

STRANGE STARS

GAME
SETTING
BOOK



BY TREY CAUSEY

Strange Stars is a far-future space opera setting where Earth is only a legend and humanity's myriad descendants and creations have spread throughout the galaxy. It's a setting of classic space opera adventure like the works of E. C. Tubb or Jack Vance updated with elements of modern transhuman science fiction as written by Alastair Reynolds or Hannu Rajaneimi and presented with the visual aesthetics of '70s sci-fi films and comic books.

In 30 pages, this book is an introduction to the setting, not an exhaustive treatment. It's also structured differently than a lot of role-playing setting books, owing more to things like the Galactic Encounters series and any number of reference works for popular sci-fi franchises. It takes more of a "bottom-up" approach — focusing on characters and interesting details, building the wider world by implication — rather than a "top-down" approach of giving the big picture and then painting in the details. It's vague in some ways but vague to a purpose. Hopefully it will inspire you to create your own version of the setting rather than to establish a canon. It's meant to provide the imagination fuel — and the freedom — that watching *Star Wars* did when the world beyond the film consisted only of evocative details like "the Clone Wars" or "the Spice Mines of Kessel."

This book is also systemless and (with the exception of this introduction and the credits) written from an "in-world" perspective, so it can be used as a resource for players at the gaming table. Future releases will give rules for adapting the setting to a couple of different game systems and more coverage on some setting elements that may seem obscure here. There is also a short glossary and pronunciation guide on page 29 of this book.

More information about the setting can be found at the "Strange Stars Index" on the Sorcerer's Skull blog (www.sorcerersskull.blogspot.com/p/the-strange-stars.html). One post also includes a list of inspirations and influences.

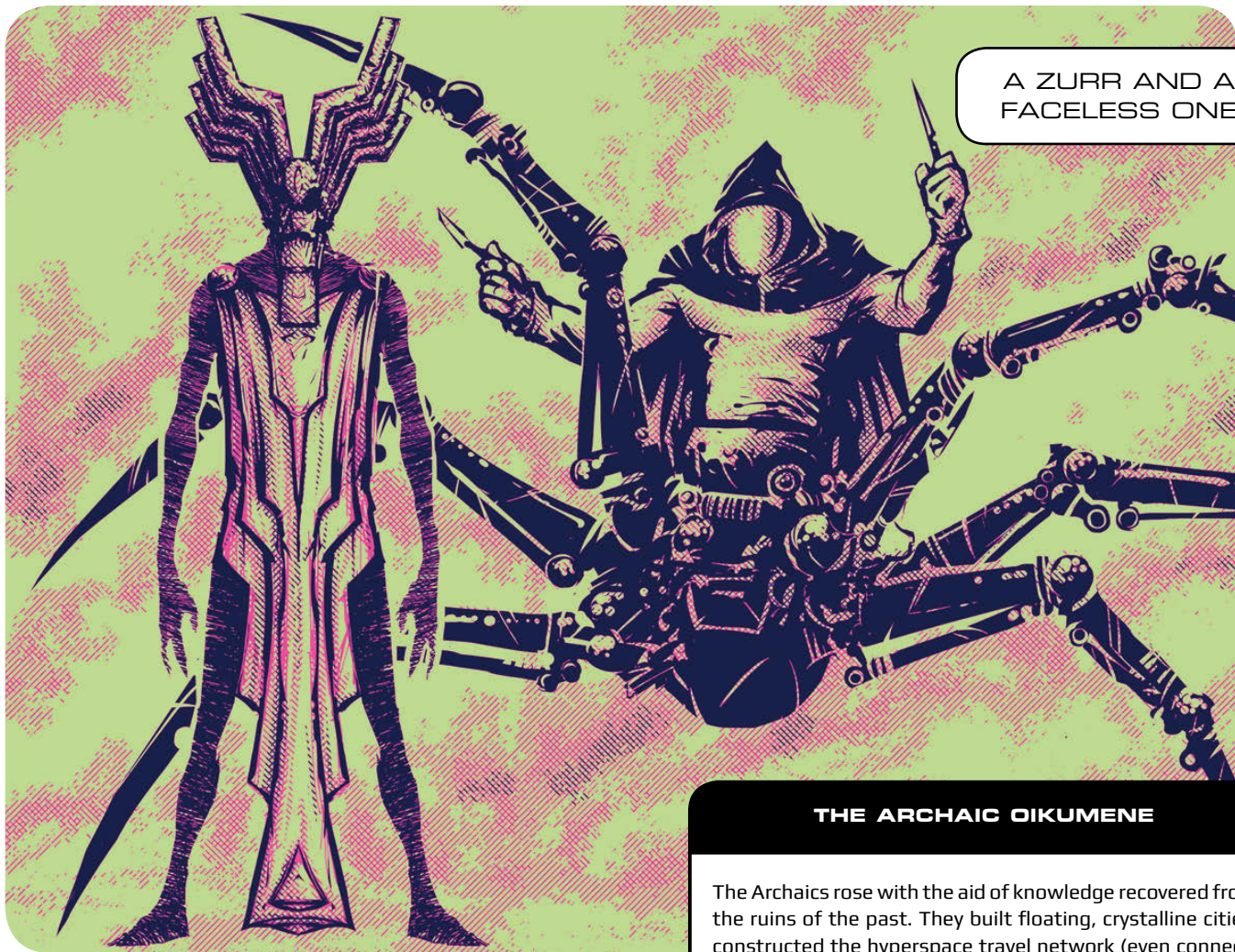
ARMCHAIR PLANET PRESENTS STRANGE STARS WRITTEN BY **TREY CAUSEY** LAYOUT & DESIGN BY LESTER B. PORTLY

ORIGINAL ART BY DAVID LEWIS JOHNSON & WACLAW WYSOCKI COVER ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC QUIGLEY ADDITIONAL ART BY JEZ GORDON & LESTER B. PORTLY

STOCK ART FROM FERNANDO RODRIGUES, FRAGILE STUDIOS, ANDREW SMITH, & THEE DEONKNIGHT AT DEVIANTART.COM, GIUSEPPE GERBINO, & NASA.GOV

PROOFREADING ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY MICHAEL MOSCRIP, SCOTT SIMMONS, & JACK SHEAR

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



A ZURR AND A FACELESS ONE

THE FOUR EPOCHS OF HUMAN SPACE:

LOST AGES

The history of paleo-humanity's rise on the fabled world of Old Earth, its dispersal across the stars, and its cladization into a myriad of forms is fragmentary at best — the result of societal collapse, transcendence events, data storage format wars, and outright censorship. Even Old Earth's exact location is uncertain.

THE DAYS OF OLD EARTH

THE ARCHAIC OIKUMENE

The Archaics rose with the aid of knowledge recovered from the ruins of the past. They built floating, crystalline cities, constructed the hyperspace travel network (even connecting the noospheres of their core worlds with superluminal relays), and engaged in planetary-scale engineering. Theirs was an age when a noble might rule an entire world populated by her clones and sophont warships fought grand battles for audiences in telepresence.

Something happened — something called the Great Collapse. Galactic civilization fractured into individual worlds, and some of those worlds slid back into savagery. Much of the available historical record of this time appears to have been deliberately altered to obscure events. The time separating the Great Collapse from the present isn't entirely clear, but may it be 1,000 standard years or more.

THE PRELAPSARIAN AGE

STRANGE STARS

“WE CIVILIZE; WE DO NOT GOVERN.” – THE RADIANT LORDS

THE DARK AGE

In the time following the Great Collapse, systems were largely isolated, and mysterious cultures rose and fell in what was once the core of human space.

The zurr are known from their iconography, some ritual sites with oddly angled monumental structures, and a few apparently functionless artifacts. They left no information technology or tools necessary for an advanced civilization behind, but their presence is attested on multiple worlds.

The Faceless Ones were a cabal of research-sadists who replaced their faces with featureless metallic masks that were actually incredibly powerful sensory and recording apparatus. Their goal was the exploration of the extremes of sensation, and they sought to archive all they could about their depraved experiments on those who fell into their hands.



THE RADIANT POLITY

The Radiant Polity directly ruled only a few worlds or habitats, but it claimed ultimate guardianship over the future of the entire human-descended tribe.

Through control of hyperspace network access, the Polity effectively controlled interstellar trade and influenced planetary governments. Membership in the Polity was ostensibly voluntary, yet each of its psybernetically enhanced lords wielded absolute power, checked only by other lords. Their mantra was: “We civilize; we do not govern. We end war; we do not wage it. We guard; we do not control. Our thoughts look always to the future.”

The Polity prohibited the export of certain memplexes between cultures, but this effort failed, and it was torn asunder by memetic conflict. The Instrumentality of Aom was born out of this struggle.

JISASA
PANC-ASHASH,
RADIANT LORD

THE LONG NIGHT

THE MODERN AGE

STRANGE STARS

CATEGORIES OF SOPHONTS

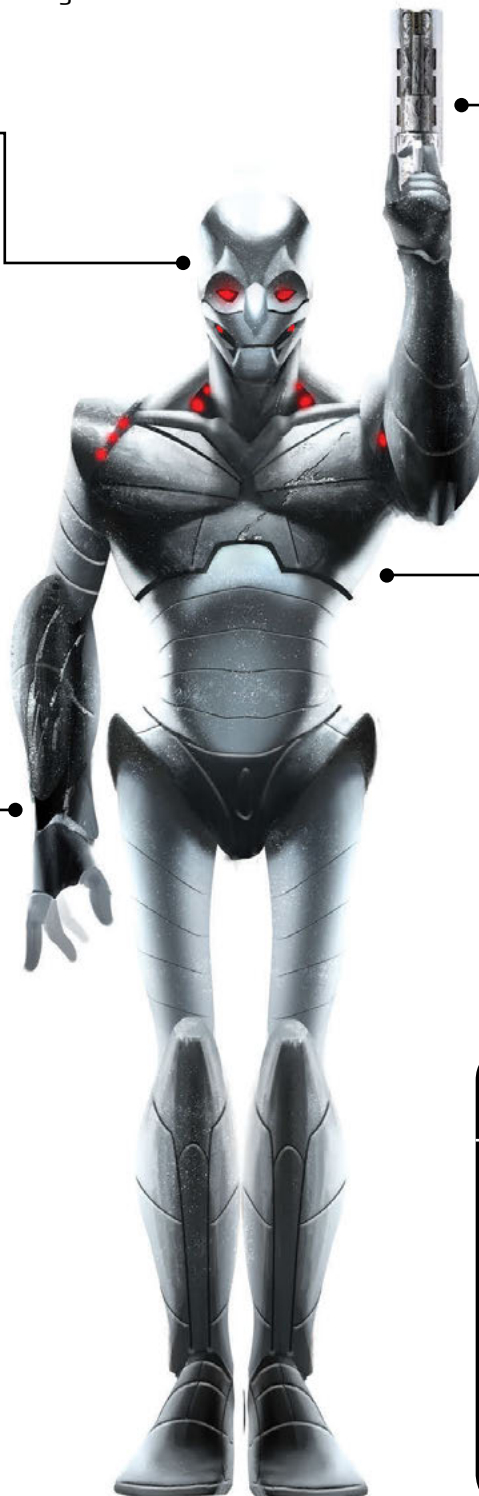
THE TRILLIONS OF SOPHONTS in known space can be grouped into one of three types or categories on a morphological basis: infosophonts, moravecs, and biologics. The divide between these categories is not always clear: Many infosophonts are copies of biologic minds or descendants of copies; artificial neural networks can be placed in biologic bodies as easily as inorganic ones.

