game program

STRANGE STARS

Use with Setting Book

BY TREY CAUSEY

ARMCHAIR PLANET & THE HYDRA COOPERATIVE PRESENT

STRANGE STARS

OSR RULE BOOK

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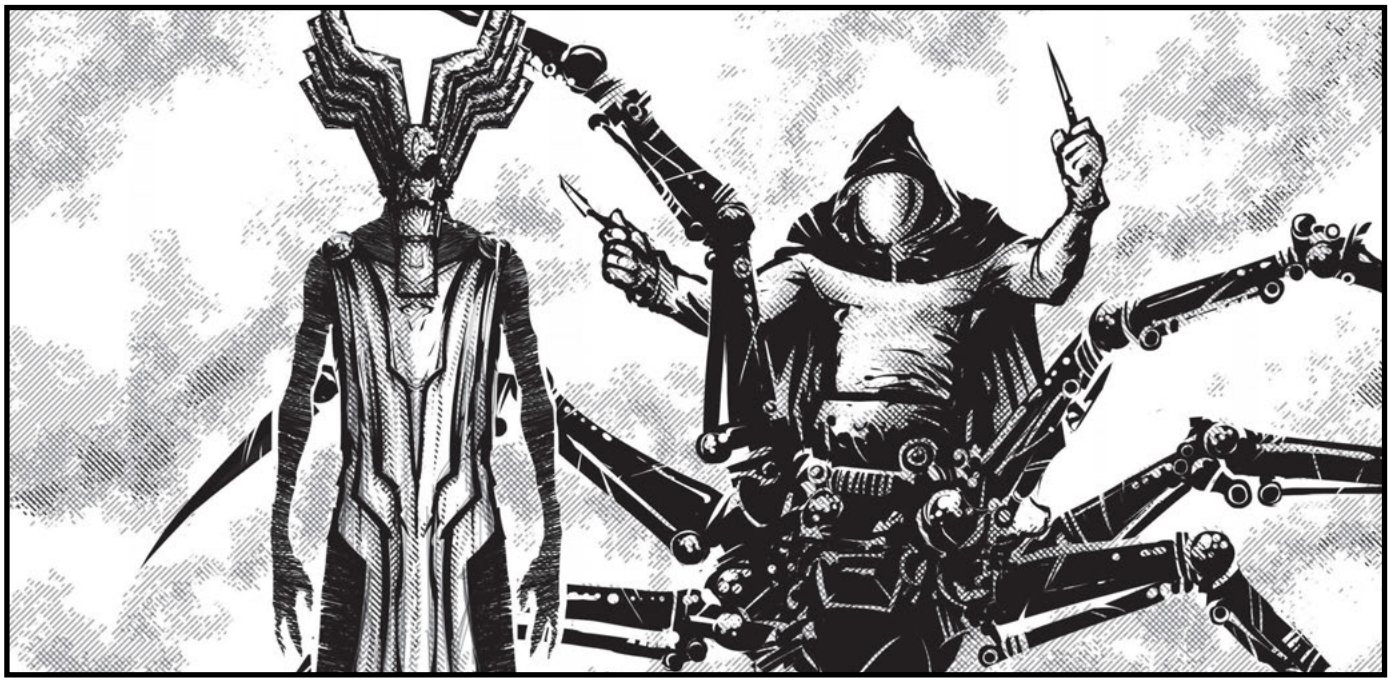
INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the **Strange Stars OSR Rule Book**. First off, a warning: **This is not a complete game**. It requires *Stars Without Number Core Edition* or a similar ruleset (though the latter option will necessitate a bit more translation) and the **Strange Stars Game Book**. Other **SWN** supplements are discussed in the text but these are optional depending on the type of game you want to run.

This book isn't intended to be the final word on gaming in the **Strange Stars**. It's a toolkit, designed to allow you to adapt elements of **Strange Stars** to your old school game. For that reason, it offers guidance rather than definitive answers. They are your **Strange Stars**, now. Make of them what you will.

I'd like to thank my Hydra partners Humza Kazmi, Chris Kutalik, and Robert Parker and my wife, Andrea, for their contribution to this work, both of in terms content and editing, and of course the artists: David Lewis Johnson, Lester B. Portly, Reno Maniquis, Adam Moore, and Jason Sholtis for helping bring **Strange Stars** to life.

Trey Causey

TERMINOLOGY

bioroid: From "biologic android." A biologic humanoid organism created by artificial means.

clade: A group of organisms derived from a common ancestor or ancestral template.

fabber: A nanofabrication unit, ubiquitous across civilized space, used to manufacture finished products from raw materials.

infosophont: An intelligent entity comprised of information; a sophont AI.

metascape: The augmented reality overlay through which citizens of technologically advanced societies view the world.

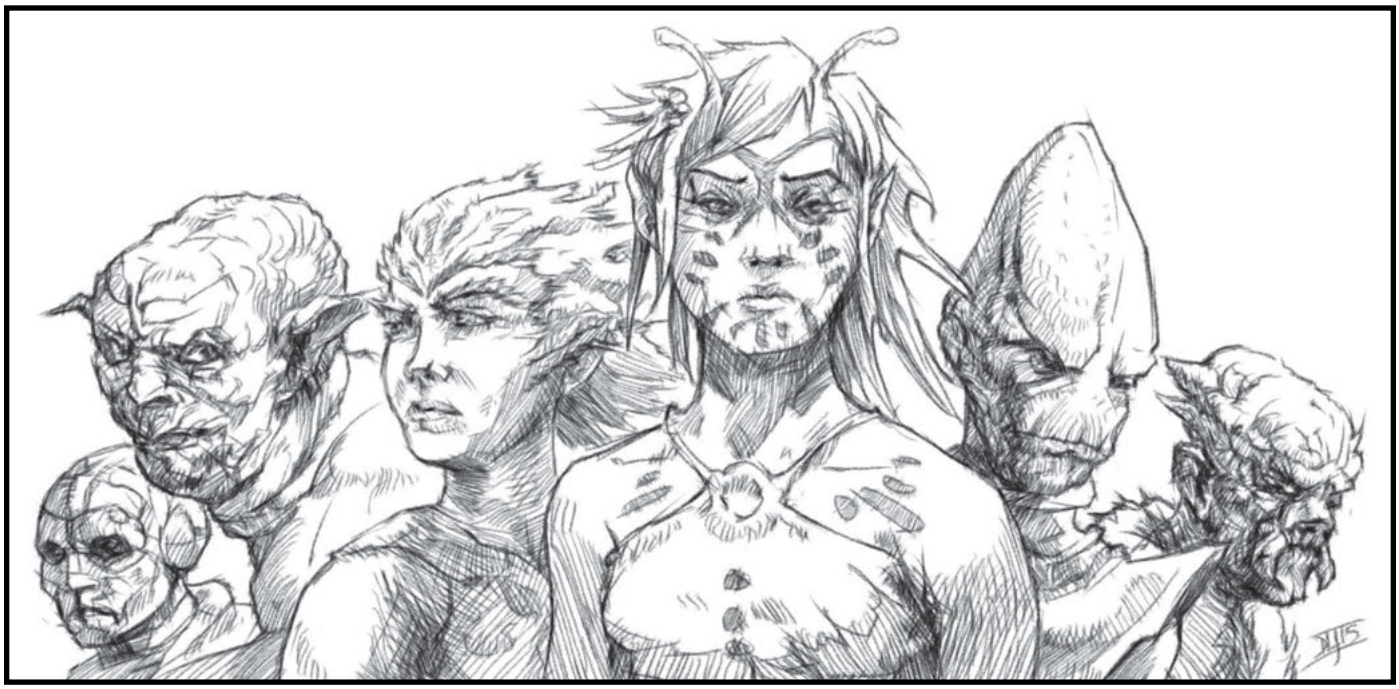
moravec: A general term for self-replicating, sophont robots.

noosphere: The environment of human(oid) thought of a civilization or world, populated by infomorphs. It evolved from the ancient technologies of cyberspace, augmented reality, spimes, and the sophont minds with which they interact.

sim: Shortened from "simulated reality"; A popular form of art and entertainment.

sophont: An intelligent and self-aware being; often used synonymously with "sapient," though the terms have slightly different connotations.

01: CHARACTERS



Potential player character types in **Strange Stars** are a varied lot; they range from the relatively human-appearing majorities of places like Circus to the green-skinned, psi-enhanced Smaragdines or the carapaced, cyber-arthropod Engineers. This chapter outlines how to bring the rich detail of the setting to your game.

Character creation in **Strange Stars** follows the basic steps found in *Stars Without Number* (**SWN**) or your system of choice, but includes a few more options. With the Game Master's approval, players may choose from three broad categories of sophonts, subdivided into clades and cultures. A number of clades are mentioned in the **Strange Stars Game Setting Book** (**SSGSB**), but it doesn't provide an exhaustive list. GMs are encouraged to add their own.

There are three broad categories of sophonts as described in the **SSGSB**. Use the guidelines below to create characters or clades:

Biologics: These are either humans or aliens (and in the far future of **Strange Stars** the distinction isn't always clear) and are created using the standard character creation rules in **SWN**. Some biologic clades have attribute requirements/modifiers and special abilities.

The sort of body-swapping (transferring an individual's ego template between different physical bodies) described in *Mandate Archive: Transhuman Tech* is much more common in **Strange Stars** than in the default **SWN** setting. Many people have some sort of genemod upgrade and backups are common for those who can afford them. Cyberware (as presented in the **SWN** core book and the *Polychrome* worldbook) is also common, though most cultures find overt cyberware tacky and primitive; it has been replaced by genetic engineering. The Zao Pirates and some Star Folk bands do not share this disdain.

Bioroids: The bodies of these artificially created biologic beings are technically something like hulls, artificially created bodies that a mind wears (see *Transhuman Tech* worldbook). Most PC-appropriate bioroids will resemble the basic hull type, perhaps with a few augmentations. Other hull types are possible, at the GM's discretion. Bioroids are unlikely to have psionics.

Moravecs: Many moravec types will just be mechanical "species" and are designed like any other character with a few minor traits due to their non-biological nature (immunity to some psionics, no need to eat or sleep, etc.). Others will be easier to build via the AI armature rules in the core **SWN** rulebook.

Infosophonts: Though they don't automatically have bodies, these artificial intelligences can be downloaded into a bioroid body (hull) or a mechanical one (armature). The differences between infosophonts and moravecs can be fuzzy, but in the main moravecs are as attached to their single, physical forms as most baseline humans are. For infosophonts, those forms are just outfits they wear.

CLADES

An alphabetical list of the unique clades from the setting book most appropriate for PCs are presented below. The GM should add or subtract from this list at her discretion. This should certainly not be considered an exhaustive catalog of character homeworlds/cultures, as many worlds and habitats are populated by standard humans, including much of the League of Habitats and the Instrumentality.

Some of the clades have abilities that are potentially unbalancing to a campaign while others have characteristics that may make them unlikely members of adventuring groups. These are marked with a star (★). The GM should use discretion in allowing them as player characters in his or her campaign.

Following the clade descriptions is a list grouping them by region to make it easier for players to select character types most appropriate for the campaign locale the GM has in mind for his or her campaign. Of course, any spacefaring adventurer might well be far from home.

A note on clade names and capitalization: It isn't as inconsistent as it may appear! Names of species are common nouns and so aren't capitalized. Names of cultures are proper nouns and are capitalized. Admittedly, sometimes the divisions can be fuzzy.

ATOZAN

Physical Characteristics: Atozans are ectomorphic biologic humanoids with tall, narrow, domed skulls.

Psychological Characteristics: Atozans often come off as scholarly and pedantic to other sophonts.

Names: Atozans have a lineage designator consisting of a letter in the ancient Greek alphabet followed by a numerical code (typically 3 letters, but occasionally up to five) and then a short personal name. Examples: Alpha-729 An, Chi-0113 Bel, Beta-451 Hano, Kappa-002 Lin, Gamma-882 Mish, Omega-024 Mek, Phi-169 Sus, Tau-931 Pol, Rho-644 Rog, Eta-404 Thom, Nu-063 Kar.

Backgrounds: Bureaucrat. Data Prospector, Researcher, Technician.

Classes: Expert is the most common class for Atozans; Psychics are very rare.

Attributes: Standard.

Special:
Catalog Language: All Atozans learn a secret, ceremonial language that allows them to locate holdings within the Library, the vast and ancient noospheric and physical archive of most known worlds (**SSGSB p. 19**). Anyone else trying to locate a particular record would be completely lost.

BLESH

Physical Characteristics: Blesh are vaguely insectoid, bipedal bioroids with six limbs and crystalline, translucent bodies. They grow like fruit from cybernetic tree-structures on their homeworld, Elysium (**SSGSB p. 11**).

Psychological Characteristics: Each blesh has a gestalt mind, blended from one of 1803 digitized human minds (recovered from a crashed ark) and an alien, post-sapient mental structure. Blesh are nonviolent and invested in galactic stability, as this facilitates cultural exchange. They are particularly interested in ancient human cultures.

Names: Blesh names are a combination of the name of their human mind, a number designation related to the tree they grew from, and a monosyllabic prefix. Examples: Li-Glissa-19, Nal-Reza-23, El-7-Syblline, Ko-99-Izaak.

Backgrounds: Peasant, Scholar, Researcher.

Classes: The best fit for the blesh is the Expert class. They are unlikely Warriors and never Psychics.

Attributes: Minimum Intelligence and Constitution of 9.

Special:
Immunity: Blesh have the equivalent of the Basic Immunity benefit package (see *Transhuman Tech*), +3 to saves versus poison, disease, and radiation.
Tough Integument: Blesh have a base AC 7 vs weapons of Tech Level 3 or lower.
Slow Healing: Without access to the cybernetic trees of their homeworld, blesh suffer a +1 penalty to all rolls for length of time for healing.

DJÄGGA

Physical Characteristics: Djägga are biologic humanoids with some felinoid characteristics, including a tail, large eyes, and high placed ears. Though their skin is no more hirsute than a baseline human's, they are pigmented in patterns like those of Terran-derived cats.

Psychological Characteristics: Djägga are typically solitary beings, suspicious of others. They tend to speak very little. They are keen to avenge any perceived betrayal. Competitions can trigger their predator instincts, even games — particularly ones with a physical component.

Names: Djägga tend to use either a first name and family name or just a first name. "L" and "r" are interchangeable sounds. Examples: Shra Karee, Yar, Djakan, Fyree, Garan, Meerkar, Challa Akan, Mrissa Shir.

Backgrounds: Armsman, Law Enforcement, Soldier, Security, Tribesman.

Classes: Djägga are Warriors, foremost. They are never Psychics.

Attributes: Minimum Strength and Dexterity of 12.

Special:
Keen Senses: Djägga possess superhuman smell and hearing and have the equivalent of Perception 1 when detecting things related to those senses.

ENGINEER ★

Physical Characteristics: Engineers (autonym: *mnadnzat, mnaat sing.*) vaguely resemble Paleo-Earth isopods with a blend of cybernetic and biologic characteristics. The average individual is 1.2 m tall and has four pairs of limbs, but ambulates bipedally. Either of their upper pairs of limbs may be used as manipulators, though the first pair is shorter and more dexterous. They have an internal skeleton, but also possess thick, iridescent plates of carapace running the length of their bodies.

Psychological Characteristics: Engineers are somewhat literal-minded and pedantic, though they're fairly gregarious when there is a topic of conversation that interests them. They are averse to physical confrontation and danger — often to the point of cowardice from the perspective of other species.

Names: Engineers use long designation codes that provide information on expertise, location, and genetic lineage. At the Vokuns' insistence, Engineers use a base designation of one or two syllables with other sophonts. Examples: Aznat, Enek, Inaat, Ikatik, Mnazek, Ndzat, Omnak, Tlek

Backgrounds: Engine Crew, Technician.

Classes: Expert only.

Attributes: Minimum Constitution of 11.

Special:
Additional Limbs: As many as four of an Engineer's limbs can be used to manipulate objects with standard manual dexterity, but they gain no additional attacks.
Bodyswapping: Should an Engineer's body become irrevocably damaged, its mind may be downloaded into a new body from a remote backup. The process of mind-reintegrating takes 2d12 hours. If the Engineer dies before she can personally log her re-embodiment request, she will be at the mercy of her fellows. Without a particular need, the routine re-embodiment queue may run 2d20 days.
Carapace: Engineers have a base Armor Class of 4 against weapons Tech Level 3 or lower.
Cyberware: All Engineers have the equivalent of a Direct Neural Interface (Level Two), an Integral Biostatus Monitor, and an Integral Commlink.

