





**THOUSAND SUNS**





*“This was a Golden Age, a time of high adventure, rich living, and hard dying . . . but nobody thought so. This was a future of fortune and theft, pillage and rapine, culture and vice . . . but nobody admitted it.”*

--Alfred Bester, *The Stars, My Destination* (1956).



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**Dedications:** To the memories of H. Beam Piper and Poul Anderson – you lit the fire

To Marc Miller, Loren Wiseman, and Dave Nilsen – you kept the flame

To Mary and Peter – you inherit the future

*Thousand Suns created by James Maliszewski*

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## **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1: Basics	<b>8</b>
Chapter 2: Character Creation	<b>20</b>
Chapter 3: Skills, Hooks, and Psionics	<b>66</b>
Chapter 4: Action	<b>112</b>
Chapter 5: Technology, Equipment, and Starships	<b>130</b>
Chapter 6: Setting Design	<b>200</b>
Chapter 7: Meta-Setting	<b>234</b>
Bibliography	
Character Sheet	









# *CHAPTER 1: BASICS*

*Gully Foyle is my name  
And Terra is my nation.  
Deep space is my dwelling place,  
The stars my destination.*

--Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination* (1956)



Every age has its myths and many of the central myths of the 20th century took the form of science fiction. Science promised humanity the knowledge of the inner workings of the universe and its daughter, technology, promised the ability to harness those inner workings to improve the species' lot in life—a heady brew for the imagination that would flower into the literary genre we call science fiction. From its humble beginnings in the scientific romances and speculations of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and others, science fiction came into its own in the years between the World Wars, as the readers of pulp magazines thrilled to the adventures of Kimball Kinnison, Buck Rogers, and other space-faring heroes whose tales evoked both wonder at the possibilities the future might bring, as well as hope for a better world.

These same themes would form the foundation upon which much of later science fiction was built and then expanded upon throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, when many talented writers remade what had been derisively called “space opera” into a sub-genre of remarkable depth and sophistication. It is from this sub-genre of science fiction that *Thousand Suns* proudly takes its primary inspiration.

## The Game

*Thousand Suns* is a science fiction roleplaying game set in a future when humanity has traveled into the far reaches of the galaxy, colonized new worlds, encountered other intelligent species, and established interstellar states by which to govern itself. As noted above, the game draws much of its inspiration from the classic literary “imperial” science fiction of the 50s, 60s, and 70s, so called because its stories typically featured mighty galactic empires and whose plots often harkened back to events from the Age of Imperialism in the 19th century. Authors like Poul Anderson, Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, Gordon Dickson, Larry Niven, H. Beam Piper, Jerry Pournelle, and A.E. van Vogt are but a few of the most prominent writers of this sub-genre of science fiction and all have influenced the design of *Thousand Suns* in one way or another. Of course, many contemporary authors, such as Iain M. Banks, Lois McMaster Bujold, Peter F. Hamilton, David Weber, and Walter John Williams, among others, have written books with similar plots and themes yet with a more modern perspective. *Thousand Suns* also looks to them for inspiration.

In *Thousand Suns*, your character can hail from one of hundreds of settled planets. Numerous species, whether alien, human, or genetically engineered clade, call these planets home. Likewise, representatives of these species come from all walks of life, from highly trained naval officers to determined explorers to wily merchants to almost any other vocation you can imagine. As you travel the galaxy, you might explore alien ruins, engage in dogfights with enemy fighters, re-contact a lost colony world, fly amidst the spires of a world-city, or



engage in speculative trade. Despite the wealth of inspiration it draws from the classics of literary sci-fi, *Thousand Suns* is not a game about recreating them. Rather, it is about using their plots, ideas, and themes as springboards to create science fiction epics with a modern perspective.

Science fiction, it's been said, is really about the present, not the future. Consequently, a lot of older science fiction — including the works that inspired *Thousand Suns* — feels somewhat dated because the concerns of the time when they were written don't always translate well across the decades. Yet, older science fiction often joined a wide-eyed sense of wonder with an appreciation for classical archetypes that's generally lacking in either the jaded cynicism of cyberpunk or naïve optimism of transhumanist SF of the present day. *Thousand Suns* is an attempt to marry the best of the past to the best of the present to create exciting space opera roleplaying adventures in the imperial SF tradition.

Imperial science fiction — whether classic or contemporary — is a vast genre, both in terms of its literal scope and its diversity. Of necessity, it takes place over a large canvas, with hundreds, even thousands, of worlds as potential sites for adventures. Having such a large canvas allows it to encompass almost any kind of science fiction story, big or small. This makes it even easier to create whatever adventures appeal to you and your players. The real trick is to give them all that classic SF “spark,” that connection to the grand themes of the genre, most importantly humanity's destiny among the stars.



The rules of *Thousand Suns* were written with the grand themes of space opera in mind. They are flexible, easy to understand, and modular. This gives the Game Master a toolbox with which to add, subtract or emphasize whatever elements he wishes without having to worry about its effects on other parts of the game. These rules do not model the hard science realism found in some science fiction. Instead, these rules support the “wow” moments found in the older classics of the genre.

*Thousand Suns* gives you the tools you need to imagine a setting where the human race has left behind the cradle of Earth and ventured into the Great Unknown to find its place in the galaxy. The game rules are intended to make this responsibility as simple—and fun — as possible, because detailing the setting and running adventures should be every bit as enjoyable an experience as playing them.

