

NEMEZIS

# GALAXY



GAMLOFT



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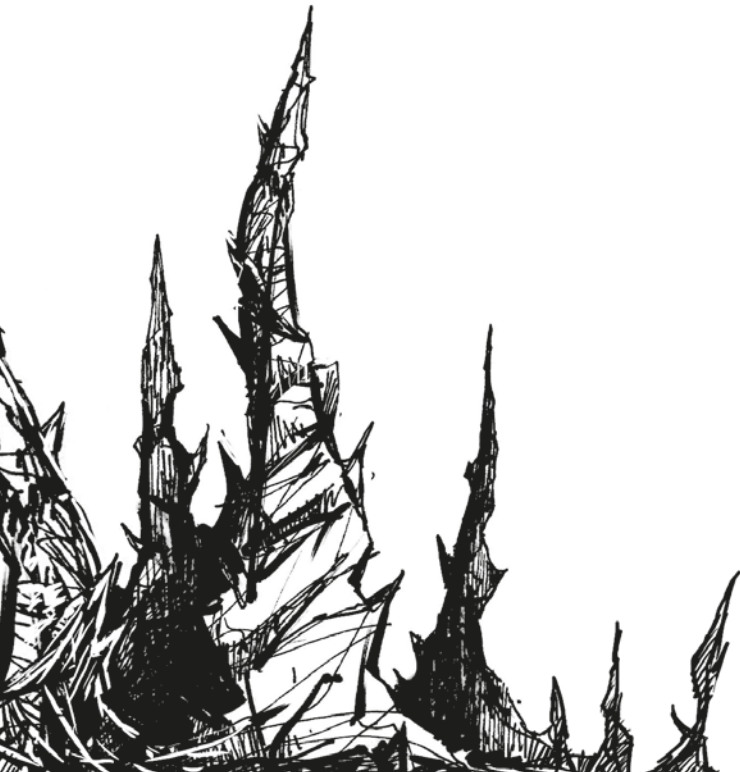
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# ASH



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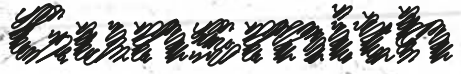


## ASH IS DYING. EVERYONE KNOWS

it, from a low-level Infinity office drone to the bosses of the Syndicate families. The terraformers are dead – repairs of the few which are still functioning are so expensive that sooner or later maintaining them will stop being profitable. The best workers move to other, far safer, systems, together with the capital of major companies. Ash is freezing and only a miracle can change its fate.

Not everyone living here can afford the luxury of emigration, though. Out of one hundred and seventy million officially living on the planet, only up to a million can leave it. The rest of them – the poor, the uneducated, the unconnected or forced to stay because of their family ties – have to live on this planet. Only a few people think about the far future. Daily life offers enough problems – the work is harder and harder, and the quality of accommodation, heating, and entertainment VR decreases day by day. This despair causes many people to abandon an honest life, and go to the streets, to work for the Syndicate, a corporation, the army, noble families or anyone else who have money and is willing to pay. Working in the shadows is often very risky, but for many it's better than freezing to death in your own apartment.

Ash is the kind of world where those on the margins of society are more numerous than honest citizens. This is a war zone no less dangerous than Cor, but full of shady businesses, weird cults, and rampant injustice. This is an urban jungle, a place where street smarts, courage and a strong arm matter, while compassion, faith and mercy have been long forgotten.



**This is not an ordinary gun,  
Chiba-san. This is a work of art.  
The child of a real artist.  
This weapon deserves more  
respect than you and your petty  
gang. Better move aside before  
I show you what it can do.  
Fabio Capella**

When the Ashites' dream of wealth crumbled, most of the inhabitants of the planet – at least those that could afford it – moved away and went to search for jobs in other systems. This exodus only increased after the invasion on Cor. Everyone who had friends or relatives in the more secure regions of the Galaxy left, trying to start their lives anew.

Not everyone decided to emigrate, though. Ash was famous throughout the entire Galaxy for producing really high-quality electronics. It had a similar reputation (if only among well-informed combat veterans) for military equipment. The local slughtrowers and plasma weapons, as well as energy weapons were not only decent, but also cheap. When major companies dealing in arms started to wrap up their business, many technicians, engineers and weapon designers decided to stay. The less ambitious have been hired by Infinity, while the bolder ones have joined the Syndicate. And the best, who could afford their independence, bought machines from their former employers, gained the necessary licenses (sometimes legally, sometimes using bribes), and started to produce guns, shields and



ammo for the gangs. The tough (and brutal) competition has eliminated more than half of such companies, but the remaining ones fare excellently.

A Gunsmith is more of a title than a profession. The inhabitants of Ash call people that if they not only produce but also modify various models of weapons: guns, shotguns, plasma weapons or implanted melee weapons. You don't have to own an ammo factory or produce thousands of rifles each year to be called a gunsmith. The best of them are employed by the rich, designing various toys for them. A single experimental triple-barreled assault rifle, firing an explosive round, an armor-piercing bullet and a plasma stream at the same time, might cost as much as a heavily armored transport. It might seem that no one would be stupid enough to threaten a gunsmith, but once every couple a months a wise guy starts to think that he can change the rules of the game. The rules usually change them. Either a hired gang guts them in a dark alley, or they're shot by a corporate agent protecting an important asset. Most of time they die somewhere near the gunsmith's workshop, killed by some amazing toy, kept in secret by the armsmaker for his own use.

## Weapon Modifications

There are limits to the modifications you can install in a weapon. If the description of the specific weapon does not state otherwise, up to 4 mods can be installed. Most of those described below are minor

changes, worth 1 modification slot, but there are some that require more serious changes – equivalent to two or three modifications. Likewise, there are also some trivial changes which do not take up modification slot. All the options are described according to this pattern:

### Option Name

**Availability:** availability code of the modification, as per *Nemexis* core book.

**Price:** modification to the basic weapon cost. When applying multiple mods, add the multipliers, and multiply the total by the basic price of the gun with existing modifications. The total result is the cost of installing the selected mods. When you want to add more modifications to a weapon that has already been altered, instead of the basic price, use the price of already modified gun.

**Effect:** game effect of the mod, and also the number of slots the modification takes (if different from 1).

**Notes:** optional rules, additional information and so on.

### Exploding Ammo

If you put this in a plasma handcannon and throw in improved batteries and a new targeting system... you'll basically have a handheld plasma grenade thrower, able to evaporate dozens of crawlers with a single shot.

**Availability:** D

**Price:** ×10

**Effect:** The shots of the weapon use a small burst template.

**Notes:** Can only be applied to a plasma weapon with RoF 1. Uses two mod slots.



## High-Energy Yield

An alternative to increasing the caliber. Thanks to increasing the temperature of the plasma ejected at the moment of firing, this mod allows charges to go through energy shields like butter. It's not that useful against the beasts of the Horde, but is a must on the streets of Ash.

**Availability:** C.

**Price:** ×2 for each +2 to AP (up to +10)

**Effect:** the shots have greater AP – depending on the option selected.

**Notes:** Only plasma weapons.

## Improved Aim

The easiest way to increase the effectiveness of a weapon is installing some kind of targeting device – but some gunsmiths can modify the construction of the weapon to make it more accurate. This is perhaps the most effective and hardest to install mod.

**Availability:** B

**Price:** ×6

**Effect:** A +1 bonus to all attack rolls.

**Notes:** This modification is incompatible with exploding ammo for plasma weapons.

## Improved Batteries/Larger Magazine

Increasing the effectiveness of batteries is hard to do – it requires reconstruction of some very basic components, so it's restricted almost exclusively to the military. For the high command, it's very important to maximize the effectiveness and number of shots fired by a single soldier. In the case of a slugthrower, the modification boils down to installing a larger magazine.

**Availability:** C

**Price:** ×4 (plasma weapons), ×1 (missile weapons). In case of regular weapons the mod increases the cost of the larger magazine, not that of the weapon itself.

**Effect:** The weapon can now fire twice as many shots.

**Notes:** The slugthrower version does not cost a mod slot, but it makes the weapon impossible to conceal.

## Increased Caliber

A standard improvement for personal plasma weaponry. It doesn't significantly decrease battery effectiveness, but that's not a problem for a soldier on the front lines or a headhunter – if your opponent's dead after the first shot, you can reload safely.

**Availability:** C (+1 and +2), D (+1d)

**Price:** ×2 (+1), ×4 (+2), ×8 (+1d)

**Effect:** The damage dealt by the gun increases by +1, +2, or 1 additional damage die (depending on the variant purchased). This decreases the effectiveness of the battery – with +2 damage each shot uses 2 charges instead of one, and with +1 die – 4 charges.

**Notes:** Regular firearms don't use more bullets – with +2 and +1 die the character has a -1 penalty to his attack rolls.

## Increased Range

This mod, beloved by snipers, is also used by bounty hunters. The ability to off the opponent before he notices you is deemed far more useful than improved aim or the ability to drain the battery in two seconds.

**Availability:** B

**Price:** ×2(+25%), ×4(+50%), ×8(+100%).

**Effect:** The weapon's range increases by

25, 50 or 100 percent, depending on the price of mod.

**Notes:** The 25% range increase does not take up a mod slot.

## Increased Rate of Fire

Probably the most common modification on the streets of Ash. Gangs love hosing down the street with rapid fire when blasting an opponent to pieces.

**Availability:** C

**Price:**  $\times 2$  for every +1 to RoF, up to +3

**Effect:** This mod increases the Rate of Fire. If this mod increases it to 3, the weapon can now shoot 3 round bursts. If it's increased to 5, the weapon becomes Automatic.

**Notes:** Increasing RoF by 1 or 2 takes up 1 modification slot, increasing it by 3 – two slots.

*Example 1: A PC has found a great model of the plasma assault rifle; Nex-Coleman's NC400V is an improved version of the model used during the Battle of Cor. Since he has some spare cash, he decides to improve the gun. He does not care about rate of fire or magazine capacity – but wants to kill heavily armored opponents with a single shot. He decides to increase the caliber (+2 damage), range (+25%), and install two levels of high-energy yield. The total cost of improvements is now 3000 ( $\times 4 + \times 2 + \times 4 = 10$  times the basic price of the weapon). The new stats of the rifle are now Range 36/72/144, Damage 3d10+2, Ro F1, Shots 5, AP 14.*

*Example 2: A character decides he needs more firepower, and decides to transform his gun into a real monster, using all his life savings. He picks two levels of increased caliber (+2 damage), all levels of high-energy yield (+10 AP), and tops it off with exploding ammo. He has to spend \$12 000 ( $\times 4 + \times 10 + \times 10 = 24$*

*times the cost of the gun), but it's going to be worth it. Now, the gun has the following stats: Range 10/20/40, Damage 4d8+2, Ro F1, Shots 5, AP 25, uses small burst templates.*

## CERS

Here are the most influential arms manufacturers in Eclipse – something just for the groups that don't like using generic names like "assault rifle" or "TPC".

**BSP** – a small firm dealing in guns "for real men". It's focused especially on the Horizon market; it produces both personal plasma weapons and regular slugthrowers – including the limited series "Twilight", encrusted with precious metals.

**NC (Nex-Coleman)** – a company with hundreds of years of experience. It produces only modern weapons – personal ones or those mounted on vehicles, even on spaceships. Their products are expensive, but very reliable.

**Sherman** – a forgotten producer of personal firearms, until recently the sole supplier of Horizon's armies.

**Virus** – the cheapest, worst and slowest arms manufacturer in the Horizon system. It owns three old, decrepit automated factories, churning out cheap, weak, and pathetic plasma guns. Price is their only saving grace.

## Technobabble Generator

What to do when the player doesn't like phrases like "Increased Rate of Fire" or "Improved Aim", and would rather like to hear that in his NC-17 the gunsmith installed a parallel loop system, or switched out the central impulse transmission feedback array? While naming the



RESULT	ELEMENT	RESULT ON D10	RESULT ON D12
1	Coil (damage)	Flow	Counter
2	Streamer (damage)	Conductivity	Primal
3	Transformer (damage)	Vector	Dual
4	Generator (batteries)	Energy	Negating
5	Probe (rate of fire)	Emission	Ionized
6	Processor (aim)	Feedback	Quantum
7	Compensator (aim)	Transfer	Total
8	Polarizer (range)	Drive	Impulse
9	System (universal)	Polarity	Limiting
10	Circuit (universal)	Zero	
11	Plus		
12	Circular		

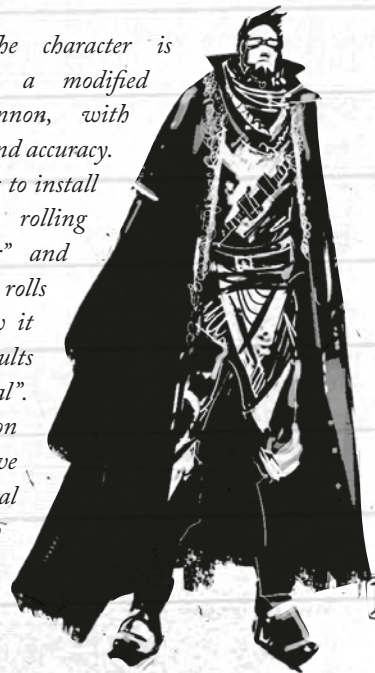
Table 1.

modifications according to their function and influence on weapon's statistics is more convenient for all players, flavor names sound much better. This generator is designed for the groups that like to introduce various pseudo-technical terms, not necessarily important or meaning anything – but adding a sci-fi feel to the game. To randomly generate a name for an installed modification, select the column tied to its type, and then roll a d10 and d12, to determine the specific name of the modification. This technobabble generator is of course designed only for futuristic weapons. If the results aren't accepted by the players, you can further develop the name with terms like "improved", "maximized", "second level", or just reroll. (Table 1).

*Example 1: The player has increased the range of his plasma rifle. He selects "polarizer" as the modified element, and*

*then rolls dice which show "energy" and "impulse". He toys with the description, declaring that his faithful NC 300 has been now equipped with a "souped-up impulse energy polarizer".*

*Example 2: The character is rewarded with a modified plasma handcannon, with greater damage and accuracy. The player decides to install a new "system", rolling up 3 = "vector" and 12 = "zero". He rolls again, to narrow it down, and it results in "flow" and "dual". His new weapon turns out to have an "experimental dual-flow zero vector system".*



# LIFE IN THE SYNDICATE

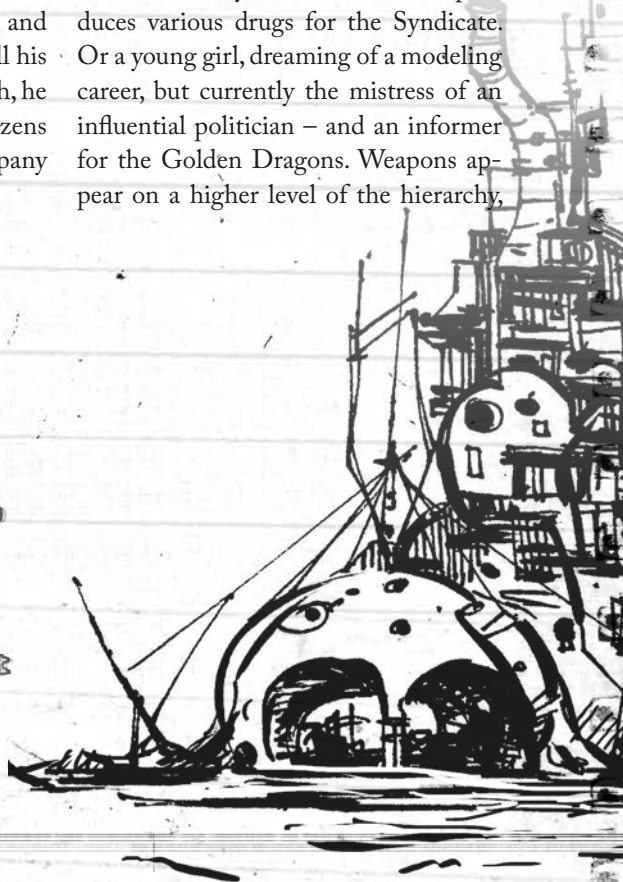
The life of a made man in the Syndicate doesn't have much in common with the one imagined by the common folk on Ash. Sure, you do have to intimidate people, cut someone's hand off or just off a target, but usually it's just business, like in a corporation. Only with no taxes, and better medical care. Wars – real wars between gangs or even entire clans – happen very rarely. Scuffles between bosses aren't really noticed by normal working folks. An average Joe probably buys some illegal goods, but that's the limit of his usefulness to the mob. He can't afford to buy a kidnapped child, can't pay up for extortion money, and you won't be able to kill him and sell his organs. If you push him hard enough, he and a thousand other average citizens will chip in, hire a mercenary company and it will eradicate your gang.

**You can go out on street  
and kill everyone who looks  
threatening, but that's not  
wise. Sooner or later you're  
gonna piss off someone important,  
or hurt someone being taken care of  
by the competition.**

**You could start a war nobody wants.  
Then it's better if you have something up  
your sleeve, since against the power of  
an entire clan your kung-fu and plasma  
won't count for jack.**

**Manu Taiwo  
Black Dragon Lieutenant**

That's why the Syndicate attacks usually the lower and criminal classes. On some planets it's from 0.1% to half of a percent of the entire population. On Ash people claim that they are more numerous than the previous norm. In the freezing, decaying cities there are fewer and fewer honest job opportunities. People try to survive, and many are forced to either take up underpaid work or a well-paid, but risky and illegal job. Producing illegal substances, modifying military implants, prostitution, gambling, smuggling, extortion, kidnapping or even assassination are the bread and butter for boys and girls from the Syndicate. A typical member of the Organization is not a bandit ready to draw his gun in every situation. He might be a former pharmacist who, after his factory closed down, now produces various drugs for the Syndicate. Or a young girl, dreaming of a modeling career, but currently the mistress of an influential politician – and an informer for the Golden Dragons. Weapons appear on a higher level of the hierarchy,

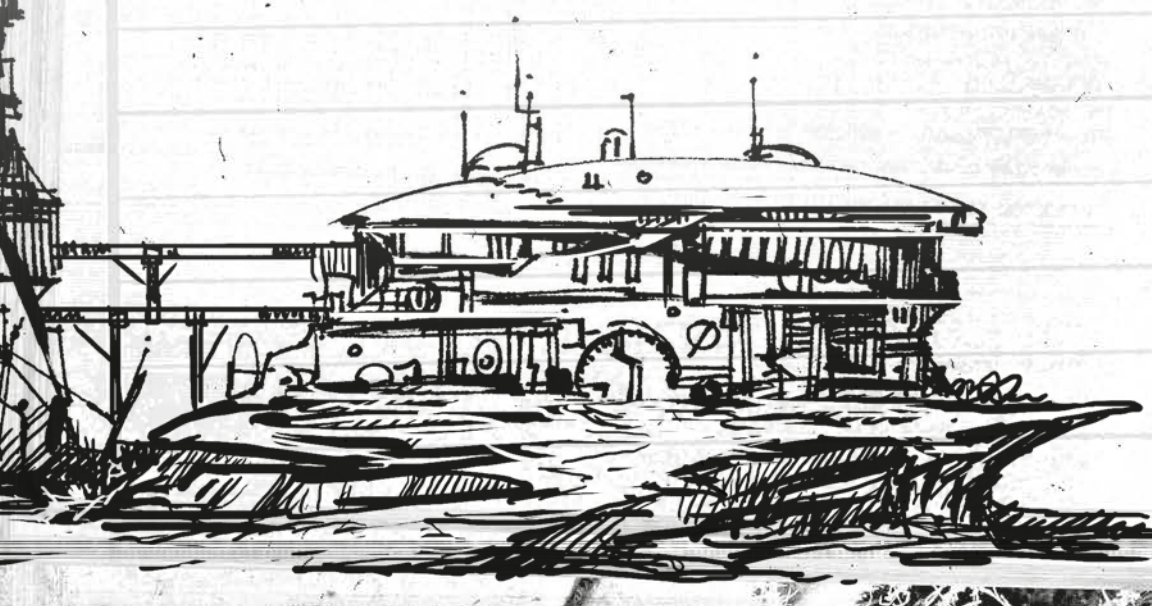




among soldiers (even though many chemists or technicians are far more respected and better-paid than a simple hired gun), who chiefly work as bodyguards. More dangerous tasks, like smashing someone's face in, demolishing a bar or destroying heating systems are performed far less often – once or twice per month. Soldiers are supposed to protect their bosses, transport them to meetings and parties, and maintain their skills through intensive training. A Syndicate soldier constantly has to be in top form.

Life's more interesting at the next level up – when you're promoted to lieutenant. To become one of boss's advisors you need to prove your abilities over a long period, since it's not a job for a simple soldier. A lieutenant has to be a killer, businessman, diplomat, officer and a telepath. He needs to know how to fight, since his work is often breaking bones or burning heads with plasma. He needs to know something about money, planning and economics to avoid making losses for the family. He has to be able to talk to people, to convince them

without using guns. He has to be a good commander – without respect, loyalty and trust he won't be able to complete any assignment. Finally, he has to be a complete paranoid. The easiest way to become a new lieutenant is by killing the previous one, or by blackmailing or discrediting him. While his men should trust him implicitly and follow his orders to the letter, the lieutenant himself – if he wants to maintain his life and status – should trust no-one. In many clans, the lieutenants are directly subordinate to the boss or his closest family. On Ash they have a lot of leeway: they can count on the daimyo's support, but very rarely do they receive direct orders. They usually find new opportunities to earn money by themselves – they're limited only by their territories, their own skills and their common sense. Really violent actions, like in VR movies, happen very rarely – a couple of times a year. Usually there are no snags: the family pays the ransom, the businesses pay their protection money, other gangs and ambitious wannabes stay out of your protected areas.



A clan daimyo is a cross between a politician, a strategist and a CEO. Thanks to his authority, the most profitable contracts are signed. His vision holds the family together, allows it to avoid bad investments and unnecessary conflicts. If he needs to take direct control, he oversees his lieutenants (especially during gang wars). He may also take care of the gang's legal dealings, contacting officials who accept various presents – and he reciprocates.

This does not mean that the daily life of a gangster is dull. The monotonous work is done by the regular soldiers and simple stooges. The lieutenant's job is entirely different. They scan the Cortex searching for new opportunities, recruit people, meet with cops, courts, politicians and nobles – to hand over bribes, deal in various illegal goods, information or even people. They organize smuggling operations and invest the money in legal, profitable businesses. They protect the secret clinics where their soldiers receive new implants or treatments, or where the refugees receive plastic surgery and genetic treatments. They also negotiate with other clans or even travel to another star system to find trading partners. All this – and regular reports and meetings with the bosses – is the daily job of a Syndicate lieutenant.

## Honor Among Killers

Someone completely unfamiliar with the daily life of the mobster is very susceptible to the media's illusions. It's commonly thought that the Syndicate has some kind of code of honor. Clans that follow that code are portrayed as "good", the others as murderers, rogues and sadists, or even cultists of the Devoufer. This image has little in common with the reality.

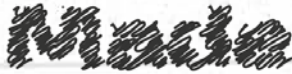
The behavior of the family is solely dependent on the character of the boss, his lieutenants and their sphere of interest. Someone who's dealing in the production of illegal implants can afford to be nice to strangers – but if you deal in contract killings there's little leeway. The honor of the Syndicate is just an invention of VR and the media. Sure, gangsters love how they're portrayed (and they do, in fact, bribe some producers), but only a few actually behave like that – a handful of idealists and some simpletons shaped by the movies now trying to live the dream. The most famous 'honorable gangster' is Shiro Hino, boss of the Golden Dragons. It's hard to tell whether his image of honor, rules and dignity is just a smokescreen. Possibly Shiro presents this image just to divert attention from his lieutenants. Even though the Syndicate isn't particularly honorable,

Honor's a good thing to have.  
Life's even better.  
Manu Taiwo  
Black Dragon Lieutenant



they're pragmatic – and there's little to gain in killing innocents. Another non-profitable activity is worshipping the Devourer – virtually no leader will spend the clan's money on this, but some individuals use their own assets. The Syndicate does not care what motivates you, so it's not very likely for an entire clan to support the Devourer. Terrorism is also not popular – bombs, poisoning water or taking over spaceships is not something the Syndicate would deal in. They want to remain in shadows and silently earn more money.

Sadly, since the great gang war eight years ago, the Organization often appears in the headlines. The wiser bosses hope that time will cure all wounds, but there are some clans that disagree. They attack noble families, cops, ordinary people, even Infinity. A more serious conflict, potentially able to destroy the families, is only a matter of time. The patience of the real rulers of the Horizon system is running thin.



An average lieutenant controls at least a few dozen people – and there are some under-bosses who command two or three hundred. These are killers, drivers, soldiers and bodyguards, but also veritable armies of technicians, doctors,

messengers, spies, escorts or ordinary servants – butlers, cooks, cleaning ladies. Everyone should know their place, what to do and what the boss wants. Every lieutenant should know what skills his men are able to use, who should and who shouldn't take care of specific business. Finally, there are some trusted agents – people who have general skillsets, able to organize actions by themselves, and act even when there are no clear orders. This is an ideal role for players in a campaign based on the Syndicate. It's great if one of the players takes on the role of a lieutenant – in this case the characters will have a lot more options available – but it isn't necessary. A sub-boss will also work well as a NPC – this is more convenient for groups that do not like to initiate their own adventures and would rather rely on the GM's ideas. A group can consist of various characters – below are a few sample archetypes.

**Ex-Agent** – working for a corporation has its upsides and its downsides. This man has seen more flaws than benefits in working with a corporation. Perhaps he felt too constrained or he just hated his boss? Each one of them had a reason

**You're a killer, right? I can see that  
– you scan the surroundings,  
looking for threats,  
sudden movements,  
a glimpse of the reflection from  
a scope. It's hard to get rid of those  
habits. Same thing with me, really.  
I've been hiding a sawed-off under the table for year.  
Before you draw your weapon think twice, is it worth  
dying by the hand of an old fart like me?  
Tanaka Hino**

to change job and gain fame in the Syndicate. For lieutenant, an ex-age is a real treasure – a jack of all trades, a fully self-sufficient soldier.

**Field Medic** – someone who has earned his spurs in battle. He's patched up friends on the battlefield, probably in some jung on Cor. He's seen more death He's seen more death than many samurays and is able to both kill and heal without any special equipment. Such a person can work in a clinic, overseeing many patients, but when the time comes you can give him a gun and a shield and order him to attack a hostile clan.

**Gunman** – a specialist in using regular guns, only rarely using plasma weapons. A slugthrower is far safer and more reliable than any plasma caster. It bypasses energy shields, and causes nasty, bleeding wounds. Maybe there are some people able to shoot someone in the face with a plasma gun without frying the hostage, but Ash has only a handful of these.

**Independent Psionicist** – a lot of psis can find a great future on other planets, but this one was too stupid or too greedy, broke the rules of his foundation and was caught. Thrown out, stripped of his status, he needs to find another employer. The organization always favors these people – ambitious enough to fight for their own wealth, but ones that have already experienced the consequences of disloyalty.

**Smuggler** – also known as an 'independent merchant'. Some people in the mob do own their own ships, but these are either rich lieutenants or mercenaries. The

smuggler uses the Organization's shuttles when he needs to smuggle something off-planet. As well as being a great pilot, he's often a good diplomat with some possible military experience.

