (the Istakhr Market), but some of the most stupendous buildings. The al-Malik rulers have used much of their wealth to build pleasure palaces for themselves, awe-inspiring cathedrals and even museums open to their serfs. The vast amounts of wealth floating around this largely desert world have attracted all sorts of people to Istakhr, from the most ambitious to the most unscrupulous.

Kish

Homeworld of the Li Halan, Kish is an extremely conservative desert planet. It has changed little throughout the devastation of the Emperor Wars, and the residents consider the relative chaos of surrounding worlds to be proof that the Li Halan are the only rulers worthy of the title. Outsiders claim that there are more peasant uprisings on Kish than the Li Halan admit to.

Kordeth (Ukar)

Now owned jointly by the al-Malik and Merchant League, Kordeth was once a proud if fractious world. Homeworld of the Ur-Ukar and capitol of their former empire, it is still an autonomous region for Ukari although it is monitored heavily by the Church. The planet's surface is rocky and without arable soil, covered with craggy gullies and sharp cliffs. Life exists only in the vast underground tunnels that comb the planet. Here grow thousands of mosses and fungi, and indigenous predators and prey — both insect and mammal — crawl in the darkness.

Leagueheim

No other planet in the Empire can claim to have as many technological wonders as Leagueheim. No other planet can claim to have politics as vicious as Leagueheim, either. With several hundred guilds represented on the planet, anything can — and does — happen. Here anything that can make someone a firebird is legal and already being done. Still, discretion is the key word here. No one wants the Inquisition ruining the fun.

Leminkainen

A Hawkwood-ruled border world which suffered heavily from the barbarian invasions of the past. It was occupied for a time by barbarians, and their descendants still live here, maintaining what they claim is a sovereign nation. The Hawkwoods say the barbarians are deluded, and only live separately from others because the Hawkwoods allow it. Still, the forests are full of pagans who openly ignore the Church missionaries attempting to save their souls.

Madoc

This aquatic world is a rich resource for the League. The vast majority of the surface is covered by water, and the marine life is varied and wondrous, producing many delicacies. However, this cuisine is hard to ship off-world, so the rich who desire it must come to Madoc. The amphibian Oro'ym live in its oceans, long believed extinct until they revealed themselves once more. While they now live in primitive squalor, scientists believe their ancestors once traveled the stars with the Anunnaki. Madoc is one of the rare worlds which required little terraforming, and is said to hold many unspoiled secrets beneath its waves.

Malignatius

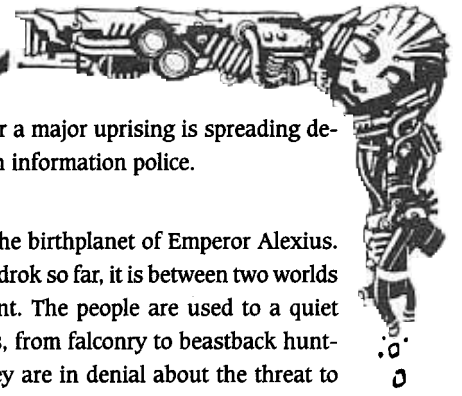
Once a Li Halan planet, the Decados seized this arctic-and-tundra world early in the Emperor Wars and have held it ever since. It still bears the mark of its former rulers, and religious fervor regularly sweeps the world. Since the Decados took over, however, the Orthodox view has become diluted. New sects crop up on a regular basis, and even different members of the same group find themselves battling over dogma. Newcomers often find themselves caught up in this factional fighting against their will.

Manitou

A joint human-Vau protectorate, Manitou is home to some of the few psychic covens which dare to operate openly. The Vau do not allow the Inquisition to enter the system, and so criminals and outcasts from across the Known Worlds desperately seek to find their way here. The Vau either do not care or have planned it this way, using the world as a viewing glass into the underbelly of human culture. The human government is run by a local guild, although it has strong ties to the League and claims fealty to the new Emperor.

Midian

A Li Halan world, famed as the birthplace of Patriarch Palamedes, founder of the Universal Church. It was the Prophet's preaching here that converted Palamedes, heir to vast lands then owned by House Alecto. The planet's religious heritage is pounded into the hearts and minds of all the residents, many of whom nonetheless abandoned the Orthodoxy during the Emperor Wars to join



the multitude of new sects springing up on the planet, much to the horror of the devout Li Halan.