Skull-like visage intimidates dueling opponents but is reconfigurable for jury trials

Ambidexterity is an advantage for a duelist

Dueling pistol fires a nanomissile barrage and countermeasures

Light armor is allowed in most jurisdictions



“FIRING SOLUTION COMPUTED.
IF IT PLEASURES THE COURT,
I WILL DELIVER MY CLOSING
ARGUMENT.”

LINCOLN-5

Lawyer and judicial duelist

On some miniarchist habitats, individuals are given broad latitude in the settling of disputes arising from extracontractual issues, and so dueling is in vogue. Lincoln-5 Rhadamanthus-beta-27 practices in the megapolis of Interzone on the orbital ring Circus. As befits a member of the moravec lineage whose template is an embodied partial copy of the famed legal mind, Rhadamanthus, Lincoln-5 is as adept in the courtroom as he is with his dueling pistol.

STRANGE STARS



BIOLOGICS

Examples: Paleo-humanity, the Star Folk bioships
Biologics include the descendants of organisms that evolved naturally (either on Old Earth or some other world), created organisms, and bioroids (biologic androids).



MORAVECS

Examples: The warrior-poets of Eridanus, Telosian moravec-supremacists
Moravecs (their name is derived from the surname of an Old Earth scientist-prophet) are self-replicating, sapient robots.



INFOSOPHONTS

Examples: the Wanderers, the Wise Minds of Interzone
Infosophonts (sometimes called ai) are digital minds independent of physical form. Some choose to live entirely in the noosphere, while others wear one or more bodies.

Famed Smaragdine synthasthete Lamorak Ultra and his hyehoon body-guard Rukh Ysola Arawi are both broadly human on the genetic level.

BIOLOGIC HUMANITY

Most known naturally evolved biologics are members of subfamily Homininae, though there are also uplifts and splices that contain genetic material from other (mostly Terran) species. There are sophonts that may be exobiologics but given the gaps in the historical record, this is difficult to ascertain definitively.

The human-descended biologics superficially resemble humans from centuries past, aside from a few cosmetic differences like skin color. The terms "baseline" and "near baseline" are sometimes used for members of this group that closely follow the genetics and appearance of ancient humans, though these terms are obviously imprecise. Beneath the surface, there are numerous small genetic tweaks and ubiquitous minor cybernetic enhancements. These vary from culture to culture.



STARSHIPS AND TRAVEL

SPACECRAFT VARY in appearance and use, but most of their systems are fairly standardized. Some of this similarity is due to trade between cultures, but there is another reason. The level of technology across the known galaxy is lower than in ages past; many ships currently in use are the products of previous civilizations or at least built from parts scavenged from ancient vessels.

STELLA STARLIGHT

Starship Captain

Motherless Child's transponder identifies her as a freighter registered in High Lonesome, but Stella Starlight and her ship are most often found docked in Interzone's low port on Circus. Starlight's got a reputation for toughness and a willingness to take on dangerous cargoes. She's also known to have a soft spot for hard-luck cases and a strong sense of justice, even when there's no profit in it.

Low slung holster with slug pistol loaded with configurable smart ammo

Stylish but functional clothing can go from the ship's bridge to an Interzone nightclub

Fashionable bracer computer is a signal relay and storage backup for her implants

"SHE'S FAST ENOUGH FOR YOU. WHAT'S THE CARGO?"

SALVAGE

The salvage of ancient derelicts or wrecks is an important (and lucrative) activity. Gravity generators and inertial suppressors are only two of the technologies many civilizations can exploit but can't manufacture themselves. Intact data systems are a particularly spectacular find. There is always the hope of engineering files executable in modern nanofactories.

ANCIENT STARSHIPS

The salvager holy grail would be one of the twelve great battleships of the Archaic Oikumene, vessels the size of cities with sophont minds. Some of these great ships (like *Terrible Swift Sword* and *Leviathan Smiles*) are known to have been destroyed. Others (like *Achilles' Last Stand*, *Fearful Symmetry*, and *Conspiracy of Ravens*) have disappeared completely from history, possibly restructuring themselves into vessels of different types.

HYPERSPACE GATES

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the Archaics is the hyperspace network. Though the means of the network's engineering (even much of the basics of hyperspatial physics) has been lost, current civilization is still able to make use of it to travel the stars faster than light. The rediscovery of a lost node is a major find, potentially introducing uncharted systems to interstellar civilization.

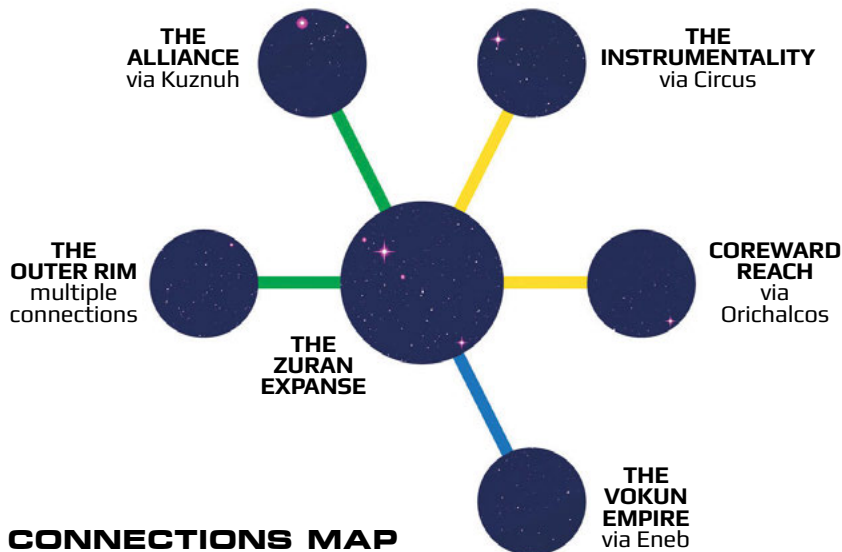
The topology of the network today is much simpler than in ancient times. In most cases, nodes only connect to one or two neighboring nodes. Active nodes have exit and entrance gates and terminal stations, located a safe distance away. These structures may date back centuries, a few even to the Oikumene. 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 PSI CONNECTION

The technology behind the nodes is at least partially psionic in nature. Specially trained psi-sensitives (or specially engineered sniffer animals) can detect inactive nodes. Re-activating one requires, in part, psionically transmitted passcodes. Psi-sensitive individuals tend to find hyperspace travel a bit uncomfortable. Many report the strange sensation of being watched.

REGIONAL HYPERSPACE CONNECTIONS



CONNECTIONS MAP

The travel distances through hyperspace have only a slight association with the distances in regular space, and the spatial relationship of two systems matters very little. Instead, congestion and poorly understood conduit properties ("bandwidth") play a greater role. By convention, the connections between nodes on maps are color coded based on the baseline human visible spectrum. For a given length, redder connections indicate faster travel times and bluer ones slower. Red connections, for example, typically mean average travel times between 18 and 90 ks, depending on length of the connection and other lesser variables. Violet connections might take 7 Ms or more.

THE OUTER RIM

THE OUTER RIM is the most sparsely settled region of known space; even in the days of the Archaic Oikumene, it was the frontier. Today, most of the inhabited worlds there are isolated and insular. Some are planet-bound and unaware that a star-faring civilization exists around them. Only the ksaas (p. 26) control more than one system — and they have little interest in joining galactic society.

YERAN QAR

Bounty Hunter

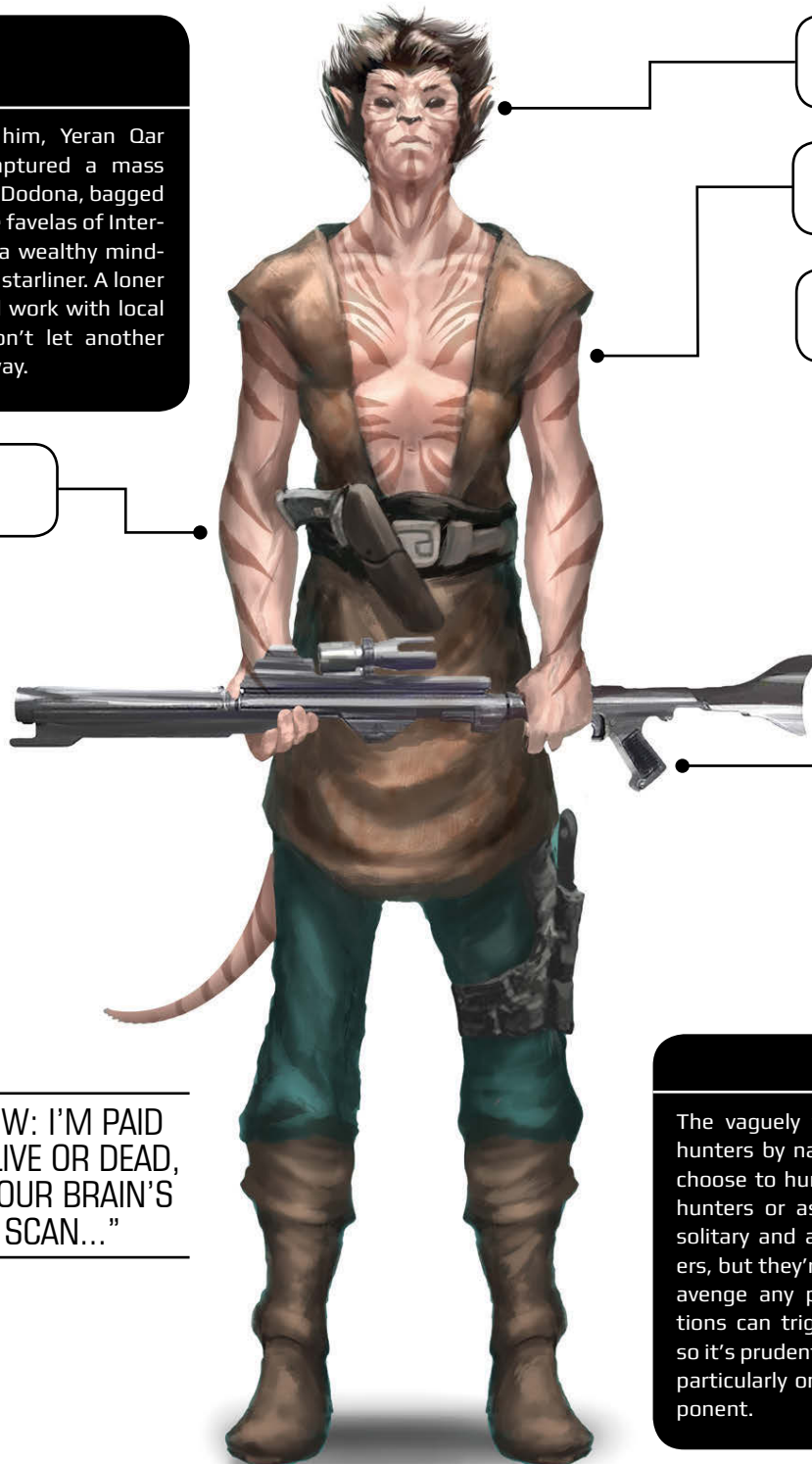
Like his mother before him, Yeran Qar hunts criminals. He's captured a mass murderer in the jungles of Dodona, bagged a notorious art thief in the favelas of Interzone, and brought down a wealthy mind-slaver in the ballroom of a starliner. A loner like most of his kind, he'll work with local law enforcement but won't let another bounty hunter get in his way.