**Telepath** – some people can't be broken with ordinary techniques or guesses about what are they thinking. You need someone who has at least a modicum of psionic skill – and can at least read someone else's thoughts, or better still, replace thoughts with ones you'd like. Most telepaths are taught how to brawl and shoot – they're too valuable to the Syndicate to leave unarmed.

**Undercover Cop** – a police officer working for the Syndicate. Some are just corrupt cops on the payroll, but there are also police officers who were originally sent to infiltrate the Syndicate, but eventually joined the criminals.

### **BEGINNERS OR PROS?**

An average Novice character is above average, but they might not be up to the capabilities of an average lieutenant or one of his agents. Before beginning the game it's worth thinking whether the players should create more experienced characters – Seasoned or Veteran ones. Such a solution would fit a shorter campaign – after a dozen or so sessions the adventures would end. Another solution is taking some advances on credit. You gain Experience Points as usual, but can use only every second or third advancement to gain new abilities, until you pay back the advancements gained during character creation.

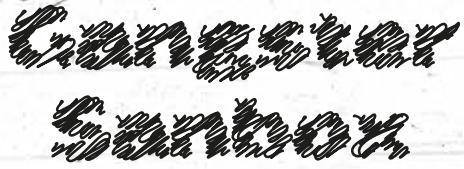
Before beginning the game it's also worth discussing which clan the heroes will



belong to. Black Dragons and Wolves are probably the worst choice: these are the most aggressive, even outright evil clans. This decision should be based on the play style of the group. If they want to assist the rich and powerful – they should start out as Tigers. Maybe they want to play action adventures based on smuggling – then Phoenix would be your best choice. Even though the spheres of influence of particular clans are roughly set, you don't have to stick by them – remember that after the gang wars the Syndicate lost a lot of influence. The heroes could be tasked with gaining new ground for their clan, for instance in places where other, smaller criminal organizations took over. Speaking of competition, maybe many teams wouldn't want to serve the Syndicate and instead want to create their own organization. After Hidoi's rebellion the supremacy of the Syndicate has been broken. Lesser organizations, gangs or even legal firms are trying to take over former domains of the Syndicate (like Byssu, described below). A small, well-organized group could find a niche on Ash – especially now, when the Syndicate is losing the support of the nobles and Corporation. The real question is whether the heroes will accept orders from Infinity and the Barizian clans as the Syndicate daimyos did before.

**Forget about your conscience. For real. Go to a clinic, have your conscience surgically removed. Install a substitute chip, or do something to disregard good and evil totally. Because if you don't kill your conscience, sooner or later the little bastard will stop you doing something for the clan.**

**Manu Taiwo,  
Black Dragon Lieutenant.**



When deciding to play as men of the Syndicate you need to remember that this isn't going to be a typical campaign, full of action and with stereotypical villains. In such a game it's the player characters who'll be 'bad guys'. Of course, the GM can freely introduce even worse, truly despicable rogues, but this won't change the fact that the PCs will break the law.

Some players will have problems with this alternative style of creating a gangster saga. During such a game, it's better if the players (and not the GM) are responsible for the events that happen during the gameplay. The GM should create a network of connections, describe the most important people in the city, and come up with the basic



problems the characters' clan is currently dealing with, but it's the players that determine which direction the story will take. A typical Syndicate lieutenant is usually on his own, so the characters will rarely take direct orders from their boss – usually they will be asked to do a favor for an important ally, but the details will always depend on the heroes.

### TO IMPROVISE OR NOT?

A looser, improvised approach to planning adventures might not suit some GMs. Learning how to plan open-ended scenarios, thinking over how you could create alternative roads to the finale, creating a network of connections between NPCs or improvising random events on the spot – all of these require some time. If the GM isn't used to this style of adventure, he can adjust to it slowly: start with confronting characters with two or three different solutions to a problem, and later introduce more possible paths.

Preparing such a game for Syndicate agents could take more time than normally, but the effort is sure to pay back. Before beginning the first adventure you should focus on the

network of connections: create a dozen of the most important NPCs in the campaign area, think about their relationship with the player characters, and write down their goals (which they will later try to achieve, regardless of the PCs' actions). Also, prepare the statistics of typical opponents (and a couple of elite ones), short descriptions of interesting places, and a couple of rumors which you can present to the players during the introduction. Make use of the various random generators – drawing cards or a die roll can inspire interesting plot points, which can sometimes develop into major themes in the campaign.

When the party becomes accustomed to important allies or rivals, and has learned about interconnections and how to survive on Ash, the players will want to take the initiative. Taking care of business, planning actions, contacting friends, obtaining and using favors... The scenarios will practically run themselves, and the role of GM in planning them will boil down to inventing rumors, new characters, and determining what the influential NPCs will do.

*Handwritten text at the bottom of the page, appearing to be bleed-through from the reverse side. It is mostly illegible but contains phrases like "factory as how propose", "the city have his name", and "all right".*



# ~~GM~~

## ~~Rumor~~

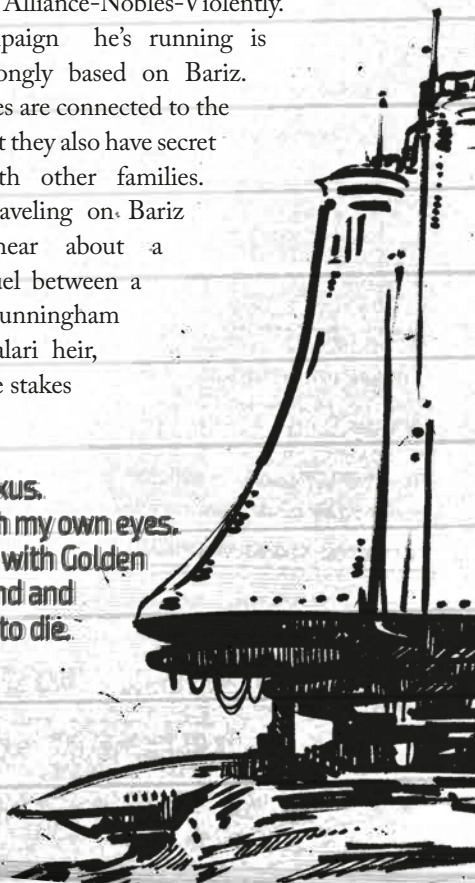
### ~~GM~~

On Ash even gangsters can live uneventful lives. Yet, there are always times when life gets turned upside down. Entire families get murdered, massive wealth changes its owners' personalities, and the balance of power changes sharply. The generator below has been designed especially for the characters connected to the Syndicate. By rolling three dice – d8, d10, and d12 the GM can roll up a rumor that will foreshadow an important future event. Not all of them have to be true, but many have some grain of truth within them. The result of the d8 will show what event has happened – for example a “7”, New Actor, shows that a new, hitherto unknown force has appeared. The subject of the rumor is shown on the d10 – if the GM rolls a 3, it'll mean Police. The last die shows how the event manifested itself, how it was been discovered or what its effect is – depending on the context. A 7 on the d12 means Official. This result can be interpreted in many ways, but the

GM decides that a new police special unit devoted to combating organized crime has appeared on Ash. It can be just a distraction (the police chief is almost certainly controlled by the bosses), but the new unit could actually be effective, if controlled by Infinity and the Ancient One, annoyed with internal Syndicate struggles. (Table 2). Below are two other examples of randomly generated rumors. While creating your own, it's good to think about how such a random event would fit into your campaign. There's no point in wasting your time on an action that wouldn't fit the current situation, or one that's similar to an event that's very similar to a previous one. In such a situation it's best just to re-roll. Example 1: The GM has rolled 6, 2 and a 3. This means Alliance-Nobles-Violently.

The campaign he's running is quite strongly based on Bariz. The heroes are connected to the Valari, but they also have secret deals with other families. While traveling on Bariz they'll hear about a recent duel between a young Cunningham and a Valari heir, where the stakes

**Three weeks ago someone mentioned this, in Nexus. Initially I didn't believe it, but now I've seen it with my own eyes. Two brand new, shiny models of bloody cyborgs, with Golden Dragon emblems! Shiro's stopped prancing around and started to take this war seriously. We're all going to die. Manu Taiwo, Black Dragon Lieutenant.**



were a new alliance between the families. The Cunningham duelist won, and this reportedly means the end of cooperation of Valaris with the Syndicate. The GM decides this rumor is false, even though the duel did happen.

**Example 2:** The GM rolls 5, 9 and 10 – Conspiracy-Government-Surreptitiously. In her campaign, the politicians just take bribes. She decides that one of them, slightly more ambitious, has decided to seize power, thanks to a group whose goal is denouncing government corruption. The heroes will hear that a smaller party is going to leverage their campaign with anti-bribery slogans and select evidence. Some of the evidence is pictures and recordings of one of the heroes, bribing the mayor of Victoria...



## WHAT'S GOING ON ON ASH?

**The GM** can steer his campaign in any direction – but he could also use the plot ideas presented in the core *Nemesis* book. Thanks to this, he'll present his players with a living, evolving world. Some major events that could appear in your games would be:

**Miko Yononoke** transfers her soul into a new body: After months of preparation, when the old shell of the Mantis' daimyo collapses, the mind of the old woman is transferred to a young, genetically improved organism. A young, fit and attractive supermodel's body.

**Tanaki Hino's death:** Shiro's father will inevitably die. Maybe from a bullet, maybe from poison, but he might just as easily die from old age. His funeral will be a disaster: the Wolf clan will prepare a bomb, to kill many clan representatives. This will be the start of another gang war.

**Yuki's wedding:** daughter of Kaga Kara will tie the knot with Cathe second heir of Valari clan leader, in a few months. This pact will strengthen the position of the Black Dragons not only on Bariz, but also on Ash. The rumors will say that the marriage occurred due to a complex intrigue: the young Valari was poisoned by Yuki, and the only thing keeping him alive is a special serum provided by her technicians.



RESULT	D8 - WHAT?	D10 - WHO?	D12 - HOW?
1	Death	Corporation	Instantly
2	Revenge	Nobles	Brutally
3	Betrayal	Police	Violently
4	Arrest	Another Clan	Luckily
5	Conspiracy	Own Clan	Bravely
6	Alliance	Cult	Heroically
7	New Player	Psionic Foundation	Officially
8	Money	Army	Generously
9	Government	Slowly	
10	Independents	Surreptitiously	
11	Tragically		
12	Inhumanly		

Table 2.



This city, over 2000 miles away from Victoria, is almost a planet of its own, with its own problems, plagues and successes. Until the terraformers malfunctioned, Serena was considered the poorest metropolis on Ash. Currently, it's the city with the friendliest climate on the planet - but it's hardly a Galaxy-famous tourist center.

noble families, politics, government and major corporate action. It's the most independent, self-contained city on the planet, attracting not only smaller investors, risk-takers and merchants, but also the worst scum, vile cults, mad scientists and everyone who makes their living eliminating them.

It has over three million inhabitants, eighty-seven major industrial plants a few heating plants and one, fully operational, terraformer. The city is far away from Victoria - and from Barizian

### Geography

Serena was planned as an industrial city - with the north full of factories, power plants, and major industry, and a clean, beautiful south. That's why it

**Whenever I get a long leave, I'd get a shuttle and fly to Serena. different from other Ashite cities - It's free from the ubiquitous corporations, politicians, nobles and tourists. For a veteran of the Cor war, desperately needing some rest, a few days in Highcastle is far more interesting than a month on a beach. Sergeant Kate Rush, Cor army**

received two terraformers – the major one in the industrial district, which was also designed to filter out pollution, and a smaller one next to the residential zones. Until the northern machine was damaged, the city was developing according to plan, but currently, much like other Ashite cities, Serena's inhabitants are slowly melting away.

The city has never been very popular. Since it was placed in a warm, equatorial region, it was far more accommodating than, for instance, Nexus. However, the distance between Serena and Victoria (and other major metropolises) caused Serena to be the smallest town on the planet. The current situation is completely different – mostly thanks to one of the last still operational terraformers. Yet, if a miracle doesn't happen, Serena will share the fate of the other cities of Ash.

### Chimneys

The industrial district is a cold, grim and dark place. Over 80% of the city's inhabitants work here – most of them in harsh, almost inhuman conditions.

The corporations managing the southern terraformer and the heating plant probably hire the most workers, but there are over three hundred other industrial plants, producing all necessary goods, from components for armored trains, through clothes and electronics, to pharmaceuticals.

Chimneys is not just a district of factories, but also massive, mostly abandoned warehouses and ruined apartment blocks inhabited by outcasts,

weirdoes and madmen. Normal people try to avoid this dangerous district – partially because of scary stories about terrible murders committed by savage inhabitants of the Chimneys (which are mostly false), and partially because of the rumors about the mob presence in this district (which happens to be true).

**Clinics:** the inhabitants of Serena discovered a long time ago that no one really cares what happens during their working day. If the company turns in profits, the managers ignore small mistakes, and if the inspectors have been sufficiently bribed, even larger ones. A few years ago, near the factories producing implants and other military equipment for the Cor military, illegal clinics opened, dealing in installing them. If you have enough money, you can buy any military toys – both cybernetics and experimental weapons.

*Use in play:* Dirty business, assassinations, kidnapping valuable employees, or destroying the warehouses of enemy clans are just a few actions which could be undertaken by the characters. Among the Chimneys you could find various scum, gangsters and the men of the Syndicate, but also corporations trying to do some business quietly. In the factory district no one would be concerned about a night-time shooting or a fire in a – supposedly – abandoned warehouse.

### The Ruins of Alba

Thirteen years ago it was the safest and warmest district of the northern part of the metropolis. It's changed into an empty, silent wasteland due to the crash of



an interstellar freighter – a massive ship, over 100 yards long, hit directly in the center of the district, causing an explosion comparable to the detonation of a nuclear weapon. Over half a million lives were lost, and the total damage is estimated in the billions of Eagles. The word on the streets is that the destruction of the district was not an accident, but the result of an attack on the freighter, committed by a terrorist organization or even a cult worshipping the dark deities, and their primary goal was Infinity Tower. At this point this theory is solely the domain of conspiracy theorists, but in the Cortex you can find supposedly genuine recordings from the ship's cameras. You can see the crew fighting some masked soldiers.

*Use in play:* The discovery of the secret of the greatest disaster since the Battle of Cor could be a challenge even for the Player Characters. Was the freighter really attacked? Or maybe the instruments were infected by Lij? It might've been a deliberate action by the military – the army discovered massive underground installations in the district, where Horde monsters were being bred and raised. Other rumors claim that the ship was destroyed by some new technology.

## The Starport

This busy district is composed of over three hundred landing pads and three giant markets (one of which is covered by an impenetrable dome). A magnetic railway line connects the Starport with the factory district, transporting an unbroken stream of goods and raw materials – the factories receive ores

and fuels, and return ready-made goods, often excellent quality ones.

The starport of Serena itself is more often a place where ordinary citizens sell their wares – from an amateur artist trying to add some money on the side, to Byssu peddlers trying to pass off uncensored pirate VR systems.

While most of the deals made here are small, one-time transactions worth a few dozen or a few hundred eagles at best, the Starport district is also a place for more serious business. Trade in property, shares and obligations, patents or interplanetary contracts is not just the domain of Highcastle but also of this district. People try to make their deals here because in the elite neighborhoods the cops are often more inquisitive, and because they're attracted by the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Starport. New arrivals who come here on business don't even try to make deals anywhere else – they have everything here, from potential clients, to places to rest and have fun. If someone just wants to make a quick deal, the Starport is the only place where it'd be possible.

Not all places in this part of Serena are safe. The government tries to maintain order only near the landing pads and the trading dome – the other two markets are a veritable urban jungle. Fights between Byssu and minor gangs are a daily occurrence, and the reason why nearly every trader in the markets is armed.

**Casinos** – the surroundings of Starport are a haven not only for prostitution, smuggling and trade, but also for



gambling. A couple of Eagles' bribe is enough to find one of Byssu's casinos. Most of them rip the customers off, but if you're lucky you can find a better locale, where the Organization only provides protection, companions and entertainment, and the money flows mostly between the players.

**Shipyards** – near the landing pads are a couple of small plants where spaceships are still being produced. Some of the subassemblies are imported from beyond the Horizon system, but the hulls, FTL drives, electronics and navigational computers are built here. These ships can't match the models created by major producers, but they'll suit a smalltime merchant or a bounty hunter perfectly. Besides, no one on Ash would even care if a customer hides a few military gadgets (like rocket launchers or a mass driver) on his new civilian spaceship.

*Use in play:* Starport is a place where you can find a job, make a profitable deal or capture a wanted criminal. This district is also a point of interest for all factions within Serena – except maybe Infinity, which cares only about the safe transport of its goods.

## Bridges

In the good old days, when the temperatures on Ash were far higher, the city was divided in half by the Thread: a wide, shallow river, flowing slowly and providing water for the farmlands surrounding the town. After the northern terraformer broke down, and the people decided to erect domes protecting the southern side, the river froze over – and it stayed frozen. The only memories of these better

times are the massive bridges, hundreds of yards long – currently inhabited by various clans, tribes, gangs and sects. Four out of seven bridges still exist in the present day, and all of them are being used. The Old Bridge is even still used for its primary purpose – rail transport. The government of Serena couldn't allow the transport link to Nexus and Victoria to be threatened by outcasts and madmen, so the Old Bridge is protected by the military – two platoons of infantry and a dozen light vehicles, able to call in air support if necessary.

*Use in play:* The Bridges district is a great place for a hideout, either for a hero on the run or a NPC needed by the party. But when the target has support from one of the gangs controlling this area, a frontal assault without a small squad of your own is not a good idea. Infiltration or negotiations could be more successful – but do not guarantee recovery of the target.

## Southfield

This district near the southern terraformer and Highcastle, is essentially downtown – safe, with good infrastructure and numerous job offerings but not really interesting to corporations or gangs. This district is dominated by the *bourgeoisie* people interested in their own work and family.

*Use in play:* Southfield really is as boring as it seems. The heroes here can discover dirty secrets about a business, or after a spectacularly bad mission find themselves in one of local hospitals. For groups looking for a better job, the

district will be able to provide neither work nor entertainment.

## Highcastle

This settlement, surrounded by a wall 25 feet high, and guarded by a small private army, is home to all the happy folk working for the corporations, the government or the Syndicate. The inhabitants of Highcastle want for nothing – warmth and fresh air are provided by the terraformer nearby. Food, electric power, fresh water and other resources are made underground, in a complex which will soon be – if Ash doesn't stop freezing – home for the inhabitants of Serena.

*Use in play:* Highcastle could be both a place for meetings, where the characters will take on more and more tasks, or their permanent base of operations. It's not a perfect place, and it has its flaws and secrets. You can find a Black Dragon assassin, a Stansfield underling, or a cultist looking for another victim; but you can also find a foreign spy or a famous politician, who's also the target of a potential assassination.

## DIGISPECS

An alternative to the jack: a set composed of a small pair of glasses, electrodes on the back of the neck and a small computer the size of a matchbox. All of this allows you to explore a planetary network without an implant or a nanotreatment. The flaw of the specs is that they're slow – all tests made using this device (for instance research) are made with a -1 modifier. For sects or other groups hostile towards cybernetics this is hardly a major problem. Availability: A. Price: 200.

## ~~Organizations~~

Even though Infinity is present in Serena, the city's also a domain for many other organizations that on their own turf can rival that corporation, the Syndicate or other the major players in the Horizon system. The metropolis has gained a degree of independence other cities of Ash can only dream of.

## Byssu

Just ten years ago Byssu was a part of the Syndicate – one of the most powerful families, known as the Lead Hydra. It was

**No goddamned Wolf tells me what I can and can't do in my city. Go back to your master, dog, and tell him what I did with your companions. That will be the fate of any of you stupid enough to show your face in Serena.  
Erton Arvhage**



one of the most versatile clans, dealing with drugs, gambling, and smuggling, but also with experimental technologies, medicine, cloning or even kidnapping. The activities of Hydra, however, concerned only Serena and the space beyond Ash. After the Hidoi Revolt the clan lost a lot of influence in orbit and in other star systems. Erton Arvhage, boss of the Lead Hydra, was disgusted by the war and the methods used to wage it and decided to leave the Syndicate. He declared Serena a territory of Byssu (as he renamed his organization) and pulled his men back from Victoria, Nexus, and other metropolises. For now, he manages to remain in power in Serena, but the more aggressive Syndicate families are still trying to regain power in the city. Even though officially there's an armistice, not a day passes without a major or minor battle of the gangs' soldiers.

During its eight years of separation from the Syndicate, Byssu has changed both its organization and its ways of operation. They still follow the hierarchy of specialists, soldiers and lieutenants, but in Byssu the civilians are far more important than in the Syndicate. Arvhage is trying to legalize quite a lot of their business, so in Byssu, the presidents of companies controlled by the family are often more influential than assassins or troopers. Out of four lieutanants working

for Erton, only one – Sartu Anva – is not running a legal business, due to his duties. Sartu is responsible for protecting Serena from the Syndicate – which usually boils down to eliminating soldiers of the rival families.

Erton Aryhage is over one hundred years old, but he doesn't look a day past forty. That's a result of genetech and nanotreatments, which he regularly receives in Infinity clinics. Erton has very good connections to the employees of the Ancient One (and rumor has it he knows him in person), and occasionally calls in some favors. Arvhage knows that if a gang war breaks out, he won't be able to resist the clans, that's why he looks for allies among the enemies of the Black Dragons and the Wolves.

#### Section 4

This elite unit, created 15 years ago to fight organized crime, turned into a gang itself in a couple of months. Section 4, also known as the Group, is an excellent crime-fighting machine on paper. Dozens of destroyed chemical labs and illegal clinics, hundreds of captured dealers, thugs and even higher-ranking bosses, millions of Eagles in confiscated accounts and goods... For someone who's not streetwise enough, or who does not know much about the

**My man has been killed on your territory.  
I do not care whether he's been offed by Tinkers,  
Hyenas, cops or Byssu. You owe me one soldier,  
and I never forget a debt.  
Captain Stansfield**



Syndicate, this seems impressive.

But it's merely the tip of the iceberg. For every million of eagles recovered, the cops pocket at least two.

If they destroyed a laboratory producing illegal nano, it must've belonged to the competition, and the Group was not able to introduce their own goods. A dealer killed during a raid was probably a traitor or a man that did not want to sell his business to Section 4. Currently, the Group is strong enough to rival Byssu and local cells of the Syndicate. Their main sphere of interest is new technology and pharmaceuticals – anything that does not involve massive warehouses or cooperating with people. Sometime ago Section dealt in prostitution, but all too often they needed to silence a stupid girl or an inquisitive pimp. Nano, drugs, military tech, or rigged VR sell far better and more easily.

Section 4 is comprised of about 60 police officers, most of which have at least basic military experience. They also have a Special Forces group (twelve heavily implanted veterans with heavy weapons: TPC, two armored cars and a VTOL). The Group tries to avoid violence, but there are always a few aggressive thugs, and every month their record for it grows. **Captain Nathan Stansfield** is a paranoid, hyperactive junkie with periodic bouts of violent rage... but a *smart* paranoid, hyperactive junkie with periodic bouts of violent rage. He's run Section 4 since its creation. Initially he was just an ordinary cop, but a few bribes convinced him to switch sides. He's not stingy, and this is why he's still running Section 4 – he's spent over a third of all profits on bribes. Not

many people are aware that Stansfield is a reject from a monastic ship. There, he received several implants, amazing combat skills and serious psychological problems connected to drug addiction.

**Johnny Reese** is a real jack-of-all trades. He knows absolutely everything – from finances through chemistry, computers and graphic design to explosives and strategy. Johnny worked as a mnemonic courier, but after a dangerous mission (he's been tricked into carrying data from a pharmaceutical company working for the Syndicate) he decided to quit. He replaced his memory bank with an experimental jack model, packed it full of knowledge, and started to work for himself. Soon, Stansfield took an interest in him – while initially he forced Reese to work for the Group, Reese started to enjoy this. Currently he's a lieutenant in Section 4, responsible for distributing VRs and nano. He's Nathan's right hand – if the captain ever dies, Reese is sure to take his place.

## The Unification Church

During the thousands of years of humanity's exploration of the cosmos, most people abandoned faith in superior beings controlling their lives. It was hard to believe in an omnipotent god, when human technology was able to create new species, transform entire planets into livable worlds or create entirely new virtual worlds.

And yet, faith was reawakened by the manifestation of the Devourer. If evil exists and is so powerful that it's able to destroy solar systems – wouldn't that

imply a force of good, at least equally powerful? If the cultists have powers of black magic, wouldn't miracles also be possible? Is there any meaning in the power of science, the human mind and its accommodated knowledge, while the powers of the Wyrms break the most fundamental laws of the universe? Such questions have often made people realize how fragile their civilization is. The existence of a god, or gods, became a more serious question. Old religions were reborn in a new form, better fitting the needs of mankind. In the Horizon system, these faiths have been reborn as the Unification Church. To be fair, this is more of a charity than a normal religion, requiring full devotion. It does have an organized structure and hierarchy, its own rituals, and holy writ, but it focuses more on mortal life than life after death. And maybe that's why it's the most popular of all the legal cults on Eclipse. The Church urges people to do good – to help the poor, avoid temptation, avoid breaking the law (including many commonly accepted misdemeanors, like installing illegal heating or computer piracy), and

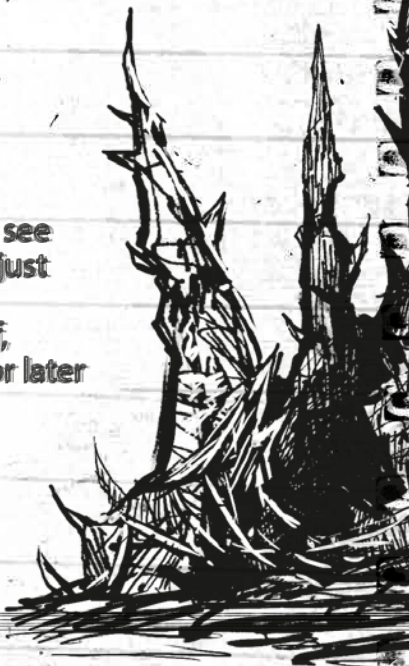
supporting the community in difficult times. The priests try to reach everyone in need, but this often ends tragically: the gangsters aren't interested who you're working with, but if you help people, you gotta have some money, right? –

That's why most of the priests carry sawn-off shotguns under their cassocks.