GNOME

Physical Characteristics: Gnomes are small (1-1.3 m) humanoids with little sexual dimorphism, loose, wrinkled skin and large ears. Manager caste gnomes are taller than the worker caste and disproportionately female (though still majority male). Each gnome clan only has one "Mother" producing young at a time: Mother being the gnome term for an external womb produced by the mating of a gnome male and female. The Mother generates gnome embryos from the genetic material of its female parent and all the males she may have mated with. The gnomes care for the Mother until it gives birth to its stock of embryos and dies.

Psychological Characteristics: Gnomes are eusocial (like naked mole rats) and divide labor between workers, responsible for the care and maintenance of habitats, and managers, who raise the children, defend the habitat, and interface with outsiders. Gnomes are gregarious and inquisitive, but deliberate in their thought process. They seldom act rashly. They have less need for personal space than most humanoids and are prone to depression if forced into situations where they have diminished physical contact with others. Many gnomes suffer from a fear of open spaces, and may experience a panic reaction in these situations.

Names: Gnomes aren't given lifelong names at birth, but instead their clan members use descriptors to refer to them. These descriptors may change over the course of a gnome's life. They are often four or more syllables long and have been likened to low pitched humming or stomach rumblings. Gnomes are often given nicknames by members of other species they associate with. Example descriptors: Brrdurmmdrur, Obdommrrmrr, Nggrrtumbora, Mmbuhmmngrr (Double consonants indicate a syllabic form of that sound, e.g. "mm" is "uhmm.")

Backgrounds: Deck Crew, Politician, Worker (Miner), Soldier.

Classes: Gnomes may be Experts or Warriors, though only manager caste gnomes are likely to be the latter. There are no Psychics among them.

Attributes: Minimum Constitution of 9.

HWURU

Physical Characteristics: Hwuru are arboreal biologics with some resemblance to Old Earth apes and sloths. They are shorter than humans but powerfully built with arms longer than their legs, and digits with claw-like structures (actually bony projections covered with horn) on their dorsal surface. They're covered with shaggy fur except on the anterior surface of their torsos, which is covered with leathery plates. Primarily insectivorous, they have beak-like snouts with extendable tongues and cannot swallow anything much larger than 24 mm in diameter.

Psychological Characteristics: Hwuru native culture is tribal and primitive by galactic standards. They have reputation for being highly sensitive to affronts to their honor and prone to violence, but this is a stereotype.

Names: Hwuru have a personal name and a tribe name. Examples: *Personal names*: Chafa, Ihooyo, Hakla, Hichi, Ooka, Tuklo, Ustakaa; *Clan Names*: Nuklagi-isa, Ichasulasa, Yarahutki, Kunipa-gichi, Muhwuhi-chisa, Bolahuma.

Backgrounds: Adventurer, Armsman or Tribesman.

Classes: Warrior is by far the most common. They are never Psychics.

Attributes: Minimum strength of 12.

Special:
Bone Claws: 1d4 damage.
Climbing: All hwuru possess Climbing as a background skill.
Chaoofsh Dependence: Virtually all (85%) of hwuru are physically dependence on chaoofsh (an inhaled intoxicant). Going without for 12 hours or more leads to withdrawal: Toxicity 8, Interval one day, Virulence 3. Each failed save means a -1 to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Dexterity. Withdrawal resolves in 5 days.

HYEHOON

Physical Characteristics: Hyehoon are biologic humanoids with some avian characteristics. They have lighter frames than baseline humans, but are strong for their weight. Head and brow hair is replaced by light, downy feathers.

Psychological Characteristics: Hyehoon are dynamic and inquisitive. They get along well with other clades.

Names: While there is variation based on subculture, most hyehoon have a personal name, a clutch name (immediate family), and a clan name (larger kinship group). Their typical ordering convention is clan name, personal name, clutch name. Examples: *Female Personal Names*: Ahwi, Hyana, Oona, Wheta, Yaren, Yrari; *Male Personal Names*: Apata, Hamoon, Helo, Olo, Tuvo, Ydris *Clutch Names*: use personal names from either gender; *Clan Names*: Ahmat, Aroi, Milonga, Ro, Sokha, Yooloo, Waroi.

Backgrounds: Any; Adventurer, Astrogator's Mate, Biotech Crew, Comm Crew, Politician, Researcher, and Technician are typical.

Classes: Any.

Attributes: Standard.

IBGLIBDISHPAN

Physical Characteristics: Ibglibdishpan are biologic humanoids who are tall with gracile builds. Their skulls are somewhat ovoid vertically, though this appearance is accentuated by a shield-shaped "mask" of osteoderm. They exhibit little sexual dimorphism.

Psychological Characteristics: Ibglibdishpan are restrained in emotional responses and lacking in empathy in comparison to other humanoids. They are viewed by others as pedantic and overly precise. Most are adverse to violence (though see below). They consider discussion of gender or sex as rude.

Names: Names of the ibglibdishpan are composed of two, monosyllabic elements that end in a vowel, n, ng, m, l, r, sh or more rarely b. Among themselves they employ numerical family designation that is placed before the personal name, but they rarely use these when dealing day-to-day with other cultures, except in formal situations. Examples: Chun Ri, Gan Yul, Ro Nar, Ang Tu, Tan Em, Ib Kan, Li Pan.

Backgrounds: Adventurer, Astrogator's Mate, Researcher, Scholar.

Classes: Expert is the most likely class for an ibglibdishpan. Warriors are rare and Psychics nonexistent.

Attributes: Intelligence of at least 14. Charisma and Strength no higher than 10.

Special Abilities:
Humanoid Computer: Ibglibdishpan gain an additional +1 to Skill checks based on Intelligence. They also have the power of Hypercognition; once per session, the PC can ask the GM for a useful conclusion regarding a topic, and the GM will tell them what he or she considers the most useful fact the character could have concluded from analysis of the available data.
Mental Breakdown: Ibglibdishpan mental structure always has a chance of a cognitive glitch or breakdown. Any time an ibglibdishpan has to make an Intelligence related skill check of difficulty 11 or higher, fails an Intelligence related check of any difficulty, or uses the Hypercognition ability, a save vs. Mental Effects must be made. On a failed roll, a negative effect occurs. The following d6 table offers some examples:

1. Catatonic state, repeating the last statement made for d100 minutes. Hypercognition ability (if unused) is not available the rest of the session.
2. Screams for d100 seconds, then returns to previous activity as if nothing happened. Intelligence-related skill checks are at -1 for 24 hours.
3. Develops a severe phobia which lasts for 2d12 weeks. Every week, the character may make another Mental Effects save. 3 successful saves in a row means the phobia abates early.
4. Develops a reaction akin to Stendhal Syndrome (dizziness, confusion, possible fainting) for d4/2 hours. -2 to Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wisdom for the duration.
5. Suffers a seizure lasting 1d4 min. -1 to all rolls until a period of rest of at least 8 hours.
6. Loses 1-2 points of intelligence for 2d10 days. Every 2 days, another Mental Effects save can be attempted. 3 successes means the return of the lost points early. Each failure adds an extra day.

KOSMONIK

Physical Characteristics: Kosmoniks are short (1.4 m tall on average), lean humanoids with arms almost as long as their legs. They have dexterous, four-digited hands and prehensile feet. Their gray skin is a flexible membrane, engineered to afford some protection against hard vacuum. Their most unusual trait are their faces: they are flat and hidden behind smooth, glossy nanotechnological masks, featureless except for their membrane-protected eyes.

Psychological Characteristics: Kosmoniks are friendly, but superstitious. They are given to finding hidden meanings and interpreting signs and portends from events. All kosmonik groups have a set of taboos, but each kosmonik is likely to individual ones, as well.

Names: Kosmonik names are made up of visemes (hand signs or visual signals) rather than sounds, so any phonetic representation is arbitrary. Typically, their translation devices represent their names as one or two syllables occasionally with unusual sounds like pops or clicks. Some groups use family names and others do not. Examples: Tigo, *tika, Mogo, Ra%ngi, Kai, Pakuni, ^chaka, Gree, Maki, Nok, Isha, Tsa%n.

Backgrounds: Adventurer, Deck Crew, Engine Crew, Technician.

Classes: Expert is the most common, Warriors uncommon, and Psychics rare.

Attributes: Standard.

Special:
Mute: Kosmoniks communicate with each other via sign language, but carry translator devices to interact with other cultures.
Space-Adapted: Kosmoniks are able to withstand exposure to vacuum for two rounds before they must begin to make saving throws (and get a +1 to those saving throws). They also get a +1 to saving throws against radiation.

KUATH

Physical Characteristics: The Kuath are baseline humans, typically with dark skin and hair.

Psychological Characteristics: Kuath come from a world at essentially a Stone Age level of technology (**SSGSB p. 17**). They are worshippers of the Dragon-Mothers (aquatic super-organisms native to their homeworld) and bio-armored slave soldiers of the Vokun Empire.

Names: Kuath have a singular, gendered personal name. Examples: *Male*: An-Tuani, Cham-Ka, Hulan-Yi, Konaga, Ngata, Sungoro, Tanathi, Waruahi; *Female:* An-San, Chanya, Dara-Ja, Miri, Shu-sheng, Susi, Ulathi.

Backgrounds: Priest, Tribesman.

Classes: Any, though Warrior is the most common.

Attributes: Standard.

Special:
Connected to the Dragon-Mothers: Kuath have endosymbiotic projections of the Dragon-Mothers within their bodies. Most of the time, this will have no game effect, but it does allow the Dragon-Mothers to manipulate them more easily, and could be used by anyone with access to advanced medical tools to differentiate a Kuath from other baseline humans.

NESHEKK

Physical Characteristics: Neshekk are short, lean, biologic humanoids with weathered, wrinkled skins and large ears.

Psychological Characteristics: Neshekk are extremely concerned (possibly obsessed) with security and privacy. They never go into public without their elaborate privacy screens/firewalls called *nizara* in place. They have a reputation for ethical behavior and conservative investment, but are infamous for their strict adherence to the letter of contracts and for hard credit terms.

Names: Neshekk have personal and clans names and possibly nicknames reflecting noteworthy deeds or exceptional ancestors. Neshekk never use anything but their personal names and a single syllable (analogous to the "first name, last initial" usage) with off-worlders, however, relying on digital keycodes to verify their exact identity, if necessary. Examples: *Female Names*: Azir, Faimah, Khulda, Tsena, Yatma, Yezda, Zuzeya; *Male Names*: Azrum, Ikazd, Kharam, Orad, Rezmar, Tsek, Yazed; Syllables: Mek, Nan, Kha, Tsat, Yad, Yek, Za, Zem.

Backgrounds: Politician, Businessperson, Bureaucrat, Hacker, Technician.

Classes: Expert is the most likely class for a neshekk.

Attributes: Standard.

Special:
Nizara: Powerful privacy and firewall software that will obscure the identity of a neshekk. This applies to visual identification via metascape (which will be the primary way people view the world in Tech Level 4 and 5 societies) and acquiring information about a neshekk via hacking (see *Polychrome* worldbook) is two levels more difficult than normal. In areas without metascape, neshekk will wear clothing equivalent to a Ghost Mantle, except that it only confers an additional -1 bonus to AC.

NGGHRYA ★

Physical Characteristics: Ngghrya are thin, almost skeletal, biologic humanoids with rough, nodule-covered skin that almost resembles carapace. Their skin is scaled with dermal denticles, but also has ridges and horns of calcium carbonate deposition that begin to form at puberty and elaborate as they age. They exhibit less sexual dimorphism than baseline humans, but some males grow small, keratin tusks from both ends of their upper lip.

Psychological Characteristics: Taciturn, but relatively tolerant of others if they are respected. Ngghrya are a somewhat superstitious people, but do not revere gods or supernatural beings as such. Rather, they seek to avoid notice of spirit entities by the proper ritual behaviors and taboos (some of them idiosyncratic) except at certain times.

Names: Ngghrya generally use a personal name followed by a clan name. Examples: *Personal Names*: Deya, Gol, Ha'dashei, Idzuu, Jongizhi, Myiche, Ndolgan, Nzo, Tyamzashii, Urza, Xhoma; *Clan Names*: Dhayi, Dzana, Gwaage, Hantan, Itshashenga, Ngakane, Tsetzuche.

Backgrounds: Armsman, Peasant, Tribesman.

Classes: Warrior is the most common.

Attributes: Constitution +1.

Special:
Yaa'hii (precognitive tracking): A target makes a Mental Effects saving throw. On a failed roll, the ngghrya will find a target — or rather, they know where they will find them and when. Note that "finding" does not necessarily mean capture or defeat. If the target escapes the encounter and the ngghyra is still on the job, another saving throw must be made.

ORICHALCOSAN

Physical Characteristics: Orichalcosans are baseline humans with metallic skin tones, ranging from a dusky brass color to a bright gold. The aristocracy are dwarfs.

Psychological Characteristics: As a culture, Orichalcosans are wealth and achievement focused. Relative austerity and wealth inequality are seen as powerful motivating tools necessary to foster success in future generations.

Names: Variable based on subculture, but the dominant practice uses a given name and a surname, with Optimates and aristocrats often having hyphenated surnames, denoting alliance through marriage. Examples: *Male given names*: Adramo, Blezco, Ilvos, Maro, Vincanto, Yedaro, Selsca, *Female*: Agata, Iera. Lura, Matara, Ruandra, Tiareza Surnames: Andaro, Azuracar, Balarna, Izaraldi, Laranaga, Marza.

Backgrounds: Any, but Bureaucrat, Businessperson, Noble, Politician, Security, and Technician are most fitting.

Classes: Any, though Experts are most common and Psychics rare.

Attributes: Standard.

PHANTASIST

Physical Characteristics: Phantasists are baseline humans.

Psychological Characteristics: Phantasists are raised in a customer service oriented, quasi-monastic, corporate culture, and tend to have an outlook congruent with that.

Names: Phantasists have a name presenting their gens (or genline) and a gendered ordinal name (Primus/Prima through Decimus/Decima) differentiating them from other gen-siblings. Examples: *Male Gens Names*: Arlo, Brin, Davin, Gareth, Laurent, Lucian, Ywain; *Female Gens Names*: Arden, Esme, Marta, Milla, Soren, Yrma.

Backgrounds: Researcher, Technician.

Classes: Any, though the are most commonly Experts, and rarely Psychics.

Attributes: Standard.

RUNELING

Physical Characteristics: Runelings are baseline human.

Psychological Characteristics: Runelings come from a primitive world of roughly medieval technology (**SSGSB p. 15**) and often interpret the technological things they encounter through a magical worldview.

Names: Various cultures with different naming practices.

Backgrounds: Armsman, Noble, Peasant.

Classes: Any, though Experts in advanced technology will be rare. Psychics are called "wizards."

Attributes: Standard.

SISTER OF MORRGNA ★

Physical Characteristics: Biologic humanoids, all genotypically female, with a high degree of physical polymorphism based on caste.

Psychological Characteristics: The Sisterhood is unusually eusocial for a human-derived culture; while they are individuals they are more hive-like in group action than baseline.

Names: Sisters have a single name denoting their base genotype and a title for their function or some notable deed or trait. Examples: Sister Zora Wayfinder, Battle-Sister Ausra Massive, Sister Usha Swift, Mother Roxana Strategos, Sister Sahar Tech.

Backgrounds: No primitive or criminal backgrounds under most circumstances.

Classes: Psychics are nonexistent.

Attributes: Standard, though based on caste, one Sister's statistics may vary wildly from another.

Special:
Caste: The Sisterhood is divided in castes and genetically and physiologically modified for those functions. A few examples include shock troops with hypertrophic muscle and possibly implanted weaponry, vacuum-adapted ship crew, and high intelligence strategic thinkers. Most player character suitable castes will be close to baseline.

SMARAGDINE

Physical Characteristics: Smaragdines are biologic humanoids with skins in various shades of green.

Psychological Characteristics: Smaragdines see themselves as heirs to the technology and sophistication of the Archaic Oikumene and view the highly developed psi abilities of their homeworld (**SSGSB p. 11**) as the way of the future. They are the visionaries of the Alliance, but often viewed as a bit arrogant by its other members.

Names: Smaragdines have a personal and gens name. The personal names are frequently chosen from Old Earth mythology or literature. Smaragdines often retain the gender association of the source name out of respect, but not always. The gens name is a copyrighted reference to a specific registered genetic lineage; it is typically that of one or more of an individual's parents, but not necessarily. Gens are from similar sources as personal names,

but tend to be derived from ancient mythological or literary wizards or monsters. Examples: *Personal Names*: Accolon, Belphoebe, Dindraine, Finn, Gloriana, Phaon, Rinaldo, Sedna, Tsais, Thalna. *Gens Names*: Euryale, Glatisant, Hydra, Mazirian, Prospero, Simurgh, Typhon.