Strap on your blaster pistol, grab your spacesuit, and get ready to explore a vision of the future unlike any seen in a generation.

## The Thousand Suns.

*It is a time of wonder.*

Humanity has reached the stars and created a society of glittering sophistication and diversity on hundreds of planets. Poets declaim, lovers rendezvous, and rakes duel with wits and monoblades. Colonists settle virgin worlds, merchant princes vie for emerging markets, and free traders hawk their exotic wares. The Navy rules the jumplines, putting down pirates and charting new star systems. Scientists uncover startling new truths on long-dead worlds and posit revolutionary theories dizzying in their implications. Technology advances at a rapid pace, each year improving the lot of all who accept its boons. None dare deny the bright destiny Man has seized for himself.

*It is a time of upheaval.*

The inhabited galaxy -- the Thousand Suns -- teeters on the brink of chaos. Half a millennium since the Concord, and a generation since the bloody Civil War, the dynamism that ended the Age of Warring States is sorely tested. Diplomats try new gambits, shifting their ground for an unknown future. On dozens of worlds across known space, the lights are going out again and the process of decivilization begins anew. Despots and tyrants who would rather lord it over benighted backwaters than bend their knee to even a distant authority, arise once more. At the edges of explored space, rivals -- both human and alien -- watch and wait.

*It is a time of glory.*

Victorious fleets smash enemy armadas in distant star systems. Soldiers parade through liberated planets to alien cheers. Sector governors draw up breathtaking visions of terraforming and orbital cities. New jumplines open to the heart of unexplored space, daring the bold to venture into the unknown for profit and peril. Surveyors stumble upon lost colonies and puzzle out the mysteries of inscrutable clades. Captains with blazing eyes save worlds from barbarism -- and rule them as gods. Daring thieves turn new technologies to unexpected ends or to sell them to shadowy cartels on the fringes of known space. Meanwhile, bold operatives seek out these criminal plans for reprisal. Everything is possible with enough beauty, brains, or blasters, and it's all within reach of a single jump.

*It is a time of adventure.*

## The Meta-Setting

“The Thousand Suns” is what poet Johane Coelho (-29-112) called that part of the Milky Way galaxy accessible by the jumplines of the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map. The Map, an artifact of the Travelers discovered on Mars (Sol/Origo) in -1783, actually provided the coordinates for vastly more than a thousand solar systems, but Coelho’s turn of phrase -- “a future brighter than a thousand suns” -- has stuck, even long after explorers have nearly tripled the number of worlds accessible to D-drive vessels.

-- Encyclopedia Galactica, 15th edition (494)

As noted above, Thousand Suns is a science fiction roleplaying game set in a future when humanity has traveled into the far reaches of the galaxy, colonized new worlds, encountered other intelligent species, and established interstellar states by which to govern itself. The game’s rules cover character creation, personal and starship combat, generating alien worlds, species, and creatures, as well as a myriad of other circumstances that might occur over the course of play. Thousand Suns is thus a toolkit for the creation of a wide variety of settings in the imperial SF tradition. But not everyone wishes to create his own setting from scratch or at least do so without some examples to inspire him. For that reason, Thousand Suns also includes a setting of its own—or, more accurately, a meta-setting.

What is a meta-setting? Think of it as a large canvas on which the outline of a picture has already been sketched but many of whose details—not to mention color and shading—have not been filled in. This meta-setting, after which the game is named, is a large area of space encompassing thousands of star systems and planets and is home to dozens of intelligent species besides humanity. Some of these worlds and species will be named and described, but the vast majority of them will be un-described, left to individual Game Masters to describe and use as they wish (or not, as the case may be).

This approach applies to everything in the Thousand Suns meta-setting, up to and including the interstellar government that holds sway over this part of the galaxy. Imperial SF literature usually assumed that the future belonged either to a free but corrupt galactic federation or a benevolent but authoritarian galactic empire. Rather than making a choice between these two equally classic options—and limiting a GM’s creative freedom—the Thousand Suns meta-setting is structured to allow for either. Information specific to a particular version of the setting, whether it be a federation or an empire, is presented in a color-coded format, making it easy to see which details should be used or ignored, depending on which version the GM has chosen for his own campaign.

Elements of the meta-setting are used as examples throughout this book, in addition to a more detailed treatment of them in Chapter 7.

## 12°

Everything you need to know to play *Thousand Suns* is found in this book. The basics presented in this chapter should allow you to quickly understand the mechanical foundations of the game, which will serve you well as you read later chapters. Of course, *Thousand Suns* isn't a very complex game. Most rules are fairly straightforward and easy to remember. Nevertheless, there are a handful of occasions when multiple modifiers and special cases come into play. The better you understand the basic rules presented in this chapter, the better equipped you'll be to deal with those few exceptions.

### Playing the Game

To play *Thousand Suns* you will need a few things.

- First, two twelve-sided dice (D12). GMs might want to have a few more handy.
- Second, a blank piece of paper (or a character sheet) and a pencil.
- Third, an idea of the kind of character you'd like to play.

### Rules Overview

Before delving further into *Thousand Suns*, let's talk briefly about the core mechanic behind the game itself.