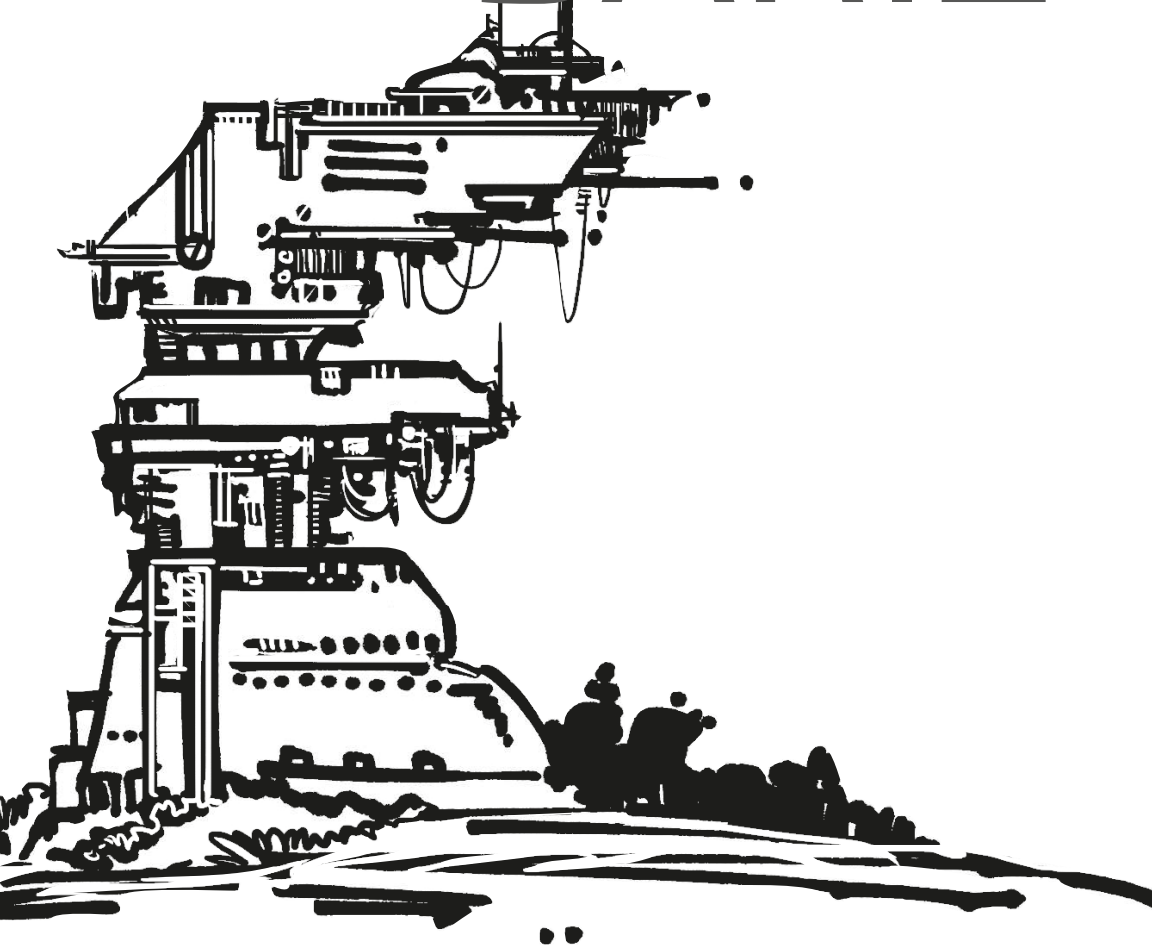
**Father Gregory H. White** – with his massive moustache, old-fashioned suit and two nasty revolvers (he takes them off only for ceremonies) he looks more like a cowboy than a man of the cloth. He's one of more demanding and stern priests of the Unification Church – such a stance paradoxically draws more faithful than the milquetoast policy of other priests. White believes that God chose him not only to give food to the poor, but also to clean the scum Ash from – that's why his day job is not praying, but bounty hunting.

**People on Ash need a goal. Everyone wants to see some meaning to life, to hope that they're not just a small point of life that flashes and fades, leaving no trace at all. Many people, like myself, turn to faith. And many more, like me, sooner or later lose it.**

**Fabio Capella**  
bounty Hunter, ex-priest  
of The unification Church



# BARIZ






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Millennia ago, when the human race colonized many worlds, a few dozen settlement ships arrived in the Horizon system. Their goal was the green, beautiful planet called Bariz. The colonists founded some settlements which, in time, turned into cities. The captains of the first ships became the leaders of their small communities – and when their families became dominant, they started to use noble titles. The informal feudal system became law. Later, the families decided that they should create a council, with a representative of each major family, which would take decisions for the good of the system as a whole. This was the time of the colonization of Ash and Cor, and the conquest of the Horizon system.

The giant mansions left on the surface of planet still belong to the families. Flying houses, based on graviters, became hovering courts or castles. Every major family with representation in the Council has its own flying city – but lesser families have also constructed their own flying holds. Giant, majestic constructions float over the vast holdings of their lords.

History does not preserve the stories of the first colonists and their settlements. In fact, the first settlers were often criminals or outcasts, whose only choice was to go to space or be executed. The nobles don't want to remember that – most of them believe they've been leading mankind since its

beginnings. A few hundred years ago, the status quo was violently destroyed. Rapid, the corporation responsible for sending the colony ships, came back to reclaim its property. Using its legal documents it tried to force the inhabitants of Bariz to surrender. After a few years the political scuffle turned into open warfare, when the citizens of Bariz were fed with slogans about freedom and independence. Eventually, Bariz managed to defeat Rapid thanks to forces from Cor and Ash, as well as from the local corporations. There are rumors that this victory was the result of a pact made by some noble families with the dark powers, – and that's why they were originally sent to the Horizon system.

Today, the noble houses still haven't fully regained the power they had before the Horde's attack. The nobles, forced to ally with corporations and losing more and more fertile land, have lost a lot of money – and respect. Though they used to be perceived as super-human, they are now seen as ordinary, fallible people – ones that can be overthrown and replaced. Is Bariz going to see society wanting to change the status quo? 'Power to the people' is catching on in these dangerous times.

## Atta

The sixth Founder Family has been lost in the mists of time. The Atta family was one of the original leading clans, owning their own mansions and settlements. They were the only group more interested in the sea than land – their archipelago of small islands was the

centre of maritime activity, and their fleet was the largest – basically every vessel that sailed the Barizian seas and oceans belonged to Attas.

Later on, the families started to look upwards. When the graviters and the first flying platforms were introduced on Ash, the Attas weren't interested at all. They looked downwards – aiming to establish an underwater empire. Let the rest of the families divide the lands between each other – the Attas would become lords of oceans. They modified their bodies to move better underwater – some even modified their genes to have gills.

Finally, when flying cities were cruising the skies, the first underwater fortresses of the Atta family were created. The archipelago slowly emptied, and only some ports remained operational. The Attas had finally hidden under the surface of the oceans – perhaps forever.

No-one on the surface knows what happened. Initially, descending underwater didn't change much – the Atta fleet have sailed on seas and oceans, transporting goods and people. With time, communication with the underwater holdings became rarer and rarer, and centuries ago it disappeared completely. Scouts sent to the family headquarters either never reached it or never returned – and some never even left their starting ports. Eventually, the scans detected no living humans underwater.

The abandoned ports and vessels decayed slowly, and the traces of oceanic explorers are now almost forgotten.

Today, there are only a few descendants of the Attas living on the surface – who became guardians of the mystery of the depths. The Attas have developed their undersea colonies, keeping only a few contacts with the surface. Yet, while penetrating the depths of the ocean, they discovered mysterious tablets, written using unknown symbols. After much research they managed to decipher the inscriptions – which meant their doom. They summoned some kind of dark power, which roamed the domed cities and destroyed everything it touched. After its orgy of violence, it disappeared without trace. The few that managed to escape, decided to do everything to keep that place and the tablets forgotten by the inhabitants of Bariz. The Attas became the guardians of the depths – sabotaging scouting expeditions and doing everything possible to ensure that no one finds the tablets again.

## The Planet

No one can deny the beauty of Bariz. Despite the constant threat of the Horde, the life here goes on at its own pace. The politics and the glamour are matters for the flying cities, while the land is allowed to live by itself. Most of Bariz is plains and steppes, divided by mountains and forests.

Despite hundreds of years of colonization and advanced technology, much of Bariz still remains a verdant, unspoiled wilderness. No one really needed to scout the forests or look for minerals in the mountains. The settlers organized their land so as to provide the necessary foodstuffs and imported the rest.



Each family owns some settlements responsible for providing resources and goods to their flying manor or other settlements – as long as the transports keep functioning. The settlements provide water, food and other resources – all thanks to the most modern technologies. Ground connections between the cities do not exist – all the travel and communication is by air and radio. Things not produced on Bariz are transported both to the ground and to the flying cities.

Many inhabitants of the ground settlements claim that Bariz is not as friendly as she looks. There are places where even large groups of people have disappeared without trace. Sometimes, especially in the middle of winter, you can hear vile howling and hymns in the mountains. The nobles generally disregard these as the tales of superstitious peasants. They don't realize that not all the colonists on the planet settled down in their towns and bowed to the nobles. Many people escaped to the mountains, where they started small nomadic communities. Living without technology, they embraced the gifts of the planet – and so, without the knowledge of the noble houses, the tribe of Wildlings was born.

In some caverns, they discovered mysterious scripts and strange paintings on the walls. These inspired them to worship the mystical gods of nature. The new arrivals quickly adapted to their new life and the number of worshippers grew. With time, the Wildlings started to guard their woods and mountains against all intruders.

Nobody knows that the mysterious gods of nature are in reality one of Mesu's forms, who has been transforming and altering the nature of the Wildlings. The aggressive tribes became even more bloodthirsty, waging open war both on intruders and each other. Many of those who rejected technology have instead relied on the graces of the planet and Mesu's boons.

Traveling the surface of the planet, you can often encounter traces of the past – times where there were no flying cities, and the surface was dotted with ordinary towns and roads connecting them. No-one even knows where the first settlements existed – today these places might be covered by jungle or the sands of deserts. Nobody knows what knowledge or treasures are hidden in their ruins. Nobody even knows where the ships that arrived here millennia ago are.

The current noble manors on the surface are not the places where the first settlements arose, even though the nobles claim otherwise. With time, memories were lost and the courts moved to more attractive places.

## Flying Cities

Doubtless the most famous attractions of Bariz are the one-of-a-kind flying cities – the result of the spoiled nobles' folly. The heart of a flying city is usually a palace or some other kind of manor – home to the head of the family and their closest relatives. The largest cities are able to provide housing to over a million

inhabitants, but the vast majority are no more than half that size.

Hundreds or even thousands of graviters keep them afloat – from a few dozen to a few hundred feet above the surface of planet. The cities can't rise too high, since the people wouldn't be able to breathe – and they can't float too low, since the exhaust gases from the graviters annihilate everything for a few yards below.

The cities float slowly on a selected course corrected by small rocket engines. Thanks to this, the heads of the families can oversee their holdings and go wherever their intervention is necessary.

The cities, although huge, aren't self-sufficient. Even though there are actual farms and animal herds aboard, as well as ponds or even small rivers, these require a constant flow of

resources. They're able to get

water easily – simply by floating over a massive water source and draining it with a system of giant pipes (and desalinating and storing it).

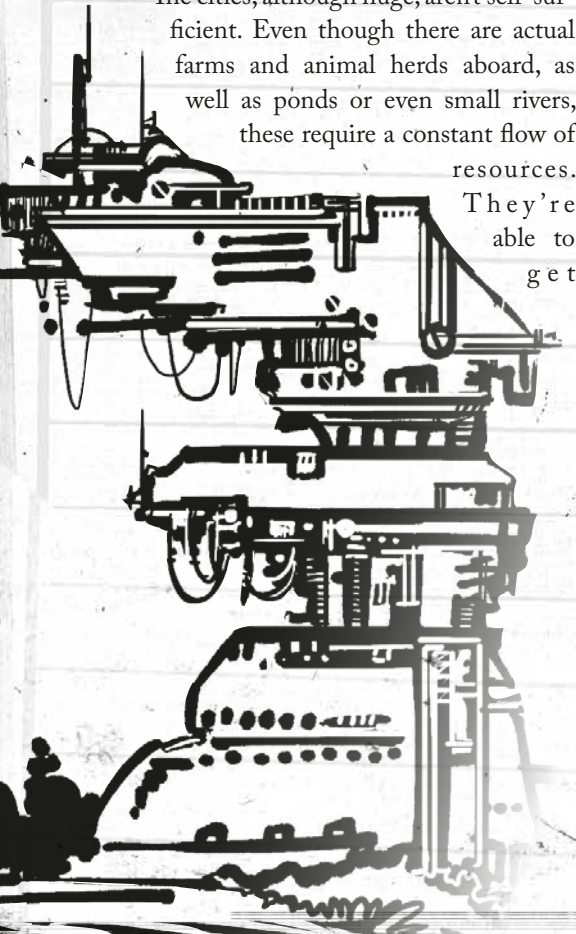
The creators of the cities tried hard to make them self-contained ecosystems. All refuse and waste is recycled to the maximum. Cities contain factories, schools, and hospitals. The nobles are usually only a small percentage of inhabitants. Maintaining an opulent, modern town requires constant hard work by many people.

The cities are not the only places that use graver technology. Bariz is traversed by many platforms using graviters. Some are simply smaller settlements, others belong to the guilds working for the various families. Often, smaller noble families build their own flying manors to show that they can rival the magnates. Finally, there are the small circus platforms – homes to wandering groups of artists travelling from city to city, entertaining, transporting secret messages and generally making life in the cities far more interesting.

### The Bariz You didn't Know

Bariz is not just flying cities full of hard-working craftsmen and nobles exploiting them. Bariz is also smaller work towns inhabited by less wealthy or fortunate citizens. But there's far more behind that mask of prosperity, forced on the planet by the nobles intent on preserving peace and stability.

The surface of Bariz has never been fully explored, and there are many unknown





species of animals roaming the world. Nobody knows what the strange paintings found in the caverns are, or who painted them. Sometimes, travelers find mysterious shrines or bones in the deep forest. The Wildlings leave traces when they leave an area they have used. They moved far away from the rest of humanity long ago, so they often baffle people who encounter places where they have camped.

Bariz is a constant struggle for power and privilege. The noble houses know that no single family is able to seize control, but they'd rather fight constantly than ally with a rival. This status quo can be destroyed by the expansion of the Syndicate or Infinity – a lavish lifestyle is expensive, and the sources of income are dwindling. The families more and more often sell their shares in the remaining planets of the system. It's only a matter of time until their lands on Bariz are auctioned.

An alternative possible source of income – that would shake up the system on Bariz is selling privileges. Many rich guild families, who have worked hard so far, are being adopted by lesser noble clans in exchange for financial gains. There are ever more rumors about selling noble titles, privileges and legal rights.



Bariz was the first planet colonized in the Horizon system. Its history can provide many ideas for interesting Savage Tales. For instance, not many people remember the origin of the noble families. Imagine player characters receiving a task from a mysterious client, to recover data about the past. That search will draw the interests of many families guarding their secrets. Conflicts behind the scenes can easily turn into violent struggles. Maybe it's Rapid wanting to weaken the nobles' position once again so it can reclaim its property? How would the Infinity react?

Another interesting subject is the Atta family. A lost family which awakened the dark powers, and now guards their mysteries. What will they do, when cultists, ostensibly trying to discover the truth about the lost family, try to get hold of the vile tablets? How will the characters react when encountering the guardians of the deeps? Will they convince the PCs to stop their search or maybe they will reveal the true nature of their employers to them? The rule of nobility is obvious on Bariz, and while it crumbles, the families try not to show their miserable financial situation. Player characters who get into noble families' good graces can be asked to solve some of their problems – particularly in illegal ways. Eliminating rivals, convincing opponents, throwing some weight around. Many families, instead of protecting their subjects, fill their coffers with gains from selling illegal substances or extortion, all to preserve their power.



Even though life on Bariz is often far better than on another planets, even though people have been living in a feudal system for millennia, this does not mean that they're blind and can't see the slow destruction of the system. They know what's going on in the cities and the courts. Even though they are more numerous, only a few of them voice their concerns. Any movements to increase citizens' rights or change the regime are eradicated by the nobles. What happens when the characters have to choose a side – for instance when the lords send them to pacify starving rebels? Or when they themselves lead the rebellion? Will Bariz see a revolution? How will the rest of the system react?



## Nobles

Whenever someone mentions Bariz, a common image for many is a noble spending all day lying on silk pillows, served by dozens of servants, surrounded by lavish wealth and amazing technology. The life of the nobles seems like a dream to most commoners.

In reality, the elite of Bariz live under constant stress. The heads of the families try to maintain financial liquidity and secure their own interests – all to preserve the myth of their own superiority. The young approach things in a completely different, hedonistic way – endless feasts, escapades with their peers, reckless races. Until the head of the family notices, and bestows actual duties on the young.

Many nobles are also younger children, who can't hope to receive a significant inheritance. Living off their elder siblings is not a future they desire, so it's not uncommon for them to plot to eliminate the more influential heirs – but they are not above protecting themselves with any means necessary.

Noble courts offer an infinite number of plot hooks. From classic ones, where a noble gives a mission to a PC, to complex, byzantine intrigues. An order from your sovereign can conflict with your personal honor or feelings, but must be obeyed.

Adventures among the rulers are not only about solving any random problems that might arise, but also about dealing with duties. What happens if the heir to the head of the family dies, and it's a PC that's next in line? Will he be accused of fratricide? Or maybe he will become a target himself?

Nobility also means etiquette and various rituals. Arranged marriages might be normal for one clan, but something shocking for another. How will the player characters behave, when faced with a forced marriage? Will they be able to oppose the ruling customs?

## Guilds

While the nobles are busy with ruling, their fortunes are being multiplied by the guilds. All the companies and firms on the planet have to belong to someone. The nobles do not bother micromanaging every single one of them, leaving this to their subjects.

On other planets, this niche is filled by various corporations. On Bariz, thanks to its specific nature, a guild system is retained. People famous for their deeds – or just able to get in good graces of a noble family – may be allowed to run a business. They can teach their children the trade, so that they can inherit the company.

Single firms often join together in larger cartels to cooperate. That's how the guild system works. Controlled by their own laws and councils, they try to limit the number of other people receiving the privileges or abilities necessary to practice their trade. In practice, apart from the nobles, only the guilds own spaceships and are able to travel to other planets of the Horizon system.

Adventures tied to the guilds can be described as smaller versions of adventures among the nobles. The characters don't have as many rights and privileges as the nobles, and they need to control themselves when dealing with leaders. When the party obtains a licence to run a business, they will have many opportunities, but also a lot of problems. Guilds assume that newcomers to the business are automatically subject to them. What will happen when the players start to disobey the powerful guilds?

Doing tasks for the guild is another interesting motif. The characters will slowly climb through the levels of the hierarchy, finally gaining places on the guild council.

## Psionicists

A psi on Bariz has only two options. He's either a member of the Callac Foundation or an unwanted guest. The people with the gift are forced to join the foundation and trained to serve the rulers. These court advisors accompany the nobles in business meetings and protect them from other psis. Courtly intrigues and psionic duels are their daily bread.

Not all members of Callac live at court, though. A lot of psis work for the many companies or manors owned by the foundation, where they train candidates and help the locals with their powers. Sometimes the trust hears about potential psis, and organizes expeditions to confirm this information.

Likewise, intervention is needed when something threatens the locals. The nobles do not always fund the guards or police – or aren't interested in protecting their subjects. In such cases, the foundation sends its members to defeat criminals using their powers.

## Ordinary Citizens

The vast majority of Barizians are ordinary people with their daily worries and problems. On Bariz, everyone is the subject of a noble family. The inhabitants of towns or flying cities work hard to allow their noble masters to live lavish lives. Their daily lives aren't that horrible – the weather on Bariz is far more bearable than on Cor or Ash. The Horde is far away, and the nobles take care of security. There are far worse fates than being a peasant on Bariz.



Adventures among the commoners, though maybe not as spectacular or as full of amazing technology as adventures connected to nobles, can also offer some unforgettable scenes. The simplest jobs are usually about protecting people or transportation. Sometimes the noble houses want to harm rivals attacking their settlements and weakening their economy.

Another reason for a quest could be finding a cure for a disease claiming more and more victims. The peasant PCs could try to contact the noble that owns their home town, or contact the Callac Foundation to help them in curing the disease. Perhaps this will require intervention by people from another planet?

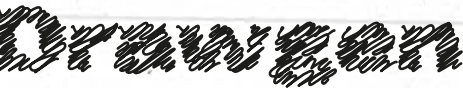
Some adventures can be tied to the social hierarchy. What will happen if a noble family decides to sell off a town and its inhabitants? Will they accept their new lord? Or maybe a young noble will fall in love with a commoner woman and kidnap her? What should her friends and family do – risk conflict with their masters?

Sometimes, in recognition of an extraordinary deed, a family is allowed to run its own business. How will their neighbors react? Will the characters promoted to the craftsmen be still able to count on their friends, or will the entire community ostracize them – maybe even faking a crime where the clues point to them? An adventure where the PCs have to prove their innocence could be an interesting contrast with typical ones.

## A Flying town

The great families own great cities, but most of the floating metropolises aren't big enough to house millions. The most common are smaller settlements. Drawgen – belonging to the Wernat family, which has sworn fealty to the Whitehalls – is a good example. This platform, equipped with eight graviters and 12 miles wide, houses a couple of skyscrapers, and a small district of five-storey apartment blocks. It's also the only flying town with a lake, located in the middle of the platform.

Near the lake, there's a park and the villa of the Wernat family. This three-storey neo-granite building is adorned with copies of many famous sculptures, and a small landing pad for fliers is nearby. The outskirts of the platform are taken up by fruit gardens and small fields, providing basic foods for the city.



Currently, Drawgen is inhabited by 50 thousand people, including around a thousand Wernat nobles, and a few hundred lesser nobles from other houses. There is also a small garrison (around 400 people) of soldiers guarding the family, as well as the regular police force.

The city has its share of bars, cinemas and theaters. People often relax after work with active and passive entertainment. Most of the inhabitants of Drawgen are businessmen – the few skyscrapers are mostly offices of various trading companies, members of the merchant guilds.



There are only a few places where you can enter the platform – one is the family residence. The entrances are well-guarded, and no-one without a pass can enter. The innards of the platform house the food storage, machinery and navigation mechanisms. There are also a few dozen transporters which could evacuate the inhabitants if necessary.

Beneath the surface and these underground chambers, there are sewers and a tangled mess of wires and cables. The generators, powered by small atomic reactors, in turn power the houses and companies. Recently, they've been malfunctioning fairly often – nobody is sure whether it's because they're old, or maybe someone (cultists? a rival family?) is sabotaging these devices.

The Wernat family is ruled by Edward, a rash sixty-year-old man. His biggest dilemma is choosing an heir; he has two twin sons, Romuald and Grudi. Even though Grudi is elder by an entire minute, Romuald is engaged to Emilia Tangar, the eldest daughter of a friendly family, also vassals of the Whitehalls.

## Places

The inner circle of the island is taken up by the family mansion and the houses of advisors and assistants to the Wernat family. The entire district is kept spectacularly clean and is constantly monitored by patrols. Whenever someone looking like an outsider appears in this district, he's stopped and required to present his ID. The lake and the park are restricted to the nobles only.

The nobles' district is surrounded by a ring of skyscrapers and smaller shops, called the first ring. This is a place where the companies belonging to the family or guilds have their headquarters. Though the security here is a bit more relaxed, this area is also monitored by Wernat guards. The sight of family limousines doesn't surprise anyone here. This district also houses a landing pad for the transportation of food and other products. Many wealthy people also live here, in luxurious apartments or hotels. Escaping to the first ring is the dream of most commoners.

The middle ring is mostly industrial plants. A noble is a rare sight here – unless he wants to have fun. It's here, on the border between the high and low-born, in emptied factory halls or warehouses, where semi-legal clubs or fighting arenas operate. The central rings are surrounded by an outer ring of housing districts. Eight sections with wide alleys and bridges make the city resemble a honeycomb when viewed from above. Only a few people from other rings come here. These are dwellings for the industrial workers – a run-down urban neighborhood, often ignored by the guards.

## Organizations

### The Sculptors of Silence

A merchant guild working for the Wernats, whose headquarters is one of the closest ones to the park. Some time ago they specialized in creating amazing sculptures out of blocks of ice from Ash, but



recently they have broadened out and created works of art from other materials. Their works are known and admired, so much so that even heads of major houses order some works of art from them.

Apart from the headquarters, they own a workshop and a warehouse in the outer ring. Two years ago it was miraculously saved from a fire – supposedly started by the competing guild of Makers of Nothing, who owe fealty to the Cunningham family.

### The Fate Trackers

Settlements like Drawgen are a perfect place for all kinds of criminals hunted over the entire planet. The outer ring is rarely visited by the police, so the task of tracking down people who have seemingly disappeared falls to the Fate Trackers.

Even though they're not much liked by the official police forces, they're certainly very effective. They have their own guild license, and therefore there is at least one branch office in most cities or ground towns. They own a couple of transporters and can freely move about the planet.

The Fate Trackers aren't easily accepted by the Valari family – who think that they have a monopoly on all mercenary activity. When these nobles encounter the Trackers, there is usually a scuffle – usually only verbal, but sometimes they fight.

In Drawgen, the Trackers own three floors in a skyscraper bordering the industrial district, near a landing pad.

This allows them not only to leave the city, but also to move to other districts rapidly.

### The Wernat Guards

The Wernat family created their own police force, responsible for keeping peace in the town – or at least in the two inner rings. Their main headquarters is situated on the border between the noble district and the first ring – this is a sign that the guards don't protect the common citizens much.

The city is ruled by the law of the noble family – nobles are judged by the courts and can defend themselves, while the cases of common citizens can receive a default judgment. Of course murders, theft, illegal deals are always prosecuted.

It's widely known that the guards aren't interested in many of the old warehouses. Enough cash or some other valuable bribe can buy a lot of disinterest.

### Trioculi

One of the most visible criminal organizations in the city is the Trioculi, named after a founder – a mysterious man with an eye tattooed on his forehead. They are based in a particularly run-down urban neighborhood – no one in their right mind goes there.

They own a couple of arenas in the warehouse district, where both hardened warriors and nobles in search of adrenaline fight to the death. They also control prostitution and night clubs beyond the two innermost rings. Rumor



has it that the gang wants to open a legal business in the skyscraper district, to gain access to new markets for illegal weapons or drugs.

### The Callac Foundation

Drawgen also has a base of the Callac Foundation. An imposing building in the first ring is surrounded by a sturdy wall and a glass dome. The building houses around ten people, including the students. The local foundation president, Miguel Rauer, advises and assists the local lord, Edward Wernat.

The president's biggest current problem is the fact that the city attracts psis from outside the foundation, and fewer and fewer people want to join the organization. It seems only a matter of time until Edward's heirs abandon the services of Callac and hire an independent competitor.

### The Vintners

Some of the guilds have been created from the fusion of many different organizations from around the planet. That's how the guild of Vintners, monopolizing delivering wine to all noble families, was founded. The vineyards of the guild are placed in many different and carefully selected farmlands over the whole of Bariz.

The guild also has its own representative at the Wernat court. A seemingly small building has many basements underground for vine and other alcohol. Nobody knows that the Vintners are

experimenting with many mysterious additives – they want to make their products addictive, to successfully manipulate their customers.

They also try to secretly sell their own products to major gang leaders, to control them. Initially, the gang bosses want to try “the wine that the Whitehalls drink”, but eventually they become addicted and need to purchase more and more wine.

### Daily Life

Everyday life in Drawgen isn't much different from other places on the planet. The noble district is well guarded, but the further from the center you go, the more dangerous the platform becomes. The peripheries of the flying city are completely controlled by the local gangs. People leave from the urban districts every day to go to work, dropping the children off at school. And so the days pass.

The streets, which are full of working people by day, at night turn into realms of violence and prostitution. From illegal fights and games to deadly races, not to mention the omnipresent gambling and illegal businesses. Among all these dark deals, alcohol and drugs are present in large quantities, as well as the ladies of the night, drug dealers, places where you can illegally undergo genetic modifications, and suspicious organizations. People can get easily lost in the ocean of pleasures. And the nobles seem to enjoy this state of things.