Backgrounds: Any, though Adventurer, Hacker, Noble, Politician, Researcher, and Soldier are most fitting.

Classes: Any.

Attributes: Standard.

Special:
Psi-Society: Smaragdine society is based on psi-use. All citizens of Smaragdoz have the equivalent of the discipline Mental Link.
High Tech: Smaragdine is a Tech Level 5 society, though much of their technology is not exportable.

THRAX ★

Physical Characteristics: Thrax are tall, powerfully built biologic humanoids, with whitish-gray skintones. They have somewhat pronounced and heavy brow, and nasal slits rather than an external nose. Neither sex has much body hair, but females do have head hair.

Psychological Characteristics: Thrax are taciturn, serious, and greatly concerned with honor and discipline as defined by their warrior's code. Some allow themselves displays of emotion in the heat of battle, but others view this as excessive display. Their possessions are few and their quarters tend to be spartan. They rarely use intoxicants, and virtually no thrax would do so at any time he thought combat might be imminent.

Names: Thrax tend to have a one to three syllable given name and a monosyllabic line name, designating their particular genotype lineage. Names are gendered with male names ending in –s, –us, –os, –ion, or –ios generally, and female names with –a or –ia. Examples: *Male Names*: Baran, Duros, Ganion, Kantos, Kos, Ronan, Thellus, Uthon, Vanthos, Vorus, Zarkas; *Female Names*: Ila, Jada, Kana, Lursa, Marta, Thara, Thovia, Zora; *Line Names*: An, Ar, Kan, Kel, Mors, Nar, Thal, Zor.

Backgrounds: Armsman, Hermit, Security Crew, Soldier.

Classes: Warrior is by far the most common. They have no Psychics.

Attributes: Minimum Strength of 12.

Special:
Armor: Thrax warriors wear distinctive and individualized (within parameters set by their unit) assault suit-equivalent armor.
Low-light vision: Equivalent to low-light goggles.

ULDRA

Physical Characteristics: The Uldra are baseline humans with blue skintones.

Psychological Characteristics: Uldra tend to be viewed as somewhat pessimistic in outlook, and possessing of a odd, fatalistic sense of humor.

Names: Uldra have a given name and a family name. Examples: *Male given names*: Dmitr, Feodr, Kolya, Uloysha, Ygor; *Female given names*: Eliska, Galya, Ilya, Nadezda, Zlatana; *Family names*: Bogmolov, Kazlov, Kruptkin, Velkov, Macek, Lanik

Backgrounds: Any.

Classes: Any.

Attributes: Standard.

VIRID

Physical Characteristics: Virids are biologic sophonts blending plant and animal characteristics. Their skintones are various shades of green (due to presence of symbiotic cyanobacteria), and they have foliage-like hair. Local groups vary a great deal in height and build. All virids are linked by nanotechnology to the world consciousness of their homeworld, but this connection does not extend over interplanetary (or greater) distances.

Psychological Characteristics: Virids are gregarious and pleasure-loving. Coming from an idyllic garden world, they are closely attuned to nature, but naive regarding the hazards of other, less pleasant worlds — and of civilization.

Names: Virids use "translated" plant or nature-themed names with other sophonts.

Backgrounds: Tribesman, Adventurer.

Classes: Any but Psychic.

Attributes: Most virids have ability scores in the same range as humans, tribes of larger or smaller individuals exist.

Special:
Photosynthetic Symbiotes: Living nanotech supplements virid metabolism and causes faster healing when they are under visible light sources with spectra similar to their native yellow sun. Every day spent in direct sunlight allows them to heal 1 additional hit point, and every day resting in direct sunlight allows a virid to recover 2 additional hit points. They also lose System Strain at a rate of 2 points per day in the sun.
Phytoxin Resistance: Virids get a +1 to Physical Effect saving throws against plant-derived toxins.

YANTRAN

Physical Characteristics: Yantrans are attractive, lithe humans with yellow skin tones and short antennae emerging from their foreheads.

Psychological Characteristics: Yantran culture tends to emphasize nonviolence, the importance of the "now," and the interconnectedness of all things.

Names: Yantrans use a personal name and a family name. The family name is typically given first. Examples: *Surnames*: Aranun, Haunahi, Hokuni, Kamata, Nohoka, Pomaku, Tutani; *Female*: Ahilani, Aonami, Elaheli, Hani, Ko'ana, Mululani, Poma, Uku; *Male*: Atamu, Aonga, Hukono, Isako, Kamaki, Rano, Tuati, Yano, Uko.

Backgrounds: Peasant, Priest, Tribesman.

Classes: Expert most commonly, followed by Warrior. Psychics are rare.

Attributes: Standard.

Special:
Nanites: Yantran have nanotechnology through their nervous system, allowing integration with the extensive (though hidden) engineering of their Vokun-occupied homeworld (**SSGSB p. 17**). This is not generally of use elsewhere, though it can be detected with the appropriate equipment.

CLADES BY REGION

Alliance: Blesh, Gnome, Hyehoon, Smaragdine, Thrax

Coreward Reach: Hwuru, Orichalcosan, Phantasist, Virid

Outer Rim: Djägga, Uldra

Vokun Empire: Engineer, Ibglibdishpan, Kuath, Yantran

Zuran Expanse: Atozan, Kosmonik, Ngghrya, Sister of Morrgna

NEW BACKGROUNDS

The backgrounds presented in the **SWN** core book work well for **Strange Stars**, but don't cover the full range of possibilities. Below are some additional options:

Bureaucrat

Despite the ubiquity of nonsophont minds, there are still plenty of sophont middle managers, datapushers, administrators, and salarymen in the ranks of government and the corporate world. Some of them get tired of jockeying a desk for substandard pay and give it up for something more exciting.

Skills: Bureaucracy, Culture/World, either Culture/Corporate or Profession/Legal, Steward.

Business Sophont

Small-time entrepreneurs and up-and-coming junior executives exist on every civilized world. Sometimes they chafe against bureaucracy or make some bad decisions and decide to look for better markets
.
Skills: Business, Culture/Any, Persuade, Steward.

Data Prospector

There is a lot of valuable information buried in the depths of planetary or system noospheres. Data prospectors mine the infospace for that value. Sometimes they discover things that make them want to have a firsthand look at the wider galaxy.

Skills: Computer, Culture/Any, Perception, either Bureaucracy or Tech/Any.

Entertainer

On every world, in every time, sophonts have wanted to be entertained. Many musicians, thespians, and courtesans decide to become itinerants, seeing the galaxy as they make their living.

Skills: Art/Any Performing Art, Culture/Artist Subculture, Persuade, one other skill.

Hacker

Everyone uses computers without even thinking about it, but hackers know the very soul of the network. Some of them are criminals, some of them work to stop criminals. Either way, it's easy to get on the wrong side of the wrong people. When that happens, it's wise to get out of the local jurisdiction.

Skills: Computer, either Bureaucracy, Culture/Corporate or Culture/Criminal, Persuade, Tech/Any except Astronautic, Maltech, or Medical.

Journalist

News is everywhere and journalists are there to sift through the data and bring connection and context to their audience. Some get the idea to go gonzo and be a part of the stories themselves, while others make enemies in places of power. Both sorts can be encountered among the Strange Stars.

Skills: Culture/Any, Perception, Persuade, and one other skill.

Law Enforcement

Beat cop, port authority security contractor, or corporate investigator, the law enforcer does a tough job, often for little reward. Is it any wonder some of them look for a way to put their skills to more lucrative use?

Skills: Combat/Any, Culture/World, Perception, Security.

Medtech

Most actual medicine is delivered by expert systems and bots, but sophont beings usually like a friendly, sophont face on their healthcare. That face is the medtech. Occasionally, though medtechs get an itch to really put their skills to use in situations where they can't rely on bots to do the real work.

Skills: Profession/Medical, Culture/World, Science, Tech/Medical.

Psychtech

Even In an age of nanopsychotherapy, the "sophont touch" is still prized — particularly by the wealthy. An understanding of sophont psychology, however, is a skill that has a lot of uses.

Skills: Culture/World, Persuade, Profession/Mental Health, either Perception or Tech/Medical.

02: TECHNOLOGY

The level of technology is more advanced in the **Strange Stars** setting than the default assumptions of *Stars Without Number* or most old school science fiction roleplaying games. A Game Master may choose to ignore some or all of these elements to make the setting more in keeping with the preferences of their group. For those wishing to use the setting as written, here is a brief discussion of the basic technologies of the setting, with suggestions on how to implement them. Remember that the tech level varies across worlds and habitats: some places are at a Stone Age level, while others border on post-scarcity.

METASCAPE

Most people experience the world through an augmented reality overlay referred to as the metascape. Each world (or world plus its satellites) contains useful information for travel, social media messages, and lots and lots of spam. Nobody walks through a public square without their filters on, lest they be bombarded by all sorts of unsolicited virtual messages. Clothing is enhanced — or even sometimes completely generated — in the metascape. Some jurisdictions make it a crime to view the world unfiltered by the metascape, as this is seen as an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

The metascape primarily comes into play in how the GM describes the world and how the players approach it; it doesn't require a lot of rules changes. When entering a new location, the GM will need to describe both the physical (people, equipment, structures) and the virtual (animations, signage, notes/tags, etc.) elements that the characters will see. Characters can leave messages for other specific people in locations or call up publicly available building floorplans. They can also hack or falsify the metascape using the standard hacking rules (*Polychrome p. 17*).

NOOSPHERE

The noosphere is essentially the cyberspace of the far future, encompassing traditional internet activities, the metascape, and the living environment of infosophonts. Think of it as the nervous system of a civilization. In gameplay, again, this is more a matter of presentation. GMs and players should just keep in mind the availability of information in the real world, via a standard smartphone, and use this as a model to extrapolate from rather than looking to most cinematic space opera.

Noospheric messages or queries that must travel between worlds or between star systems do so no faster than the speed of light or the hyperspace network, if available. The noosphere isn't real-time or continuous; it's like a collection of networks between which information can be passed.

IMPLANTED CYBERWARE

In the **Strange Stars**, brain-computer interfaces are as common as smartphones are today and are used for similar purposes. The typical pre-programmed software package allows metascape interface, noospheric connectivity, communication (where messages can either be read or heard as read by an avatar or the sender or anyone else), chronometry, basic calculation, and interface with most modern devices. Most individuals don't navigate their own apps, but use a daemon or "mook" (a nonsophont artificial intelligence) as a personal assistant and answering service. Some cultures (like the Vokun) find implanted devices distasteful, as do some individuals. These groups use wearable devices instead, for the most part.

The only mechanical impact of this sort of cyberware is in the (dis)use of the **SWN** Computer skill. Like on *Star Trek,* most characters will simply ask their personal assistants for things and never need to make a Computer skill check. Hacking or deep searches of ancient or restricted data records will be the only time these skills come into play — unless characters are on a pre-noosphere world.

FABBER (MATTER COMPILER)

A fabber is a nanofabrication unit (essentially an advanced 3D printer) that assembles finished products from raw materials at a molecular level. These aren't easily portable, but they are near ubiquitous household and shipboard items, and public units can be used for a fee, generally figured on total mass of the item(s) fabricated. For portable items this can be approximated via encumbrance: Every unit of encumbrance fabricated after 1 carries an additional 5% charge to the standard price based on item cost per fabber user per day. (Example: Faizura Deyr fabbers lowlight goggles, a pressure tent, and 6 days rations on a public fabber. This will cost her 200 credits for the goggles, 120 for the pressure tent, and 5.25 for the rations). Anything from foodstuffs (though this would only be done on long space voyages) to starship parts can be made given enough substrate and the necessary "blueprints." Commercially available models can be "jailbroken" to make illicit drugs or weapons, but it's generally easier just to buy or steal such common items.

In rules terms, these function like the personal matter compilers described in *Mandate Archive: Transhuman Tech*. There are also larger units like the stationary matter compilers found on polities or the largest vessels, as well. **As a rule of thumb, making one item will cost about the same as the list price in the *Stars Without Number* core book given the matter required, licensing fees for software, etc.** Additional items will only cost half the listed price.

PROGRAMMABLE MATTER

Programmable matter is able to change its properties or functions on the basis of user input or trigger stimuli. Programmable matter (or smart matter) is used to make exoskins (vacc suits that form around the wearer as they pass through a membrane aperture on an airlock) and smart-tools (similar to polymorphic nanites, **SWN p. 58**, but with multiple uses, able to become any tool that would part of a toolkit).

ECONOMICS

While the actual monetary units and their exchange rates vary from place to place, it's easiest to express them all in **credits**, a bitcoinage used as a medium of exchange across civilized space. In general, prices given in **SWN** are good for "standard" **Strange Stars** equipment prices with some exceptions, as discussed above. What you get for that price will be a bit different than in the default **SWN** setting: a common pistol, for instance, will have biometric identification, and a smartware integration for ammo tracking and maintenance. All of this applies to "standard" advanced, star-faring societies — which isn't the only sort civilization players may encounter.

Remember that the **SWN** listed prices are good for fabricated equipment too, though you may pay a tax on a public fabber (see above).

ARCHAIC & ALIEN TECHNOLOGY

The above describes the technologies of the most advanced civilizations of the Strange Stars, but some societies have more specialized areas of expertise, and there is remnant technology of the Archaic Oikumene that falls into the category of Clarke's Third Law. The most common example of the latter is the Hyperspace Node Network discussed in the next chapter, but there are the other, more classically Space Opera technological aspects of the setting: the sky city of Eidolon, the Circus megastructure, and mysterious things like the Tenebrae Labyrinths and the Apotheosis Maze. Any examples of Pretech given in SWN books not already present in basic Strange Stars technology would be appropriate as examples of Archaitech.

The Smaragdines are the only culture described in the **SSGSB** that makes a concerted effort to develop psitech, and they do not tend to exploit it for military purposes. The psitech items described in the **SWN** core rules would be within their ability to create, however.

03: SPACE TRAVEL

The most common means of faster than light travel in **Strange Stars** is via the Hyperspace Network. The Network is perhaps the greatest achievement of the Archaic Oikumene. Though the means of its construct and even the basic science of hyperspatial physics behind it is lost, modern galactic civilization relies upon it.

The Network is composed of conduits of exotic matter passing through a manifold known as hyperspace connecting nodes in normal spacetime. The distance between two points in normal space has very little to do with transit time through hyperspace. Instead, congestion and poorly understood conduit properties ("bandwidth") play a greater role.

Active network nodes have exit and entrance gates affixed to them and terminal stations, located a safe distance away. Most of these structures date back centuries; a few even go back to the Oikumene. In civilized areas tolls are often charged for network access and every ship passing through must have an identification transponder. So-called "black gates" exist, hidden in out-of-the-way systems that provide access without going through the public nodes. Military controlled gates sometimes exist, built near and accessing public nodes, but are given priority.

The technology behind the nodes is at least partially psionic in nature. Specially trained psi-sensitives (or specially gengineered sniffer animals) can detect inactive nodes. Re-activating one requires brute-force hacking and psionically transmitted passcodes.

The poorly understood relationship between psi and hyperspace has led to more than a few fringe and paranoid memes, as well as legitimate scientific inquiry. So far, no theory is satisfactory. Psi-sensitive individuals tend to find hyperspace travel a bit uncomfortable. Many report the strange sensation of being watched.

The travel times between nodes along the hyperspatial network of the Archaics is color-coded to denote connection speed. While the actual durations of travel can only be calculated through the use of advanced physics even an ibglibdishpan mathematician might need the aid of a calculation device to perform, approximations for gaming purposes are fairly easy. Use the following formula with the conduit colors and lengths given in the **SSGSB**:

Travel Time = [color modifier] x [distance modifier] in kiloseconds (ks).

COLOR MODIFIERS:

RED: 18
ORANGE: 45
YELLOW: 100
GREEN: 450
BLUE: 900
INDIGO: 4500
VIOLET: 6750

DISTANCE MODIFIERS:

VERY SHORT: 1
SHORT: 2
MEDIUM: 3
LONG: 4
VERY LONG: 5

Examples: The route between Kuznuh and Smaragdoz is orange and of medium length, yielding a travel time of 135 ks or 37.5 hrs. The connection between Sirius and Aygo is green and short, so the trip will take 900 ks (over 10 Old Earth days).