Backup
pistol

Keen senses aid
tracking ability

No more body hair than
baseline humans

Heavy
plasma rifle



"JUST SO YOU KNOW: I'M PAID
WHETHER YOU'RE ALIVE OR DEAD,
JUST AS LONG AS YOUR BRAIN'S
INTACT FOR THE SCAN..."

DJÄGGA

The vaguely feline humanoid djägga are hunters by nature and instinct, and many choose to hunt other sophonts as bounty hunters or assassins. Djägga tend to be solitary and are often mistrustful of others, but they're loyal. They are also keen to avenge any perceived betrayal. Competitions can trigger their predator instincts, so it's prudent to avoid games with djägga, particularly ones involving a physical component.

STRANGE STARS



BOREAS World of Cold War

The moon Boreas is covered by an ocean eternally sheathed in ice. There's a war being fought beneath the ice between a non-native, blue-skinned, humanoid people called the Uldra and a native species known as the cold minds. The cold minds are vaguely like colonies of coral that sometimes extend for miles and use the deep sea volcanic vents as an energy source. Their mental processes evolved for a cold, low-energy environment and are laboriously slow compared to humans.

It took the cold minds decades to decide what to do about the invaders on their world and decades more to formulate their counterstrike. They weaponized Boreal sea life, even using microbiota to re-animate the dead — including the ancient, bioroid warbeasts the Uldra city-states had once used to fight each other.

The Uldra have destroyed cold minds, but the oceans are dark and deep, and their enemies too dispersed and resilient. Some have suggested attempts at negotia-

tion, but even if the Uldra could find a way to communicate with the slow cold minds, it could be generations before they reached any meaningful dialog.



FORTUNA IV Gamblers' Paradise

The Fortuna system boasts casinos, bordellos, and other pleasure stations in orbit around the gas giant, Fortuna IV. The most famous of the Fortunan casinos is the Wheel — a station designed to look like an ancient roulette wheel. It's rumored to be owned by Alys Eldorose, the famed and enigmatic gambler, whom some believe to be one of the original colonists whose minds sailed

out on a lightship at 0.1c before the time of the Archaic Oikumene.

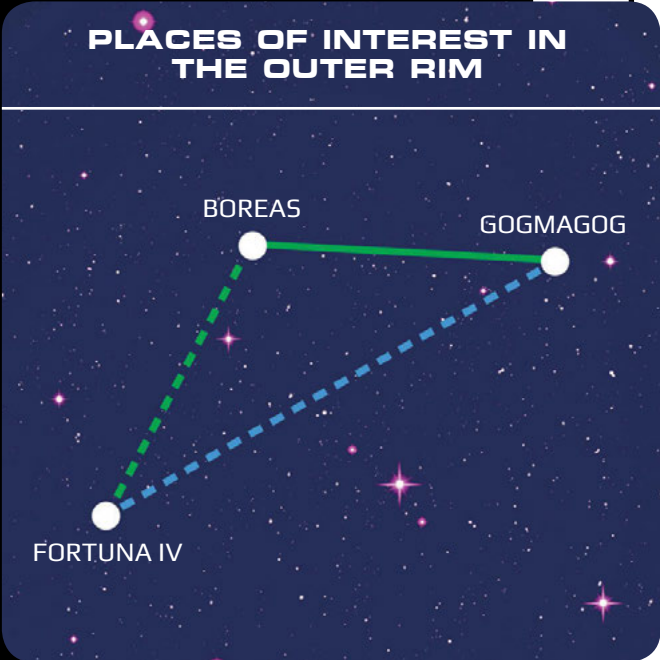
Alys also owns Solitaire (Fortuna II), the diamond planet. She leases rights to mining concerns, but mostly uses it for entertainment and gambling. Bot races on the planet's dark side offer feeds for teleoperation and telepresence to the casinos' patrons. It's rumored Alys may also have a data vault buried deep underground along the terminator, where the heat starts to climb to metal-liquefying temperatures.



GOGMAGOG Planet of Giant Robot Battles

Few galactic sporting events offer the sheer spectacle of the giant robot combats of Gogmagog. The humanoid robots are of unique design and tower anywhere from around 10 m to over 80 m. Mostly, they simply stand there; they may not move for years or even decades. Then, abruptly, they move to engage one of their fellows in hand-to-hand combat.

That's when the bot breaker gangs go into action. They have to work fast to salvage what they can from the defeated giant before swarms of von Neumann machines skitter and crawl from their underground lairs to repair the fallen gladiator — and disassemble the bot-breakers' tools and transport for raw materials. What the bot breakers can get away with they can sell to fringe scientists and inventors trying to duplicate exotic alloys or to wealthy collectors looking for an alien objet trouvé.



THE ALLIANCE

THE ALLIANCE is a unique example of interspecies cooperation on an interstellar scale. It was formed by seven peoples emerging from the dark age following the Great Collapse. Initially distrustful of each other, they came to fear the lawlessness of the Zuran Expanse and religious strife in the fragmenting Radiant Polity more than the sacrifice of a bit of their own sovereignty.

THELLUS AR

Force Leader

By the time he graduated from the agoge on Skarthak, Thellus Ar was a patrol leader. Through success in battle, he rose through the ranks to command the first company of Force 08. Thellus aspires to regain the quantum-edged thraxu blade wielded by Xura Ar, a hero of his line, who gave her life in the protection of a refugee convoy from a ssraad horde in the Alliance's infancy.



Virtually identical features to other thrax clone males

Armor decoration and helmet design are individualized

“REJOICE, COMRADES! TODAY PROMISES US ANOTHER CHANCE AT GLORY.”

Programmable - matter sword can be configured to produce a monomolecular edge

THRAX
The Alliance's greatest warriors are the thrax. A clone race created for conquest by a long-forgotten culture, they still structure their society along martial lines.

BLESH

Homeworld: Elysium, Solace System



The blesh are a gestalt species blending human and nonhuman. Their insectoid bioroid forms grow like fruit from cybernetic trees on their homeworld. Their minds are a fusion of post-sapient alien intelligence with one of 1,803 digitized human minds downloaded from a crashed ark. Blesh are a peaceful species with reverence for other sophonts. Perhaps due to the human component of their minds, they have a strong curiosity about ancient human artifacts.

DEVA

Homeworld: Altair System



Resembling beings out of the paleo-spiritual memes of Earth, the winged deva are the most mysterious of the Alliance's members. The deva are supportive of the Alliance and promote peace but are largely aloof from the affairs of other cultures. They are primarily concerned with their Great Work: the repair of 10 moon-sized artificial worlds in their home system. These are said to be huge brains and possibly components of an even greater mind.

GNOME

Homeworld: Dzrrn, Ruggedo System (Smaragdine designation)



The gnomes are small humanoids who live and mine within asteroids. Their society resembles that of eusocial insects; they have two castes (managers and workers) and only one Mother at a time produces young per clan. A gnome Mother is actually an external womb generated by the mating of a female and male. Gnomes are gregarious and inquisitive but slow and deliberate in their thought process.

HYEHOON

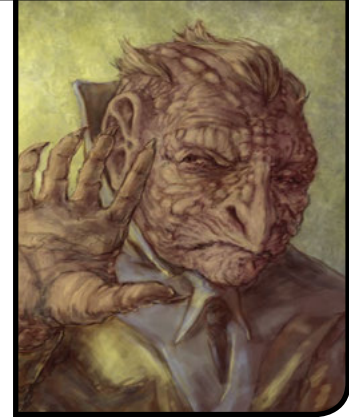
Homeworld: Omu, Karura System



The hyehoon are humanoids spliced from avian and hominid DNA. They are a dynamic and inquisitive culture, producing explorers, scientists, diplomats and traders. The hyehoon face internal strife from conflict with the minority religious faction known as the Eden Seekers, who reject their legendary creator, the engineer Anat Morao, and seek to devolve their species to nonsapience by purifying their avian genome.

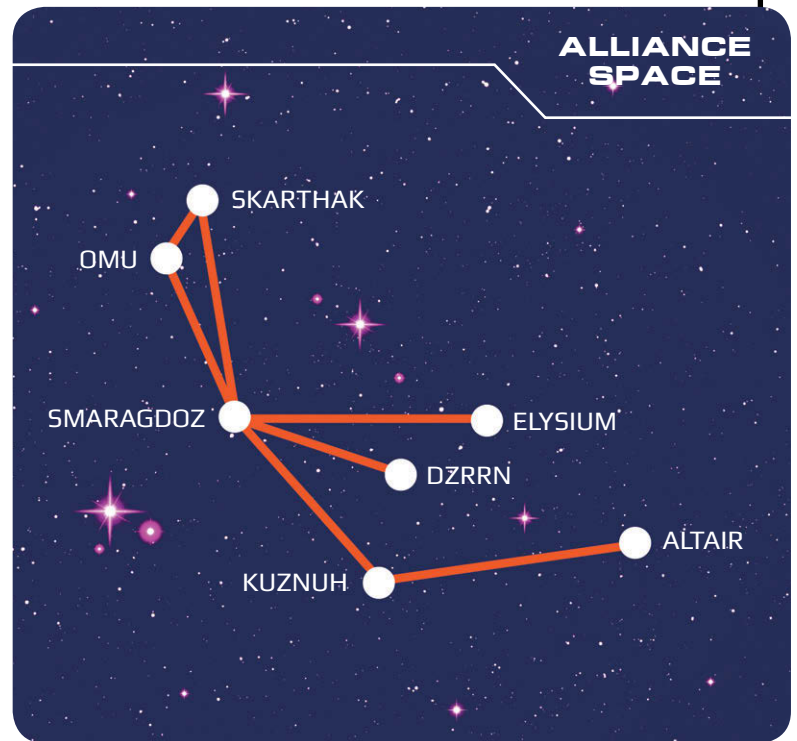
NESHEKK

Homeworld: Kuznuh, Iksat System



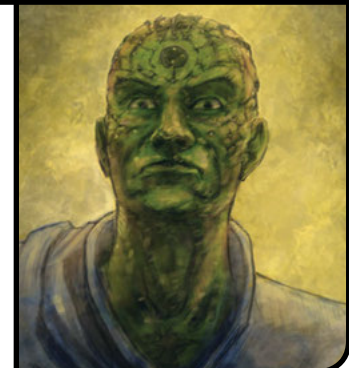
The neshekk banking and investment clans are the financial backbone of the Alliance. They have a reputation for ethical behavior and conservative investment and also for strict adherence to the letter of contracts. Neshekk are greatly concerned (possibly obsessed) with security and privacy. They never go into public without their elaborate privacy screens/firewalls, called *nizara*, in place. Off-worlders are restricted to certain areas of Kuznuh, and it is a misdemeanor to view any public space unfiltered by the metascape.