Drawgen is ideal for many daring adventures. What would happen if a member of the family disappears? When the investigation reveals that the missing person was leading a double life? Did he fall into debt and disappear, or maybe he messed with an influential gang? Or maybe the characters will be on the other side, as the right hands of

a gang boss? Life goes on, while behind the scenes the gang wars rage. The nobles are completely indifferent to the fact that innocent people are dying. After all, they themselves benefit from illegal businesses, and collect money for turning a blind eye to the dirty business in the city. At least, as long as the city works, and the inner circle is calm.

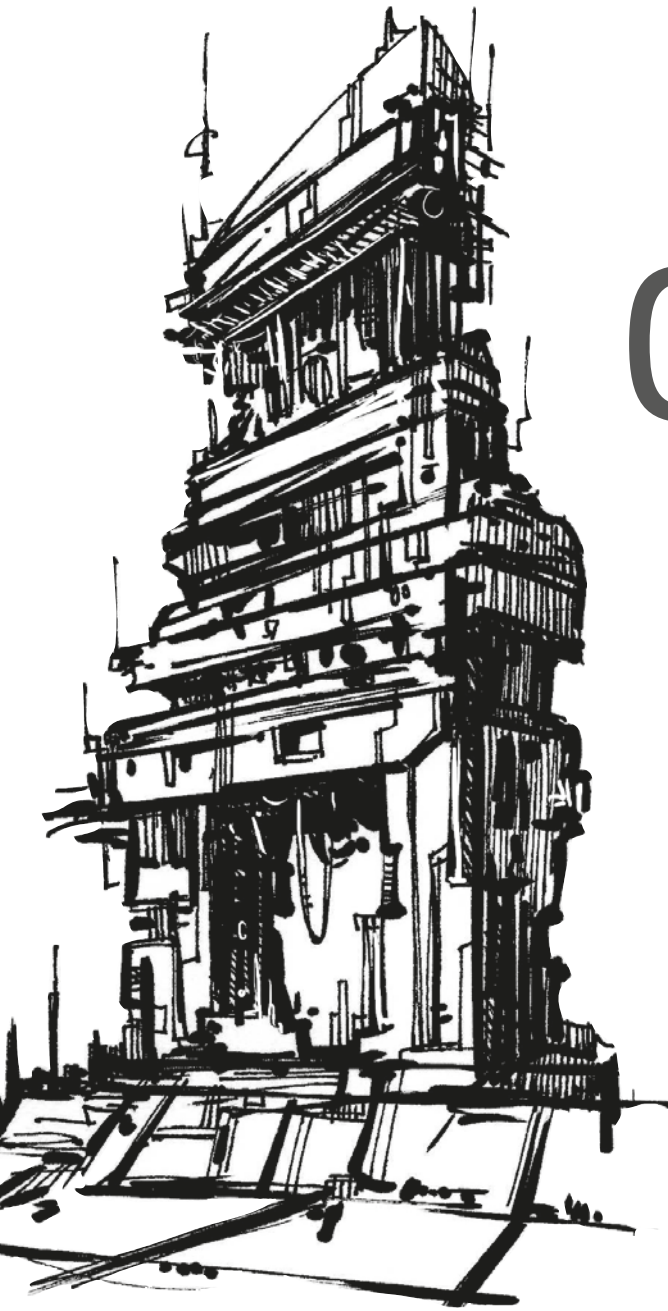
### ***Optional rule: Clash of Honor***

Throughout almost the entire Galaxy, the nobility of Bariz is known for their passion for fencing. However, only the noble duellists know about the subtle social rules of dueling, called the clash of honor on Bariz: rules for challenging the opponent, or for the more talented manipulators provoking him, so that he challenges you to a duel, and so you gain the advantage from the very beginning you're able to determine the place of the fight, choose the weapons, etc.

The clash of honor before the duel is settled like a Social Conflict, and uses tests of Intimidation or Taunt. Each of the parties decides which skill to use (depending on whether the character tries to scare or ridicule his opponent).

The clash of honor can be resolved quickly or last a long time – it can incorporate an exchange of letters between the adversaries, sending gloves as a sign of the challenge, etc. After the clash, one party challenges the other, and the winner receives the indicated bonus in the duel, depending on the outcome:

<i>Margin of Victory</i>	<i>Effect</i>
0	no effect on the duel
1-2	the winner can choose one of the following: weapon, place or time of the duel
3-4	the winner can pick two of the following: weapon, place or time of the duel
5+	a mortal insult. One of the sides managed to permanently insult the reputation of the opponent. the winner can pick two options, and when the duel starts he will receive an extra Benny



COR

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An ordinary soldier on the frontline is able to survive just a couple of months. Sooner or later a monster will eat him, he'll get exhausted due to nightmares or go insane and shoot himself. Only a few people can withstand being that close to Mesu. The day brings Horde monstrosities, while the night belongs to the nightmares sent by the god kept in the Great Pyramid of Black Iron. The army has introduced a rotation system, and sends people on and off front lines every couple of months, but for many recruits it's still too much.

In a normal army the stress could be relieved by the prostitutes and smuggled booze. On Cor, the high command can't afford to look the other way when discipline is weakened. In the first years after the invasion the army didn't really have problems with alcohol, illegal VRs or girls, but this had to end after two suicidal sabotage attempts made by the cultists of the Devourer of Worlds. In these terrorist attacks, over two hundred soldiers perished, but even more annoying was the loss of heavy equipment. A similar amount of soldiers went mad when VR units infected by the Poisoner appeared on the black market. From that time onwards, VR on the planet is strictly controlled. The army occasionally ignores small-time alcohol smugglers, but the recruits don't have much entertainment either way – their best hope is a short leave on Ash.

### **Galaxy Issue Joe**

A typical soldier serving on Cor could've been a soldier, a factory worker or even a slave. The military doesn't care what his childhood was like, what his plans are for the future, or whether he has

a family. If he enlisted, he's supposed to do what he's told. To provide the soldier with at least a minimal chance of survival, the military equips each recruit with standard-issue equipment, gives them a few weeks of training, and nano-inoculates them against diseases of the Horde. Though it's easy to think of Cor soldiers as cannon fodder, the high command does everything it can to give them the best chance of surviving. In most planetary or national armies, only elite units are equipped with plasma pistols and tactical armor – on Cor, these are standard issue.

**Standard Issue Equipment:** Plasma rifle, plasma pistol, plasma grenade, light tactical armor. One soldier in ten replaces the plasma rifle with a TPC or plasma cannon.

## **Roleplaying Soldiers**

Serving in the army is about obeying orders – including those that send your platoon to certain death so that the rest of your company can escape. It's about being trapped in a bunker for weeks, waiting for another Horde attack. For the average soldier war, is hell – there's nothing glorious and beautiful about it. Almost no private enlisted because they wanted an adventure or a chance for fame. At best, people enlist for patriotic reasons, at worst because of a difficult financial situation or under duress.

However, the player characters aren't average joes, but heroes who should eventually be famous throughout the entire Galaxy. If you decide to create

I didn't think much of the Artillery Auxiliaries to start with. I thought their job was just pressing buttons to launch the rockets, or calculate the coordinates before bombardments. I had no idea how often the Horde assaulted their bunkers. I didn't know that basically every Artillerist before joining his unit has served at least a year on the front line, and has been transferred to the firebases because of the injuries he suffered. Every artillerist I've seen had artificial limbs and a scarred face. These are brave lads. I guess you need to be brave to keep on fighting, despite the scars and wounds not only to your body, but also to your soul.

**Sergeant Kate Rush,  
Cor Army**

a military party, you need to forget about the discipline, chain of command – and often about actually obeying orders. Ignore the army structure, the standard issue equipment and low pay. The team will probably be composed of soldiers from different formations and varied skills, often including civilian consultants and psionicists. The best teams come from all walks of life and even though a special event could make them work together (usually for a single adventure), it's often not enough to create a long, engaging campaign. If you want to set your campaign on Cor and make the military your characters, you

need to ignore a lot of the limitations caused by military service.

## Flying High

The well-matched crew of a powerful flying machine, understanding each other without words, is an excellent concept. Such a team obviously needs a pilot, a gunner and a navigator, but there's a place for any military character there, whether a psionicist (an outcast from a psionic foundation) or a former bounty hunter. The GM has a wide variety of possible adventures: rescue missions, storming Horde positions, transporting important persons, battling pirates and smugglers, and scenarios set off Cor, during leave.

Such a group will probably need a commander, able to keep the team united. The GM will certainly not assign easy missions to the team – rather tasks that will force the players to think outside the box, to use their creativity and wit. The commander should be played by a charismatic player, able to convince the team of his ideas and assign tasks to individual characters that fully make use of their potential.

## Artillery

The Artillery Auxiliaries aren't exactly a separate unit. These are soldiers pulled back from the front, and currently serving in fortified positions: camps, bunkers or underground bases. Not every wounded soldier can be honored in this way – the high command picks veterans who served for at least a year. The rest of the crippled soldiers are



patched up and sent back to the front, or sent home with a small amount of money for rehabilitation and a modest pension.

They aren't particularly famous – but they're still experienced soldiers who have suffered heavy wounds and can no longer serve on the front line. They still have precious skills and knowledge, and so the army keeps them as support troops, to maintain the artillery and technical devices; but sometimes, when the Horde reaches the entrance to their bunkers, the artillerists have to grab their plasma rifles and dive back into combat.

## Special Forces

White Star, Red Devils, Golden Eagles. In the Cor military there are many Special Forces units that don't receive normal, boring service in bunkers or on the front lines. Flanking the opponent, near-suicidal strikes in the heart of the Horde, or an attempt to retake a lost research colony are just a few examples of the missions for the elite squads. Roleplaying soldiers of such a squad will require some limitations (specific equipment, similar skill sets), but it will provide strong ties between the characters.

If the players aren't fans of military discipline, the best solution is creating a team of Bone Mantises – mercenaries stationed on Cor, the Foreign Legion of the Horizon system. In a squad like that discipline, patriotism and honor are in the background – what matters is heavy

action and the money paid after another suicidal mission.

The Game Master won't have problems with giving the heroes various atypical assignments. Protecting a convoy, escorting an influential official on Bariz (to protect them from possible assassination), defending a bunker, trying to find a traitor in the camp – there are many different possible missions, not necessarily set on the front line of combat.

## Cyborgs

Even on Cor, a cyborg is not a common sight. The army does have a number of soldiers with artificial bodies, but since there's a constant risk of these becoming infected with Lij's dark disease, they are used sparingly. However, if the GM and the players agree, the campaign can be based on this theme – the high command decides to create a special task force, equipped with synthetic bodies and really big guns – and those would be, of course, the player characters.

If you want such a campaign, you need to remember the limitations caused by assuming artificial bodies. The cyborgs lose a part of their humanity on the monastic ships. Money, wealth or fame don't mean anything to them – the only thing that matters is the sense of duty, while joy is equated only with service and fulfilling their obligations. The games will boil down to a series of military missions, while investigations or adventures relying on social interactions will be very difficult.



## Officers

Or maybe the players are more interested in a game for higher stakes? Not wading in the mud, shooting the monstrosities of the Devourer, and nervously waiting for another assault, but rather deciding the future fate of Cor, predicting the Horde's next maneuvers while simultaneously furthering their own plans. Such a game will be more similar to a game about Barizian nobles than to a traditional military campaign, but it doesn't mean that the heroes will never see combat. Assassination attempts by cultists, treason, or the unpredictable movements of the Wyrms of the Void can change a safe base into a battlefield, and the leaders won't only lead from the rear.

**The air fleet of Cor is full of losers, too afraid to fight side by side with the infantry. Only two units stand out in this sea of mediocrity:**

**the Wraiths and White Star.**

**The Wraiths are crazy, dropping plasma bombs wherever possible. But if you need someone to rescue a team from the tropical hell of Cor, or you need to drop some troops right in the middle of a war zone, you need the lads from the White Star. They will reach the place without problems, drop enough napalm on the monstrosities, and will be back for you if you'll need to retreat.**

**Sergeant Kate Rush,  
Cor Army**

## Grunts

Even though tough life of a private doesn't exactly fit the fast and furious feel of Savage Worlds, there's nothing preventing playing the war with the Horde - completely straight, and role-playing a campaign about ordinary foot soldiers. Difficult orders, the eternal lack of supplies and support, the escalating attacks of the Horde, and cold, heartless officers who do not hesitate to send people to certain death will be the characters' daily bread.

You can approach this from an entirely different angle, and run a comedy campaign. On a planet overwhelmed by madness, every soldier, from a rookie fresh from boot camp to a colonel who's spent half of his life in service, will be weird. Living in the camp will be similar to surviving in the underworld: the quartermaster will be more important than a general, while the most necessary skill will be the ability to fake the symptoms of various diseases.

## Special Forces

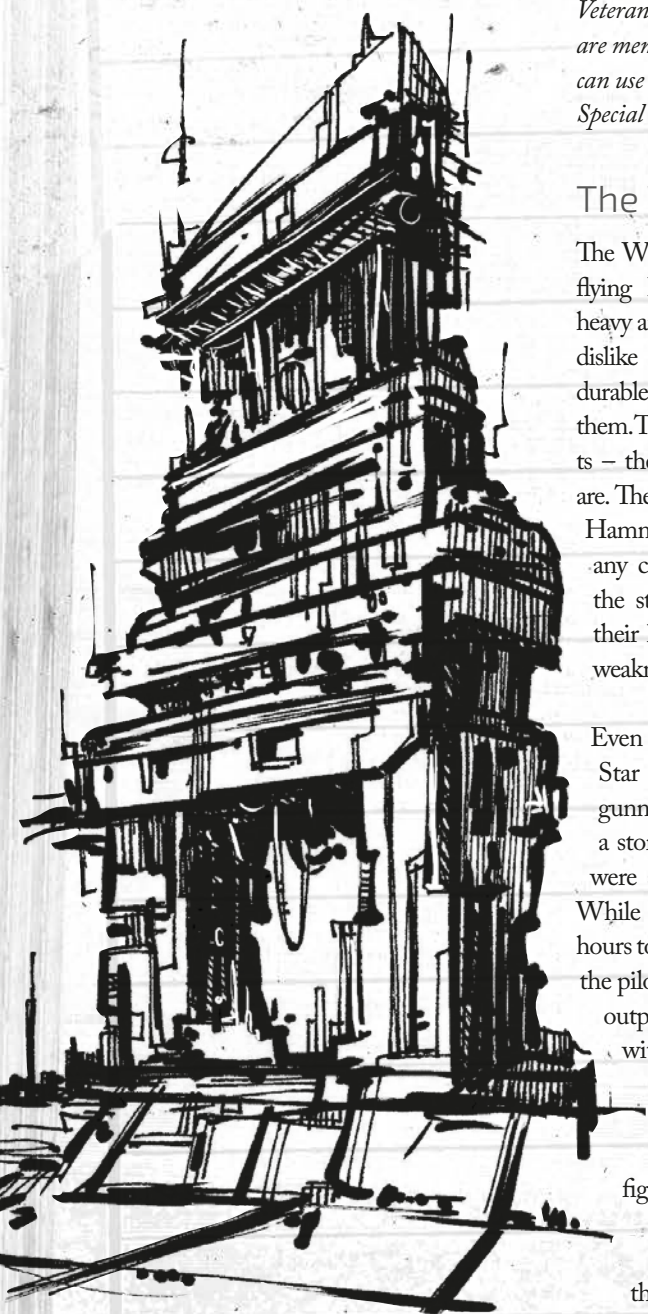
The Cor armed forces consist of numerous troops of light infantry, eternally waiting in the bunkers and foxholes for another assault by freshly bred crawlers. Service as a private is neither easy nor amusing - but every soldier in a Special Forces unit has done it. The Red Devils, White Stars or Wolverines are mythical heroes for the inhabitants of Eclipse - living legends and the only barrier between the humankind and the Horde.

*Note: Playing such characters is very specific. Not only does it force the entire party to play one single kind of characters, but the heroes are pretty powerful. Such elite troops start as Veterans, with 50 XP. All the team members are members of one such special group, or you can use these rules to create an ex-member of Special Forces, with appropriate Edges.*

## The White Star

The White Star is composed of five crews flying Hammerheads, the most popular heavy air transporters on Cor. Usually pilots dislike these machines – though they're durable and quite fast, it's hard to control them. The White Star pilots are an exception – they love their vehicles the way they are. They have perfected the art of piloting Hammerheads: they can land them in any conditions. They are able to use all the strengths of these planes (especially their heavy weapons), while covering the weaknesses with their own skills.

Even though members of the White Star are famous for their piloting and gunnery skills, the army is still telling a story from three years ago, when they were sent to evacuate one of the bases. While the scientists worked for several hours to archive the results of their research, the pilots of White Star fought to save the outpost. At first, they shot monsters with their heavy weapons, but later, when the Hammerheads ran out of ammo, they fought the creatures with their plasma rifles, fighting alongside ordinary infantry troopers. Even though seven out of eighteen pilots perished, all the scientists and the results of their research were saved.





**Standard Equipment:** Light tactical armor, assault plasma rifle, plasma pistol. Each team (6 people) crews a Hammerhead.

## Red Devils

They're officially an ordinary heavy infantry squad, but the Red Devils are probably the most famous unit in the entire Horizon system, and very recognizable even on other planets of the Galaxy. They've worked hard to gain this reputation: in the first years of the invasion they were sent to the front lines to carry out the most difficult missions. They rarely failed to do their job, and even then they fought to the end trying to follow their orders at any cost. Five years ago, the high command used the recognizable red armor of the Devils to organize a propaganda campaign, to attract recruits to join the Cor army. That was a mistake: the number of recruits didn't rise significantly, but the



reputation of the Red Devils suffered a massive blow. Many of their detractors started to call them "posterboy soldiers" or "showoffs".

The Red Devils are a part of the Southern Army. Their number is about a thousand soldiers, but this number changes day by day – usually it falls. General Webber has tough requirements for anyone who'd like to join the unit – they not only have to show fitness and courage, but also self-control, mastery of tactics and excellent perception. The main strengths of the Red Devils aren't their excellent equipment or numbers, but team spirit, trust and talented officers.

**Standard Equipment:** Heavy tactical armor, BSP-97, (1 in 5 soldiers has a plasma cannon), plasma pistol, 2 plasma grenades.

### *Special Assault Legion of Animalistic Neohumans*

Officially, they don't exist. They're only occasionally mentioned during dinner in the mess, over a card game during leave or when you want to show off on leave. According to the rumors, the Special Legion is composed solely of Beasts – the best of the best hailing from a race created solely for war. During ordinary clashes, they serve in other units, but when necessary the Legion's soldiers are joined together in a powerful force of death. Rumors claim that they're as effective as cyborgs – and guided by inhuman, bestial urges.



## The Black Legion

Grim guys. To be fair, I don't like them much. They're so serious so that they're easy to confuse with deaders or cyborgs. All of them have lost their families – and they joined the Legion to die. Gloriously, of course, like soldiers. But I think that someone did something to their brains – removed the fear centers or stuffed them full of weird substances. On the battlefield the Black Legion does what it's supposed to do – packs as much plasma as their TPCs can take. I've even seen one of them jumping into mouth of some giant worm thing – only to shoot himself a way out, and assault more worms.

**Sergeant Kate Rush,  
Cor Army**



There are many rumors about the Black Legion – but most of them are worthless. It's true that most of the soldiers are loners that have lost families and friends to war. It's just everything else that's wrong, including any experimentation on the brains of the soldiers. Some of them actually do attempt to use implants modifying their emotions, but these aren't compulsory or secret and are available to any soldier that can afford them.

The unit exists for two reasons only. The first is that the sight of the matt black

armor of the Legion boosts the morale of the ordinary infantry. When the Horde attacks, the troops are confident that the TPCs of the legionaries will cut even the biggest beasts in half. The second is that the unit is often equipped with experimental weapons – often they're sent to the front line just to test some new toy.

**Standard Equipment:** Black armor, TPC, plasma handcannon, 4 plasma grenades.

## Bone Mantises

An unwanted guest in the Cor military. A bunch of mercenaries, fighting only for the money. They're uncultured and can't follow our rules. They fight in their own weird, chaotic way, but they usually follow orders. Maybe not exactly how the generals wanted it done, but that's secondary. What matters is their effectiveness, and that can't be denied.

**Sergeant Kate Rush,  
Cor Army**



The Cor military has refrained from hiring mercenaries in large numbers. Many events on Cor are too secret and mentally scarring for the high command to use their services, at least on a large scale – sometimes using “the dogs of war” for a heavy task is the only solution. One exception from this rule is the Bone Mantis: a native Cor

unit, fighting wars on another planets of the Galaxy for entire decades. Even now, when their homeworld is infected by inhuman beasts, there are only two hundred soldiers left here – the rest work off world, on profitable contracts. There were more mercenaries here, but during the invasion a terrorist strike by cultists destroyed the barracks of the Mantises.

Anyone can join the Mantises – if they can pass the test. It's not particularly difficult, so the unit does not suffer a lack of fresh meat. For the officers, your previous experience and training does not matter. What's important is your basic training, tactical knowledge, and ability to follow orders – or ignore

them when the commander goes insane. Mantises are a private unit, and so no one provides the equipment for the privates but themselves, from armor through plasma weapons to energy shields and ammo. You can't mistake this unit for another one: dozens of various armor models, various types of plasma rifles and other equipment are as distinguishing as the uniform red armor of the Red Devils. The only element common to all Mantises is the unit insignia of the squad placed on the uniform or armor.

**Standard Equipment:** This unit does not have standard equipment. Every soldier fights using what he buys or scrounges himself.





## Golden Eagles

Almost every soldier in the army envies the Golden Eagles their skill, control, bravery and effectiveness. This is the unit that has never failed in a mission or disobeyed a received order. They also have the biggest kill count per soldier in the entire infantry. They don't use any fancy weapons, or brag about their fame – outside the battlefield they're normal people, often socializing with other units. But in a fight they're nonchalant, as if they ignored the power of the Horde. Many people think they're buffoons, but many more envy them. The presence of the Golden Eagles in the army is often more beneficial to the soldiers' morale than implants, stimulants or angry officers. The members of the unit realize this, and therefore, even if they're about to be swallowed by a reaver, they never show fear.



To become an Eagle you need to be selected. There are a few selected officers who observe and choose potential candidates. If they prove good enough, they're offered special training – if they finish it, they begin as career as a Golden Eagle. This training is exceptionally hard, and only one in every twenty soldiers finishes it, but no one mocks those who fail to complete it. During the weeks of training under the instructors of this legendary unit the candidates gain knowledge and skills which become priceless if they return to their old squads. Many of them will later become officers or members of other famous units, like the Red Devils.

**Bloody posers! They behave like this was some kind of game. Always so cold, so in control, playing with the Horde and shooting the beasts at the very last moment. Yeah, they're effective, but some day they will make one wrong step. I don't mind it they die, but they can drag hundreds of others to their deaths with them. As for me, I'd rather have ten Devils by my side than a hundred Eagles.**  
**Sergeant Kate Rush,**  
**Cor Army**

**Standard Equipment:** Full tactical armor, plasma assault rifle, RPP.

### The Ghosts

**Who? No, I don't think that there is such a unit. First, there isn't much sense in it. Who needs scouts since we have a network of satellites around the entire world? Second, no one would be able to survive in this damned jungle longer than a day or two. Third, even if it was possible, I don't know who'd want to create such a squad.**  
**Sergeant Kate Rush, Cor Armyles.**

### All the Faces of Cor

Cor is about the jungle; untamed wilderness, oppressive heat and Horde monstrosities – massive monsters spewing more and more crawlers and



other horrible beasts. Cor is about the war with the servants of the Devourer of Worlds, and a desperate fight in defense of the Pyramid of Black Iron. Cor is about legions of the undead, bodies reanimated on the battlefields before the fight with the Horde comes to an end. Finally, Cor is about nightmares mixing with reality, and overwhelming insanity, like the strange forces taking over General Marrow.

Of all the three worlds of the Horizon system, it's this planet that has the most specific theme. Cor is all about war with the Horde, Mesu, the Poisoner and the other dark gods. The first adventure themes that come to mind are all sorts of military missions: protecting and reclaiming bases, investigating secret laboratories, destroying the creations of insane scientists, escorting important people or infiltrating hostile territory. Some of them will require subtlety, others – massive firepower. Some will require delicate planning, in others the team will have to wing it. And when all their plans fail, in the end all that matters are the number of monsters between the PCs and an old transporter, an ever-decreasing quantity of ammo, and whether that ancient vehicle will even be able to take off...

### Twenty Years Ago

While the remnants of the Horizon fleet were being crushed by the Void krakens, on the surface of Cor the real war started. A couple of the remaining organic transporters crashed and rammed deep underground, only to grow roots and devour all the organic matter that could be found by their

servile creatures. A few hours later the first batch of crawlers massacred a local resort...

Two decades of war haven't brought resolution, but the forces of the Devourer are growing. At least that's what the main Nemezis book says, but maybe you could turn history in another direction? Perhaps you could turn back the clock, create heroes who took part in the Battle of Cor and run your own war? Maybe thanks to the actions of such heroes the military will be able to take the initiative and root the Horde out? But remember, that if the heroes will fail one mission too many, Marrow will find a way to awaken Mesu and Horizon will be destroyed by the God of Death.

If you want to send your heroes to Cor, they don't have to be recruits or members of a special squad. The planet can be a pit-stop on a longer journey, the site of a crash landing or just a place where a longer story will begin or end. Here are a few ideas to throw at some groups who usually operate on other planets while they're on Cor.

### Money to Loot

Abandoned towns. Luxury resorts taken over by the Horde. Forgotten bunkers full of weapons, ammo and other technologically-advanced toys. The spawn of the Devourer of Worlds often attacks so quickly and brutally that the military simply lacks the time, resources and manpower to secure the retreat. In the first years of war, when the Horde started to multiply and attack more and more towns, the army was very weak.

They managed to save the people but lost most of the equipment and buildings.