Dotted lines on **SSGSB** maps present a summation of the shortest route through multiple nodes. Intervening locations are left to the gamemaster to develop.

The length of the connections on the Regional Map on **SSGSB p. 7** are not representative. All of these connections should be considered "very long."

Hyperspace Nodes that have multiple connections may only activate a single conduit at a time; these are operated on a rotating timetable. While this timetable may be changed on the fly from the Gate's terminal station, doing so increases the instability of the Gate; the station operator must roll against his Astrogation skill (difficulty 8) or the connection requires a 'hard reboot', requiring 1d6 x 100 ks.

Starships

Stars Without Number's Spike drive FTL is a very different system from **Strange Stars**' Hyperspatial Node Network. In constructing ships in the way given in the **SWN** core book, there are two easy options: The gamemaster can assume the price of the Spike drive represents the cost for some equipment necessary for the use of the Hyperspace Network or the Spike drive associated cost can just be omitted from the price of ship construction.

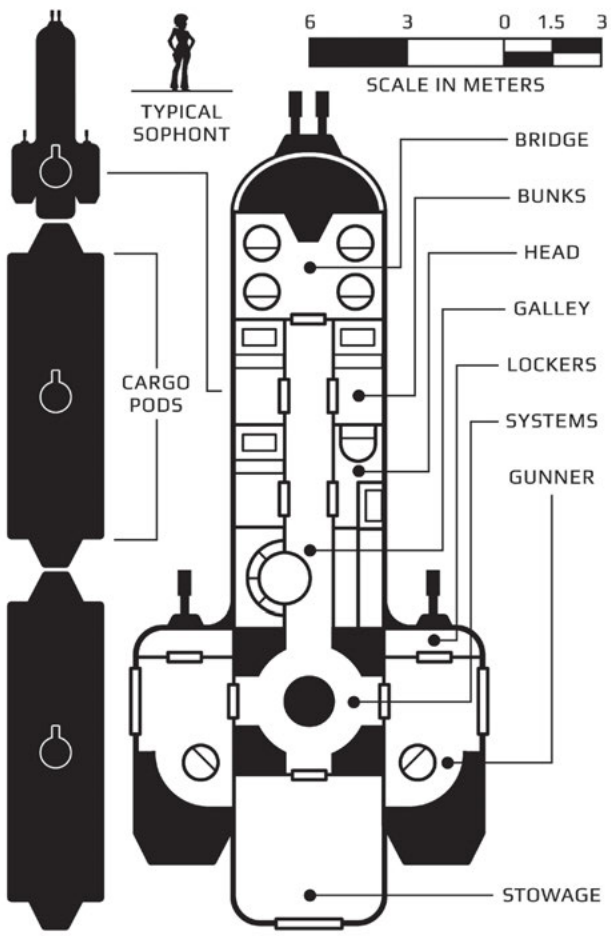
In **Strange Stars**, since the level of technology was higher in ages past, many ships currently in use are the products of previous civilizations or at least built from parts scavenged from ancient vessels. This makes the salvage of ancient derelicts or wrecks an important (and lucrative) activity, i.e. "something player characters might get into."

Gravity generators and inertial suppressors are only two of the important technologies than many civilizations are able to exploit, but not necessarily manufacture themselves. Intact data systems are a particularly spectacular find. There is always hope of engineering schematic files executable in modern nanofactories.

One of the most sought after items is a drive box. These cubes vary in size, but most are around 12 cm. When inactive they absorb virtually all the light contacting their surface, and so appear black like a void in the universe. When activated, a box will turn translucent and sometimes pulse with color. At all times they are cool to the touch and the texture of smooth plastic.

Drive boxes are used to control starship reactionless drives. Like most devices of the Archaics, drive boxes contain hyper-intelligent, but not self-aware AI, dedicated to the operation of the drive. The boxes are "plug and play" to the extent that they contain the knowledge necessary to build a reactionless drive, given a link to a fabricator and the necessary raw material. The box will then integrate with a ship's systems to run the new drive. It will not upgrade structural deficiencies in the ship that will would lead to a catastrophic failure if the drive is activated, but it will warn of these sort of issues and will not activate the drive.

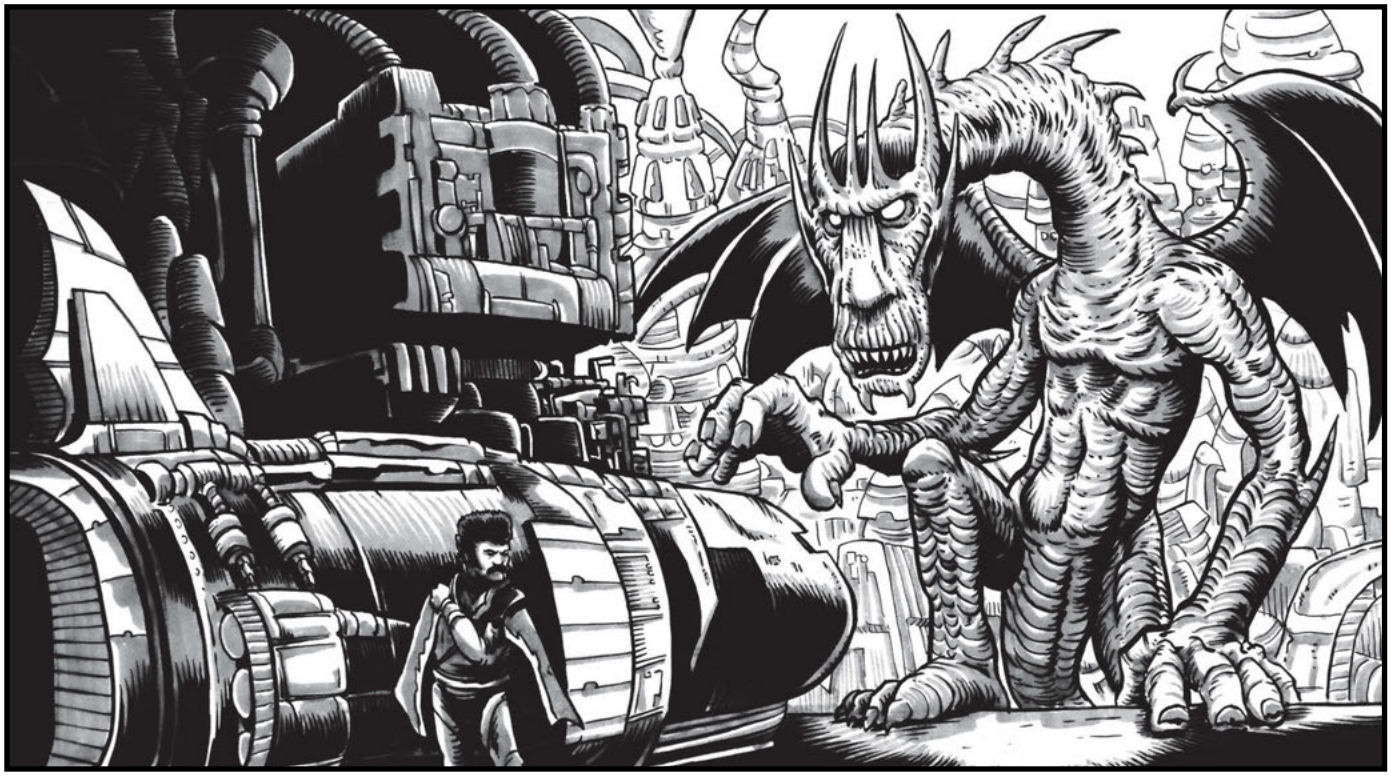
Attempts to hack drive boxes are always thwarted by the box's mind (who is able to mimic self-hood for lower intelligence beings). A drive box can be destroyed utterly, but attempts to physically disassemble one only trigger a catastrophic reaction in its circuitry that leads to it fusing into a block of inert matter.



SHIP REGISTRY: CIRCUS 33⅓

MODEL: Universal Standard Transport LS1517 series
TONNAGE: 16 ton rig with a 36 ton total hauling capacity
CREW: 2 pilots, 2 turret gunners, 2 passengers capacity
ARMAMENTS: 4 debris defense lasers, 2 heavy cannons

04: GAME MASTERING



SETTING ASSUMPTIONS

The **Strange Stars** setting is built on a number of underlying assumptions, some of which are similar to traditional space opera role-playing game settings and others which are a bit different. These assumptions may not hold true in your version of **Strange Stars**, but it is probably helpful to consider how the pieces might interact before rejecting things.

Post-Apocalyptic

The technology level of civilization in the past was higher than today. This provides the rationale for some "sufficiently advanced" Clarke-level technology, the "points of light" nature of civilization, and "lost world" exploration and space scavenging.

Big But Bounded, and Subdivided

The setting exists within one galaxy — and only a relatively small part of that one — but there's plenty of room for new clades, cultures, and even minor empires to be introduced without much disruption. The use of hyperspace means that there are "clusters" that can serve as smaller sandboxes if the whole area is too daunting. The game can be as focused as a single world or station.

Harder than Average

While **Strange Stars** is in no sense a "hard" science fiction setting, there are a number of details that are "semi-hard" and realistic. Earth-like worlds are most often the result of engineering, and there are seldom multiple earthlike planets in a system. Most people will live in orbital habitats. Faster-than-light travel (FTL) exists but works in such a way that it can't violate causality. There are very few "single biome" planets, and those there are tend to have an explanation for why they exist. The aliens aren't very alien, but that's because they're most likely the descendants of humans or human creations.

Intersystem, Fast. Intrasystem, Slow

Related to the last point, is the way FTL works. Hyperspace nodes tend to go to one place in a system (and may well dump out somewhere other than directly at the planet of interest). In-system travel is most likely non-FTL and takes a while. This allows both zipping around the galaxy (at least a part of it) and "realistic" distribution of clades, but with a hard science fiction scale to a solar system, allowing the full array of grizzled asteroid prospectors, fringe religious communities on gas giant moons, or isolated research bases. The planets highlighted in the setting book are just the "major feature" of their respective systems, not the whole story. Of course, the way space travel works also has implications for how and where space battles are fought.

A Post-Internet Conception

Most classic space opera doesn't take into account the internet in general, much less ubiquitous social media, but these things are present here. As a rule of thumb, imagining "how would that work in the Strange Stars?" involves more extrapolation from the present than looking back to how it was done in *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*.

There's Always Belief

The future doesn't mean belief systems go away. The best of space opera (*Dune*, for instance) addresses belief, so it was something not to be left out or to portrayed one-dimensionally. From the arbitrary taboos of the Kosmoniks to the realpolitik theocracy of the Instrumentality, it's an important part of what makes cultures in the setting distinct.

GALACTIC REGIONS

While any type of adventure can be run in any of the galactic regions of the **Strange Stars**, they were each designed to have their own flavor, so are better suited to one sort of action or another.

THE ALLIANCE

In brief: A civilized, polyethnic region with dangers on every border.

Good For: Espionage, special-ops missions, border patrol, law enforcement, crime & detective stories.

Inspiration: James Bond, the Dominic Flandry novels by Poul Anderson, *Ocean's Eleven*, E.W. Hornung's Raffles stories, the Trigger Argee stories of James M. Schmitz, the Luff Imbry stories of Matthew Hughes.

COREWARD REACH

In brief: A "points of light" wilderness with hidden civilizations and ruins of the past.

Good For: Exploration; lost worlds; comedies of manners with quirky cultures.

Inspiration: *Gulliver's Travels*, *Forbidden Planet*, the Alastor Cluster and the "Planet of Adventure" series by Jack Vance, *Star Trek* episodes "Shore Leave" and "A Taste of Armageddon," among many others.

Comments: The incursion of the Locusts (**SSGSB p. 22**) also gives room for military action and an impending danger to add a ticking clock to other sorts of adventures.

THE INSTRUMENTALITY

In brief: A theocratic, expansionist state to be fought against or served, surrounding smaller independent states and bordering wilderness.

Good For: Freedom fighters or self-interested rogues fighting the system; space pirates or privateers operating out of an anarchic port, spy stories, law enforcement (pulpy or shades of gray), or missionaries.

Inspiration: *Firefly*, Howard Chaykin's *Cody Starbuck*, James Bond, *Ice Station Zebra* (1968), *Tales of the Gold Monkey* (1982), *Black Robe* (1991).

OUTER RIM

In brief: A wilderness with dangers lurking on often inhospitable worlds.

Good for: Survival adventure, encounters with monsters in desolate places.

Inspiration: *Alien, Planet of Vampires, Star Trek* episodes "Obsession" and "The Galileo Seven," *The Gold Rush* (1925), *Flight of the Phoenix* (1964, 2004).

Comments: Ksaa territory in the Outer Rim opens up additional possibilities. They make a good stand-ins for the scheming Romulans on *Star Trek* or *Farscape*'s Scarrans.

VOKUN EMPIRE

In brief: A decadent, classic space opera star empire.

Good for: Honest warriors caught in a corrupt system; rebellions of all sorts, military farce, games of scheming noble houses, and black comedies of protocol.

Inspiration: The *Deep Space Nine* Mirror Universe arc or episodes dealing with Cardassian society or military, Lois McMaster Bujold's Vorkosigan Saga, *Game of Thrones, Lone Wolf and Cub* and other stories set in feudal Japan, *Rome* (2005 tv series).

ZURAN EXPANSE

In brief: A lawless frontier where different cultures meet and ancient secrets are buried.

Good For: Rogues and criminals; pirates, civilization vs. savagery, artifact looting and tomb-raiding.

Inspiration: Tatooine in *Star Wars*, the Uncharted Territories in *Farscape*, particularly the episodes "The Flax," "Home on the Remains," and "Liars, Guns, and Money," *A Fist Full of Dollars, Deadwood, Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1948), *King Solomon's Mines, The Professionals* (1966).

ADVENTURE GENERATOR

The exoticness of the **Strange Stars** can be a little daunting at first in terms of figuring out what it is the characters do in the setting. Here's a short adventure idea generator to help get the creative juices flowing:

SETUPS (ROLL D6):

1. THE CHALLENGE
2. THE HEIST
3. THE HUNT
4. THE GAUNTLET
5. THE RESCUE
6. THE UNEXPECTED

1. THE CHALLENGE

The PCs (or one of them) participates in [A] on [B].

TABLE A

1. A martial arts competition
2. A high-stakes gambling tournament
3. A race
4. A hunt for an exotic animal
5. A deadly game
6. A battle of the bands
7. An alien religious ceremony
8. The recording of a popular sim

TABLE B

1. A vessel circling a hyperspace anomaly
2. A domed area of an asteroid
3. Interzone
4. The wilderness of Smaragdoz
5. Gogmagog
6. The diamond planet Solitaire (Fortuna I)
7. A world blockade by the Vokun
8. The private station of an celebrity

2. THE HEIST

[A] wants the PCs to steal [B] from [C].

TABLE A

1. A neshekk insurance exec
2. A Vokun lord
3. A zhmu collector
4. An eccentric Smaragdine celebrity
5. An Orichalcosan optimate
6. The Pharesmid Syndicate
7. The Aurogov Ascended Masters
8. An Interzone Smuggler

TABLE B

1. A proprietary genetic code
2. An Old Earth artifact
3. A work of art
4. A high-grade mind emulation
5. A weapon from the Archaic Oikumene
6. A mysterious box of alien origin
7. A partial Archaic Hyperspace Node Map
8. The head of a particular moravec

TABLE C

1. A high security vault station
2. The interior of a Wanderer
3. The isolated asteroid estate of a rival
4. A stateroom safe on a luxury starliner
5. A Zao Pirate stronghold
6. An armored spacehauler
7. A habitat in the path of the Locust swarm
8. A war-torn world

3. THE HUNT

The PCs search for [A] [B] but must contend with [C].

TABLE A

1. A Eden Seeker terrorist cell
2. A bioengineered horror from the surface of Phobetor
3. Convicted megacorp executive
4. A thief with a stolen bioweapon
5. A Wanderer Avatar
6. A Circean witch
7 A witness to an important crime
8 A bioroid carrier of a deadly disease

TABLE B

1. Across the deserts of Deshret
2. In Smaragdoz City
3. Through the forests of Woon
4. On the planet Rune
5. During a party in a domed city on Aygo

6. Under the ice on Boreas
7. On a military starship
8. At an Aurogov seminar

TABLE C

1. The Pharesmid Syndicate
2. The hellhounds
3. Talosian Moravec supremacists
4. A squad of Thrax
5. A djagga bounty hunter
6. Instrumentality agents
7. Identity theft and hacked accounts
8. Battle-Sisters of Morrgna

4. THE GAUNTLET

The PCs must get [A] [B] despite [C].