Action in *Thousand Suns* isn't intended to be "realistic" or "gritty." Rather, it's meant to recreate the type of action you're likely to read about in classic science fiction or see in a SF movie or television show. This isn't to say action in *Thousand Suns* is cartoonish or ridiculously over the top, but the emphasis is on verisimilitude and plausibility rather than a strict simulation of reality. The game's rules, known as 12°, are designed to accommodate this style of play with ease.

Every action, regardless of whether your character is firing his blaster at a Myrmidon soldier or sneaking past a patrol of Naval Infantry troopers, is handled the same way. Roll 2d12 and if the result is equal to or less than your Target Number (TN), the action succeeds. It's as simple as that.

Your TN is a number based on two associated Abilities or skills plus or minus any modifiers. For example, if your character wants to shoot a blaster and has a Agility 6 and Shoot 6, your TN is 12. Thus, rolling a 2d12 and getting a result of 11 results in a success; rolling 2d12 and getting a 23 results in a failure.

## Tests

All actions in *Thousand Suns* are called Tests. There are three types of Tests — Ability, Skill, and Opposed — that depend on specific situations; the Game Master will tell you what type of Test you need to make if it is not obvious.

### Ability Tests

Ability Tests depend on one of your character's Abilities and are used in times of great need or danger. These Tests are not tied to Skills; instead they are tied to your character's inborn ability to do something. Your Target Number is always the unmodified Rank in your Ability.

For example, suppose your character is running away from some megacorp security forces. You decide to lose your pursuers by declaring that your character is diving into a nearby pond and will hold his breath while underwater, hoping the security guards don't spot him. Once your character reaches his limit, your GM tells you to make a Body Test, to see if your character still manages to hold his breath. In this case your TN would be your character's Body Ability (8). Rolling 2d12 the result is 15, failure. Thus your character fails his Body Test and starts to drown.

### Skill Tests

Skill Tests are the most common tests used in *Thousand Suns*. Most actions, from shooting a blaster to flying a starship, are handled by Skill Tests. Your Target Number in a Skill Test equals your Skill Rank plus the Rank of the Skill's associated Ability, plus or minus any bonus or penalties associated with the Test. The resulting number is the one you need to meet in order to succeed.

For example, your character is flying his starship. This is normally a Routine Test. Unfortunately, your character is attempting to pilot his ship through a debris field. Your character's Piloting skill is 7 and his Agility is 6, making your TN 13. Due to the thickness of the debris, your GM assesses your character a -4 penalty, which lowers your character's TN to 9 for this Test.

### Opposed Tests

Opposed Tests are tests between two, separate characters and usually occur when your character is competing against another character or is acting out against a non-player character of some sort. Opposed Tests are necessary because the degree of your character's



success (or failure) determines how events unfold in the game. Opposed Tests require two or more parties to make a Test; whoever rolls highest but still below their Target Number succeeds. Opposed Tests can also come into play for some specific skills, such as Stealth, as well as in combat.

An example of an Opposed Test for Stealth would be in the case of hiding. Your character is trying to sneak into a protected research laboratory. There is one guard keeping watch and the GM states that he has a chance of noticing your character sneaking into the camp. The GM tells you to make a Stealth Test; while the GM will make an Observe Test. Rolling the dice your result is a 4 (your TN was 12)—success! The GM, rolling for the guard (whose TN is 9), rolls a 12—failure. Your character easily sneaks into the camp, while the guard standing watch, fails to notice him.

### **Success and Failure**

As long as you roll a number equal to your Target Number or lower, your character succeeds at his actions. Anytime you roll higher than your TN, your character fails. In some cases, your character may also experience a Dramatic Success or a Dramatic Failure.

### **Dramatic Success**

Anytime you roll a “2” on a 2d12, you score a Dramatic Success. The meaning of a Dramatic Success varies with the type of Test, but it typically means that your character has not only succeeded but succeeded in a spectacular, memorable fashion. In combat, a Dramatic Success indicates that you have dealt your opponent maximum damage for his weapon type, whereas in a Skill Test it indicates that you’ve achieved all you were attempting and more.

### **Dramatic Failure**

Rolling a “24” on a 2d12 means your character experiences a Dramatic Failure. What this means is that your character not only failed his Test, but he performed his action so badly that he has either placed himself in danger or otherwise adversely affected himself (and possibly his companions). In combat, a Dramatic Failure indicates that your weapon suffered a jam or malfunction, while in a Skill Test it indicates that you are either badly mistaken or have failed in such a way so as to make the situation more precarious.

## Degrees

As you might expect in a game system called 12°, your character's degree of success is often important. Your degree of success is the amount by which you roll under your Target Number. For example, if your character's TN is 14 and you roll 11, your degree of success is 3. In combat, your degree of success acts as a multiplier to your weapon's base damage. Using the above example, if your character is firing a blaster rifle with a base damage value of 9 and achieved 3 degrees of success, he would deal 27 points of damage to his opponent. In skill use, degrees of success have a much more "impressionistic" meaning, which is to say, largely up to the GM. Generally, degrees of success either indicate the time factor removed from the task or the increase in its effectiveness.

Returning to the above example, a task that would normally take 10 minutes might take only 7 if you achieve 3 degrees of success. Ultimately, the Game Master is the final arbiter of how degrees of success improve Skill-based tasks, but it should always be an obvious improvement that increases with the more degrees of success a character achieves.