ALLIANCE SPACE



SMARAGDINE

Homeworld: Smaragdoz, Lurline System



The Smaragdines are the visionaries of the Alliance, known for their psi abilities. All citizens are required to have at least rudimentary skills because the crystalline megapolis of Smaragdoz is ruled by a group mind Consensus: The captured thoughts and desires of the citizens form an entity of pure thought that makes laws by decree. All Smaragdine children are tested for psi abilities, and the most promising are sent to one of a number of academies.

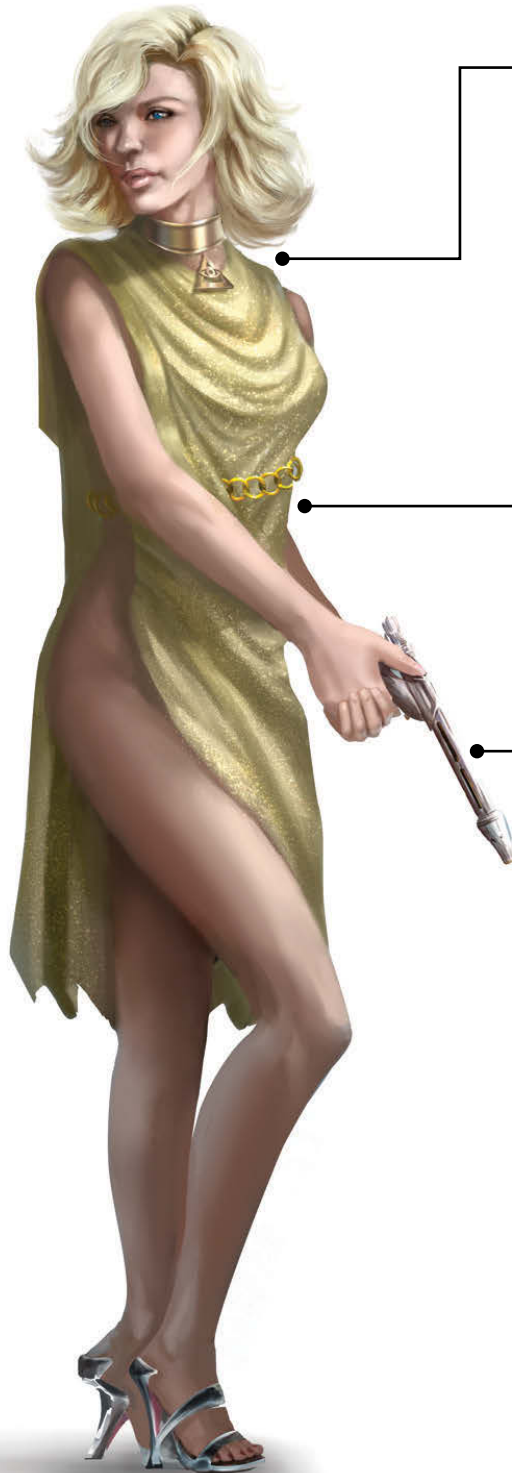
THE INSTRUMENTALITY

THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF AOM is a theocracy controlling several systems spinward of the old core of the Archaic Oikumene and providing spiritual guidance for the faithful scattered throughout many more. It aggressively seeks to expand its sphere of influence, particularly into the coterminous members of the League of Habitats. The Instrumentality grows primarily by peaceful conversion, but it's willing to use more violent means.

SIANA ELIZOND

Special Operative

Interstellar politics demand the Instrumentality use subtlety at times to achieve its goals. Agent Siana Elizond is a soldier in that softer war. She acts as a spokesperson, a lobbyist, and a quasi-diplomat, in order to advance the Instrumentality's interests in the League and in the Alliance. Sometimes harsher measures must be taken — but taken quietly. Elizond is ready to act in those situations, as well.



Instrumentality symbol pendant

Fashionable sparkle-silk evening gown

Concealable laser pistol

"RELIGIOUS FANATICISM?
NO, LEGATE. I'M THE AGENT OF
THE INSTRUMENTALITY'S
COLD PRACTICALITY."

WHO IS AOM?

Aom can be many things (depending on the context and the audience) but is generally described as both the godhead and the godhead-receptive-spiritual-being complex. Church liturgy often uses litanies of statements of opposites to analogize the ineffable Aom.

STRANGE STARS



CIRCUS

Largest member of the League of Habitats

Circus is an ancient megastructure with a habitable surface area roughly 20 times that of Old Earth. Located at the nexus of hyperspace conduits from three territories, Circus has long been a center of trade. The most famous area of Circus is the megapolis Interzone, which (including all of its favelas and industrial parks) covers an area slightly less than the surface area of Sol IV. Spacers say there is no law in Interzone, but this is not strictly true. It's a demarchy with minimalist government. The Wise Minds (ancient infosophonts) randomly select the city's anonymous rulers, the Tsadikim, from its populous. A Tsadik (with the advice of the Minds) can create laws, though these must be approved by a majority of the other Tsadikim. Any Tsadik can supercede the decree of another in the same way. The only immutable laws are "property and self are sacred," "self-defense and common defense are a justification for violence," and "a contract is a contract."

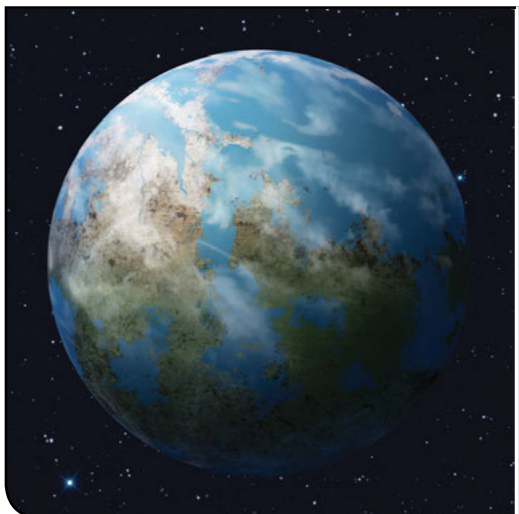
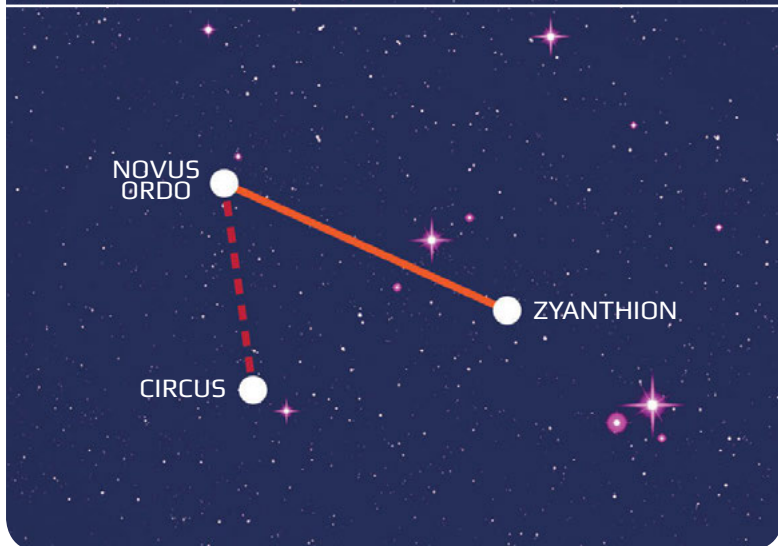
NOVUS ORDO

Holy Seat of the Instrumentality



Once a prominent world in the Radiant Polity, this was where two memetic engineers became interested in ancient forms of spirituality and embarked on a private project to synthesize a belief system from the commonalities of the "paleo-faiths" still extant within the human sphere. Today, the re-named Novus Ordo is the bustling political and sacerdotal hub of the Instrumentality.

SELECT WORLDS OF INSTRUMENTALITY SPACE



ZYANTHION

Society with a reputation economy

To the red-skinned Zyann, reputation is all. It forms their "currency" (*éclat*) and is awarded and tracked in the social media noosphere. Zyann who have accumulated high *éclat* (whether from artistry, craftsmanship, bravery, or skill as a lover) can become powerful in their society, able to occupy manors and estates, and to assume self-chosen titles of nobility — as long as their *éclat* remains sufficiently high.

Because of the supremacy of reputation, Zyann honor is easily offended. Off-world visitors can easily find themselves challenged to a duel. Consultation of a lawyer of at least moderate *éclat* is advised in such situations, as there are face-saving ways of avoiding the deadly art of Zyann swordsmanship in many cases.

COREWARD REACH

THE COREWARD REACH is on the frontier of known space in the current era, but in ages past it was second only to the Archaic Oikumene's core as a center of human civilization. The region's ancient and eclectic cultures are currently under threat from the advance of the Locusts, a spaceborne swarm of alien von Neumann machines that devour any habitats they encounter, and expansionist states like the Instrumentality and the Vokun Empire.

ESME-SEPTIMA

Oneirochemist

The Esme gen-sisters are typically funneled into customer service and advertising, but Esme-Septima was the first rated level 4 for aptitude in chemistry of her genline, and had the highest scores of her birth cohort in that area on the noviate exam. She has garnered three nominations for awards for novel compounds, winning one for a development in which she was lead designer.

"WE MADE SOME IMPROVEMENTS ON THE LAST VERSION. I THINK WE'VE FINALLY GOT A COMPOUND CO-MARKETABLE IN THE EROTIC AND NIGHTMARE PRODUCT LINES."

PHANTASISTS

The Phantasists are renowned as dream merchants. No purveyors of mere sims or other mass-produced neural trickery, they use ancient arts to craft neurochemical cocktails that deliver an individualized, specific, and vivid oneiric experience for high-paying clientele.



Vial contains ai-guided compound testing in-process

Intense focus on her craft

Laboratory uniform of the Chemist Guild

EIDOLON

The sky city of Eidolon is the home of the Phantasists. Believed to have been a folly constructed by an Archaic plutocrat, it was once home to an artists' colony who created fanciful bio-art monsters that still roam the ecologically damaged surface of the planet Phobetor below.

STRANGE STARS



GAEA Mystery Copy of Old Earth

The planet Gaea is one of the wonders of known space: It's an exact replica of Old Earth down to the landmasses. Biologically, it differs markedly from the homeworld of humanity. The biosphere forms one gigantic mind, and the most independent and intelligent of its constituent programs are the virids, primitive humanoids with skin of various shades of green (due to the presence of symbiotic cyanobacteria) and foliage-like hair. All virids have nanites in their bodies linking them with Gaea, whom they think of as the Great Mother. Gaea's consciousness (if the term is relevant for such an alien intellect) is too distributed to interact in a verbal way without great effort, but

virids experience dreams and visions that they view as messages from her. It is believed that Gaea and the virids were engineered (or at least modified), but what ancient power was responsible and for what purpose?