## Intrigues

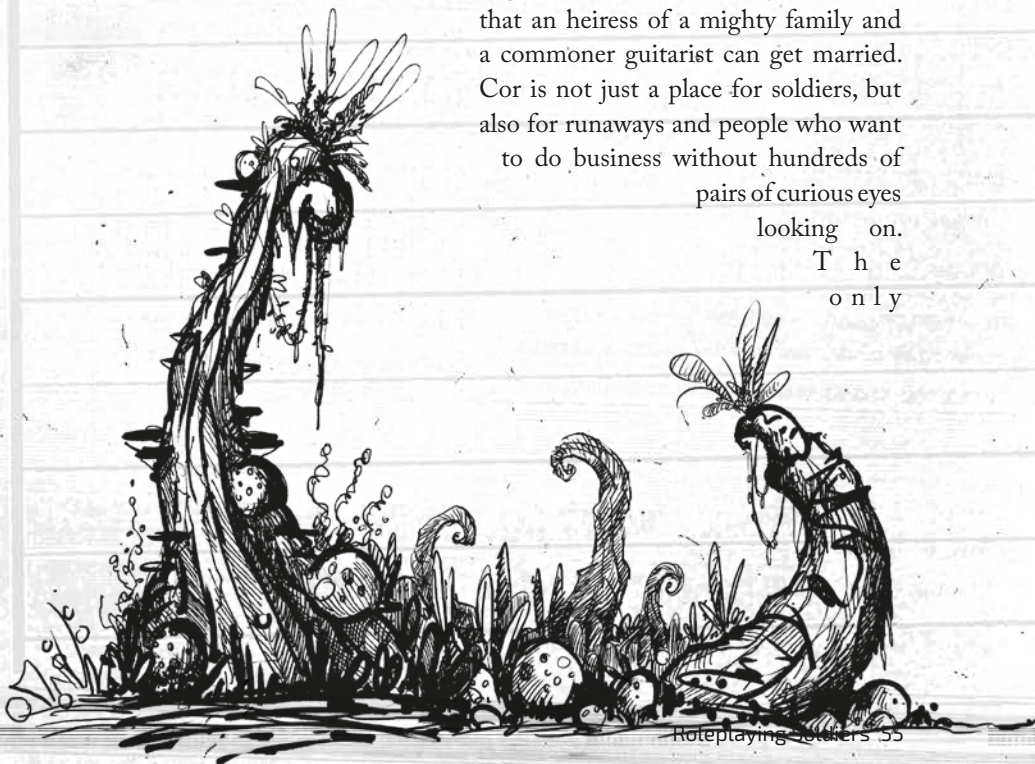
Cor is a perfect place of work for mercenaries who aren't afraid of fights with tentacled monsters. A quick search of a forgotten five-star hotel gives the chance of looting enough money to buy your own spaceship. Exploring one base or laboratory promises hundreds of pounds of cybernetic toys. In the worst case, you can be hired by an eccentric millionaire to hunt monsters.

Playing such greedy scavengers won't be centered solely on Cor – such a group would have contacts on Bariz or Ash (or both), and treat looting as an additional source of finances. In the jungle, the PCs won't be able to spend their money, after all. Cor could be a place where you go if you don't have any better job – risky, but well-paid.

Unlike Bariz and hundreds of planets of the Galaxy, Cor isn't surrounded by a network of spy satellites able to trace any civilian spaceship. Even if one of Cor's satellites detects a suspicious transport, it won't be able to analyze it in detail – and none of the data it finds would threaten the positions of politicians, aristocrats or CEOs. Similarly, the various secret services focus almost solely on the Horde, the worshippers of the Devourer and other cults. And therefore no one pays any attention to the intrigues of noble families.

If the heroes' employer wants to place a profitable, but not exactly legal contract, he can do it on Cor. A senior member of a Barizian family can pick this place as the location for final negotiations with Infinity. It's here that an heiress of a mighty family and a commoner guitarist can get married. Cor is not just a place for soldiers, but also for runaways and people who want to do business without hundreds of

pairs of curious eyes  
looking on.  
T h e  
o n l y





problem is of course the Horde, but that's why people invest in professional protection – like player characters. A team of experienced fighters will be able to get rid of hundreds of primitive beasts... Of course, there could be more than that...

## Sects and Cults

There's a good chance that if the characters are on the trail of a cult worshipping the dark gods, they will visit Cor. The planet somehow attracts madmen worshipping the Devourer, mad prophets seeing Mesu in their dreams, or engineers with Lij-infested jacks, slavishly following the programs of the Poisoner. A chase after a high priest or a group of cultists trying to make a vile ritual in a place where the Devourer is very strong, will surely end in a shootout with cerberi or crawlers.

There are some places on Cor where people live almost normally – areas protected by the military, uncontrolled by the Horde. Such a town is a perfect place for a dark sect – or a cell of special agents which is supposed to detect such cults. Detect, and destroy, preferably with flamethrowers and heavy plasma rifles.

## Long Periods of Waiting

War on Cor doesn't have to be a continuous nightmare. There's nothing stopping you from decreasing the tempo, you just need to place the characters away from the front line. If they're serving in a garrison placed in relatively

safe surroundings, their problems will be totally different from those of front line fighters. A commander prone to bribes, a nasty drill sergeant, a group of drunken Hammerhead pilots, or playing tour guide for some bored Barizian nobles – all these and more can be major pains for the player characters.

## The Nib

An old, shabby, rusted freighter, supplying Cor soldiers with prime goods for over ten years: it brings packages from home, electronics, real food, cigarettes, alcohol and other diversions. General Webber usually ignores such transports – rumor has it that he's a friend of Andy Stodge, captain of the Nib. Old soldiers claim that both of them served in the same unit, but that Stodge left the army when he discovered his psionic powers.

Heroes serving on Cor can order any goods with A or B availability codes at a 25% price increase, and also those with code C – but the price doubles in this case. Delivery time varies, but it's rarely longer than ten days.

A humorous introduction to the war can't last forever, and the characters' scams will eventually be revealed. Then, they will have a choice between two kinds of punishment – transfer to the front lines or a dishonorable discharge. And so, the players will be able to choose whether to move the campaign to another, more interesting planet, or stay on Cor and start fighting to defend the human race.



# GALAXY



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# Alvernia

*Author: Andrzej "Enc" Stój and Jakub Osiejewski*

Even though it hasn't been conquered by the dark gods, Alvernia belongs to them, not to humans. Some time ago, the cultists spun a web of intrigue so large it escalated into a fully-fledged war between the worshippers of dark deities and the psionic defenders of the planet. Sadly, the dark magic of the cultists and their significant numbers proved too great for the psionicists to resist. Too many good people had sold their souls, and there were at least as many traitors as people loyal to their species. Alvernia became a world devoted to Darkness – but its history does not end there.

On the planet there are still over 40 million people – and the vast majority of them are followers of the Dark Gods. The few unwilling to convert are either imprisoned (to be sacrificed to the Devourer and its kin) or hide in the ruins of destroyed cities or in the radioactive deserts that are a legacy of the war.

No-one sane would visit Alvernia of his own free will. The few who manage to wander there are caught, interrogated and sacrificed. The only exceptions are pilgrimages by groups of cultists or even entire sects. If they can fight, they're drafted into the army or into groups of slavers, and the remainder hold ordinary jobs. Alvernia, after all, is not some land of darkness; people there still need

to eat and their homes still need to be heated in winter. The vast majority of Alvernians live normal lives – except for the ceremonies, in which participation is mandatory. Very few Alvernians are fanatics; mostly they're driven by fear – fear of death, disease and the madness their vile gods can send. They have chosen the side of evil, believing that in this way they can protect themselves and their families. They regret their choice, but they're sure that mankind can't survive otherwise – at least, that part of mankind foolish enough to fight the monsters.

## **Alvernian Racial Profile**

Most Alvernians aren't too different from the Galactic standard. Alvernia was a major crossroads of various FTL routes, and various sub-species of humanity mingled there. Of course, this only made Alvernia's conversion easier.

**Free Edge:** Alvernians come from various backgrounds and sub-races. They can pick one free Edge.

**Forbidden Lore:** Alvernians receive a free d6 in Knowledge (Occult) and Intimidate. They deal with ceremonies to the Dark Gods daily, and they often need to use fear to gain a privileged position in the cult.

**Traitor to Mankind:** Regardless of whether individual Alvernians follow the Dark Gods or not, the Galaxy thinks that they do. Away from Alvernia, they receive the Traitor to



Mankind Hindrance. An Alvernian PC could spend an Advance or forfeit one bonus skill to change this Hindrance to Cursed Blood.

## The Truth about Alvernia

Though Alvernia seems like a totalitarian hell, firmly united by belief in vile deities, it's quite the opposite. Dozens of cults fight each other, trying to gain power, better living conditions and favors from their insane patrons by sacrificing humans. Alvernia is surprisingly self-destructive. In ten or twenty years the population of the planet will be so reduced that a small force would be enough to liberate it. Before that happens, however, Alvernians could seriously harm the galaxy.

Alvernians are building an army to invade the Horizon system. The leaders of the most powerful cults have received visions and secret knowledge – the key to freeing their bodies from death and their souls from eternal torture is the destruction of the Cor military, so that the Horde can complete its work of annihilation and welcome the Devourer itself into the system. Only a few Alvernians are actually aware of the Pyramid of Black Iron, and even fewer know about the horror slumbering within. For the average Alvernian, an attack on Cor will simply be an act of submission and loyalty to the Hordemaster.

## Alvernia and the Horizon System

It's not surprising that almost every major force in the Horizon system sees Alvernia as nothing but a potential threat, even if they're not aware of its invasion plans. Before the Battle of Cor, in fact, some Cor veterans fought on Alvernia and were forced to retreat. Some people claim that the Cor alliance started as an attempt to gather forces to liberate Alvernia, and Alvernian veterans formed some kind of brotherhood within the high command. They should be long dead or retired by now, but some insist that the benevolent conspiracy lives on.

About the only semi-reliable ally of Alvernia in the Horizon system, other than minor cults, is the Grey Wolf clan of the Syndicate. It seems that the undead Kagi Hidoi has some sort of connection to Alvernian leaders, transcending space and time, and enigmatically counsels Kara to send support (mostly espionage data, weapons and cybernetics) to Alvernia. Kara is not keen on this idea (after all, Alvernia is far away while the Cor military and Infinity are practically next door), but he obeys.

The Ancient One takes an ardent, personal interest in Alvernia, but is not going to attack it any time soon. It's unlikely that he actually orchestrated the cultist takeover, but nevertheless much of Infinity's knowledge of cults and their methodology comes from spies on that world. Some agents, however, quickly surrender and start serving the Enemy – and that's something Infinity can't prevent.

## Alvernia in the Game

The liberation or destruction of the planet can be the theme for an entire campaign. It's a great challenge – the cultists have access to a trained army and supernatural power. They include seers, psionicists and may even have access to cyborgs, poisoned by Lij. A small group of well-trained heroes won't be able to threaten Alvernia. The party needs support – they can take over a powerful organization, or use diplomacy to convince the governments of neighboring planets that the destruction of this den of evil is the key to securing safety in the sector. Just achieving this goal, and then conducting the invasion and bringing it to an end, would be a great achievement – fitting for an epic campaign.

### Important People and Places

Alvernia consists of massive cities covered with smog. It's pyramid-shaped temples where piles of bodies burn on massive altars, blackened by smoke. It's tall factory chimneys, constantly producing more and more weapons, ammo and vehicles. Ruined towers, empty, dirty streets, omnipresent symbols of dark deities. Enormous refining plants, devouring the few remaining natural resources of the planet. Among the smoke, rust and decay there are still ordinary people, desperately trying to keep their lives together just to feel some normalcy.

A cut above the masses are the Esharn, fanatic followers of the Dark Gods, the self-proclaimed defenders of the faith, taking away anyone who blasphemes

against the powers of Alvernia, supports the faithless or disobeys orders of the priests. After a few days such prisoners usually end up on the altar, with a dagger through their hearts. About the only people on Alvernia able to live relatively normal lives are the elites: officers, priests, spaceship pilots and the Esharn themselves. They live in large apartments and are surrounded by luxuries and opulence. The only difference between them and aristocrats, CEOs or guildmasters on other worlds is motivation – those people only try to gain power and wealth, but Alvernians are acting upon their faith.

**Seth Aida** – officially he has no function, but thanks to the powers of precognition he received for his faithful service to darkness, he is one of the most important people on Alvernia. He's a grim old man, bitter and disillusioned – partly with his life and what he's made of it, but mostly with his future. The dark powers have revealed his doom to his eyes – no one knows what he's seen, but it's certain that Seth does not like it. Rumor has it that his death is so terrible and cruel that Aida is considering betraying his faith and escaping from Alvernia, to somewhere where no one will find him. Among the Esharn and high priests there are calls for deposing Seth, and the braver ones even suggest sacrificing him – especially since his visions have become more complex, lacking the clarity and sense they once had.

**Manmoru'h** – a high priestess who is reputed to be the greatest expert on forbidden rituals, surpassing any other

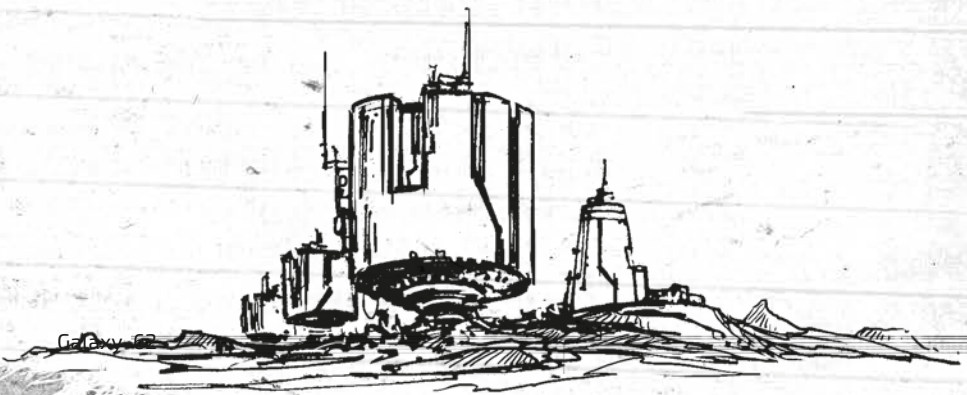


warlock on Alvernia. According to some, darkness has rewarded her with immortality – though the body of Manmoru'h grows older, her spirit can leave it whenever she wants. Seeing her grey wrinkled skin and webbed eyes, and smelling the foul smell of decaying flesh, can only make one believe these rumors. Few people know that it was Manmoru'h who initiated the events that eventually led to the takeover of the planet. Even though no one can imagine Alvernia without the high priestess, she behaves as if she was going to die any day now. However, when asked about her death she just smiles and claims that she has only one thing to do before leaving: free Mesu, the deity who bestowed her with magical powers. She does not explain what Mesu is and where it is imprisoned.

The central squares of every city in Alvernia now host temples to the vile powers. They are massive pyramids of stone, metal and glass, hundreds of feet high – often resembling mounds of rubble rather than the works of human hands. The stairways of these temples are strewn with bodies and the bones of sacrifices. In the major cities, the bodies of the dead are piled high, attracting wild animals, flies and vermin. The stench of rotting corpses surrounds the

temples for kilometers – that's why the area around them is practically deserted. Only the most fanatic cultists live in these conditions – hoping to get closer to their gods and be rewarded after death.

**Teratene** is the most powerful temple on the planet. It lies in the center of the former capitol of Alvernia, Quell. It's surrounded by fortifications and minefields, guarded by legions of the most experienced soldiers on the planet – but every massive statue to the Devourer of Worlds there is an undeniable proof of the cultists' insanity. Every day, dozens of prisoners are killed on the altars of Teratene. Their blood flows to underground cells, where the monsters serving the vile powers live. The only safe road to the temple is a narrow path, made of sharp pieces of metal, broken glass and the ground bones of the cultists' victims. It's said that those who wander astray from this road – whether accidentally or on purpose, to learn the secrets of the dark priests – disappear forever, or are the next sacrifices on the altars.





# The Archipelago

*Author: Andrzej "Enc" Stój*

*Translation: Jakub Osiejewski*

The Archipelago is considered to be the new centerpiece of the Sagittarius Arm. This is one of the few transstellar states, a federation spanning seven stars, over a dozen inhabited planets, hundreds of massive moons and mineral-rich asteroids. The system is seen by many as the Galaxy in miniature – you can find everything here – with one exception: The inhabitants of the Archipelago have no contact with the vile beings of the Horde. Sure, occasionally a suspected cultist is lynched or a rumor of impending invasion breaks out, but these are almost always disconnected accusations or propaganda. For some reason, the servants of the Devourer avoid the Archipelago. However, since the Battle of Cor, the citizens of Archipelago often wonder about a future war with Horde, even if such a war might not begin for a hundred years.

However, these concerned citizens are a minority. The Archipelago has too many of its own problems – overpopulation, uncontrollable immigration, a high crime rate, resource attrition, piracy within the federated systems, climate change and many, many others – to worry about the fate of the humanity. At least that's what the media claim.

## Races of the Archipelago

There's really no way to describe an average inhabitant of the Archipelago. Multiple races and subspecies of humankind mix freely there, and genetic mods are widely used. You might treat them as humans, and grant them a free Edge, or create a racial profile for the character.

However, if your campaign is set in the Horizon system, particularly on Cor, consider giving them the Clueless Hindrance balanced by an extra skill point – they simply do not know anything about the Horde.

## The Truth about the Archipelago

For many people in the Sagittarius Arm, the Archipelago is an ideal place to live – a stable, semi-democratic state with easily understandable politics, where every citizen has a vote, and can enjoy a long, comfortable and calm life. In reality only three or maybe four planets can boast such conditions. Most of them, like swampy Apoka, cold Fenris or desert N'goula, are very poor, with decidedly sub-standard conditions. However, the fame of the Archipelago draws millions of migrants per year, dreaming of prosperity. Most of them wake up quickly after arrival, and leave as soon as they see the reality, but for quite a lot of them even such poor planets are an improvement (no one shoots at them, at least), and they are eager to start work. But some give in to their frustration and disappointment, which quickly turns into resentment

and rage. They want an easy life, so they quickly join the gangs and mobs, or start their own crime organizations. Such petty criminals are a real plague on the Archipelago – while most of them are caught on their first attempt, some can escape justice for years. The police can't control the situation; that's why, using the central government's resources, they often hire veterans and bounty hunters. While capturing petty thieves or gangsters does not bring a lot of profit, petty crime also creates more dangerous lawbreakers, with bounties worth millions.

### ***The Archipelago and the Horizon System***

Around 20% of Cor officers were born in the Archipelago. The state does support the Battle of Cor, and massive holographic and telepathic advertisements presenting the Corite soldiers as saviors of mankind can be encountered on every one of its planets. They draw in many recruits – though the Cor military unofficially thinks this is simply a way to get rid of immigrants, they can't deny that they're useful cerberus fodder with some surprisingly good technical skills.

Infinity does business on Celia, and their corporate complex is one of the most impressive there. However, there's a reason why they haven't yet moved their HQ there – on Ash, it's Infinity that makes the laws, on Celia they're just one of many companies – they're not even in the top ten.

Among the nobles of Bariz, the Archipelago has fallen out of fashion. After all, the Founding Families hail from Old Earth itself, while Celia

merely claims to be New Earth. The current ruling generation has some people educated on Celia, but trends have changed, and the comforts of the Archipelago seem dull and boring to the young people who live for exciting duels and high-speed races.

### **The Archipelago in the Game**

The Archipelago is the perfect place for a campaign where the presence of vile gods and their servants, including the Horde, can be kept to the lowest levels possible. The heroes can adventure here for years, not even switching systems. The inhabitants of the Archipelago don't really give much thought to the rest of Galaxy – their home state is the Milky Way in miniature, colorful and interesting, but also dangerous for those who don't tread lightly enough. Here you can find everything – diplomatic confrontations between corporations and governments, psionic clans and foundations, organized crime, gangs and space pirates, military, espionage and police organizations.

### **Important Places and People**

The seven stars of the Archipelago are circled by nineteen inhabited planets – and all but six of them have been terraformed. The population is over 85 billion people, and each year the cluster is visited by hundreds of millions of visitors. The individual planetary governments, associated as the Archipelago Federation, have little influence in galactic politics – but the Archipelago is one of the most important places in this region of the Milky Way. The Federation has massive deposits of raw materials, including rare resources, as

well as access to advanced technologies and a well-trained and -equipped army. Perhaps the Archipelago isn't as battle-ready as Sparta, and its technology doesn't measure up to that of Thénard or Ash, but they are doing well in every regard. Within Archipelago space there are four passenger space stations, and nine devoted to industry and transport – according to rumors, three ships visit the Archipelago every minute.

**Apoka** – this grim, cold planet is full of swamps, bogs, everglades and the creatures inhabiting them. It has few inhabitants, and they care little about the Galaxy and interplanetary politics, concentrating only on survival. People there live in small settlements behind solid walls. Industry – especially heavy industry – is marginal on Apoka; they sometimes use advanced technology but production is low, sufficient only for local needs. Everything that can't be created on Apoka is imported from other planets of the Archipelago. The locals don't need much, though – they import only medicine and medical technologies.

Apoka is not the best planet in the Archipelago. Most see it as inhabited by primitives occupied by farming and hunting – and they are pretty much on the mark. Life on Apoka is dangerous, and the wild animals can harm even people armed with plasma weaponry. Everyone on Apoka learns hunting, starting in early childhood. It's also true that Apoka is a great place for refugees – no-one there cares what you did before, what matters is how you can help the community. And if you break the rules you might wake up in the middle of the

forest, without weapons and surrounded by predators.

**Celia** – Celia, called New Earth by its inhabitants, was the first world in the Archipelago to be colonized. Initially, the settlers spread through the entire Archipelago cluster, and no-one focused on Celia. But once it proved to be a safe world, away from asteroids and full of valuable mineral deposits, the second wave of colonists flooded Celia. In just a couple of decades Celia became the most important planet in the sector.

It retains the dominant role even today. Even though the raw resources of the planet were depleted ages ago, they are no longer the source of Celia's riches. They have still access to advanced technologies, well-organized trade and collectives, and influence in other systems – and that makes New Earth the “centerpiece of the Sagittarius Arm”. Sadly, the planet and the entire Archipelago have to face a major problem. The Horizon system, fighting the Horde for almost twenty years, is only around 200 light years from Celia. The government has taken some steps to increase the army, but they can't protect all the worlds of the massive Archipelago. The threat of the attack by the servants of the Devourer is distant – but unavoidable. The question is whether the people of Celia will prepare for the war.

**Felsen** – this rocky planetoid, without a breathable atmosphere, is one of the most important places of the Archipelago. Few people know that as well as the automated mines and research stations, this is also a major military base of the Archipelago defense system. It's



on Felsen where clones – making up over 75% of the army – are bred and raised, and most of the research on cybertech and genetech is done. The planetoid hosts hundreds of missile silos – housing over ten thousand nuclear missiles and over a hundred experimental Interstellar Ballistic Nuclear Missiles, equipped with short-range hyperdrive. In theory they can reach distant targets in split-seconds.

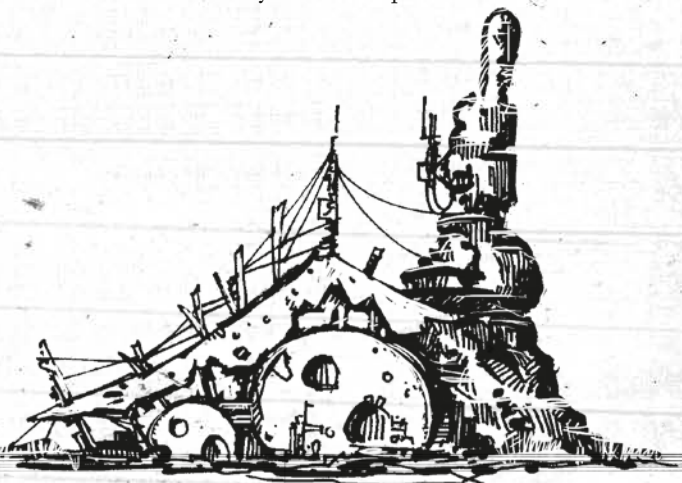
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The Archipelago doesn't just attract entrepreneurs, diplomats and merchants. The multitude of planets and cultures combined under one government creates numerous loopholes – and therefore the system draws in massive numbers of bandits, smugglers and ordinary thieves. If you know how to bend the law, you can make a good life on one of the more civilized planets, from raids on the transports filled with expensive wares, through smuggling of illegal goods, to assassinations. Sure, the interstellar government spares no expense on the police and navy, but before they catch you, you might make millions.

**Alan Smith** – a talented delver, philanthropist and skilled businessman, accused of connections with dozens of

foreign spy agencies, criminal organizations and corporations. He's a successful businessman, but many people claim that he made his money using less than legal methods. For many people on Celia, however, he is a shining example, proof that you don't have to inherit wealth to become a millionaire. You only need determination, courage and planning. The rich despise him (and, though they won't admit it, fear him as well), but the ordinary people envy him. For many young entrepreneurs he's an idol – if you start as a businessman you want to be like him.

And of course Alan wouldn't be able to gather such a massive fortune without some underhanded actions. Indeed, for most of his youth he lived a double life – to society he was a brilliant businessman, but to the underworld he was a crime boss, ruthless and cruel. Now he's said to have gone soft (partly thanks to his three daughters), but he's still a dangerous man and no one dares to cross him. The police have been trying to capture him and find at least some proof of his criminal activities – but Alan never leaves traces of his presence, thanks to his immense psionic gifts. He's a master of precognition and a very skilled telepath.



# Blue Wave

*Author: Jakub "Erpegis" Osiejewski*

Blue Wave is a relatively new colony, though the world is located near a major hyperspace route, has an oxygen-based atmosphere and is teeming with native life. The reason for that is simple – the Blue Eye, the sun of the system, is a young star, emitting vast amounts of radiation. The native life adapted, thanks to a dense atmosphere – and some claim it even evolved intelligence in the past. The native Wavers had to boost their own systems to develop immunity to radiation to be able to settle on the planet, and even then they need to undergo regular nanotreatments on Green Eye – the planet's only moon.

The Wavers can't rely on immigration to increase the planet's population. After all, who would want to live on a radioactive hell? They quickly turned to terraforming and cloning to increase their population, and build their cities in underground caverns. Even when visiting other planets, they subconsciously avoid sunlight.

Blue Wave tries to be self-sufficient, and many of its inhabitants work on farms using remotely-controlled robots and android workers. They still must import many key technologies, chiefly from Thénard and Ash, but they hope to be able to compete with them eventually. The pioneer spirit of Wavers is strong. They're a representative democracy, and each city is governed by a Councilor, who together form the planetary

government. Each city has its own ground and air forces, while the space navy reports only to the Councilor of Green Eye.

The few visitors to the planet are chiefly interested in the ruins of the first inhabitants of the planet – massive stone buildings and towers. The rare metal artifacts found there are corroded and quite radioactive, hinting at the heightened radiation level of the planet in the past. The earlier inhabitants of Blue Wave presumably died out when the radiation level dropped.

All visitors to the Wave are welcome, provided that they fill the (somewhat personal) questionnaire, provide the details of their life history and donate some of genetic material to the planet's banks, to increase the planet's genetic diversity. This disconcerts many guests, but in return they can enjoy many privileges, for instance free entertainment on Green Eye.

## **Waver Racial Traits**

The vast majority of Wavers are cloned, but the mutation rate of clones is high, and around two out of three babies survive the gestation. The clones aren't artificially grown – after decanting they are usually raised by volunteer families, often with six or seven other children. The following stats reflect such an average clone.

**Heliophobia:** The Wavers dislike natural sunlight and try to avoid it whenever possible. On Blue Wave,

this is reasonable, but on other planets this is not just inconvenient (and should be role-played), but also an annoying minor Habit and grants -1 Charisma.

**Pioneer Spirit:** Wavers are pleasant and well-adjusted people, who hope to turn their world into a paradise. They receive the Élan Edge for free.

**Rad Resistant:** The Wavers have a +4 bonus to all rolls made to resist the harmful influence of radiation.

## The Truth about Blue Wave

The world would be a pleasant place, if not for the radiation... which indeed used to be much higher in the past. Blue Wave was once a colony of a long dead alien race, who have changed the world's orbit and changed its atmosphere to be more bearable to them. They lowered the radiation level to one that was optimal to their organisms. The terraforming process Blue Wave is now undergoing will slowly conflict with the residual nanobots left by the ancients, which ironically might cause the planet to be even more uninhabitable, starting with fires in the atmosphere and rapid changes in radiation levels.