### Bonus and Penalties

Sometimes, depending on the situation, your character will gain a bonus or penalty to a Test. These modifiers will change the Target Number of the Test, making it easier (or harder) for your character to achieve what you want. Bonuses and penalties are never applied to the die roll; they are added (or subtracted) directly to the TN.

GMs, as they run adventures, determine what the situations are and whether any penalties come into play. For example, suppose you are the GM, and one of your player's wants to fire a blaster while riding in a speeding grav car. Typically, firing a blaster is a Routine Task, but firing it from a moving vehicle is much more challenging. As the GM, you decide that, due to the nature of this task, the player suffers a -3 penalty while firing from a moving vehicle.

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Modifier</b>
Impossible	-4
Challenging	-3
Difficult	-2
Hard	-1
Routine	+1
Easy	+2
Trivial	+3
Simple	+4

## Hooks and Action Points

Thousand Suns succeeds or fails to a great extent based on the characters you play. Of course, the Game Master's skill at creating an interesting and believable science fiction world is almost as important, but it is the characters and their actions that drive most games. To encourage you to create interesting and well-rounded characters and to encourage your bringing their most interesting characteristics to bear in your adventures, Thousand Suns introduces the concept of hooks.

Hooks are roleplaying tools that describe some aspect of your character's past history, personality, or connections to other characters, among other things. For example, a character might have "AWOL from the Naval Infantry" or "Heir to the throne of Regulus III" or "Strong as a Megathere" as hooks. Each of these hooks is suggestive about your character and possibly about his relationship to the wider universe—both of which make them invaluable to the GM as he plans engaging adventures among the Thousand Suns.



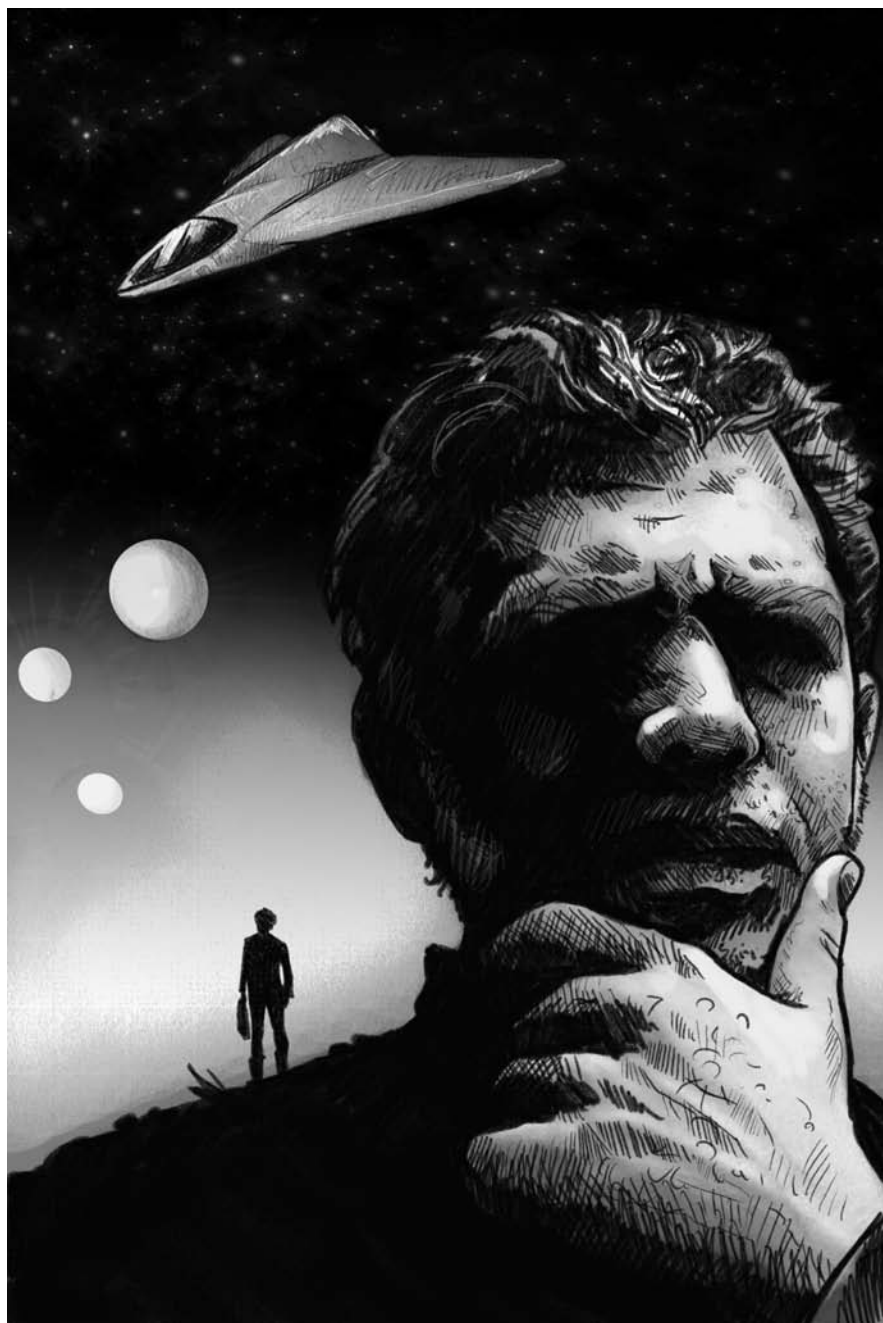
Besides suggesting interesting things about your character to the GM, hooks have another more immediate benefit: Action Points. Action Points are a kind of dramatic "currency" you acquire by creating hooks. They can be traded for situational boons, such as bonuses to your Target Number, free re-rolls, and other benefits. Action Points are finite in number, with characters having no more than 10 at any given time, sometimes less. Action Points can be regained by bringing your hooks to bear in an adventure in ways your GM thinks makes the game more exciting and fun for everyone.