ORICALCOS The Golden World

Orichalcos is one of the richest civilizations and the preeminent economic power of the Reach. Orichalcosans are humanoids with metallic skin tones ranging from dull brass to bright gold. There are two distinct populations: the dwarf aristocracy, and commoners of more standard height. The environment of Orichalcos is inhospitable, so the aristocracy and their retinues live in domed habitats, while the rest of the population lives

in orbit. Other than official ceremonies, the aristocrats spend their time in leisure pursuits, entertaining the populace with their escapades broadcast on social media. The true rulers and administrators are a class of capitalists called Optimates. They collect the money from the aristocrats' holdings and theoretically keep it in trust for their masters, but clever accounting practices ensure it is all reinvested or paid out in bonuses.



RUNE Sorcerers & Dragons

Rune is a world at a medieval level of technology ruled by wizards and bedeviled by monsters — or so it appears. The magic of its ruling class of wizards is thought to be psi, though the wizards exhibit illusion production abilities virtually unknown in the rest of the galaxy. The most fearsome foes of the wizards and their people are the

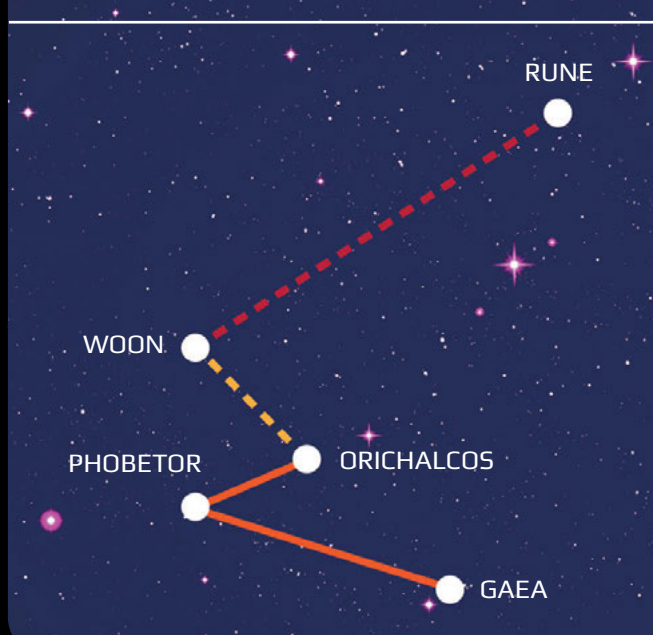
dragons. The dragons are large, vaguely reptilian bipeds with psi abilities of their own. They are theorized to be the degenerate descendants of the stranded crew of either an exploratory vessel or a military scoutship. The adolescent dragons are social creatures most numerous in equatorial areas, but older adults are mostly solitary and establish large territories. They view humans as animals and potential (though not preferred) prey. Periodically dragons become extremely acquisitive, gathering or stealing items of value, particularly shiny objects, and lining their lairs with them.



WOON World of the Bomoth

Woon is the home moon of the bomoth, a species resembling giant caterpillars and renowned as musicians. A popular theory (likely suggested by their appearance) is that bomoth are a larval form of some other organism. Visitors to the underground mushroom forests of their home moon occasionally report sightings of butterfly-winged creatures resembling human females flitting through the twilight. Such sightings are dismissed as the result of exposure to the psychoactive fungi spores in the atmosphere.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN THE COREWARD REACH



THE VOKUN EMPIRE

THE VOKUN EMPIRE lies in the trailing direction from what was the once core of the Archaic Oikumene. The vokun are once-fierce conquerors in decline. As they age, they become progressively more obese until they are immobile without use of their conveyances. The elder Vokun direct the younger in administration of the empire, but increasingly they're concerned only with political maneuvering and decadent games.

MULZAKESH

Lord of A Minor House

Mulzakesh son of Katapaxu, is the nominal head of a Vokun trade mission to Circus. He delegates most of the actual work to his ibglibdishpan subordinates while busying himself with intrigues aimed at raising the fortunes of his House.

Disdainful expression meant to show *aojanga*, "imperious will"

Braided queue preferred by some Vokun over the martial topknot

Girth denoting early middle age

Flying chair compensates for age-related loss of mobility

"YOUR IMPERTINENCE WILL NOT GO UNPUNISHED."

ENGINEERS

Homeworld: The Nests (a group of habitats), Mnumra System



The Engineers (*mnadnzat*; *mnaat sing.*) are responsible for much of the Empire's technology. Though humanoid, they have characteristics like Paleo-Earth crustaceans, including eight limbs and a metallic carapace. All the engineers have cybernetic enhancements and symbiotic nanites. They can back up their minds for download into new bodies should their old ones be damaged beyond repair. Engineers make

poor fighters, but their aptitude for technology makes them excellent technicians and (of course) engineers. Though they are essential to the Empire's function, the Vokun keep them under close control due to a fear of artificial intelligence.

IBGLIBDISHPAN

Homeworld: Eneb, Ushkalish System



The Vokun have a distrust of disembodied minds, so they employ "humanoid computers" in the form of ibglibdishpan savants. Ibglibdishpan neural structure and training make them logical and dispassionate — ideal accountants, administrators, and archivists. Some are trained in interpreting the emotions of other humanoids and are given careers in law or diplomacy. Ibglibdishpan themselves are notoriously difficult

to read; their expressions are almost always masks of perfect serenity. Their mental structure is not without problems, however; they are prone to neural deadlocks, crashes, or other forms of madness.

KUATH

Homeworld: Utuan, Matari System



The Kuath are known throughout the galaxy as the fanatically conditioned shock troops of the Empire. They are seldom seen outside of their 2.5 m tall bio-armor suits, but they are near baseline humans, rarely older than their teens. The real Kuath are the culture these adolescents hail from, a Neolithic people living in coastal settlements with a symbiotic relationship with marine invertebrate collective intel-

ligences known as *Naga Ma* — Dragon Mothers. The Dragon Mothers (under threat of destruction by Vokun military might) surrendered and were forced to provide armored and drugged Kuath soldiers as tribute.

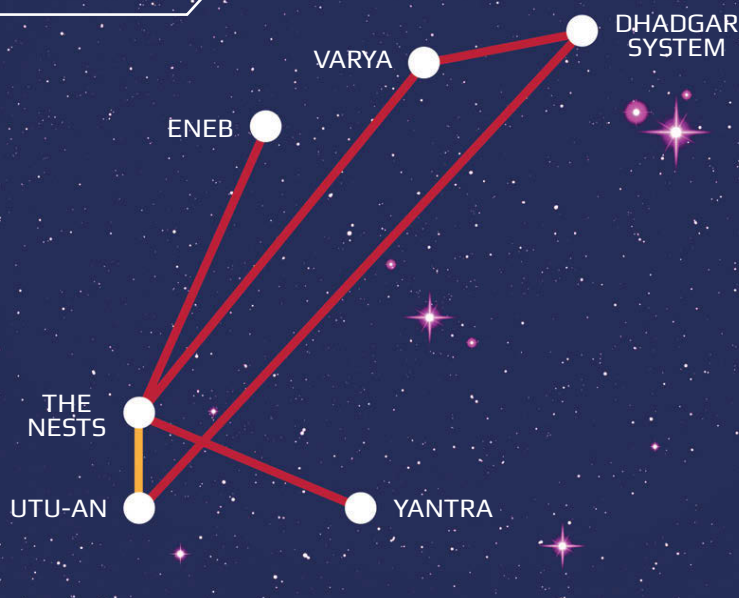
VOIDGLIDERS

Homeworld: None, confined to the Dhadgar System



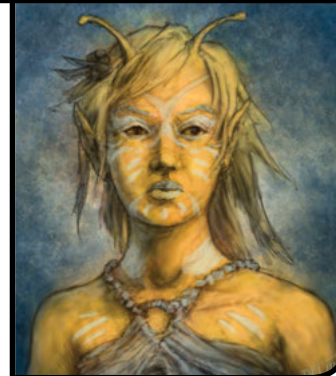
Voidgliders are vacuum-adapted humanoids who were considered a nuisance by the Vokun until their natural ability to detect hyperspace nodes was discovered. The Vokun continue to let the voidgliders live in their clan groups, but they have confined all they could find to a reservation within the asteroid belt of one system. They take volunteers to serve as scouts for their star navy.

VOKUN EMPIRE



YANTRANS

Homeworld: Yantra, Suryana System



The Yantrans are a primitive people with a pervasive cultural belief in non-violence whose idyllic world is used as a place of recreation by the Vokun elite. There are signs of that an advanced civilization once inhabited Yantra: The environment has been finely tuned, nanotechnology (though dormant) still permeates the biosphere, and what appear to be primitive stone structures (shrines, mostly, for the superstitious Yantrans) actually show complex femto-level engineering. Vokun occupation of Yantra has been plagued by random network and equipment failures and a higher than usual number of disappearances and accidental deaths.

THE ZURAN EXPANSE

THE ZURAN EXPANSE is without central authority and contains many isolated and damaged worlds. It occupies territory that was once the cradle of human and transhuman civilization until the Great Collapse. Old Earth is believed to be located somewhere in the Expanse, though the most likely candidate for the Sol System is quarantined by aggressive posthuman entities.

IN A CANTINA IN THE ZURAN EXPANSE

HENOK-73 KASHCHEY **Wanderer Avatar**

A remote for the hypersophont, asteroid-sized brain Kashchey. Wearing Henok-73 allows the Wanderer to observe and interact in a more personal way with lesser sophonts. Is it just xir curiosity that has Henok-73 here, or something else?

UBARD ELRANN **Aurogov Rep**

Elrann is looking for opportunities to pass on Aurogov self-help software. He's the top rep in his region, and he wants to keep it that way. When installed, the software slowly evolves into a non-sapient mind emulation of the founder — The Prime. Its on-going audits and critiques of the thought and behavior of the user lead to progressive behavior modification toward the Aurogov ideal.

BELETH **Algosian Procurer**

The bioroid Algosians are the former playthings and servitors of the Faceless Ones and have taken up their creators' torture cult. Beleth, and other operatives like her, kidnap victims from clubs and bars to take to the cult's hidden enclaves.

TUPALU SWEETS **Boma Musician**

Jook aficionados say Tupalu Sweets is the best vibratrumpet player in the whole Expanse. Tupalu doesn't let the praise go to his head. Good chreech and a gig are all he needs to keep things copacetic.



DZRI NXANGA **Ngghrya Bounty Hunter**

Dzri has tracked his quarry across lightyears, and today he's going to catch her. So *yaa'hii* — the psi-like tracking ability of his people — tells him. This ability is believed to be the result of the neural equivalent of a time loop logic computer that uses telepathic data sent back through time from the ngghrya's future mind, for error correction.

GANELON LAO **Magi Gambler**

These days, Lao makes more money gambling than telling fortunes, but he still has his Zener Tarot deck when a special client comes around. Like all Magi, Lao has a modified neural structure leading to enhanced intuition and lateral thought processes, and occasional bursts of precognition.

MILBUR VECH **Deodand**

Vech is suffering from a run of bad luck, but that's the way it is when you're a Penitent — or Deodand, as the rest of known space calls them. For crimes they can no longer remember, they've been cursed with immortality by a posthuman entity. Any time a Deodand dies, it awakens in a new clone body, delivered mysteriously to the squalid Penance habitat.