Which is a pity, because the alien ruins contain some interesting cultural artefacts. While these aliens never encountered Nemezis and the Horde (they went extinct on their own), they nevertheless had some technologies humans aren't aware of. Somewhere on Blue Wave are the coordinates of the aliens' home world – now dead, but

probably containing at least a couple of useful technologies.

Blue Wavers would be overjoyed if they learned this, since this would increase the number of visitors to the planet. Right now, however, they have a slightly more pressing problem. The relatively high tech level of the planet, combined with the happy-go-lucky attitude of Wavers, makes the world a good base for piracy. The pirates usually hide in alien ruins, but some have created their own strongholds a few kilometers away from the cities, with the tacit approval of the Council. The Councilors are somewhat corrupt, and the pirates also bring much needed technologies and ships to the planet. The bodies of their victims and slaves are also used to diversify the gene pool of the planet, and some young Wavers would be horrified to learn that their ancestors were victims of pirates or still live in captivity.

### Blue Wave and the Horizon System

Infinity was already a major corporation when Blue Wave was settled. The company has a couple of representatives on the planet, and considers it a reliable, though not top-rank, customer. Nanotreatments to remove mutations and the effects of radiation are bringing Infinity major profits, and rights to samples of native flora and fauna have proved useful for their research. If anything threatened the stability of Blue Wave, Infinity would be among the first to react.

Green Eye has its share of gangs and mafias, some of which cooperate with the Phoenix clan and the pirates. It's a minor center of drug trafficking



and manufacture in the region, important enough for the clan to send representatives to the moon.

## Blue Wave in the Game

Blue Wave is not a nice place to visit, even with a radiation suit. It has bountiful fruit and cute, fuzzy animals – all quite deadly to humans. PCs can travel the wilds with proper protection, preferably at night, and combat the native predators of the Wave, but can also track down dangerous pirates and discover their connections with the planetary government. If the PCs dabble in piracy themselves, Blue Wave is civilized enough to provide them with a decent base and market for their stolen wares, and wild enough that the authorities won't bother them... for long.

Of course there are also the alien ruins. They're mostly empty, but the aliens might have left some dangerous surprises behind, or some local predators might've moved inside, so feel free to run a good old dungeon crawl. If you're in the mood for some world-changing events, feel free to give the PCs some unusual alien artefacts and then watch as they run from the Syndicate and psionic organizations.

## Important People and Places

Wavers are closely-knit. They typically sleep and eat in large clone families, but they also understand the right of an individual to privacy. Their heroes are mostly technicians and scientists

who work hard to make their world more habitable, but they also respect the military. No one would admit that they like pirates, but everyone seems to know a guy who knows a guy...

**Councilor Agnes DuMont** is the elected leader of the city of White Mountain and an informal leader of the Council. This silver-haired woman is publically known for her determination and shrewd business sense. Nobody knows, however, that she's not who she claims to be. She actually shares the genotype of the original Agnes, was raised in a completely different town and has replaced her. The new Agnes (Marika) is as decadent and corrupt as the original was, taking money from the pirates, but at least she seems to genuinely care about her city.

**Chief Grombaf** is the chief of the police of Green Eye. It's common knowledge that it's only thanks to his incorruptibility and determination that the Green Eye's underworld is on the defensive. Grombaf is a powerful psi, supporting a vigilante group of freelance psychic cops, but this is less widely known.

## Radiation on the Planet

Most of the planet is a low-radiation environment, thanks to the efforts of the unnamed alien race. The Waver cities and alien ruins are effectively protected against the radioactivity. Nanotreatments offered on Green Eye restore any Fatigue loss due to radiation, including long-term chronic loss, for about six months.

Most underground cities on Blue Wave follow a simple plan – the upper levels are reserved for industry, farming and the military, and the deeper ones are living quarters. The population of the planet is still relatively small, and even the largest clone families have plenty of space.

**White Mountain** is the unofficial capital of Wave, famous for its cloning facilities and genetic experimentation on the native life. The city is a bit chaotic, but it offers plenty to travelers – including markets for pirates. It's also a good starting point for most expeditions wanting to investigate the alien ruins.

**Green Eye** is the moon orbiting the planet. It's devoid of native life, but it has a scant atmosphere made mostly of noble gases giving it a pleasant green

hue. The radiation level, for some reason, is much lower on the moon, so every Waver must visit it twice per standard year to undergo a nanotreatment that will cure their radiation poisoning (and also extract DNA for cloning of the new generation).

Local businesspeople quickly realized the importance of a place everyone on the planet will have to visit, and changed Green Eye into a pleasure world. As well as medical facilities, you can find numerous entertainment parks, VR centers, and some seedier establishments. The police and military keep an eye on the local underworld, but recreational drugs and prostitution are usually ignored. Green Eye does not get many tourists from other systems, and the local entrepreneurs try hard to attract them.



# Copernicus

*A savage planet torn by war*

*Authors: Andrzej „Enc” Stój and Jakub Osiejewski*

Copernicus isn't ruled by humans, monsters, alien races or Artificial Intelligences. Even though the planet has been completely terraformed, it still governs itself. It's the savage, untamed nature and unpredictable weather that decide who lives and who dies. The mighty forests, impassable mountains and depths of the seas and oceans are the homes of dangerous predators, often more dangerous than many servants of the Dark Gods. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and hurricanes – those are bread and butter for Copernicans. They live in cities surrounded by tall walls, resembling fortresses more than normal metropolises.

The first colonies on Copernicus were established relatively late – the planet is in one of the least explored regions of Galaxy, far away from trade routes and major star systems. The pioneers who constructed the first settlements were refugees and – according to rumors – prisoners sent to Copernicus as a punishment. They had little choice – to survive they had to cooperate. However, they weren't very good at it – quickly, divisions arose, escalating into clashes and battles. To this day, Copernicus is divided into around a dozen states, fighting with each other or at best enjoying a brief truce.

Luckily for civilians and visitors from other planets, Copernican wars

are limited to small-scale conflicts, mostly using infantry, vehicles and, to a lesser extent, air forces. International agreements forbid the Copernicans from using weapons of mass destruction – and despite their negative view of rules and laws, they seem to comply with this. After all, you don't gain anything by turning the enemy country into a radioactive desert, and if you use engineered viruses or nanos to eradicate them, everyone else will unite against you. Anyway, regardless of the rules, the governments can't afford to purchase modern weaponry of mass destruction – Copernicus seems to be the poorest planet of the Sagittarian Arm.

## **Copernican Racial Traits**

**Survivalist:** Copernicans haven't been engineered to survive on their world, but centuries of cultural conditioning and natural selection have had the same effect.

**Rebellious:** Copernicans seem to have inherited the sheer spirit and toughness of their ancestors. They're automatically Stubborn.

**Survivalist:** Even townsfolk on Copernicus learn how to survive in the wild, in case of an attack by the enemy or a hurricane. They receive a free d6 in Survival.

**Versatile:** Much like their human ancestors or Corisian settlers, Copernicans are resolute and multi-talented. They start the game with one free Edge.



## The Truth about Copernicus

Copernicus is a primitive world. The inhabitants never invested in the production of advanced technologies, preferring to purchase them from someone else. Ages of exploiting natural resources and almost constant wars have resulted in significant poverty. While tourists looking for extreme experiences bring quite large sums here, there aren't that many of them – very few people want to visit a world torn by war. The resources and minerals mined on Copernicus will soon be depleted, and the planet is on the edge of downfall. In a decade or two the resources of the planet won't be enough to wage wars, let alone maintain archaic technologies or fund the interstellar fleet.

About the only craft Copernicus can offer the Galaxy is war. A well-trained army, excellent officers with years of experience, advanced AIs controlling military actions, powerful psychic commanders – if the entire military power of the planet turned mercenary, it would certainly have no trouble attracting customers. However, to achieve this, the states of Copernicus must first end their ancient conflicts. Forgiveness and unification under one common Copernican banner is their only chance to avoid the fate of hundreds of other worlds who have succumbed to barbarism over the ages.

### Copernicus and the Horizon System

A certain number of Copernicans is always present in the ranks of the Cor military, but they're usually volunteers, professional soldiers who, disillusioned with making war on humans, decided

to use their skills to combat monsters. None of the planet's governments has decided to send official aid to the war with Horde.

Some of the more ambitious officers of the Cor forces, perhaps inspired by the Unification Church on Ash, see Copernicus as a potential propaganda opportunity, thinking "If we can manage to unite the warring clans of Copernicus, we can also unite humankind". They have already found some potential allies in this task on Copernicus, but they need people to carry out the actual negotiations – and battles.

## Copernicus in the Game

Copernicus' is a planet where the PCs could participate in an entire campaign, without ever visiting another star system. Politics, secret cults, wars and threats, chasing fugitives, discovering the mysteries of the past – you can play any kind of *Nemexis* adventure here, except maybe adventures not focused on conflicts. It's these clashes – starting with an accidental fight in a dark alley and ending with a duel finalizing failed negotiation attempts – that ensure that the heroes will not be bored on Copernicus. Even if they don't go looking for trouble, it will find the heroes by itself. Revenge for a friend's death, insults (real or imagined), betrayals or scams can ensure that the PCs will find enemies everywhere. If the heroes are bounty hunters, friends of the bandits will try to rescue their mates. If the squad is composed of soldiers they can experience life with a nasty superior, sending them on suicidal missions. As diplomats or politicians they are sure to

get in someone's way – and that leads straight to duels, assassinations, psionic assaults or the good old methods: poisoned daggers or explosive charges.

The player characters' ultimate goal could be the unification of the planet or ending its unending war. That would require months, perhaps even years, of hard work – precisely planned military campaigns, delicate diplomacy and active propaganda, but it would not be impossible.

### Important Places and People

There aren't many places like Copernicus. On most planets of the Milky Way an individual is next to nothing, just a single cog in a massive machine, easy to replace with another. But here, exceptional people can achieve much more and feel that their choices alter the world. A skilled commander can tip the scales of battle and defend his homeland. A brave diplomat can, thanks to a few wise compromises, protect his country. A charismatic merchant can earn millions if he manages to make a good contract. Sure, Copernicus isn't exactly the center of Galaxy, it ranks far below Bariz or Celia, but many people prefer to be someone on a backward world than to be nobody on the finest planet of the Sagittarian Arm.

**The Hermit** arrived on Copernicus years ago, aboard an old lander which he destroyed soon after his arrival. For decades no one knew about his existence. Sure, hunters told stories about some strange creature, but no-one claimed to have seen it with their own

eyes. However, the rumors have been confirmed by the arrival of a group of bounty hunters looking for the Hermit. This was a large team of professionals, armed with modern equipment, but they were massacred – the Hermit spared one, so that the tales of bloodbath would scare off other hunters. Indeed, the reports of the man he spared made everyone stay away from the Hermit – not a single person will risk their lives to collect the reward, once they learn about his past.

The Hermit is a perfect soldier, created in an experiment on a distant world preparing for war. In many respects he resembles a member of one of the Tiger Clans – he has fangs and claws, a skin covered with fur, he can see in the dark and he's super strong, fast and nimble. He served in the army for nearly fifty years, performing many, often suicidal, missions. He was conditioned to revel in battle and obey his superiors – but something must have gone wrong. With time, the Hermit grew more independent and pacifistic. Eventually, he decided to escape. He's lived on Copernicus for a couple of dozen years, undisturbed by enemies or allies. Sadly, his former superiors have discovered his hideout, and decided to punish him for insubordination. They sent ordinary people first, to make sure that the creature hiding in the Copernican woods is in fact what it seems to be. Now it's only a matter of time until another, more serious, hunt starts.

Copernicus is much like an old machine where many different parts have begun to break, held together only by spit and hope. Everything on the planet is

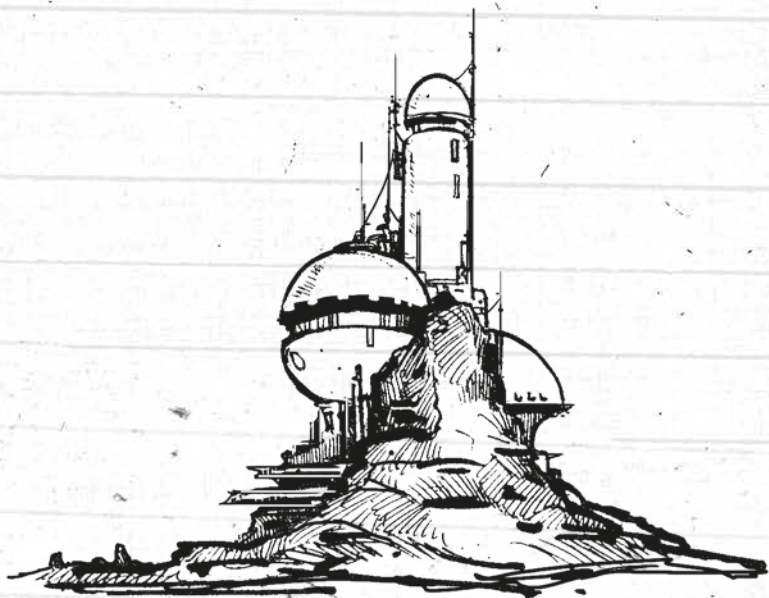


seriously worn out, especially the high-tech machines, devices and vehicles. The roads aren't maintained – and most inhabitants of the planet use ground vehicles, while air travel is restricted to the elites and the military.

In many cities away from the front lines life is normal, but the closer to the borders you are, the more soldiers, tanks, bunkers and artillery positions you encounter. The Copernican war is different from wars in other regions of the Galaxy – it's slower, smaller-scale, without modern technical inventions like nanoids or weapons of mass destruction. Major offensives are rare, but smaller troops or companies clash quite often. The soldiers are tired of war, reluctant to heroically charge the enemy, and would rather guard their posts or fortifications.

**Crownport** – once the largest starport of Copernicus, today this is a scarred

ruin, razed by bombardments a dozen or so years ago. However, ships land here even today – simply because this is the only place on the continent where large transports or warships can land safely. Around the still-active landing platforms a small town of traders arose; a bazaar of tents, where people buy and sell absolutely everything – from mementos of the dead, through weapons stolen from military warehouses, to slave laborers. These people don't make much money, and are often refugees, more interested in barter – but if you look closely enough, you can find equipment of a very good quality for peanuts. If you're looking for heavy weapons, or even military vehicles, Crownport is a good place to start.





# MZUZU

*A world of psionic clones*  
Author: Andrzej "Enc" Stój

Orange sands, a cloudless sky where the only feature is a massive, blood red sun, and the dark-skinned inhabitants with their bald heads and irisless eyes have given Mzuzu its nickname – Hell. Very few people have visited the planet in person, but old travelers' tales mean no one wants to see this orange sun-burnt globe with their own eyes or meet its strange, mysterious inhabitants.

The ill fame of Mzuzu is only partially caused by conditions on the planet. There are hundreds of globes where humankind has to hide underground or in closed settlements. The most frightening thing on Mzuzu are its inhabitants. All of them possess some kind of psionic ability, not caused by nature but by advanced technology. Mzuzans are not born naturally, they're bred and designed by machines programmed ages ago by their mysterious ancestors. Rumor has it that people living on this planet resemble worker bees – ruled by a powerful consciousness hidden deep underground.

The planet doesn't have many natural resources – although it's famous for its diamonds – and the main income of Mzuzu is from mining and trading cloning and engineering technologies. Mzuzu has trading contracts with over a hundred other worlds. They aren't too happy about dealing with Mzuzans, but they have little choice. In the Sagittarian

Arm there's no other world with cloning machines of better quality.

## Mzuzan Racial Profile

There are several "templates" for Mzuzans. A future administrator has a different profile from a psionic soldier or a diplomat. The following profile represents a typical middle-class citizen, a low-ranking technician or civil servant.

**Arcane Background (Psionics):** All Mzuzans are psionic. No one is sure whether this is the result of conditioning, the selection of clone templates, or the influence of aliens. Whatever the cause, they all receive the Arcane Background (Psionics) Edge, and Psionics skill at d6.

**Psionic Enhancement:** Mzuzans are talented psis and have +10 extra Power Points.

**Willowy:** Mzuzans are more focused on psionic development than on physical training. They have -1 Toughness.

**Xenophobic:** Mzuzans despise all strangers and have the Outsider Hindrance.

## The Truth about Mzuzu

Ages ago, ancestors of the present Mzuzans made an amazing discovery – they found underground structures, too regular to be the work of nature and too alien to be made by humans. They suspected that these were created by

an alien race who went extinct millions of years ago – perhaps even before the star of the system became a red giant. Pioneers used these structures as the basis for the first colonies on Mzuzu. It seems that the presence of the alien base somehow influenced the later decisions of the psionic masters who have since taken over the planet. The archives mention the discovery of remnants of ancient technology, even documenting them with pictures – but there's no data on whether they have been analyzed or activated. Rumors claim that the aliens – identified with the creations of the gods – never left, and just hid deeper inside the planet, but these are probably false. Mzuzu was indeed inhabited once, but the species who lived here died out millennia ago.

However, the rumors about the artificial intelligence, a data bank where the memories of every dying inhabitant of Mzuzu are being kept, are most definitely true. Cothinel, as it's called by the psionics, is more of a repository of memories controlled by an advanced program than a sentient being, but as the centuries passed it grew more and more self-aware. Today, it shows much more independence than it should. That's why many Mzuzans want to turn the machine off, or at least cut the connection between it and the laboratories and cloning machines, where the minds of new members of the community are being designed. Sadly, it might be too late for that – the AI long ago overcame the safeguards on that connection and created its own communication channels, and many

grown-up psis are its "children", utterly loyal to Cothinel.

### Mzuzu and the Horizon System

Mzuzu is one of Infinity's major competitors. The corporation sends trained agents, psis, and gengineered clones to pierce the veil of Mzuzan experiments. Mzuzans are sometimes polite enough to return those spies – as babbling mindless idiots. Of course Mzuzans would also like to learn Infinity's secrets, and there are many ways they can pay willing defectors – including unlocking their psionic potential.

Despite the fact that it competes with Infinity, Mzuzu recently sent a token psionic battalion as aid for the Cor military. It was disbanded eight months later, due to lack of cooperation between it and the High Command. Some Mzuzans, however, stayed in the forces, often as psychic commanders, overcoming their prejudices. That unsettles their people – they're out of place, and that's a terrible thing on Mzuzu. Some mental influence on the officers might make the few dozen Mzuzan psis on Cor be sent on a suicidal mission, get them demoted or discharged – either way it would weaken the army.

### Mzuzu in the Game

Mzuzu probably shouldn't be the setting for many sessions. The strict control of society (possibly by the Artificial Intelligence) and the limitations of space within the underground or domed settlements can severely limit the player characters. The planet can be simply an element



of background – appearing only in the tales of merchants or pilots. The PCs can also meet a group of Mzuzans or visit their planet during a single mission, being hired by the government of a rival planet.

Sabotage, stealing cloning technologies or eliminating an inconvenient Mzuzan will be difficult challenges even for seasoned heroes. Strong security, numerous guards and the constant psionic presence (including psionic echoes) will complicate matters. Bribing, intimidating or fooling a Mzuzan are practically impossible – the PCs must find other solutions to the problem.

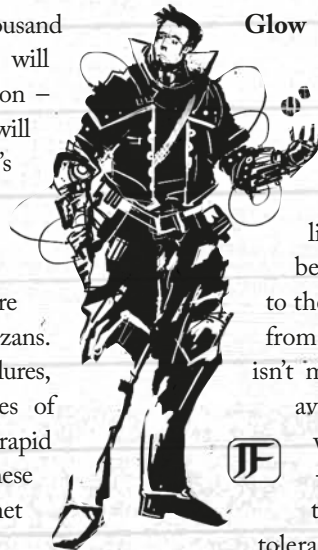
### Important People and Places

The massive, red sun of Mzuzu frightens visitors. It seems that the planet is getting closer and closer to the star and will be soon devoured. Of course, nothing like that will happen – at least in the near future. Nonetheless, the star of Mzuzu is dying. In a couple of thousand years the Mzuzu system will witness a spectacular explosion – the only star of the system will become a supernova. While it's almost impossible for this event to happen during the next few centuries, the changes inside the star are even now a threat to Mzuzans. Communication failures, damage to satellites, changes of planetary climate, including rapid temperature shifts – all these force the citizens of the planet

to constantly look for a new home. So far their efforts have proved fruitless.

**Diamond Valley** – this place is one of planet's greatest secrets. It is the oldest diamond mine on Mzuzu. The local workers are slaves, mostly imported from other systems, but some are native Mzuzans with faulty genes, for instance lack of psionic talent or psionic enhancements. The life expectancy in Diamond Valley is around four years – for the natives, since off-worlders last a year at best.

Mzuzans come over as strange and unfriendly to visitors – except maybe on the rare occasions when they meet with diplomats or guild representatives who can offer them important contracts. Even though they're polite, you can sense a weird threat in the air. The awareness that you're surrounded by psis, and that they have all been created in labs, does not help in understanding them.



**Glow** is one of the most talented psis of his generation, and the only Mzuzan in recent history that has been allowed to live despite his genome being damaged (according to the local scientists). Apart from his powers, Glow isn't much different from an average psi on his planet, with one exception – he's an albino. In theory Mzuzu is very tolerant, and they don't pay

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much attention to your looks, but the practice can differ. Glow is an outcast, a pariah who would have been eliminated long ago, if not for his great talent. His masters realize that his abilities are very rare, and that's why they put up with his presence. Glow himself waits for an opportunity to escape. Sooner or later

he will meet someone from outside Mzuzu, and then he will use them to leave – whether they want that or not.



# Sparta

*A world of inhuman warriors*

*Author: Andrzej "Enc" Stój*

*Translation: Jakub Osiejewski*

Sparta is a place where soldiers are forged. They're being created out of the bodies of the greatest warriors of mankind, out of the cold chrome of cybertechnological implants, out of the perfection of reprogrammed genomes and out of frighteningly beautiful thought patterns placed in their brains. Spartan soldiers dominate on the Galaxy's battlefields: they're perfect warriors, winning despite all odds. Soldiers born of metal and blood, fire and lightning. They fight only for themselves, their motherland and their ideals. They never work for money or to conquer other worlds, and if they aim their weapons at the enemy, they will not rest until the enemy or themselves are utterly destroyed. Pacts, negotiations, defeat or surrender – these are all alien words for them, ideas Spartans can't understand. Sparta is a dangerous, unwelcoming place where only the strong can survive – the weak of body or mind are soon destroyed.

For most people Sparta would be hell – it's a dead world, half of which is eternally in the darkness of space while the other half is subject to the fiery

gaze of its sun. People could live only in a narrow circle of eternal dusk – if the planet had atmosphere. Spartans spend their entire lives inside underground cities. These massive bases are practically devoid of conveniences. Any luxuries, additional facilities or entertainments are completely contrary to the Spartan way. According to them, they make you soft, causing you to lose focus and forget about the important matters. The difficult conditions of living make Spartans a very pragmatic, but dour, violent and ruthless nation. These are perfect soldiers – they can master their emotions, are ready for the greatest sacrifices and for any kind of orders. They never show fear, never flee from the battlefield and they will follow your orders even at the cost of their own lives.

The society of Sparta divides their people into slaves, called helotes (helots), and fully fledged citizens – Spartiates or Spartans. Even though there's over a hundred helots per Spartiate, they never revolt. They rose against oppression a couple of centuries ago, before the Oracle appeared on Sparta.

Only the five ephors know who or what the Oracle is, when it arrived on Sparta,

**Thénard is hell because there, a couple of bastards decided to enforce their way of thinking.**

**Sparta is worse: everyone there already has one way of thinking and knows it's the best one.**

**– Jenner, independent merchant.**



or the source of its power, which allows them to foresee the future and discover ancient secrets. It's commonly known that no man has ever seen its face. The only people allowed to communicate with the Oracle are the ephors, but even they can't see the Oracle. It transfers its cryptic prophecies directly to their brains. Nobody is surprised that only the five ephors can hear the Oracle's words – they must be powerful psis, and very few psions are born on Sparta.

For an average human Sparta is a dark, dangerous world whose inhabitants live according to strange, rough rules. They're respected for their mastery of war, ability to endure hardship, courage, and cold-bloodedness in face of death. However, everyone who has had to face the Spartans is pleased that their homeworld is on the borders of the Galaxy, far away from the trade routes and the so-called civilized worlds.

### Spartan Racial Traits

Around 90% of Spartan soldiers are cybernetically enhanced, often beyond the Cybernetics Threshold. The following stats represent the unenhanced abilities of a Spartiate.

**Born Soldier:** Spartans start with Fighting and Shooting both at d8.

**Powerful build:** Spartans are genetically enhanced and are all classically sculpted. They receive the Brawny Edge for free. Their Cybernetic Threshold is calculated as if Spirit was one die step higher.

**Psionic Vulnerability:** Though soldiers are not controlled like helots, the

society of Sparta favors characters that are vulnerable to mind control. Spartan Wild Cards do not roll their Wild Die when resisting arcane powers. They can normally purchase Arcane Resistance Edges to at least partially mitigate that.

**Soulless:** To visitors, Spartans seem closer to cyborgs than to real people. Increasing Spirit during character creation costs double, and to raise it during play they must sacrifice two Advances. They also have a -2 penalty on Notice rolls to understand lies and deception.

### The Truth about Sparta

The real power of Sparta is not its legions of excellent soldiers, the most modern weaponry or iron willpower, but its excellent technology. Deep under the surface of the planet, hundreds of scientists work tirelessly to provide security and protection to its inhabitants – not only against humans but against the Dark Gods as well.

Very few people are born naturally on Sparta. The Spartan genetic code is significantly different from the average human genome – thanks to this they're amazing soldiers, able to control their emotions and put service to their country and the ephors before their own needs. Helotes are also not fully human – their brains are damaged, so no slave would even think about revolting. They readily accept raw conditions, heavy labor, and slavery in Spartan cities, not thinking about the future.

The most heavily guarded secret of Sparta is the Oracle – it's a massive



conglomerate of psionics whose bodies are held in cryostasis but whose minds are cooperating to discover the mysteries of the past and the future. Every inhabitant of Sparta who shows psionic potential is forcibly connected to the common consciousness, increasing the immense power of the Oracle. The Oracle seems to be controlled by the ephors – they point out the direction on which the group mind should focus and ask it questions necessary to the well-being of the world. Thanks to the Oracle's guidance, helots are completely obedient, while Spartiates do not have their own needs and wants, thinking only about serving their state.

The truth about Sparta is known only to the few – ephors, selected Spartiates and scientists working in the underground laboratories. They believe that they are doing the right thing and their planet benefits from the existence of the Oracle. They're aware of the possible danger caused by outsiders learning about the true source of Sparta's military might and the mysteries of the Oracle. That's why no one who knows the truth can leave their homeworld, and all dissidents are tracked down and murdered.

### ***Sparta and the Horizon System***

Though Spartans would be a great help in the war with the Horde, they haven't sent any troops, claiming that they're needed for the defense of their homeworld. They did, however, provide the High Command with several important technologies, including quite a lot of military cybernetics. It's said that quite a lot

of cyborgs serving on *Emperor Tenji* hail from Sparta, but in either case the former lives of cyberneticized soldiers don't matter that much. Perhaps if Spartans had their own way, some of them could have volunteered to fight the Horde – unfortunately, such ideas are anathema to them.