Nowhere

A barren wasteland where sits the Gargoyle of Nowhere, an ancient statue said to deliver omens to those who come seeking it. The Stigmata Garrison Commander suspects that Symbiots have compromised the world, although there is no proof in the sand-blown deserts. Pilgrims who go to Nowhere may not be allowed back into Known Worlds, and nomadic caravans of such refugees roam the world, eking out a living in the sands. It is said that Nowhere once had lush forests and that many secrets lie hidden in its wastes.

Pandemonium

Once the breadbasket of the Second Republic, Pandemonium is now a world in turmoil, wracked by the cataclysmic failures of its terraforming engines. Most of the populous has crowded into the only safe place on the planet surface: the Hub, host to stable terraforming engines, teeming multitudes, rampant crime, and the current Decados rulers. Nonetheless, adventurers from across the empire arrive in droves, seeking the ancient Republican treasures the cataclysms occasionally reveal in the deep wildernesses. Intrigue over the mysterious second jumpgate — inoperative as yet — draws spies and scientists from every faction to this frontier planet.

Pentateuch

Terraformed by the legendary Doramos, Pentateuch is considered by many to be a magical planet, the ultimate wedding of magic and technology. There seems strong evidence that Doramos deliberately designed the terraforming to create ley lines and energy centers, although most of these are little understood today, for Doramos left no records of his secrets. The Eskatonic Order claims the cathedral and rulership of this world, although the planet is a frequent target for Inquisitorial scrutiny.

Pyre

Home to the famous Burning Desert, a hot-house hell that proved unterraformable, this world is claimed by Temple Avesti, which is allowed to rule it in the name of the Patriarch. The sect's main monastery lies in the harsh desert, but there is little tech to aid the monks in surviving the heat. Most are forced to relocate to the milder habitats by the sea. The planet is considered Inquisitor central, but most Avestite Inquisitors leave the system to look for sin elsewhere, never suspecting it might reside on their homeworld. As a matter of fact, at least one secret laboratory operates on the southern continent, far from the eyes and attention of the monks, who do not have the facilities to monitor all space traffic to and from the world.

Rampart

This frontier world was once owned by the League but was seized by the Li Halan during the Emperor Wars. The independent guild that once ran the planet is still powerful, but choking under the reforms of the Li Halan governor, who seeks to clean up what she perceives as social decay and moral licentiousness. The Li Halan are attempting to enforce onto the frontier-minded residents of Rampart the sort of social laws they expect on their other, better-behaved worlds. But the rigid caste structure they impose is resisted

by the residents, and the call for a major uprising is spreading despite the best efforts of Li Halan information police.

Ravenna

A Hawkwood world, and the birthplanet of Emperor Alexius. While the planet is safe from Vuldrok so far, it is between two worlds which have suffered harassment. The people are used to a quiet existence and pastoral pastimes, from falconry to beastback hunting. Many outsiders believe they are in denial about the threat to their world and way of life, drinking bitters as their other worlds are plundered. Others believe that, should Ravenna be attacked, Alexius will finally make a serious move against the barbarians.

Severus

Very few humans lived on this jungle planet before the collapse of the Second Republic. Then its Decados owners opened it up to refugees from the major trouble spots, if those refugees would pledge allegiance to the house. Those who made the pledge may well have regretted their decision, because Severus is a most inhospitable world. Its native species and indigenous sentients (the primitive Ascorbites) have evolved tough, almost metallic skin and sharp teeth to break through skin to the sweet blood within. Severan hull rats are probably the most famous of these, and they now infest ships throughout the Known Worlds (see the *GAMEMASTERING* chapter). They use their sharp teeth to gnaw through anything in search of nourishment.

Shaprut

This mineral-rich planet has avoided much of the intrahuman strife that has plagued other worlds, but it has suffered occasional raids from Symbiots. These few attacks have been used by local lords as further justification to keep the ungulate Shantor, Shaprut's native race, on their reservations, where they are supposedly safe from contamination — and well out of sight of humans. Most of these Shantor return the favor to their lords by serving as slaves in the mines.

Stigmata

Stigmata is the hotly-contested world that forms a bulwark against the Symbiots, and is home to the powerful Imperial Stigmata Garrison, the best collection of troops in the Known Worlds (next to the Imperial Guard). Little is known about the Symbiot-claimed worlds beyond Stigmata, since those who have gone out have not been allowed to return, despite their radio claims of being whole and uncorrupted by what they saw. Before they can deliver full reports, their ships are destroyed to prevent organic infection from entering Human Space. Those legionnaires who have survived their tours of duty here are shaken and hollow men, scarred by what they have seen on the battlefields of Stigmata.