AKO ASTRA **STARSHINE** **Star Folk**

Starshine has kept the party going since her gang crashed through this part of space megasecs ago. The Box glimmered "party here," and so here they partied. Trance-dancing on a-go-glo and color-bombing on plox makes the cycles pass, transcendent.



AYGO
Home of the Zhmun

A domed city is the only civilization on Aygo. There, the invertebrate zhmun live in opulent splendor, relying on the service of their slaves and the toil of offworlders in the zhmun-owned mining concerns on the system's

gas giants. Some zhmun use hydrostatic pressure and the ability to alter the rigidity of their tissues to hold themselves in a roughly humanoid shape. Zhmun who can't achieve consistent humanoid appearance are second-class citizens — "globs."



DESHRET
Ghosts in the Desert

Deshret was terraformed in an earlier age, but is now slipping back to uninhabitability. It would likely have been abandoned to wild nanite monsters and hostile natives if it weren't for the treasure there. Sandminers sift the red dust for fragments of code

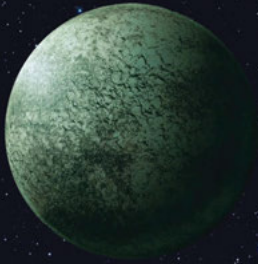
and the rare whole artifact left from the Great Collapse. Tombrobbers steal ancient mind copies from underground data-vaults to sell into info-slavery. The thin, green-skinned Ogüptans control all this commerce from the Moph spaceport.



LIBRARY OF ATOZ-THELN
Repository of Knowledge

Built before the Great Collapse, the Library contains the noospheric archives of many worlds from the time of the Archaic Oikumene and before and significant physical media from cultures both human and nonhu-

man. The Library's inhabitants and staff are the humanoid Atozians, whose ancestors have worked in the Library since before the dark ages. Only they know the encrypted, ceremonial language that serves as a key to the elaborate classification system for the Library's holdings.



MORRGNA
Amazon World

Morrgna is the moon-sized artificial habitat of the Sisterhood, an all-female clade of mercenaries. Though their war wombs once grew hives on several worlds, they now have only one queen and one army. All Sisters are cloned from less than a hundred

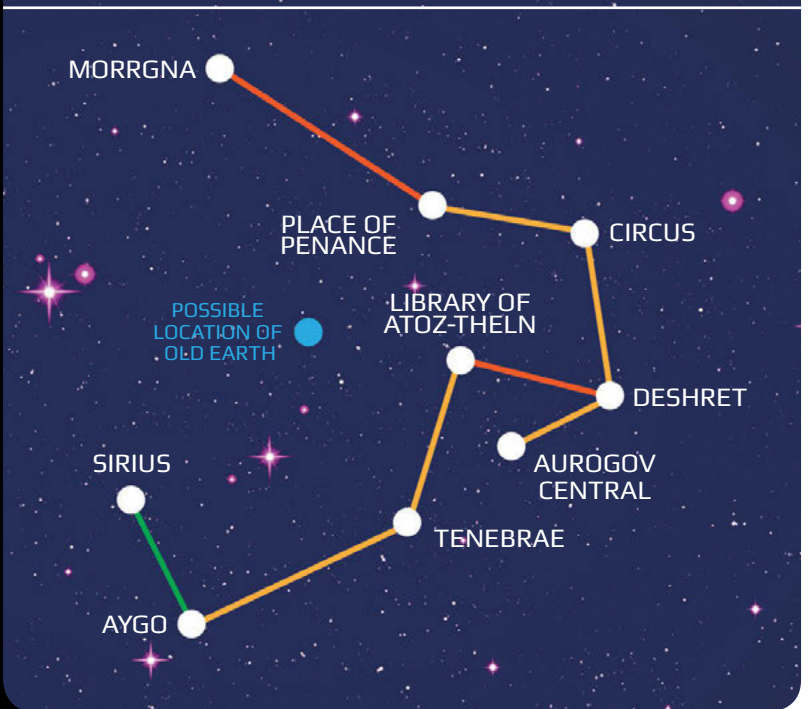
genotypes but are modified for their caste function.



SIRIUS
Here Be Monsters

This binary system is home to the ssraad. The green ssraad control ancient habitats in orbit around Sirius A. The only non-ssraad they allow in the system are their slaves (and future meals). Their rivals, the blue ssraad, nest in stolen asteroid habitats huddled close to the cinder of Sirius B. Both ssraad groups launch raids into other systems.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN THE ZURAN EXPANSE



TENEBRAE
Gloom and Labyrinths

Tenebrae holds the ruins of two previous civilizations. The second was the zurr, who built three black stone labyrinth structures the size of small cities. Artifacts are found in the labyrinths (small sculptures, pieces of zurr masks, personal

items from the first human civilization), but these are of little value compared to the pentachorons. These glossy black pyramids, sometimes found in alcoves in the walls, can be used to detect hyperspace nodes. The labyrinths are guarded by the dwarfish skulkers, who shun bright light and are utterly hostile.

NOMADS

SOME CLADES have no fixed homeworld. The Magi are itinerant fortune tellers and mystics who blend into wider starfaring society. The Wanderers, hypersophont minds the size of asteroids, are practically habitats themselves. The Kosmoniks and Star Folk live most of their lives aboard starships, traveling between worlds. Kosmoniks are dispersed throughout known space but are most common in the Zuran Expanse. Star Folk are encountered along their circuitous routes between civilized worlds.

TANGO KREE

Kosmonik Tech

Tango Kree is the verbal translation of his name in Kosmonik sign language. He is a mid-rank outer hull technician on the vessel *Thirteen Cherenkov Blue*. Tango is satisfied with his station, but his marriage klatch thinks he is not living up to his potential: He should be a chief inscriber by now! He has a taboo against engineering work ever since he saw a sign written in the cosmic dust scouring of the surface runes.



Mask protects against hard vacuum, among other functions

[CROSSED HANDS], [PALMS DOWN] + [FINGERS SPREAD], [HEAD SHAKE]
("UNREPAIRABLE")

Laser welding torch

Prehensile feet

KOSMONIKS

The Kosmoniks are space-adapted and acclimated to hyperspace. They are traders and sometimes pirates. They live and travel in ovoid, rune-inscribed ships or operate node terminal stations. Kosmoniks are friendly but superstitious and given to finding hidden meaning and seeing signs in events.

COMMUNICATION

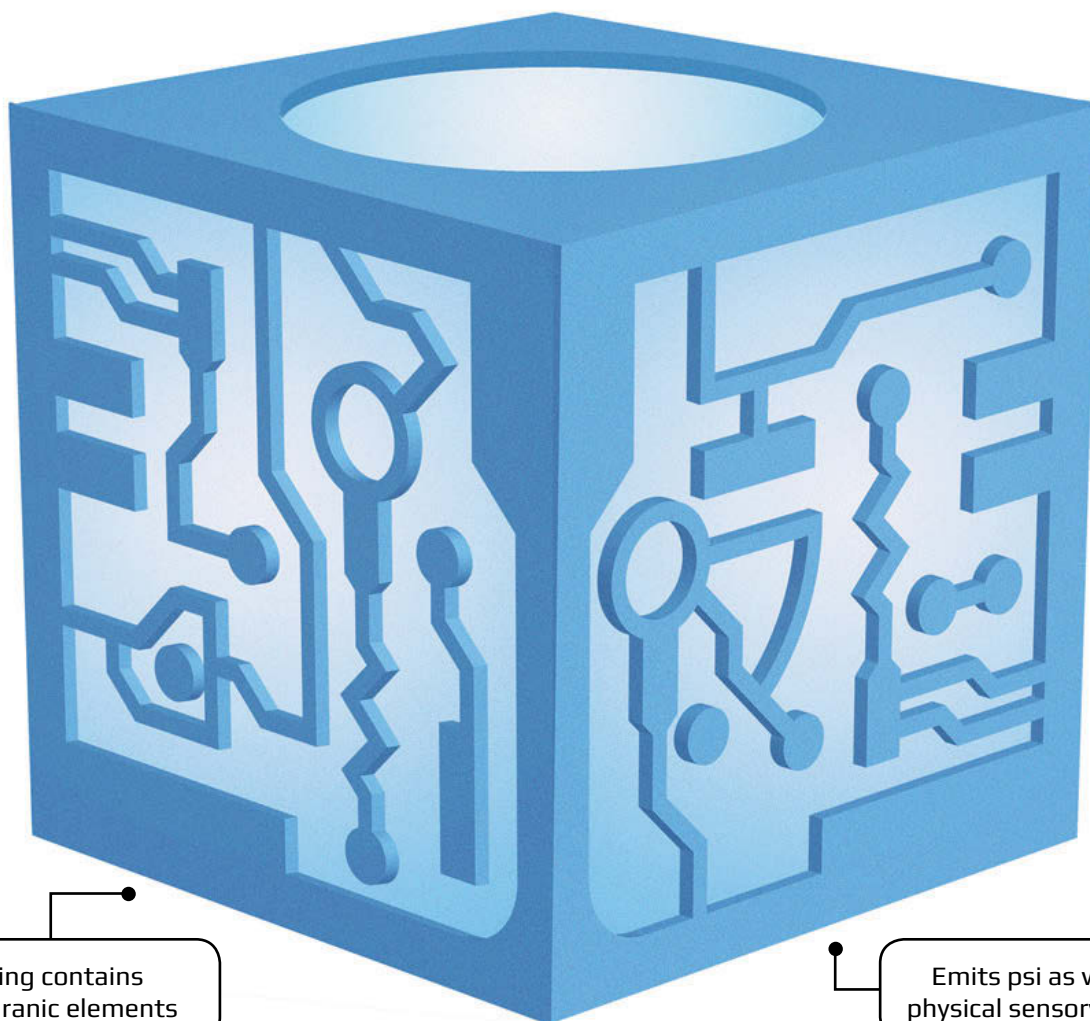
All Kosmoniks are mute; They communicate with each other via sign language but also carry translators.

STRANGE STARS

S'TA ZOKU [STAR FOLK]

The Star Folk travel between worlds in caravans of living starships. They declare festivals on planets where they make landfall, sharing eclectic, primitivist music, non-fabricated wares, psychedelic drugs, and xenophilic sexual encounters. In passing, they impart facets of their quasi-religious philosophy (a mishmash of elements of ancient mysticism) that embraces the seemingly conflicting elements of radical individualism and universal interconnectedness. They also play practical jokes and minor confidence games meant as performance art on authority figures and those they consider too narrow-minded.

Star Folk of all ages presumably exist, but the ones most frequently encountered as visitors to other societies are in their teens or twenties — or at least that's how they appear. Some engage in radical body-shaping, modifying their baseline form or changing their sex on a temporary basis.



Casing contains
transuranic elements

Emits psi as well as
physical sensory signals

NUMEN BOX

Groups of Star Folk youths share sophont devices that may be the product of a long-dead culture. The boxes are attuned to mental states of their associated groups; they emit sounds, and their surfaces display changing color patterns that act to reinforce group cohesion and mental well-being. Star folk have formed something of a cargo cult around the boxes and seldom make significant decisions without consulting these devices.