The Barizian nobles suspect that the Spartans do not join the fight in order to provoke Thénard into sending more ships and troops to Cor and eventually attack the weakened planet. That would deeply hurt the alliance, and one of the major goals of Horizon's foreign diplomacy is to reconcile the Senate of Thénard and the ephors. It's probably a lost cause either way since on Sparta Bariz is abhorred as an example of decadence, and it's a rare ephor that would even consider negotiating with a noble. They prefer to deal directly with the Cor military and independent merchants.

### **Sparta in the Game**

The player characters should not just visit Sparta by accident. They could be enslaved by Spartans, looking for a place to hide from enemies, or work for a person or organization wanting to discover the secrets of Sparta. Their stay on the planet will definitely be unpleasant – the cities of Sparta are labyrinths of grey, concrete corridors. The heroes will be accompanied by the noise of machines, the omnipresent smell of metal and grease, and extreme cold. The empty looks of helotes toiling away in silence, the hostile remarks of Spartiates and a strange pulsing inside the skull will show them that Sparta is not a pleasant place, and the best thing

they can do is to finish their business and get out of there as quickly as possible.

The visit will be especially difficult for psis – even before landing they'll feel a powerful presence, a field distorting all scanning attempts and all powers. The feeling of being an intruder, of profaning Sparta in some unusual way will constantly accompany them, from the moment when their ship first orbits the planet, to when they engage hyperspace engines and leave this inhospitable world.

### Important People and Places

The strength of Sparta is not derived from important individuals, but from the entire society forgoing their wants and desires for the good of the motherland. However, fame on the battlefield and the glory of a hero who gave his life for the good of Sparta are the cornerstone values for Spartans and the ultimate goals of most soldiers. The names of the most skilled commanders and mightiest warriors are placed on the Iron Plate – a massive iron board placed on the door guarding the quarters of the ephors. In modern times there are two heroes whose names might be found there.

**Karos** is the leader of the Fifteenth Legion – a penal unit, taking on the toughest, most suicidal missions. Ages ago he soiled his name by attacking without orders, allowing the enemy to flank the Spartans. The battle was won, but at a massive cost. Karos was demoted from a Captain to an ordinary private and sent to the Fifteenth Legion. Since that time he has gained experience and

wisdom, and most importantly of all – respect for the lives of his soldiers. He's a perfect commander, victorious in every battle, often avoiding losses completely.

**Daimon** – a young man who became famous accompanying the ambassador of Sparta to a distant system. The diplomat was challenged to a series of duels as a result of an enemy plot – and Daimon, being his bodyguard, managed to defeat all opponents, one after another, without receiving a single wound. Since then he has served the ephor as a guard and as a bodyguard to influential Spartiates during diplomatic missions to many areas of the Galaxy.

Not only soldiers can earn fame on Sparta. Wisdom, wit and intelligence can also result in glory. While the ability to make diplomatic plans and plots is not enough to place a Spartan's name on the Iron Plate, it will certainly make him famous in the current generation.

**Laikos** is the only one of the five currently living ephors who has seen other worlds with his own eyes. Laikos is an old, patient man, who was impetuous and impatient in his youth. Due to his mercurial nature he used to go on diplomatic missions to other planets, against other ephors' wishes, claiming that he had no competent advisors whom he could trust to conduct negotiations so vital to Sparta's future. In reality, though, he just wanted to see the Galaxy, and learn about life on other worlds. Perhaps thanks to these journeys he is a rarity indeed – a Spartan with a sense of humor. He has wisdom and experience other ephors

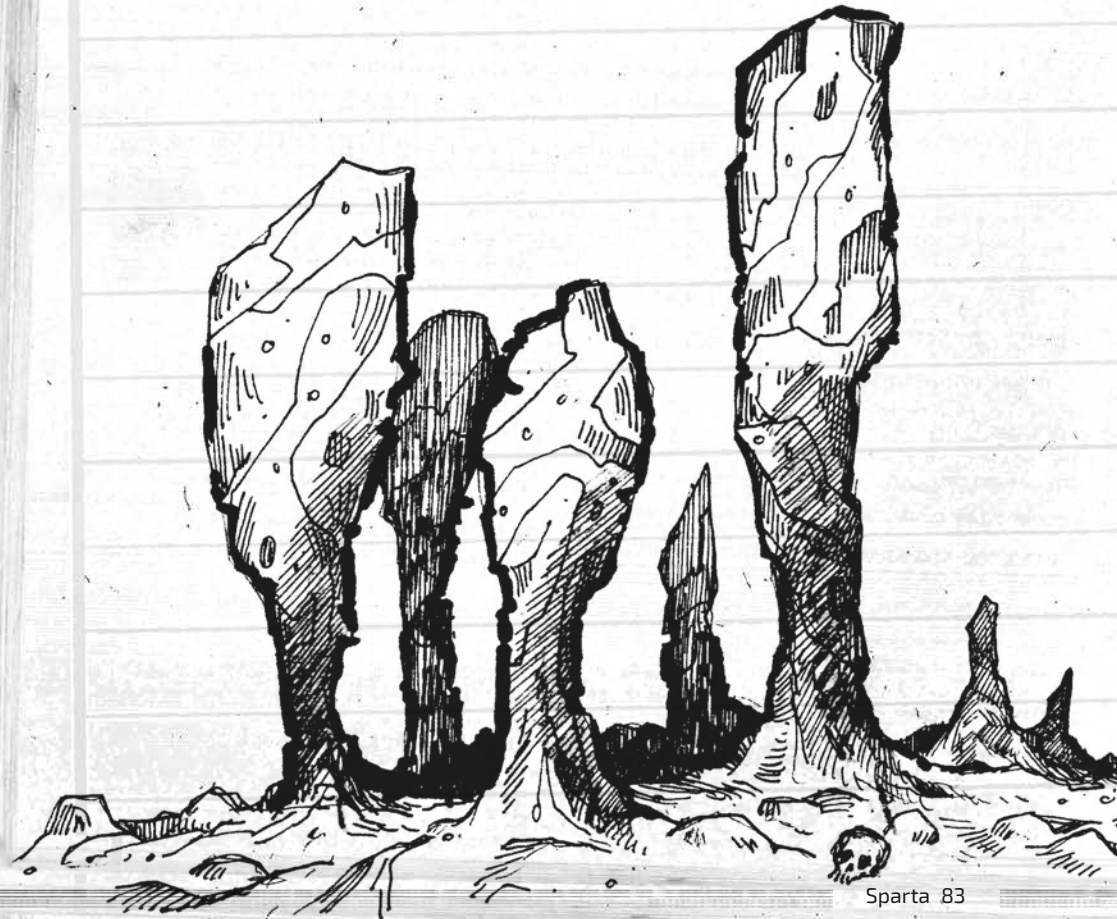


seem to lack. However, he has many enemies – during the last three decades enemies have attempted to assassinate him at least seven times! It seems that his unknown foes do not want to wait for him to die on his own.

### ***Psionic Echoes***

Sparta is subject to a permanent low-power psionic echo field thanks to the presence of the Oracle (see page 61-62 of *Nemesis*). The field is stronger inside the area of the temple of Oracle. Spartans themselves are conditioned to be immune to these echoes, which leaves them strangely vulnerable to psionics.

If enemies of the mankind ever invade Sparta, the war for this planet will be completely different than the current invasion of Galaxy. The dead surface of the globe offers no way for the Horde to survive – to start the war monsters must gain a foothold in one of the underground cities. The Horde is not smart enough to realize this, so the most likely scenario is a long space siege where thousands of void krakens will be destroyed, attempting to conquer the planet despite the constant artillery barrage. If the monsters manage to land on Sparta, a long war in the underground tunnels will follow. The inhabitants of the planet know what's at stake; that's why they created a defensive system that



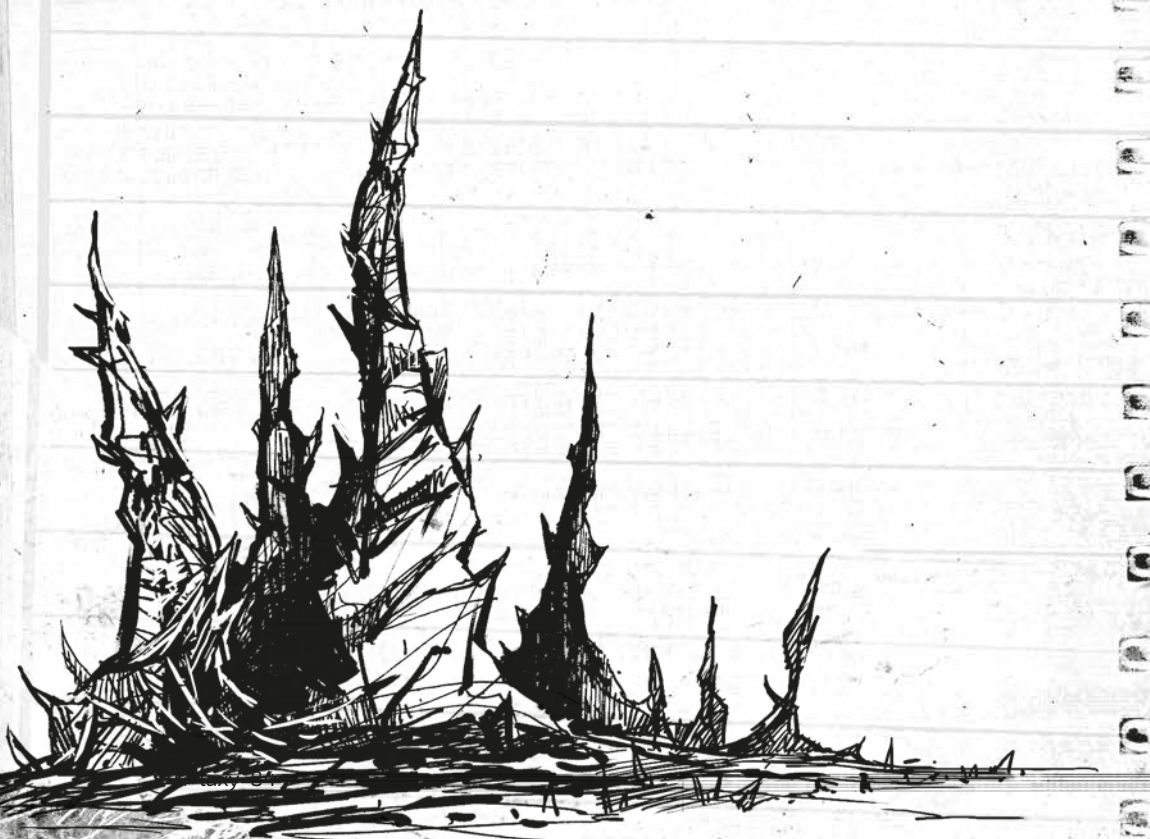


could resist the assault of any human fleet.

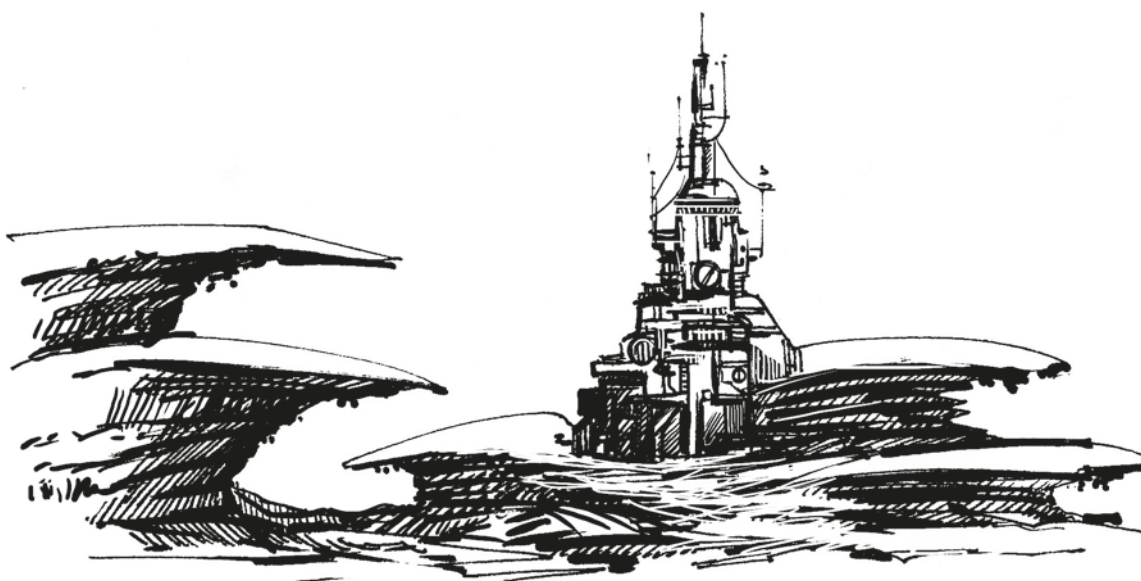
**The Temple of the Oracle** – the main weapon of the Spartans is buried deep underground. This massive complex is composed of six giant rooms, called Wells, connected by a labyrinth of corridors. Inside the Wells the psionics sleep inside cryostasis pods glowing with an eerie blue light. They're protected by legions of cyborgs – patient Spartan soldiers who have never used their weapons in the history of the planet. Hundreds of scientists are constantly monitoring and optimizing the state of the telepathic minds. These scientists spend their entire lives there – taken here as children, they're also educated here, live here and die here. They never complain, much like helots

– devoid of their own desires, they only wish to serve Sparta.

**Port Freedom** – the only normal place on the rough world of the Spartans, and the only open space port on the planet. If you want to do business with Spartans or ephors, you need to stay here – in a smelly, overpopulated and vividly colorful town. Here you can find whores, drugs, guns, duels, gladiatorial arenas and headhunters chasing cultists. While Port Freedom is still ostensibly a Spartan town, it's self-governing thanks to an unofficial pact between the ephors and the city. Local gangsters and bandits flourish, since this means that there are no rules in Port Freedom.



# ADVENTURES



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# The Sacrifice

*Author: Andrzej "Enc" Stój*

*Chasing their enemy, the PCs encounter a secret temple to the Dark Gods.*

A long, exhausting chase after Jando Wantara, a smuggler who sold the PCs some faulty goods and ran away with their money, is almost over now. The party's spaceship is faster than his old, rusty smuggling ship. The players catch up with him near Santi, a small moon of Dis, the largest planet of the Horizon system.

As Jando's ship closes in on the orbit of the moon, and the PCs' vessel is close enough to open fire, a massive unidentified object appears on the radar – some kind of base, the size of a cruiser or a space station. From that base, three other contacts break off – missiles, aimed at the smuggler's ship. When they reach the location of Wantara's ship, the PC see a massive explosion on their screens. The smuggler's spaceship has either been destroyed or damaged.

## So What's Your Plan?

Analysis of the sensor output will allow the heroes to discover that the missiles have destroyed the engines of Jando's ship, and damaged its secondary systems, but the life support still works. There's still a chance that they could capture the smuggler – and recover their money.

The party should plan their actions wisely. The defense system of the

base will certainly consider their ship a threat – and missiles might not be the only defensive system. Maybe a more sensible solution would be attacking the base first – and finding more loot on board.

Attacking the missile launcher is tricky, but certainly possible. The automated missile turret is the only defensive measure the station has – and luckily for the PCs there are only two missiles left. The automatic defensive systems have Shooting d8, Piloting d8, and Toughness 12. Use the Missiles (space-to-space weapons) rules from *Savage Worlds Deluxe Chapter Two: Gear*. The station is programmed to launch the missiles when the hostile ships enter long range. A missile deals 4d8 damage.

## The Station

The satellite is an old research station, built around a century ago. It has two space docks. According to the sensors, its life support systems are still active.

Initially the station was used to conduct research on Dis and as a relay satellite to facilitate communication between the automated mines on Santi and the rest of the Horizon system. When the deposits were gone, the station fell derelict. However, a couple of years ago, a group of independent merchants, secretly cultists of the Devourer, took it over. They managed to restore power to the station, fixed up some of its rooms

and installed the defensive systems. Currently, there are no humans aboard the station – the only inhabitant of the base is its monstrous guardian, a mangy dog transformed into a fearsome beast by the powers of dark magic.

### Empty Corridors

Wandering through the corridors of the station makes the heroes antsy. Everything's destroyed, rusty – the base seems to be falling apart. The characters feel as if they're being observed. A successful Notice roll allows them to spot the shadow of some creature disappearing just around the corner, but they will never see it in its full glory.

The monstrous dog observes the party, waiting for them to split up and search the base in smaller groups. It will attack one or two heroes if they're alone, but if the PCs don't split the party, it will stay hidden.

### The Shrine

Sooner or later the heroes are going to reach a room transformed into a shrine to the Devourer of Worlds. This round chamber is around 50' wide. In the center there's a metal table used for post mortem dissections, but equipped with clamps to immobilize the victim. Nearby there are two smaller tables full of surgical tools and other objects used for torture. Both the table and the tools are covered with gore. Around it, there are two rows of steel chairs with high backs, decorated with sculptures – presenting blasphemous scenes and terrible monsters, which could only

exist in the imagination of a madman worshipping the Devourer. From the ceiling hangs a copperplate image of a massive snake eating the Earth. The symbol seems to absorb the light and radiate dark, vile energy that causes the heroes' spines to chill.

Just a moment after the group enters the shrine, its most heavily armed member is attacked by the invisible beast – the monster that has been observing the heroes is now going to attack. The monster tries to kill the characters before they manage to profane the shrine or destroy the copperplate holy symbol of the cult. It will try to remain invisible, but once it suffers two Wounds it will appear to frighten the PCs, and then teleport away to one of the corridors nearby. It hopes that the characters will follow it, and it wants to split them up again – but if its plan fails, it will turn invisible and fight to the death.

### Epilogue

The adventure ends when the guardian of the shrine has been defeated. The characters can search the temple to find some food, the personal items of a couple of cultists (allowing the PCs to identify them and track them down), and around \$500 cash. They also find a locked chest containing four missiles fitting the launcher which attacked them earlier. They can sell these (they're worth around \$500 per one) or use them to destroy the base.

Jando Wantara's still alive, but the air on his ship is running out. He will agree to



any offer by the heroes – if they don't save him, he is going to die.



### Monstrous Dog

A massive creature the size of lion, covered with scraps of hair, fur, bone protrusions and smelly scabs. Spittle drops from an open mouth armed with shark teeth.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Notice d10.

**Pace:** 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

### Special Abilities

- **Black Magic:** The dog has 25 Power Points and can use *invisibility* and *teleport* as if they were black magic powers, using its Spirit as its arcane skill.

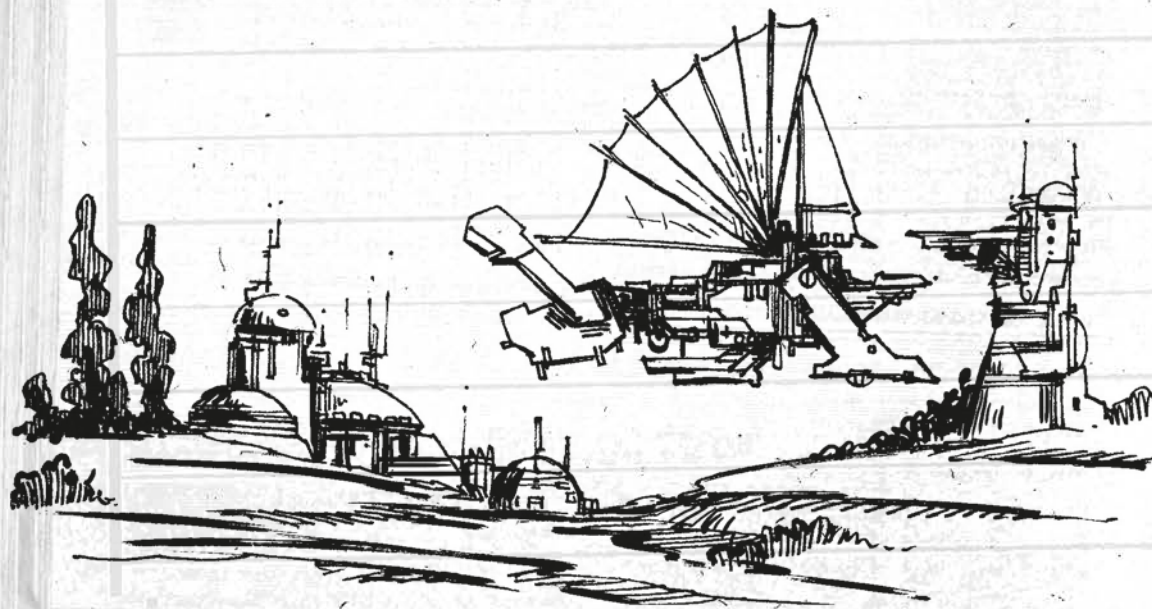
- **Fear:** Anyone who sees the monster must make a Fear roll.

- **Low-Light Vision:** The monster ignores the penalty for darkness.

- **Mad Frenzy:** The creature can make two attacks per round without any penalties.

- **Size +2:** The monster is as big as an adult lion.

- **Teeth and Claws:** Str+d6.





# The Institute

*A one-sheet adventure in a haunted laboratory.*

*Author: Jakub Osiejewski*

The north of Ash is currently an empty wasteland. Just over half a century ago, some smaller places like automated mines or research stations were habitable, today they're ruins only visited by occasional scavengers.

## Meet Mr Johnson

The PCs are contacted by Mr Ivanov, a representative of Infinity, offering them a job – a short trip into the frozen wastelands. They need to recover valuable data from a small research station in the north, and then detonate explosives, destroying the base. This needs to be done within 24 hours, otherwise the corporation will bombard the laboratory themselves. The reward is \$1000 per PC. Ivanov knows little about the lab himself, he only knows that recently it was involved in some top secret project.

The trip to the Institute (if the PCs have no vehicle, Infinity will give them fuel and a barely-heated van) will be mostly eventless, taking 8 hours of driving. While this might seem like a relatively short time, Ashite roads aren't exactly in top condition – if only one person has been driving he or she will be Fatigued. The navigator must make a Survival -2 roll to find the best course, and failure means that the journey will take 2 extra hours. Snake eyes on that roll mean

a crash, a breakdown or a random encounter – PCs must make a Repair test (-2 for cold and snow) taking 1d4+1 hours.

Eventually the PCs will reach the entrance to the Institute – a massive, steel door leading to a complex of small, domed buildings connected by underground passages, all covered with snow. Though the door is made of steel, it's covered with bumps and wayward shapes, as if someone tried to punch their way out. The PCs have access to the keycard opening the door. Inside, the base is dark and mostly not heated.

## Exploring the Institute

The Institute was a secret research station of Infinity where they investigated the nature of Lij, the Poisoner of Technology. The inhabitants of the complex researched the influence of the goddess on computer systems. They were close to a breakthrough, and to creating a system that could be secured against her influence – but Lij couldn't allow that to happen. The vile goddess took over the computers in the station a couple of days ago, binding the machinery inside to her inhuman will, and cutting the laboratory off from the outside world. While the malicious will of Lij has left the complex, the robots are still subject to warped programming and are guided by the Spawner. This villain was once Barney Konpira –

a Cor veteran, chief security officer of the laboratory and now a cultist of Lij.

There are still humans inside the lab – a couple of scientists and guards trying to survive. The Spawner intends to sacrifice the few remaining refugees, escape the laboratory and get to the cities of Ash to spread the cult of his mistress.

To get to the main computer the PCs will have to explore the base further. Here's what they can find inside.

**Office areas:** Completely devastated. Holographic terminals sometimes flicker to life, illuminating empty areas covered with trash and blood and the dead bodies of people shot with plasma weapons. If the PCs try to examine them too closely, they will display blasphemous symbols and force them to make a Fear roll. The furniture here has been devastated, and after closer examination, the PCs discover that all the metal elements have been ransacked. Spiders don't come here anymore, but PCs might hear the clicking of their metal limbs.

**Personal quarters:** These, too, have been ransacked, but if the PCs make a Notice roll they'll discover human tracks. Someone has been sneaking in here and stealing food and water from the canteen. A simple Tracking or Notice -2 roll allows them to follow the trail to the power plant (see below). A raise on the Notice roll to discover the tracks will reveal that someone else also visits the place. A massive, cyborgized man

with artificial limbs – in other words, the Spawner.

If the PCs look through the personal belongings of the inhabitants, they'll discover (among things like small slugthrower weapons, a bloodied teddy bear or broken glasses) one active terminal. A lot of the data has been garbled by Lij, but the diary of one scientist is still mostly legible – it describes the gradual rebellion of the machines and the strange behavior of Konpira.

**Laboratories:** The laboratories are patrolled by a security droid. (use the Mech Sentinel stats from *Savage Worlds*. It's equipped with a heavy machinegun (50/100/200, 2d8, RoF 3, AP 2, HW, effectively unlimited number of shots). Lij has imbued it with a hatred of all life forms and it will attack the PCs as soon as it detects them.

The PCs will discover that the labs are full of strange, experimental devices. Evidently, they use some kind of inhuman technology – and some even seem to observe the PCs and threaten them. Most of the computer terminals in the lab are active – but all they seem to do is to repeat “death to the human race” over and over again, in a sweet synthesized voice. The only terminal not connected to the network, but still operational, contains the data on Lij. PCs can safely upload it to their jacks.

**Industrial complex:** Nanobots and 3-D printing were being used here to produce prototypes and machines – and now they are solely making the spider-



shaped robots, the main task of which is to find and destroy the refugees. If the PCs come near here, they will certainly spot at least one such robot. They're swarming near the main nanolab, and occasionally emerge, shiny and new, from the grey goo in the vats – and other spiders throw in human bodies and metallic elements from the base to disassemble them. If the PCs start busting up the lab, the Spawner will take notice and arrive there himself with one spider per two PCs.

**Power plant:** The Spawner and his machines need energy, and they can't afford to destroy the nuclear reactor. That's why Jordan Freimann and the three other scientists have been hiding inside. Sure, they do receive small doses of radiation, but it's better to die of radiation sickness than to be sacrificed to dark gods. Everyone here begs the PCs to take them back to the city.

**Main computer:** The main computer room has been converted into a small temple to Lij. The damaged screens display images of the Poisoner and humans and robots kneeling before her.

While Konpira was busy killing the researchers, Freimann irrevocably damaged the computer, destroying both the backup copy of the data on Lij and the hardware controlling the security systems, thus locking the door and rendering the cameras inert – and alerting the Infinity HQ that lab had been locked down. The Spawner spends most of his time here with his spiders, improving their bodies and his own. Even though he doesn't need to eat

anymore, he tries to hoard all food in the base, in order to draw the survivors out of the power plant. Konpira is actually willing to negotiate – if the PCs allow him to leave the complex and don't destroy it, he'll let them live, and, if prompted, will also agree to free the survivors. If players tell him that they already have the data on Lij or that Infinity will bomb the base soon, he attacks, supported by one spider per two PCs and the security droid from the laboratory if it hasn't been destroyed (the droid will arrive when someone draws a black queen as an initiative card).

## The End

The best place to put the explosives is of course the power plant or the main computer room. Either way the complex is going to be bombed soon. If you want to spice up the finale, there might be not enough room for the scientists in the van, or they might show radiation sickness symptoms during travel.

Ivanov will gladly pay the PCs for their efforts. If they managed to save Freimann and her people, he will be very pleased, but will not reimburse the PCs further – however, if they insist, Infinity will give them the van they traveled in.