## Science Fiction Adventure

As noted above, Thousand Suns is intended to be a simple, flexible roleplaying game of science fiction adventure in the imperial SF tradition. Everything you need to play can be found within these pages. Future releases for the game will expand upon many aspects of it, such as starships or alien species, but they will all hold to this original intention, thereby ensuring that you never get bogged down in needless rules or details. As a game, Thousand Suns requires rules, of course; but they are not its focus, and you should always feel free to alter or even drop any rules that get in the way of having fun.



THIS IS YOUR GAME NOW. MAKE OF IT AS YOU WILL.







# **CHAPTER 2: CHARACTER CREATION**

*“If you are going to be what you wear, you should try more than one style before you settle. As an experiment, try on something strange and wild. What sweet whirling thoughts unsettle the mind? Think about them. Now, who are you?”*

*--Alexei Panshin, Masque World (1969)*

Your character is your window on the futuristic worlds of *Thousand Suns*. This chapter gives you the rules you need to create and detail your character.

## The Character Creation Process

The process of creating a *Thousand Suns* character has several simple steps, each one of which is described in greater detail below. These steps are:

1. Choose Abilities: Divide 25 Ability Points between your character's five Abilities.
2. Choose Species: Select your character's species. Spend whatever bonus points listed under the Traits section of your species on skills of your choice.
3. Choose Homeworld Package: Select one Homeworld Package for your character.
4. Choose Career Packages: Select three levels of Career Packages for your character.
5. Choose five Hooks, one based on your character's species, one based on your character's homeworld, and three based on your character's career or careers.
6. Add up the Benefits Points acquired and spend them.
7. Finishing Touches.

### Abilities

All characters have five Abilities that define them. Abilities range in numeric value from 1 to 12, with 7 being average for Terran humans. You have 25 Ability Points to divide amongst your character's Abilities at his creation. Once the Abilities are set, they are unlikely to change over the course of play, so take care to allocate them wisely.

Abilities, like many other game mechanics in *Thousand Suns*, have Ranks that are used to measure your character against others. These Ranks also set the Target for your Tests. These five stats are: Body, Dexterity, Perception, Presence, and Will.

The value of an Ability also determines the base Rank of all of your skills. For example, if you wanted to build a strong character, any skills you would buy associated with Body would have a base Rank equal to your Body's numeric value. If you have a Body of 7, all corresponding skills would be at a base Rank of 7.

#### Bonus Points

Whenever points are available to spend on Abilities and Skills without specification, the points may be spent on a one-to-one basis when purchasing Skills and a two-to-one basis when purchasing Abilities. This is a universal rule throughout *Thousand Suns*.

## Body

Body measures how physically strong and healthy a character is. You use this Ability to determine how much he can lift, how far he can throw, how hard he can hit, and how resistant he is to poison, disease, radiation, and other deleterious effects.

### Why Body?

Thousand Suns divides a character's mental/psychological characteristics into three Abilities, but divides his physical characteristics into only two. Why is that? Firstly, it's a matter of simplicity and ease of play. Secondly, while strength and health are not necessarily correlated, there is enough of a correlation to serve as a broad shorthand for any given character's physical characteristics. Finally, in science fiction, mental/psychological characteristics tend to be more important than physical ones and so the reduction of those characteristics to two rather than three stats seems warranted. GMs or players who feel the need to divide Body into, say, Strength and Endurance are free to do so. Simply give starting characters 30 Ability Points rather than 25 and specify which Body-based skills are governed by which of the two new Abilities. All other references to Body should be similarly associated with Strength or Endurance, as appropriate.

## Dexterity

Dexterity measures how agile a character is, as well as his hand-eye coordination. It also is used to determine how fast a character's reactions are. In combat, Dexterity is used to determine when a character acts during a Combat Round.

### Perception

Perception measures a character's awareness of his surroundings, as well as his intuition, memory, and insight. Characters with high Perception tend to notice things that others do not, while those with low Perception frequently fail to take note of even the blindingly obvious.

### Why no Intelligence?

Unlike many roleplaying games, Thousand Suns includes no Ability that measures native intelligence. The reason for this is simple: the skill system already does this to a large degree. In most cases, an Intelligence Ability actually measures a character's ability to piece together disparate bits of information to form a conclusion, sometimes logically and sometimes intuitively. In Thousand Suns, that's exactly what Perception does, which is why there is no Intelligence Ability in this game.

## Presence

Presence measures a character's charisma and personableness. Presence is used primarily for skills in which a character interacts with other characters, but has other uses as well.