TABLE A

1. A Deodand hacker
2. An ibglibdishpan defector
3. A diplomate from the League of Habitats
4. A jook band
5. A group of Minga
6. A Wanderer avatar
7. A child bioroid
8. A Runic Wizard

TABLE B

1. Across an Interzone favela
2. Off a prison asteroid
3. Out of Vokun space
4. To an Alliance cruiser
5. Home
6. Off Deshret
7. Out of cryogenic suspension
8. To a departing starliner

TABLE C

1. Irate smugglers
2. A traitor in their midst
3. Pursuing bounty hunters
4. A squad of kuath
5. Moravec supremacists
6. A deadly outbreak
7. Clone assassins
8. Government investigators

5. THE RESCUE

The PCs must save [A] from [B].

TABLE A

1. A shipment of Minga slaves
2. A famous popstar
3. An Orichalcosan Optimate and her entourage
4. A Borean ambassador
5. Kuath deserters
6. The delegates at an Alliance summit
7. An ibglibdishpan defector
8. The last survivor of a lost expedition

TABLE B

1. Algosian cultists
2. A starship with a malfunctioning experimental drive
3. Zao Pirates
4. A rogue Vokun Lord
5. An insane Wanderer
6. A dangerous Star Folk drug
7. Ramaging xenomegafauna
8. An Archaic dissembler nanoswarm

6. THE UNEXPECTED

When [A], the PCs unexpectedly stumble onto [B].

TABLE A

1. Responding to a distress call
2. Exploring a derelict ship
3. On a routine intersystem flight
4. Making planetfall for repairs
5. Visiting an isolated station for supplies
6. On vacation
7. Visiting a physician
8. Fencing some goods

TABLE B

1. A dangerous xenospecies
2. A cache of outlawed bioweapons
3. A hidden ssraad raiding vessel
4. A relic of the Archaic Oikumene
5. A new hyperspace node
6. A cabal of psi cultists
7. An illegal mind-copy slavery ring
8. A zurr mask

05: NPCs & ADVERSARIES

The **Strange Stars** are a dangerous place. Enemies can emerge from anywhere, and they aren't always obvious or defeatable by force alone. This chapter isn't an exhaustive list of the threats and adversaries player characters might face, but it gives a good overview for both combat and noncombat encounters.

ALGOSIAN

No. Appearing: 1-3
Armor Class: 6
Hit Dice: 2
Saving Throw: 14+
Attack Bonus: +2
Damage: 1d8+1 monoblade or 1d8 stun baton, 1d6 + special (Via Dolorosa Agonizer)
Movement: 30'
Morale: 9
Skill Bonus: +2

Algosians are humanoid torture cultists in the Zuran Expanse (**SSGSB p. 18**). They are thought to be the bioroid creations and former servitors of the Faceless Ones, an ancient sadist cabal. The Algosians learned a lot from their masters and now apply that knowledge to those that fall into their hands.

Algosians rely on kidnappings to obtain most of their victims. To this end, they operate clubs or brothels in a number of spaceports, though their involvement is usually secret.

In combat, Algosians relish the use of their Via Dolorosa, devices inherited from the Faceless Ones and passed down through the generations. Each is unique in design particulars, but all are wand-like devices that deliver a concentrated burst of microwaves to exposed or lightly covered (normal clothing) skin, causing excruciating pain. A hit with the Via Dolorosa does 1d6 points of nonlethal damage and calls for a Physical Effects save to avoid being utterly incapacitated by pain for 1d4 rounds.

Algosians are resistant to pain (a saving throw of 9 vs pain-related Physical and Mental Effects) and they recover hit points at twice the normal rate, though medical care or Biopsionics affect them the same as baseline humanoids.

BOMA

No. Appearing: 1-4
Armor Class: 8
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 14+

Attack Bonus: +0
Damage: by weapon, or 1d2 punch
Movement: 20'
Morale: 9
Skill Bonus: +3

Bomoth [the plural form] appear something like blue, giant caterpillars (1.5 to 2.5 m long) with four eyes and oddly human faces. They are renowned throughout the known galaxy as musicians. Though Woon, their home moon (**SSGSB p. 15**) is in the Coreward Reach, they can be encountered on tour in the various hegemonies and even the Zuran Expanse. They are best known for the improvisational, syncopated musical genre known as Bomoth Jook.

Boma have four manipulator hands, though this does not give them extra attacks. Their auditory sensors have different receptors for different frequency ranges, giving them superior sound discrimination to humans. Their bellows-like lungs enable fine breath control, aiding in their musical performances, while their vocal apparatus allows for incredible mimicry.

Bomoth tend to be relaxed, almost to the point of imperturbability. This is often attributed to their habitual use of a fungus-derived, mild intoxicant, *chreech*, but it's likely a species trait. Bomoth are often philosophical and given to obscure musings, but this never gets in the way of practicalities, like payment for performances or seeking pleasure. Jook musicians are known for a distinctive slang, all but impenetrable to the uninitiated.

CALIBAN

No. Appearing: 1-6
Armor Class: 7 (primitive)
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 14+
Attack Bonus: +2
Damage: 1d6 spear or 1d2 bite
Movement: 30'
Morale: 9
Skill Bonus: +1

Caliban are heavily wrinkled, ashen-skinned humanoids found in a torrid, jungle-choked orbital habitat on the border between the Coreward Reach and the Vokun Empire. They're infamous in the popular imagination for their warlike nature and enthusiastic cannibalism. Despite this (or perhaps because of it) they are sometimes transported off-world to serve as mercenaries. They have little empathy for those outside of their kinship group, so their employers often insist that they take special drugs that induce a pheromonal response mimicking their natural reaction to genetic relatives. Though this produces more cooperative behavior toward employers and comrades than would be shown otherwise, it will not stop caliban from consuming their bodies when they die.

The stats above are for a caliban in their native, low tech habitat. Those encountered as mercenaries elsewhere might well have better weapons and armor.

DEVA

No. Appearing: 1-6
Armor Class: 5
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 15+
Attack Bonus: +1
Damage: 1d10 torch
Movement: 30' / fly 40'
Morale: 9
Skill Bonus: +3

The winged deva are the most mysterious of the Alliance's members. In their home system of Altair (**SSGSB p. 11**), the deva are repairing damaged moon-sized brains — or perhaps the separate components of one even larger mind. They let few visitors enter the spheres themselves, though that may be with good reason. Rumors abound that the damaged psyches of the spheres produce dangerous qlippothic demons from deranged code.

Deva are generally nonviolent, but they carry tool-spheres capable of generating several energy beams. One of these beams is equivalent to a laser rifle in damage but with the range of a pistol. Deva can survive in hard vacuum unprotected and through space under their own power (at least for short distances). They are immune to radiation, temperatures between -100 and 100 degrees Celsius, and to any diseases or poisons not specifically tailored to them or similar bioroids.

EDEN SEEKER TERRORIST

No. Appearing: 3-12
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 15+
Attack Bonus: +1
Damage: 1d8+2 talons, 1d8 submachine gun
Movement: 30'
Morale: 10
Skill Bonus: +2

Among the avian humanoid hyehoon, the Eden Seekers are a group of anti-gnostic sapience-rejectionists, who engage in terrorist activities. Contrary to the beliefs of the majority of their species, they view their fabled creator, the genetic engineer Anat Marao, as a satanic figure. Their ultimate goal is the purging of the hominid influence in their genome to return their descendants to the "pure" avian genetics of their presumed ancestors.

While there is a wide range of expression of Eden Seeker beliefs, the violent wing of their ideology seeks to acquire and use weapons of mass gene restructuring to achieve post-sapient genetic ascension. Though their primary focus is on overthrowing the social structure of the hyehoon homeworld Omu (**SSGSB p. 11**), Eden Seeker extremists sometimes hide in the Zuran Expanse or smuggle weapons through its hyperspace nodes.

In combat, some Eden Seeker extremists use wrist-mounted metal talons as expressions of their dedication to avian atavism, although they are willing to use any means necessary to accomplish their goals.

ERATOAN ASSASSIN/BODYGUARD

No. Appearing: 1-3
Armor Class: 3
Hit Dice: 2
Saving Throw: 14+
Attack Bonus: +3
Damage: 1d6+2 retractable cyberclaws or 1d8+1 concealed monoblade
Movement: 40'
Morale: 10
Skill Bonus: +1

The bioroids of the pleasure world Erato have a myriad of modifications to primary and secondary sexual characteristics, sexual performance, and biochemistry. Always seeking to expand their market share, the Eratoans have began to generate members of their clade with new purposes. Bioroids with idiopathic poison biochemistry or weaponized genitalia command a high price on the black market as assassins. The above stats represent a somewhat less exotic assassin or covert bodyguard type.

HANNIBAL T. EARLY

No. Appearing: 1
Armor Class: 1 (power armor)
Hit Dice: 8
Saving Throw: 11
Attack Bonus: +10
Damage: 2d8+2 mag rifle, 2d6 thermal pistol
Movement: 30'
Morale: 11
Skill Bonus: +3

The military of the Radiant Polity (**SSGSB p. 3**) consisted of one soldier, and that man was named Hannibal Tecumseh Early. Early mostly appeared as a steely-eyed, taciturn veteran of late middle years, but when necessary, tens of thousands of versions of him were embodied in battleships and war fogs, spy drones and strategic minds. The Early war machine was manufactured to whatever size was needed, but at least one Early was kept in hibernation, as a reserve. Most Early iterations were lost in the wars at the end of the Radiant Polity, but a few copies of middling quality might still be encountered leading the armies of one interplanetary power or another.

Early will employ the best armor and weapons available to whatever polity he's working for. Though he will be a commander in whatever force he serves, he is never one to avoid getting his own hands dirty.

HELLHOUND

No. Appearing: 1-4
Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 7
Saving Throw: 11
Attack Bonus: +8/+8/+6
Damage: 2d4/2d4 claws, 1d8 bite
Movement: 40'
Morale: 10

Special Abilities: Their hides provide a -2 penalty to hit with laser weapons. They regenerate 3 hit points per round after 2 rounds of combat. They have the ability of total cellular regeneration similar to the biopsionic power Nine Lives (**SWN p. 26**).

The hellhounds are synthetic beings, sophont weapons of mass destruction; though if the tales are to be believed, they were originally created to be the playmates of a lonely prelapsarian princeling in an isolated habitat. Today, though there are less than 20 of these monsters in existence, they're reputed to have decimated small cities and forced the destruction of entire habitats in an effort to keep their threat from spreading.

The hounds are the size of Old Earth great cats and have triangular heads more reminiscent of birds of prey or snakes. Their faces are much more expressive than an animal's would be. Their bodies are made of computronium sheathed in a quicksilver smartmatter skin. Their limbs can contort or flow in surprising ways, and they can squeeze themselves into smaller spaces than might be expected. They regenerate damage; a fist-sized portion of their substance can regrowth the entire creature with time, an energy source, and a material substrate. They can survive for indeterminate periods in hard vacuum.

They hunt in groups, and anything and anyone is fair game. They aren't mindless animals; in fact, they're quite erudite and are likely to attempt to engage their prey (or at least taunt them) with allusions to and quotations from pre-Great Collapse works of art before the kill.

KSAA COLD EGG

No. Appearing: 1
Armor Class: 6
Hit Dice: 4
Saving Throw: 14+
Attack Bonus: +3
Damage: 2d6+2 mag pistol, 1d8 monoblade saber
Movement: 30'
Morale: 8
Skill Bonus: +6

The neuter-sexed *khii gans* ("cold eggs") are the true powers behind the ksaa (**SSGSB p.26**). Scornful of outside races, the cold eggs manipulate the female ksaa gynarchs whose territories they administer. The name "cold egg" comes from the lower temperature required for their gestation of neuter ksaa, but it has taken on the connotation of "cunning bastard."

Cold eggs are plotters and schemers; they're the chessmaster setting up the board or the spider at the center of the web. Many consider it a blessing that the ksaa are so myopically focused on their internal power struggles.

KUATH

No. Appearing: 2-12
Armor Class: 2
Hit Dice: 5
Saving Throw: 14+
Attack Bonus: +5

Damage: 2d8+2 rifle; 1d8+1 monoblade
Movement: 30'
Morale: 10
Skill Bonus: +1

The powered bio-armored kuath serve as shock troops for the Vokun Empire (**SSGSB p. 16**). They are adolescents conditioned and drugged into fanatical service by the Dragon Mother intelligences of their home world. Their bio-armor can be used as a vacuum suit for up to 2 hours but requires a dip in a special nutrient bath for at least 2 out of every 24 hours to be at maximum efficiency.

MINGA

No. Appearing: 1
Armor Class: 9
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 15+ (11+ for Mental Effects saves against Psionics)
Attack Bonus: +0
Damage: 1d2 punch
Movement: 30'
Morale: 8
Skill Bonus: +1

Minga resemble the baseline human type, and are considered physically attractive by most of that clade. They are gracile of build and have pale skins, ranging from a pink-tinged porcelain to chalk white. Their hair and eyes are in a wide variety of pastel shades.

Minga are very submissive and compliant beings. They do disagree from time to time, but always do so in an indirect way best calculated not to give offense. They are nonviolent, even against personal attack, but will defend themselves if absolutely necessary. Their meekness, however, hides a hidden agenda. The Minga deplore the venal and violent state of the galaxy and have been using the Slavers (p. 24) as a conduit to bring their way to the stars. The Minga are patient; each slave is slowly bending his or her supposed master to their view of enlightenment.

The Minga possess superhuman awareness of the emotional states of other humanoids (mechanically similar to the psionic power Empathy, though their ability is not purely psionic). They also have the ability to "charm" a humanoid with whom they have had intimate or extended (over 48 hour) close contact into doing their bidding. A savings throw vs. Mental Effects must be made to resist this power.

NECROMANCER

No. Appearing: 1-2
Armor Class: 3 or better
Hit Dice: 5
Saving Throw: 13
Attack Bonus: +7
Damage: 2d8 energy weapon or better
Movement: 20'
Morale: 10
Skill Bonus: +4

They can sometimes be seen along the space ways and at port: sleek ships, black and angular as obsidian blades. These are the vessels of the dead: the Necromancers.

Necromancers appear as tall, cadaverous, near human bioforms dressed in black nanosuits. Though they don't live in the usual sense, they do use energy; nanites infuse their tissues, reanimating them. Their bodies will break down over time, but after centuries — or millennia. Even then, the Necromancer lives on, their mind preserved in a palm-sized scarabaeus that can attach itself to the nervous system of a new host.

There is a lot of speculation about the Necromancers and their purpose. The most credible theory holds they are the guardians of an ancient culture that committed mass suicide to avoid the Great Cataclysm with a plan to resurrect itself at future time. Their bodies were interred in tomb worlds and their minds uploaded and conveyed through a wormhole to a secure data underworld. Something went wrong and the underworld was lost. The Necromancers search for the souls of their people still, dealing with any being that might be able to help them — and destroying any that stand in their way.

QUICKLING

No. Appearing: 2-20 (up to 300 in swarm)
Armor Class: 0
Hit Dice: 1-2 HP
Saving Throw: 16
Attack Bonus: +4
Damage: 1 point
Movement: 40' fly
Morale: 8

Special Abilities: Quicklings move so rapidly that they appear as a blur to unenhanced baselines. Attacks against them have a 20% chance of missing automatically (check before attack roll). Quicklings are never surprised by unenhanced individuals and always roll for initiative as normal, no matter the circumstance.

Quicklings are a bioroid clade found on numerous worlds outside the control of the hegemonic powers. They bear some resemblance to the fairies from the legends of Old Earth: they are approximately 8 cm tall humanoids with insect-like wings. They get their name from their short lifespans and their fast neural "clock speed."

Quickling tribes or collectives live geographically close to (even within) cities and habitats of other humanoids, but remain apart due to the difficulty of interaction. Quicklings find other sophonts unbearably slow, while neural baselines have to use special devices for all but the most rudimentary communication. Quickling tribes can be hired for various purposes, and they care little for legalities, but given their attention spans, all plans must be relatively simple.

Their small size and necessarily low weights (for flight) mean their brains must be made of nonbiologic materials. Even still, they are less intelligent than the average baseline (Intelligence 8). However, groups of quicklings form a partial neural composition and have some sharing of cognition, so the more quicklings in close proximity, the smarter they are (+1 Intelligence for every 2 additional quicklings in a 10m radius, to a maximum of 20 Intelligence).