## Opponents

### Robot Spider

Use the giant spider statistics – but add the Construct trait, which will increase their Toughness to 7. They obviously aren't poisonous, but they can shoot strange metallic webbing, once.



## Scientist

Jordan Freimann is a Wild Card, the remaining Scientists are Extras. While they're tougher than the scientists that didn't make it, they are now Fatigued due to radiation and exhaustion.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Investigate d8, Knowledge (Various) d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8.

**Charisma:** 0;

**Pace:** 6;

**Parry:** 5;

**Toughness:** 7 (2)

**Hindrances:** Careful, Curious.

**Edges:** None.

**Gear:** Crowbar (Str+d6, improvised weapon), 9mm pistol (12/24/48, 2d6, RoF1, AP1, double tap), protective suit (+2).



### The Spawner

Barney Konpira has always been an opportunist. Lij seems to have discovered that, and offered him immortality in exchange for betrayal. He agreed without hesitation. Now, merged with machines, he resembles a cyborg more than a man. His repulsive, bloated

human flesh transforms smoothly into the skeletal frame of his new body, and his limbs resemble those of his beloved spiders.

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d10.

**Charisma:** 0; **Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2).

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Traitor to Mankind

**Edges:** Level-Headed, Trademark Weapon (plasma handcannon).

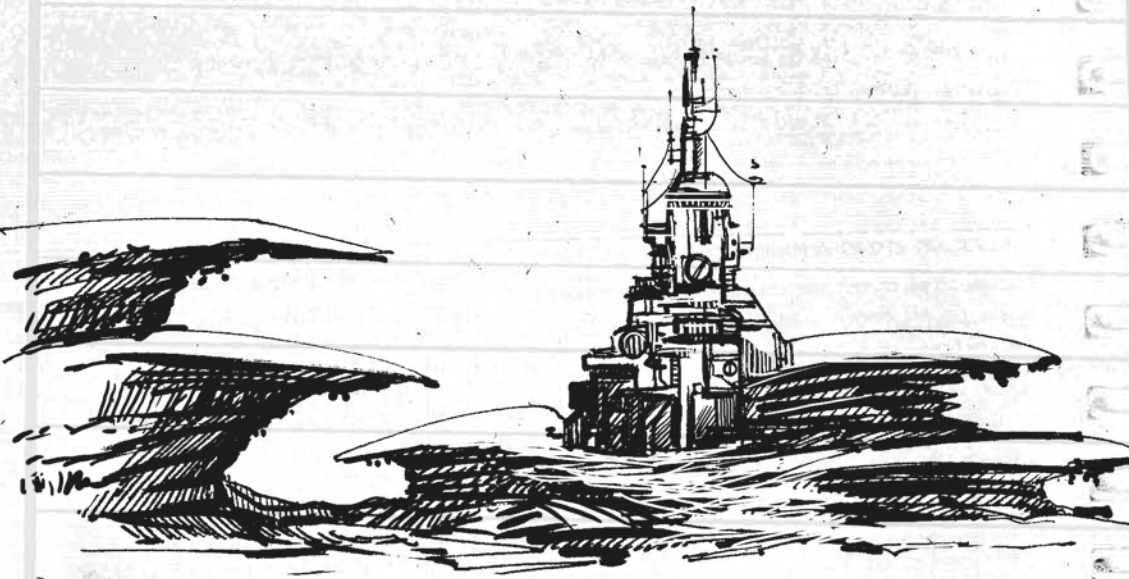
**Gear:** Two plasma handcannons (10/20/40; Damage 5d8, RoF 1, AP 15) and 4 spare batteries, military (2d8) force field.

### Special abilities:

- **Buzzsaw:** The Spawner possesses a third arm ending in a sharp saw (Str+d6). He can attack with it in melee as a free action.

- **Construct:** +2 to recover from Shaken, +2 Toughness, no extra damage from called shots.

- **Fear:** Anyone who sees the Spawner for the first time must make a Fear roll.



# A Life for a Life

*A one-sheet adventure for a group of bounty hunters or police officers. The PCs should have a powerful ally who is devoted to fighting dark cults, and perhaps a degree of psionic capability.*

*Author: Andrzej "Enc" Stój*

## Introduction

The heroes are contacted by Lieutenant O'Cullen, an acquaintance of one of the characters, asking for help. A couple of hours ago his old friend (and a good friend to at least some of the PCs), Guy Lance, kidnapped a rich businessman, Alex Moore, and is holding him hostage in an old warehouse on the outskirts of city, threatening to kill him if his demands aren't met. He's placed explosive charges everywhere in the

building, and O'Cullen was forced to negotiate. Lance's first demand was calling in the player characters – he wants to talk with them before he makes further demands. That's the help Lieutenant wants.

## Negotiations

Guy Lance is a 47 year old ex-cop, fired four years ago thanks to budget cuts in the department. A year and a half ago his wife, Ellen, disappeared in mysterious circumstances – her body was found a couple of months later. The murderer was never found. Lance has spent the last year making a private investigation. He claims that Ellen was killed by cultists, during some accursed



ritual. The Lieutenant won't mention this, but Guy found some evidence proving that he speaks the truth, which disappeared quickly after he gave it to the police. Of course, his contact in the force was O'Cullen.

Lance has chosen the location of his crime well. He is holding the hostage on the third floor of the warehouse, in an area without any windows. He's placed explosives near all exits, installed a complicated monitoring system (cameras, movement and heat sensors) and silenced the room where he has locked himself with Moore. There are no tall buildings for hundreds of meters. It's possible to storm his base, but the police need time to prepare the attack – and time is something they lack.

When the characters arrive, the Lieutenant will contact the kidnapper. Guy thanks the PCs for arriving, and then he tells them about his suspicions – he thinks Moore is a member of a sect worshipping the dark gods, and is guilty of murdering his wife during their dark rituals. He just wants to clear his name and that's why he invites the PCs to talk to him without the participation of the police. Guy won't tell them anything as long as O'Cullen is present in the conversation. The easiest solution is using telepathy (*mind reading* with appropriate trappings, for instance) to communicate with Guy's mind. If there are no psis in the party, Guy starts sending encoded messages to their jacks. O'Cullen would really love to hear what they're talking about, but if the PCs come up with another way of keeping the lieutenant away from the

conversation, he'll agree grudgingly to the PCs' ideas.

Guy did suspect Moore, but his private investigation pointed to O'Cullen as the leader of the sect. He does have some evidence for the existence of a cult (enough for the people responsible for fighting the Enemies to take interest), but he couldn't believe that his good friend O'Cullen was also a member of the cult. He decided to risk everything and test him, giving him copies of the gathered evidence and asking for help. O'Cullen proved Lance right by destroying the evidence and planting a bomb in Guy's apartment – the ex-cop has been heavily wounded but managed to survive.

Now he asks the PCs for help. All the evidence he has collected against Moore, together with the recording of conversation with O'Cullen (when he gave him the evidence) were given to Guy's friend Annie, the bartender of the Two-Headed Dragon, a popular bar near the space port. He hopes the party could contact her, protect her and give the evidence to someone who could make use of it – preferably someone influential or an organization dedicated to fighting the dark cults (in the Horizon system this ally could be the Ash government, department heads of Infinity, the Unification Church or even Cor military's High Command). Guy knows that the police are going to attack him, but he hopes that the party will perform the task in time. He hopes that he will be able to defend his post for a couple of hours.

O'Cullen is indeed a cult leader. He has bought the help of a dozen or so thugs,



and he will not hesitate to use them. He has also recruited some policemen into the cult – and ordered them to watch the party from the moment Guy mentioned he'd like to talk to them.

## Race against Time

Guy demands press representatives, air transport, and the removal of police vehicles from the area. He gives the police twelve hours to comply. O'Cullen doesn't even question the heroes – he suspects Lance managed to recruit them, that's why he sends a couple of policemen after the heroes and sets the rest of his cult on them. He hopes that the party will lead them to the actual evidence and solve his problems.

The heroes should prepare for a chase – some of the cops are great drivers (Driving d10) and know the city very well – they get a free Benny for the chase scene. If the PCs fail to lose them, probably the entire scene will end as a shootout in a space port bar. Annie is ready for that, and if push comes to shove she will back the party. She's a good shot (d8) and her nasty shotgun will certainly mess up some of O'Cullen's goons.

If the PCs are smart enough to capture some of their pursuers, preferably a police officer (the goons don't know anything about the cult, and claim that the police strong-armed them into helping out), O'Cullen's men will confess, and confirm that their Lieutenant is a high priest in the cult (and that Moore belongs to it as well). Their confessions, together with the evidence gathered by Lance should be enough to convince their potential

allies to take O'Cullen out. If they didn't secure enough evidence, the situation might require some roleplaying, perhaps some Persuasion tests or promises to repay the debt in the future.

## The Confrontation

O'Cullen won't surrender without a fight. When the heroes contact their ally, the Lieutenant will get into a police vehicle and flee – if the heroes are present, they can chase, fight and capture him. You might spare him as a future antagonist, or decide that the PCs' ally will alert the local authorities and he will be quickly detained.

However, if the heroes botch the case (for instance by revealing Guy's plan to O'Cullen) he will order the cops to eliminate both Lance and the party, claiming that they joined forces with the kidnapper (which isn't completely untrue).

If the characters fail to recover the evidence or ignore Lance, he will try to escape together with the hostage. After a day of waiting, he appears on the roof on the building, with his gun at Moore's forehead. Both of them have explosives strapped to their bodies. If Lance exits the building, the heroes or the police will be able to eliminate him – but the only place where they could plant a sniper is in the ruins of an old power station. Aiming from the top of the station's chimney is difficult, due to wind, limited visibility and distance – treat it as -6 to the Shooting roll. If Lance is missed or just Shaken, he will shoot the hostage and try to run away,

using the fire escape, and then hide in the sewers. If he receives a wound he'll detonate the explosives, killing Moore and himself.

If the heroes try to help Lance but are hindered or stopped, or if they don't believe him and decide to delay so that the police prepare the assault, O'Cullen will try to recruit a psionist who can paralyze the kidnapper or influence him mentally. If it comes to this, Lance will be arrested, but a few days later he'll be found dead, hanged on a bedsheet rope. It'll be considered a suicide.



### O'Cullen

Use the same stats for Guy Lance, if necessary.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Driving d8, Fighting d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Piloting d4, Shooting d10.

**Charisma:** 0;

**Pace:** 6;

**Parry:** 6;

**Toughness:** 9(4).

**Hindrances:** Arrogant, Vengeful

**Edges:** Alertness, Ambidextrous, Quick, Two Fisted.

**Gear:** Two plasma handcannons (10/20/40; Damage 5d8, RoF 1, AP 15) and 4 spare batteries, scout armor, standard (2d6) energy shield, short range

communicator (police frequencies).

### Dirty Cops

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Driving d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8.

**Charisma:** +0;

**Pace:** 6;

**Parry:** 5;

**Toughness:** 13 (8)

**Hindrances:** Varies

**Edges:** None.

**Gear:** Baton (Str+d4), light tactical armor (+8), standard (2d6) force field, jack, handcuffs, short range communicator (police frequencies), plasma pistol (15/30/60, 2d10, RoF 1, AP 10, semi-auto) and 4 spare batteries.

### Bandits

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Driving d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6.

**Charisma:** 0;

**Pace:** 6;

**Parry:** 6;

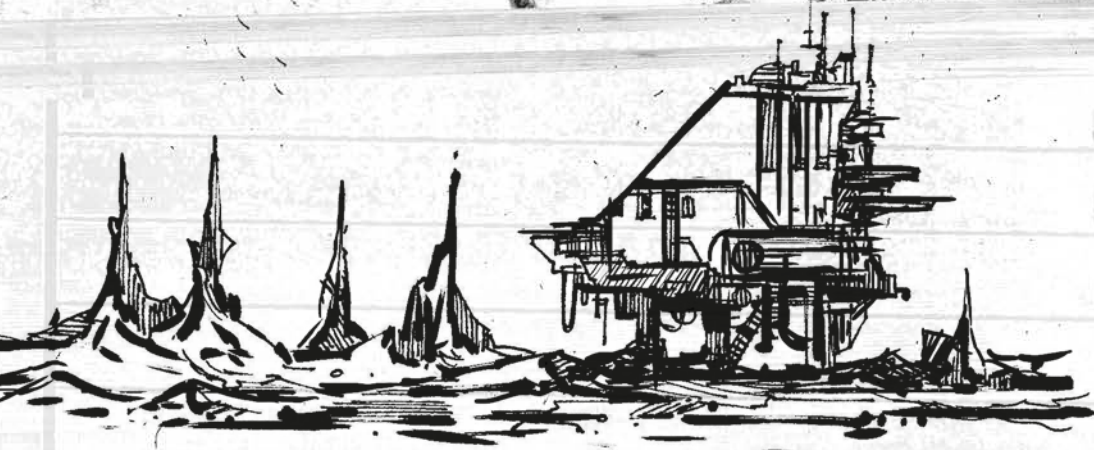
**Toughness:** 6

**Hindrances:** None

**Edges:** None

**Gear:** Clubs or knives (Str+d4), 9mm pistol (12/24/48, 2d6, RoF1, AP1, double tap) and two spare magazines.





# Dwellers of the Swamp

*A one-sheet adventure for Nemezis, for any number of players, playing elite soldiers of Cor fighting insane monster followers.*

*Author: Andrzej "Enc" Stój*

*Translation: Jakub Osiejewski*

The player characters are Cor soldiers, fighting to defend the planet against the servants of the vile deities. They're an elite special forces unit, assigned to tasks regular soldiers can't cope with. The adventure begins when their commanding officer – Major Watson (a silver-haired man with a strict, scarred face) stands next to a holographic display, explaining the details of their new mission.

## The Briefing

The PCs' goal is to save a group of scientists working in a military base on the island of Scylla. The research goals of the scientists are still top secret, but they were probably related to the Horde

– a likely goal is the creation of a new bioweapon that would attack the servants of the Devourer and not affect the natural life of the planet (including humans). Satellite images and scouts have reported a significant rise in the number of beasts in the vicinity of the island – it seems that the monsters are going to storm and destroy the base soon. The task of the soldiers is to forcibly remove the researchers (they have refused to evacuate) and to secure the results of their research. If everything goes well, the PCs won't encounter the Horde and their main task will be negotiating with the scientists and protectors of the base. That's why they won't be issued heavy weapons – just a Skorpion VTOL, a couple of soldiers (one trooper with light armor and an assault plasma rifle per two PCs, and one trooper per Leadership Edge in the party), and standard equipment (see the Special Forces chapter in our Cor supplement).



## Scylla

The island is far away from the front lines, on the southern hemisphere of the planet. Unlike most of Cor it's not covered by jungle, but rather by swampy marshes. The actual research station is placed on a small hill in the center of the island. It's surrounded by three lines of high-voltage fence, and the last line of defense is a wall 20 feet high, bristling with automated plasma cannons and incendiary grenade launchers. So far this equipment has not been used.

The inhabitants of the base have access to two small helicopters (each can carry two people) and a small jet transporter – they're civilian vehicles, unarmed and unarmored. The base is manned by eight scientists and a few technicians, soldiers and security guards – less than twenty people in total.

## Dwellers of the Swamp

The scientists refused to evacuate precisely because they felt safe on the island. Every single one of them belongs to a dark sect, plotting the destruction of the human race. They have already poisoned the soldiers and thrown the technicians to the beasts of the Horde circling around the station. Right now they're preoccupied with their grand project – a biological weapon that kills humans and other normal creatures, leaving the servants of the Devourer of Worlds unharmed. They're counting on being able to finish their research before the military arrives. While they don't expect the PCs to arrive just now, they have a plan for just such an eventuality.

## On the Island

When the PCs arrive, one of the scientists invites them inside, ordering his men to refuel their transporter. They do fill the tank, but also damage the controls and place a small explosive charge inside the VTOL – too small to destroy the ship, but large enough to force an emergency landing. The leader of the research group, Jeremiah Powell, asks the soldiers to wait for an hour so that his team can secure their research results and the computer network. After this time he will ask the troopers to go outside, secure the area, and prepare the vehicles for departure. When at least half of the soldiers have left the building, he will lock the main door, detonate the charge inside the VTOL, and activate the automatic cannons to fire at the soldiers and their vehicles. He and his men attack the soldiers remaining inside. The characters are in for a difficult fight – especially if Jeremiah managed to deceive them, since destroying the turrets is much more difficult than knocking out a couple of desperate cultists. The turrets' effective stats are Shooting d8 and Toughness 16. They're protected by standard (2d6) force fields, and armed with plasma casters (4d10 damage, 30/60/120). Luckily for the PCs, the turrets are programmed not to use the incendiary grenades when shooting targets on the base.

Even if the heroes win the combat, their problems won't be solved instantly. They receive radio information about a great number of Horde monsters swarming around the island, preparing to attack the research station. Both transporter vehicles are rendered unusable and the

helicopters can't carry everyone, besides, their effective range is too short anyway. The PCs must now decide whether to fight or flee. Taking a stand and defending the outpost is actually not a bad idea; they have access to cannons and grenade launchers, two helicopters from which they can shoot or throw explosives at monsters, and they're protected by sturdy fortifications. The exact number of Horde creatures depends on the strength of the PCs, their NPC allies, and whether they have heavy weapons, but we suggest you start with at least two dozen crawlers and one or two landsharks. If the heroes want to escape, they can try to fix one of the transporters (Repair -4, you can handle it as a Dramatic Task if you wish to) and fly away. If you want the scenario to end with a bang, the heroes should be able to find enough explosives in the base to blow it up.

## The Finale

The characters will quite likely manage to escape or withstand the attack of the Horde. Their victory, however, amounts to nothing if the group did not gather the valuable data. If they managed to capture at least one cultist or secured the information on the computers in the base, they are able to discover the identity of the cult's true leader – an influential Barizian politician. They can try to capture the traitor on their own, although a more reasonable solution would be to transfer the data to their superiors who will find more suitable people to capture and interrogate the man.



### Jeremiah Powell

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (electronics) d8, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d6.

**Charisma:** +2;

**Pace:** 6;

**Parry:** 5;

**Toughness:** 7 (2)

**Hindrances:** Traitor to Mankind

**Edges:** Charismatic, Combat Reflexes, Command, Hold the line!

**Gear:** Plasma rifle (30/60/120; Damage: 3d10; RoF 1, AP 10) and four standard batteries, standard force field (2d6), protective suit.

### Cultists (7)

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d4

**Skills:** Fighting d4, Knowledge (Various) d8, Knowledge (Occult) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6.

**Charisma:** 0;

**Pace:** 6;

**Parry:** 4;

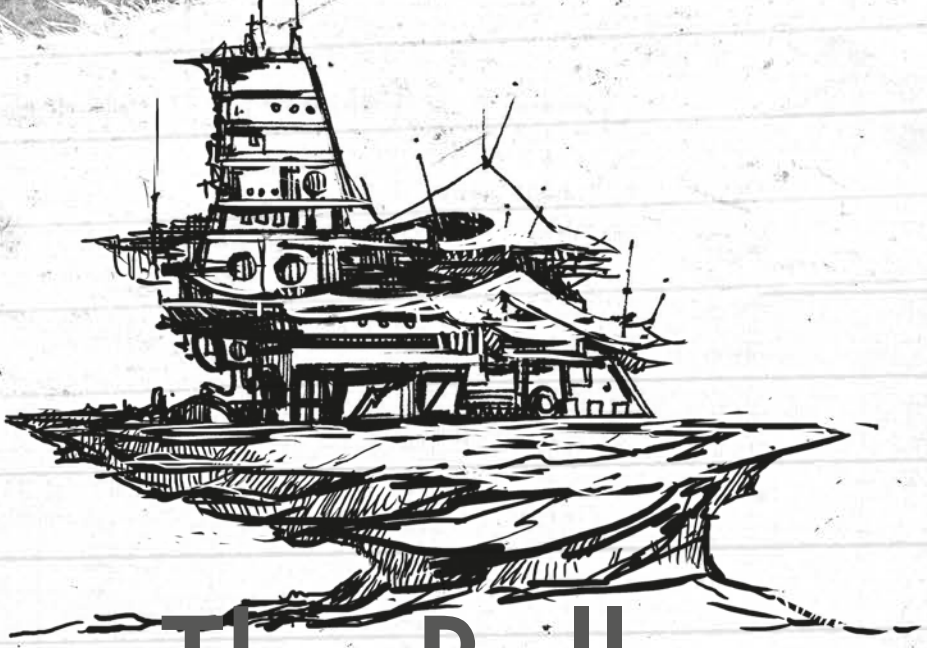
**Toughness:** 6 (2)

**Hindrances:** Traitor to Mankind

**Edges:** None.

**Gear:** SMG (12/24/48; Damage: 2d6; RoF 3 AP 1, Auto, 32 shots) and one magazine, standard force field (2d6), protective suit. One cultist has a rifle instead of a SMG (24/48/96, 2d8+1, ROF 3, AP 2, Auto, 32 shots) and one spare magazine.





# The Bell is Ringing

The Space Port

*An insane monk tries to summon a vile, forgotten force. Can the heroes discover and stop the threat?*

*Author: Andrzej "Enc" Stój*

This one-sheet adventure is best suited to a group of bounty hunters or other characters connected to police forces. The PCs are tipped off by a friend – a transport ship has arrived in a spaceport with only one passenger alive. The rest of the people on board have been killed by some kind of monster. The police do not really know what to do, and would be grateful for any help – especially if the PCs have some experience with fighting the Enemy.

*Nightwalker* is a massive interstellar transport, over 600 feet long. It has been the private property of an independent trader, Captain Saric Gadar, for over twelve years, and during that time there have been no incidents on board. Sadly, the last voyage has ended that run of good luck. Some monster, probably summoned by cultists hiding aboard, murdered almost everyone on board. The only person to survive was Brother Dalibor, an old blind monk guarding a bell – a sacred relic of his order. All the other passengers and crew were killed. Their bodies all look the same: eyes scratched out, blood spilling out of the ears, guts spilling out (but there's no other evidence of wounds or of sonic



weapons). The cameras did not record anything – everything suddenly went dark when the massacre started.

The police want to quarantine the ship to keep the monster aboard. They don't know what to do with the monk – Dalibor claims not to remember the massacre. He heard screams, but hid in his cabin and barricaded the door. He understands that as the only survivor he's a suspect, and he will cooperate. He will however insist on being allowed to continue his sacred journey as soon as possible. His goal is a monastery hidden in the mountains to the north.

## Darkness

Dalibor is not just a monk. A couple of decades ago he was one of a group who decided to use the powers of the Dark Gods to gain power and fortune. Their ritual awakened a lesser being serving the Devourer – Living Shade. Dalibor's circle used this monster to become rich and powerful – blackmailing powerful people, killing their enemies, protecting themselves. After a while they realized that they were slowly turning into cultists following the orders of the Darkness itself. They renounced their power and managed to imprison the demon in a sacred bell. To protect the secret, they've hidden on the northern hemisphere of Ash, officially as monks of some ancient order.

However, a rival sect of the Devourer managed to steal the bell a couple of months ago. Dalibor was the leader of a group sent to recover it – and he partially failed. The demon was partially

awakened and killed the other monks, but it's still bound to the bell. Dalibor hoped that he could return to Ash before the monster recovered its power, but it reawakened in space and murdered the crew of *Nightwalker*. The monk was protected by the bell – its sound wounds the monster and keeps it away.

## Enter the Heroes

The PCs can be asked (or hired) to help investigate the mysterious death of the passengers of the *Nightwalker*. Interrogating the monk won't give them any information – he is convinced that some monster killed all the others. He believes that his brethren can imprison the demon again, and he will resist all attempts at torture or intimidation. Psionic interrogation, however, will uncover one thing – Dalibor cares only about protecting and delivering the sacred bell.

Sadly, the rival sect still wants the bell for themselves. One of their agents is watching the port, ready to alert his brethren when the monk leaves the port.

If the PCs have no psionic powers they can still track the bell down. They can analyze police and customs records (whether by persuasion or hacking) and find out that an identical bell was moved off Ash by some shady characters. If the PCs take interest in these people, they'll discover that they're freelance gangsters and smugglers. Some of them can even be found in the port! The gangsters know that they work for a cult – if intimidated, they will quickly admit that the bell is some kind of prison for

a demon. They should also add that it's vulnerable to energy – this will come in handy later. If the PCs are too harsh, e.g. waving plasma weapons around, they will attract other cultists and then they're in for a difficult combat.

In the meantime the police will release Brother Dalibor. Some lieutenant will decide that an old blind man is no threat, and allow him to leave the space port. A young acolyte with a van is waiting to escort him to the monastery – and when the PCs return to the police, they will be already halfway there.

### Fighting the Darkness

When the PCs realize that there are cultists after the sacred bell, they will probably try to warn the monk. That's a great time to play out a chase scene – the road to the monastery runs through a narrow mountain pass, and the PCs' vehicle is being chased by the cultists in a military ATV. They're not great shots or drivers, so the PCs should dispatch them easily – and they should prepare for a confrontation in the monastery, where the Living Darkness is being bound.

When the PCs are near the monastery, they will hear the loud, clear sound of the sacred bell. A small group of monks gathered around brother Dalibor protects it, while black fog thickens around them. Each toll of the bell makes the darkness back away, as if it were hurt. If the PCs enter the courtyard, the monster will turn and attack them.

The demon is a powerful creature, but if the PCs have plasma weapons or even a

flamethrower they could turn back or even destroy it. If it's still alive after five rounds of combat, the monks will complete their invocation and lock it down in the bell. Of course the monster is not stupid – it will try to attack the PCs, throw heavy objects or try to contact them, promising them service and wealth if they will only stop the monks from completing their ritual. The Darkness will reveal to the PCs the real history of the monks, and that they used to be rich and successful – perhaps they will also be tempted?

### The End

Assuming that the PCs managed to destroy or imprison the demon, they probably won't receive much of a material reward. The monks, however, have extensive knowledge about the Enemy and dark rituals, and if they decide that PCs are worthy, they might teach them how to protect themselves from the Darkness.



### Living Darkness

This monstrosity is a black cloud of darkness, pulsing more or less material. You can sense the evil will radiating from this horror.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d12.

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d8.

**Pace:** 6;

**Parry:** 7;

**Toughness:** 16 (10)

**Edges:** Alertness, Combat Reflexes, No Remorse.

### Special Abilities

- **Armor:** Mystic aura +10. This monster is partly ethereal, and its armor protects it against plasma weaponry.

- **Shadow Tentacles:** 2d10 damage, range 6/12/24, AP 3.

- **Fearless:** The monster is immune to Fear and Intimidation.

- **Fear -2:** Anyone who sees the monster must make a Fear roll with a -2 penalty.

† **Invulnerable:** The monster can be Shaken normally, but can only be Wounded by its weaknesses.

- **Weakness (Energy):** Energy weapons (including most psionic powers or weapons like flamethrowers or tasers) deal normal damage to the Darkness.

- **Weakness (Sacred Bell):** When the bell strikes, the monster can't attack. Assume that if any PC draws a face card for initiative, the bell rings. The monster

also can't get closer than 12' to the sacred bell during the ritual.

### The Cultists

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6.

**Skills:** Driving d6, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4.

**Charisma:** 0;

**Pace:** 6;

**Parry:** 6;

**Toughness:** 5

**Hindrances:** None

**Edges:** None

**Gear:** Plasma pistol (15/30/60, 2d10, RoF 1, AP 10, semi-auto) and 4 spare batteries, standard (2d6) energy shield.