## Will

Will measures both a character's determination and purposefulness. Will also plays an important role in psionics, as well as in resisting attempts by others to influence your character's actions.

## Vitality

Vitality is, in some ways, a sixth Ability, representing a character's ability to take physical damage. Unlike other Abilities, you determine Vitality's numerical value not by spending Ability Points, but by a simple calculation, namely  $(\text{Body} + \text{Will}/2) \times 5$ . Thus, a character with 7 Body and 5 Will ( $7+5=12/2=6$ ) has 30 Vitality.

Vitality is represented on the character sheet by boxes. Every time your character takes damage of some type, check off the appropriate number of boxes. As more boxes are checked, your character suffers a variety of mounting damage penalties that make it more difficult for your character to act. Your character is either unconscious or dying if you check off all the boxes in the course of combat. Further information on Vitality and how it relates to damage can be found in Chapter 4.

## Resolve

Characters also have an Ability called Resolve, which is the social counterpart of Vitality. Resolve represents your character's ability to psychological "damage" and plays an important role in the social interaction rules described later in this book. Resolve costs no Ability Points to purchase. Instead, its value is equal to  $(\text{Perception} + \text{Will}/2) \times 5$ . A character with a 7 Perception and a 5 Will ( $7+5=12/2=6$ ) has 30 Resolve.

More information on how to use Resolve in play can be found in Chapter 4.

## Sample Species

The Thousand Suns are home to numerous intelligent species, many of which are suitable for use as characters. Described below are a few of the more prominent interstellar species. Each entry gives a brief overview of the physiology, history, and culture of the species,

along with other related details and any game mechanics pertaining to it.

The species described here are “baseline” ones, meaning that they are all roughly similar in overall capability. Those species presented are merely a small selection of the possible species you might have in your own campaign. Game Masters should feel free to use any, all, or none of these species as they wish. Rules for creating your own species for use as characters are found in Chapter 6 and both players and GMs alike are encouraged to use those rules to create their own species should the few presented here fail to provide sufficient options in their own campaign. The same chapter also includes descriptions of the various abilities listed under “Traits” in the entries below.

## **Terran**

Terrans are humans descended from those who left Terra after the discovery of jump drive. Politically and technologically, they are perhaps the most important sapient species among the Thousand Suns – although the Hen Jaa (see below) would undoubtedly disagree with that assessment.

### **Physiology**

Terrans are warm-blooded, omnivorous mammals standing 1.75 m and weighing 70 kg on average. They possess two arms and two legs and a single head with two eyes, an external nose, and a mouth. Their hands have five fingers, including an opposable thumb, while their feet have five toes. Terrans possess an internal skeleton covered by skin, whose coloration varies greatly, from a pale, pinkish-white to nearly-black and everything in between, although darker shades are more common. Terran heads are covered by hair, which shows as much variation in hue as skin. Being mammals, Terrans also possess body hair whose extent likewise varies from individual to individual.

Terrans have color vision and can see in the spectrum between infrared and ultraviolet. Their eyes also grant them good motion and depth perception. Terran ears can hear sounds with frequencies between 20 Hz and 20 kHz. Terran skin is very tactile in nature and responds well to such sensations. Terrans also possess the senses of taste and smell but neither is as highly developed as the other three senses.

Terran internal body temperature is 37° C. As a species, Terrans are divided into two genders, male and female, and bear live young, usually a single child (although twins are not uncommon) after a nine-month gestation period. The average Terran, with a good diet and regular medical attention, can expect to live between 100 and 120 standard years, with lifespans as long as 150 years not unheard of.



## **Psychology**

Terrans, as a species, are intensely curious, often to the point of self-destruction. Terrans often seek out new information and new experiences simply for the pleasure of doing so, although they are also quite clever in finding ways to make use of what they discover for other ends. Sometimes this leads to recklessness and a lack of interest in the long-term consequences of their actions. More than once throughout their own history, Terrans have followed their insatiable curiosity one – or more! – steps too far and nearly brought disaster upon their species.

Fortunately, Terrans are also quite innovative. A natural outgrowth of their curiosity, Terrans are natural tinkerers, finding enjoyment in solving puzzles and developing new ways to approach old problems. Unsurprisingly, Terrans have always been fascinated by technology and treat the invention, sale, and acquisition of new gadgets as pastimes.

Finally, Terrans are, in equal measures, xenophilic and xenophobic. This is difficult for other species to understand and has caused numerous problems throughout interstellar history. The curious Terrans always seek out the new and unusual and few things are more new and unusual than other cultures and species. Yet, Terrans also recognize that, while the grass may indeed appear greener elsewhere, this is not always the case. When a threat is perceived, Terrans are quick to rally around the tried and true, an atavistic affection for tradition that lies at the core of their otherwise open-minded and curious psychology.

## **History**

Terran history extends back several thousands of years to their homeworld of Terra. After millennia of strife and warfare, the species managed to survive to discover the D-Drive and the gateway to the stars. Since then, Terrans have expanded outward into the galaxy, rarely looking back at their world of origin. Many Terrans feel that it is only since star travel that their species has truly “grown up” and achieved its fullest potential. While other species might question this assertion, particularly given the Terran proclivity for stirring up trouble, few can deny that the history of the species since traveling to the stars has been an impressive one. For good and for ill, the Terrans are one of the pre-eminent species of the Thousand Suns and that is unlikely to change anytime soon.