Sutek

The first humans to fly through a jumpgate found themselves in this star system, and humans have been here ever since. Its cities have sprung up on the ruins of its older municipalities, and inhabitants regularly find artifacts dating back to the earliest days of the First Republic. Most of the valuable items disappeared years ago, but rumors still crop up about major hidden troves of antique treasures.



Tethys

An Imperial world, once run by an independent guild but now owned by the Emperor. This is one of the oldest worlds in Human Space, and was stripped of its resources long ago. It now survives by attracting renowned craftsmen and manufacturers, promising land and low noble status in return for a cut of their profits. The Mitchau family of weaponsmiths has recently relocated here from Aragon to take advantage of these benefits. One of the remote continents on a nearby planet in the system is said to be used by the Imperial Guard for training and war games; entry onto this planet is closely guarded.

Ungavorox (Vorox)

The homeworld of the Vorox is a vicious environment composing many conflicting biomes. The planet breeds some of the fiercest and most dangerous predators in the Empire, many of them poisonous with toxins even most assassins dare not use lest they be turned against them. Amid this chaos of competition, the Vorox reign. While not as big as some Voroxian predators, they learned early on to use teamwork to take down their prey and defend themselves from their own predators — on this world, no one is above the food chain. The planet is owned by Li Halan, who are careful only to allow civilized Vorox off-world.

Vau

A closed world; nobody is allowed into Vau Space without diplomatic permission. They rarely kill invaders, though. They simply snatch them up with their plasma-nets and deposit them back on their side of the border. Repeated attempts to enter, however, may be met with deadly force. This said, black-market trade does take place between the nations, but mainly in Human Space, on worlds such as Manitou or Vrîl-Ya. Vau is home to the mandarins who venture into Human Space on missions for their leaders. It is rumored that one of the Vau leaders is placed on this world, sent from one of the many Vau worlds beyond the planet's border.

Vera Cruz

Long known as one of the most beautiful planets in space, this Hazat world bears the stamp of the great terraformer Doramos, whose wife is said to have come from here. Some of the wealthiest people in the Empire used to come here to escape their concerns and worries, but the recent military buildup for the war over Hira has somewhat marred its peaceful demeanor. Still, many older Hazat retire here (or get retired here), and they still do their best to keep their hands in the intrigues which plague the Known Worlds.

Velisimil (Obun)

The homeworld of the Ur-Obun, officially owned by House Hawkwood. The Obun have a degree of sovereignty envious to other races, and still maintain their ancient culture of wisdom. The architecture of the planet is like nowhere else in the Known Worlds, with graceful spires reaching beyond the clouds, beautiful fountains miles high, perfect gardens and wide promenades. Human malcontents attempting to find a black underbelly to Obun culture have so far been unsuccessful.

Vrîl-Ya

The Vau ambassadorial world. Humans are allowed here to discuss matters of state, but they must stay on the single island reserved for their use. Certain lower-caste Vau run a secretive black-market, selling Vau tech items to those who can afford them and are discreet enough not to bring the deal to the attention of the mandarins. They rarely deal openly, using alien go-betweens instead, such as Hironem or other minor races.

The Lost Worlds

At its height, the Second Republic spanned far more planets than does the Empire. A number of these have disappeared from public records. Their jumpgates sometimes operate, but no one knows how to reach them. They still exist, circling their isolated suns, separated from the rest of humanity by ignorance alone.

These worlds range the spectrum from those that have declined to caveman levels to those rumored to have kept their Republic-era technology — and improved upon it. Some people suspect that a few planets deliberately eliminated any outside knowledge of themselves, and have agents in the Known Worlds dedicated to protecting their solitude.

The Emperor has let it be known that he will handsomely reward anyone who brings word of a rediscovered world. The houses seek the added power and prestige that comes with ruling more planets, the guilds want to expand their trade routes, and the sects yearn to add the souls of those poor heathens to their ranks. Of course, everyone wants to uncover whatever Philosophers Stones and other artifacts an unknown world might be hiding.

Still, most of the people who have gone searching for hidden planets have done it for their own reasons. Some have been looking for a new place to live, having either voluntarily left their old home or been thrown off it. Others have sought abandoned treasures and lost knowledge. The bard Arletra wrote her acclaimed epic "Vladimir Unforgotten" while on a quest for her family's ancestral world of Principia.

Discovering such a world is exceptionally difficult. The easiest way is via research, sifting through what few records remain from the Second Republic, looking for references to forgotten planets. These records rarely provide information on jumproutes to those worlds, however. Finding a key to a lost jumproute is guaranteed to bring a character lots of money and trouble.



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