PIRATES

ROBBERY IN SPACE is a lucrative (if dangerous) trade. The nature of hyperspace travel tends to mean most of it takes place in-system rather than in open space. For this reason, most pirates are members of local gangs. There are two infamous pirate groups that operate on a wider scale: the Scavengers, who are a nomadic society based around plunder, and the Zao Corsairs, who permit franchises of their organization so long as certain operating procedures are adhered to.

Spectrum-enhancing optical prosthetic

Industrial-style cybernetic enhancements

MUKURO

Scavenger

A near-baseline human of some heavy-worlder clade, Mukuro joined the Scavengers as a child, after his home was destroyed by the Locusts. He has based his anachronistic piratical persona on bootleg sims of Zao pirates, and has been known to force captives to “walk the plank” out of an airlock.

“ENOUGH! NOW INTO THE AIRLOCK WITH YE.”

SCAVENGERS

A menace on the Coreward Reach, these opportunistic plunderers follow the Locusts, a vast swarm of von Neumann machines that devour any habitats they encounter. The Scavengers perform hit-and-run raids before the arrival of the swarm, then their fleet sweeps up any surviving craft once the swarm passes. Scavengers commonly have obvious and primitivist cybernetics, the better to frighten victims.

Hyper-musculature common to heavy-worlder genemods

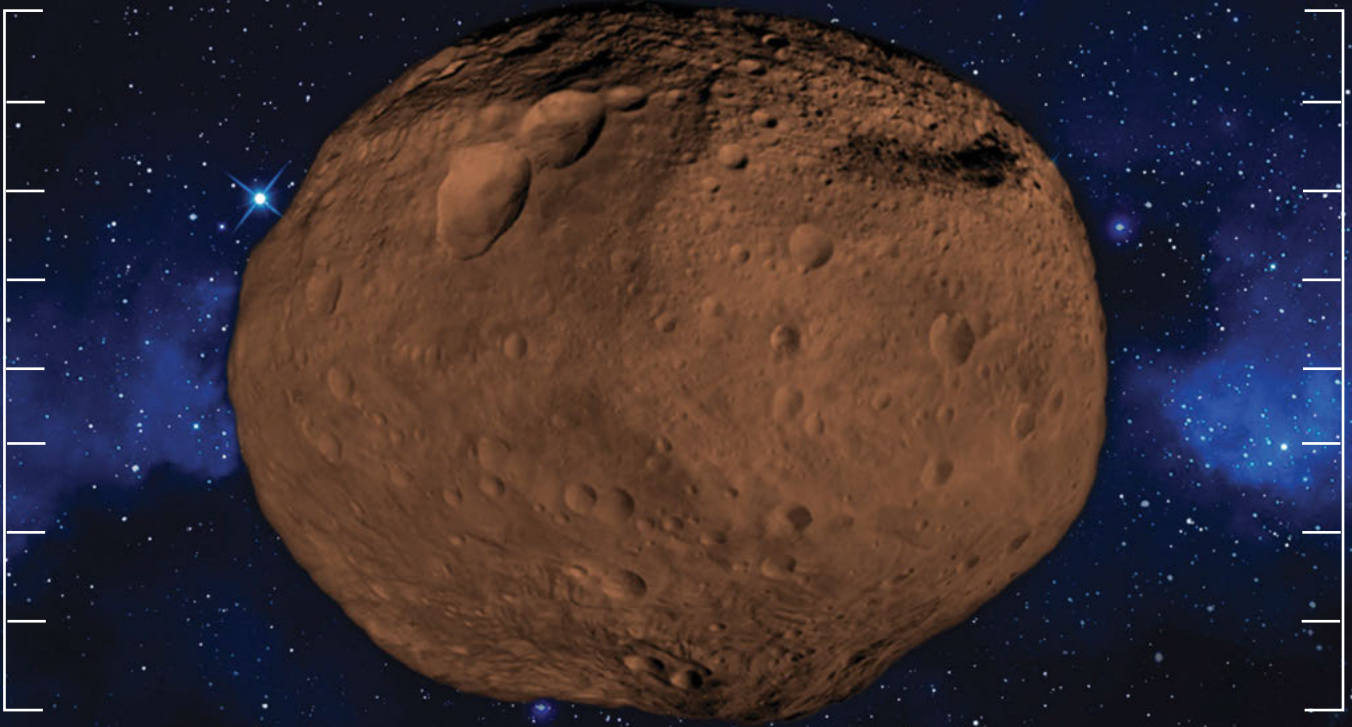
Ceramic-edged cutlass



ZAO CORSAIRS

The Zao are an infamous group of space pirates. Their brazen crimes and theatrical flair have made them favorites as villains and anti-heroes in 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.

NARAKA Zao Pirate Base



Formerly a Radiant Polity penal asteroid, it was taken over by the inmates during the memetic wars. Legend has it the takeover was preceded by one of the prison's rehabilitation programs being replaced by hackers with a sim mixing elements of various ancient adventure and crime narratives. The asteroid has served as the pirates' base since. The asteroid is cloaked in a defensive dust that allows only authorized craft to pass unscathed.

ZAO CORSAIR BANNERS



Standard of the
Unfolded Hands
under Captain
Zelezo-317



Standard of the
Deadlock under the
Jannah Sisterhood
Composition

CRIMINALS

WORLDS AND HABITATS isolated by interstellar space provide fertile ground for criminal enterprise. Smugglers, grifters, and petty thieves eke out a living in one system — or even only one station. Their careers are typically short, but there are always more like them. Truly interstellar criminals are much rarer, but also more likely to become famous — or infamous.

TUKLO

Hwuru Thug

Tuklo Hiichi-lusa got off his homeworld by replacing the man whose skull he crushed in a pirate crew, and he's never looked back. He pretends a primitive lack of understanding for laws and social niceties, but in reality he just enjoys physical confrontation. He just breathes deep of chaofsh and wonders at the patterns the blood spatters make.



Apparatus delivers the inhaled intoxicant *chaofsh*

Long, heavily-muscled arms for brachiation

“YOU LUCKY THIS IS SO GOOD CHAOFSH. IT PUT ME IN GOOD MOOD. I KILL YOU QUICK.”

Claw-like bone projections

Cheap auto pistol

HWURU

The hwuru are arboreal, insectivorous sophonts native to a world in the Coreward Reach. The most advanced civilization on their world has barely reached the Iron Age, but interaction with spacefaring cultures has allowed some of them to get off-world. Their imposing physical strength allows them to find jobs as hired muscle.

PHARESMID SYNDICATE

The Pharesmid Syndicate is a criminal organization from the planet Smaragdoz. Its members are all bio-clones or mind copies of their founder, Smaragdine terrorist UIn Pharesm. Pharesm was a mole within the development group in the beta phase of the Smaragdine noospheric Consensus. With his access to the computing power of the noosphere, he was able to generate several mind copies and abscond with governmental funds. Using the mind copies to hijack the bodies of his terrorist cell, Pharesm kept the money for himself, and embarked on a new criminal career with his new henchmen.



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

MOST WANTED

A selection of criminals from various crime databases across known space

- **The Dragon's Teeth:** An infosophont that generates for its clients a specially synthesized, infectious nanoweapon for the purposes of creating assassins from random bystanders.
- **Haxun Malokk:** Deodand crime lord operating out of an independent principality on Circus. Though associated with numerous crimes, he may be more notable for his eccentricity: He has patterned his criminal persona on an Old Earth historic work named *Chicago Mobs of the Twenties* and forces the members of his gang to dress and act accordingly.
- **Ligeia-988:** Eratoan bioroid who masterminded a large-scale kidnapping ring in a supposedly unused pleasure dome. Most of her victims believed they were on vacation during their confinement.
- **Mako Orm:** An infamous Zao Pirate who escaped capture by the privateer vessel *Thermidorian* by use of a bootleg genderswap nanoswarm. She is believed to be living under an assumed name in the Strip.
- **Polychrome:** Allegedly the target of contract killers hired by neshekk banking clans, this con artist was responsible for a major "correction" in Alliance financial markets after a spectacularly successful execution of the "new node scam."

HOSTILE SPECIES

SOME SOPHONT SPECIES choose to live outside galactic society and are generally enemies to all. The ksaas and the ssraads are among these. All attempts at diplomacy with the ksaas are thwarted by their political structure and their belief in their superiority as a species; everyone foolish enough to attempt negotiation with the ssraad is dead.

SATHIKSIS TSRAUN

Cold Egg Viceroy

First Minister of the holdings of her egg-sisters and cousins, Tsraun is the de facto ruler of one of the largest agricultural and mining territories on Ishakhshar, though she yearns to extend her reach to offworld colonies. She is a master swordsman and a student of poisons — areas of expertise she has found useful in her rise to power.

“THIS ONE IS BUT A HUMBLE SERVANT OF HER GYNARCH.”

KSSA

Ksaas are oviparous humanoids with some reptilian characteristics who are native to the Outer Rim. Ksaas have three sexes: large, aggressive, and territorial females; smaller, low-intelligence males; and human-sized, highly intelligent neuters. This last group are born from eggs incubated at a cooler temperature, hence the name *khii gan* (“cold egg”), meaning “eunuch” but also used figuratively to connote something like “cunning bastard.”