## **Society**

Terran society centers around the family unit, composed of elders, young, and those related to them by blood and other bonds. Families in turn form larger social units, which in turn form larger ones still. Terran society is marked by great trust between those with whom

one has formed a social bond, whether it be through religion, custom, or law. Outside of those bonds, Terran society can be quite close-minded and discriminatory, sometimes to the point of violence.

At the same time, Terran society is very adaptable and has shown a remarkable willingness to make changes when circumstances demand them. Among starfaring Terrans, this has led to a wide variety of social arrangements, the diversity of which is dizzying to many other species – and to some Terrans as well. Although one would never use the term “logical” to describe Terran society, there is nevertheless a thoroughgoing consistency to it, wherein ideals are, over time, applied ruthlessly to all of its aspects. What this means is that, while Terran society is no more or less just than any other society, it is nevertheless much more open to recognizing its faults and correcting them in light of foundational principles, even if this process can sometimes take generations or more.

Though Terrans laud bonds of blood and custom, they also allow a place for loners and malcontents, rebels who buck the trends of their society to find their own way in the galaxy. Such individuals are not always revered or respected in their lifetimes (if ever), but there is still a tacit acknowledgement that not every Terran will fit in with the prevailing society and it is his right to choose a destiny of his own making, provided that this destiny doesn't cause undue disruption to the society at large.

## **Traits**

Terrans gain 10 additional points with which to purchase Abilities and skills.

## **Human Clades**

“Clade” is the term used to describe genetically engineered sub-species of humanity created sometime during the Old Federation. Originally created for specific purposes, several clades have not only survived but prospered, forming their own unique societies and cultures among the Thousand Suns. A couple of the most prominent are described below but there are many more not described here.

### **Myrmidon**

The Myrmidon clade was created to augment the military forces of the Old Federation. Myrmidons were intended as “super soldiers” with superior strength, endurance, and reflexes, as well as an intuitive understanding of strategy and tactics. In the final days of the Federation, many Myrmidon units took the opportunity to rebel, seizing power on several worlds and setting themselves up as rulers over “lesser” breeds, both human and alien.

## Physiology

Myrmidons are physically perfect human specimens, looking very much like their Terran ancestors. Except for the fact that they are supremely fit, strong, and highly resistant to disease, they differ physiologically from Terrans in only the most minor ways. This fact limited the augmentations possible even to Old Federation genetics, as human physiognomy is sub-optimal in design in certain areas. Thus, it's medically possible to determine if an individual is a Myrmidon or an unaugmented Terran, but it's not always possible to determine this simply by sight alone. Contrary to popular belief, not all Myrmidons are paragons of physical beauty, although all are well-proportioned and muscular.

Myrmidons are also highly intelligent and cunning – with ambition to match. Not all Myrmidons are geniuses, but all possess above average intelligence. In principle, Myrmidons have a lifespan exceeding 120 years common among Terrans, but the violent and treacherous nature of their society prevents all but the most ruthless from reaching that age.

## Psychology

Myrmidons differ from ordinary Terrans psychologically far more than physiologically. As noted above, they possess an intuitive understanding of strategy and tactics. Consequently, they view almost any situation, whether it be a battle, a commercial transaction, or even a friendly meeting in these terms, looking for ways to turn the situation to their advantage. They may not always act in accordance with their own advantage but they will certainly be aware of it – just in case.

This in turn contributes to their well-deserved reputation for cunning and treachery. Even if Myrmidons are just as capable of selflessness as any other human being, it's rare to find one who acts primarily with the best interest of anyone but himself in mind. This means that even seemingly altruistic actions are almost certain to give at least as much benefit (if not more) to the Myrmidon as to the person whom he has aided.

At the same time, Myrmidons are psychologically predisposed to respect those in authority over them, whom they obey so long as the authority figure shows no signs of weakness or any openings for the Myrmidon to gain advantage. Displays of dominance are a natural outgrowth of this and most Myrmidons go to great lengths not only to show their strength (which is not limited to physical strength), but also to avoid even minor errors that could cause a loss of face.

Myrmidons are thus annoyingly meticulous and fastidious. They take great pride in remembering even the minutest details of people and events as well as acting in accordance

with established codes and regulations. Although inclined to dismiss other species and clades as inferior to themselves, they nevertheless accord grudging respect to anyone who shows a similar concern for detail, which they see as equal in importance to their genetically superior physical attributes.

## **History**

A corporation created the first Myrmidons in the waning days of the Old Federation at the behest of the government, which had begun to question both the competence and loyalty of its soldiers. Code named for the soldiers of the ancient Greek hero Achilles, who were noted for their devotion to their commander, the Myrmidons proved every bit as capable as hoped, winning several major victories against rebel factions and handily defeating even the most talented Terran units under brutal odds. Previous “super soldier” projects had failed because the engineered troopers were too compliant and thus lacked the drive to be good warriors. Initially, the “willfulness” of the Myrmidons was praised, as it clearly contributed to their battle prowess. Within a few years, though, it became increasingly obvious that most Myrmidons were no longer content to prop up the tottering Federation and took the opportunity to become rulers in their own right, leading to the disastrous Gene War (see Chapter 7), which hastened the fall of the Old Federation. In the centuries since, Myrmidon states have been established on numerous worlds and several petty empires are ruled by Myrmidon elites.