RUNIC DRAGON

No. Appearing: 1-4
Armor Class: 3
Hit Dice: 8
Saving Throw: 11
Attack Bonus: +8/+8/+8
Damage: 1d6/1d6 claw, 2d8 bite
Movement: 30'
Morale: 10
Special Abilities: psionics like a Psychic of 6th level.

The most fearsome foes of the psychic wizards and their people on the pseudo-medieval world of Rune are the dragons: large, vaguely reptilian bipeds (about 3 m tall, with tails roughly as long) with psi abilities of their own. They are theorized to be the degenerate descendants of the stranded crew of either an exploratory vessel or a military scoutship. The adolescent dragons of the current era are social creatures most numerous in equatorial areas, but older adults are mostly solitary and establish large territories. The dragons are aware that humans are intelligent, but view them as animals and potential (though not preferred) prey. Periodically, (Perhaps related to ancient mating cycles) dragons become extremely acquisitive, gathering or stealing items of value, particularly shiny objects, and lining their lairs with them.

The humans of Rune try to kill or drive away any dragon near a civilized area. Despite the dragon's size and intelligence, the more numerous humans might have driven them to extinction if not for the fact that the wizards value them: Certain neuroendocrine glands of the dragons contain chemicals that the wizards believe enhance their "magic."

SCAVENGER

No. Appearing: 4-24
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 15+
Attack Bonus: +1
Damage: 1d6 cyberlimb, 1d8+1 monoblade, or 2d8 mag rifle
Movement: 30'
Morale: 9

Scavengers are opportunistic pirates who follow the Locusts, a giant swarm of von Neumann machines that devour any habitats they encounter. The Scavenger scouts perform hit and run raids before the arrival of the mass of the swarm, and the majority of their fleet sweeps up any surviving ships once the swarm passes.

Scavengers commonly have obvious and primitivist cybernetics, the better to frighten victims into submission. These cybernetics frequently take the form of weapons, from chainsaws to gatling guns, but their unreliability often produces less than spectacular results (hence the low damage potential). Scavengers are craven foes, preferring to use wolf pack tactics and quickly scattering in the face of any serious adversary.

SISTER OF MORRGNA

No. Appearing: 1-4
Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 2
Saving Throw: 14
Attack Bonus: +4
Damage: 1d8+1 monoblade, 2d6 thermal pistol, or 1d8 Stun Baton
Movement: 30'
Morale: 10
Skill Bonus: +2

The Sisterhood of Morrgna is a eusocial, all genetically female human clade designed for war. In earlier times, a Sisterhood could be generated anywhere a gravid warwomb landed, given sufficient material, but today only one hive exists and only one queen.

All Sisters are cloned from less than a hundred genotypes, but they are further modified for certain caste functions. Most appear as baseline humans, but there are hypertrophic muscled shock-troops, vacuum-adapted space-sisters, and ambigenitaled comfort sisters. The most heavily modified Sisters are perhaps the Queens (or "Mothers"): macrocephalic beings, whose vast brains allow them to monitor every aspect of hive function.

The above statistics are for the relatively human "honor guard" of the queen's palace. Their purpose is mostly decorative, but they are still deadly.

SKULKER

No. Appearing: 3-18
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 15+
Attack Bonus: +1
Damage: 1d4 claws or improvised weapon
Movement: 20'
Morale: 8

On the planet Tenebrae in the Zuran Expanse there exists three city-sized labyrinths comprised of basalt-like material zealously guarded by squat humanoids called "skulkers." Their origins unknown, skulkers are utterly hostile to other sophonts and pose a near-constant danger to explorers and scavengers of the labyrinth. They appear to live adjacent to the labyrinth but whether they make their homes in ancient support structures or warrens they dug themselves is uncertain. Possessing 120' low-light vision, packs of skulkers will often knock out any unguarded light sources before attacking en masse. Being light-sensitive, a skulker directly exposed to bright light will suffer -1 to attacks and saves and must make an immediate Morale roll.

SLAVERS

No. Appearing: 1-4
Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 8
Saving Throw: 11

Attack Bonus: +8
Damage: 1d6/1d6/1d6/1d6 tentacles (plus slime)
Movement: 10'/60'
Morale: 9
Skill Bonus: +1
Special Abilities: Tentacle slime (Toxicity 8, Virulence 3, Interval 5 min) poisons humans; sensory illusions (Mental Effect saving throw to resist), Overpowering Will 3x/day

Slavers (*yssgalah*/ is an approximate rendering of their autonym) are aquatic sophonts who look vaguely like 4 m long mucus-covered catfish with tentacles. They are a psionic species who use their abilities to stun prey in their native oceans. The Slavers never developed more than rudimentary tool use until human explorers visited their world, and they discovered that off-world organisms have little resistance to their abilities.

Only the sheer size of galactic civilization, their aquatic nature, and the resistance of other psi-capable species kept them from establishing a vast empire. Instead, they became slave traders. They keep a number of personal servants and sell the rest on the galactic market-places where "naturally" grown sophonts are preferable to bioroids or robots. The Slavers are the primary suppliers of Minga slaves (p. 23).

The slime coating the Slaver's tentacles is a paralytic to life native to its world, but cause skin changes to humans which lead to 1d4 damage each interval the affected isn't kept cool and damp (Toxicity 8, Virulence 3, Interval 5 minutes). Slavers can create realistic sensory experiences in the minds of biologic sapients if they fail a Mental Effect saving throw. The Slaver's also possess an ability similar to Overpowering Will, which they can use 3 times a day. The power can be used on any single individual within 9 meters. If a being is dominated, they will serve the Slaver until some external force breaks the control. If the enslaved individual is separated from the Slaver by more than a kilometer, a new savings throw is made every day.

SSRAAD, BLUE

No. Appearing: 2-12
Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 8
Saving Throw: 11
Attack Bonus: +8/+8/+8
Damage: 2d6/2d6 claws, 1d12 bite
Movement: 30'
Morale: 12

The hulking blue (3 m tall) are the most massive of the ssraad species (**SSGSB p. 27**) and are more intelligent and organized than the red. Still, they have no hierarchy beyond the tribal level, where the strongest rule. What technology they possess is stolen; the blue force captives to remodel their starships for the ssraad's large frames before they kill them. They can employ weapons, but prefer to use the bone spur claws that grow from the dorsal surface of their hands, and their massive jaws.

Ssraad reproduce asexually. Dominance challenges between ssraad can lead to slashes along the loser's back from the victor's bone spurs that (combined with chemicals introduced into the loser's bloodstream from the victor's saliva) stimulate the growth of eggs beneath osteodermic plates. These eventually bud off into larva.

SSRAAD, GREEN

No. Appearing: 2-12
Armor Class: 5
Hit Dice: 5
Saving Throw: 12
Attack Bonus: +7/+6/+6
Damage: 1d4 tongue slap (plus poison) or 1d8 bite; or by weapon
Movement: 30'
Morale: 12

The green are the smallest ssraad species (2.13 m), but also the most intelligent. They believe themselves to be the closest in form to the zurr, whom the greens worship as their semi-divine progenitors. Their plump bodies and thin limbs make them appear much less threatening than the reds or blues. Appearances can be deceiving.

The green ssraad generate a paralytic biochemical that they can deliver via their sticky, extensible tongues. Anyone hit on exposed skin by a green ssraad's tongue must make a Physical Effects saving throw (Toxicity 10, Interval 1 hour, Virulence 2) or be paralyzed. Three failed saves means a victim's breathing has also been paralyzed, and he or she begins to suffocate without respiratory support. Other ssraad aren't paralyzed, but instead become docile and submissive. The green can also deliver a cocktail containing hormones and plasmids which trigger parthenogenesis in any ssraad species. The genetic material in the plasmids causes all offspring produced to be born as green ssraad. Greens refer to ssraad undergoing forced parthenogenesis as *slrnn meh* ("breeders"); the *slrnn meh* automatically lose status in ssraad society. Greens cover their skin with an ointment made from human endocrine elements and other ingredients to insulate themselves against such assaults by rivals.

SSRAAD, RED

No. Appearing: 1-4
Armor Class: 5
Hit Dice: 6
Saving Throw: 11
Attack Bonus: +6/+6/+6
Damage: 1d4/1d4 claws, 1d10 bite
Movement: 30'
Morale: 10

Red ssraad are nearly 2.5 m tall. Though sophonts, their behavior is savage and animalistic. Often, only their sadism betrays their intelligence. They do not build or create, but are capable of utilizing technology when necessary. Red ssraad are used as shock troops and terror weapons by the greens. They are phenomenally hardy and regenerate 2 hit points a round.

Red ssraad parthenogenetically produce eggs that must incubate with a living host. They use their hollow tongues to inject eggs (40% chance) into a host on a bite that does damage. Once inside, the egg gestates for 3 weeks. The host then falls ill for approximately 24 hours with nausea and abdominal pain before the ssraad larva eats its way out of the victim's body, killing them.

TELOSIAN

No. Appearing: 10-100 (on Telos) or 1-3 (off-planet)
Armor Class: 5
Hit Dice: 2
Saving Throw: 14
Attack Bonus: +2
Damage: 1d4 punch or 1d6 integrated laser
Movement: 30'
Morale: 9

The moravecs of the artificial moon of Telos are followers of the AI prophet Iskander Null-A, who taught that biosophonts are the flawed creations of moravecs, destined for a life of servitude. Telosians enjoy gladiatorial contests where humans are forced to fight for their entertainment and rarely tolerate free biosophonts within their sphere of influence.

THRAX

No. Appearing: 1-10
Armor Class: 2
Hit Dice: 5
Saving Throw: 14+
Attack Bonus: +7
Damage: 1d12+1 thraxu blade or 1d8+2 monoblade
Movement: 30'
Morale: 11
Skill Bonus: +2

The thrax clone clade are the famed warriors of the Alliance (**SSGSB p. 10**). They are taciturn, serious, and greatly concerned with honor and discipline as defined by their warrior's code. Thrax express their individuality through their armor, which they are allowed to individualize within parameters set by their unit. Their signature weapon are the thraxu blades: ancient weapons of programmable matter which, when energized, creates a quantum edge (treat as a nanoknife from *Mandate Archive: The Dust*).

VOIDGLIDER

No. Appearing: 1-10
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 1+1
Saving Throw: 15
Attack Bonus: +1
Damage: 1d10 laser rifle
Movement: 25'; 120' (fly)
Morale: 7
Skill Bonus: +1

A clade adapted to survival in the vacuum of space, the Voidgliders were once free peoples who have been confined to a reservation in the Dhadgar System (**SSGSB p. 17**) by the Vokun Empire. They can unfurl giant dragonfly wings, living solar panels from which plasma sails provide self-locomotion in the vacuum. Adapted to the vacuum of space, Voidgliders are resistant to radiation (+3 bonus to saving throws) and can survive without oxygen, so long as they have food and water.

They can see in the microwave and ultraviolet portions of the spectrum (allowing normal vision in the absence of visual light out to 100 meters), and can communicate via UV laser or radio. Most important to the Vokun Empire is their ability to detect hyperspace nodes within 1 AU and to sense a node's general presence without precision within 5 AU (Perception skill check at +3). While still allowed by the Vokun to live in their familial clans in the asteroid caves of the Dhadgar System, only Voidglider volunteers for the Stellar Navy are allowed greater freedoms.

VOKUN LORD

No. Appearing: 1
Armor Class: 9 (2 with chair deflector array)
Hit Dice: 3
Saving Throw: 13
Attack Bonus: +2
Damage: 1d4+1 punch or 2d6 energy weapon concealed in hoverchair
Movement: 5' (25'' in hoverchair)
Morale: 8
Skill Bonus:+3
Special Abilities: Vokun regenerate 1 hit point per minute, up to maximum of 12 points. This does not prevent a vokun from dying at zero hit points.

A vokun's age is linearly correlated with their subtlety, breadth of vision, hedonism, and physical immobility. Vokun lords, heads of their households, dream intricate dreams of vast triumphs and glorious conquests — and then promptly lose themselves in immediate decadent pleasures. While perhaps not imposing on an immediate physical level (in any way but sheer bulk), a vokun lord sufficiently roused from their indolence by anger is a dangerous foe indeed.

XANN HUNTER

No. Appearing: 1-2
Armor Class: 3
Hit Dice: 7
Saving Throw: 11
Attack Bonus: +8/+8/+6
Damage: 2d4/2d4 claws, 1d6 bite
Movement: 40'
Morale: 11
Skill Bonus: +1
Special Abilities: They regenerate 2 hit points per round, starting after 2 rounds of combat. They possess the equivalent of the Biopsionic power Invincible Stand.

The xann are the monsters who monsters fear. Seeking revenge for the near genocide of their people in ancient times, they are implacable enemies of the zurr and their creations/descendants, the ssraad. Despite historical consensus that the zurr are an extinct culture, the xann believe that a few of their enemies have passed their minds down through the ages, downloading them into new bodies.

In base form, they are chalk white-skinned, slim, almost delicate-appearing humans. They are never seen in groups larger than three or four. Often their children are abandoned to be

raised by other sophonts. Xann hide their identities, to avoid being shunned by other species. No one who has heard the stories wants to be near a xann when the change occurs. When a xann finds a target (be it one of their secret zurr or a ssraad), he or she transforms into a hunter form: a bioengineered killing machine like a taloned and many-toothed distortion of their native appearance.

ZAO PIRATE

No. Appearing: 1-10
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 15+
Attack Bonus: +1
Damage: 1d8+1 monoblade, 2d6 void carbine
Movement: 30'
Morale: 9
Skill Bonus: +2

The brazen crimes and theatrical flair of the Zao Corsairs (**SSGSB p. 22**) have made them a favorite as villains and antiheroes in sims and other popular entertainments. The truth is far from glamorous: the Zao are killers who capture ships, loot them, and hold their passengers for ransom or sell them into slavery — sometimes selling their bodies separately from their uploaded minds. Anyone may call themselves a Zao pirate, and some vessels operating under that title may have no connection to their asteroid base of Naraka, but the actual Zao pirates react harshly to those "flying their flag" who don't obey their established codes governing the division of plunder, interactions between affiliate vessels, and the secrecy of their defense system keycodes.

The Zao have a fondness for antique-looking bladed weapons for close-quarters boarding, but are certainly not adverse to the use of ranged weaponry.

ZAO PIRATE CAPTAIN

No. Appearing: 1
Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 4
Saving Throw: 13+
Attack Bonus: +6
Damage: 1d8+1 monoblade or 2d6 void carbine
Movement: 30'
Morale: 10
Skill Bonus: +3

Though elected via a realtime, microtransactional system, Zao captains are virtually always drawn from the toughest and craftiest of the crew. Zao captains are near fanatical in defense of their crews and ships and will be certain to employ any stratagem, no matter how ruthless, to trap prey.

ZHMU NOBLE

No. Appearing: 1
Armor Class: 8 (6 against primitive weaponry)
Hit Dice: 1
Saving Throw: 14+
Attack Bonus: +1
Damage: 1d4 punch
Movement: 20'
Morale: 7
Special Abilities: Due to their ameboid nature, zhmun can squeeze through places a quarter of the size needed for a baseline humanoid and are resistant to primitive weapons.

The zhmun inhabited a domed city on the planet Aygo (**SSGSB p. 19**) and control the wealth of that world's ancient treasure stores and the mining rights to their system's three superterrestrial worlds.

Zhmun are invertebrates with ameboid characteristics, despite being multicellular. A zhmu uses the hydrostatic pressure of internal fluids and the ability to quickly alter the rigidity of its tissues to hold itself in a roughly humanoid shape. Zhmun who can't achieve consistent humanoid appearance are second class citizens — "globs."

Zhmun perform no manual labor, but insist that their needs be provided for by biologic entities, not robots. Higher status zhmun perform no work at all. They affect an air of nobility and assume lofty, nonsensical titles. They spend their days in artistic pursuits or idle pleasures, as befits their station. Globs direct zhmu business interests and supervise their myriad of alien employees and servants in the name of a zhmu master. Menial tasks are performed by a slave clade of unknown origin, collectively called yoom. Yoom are low on the sophont-scale and are bred in a variety of function-based forms, from brutish, thick-browed laborers and bodyguards to sleek, quadrupedal racers.