White skin is indicative of neuter sex

Barbels are chemosensory organs

Traditional dueling saber

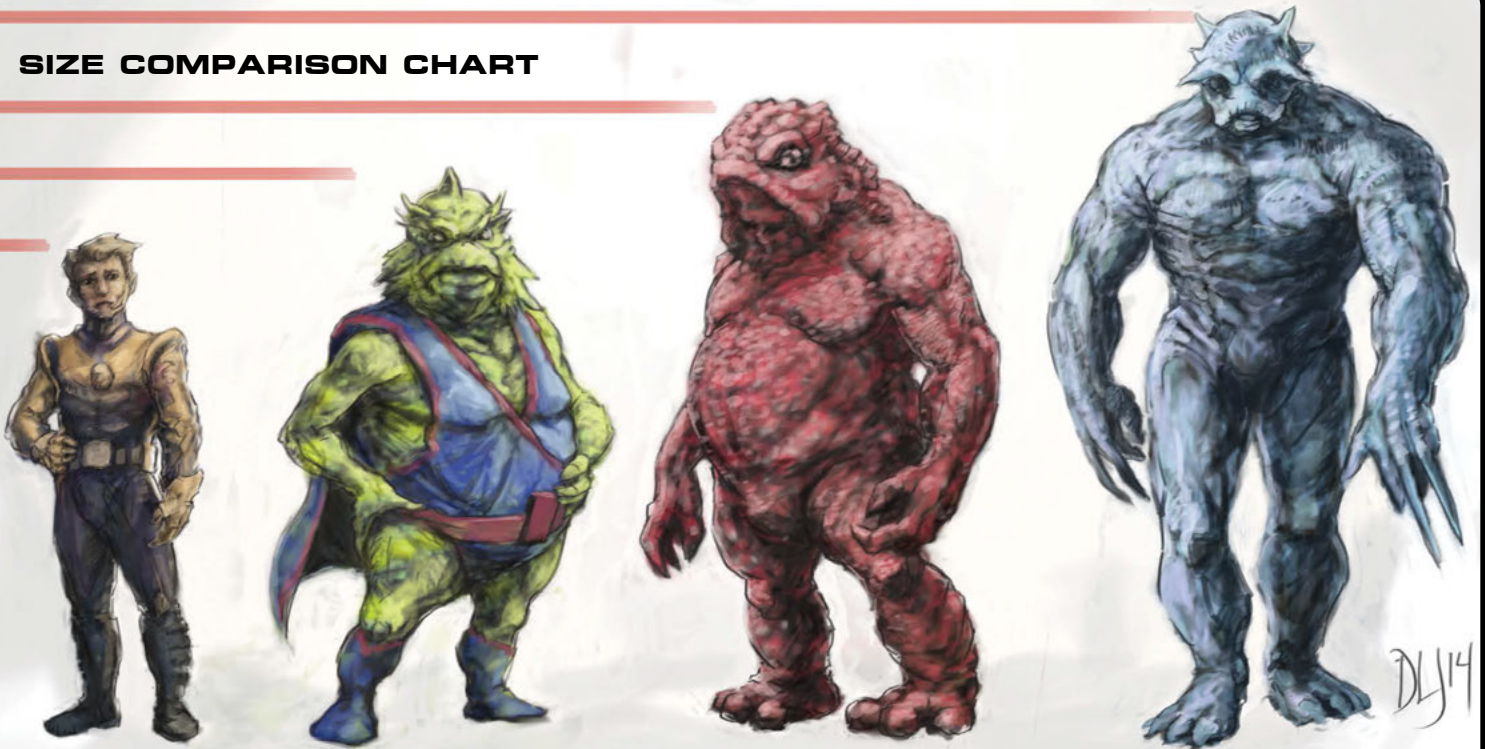
COLD EGGS

The cold eggs are the true rulers of ksaas society. They administer the territories ruled by the females of their clutch and play games of political intrigue for greater wealth and power. Occupied with internal conflict, ksaas are not an organized threat to other species, except on the rare occasion when a cold egg manages to unite a significant number of the great families.

SSRAAD

Ssraad claim the entire Zuran Expanse as their own on the basis of their supposed descent from the zurr. Experts consider it more likely that they are the zurr's creations — and perhaps the reason for that culture's extinction. There are 3 subspecies of ssraad existing in a state of mutual hostility. They can be distinguished by color, certain morphological features, and culture.

SIZE COMPARISON CHART



**MORPHOTYPICAL
HUMAN**

**GREEN
SSRAAD**

**RED
SSRAAD**

**BLUE
SSRAAD**

● GREEN SSRAAD

Green ssraad control orbital stations around Sirius A. From there they stage raids against other sophonts and wage war against the blue. They can deliver a chemical with their sticky, extensible tongues that paralyzes most non-ssraad and triggers docility and submissiveness in their own kind.

● RED SSRAAD

Red ssraad are often mistaken for vicious animals, but they are sapient. They are employed as shock troops and terror weapons by the green and occasionally serve as mercenaries with the blue.

● BLUE SSRAAD

Blue ssraad live in stolen asteroid habitats around Sirius B. They have no hierarchy beyond the tribal level, where the strongest rule. All their technology is stolen; they force captives to remodel starships to their specifications before killing them. They can employ weapons, but prefer to use their claws and teeth.

PSI & PSIONICS

PSI PHENOMENA moved fully from the realm of fringe belief to exploitable technology during the Archaic Oikumene. The hyperspace network is the most prominent example, but not the only one; other psionic devices exist. In the modern era, only certain cultures, such as the Smaragdines and the Sisterhood of Circe, make widespread use of psi abilities.

ELPHABA MANDRAKE

Smaragdine Psi-Sorceress

The Wizard Consensus Mind governing Smaragdoz has permitted a number of celebrity vigilantes to emerge, and Mandrake is one of them. Armed with an Archaic psionic artifact and a theatrical flair, she apprehends mundane criminals and dissidents, and the occasional equally theatric master criminal — apparently also allowed by the Consensus.



Helm nantennae in extended position greatly enhance psi range and sensitivity

Eye-catching outfits contribute to her celebrity

Hand gestures for dramatic effect

"NICE TRY, BUT I'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK. I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE YOU DOWN UNTIL THERE WAS A SUFFICIENTLY LARGE AUDIENCE."

HELM OF HEKATE

The psionic enhancement helmet Elphaba Mandrake wears is known as "The Helm of Hekate," though the name is likely Mandrake's invention. The device itself dates to the Archaic Oikumene and is theorized by some experts to have been a prosthesis to amplify psi potential. Others believe it to have been used primarily in experimentation by an early psi-religious/self-help group.

STRANGE STARS

PRONUNCIATION

The names of people and places in the Strange Stars can be exotic, but they're reasonably straightforward in pronunciation. There are a few orthographic conventions that might require a bit of explanation. The following sounds occur in English, but not at the beginning of words like you'll encounter them here:

dz - as in "adze"
ks - as in "kicks"
ng - as in "sung"
ts - as in "fits"

The following sounds aren't found in English:

gh - A voiced velar fricative; a hard "g" sound is reasonable approximation.
kh - like the sound in the German Buch or the Scottish pronunciation of loch.
ss - A voiceless retroflex sibilant; the "sh" of ship is a good substitute.
x - In Nxanga, this is a voiceless palatal fricative like in the German nicht.

TERMINOLOGY

baseline: A biologic entity showing minimal phenotypic or genotypic variation from pre-genetic engineering stock of paleo-humanity.

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. The grouping may be biological, cultural, or some combination of both depending on the context.

infomorph: An entity comprised of information.

meme: An idea, behavior, or other information pattern that spreads from one sophont to another.

memeplex: Meme complex; a set of related memes that are mutually reinforcing.

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

mind: A sophont being, physical form unspecified (if any); A sophont ai.

near baseline: A biologic entity phenotypically distinct from paleo-humanity but with an overall high degree of genetic similarity.

noosphere: The environment of human(oid) thought of a civilization or world. It emerges from the ancient technologies of the internet, augmented reality, and spimes, and their interaction with connected sophont minds.

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

sophont: An intelligent and self-aware being.

splice: A chimera made from blending human genetic material with that of one or more nonhuman species; a member of a species or clade descending from such a chimeric line.

xe/xem/xir: Gender-neutral pronouns.

5 OPERATIONS, 8 ITERATIONS

• CONTENTS OF SPACEHAULER CONTAINER 49

01. Home Surgeon Bots – [3] of a recalled model, still in packaging.
02. Vacuum-sealed Containers of Military Surplus Food Paste – [120 total] Slightly irradiated.
03. Faded Celebrity Sims – [5 types/20 ea.] Actually low-rez, multi-generation copies of celebrity sensory lookalikes.
04. Aurogov Software Vouchers – [500 free download chits] seized in a copyright enforcement raid, nonfunctional and infected with a virus.
05. Box of Plastic Dancing “Hu-La” Girls – [32] affixed to a sticky nanofiber base.
06. Crate of Venomous Snakes – [6] In cryosleep, cloned from Old Earth genotypes.
07. Bottles of “Burner” Cyberware – [4, 200 count] When ingested, crudely anonymizes noospheric interface for up to 20 ks.
08. Dented Cannister of Exoskin – Integrity eroded by bacteria. Unusable.

• VALUABLE ARTIFACTS

01. Drive Box – 12 cm cube contains an ai with the knowledge to build and run a reactionless drive in any starship.
02. Thraxu Blade – Ancient thrax sword with a quantum-scale edge when activated.
03. Zurr Mask – said to contain the soul of the ancient zurr who wore it.
04. Gravid War Womb – 38 cm diam. spheroid nanoassembler capable of replicating a Sisterhood of Morrgha hive.
05. Strangelet Bullet – Planet-killer missile payload. Will convert any ordinary matter to strange matter.
06. Mnemosyne Leaf – contains chemically stored memories of visitors to Dodona, captured by the psi-singing trees.
07. Tenebraean Pentachoron – The black, pyramidal 3D shadow of a 4D object capable of locating hyperspace nodes.
08. “The Horn” – Music file that will send a signal to initiate the rejuvenation sequence on a hibernating Hannibal T. Early, the one man army of the Radiant Polity.

• PEOPLE SOMEONE WANTS FOUND

01. Rhona Tam – Captain of Moral Hazard, privateer/custom enforcement contractor out of Circus.
02. Laira and Volta Urzo-Mezenta – Orichalcosan trade delegates; wife and husband.
03. Volodimir Ivo – Envoy Plenipotentiary, representing the Uldra People’s Council of Kommissars on Borea.
04. Faizura Dayr – Mercenary guard on a bot-breaking crew on Gogmagog.
05. Hemaka Maago – Ogüptan mid-level customs-official at the Moph spaceport.
06. Vikala-213 – Bioroid host of Pleasure Dome Jardin Rouge.
07. *tika and Ra%ngi – Kosmonik journey-partners.
08. Mareva Lalani – Yantran freedom fighter turned freelance hacker.

• DRUGS IN AN EPIC STASH

01. Bouncing Balls of High-Grade Chroma – [7] Psychedelic and euphorogenic.
02. Living Aku “Ink” Xenoecephalods – [13] Cannabis-like effects; stains the mouth.
03. Gel Sheets of Sophia – [5] Awareness spectrum enhancer.
04. Pellets of Proteus V – [75] Expensive fakes.
05. Bottle of Smaragdine Aurulent Liqueur – [375 mL] The good stuff.
06. Boxes of Military-Grade Transdermal Stim Patches – [2/10 patches ea.] Stimulant and anodyne.
07. Tubes of A-Go-Glo – [13] Stimulant and euphoriant.
08. Woonian Auraspice Sticks – [10] Dissociative bark.

• EXOTIC LOCALES

01. The Apotheosis Maze – Whom among the gathered applicants will the guardians choose to walk the dangerous path to potential godhood?
02. Observation deck of Princess Adastra – A luxury starliner on a 3-year cruise.
03. The Pampas of Taprobane Habitat – On safari, hunting the sharp-beaked blushing shraik.
04. Arena on Telos – Watching or participating in a death sport for the amusement of moravecs.
05. Poker Table on the Wheel – In a game with some of the highest rollers in the known galaxy.
06. Wanderer Memory Palace – Deep inside a potentially hostile, moon-sized brain, looking for treasure.
07. Jungles of Dodona – Among the Singing (both psi and auditory) Trees.
08. A Damaged Artificial World – Orbiting Altair, psychic demons given form approach through fissures in the diamondoid shell.



The Future Is In Your Hands...

Welcome to the **Strange Stars**, a new setting from Armchair Planet and the writer of *Weird Adventures*. It's the far future, Old Earth is just a legend, and the galaxy is teeming with weird lifeforms and strange cultures. Adventure awaits!

Join a salvage mission to steal ancient technology from the wreck of a sophont (and demented) warship. Become a skiptracer in the lawless orbital megapolis of Interzone. Plan an elaborate data-vault heist on a planet made of diamond. Cross ceramic blades with Zao Pirates in hard vacuum. Score sweet dreams or nightmare fuel from the oneirochemists in the floating city of Eidolon. It's all somewhere in the **Strange Stars**.

Strange Stars is a far future space opera setting for any game. Look for companion rule books for Fate™ and old school role-playing games available in 2015 in print and digital download.



Armchair Planet