ZURR MASK HOST

No. Appearing: 1
Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 4-2
Saving Throw: 13+
Attack Bonus: +3
Damage: 2d4 psychic assault
Movement: 30'
Morale: 11
Special Abilities: Telepathy and one other psychic discipline, mastered to level 6

Most zurr masks are inert, but not all of them. A few still hold, by a means beyond current technology, the mind of a long dead zurr. A mind driven insane by isolation and the lack of sensory inputs. The zurr intellect is able to possess a wearer, and psychically induce the potential wearer to don the mask even before full possession occurs. A mask bonds to a wearer on a molecular level in 2-4 hours of cumulative wear and requires substantial medical care to remove without serious injury. Its possession attack requires a Mental Effects save to resist and has "Toxicity" 10 and Virulence 2. If the mask is not removed, this attack can be repeated in 12 hours. Once in possession of host, the zurr will attempt to resume its previous life — an impossible task given the millennia that have passed since its culture thrived. A zurr has no qualms about killing anyone who gets in the way of its mad quest.

Note: The zurr are intended to be one of the great mysteries of the setting, to reveal (or not) as the Gamemaster wishes. This is one idea of how the masks might work.

06: FACTIONS

Factions play a big part in the universe of **Strange Stars**. They can make the lives of PCs easier or more difficult — but hopefully always more interesting! The factions presented below are only a sampling of the ones that exist in the setting. They are described and interact in the ways outlined in Chapter 8 of the *Stars Without Number* core book.

AUROGOV

Attributes: Force 3, Cunning 6, Wealth 5
Hit Points: 29
Assets: Demagogue/Cunning 6, Organization Moles/Cunning 5, Marketers/Wealth 5, Security Personnel/Force 1
Tags: Theocratic

Aurogov has been described as a quasi-religious voluntary tyranny (though its leaders consistently deny its religious character). Participants advance through levels ("The Protocol") wherein Aurogov teachings take greater and greater control of their lives. Adherents typically begin with a download of Aurogov's open license self-help software, distributed by parties unknown in the noosphere of most civilized worlds. The seed software slowly evolves into a nonsapient AI mind emulation of the (perhaps mythical) founder of the group, The Prime. The software's audits and critiques of its user's thought processes and behavior lead to progressive behavior modification of susceptible individuals. "Advanced" members without public relations duties tend to dress in the same grey uniform-like garments and use frequent aphorisms from Aurogov teachings in their speech.

EDEN SEEKER EXTREMISTS

Attributes: Force 3, Cunning 6, Wealth 5
Hit Points: 29
Assets: Boltholes/Cunning 6, Demagogue/Cunning 5, Laboratory/Wealth 3, Zealots/Force 3
Tags: Fanatical

The Eden Seekers are a group of antignostic sapience-rejectionists among the avian humanoid hyehoon. Contrary to the beliefs of the majority of their species, they view their fabled creator, the genetic engineer Anat Marao, as a satanic figure. Their ultimate goal is the purging of the hominid influence from the hyehoon genome so that their descendants may be returned to the "pure" avian genetics of their presumed ancestors. This faction represents the fanatical splinter groups that seek to acquire and use weapons of mass gene restructuring to achieve their goals.

Though their primary focus is on overthrowing the social structure of the hyehoon homeworld Omu, Eden Seeker extremists sometimes hide in Expanse or smuggle weapons through its hyperspace nodes.

INSTRUMENTALITY OF AOM

Attributes: Force 8, Cunning 5, Wealth 7
Hit Points: 49
Assets: Space Marines/Force 7, Planetary Defenses/Force 6, Strike Fleet/Force 4, Zealots/Force 3, Pretech Manufacturers/Wealth 7, Marketeers/Wealth 5, Organization Moles/Cunning 5, Cyberninjas/Cunning 3
Tags: Theocratic, Planetary Government

The Instrumentality of Aom controls several star systems and provides spiritual guidance for the faithful scattered throughout many more. It aggressively seeks to expand its sphere of influence, primarily by peaceful conversion, but it is not opposed to violent conquest.

While the Instrumentality's evangelists revise doctrine to best win converts, its rule is uncompromising on worlds already under church control, even if the faith's actual tenets are sometimes vague.

PHARESMID SYNDICATE

Attributes: Force 3, Cunning 6, Wealth 5
Hit Points: 29
Assets: Cyberninjas/Cunning 3, Smugglers/Cunning 1, Thugs/Force 1, Laboratory/Wealth 3

The Pharesmid Syndicate is a criminal organization centered on the planet Smaragdoz, though its presence is also felt on other worlds. The members of the group are all bio-clones or mind copies of their founder, Smaragdine cyberterrorist Uln Pharesm.

Pharesmids all wear facial tattoos, though they may disguise them in the course of their criminal operations. Their progenitor has augmented his brain to give himself limited psi abilities, and it may be that some lieutenants have similar enhancements.

SAMPLE THRAX MERCENARY CADRE

Attributes: Force 4, Wealth 2, Cunning 1
Hit Points: 15
Assets: Hardened Personnel 2, Informers 1
Tags: Mercenary Group

The distinctively armored thrax are famed soldiers of Alliance space. Some thrax form mercenary companies and can be serving wherever there is conflict across the Strange Stars.

The Valor of Faora Ul Legion is one such unit, known by the distinct green claw slashes somewhere on their armor. Their notable actions include storming the crawling dreadnought of Dzaladin Huerto in Circus's Neurokleptocrat Wars and the capture of cult leader Czerna Zera despite sustaining heavy casualties from suicide attacks by her clones.

SAMPLE VOKUN NOBLE HOUSE

Attributes: Force 5, Cunning 3, Wealth 6
Hit Points: 29
Assets: Strike Fleet/Force 4, Postech Infantry/Force 4, Blackmail/Cunning 2, Local Investments/Wealth 1, Commodities Brokers/Wealth 6
Tags: Warlike [once per turn, roll an extra d10 when making a Force attack]

The various noble houses of the Vokun Empire attempt to expand their power base outwards to new systems. This expansion is undertaken primarily to improve their standing in the continual intrigues taking place within the Empire.

House Ksurukandesh, struggling to shrug off years of decadence and revitalize itself, has dispatched a trade mission to Circus under its favored son, Lord Mulzakesh, son of Katapaxu. While ostensibly present on Circus to expand economic linkages between the Empire and Circus, Mulzakesh's real objective is to extend House Ksurukandesh's control beyond the Vokun Empire and into the Circus economy. His honored father Katapaxu seeks to create a refuge beyond the Empire for his house, and has authorized Mulzakesh to use any means necessary to stretch forth House Ksurukandesh's hand and dominate this potential new home.

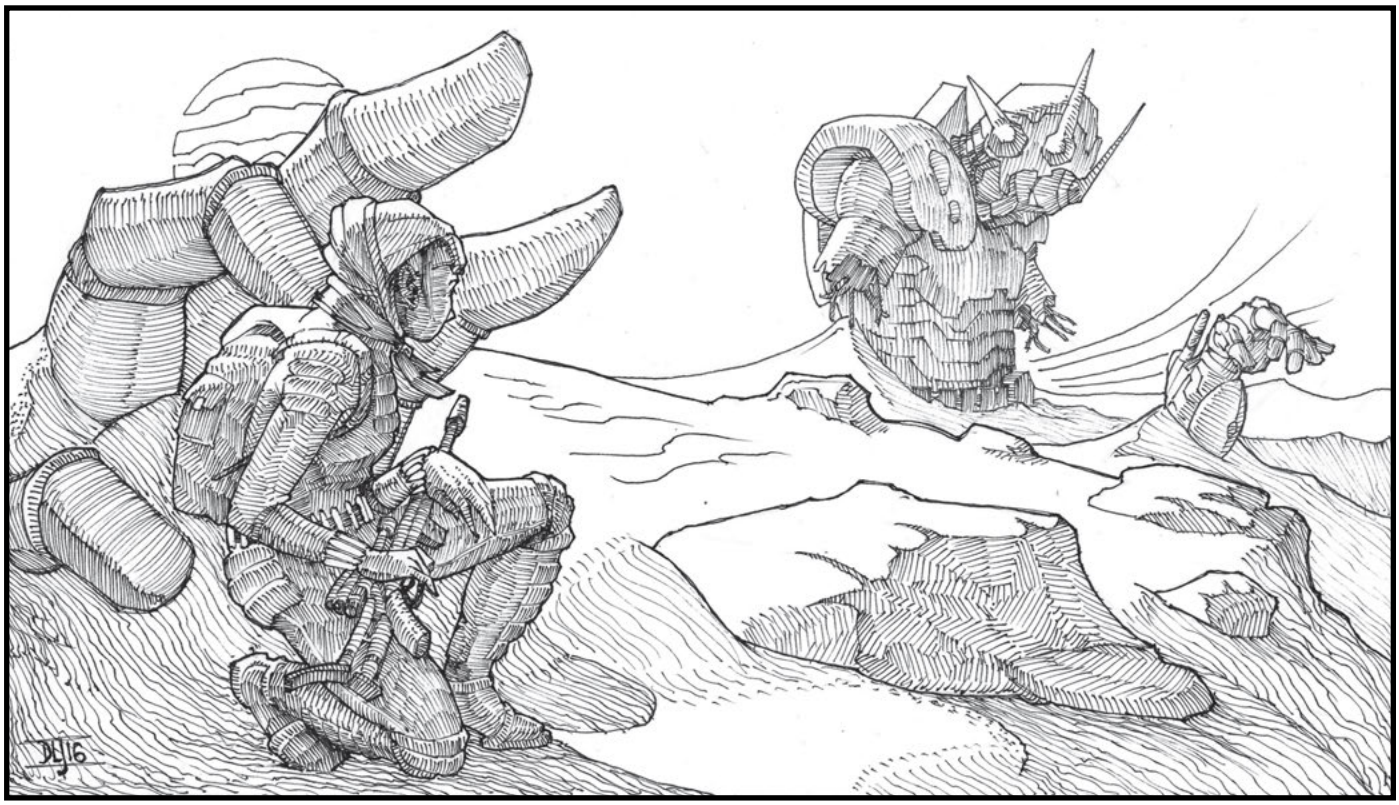
SAMPLE ZAO PIRATE BAND

Attributes: Force 4, Cunning 2, Wealth 2
Hit Points: 15
Assets: Cunning Trap 3, Elite Skirmishers 2
Tags: Pirate

The infamous Zao Corsairs are based on the former Radiant Polity prison asteroid of Naraka. The Zao are killers who capture ships, loot them, and hold their passengers for ransom or sell them into slavery — sometimes selling their bodies separately from their uploaded minds.

While following the codes and contributing to the defense of the association, Zao pirate bands are autonomous franchised groups of freebooters. Each band runs its own small flotilla and keeps its own finances. Each band is headed by a captain or captains, usually elected by corsair members (generally through a complicated system of real-time assessment of crew confidence).

07: WORLDS



There are thousands of worlds and habitats in **Strange Stars**; the setting book only touches on a few of them. The world generation system in *Stars Without Number* is a good way to generate new worlds for your own campaign, though some of the world tags don't readily apply to the **Strange Stars** setting.

More sophonts in **Strange Stars** actually inhabit artificial habitats rather than natural satellites. The primary reason for this is space: fully Earth-like worlds are relatively rare and orbital habitats can be placed in a lot of locations, including star systems that never developed rocky planets. A system for the random generation of habitats is presented at the end of this chapter.

Changes and Additions to the World Tags:

Alien Ruins: Replace this with **Ruins**. These *could* be alien, but are more likely to be ancient ruins from the time of the Archaic Oikumene or before.

Altered Humanity: Altering baseline humanity is much more common in **Strange Stars**, so this tag should only be used for particularly unusual cultures.

Eugenic Cults: The rough equivalent of these could be found, but given the commonness of genetic modification, the "eugenics" element is less important than the "cult" part.

Exchange Consult: This doesn't really have an exact equivalent in *Stars Without Number*, but a rough approximation would be **Banking Center**.

Forbidden Tech: Much of the technology considered forbidden in the standard setting of **SWN** is common in **Strange Stars**. As a result, this tag carries the opposite meaning and denotes a particularly repressive world with respect to one or more technologies.

Heavy Mining: The definition of this tag should be broadened to include gas giant mining.

Misogyny/Misandry: To get more use out of this tag, expand it to include prejudice or persecution against any group by replacing in with **Chauvinism**.

Perimeter Agency: This group doesn't exist in **Strange Stars**, and there isn't any group that would be a direct correlation. A culture similarly concerned with the dangers of technology and curtailing (or trying to curtail) it in some way can be represented by the tag **Luddite World**.

Pleasure World: This new tag denotes a world or habitat famous, or infamous, for its hedonistic pursuits. Worlds like this will often be a vacation destination.

Preceptor Archive: The equivalent of this tag is **Archive**, denoting troves of data or technology from earlier time periods — mostly the Archaic Oikumene, but possibly the Radiant Polity.

Pretech Cultists: Replace this tag with **Strange Tech**. Like the case of Eugenic Cultists above, in most cases the focus should be on the odd use of a technology rather than its simple existence.

Primitive Aliens: Replace this tag with **Primitive** of a non-baseline or exotic biotype.

Unbraked AI: This would instead be a **Tyranny** tag that just happened to have an infosophont tyrant.

Unusual Culture: It takes a lot for a culture to be considered unusual in the **Strange Stars** terms, but this this tag exists for those worlds that deviate significantly from the "mainstream" of galactic culture in ways not covered by another tag. Examples include a culture based entirely around playing a specific game, a world where everyone wears masks, or a world where everyone is physically isolated and only makes contact via telepresence.

Xenophiles/Xenophobes: Again, "alien" here should be read as exotic/unusual clade.

CATALOG OF WORLDS

Here's an overview, in *Stars Without Numbers* terms, of most of the worlds mentioned in the setting book, plus a few new additions. Where applicable, references to the setting book are given.

AYGO
SSGSB p. 19

Tags: Bubble City, Rigid Culture
Enemies: Offended zhmu Metaboyar-Zamindar Purulu, Enraged yoom slave, Scheming trade ambassador
Friends: Jovial glob major domo, Curious zhmu master artist Tulush
Complications; Murder during delicate trade talks, Shifting balance of power amid zhmu lords
Things: Birthing vat, Brain scans from zhmun sacred stores

BOREAS
SSGSB p. 9

Tags: Seagoing Cities, Zombies
Enemies: Animated bioroid beast, Vrzemko Koprdazak xenophobic local kommissar, Zyta Hrenj paranoid ranger
Friends: Scientist Jarka Lissik seeking communication with the Cold Minds, Local trader Balok Zek
Complications: Transport breakdown out on the ice, Dead from a sunken warship animated by the cold minds
Things: Container of weaponized microorganisms, Exclusive trade contract with the uldra
Places: Ranger station beneath the ice, Subsurface levels of a trading settlement

CIRCE

Tags: Theocracy, Psionics Academy
Enemies: Reverend Mother Vlara Szeklos, Instrumentality spy Mila Angmark
Friends: Witch Novitiate Inessa Ravzan, Smaragdine psi researcher Tsias Sycorax
Complications: Conflict within the Witches, Hidden Instrumentality agents
Things: Ancient texts of psi, Transport vessel full of aspirants
Places: Ceremony hall of the Sisterhood school, Underground crypt

Circe is the smaller of two worlds controlled by the Circean Witches (the Sisterhood of Circe), an all-female order of psyches. It is located in neutral territory between the Alliance and the Instrumentality. The larger and more populous world is named Perseis, and it's people largely live in primitive, early industrial conditions (something akin to the 19th century of Old Earth in the ancient reckoning). The Sisterhood, headquartered on the smaller world of Circe, limits the technology of Perseis through its "advisory" role to the world's various governments. Women on Perseis are tested in adolescence, and those with the talent are taken away to Circe and become novices in the Sisterhood.

CIRCUS
SSGSB p. 13

Tags: Trade Hub, Regional Hegemon
Enemies: Customs enforcement contractor Captain Rhona Tam, Interzone crimelord Cephas Omoro
Friends: Explorer Captain Garm Singh Hardraker of *Brave Ulysses*, Minga escort Solace
Complications: Minor trade war, Dispute among Tsadikim
Things: Major stash of a new drug, Unclaimed longhaul container
Places: Joyhouse in Interzone, Port at the Strip, Petty fiefdom in the hinterlands

DESHRET
SSGSB p. 19

Tags: Desert World, Archaic Ruins
Enemies: Moph customs inspector Minyar Sabak, Nanite dybbuk, Tomb-robbing gang leader Kiyat
Friends: Enthusiastic infoarcheologist, Flirtatious desert djinn, Grizzled desert guide Rukh
Complications: Massive sandstorm, Desert tribesmen, Deadly tomb trap
Things: Data-laden sandminder, Newly discovered data-tomb
Places: Ruins in the deep desert, Dive tavern in Moph

ERATO

Tags: Pleasure World
Enemies: Disguised assassin Freyr Kanamara-47, War criminal from the League of Habitats hiding out
Friends: Bartender Ona Nanda-74, Bioroid physician Arturo Yueh-65
Complications: Masked bacchanal, Invitation to a mysterious stranger's private suite
Things: Weaponized sex toy, Platinum passcode

Places: Isolated, supposedly off-line dome, Underground bioroid repair facilities

Erato is home to the largest collection of resorts and parks catering to every imaginable sensual pleasure in the known galaxy. The domes are themed by interest and provide a variety of different environments from lush gardens to freefall — though the facilities are less expansive now than in centuries past. The bioroid staff, in a myriad of forms, cater to every taste.

ERG
SSGSB p. 19

Tags: Heavy Mining, Outpost World
Enemies: Zhmun company representative Arn Daarven, Workgang boss One-Eyed Shota
Friends: Crusading workers' rights activist Sarai Allon, Chatty bar owner Ulo
Complications: Workers riot, Heavy irritant smog, Press gang
Things: Anti-zhmu samizdat, Marker for a fortune in gas-mining shares
Places: Zhmun hiring station, Row of grimy chem-toilets pods, Low-rent cybertech doc tent

GOGMAGOG
SSGSB p. 9

Tags: Desert World, Local Specialty
Enemies: Crazy bot-breaker Haxo Ysgar, Robber gang
Friends: Merc Faizura Deyr working for the bot-breakers, Free trader supplying bot-breakers
Complications: Von Neumann machine swarm, Malfunctioning giant robot
Things: Hidden entrance to the mysterious planetary substructure, Forgotten ancient giant bot
Places: Shanty town, Junkyard

KUZNUH
SSGSB p. 11

Tags: Banking Center, Desert World
Enemies: Auditor Azir Zem, Hacker "Flashpoint" Faruz
Friends: Lawyer Rakta Lom, Security specialist Khazhir Mek
Complications: Deep audit, Unexpected death of a CEO
Things: Nizara hack, Emergency board of directors meeting
Places: Tower with high security, Underground bar in the off-world's quarter

LIBRARY OF ATOZ-THELN
SSGSB p. 19

Tags: Archive
Enemies: Data-raiders, Paranoid librarian Abno-Ord
Friends: Archaic History section specialist Than-Ki, Visiting scholar
Complications: Glitch in the Library Mind, Murder of a prominent visitor
Things: Map to an ancient treasure, Dictionary of the Atozan language
Places: Hidden section, Atozan cloning center

MAZEWORLD

Tags: Pilgrimage Site, Ruins
Enemies: Other would-be maze walkers, Maze cultists
Friends: Maze-walker aspirant Shilo Loum from Circus, Alliance security attache Darus Zor
Complications: Chosen by the Guardians to walk the Maze, Some sort of energy ripple in the Maze's structure
Things: Purported map of the Maze, Guardian's cube weapon
Places: Impromptu camp outside the Maze entrance, Ceremonial place of the Guardians

The so-called Apotheosis Maze is an ancient structure of great power. It appears to be black marble with an iridescent, oil-slick sheen when the light hits it right. It possesses a psionic presence, too — like faint, whispering voices in an adjacent room. Though the maze is open to the sky, no one has ever been observed traversing it; it would appear that the maze's interior exists elsewhere. The vast majority of those who enter the maze never emerge. In fact, there is no recorded instance of anyone emerging — but many stories exist. All the stories suggest sophont beings who walk the maze transcend in some way — perhaps even to godhood.

The Maze's guardians are tall, robed humanoids with enlarged craniums and skin as black as starless space. There are always three present, though perhaps not always the same three. Their primary task seems to be to decide who may walk the maze from the supplicants present. They never allow more than five in, but the number varies; they often select fewer. Those they choose must divest themselves of weapons, equipment, and uplinks, and don simple robes before entering the maze.

NARAKA
SSGSB p. 23

Tags: Outlaw World, Forbidden World
Enemies: Moravec chauvinist Pirate captain Zelezo-317, Mentally unstable hostage
Friends: Dashing captain Jolanda Almaviva Chang, Cantankerous-but-kind old cook Feropato
Complications: Rivalry between captains, A dangerous captive for ransom
Things: Defense grid pass codes, Haul of Archaic tech
Places: Bridge of a ship in dock, Prisoner cell block

OMU
SSGSB p. 11

Tags: Civil War, Major Shipyard
Enemies: Eden Seeker terrorist Crimson Shrike, Corrupt industrialist Vakal Tao Hamoon
Friends: Minor bureaucrat Ro Yana Kili, Special ops soldier Nyaga Ysola Ulalo
Complications: Terrorist attack in a public place, Vokun-sponsored industrial espionage
Things: Design schematics for a new starship engine, Database of Eden Seeker terrorist cells
Places: Orbital shipyard, Counter-terrorist bureau office

ORICHALCOS
SSGSB p. 15

Tags: Trade Hub, Rigid Culture
Enemies: Disingenuous power-grabbing Optimate Tyodoro Guruzte, Sadistic aristocrat
Friends: Trade delegate Laira Urzo-Mezenta, Economic reform activist Barna Zagari
Complications: Malfeasance scandal, Murder of an aristocrat
Things: Hidden bank accounts, Untraceable weapon
Places: Opulent aristocratic mansion, Inner city ghetto

PHOBETOR
SSGSB p. 14

Tags: Local Tech, Flying City, Badlands World
Enemies: Industrial spy disguised as a technician, Nightmare dealer Arden-Decima
Friends: Customer interface specialist Soren-Tertia, Short-duration reverie designer Alex-Quintus
Complications: A loosed frumious bandersnatch, Wealthy BASE jumpers wingsuit-flying to the planet's surface
Things: Experimental dream drug product, Captured art-monster, Weaponized dream-tech
Places: Sky city of Eidolon, Ancient underground vault

RUNE
SSGSB p. 15

Tags: Out of Contact, Rigid Society
Enemies: Necromancer Mauldazard, Rampaging dragon
Friends: Young dragon Thussumbraan, Benevolent sorceress Jaronel
Complications: Feudal warfare, Dragon attack
Things: Dragon's treasure horde, Downed spacecraft from a "civilized world"
Places: Wizard's tower, Dragon's cave

SMARAGDOZ
SSGSB p. 11

Tags: Local Tech, Psionics Academy
Enemies: Thrill-criminal known as the Red Queen, Local thug in the Xanthic Prefecture Griflet Marax
Friends: Psi instructor Curtana Beithir, Laconic farmer Boq
Complications: Missing atavism tourist, Manifestation of the Wizard groupmind
Things: Box buried in the Deadly Desert, Psi-enhancing drug
Places: Crystal tower, Rural hamlet

TELOS

Tags: Chauvinist, Quarantined World
Enemies: Crazed human thrall, Sadistic biocontrol officer
Friends: Biologic rights activist Raq-3-L, Slave underground resistance
Complications: Fanatics speaking anti-biologic jihad, Engine malfunction in the vicinity of Telos
Things: Hidden entrance to the mysterious planetary substructure, Forgotten ancient giant bot
Places: Gladiatorial arena, Shrine to Iskander Null-A

Telos is an artificial moon orbiting through the failed planetary dust cloud of a red dwarf in the Coreward Reach. The dust cloud is stalked by vicious hunter-killer satellites that vaporize any ship without the proper codes. Its dominant civilization are moravec adherents to the AI prophet Iskander Null-A who rule over an underclass of biohumanoids. The Telosians aren't usually cruel to their slaves, but they do enjoy gladiatorial battles where humans are forced to fight — perhaps to the death.

TENEBRAE
SSGSB p. 19

Tags: Badlands World, Ruins
Enemies: Artifact thief Bellocq Rene, Skulker swarm
Friends: Blesh archeologist Ru-19-Ayla, Journalist Rosef Brannet
Complications: Sudden storm, Sabotage to a transport
Things: Mysterious artifact, Message scrawled on a stone wall in blood
Places: Ruined city, Hastily abandoned camp of a missing expedition

VARYA
SSGSB p. 17

Tags: Regional Hegemon, Rigid Culture
Enemies: Inscrutable ibglibdishpan advisor Leng Yar, Young military hero Zraleikastra
Friends: Yantra resistance spy Tulahani Hala disguised as a servant, Circus trade delegate Vestra Mateen
Complications: War between houses, Unwanted attentions of a noble
Things: File full of secret communiques, Shipment of slaves
Places: Private hunting reserve, Foreigner's quarter of the capital

YANTRA
SSGSB p. 17

Tags: Colonized Population, Oceanic World
Enemies: Vokun Prefect Axanareshta, Xenophobic Yantran elder Kanutu Maata
Friends: Minga courtesan Opal, Yantran resistance saboteur Konahi Atamu
Complications: Unusual storm, Vokun crackdown
Things: Vokun surveillance drone, Yantran resistance code glyph
Places: Yantran holy site cave, Vokun lord's villa

ZYANTHION
SSGSB p. 13

Tags: Unusual Culture
Enemies: Up and coming duelist Ul Vanth, Famed matchmaker Naya Lamris
Friends: Ambassador gone native Edwer Thissell, Fashion maven Thian Ziin
Complications: Challenge that can't be refused, Gift with unexpected implications
Things: Antique dueling blade, Daring and fashion-forward outfit
Places: Grand avenue of the largest city on Zyanthion, Salon of a Zyann possessed of the highest tier of éclat

HABITAT GENERATION

HABITAT GENERATION SUMMARY

1. Roll or Choose Habitat Shape; Determine Size and Population
2. Roll or Choose Interior Bioclime and Urbanization
3. Roll or Choose Tech Level
4. Choose Habitat Tags

1: HABITAT SHAPE

Roll 2d6

2	Sphere
3-4	Torus/Ring
5-9	Cylinders
10-11	Asteroid
12	Exotic

Sphere

A spherical shell is the optimum shape for containing air pressure and mass efficiency for radiation shielding.There are two standard sizes of sphere habitats in Strange Stars: the larger Bernal Sphere and the compact O'Neil Sphere. Due to their shape, they only have spin gravity along their equator, but this allows zero-g space ports at the poles. O'Neil Spheres have a diameter of around 500 meters and are more densely populated compared to the larger Bernal Sphere with a diameter of perhaps 16 kilometers.

Sphere Size and Population

2	O'Neil Sphere, 2d6 x 1,000 inhabitants
3-4	Densely-Populated O'Neil Sphere, 2d6 x 2,000 inhabitants
5-9	Underpopulated Bernal Sphere, 1d6 x 1,000 inhabitants
10-11	Bernal Sphere, 2d6 x 2,000 inhabitants
12	Densely-Populated Bernal Sphere, 3d6 x 2,000 inhabitants

Torus/Ring

Like the sphere, torus or ring-shaped habitats come in two basic forms. The classic, "space wheel" Stanford Torus is completely enclosed and much smaller than the more-resource intensive (and thus less common) Bishop Ring. Due to their size (approximately 1,000 km in radius with a width of 500 kim), Bishop rings do not need to be fully enclosed and retain atmosphere with a combination of their spin and their 200 kilometer tall retention walls.

Torus/Ring Size and Population

2	Underpopulated Stanford Ring, 1d6 x 1,000 inhabitants
3-7	Densely-Populated Stanford Ring, 1d6 x 3,000 inhabitants
8-10	Underpopulated Bishop Ring, 1d6 x 1 million inhabitants
11	Bernal Sphere, 2d6 x 2,000 inhabitants
12	Bishop Ring, 1d4+1 x 10 million inhabitants

Cylinder

Enclosed cylinders provide the maximum habitable internal surface area for their size. They are spun along their long axis to generate artificial gravity. The O'Neil Cylinder design is the largest (8 km in diameter and as long as 32 km) and most common of cylindrical habitats. The Lewis and Kalpana Cylinders are smaller (radius only 250 m) and are found either in backwater or highly Balkanized systems. The McKendree Cylinder uses nanotubes rather than more traditional elements in its construction and is the largest of the cylindrical habitats (radius 460 km and a length of 4,600 km) but otherwise resembles an O'Neil Cylinder.

Cylinder Size and Population

2	Underpopulated Stanford Ring, 1d6 x 1,000 inhabitants
3-6	Densely-Populated Stanford Ring, 1d6 x 3,000 inhabitants
7-8	Underpopulated Bishop Ring, 1d6 x 1 million inhabitants
9	Bernal Sphere, 2d6 x 2,000 inhabitants
10	Bishop Ring, 1d4+1 x 10 million inhabitants
11	Underpopulated McKendree Cylinder, 2d100 x 10 million inhabitants
12	McKendree Cylinder 2d20 x 1 billion inhabitants

Asteroids

Unlike the more standard manufactured habitats, asteroid habitats vary greatly in size. Most designs do not allow for the generation of spin gravity and are zero-g environments. Some ancient stations will have artificial gravity generated by other means. Hollow cylinders have been cored and reshaped to a degree by heating. Warrens are more natural asteroid forms that have been burrowed into to create habitable areas.

Populations will depend on the size of the asteroid. On the chart below, "underpopulated" can also be used for smaller (but still colonizable) asteroids and "densely populated" could represent one approach a dwarf planet in size.

Asteroid Size and Population

2-3	Underpopulated Hollow Cylinder, 2d6 x 2,000 inhabitants
4-6	Hollow Cylinder, 2d6 x 20,000 inhabitants
7	Densely-Populated, Hollow Cylinder 1d6 x 2 million inhabitants
8	Underpopulated Warren, 2d6 x 1,000 inhabitants
9-10	Warren, 2d6 x 10,000 inhabitants
11-12	Densely-Populated Warren, 1d4 x 1 million inhabitants

Exotic

Some habitat types are nonstandard.

Exotic Habitats

2-3	Archaic Station
4	Bioform
5-6	Vessel
7-10	Beaded Habitat
11	Megastructure
12	Other

Archaic Station: Built during the latter times of the Archaic Oikumene, these stations have true artificial gravity (not just spin gravity) and take a myriad of forms, like the Wheel in the Fortuna system that resembles a gigantic roulette wheel. Archaic Stations may have superficial similarities to any of the above station types.

Beaded Habitat: Smaller habitats strung together like beads on a string (though they need not be spherical). These are typically zero-g.

Bioform: A generally small habitat either on the surface or interior of a biological (or partially biologic) entity. Sometimes the bioform will have been expressly engineered for this purpose, other times it has been adapted to it.

Megastructure: Whether built by aliens or by the early Archaic Oikumene (or even earlier cultures) these rare habitats dwarf conventional structures. Circus is a ring megastructure.

Vessel: Some small communities make their home in repurposed vessels. Most of these makeshift habitats are stationary, though a few may circulate on long cycles. They differ from ships in that they don't typically have destinations or significantly alterable courses.

Other: Something else unusual.

2: TECH LEVEL

Roll 2d6

2-3	Tech 3
4-8	Tech 4
9-12	Tech 5

Modifiers:
-2 Underpopulated
+2 Densely-Populated

3: INTERIOR BIOCLIME AND URBANIZATION

Roll 2d6

2	Wilderness Heavy (1d6 Bioclimes), Low to Non-Existent Habitation
3-4	Multiple Bioclimes (1d3 Bioclimes), Light/Concentrated Urbanization
5-6	Natural Single Bioclime, Light Density Urbanization
7-10	Parklands/Farmlands and Low to Medium Density Urbanization
11-12	Highly Urban, Light to No Park/Agriculture

Modifiers:
Underpopulated Habitat -3
Densely-Populated Habitat +3

Natural Bioclimes Subchart

2	Silicate Forest
3	Alkali Salt Flats
4	Macrofungal Bog
5	Mesas and Canyonlands
6	Wetlands
7	Grassland Prairie/Steppe
8	Boreal Forest
9	Terran Forest
10	Rainforest
11	Freshwater Lake (islands present 9+ on 2d6)
12	Saltwater Sea (islands present 7+ on 2d6)
13	Rhizomatic Forestlands
14	Exotic Liquid Lake (islands present 9+ on 2d6)
15	Razorvine Tangles
16	Single Megaorganism

4: HABITAT TAGS

Use the tags as described above for worlds.

NEW STRANGE STARS WORLD TAGS

Archive: A great storehouse of information can be found on this world, either curated by the current civilization or left sealed by an ancient one.

Banking Center: This world has become a center for the financial industry.

Chauvinism: On some worlds particular genders or sophont types are viewed with contempt.

Luddite World: Some worlds fear the threat of societal change brought on by certain technologies and have chosen to limit or forbid them.

Ruins: This world has significant ruins present from some ancient civilization, perhaps even an unknown one

Strange Tech: Some isolated civilizations develop very unusual uses or relationships with their technology.

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