## **Society**

Myrmidon society reflects their psychology and history, as well as their human ancestry. Like the Terrans, the family is a basic societal unit. Indeed, genetic lineage is extremely important to Myrmidons, who trace their family lines with great accuracy and often make alliances or conduct feuds on the basis of proximity to one’s own genetic heritage. Myrmidons still seek advantage even over their own kin, of course. However, they are much less likely to take extreme advantage over those with whom they share common genes.

Unlike the Terrans, though, the family is not the only societal unit. From a young age, Myrmidons, both male and female, are trained to fight as part of what is called a duonroto. These teams live and learn together in military academies and, ideally, will stay together throughout their lives, creating at once an extended family and fighting force. Duonrotoj are sex-segregated, like the Myrmidon military, but there is otherwise no difference in their training and female Myrmidons are expected to be every bit as strong, cunning, and skilled as their male counterparts.

Some have compared Myrmidon society to that of pack hunters, like wolves, and there is

some truth to the comparison. Leaders maintain their positions both by displays of strength and by rewarding those who support them. Any signs of “weakness” – a vague concept many a Myrmidon has used to slake his personal ambition – are ruthlessly exploited. Myrmidon politics, including within the military, often appears to be a barely controlled chaos, as power relationships shift on a regular basis. Almost any means to gain or maintain power is deemed acceptable, provided that it is successful and provides a measure of stability afterwards. Assassination of one’s superior is thus not condemned absolutely, but if the assassination has negative consequences that undermine overall effectiveness, it will be condemned. Many a would-be “liberator” has found himself hoist by his own petard, once it became apparent that his actions were more detrimental to society than the “tyrant” whom he eliminated.

## Traits

Myrmidons gain Body +1, Ultra Immune System, Tactics +1, and Will +1 and 4 bonus points with which to purchase Abilities and Skills.

*“Too bad, but you can’t revive the dead. This is an age in history such as has often occurred before when the enforced peace of Caesarism is the only solution. Maybe not a good solution but better than the devastation we’re suffering now. When there’s been a long enough period of peace and unity it may be time to think of reinstating the old republicanism. But that time is many centuries in the future, if it ever comes.”*

–Poul Anderson, “The Star Plunderer” (1952)

## The Delphic

The Delphic clade was created as an experiment in heightened human intelligence and perception. Delphics thus demonstrate remarkable critical thinking skills, memories, and the ability to learn quickly. Many also demonstrate psionic abilities far in advance of Terrans and other clades.

## Physiology

The Delphic are nearly physically identical to Terran humans. The primary difference is a much higher incidence of red hair, owing to an unintended side effect of the original genetic engineering that created the clade. Approximately 80% of all Delphics are red-headed, while the remainder exhibits the normal range of human hair coloration. Equally aberrant is the large percentage of left-handed Delphics (approximately 40% of the clade). The only other significant differences are internal, which can only be recognized under



medical examination. These include a brain with a slightly larger corpus callosum and a more efficient cardiopulmonary system.

## **Psychology**

The Delphic possess brains with vastly more axons bridging the gap between their two hemispheres. Consequently, Delphics represented to their creators an improvement of the species by being more intuitive, insightful, and creative than either baseline Terrans or the artificial intelligences they often replaced. This point of view was inculcated in the Delphic as well. Leading many the first generations of the clade to see themselves as “superior” to Terrans intellectually, a “next step in human evolution.” Unsurprisingly, this notion did not sit well with most Terrans, who look on the Delphic as arrogant and pretentious. Subsequent generations were taught to see themselves not as superior to Terrans so much as “differently gifted.” Nevertheless, there is a strong streak of pomposity in the Delphic psyche, one that remains despite many efforts at extirpating it over the centuries.

Interestingly, the Delphic get along well with Terrans and indeed most other species. Their innate thirst for knowledge, combined with their photographic memories, make it very easy for them to assimilate and imitate cultural traits from other species. This makes Delphics excellent diplomats, as well as scientists and researchers. Of course, members of the clade prefer to work with other Delphics above all others and experience has shown that their productivity increases dramatically when doing so. Delphics who spend long periods of time with others of their kind begin to develop a gestalt personality with these others – finishing one another’s sentences, guessing what the other is thinking, and generally unnerving ordinary Terrans, who find this tendency “creepy.” It is this psychological trait that earned the clade the definite article in their name, on the mistaken belief that all Delphics are members of a single collective mind.

The true irony is that, for all their immense intellectual gifts, the Delphic are an insecure species. Though rarely letting on to this fact, they frequently second guess themselves and view ordinary Terrans with a certain amount of envy because of the freedom they enjoy in galactic society. Although not required by law to pursue certain careers, Delphics face enormous pressure to enter scientific or diplomatic occupations and few manage to resist it. Thus, many Delphics find themselves “trapped” in careers they do not like, even if they excel at them. It is for this reason that growing numbers of Delphics pursue unusual careers and spend time with Terrans and others who work on the fringes of galactic society.

## **History**

Like most clades, the Delphic were a product of Old Federation genetic engineering,

although, unlike the Myrmidons, they were first created at the height of that interstellar state's power rather than in its waning days. Federation officials wanted a clade whose members could act in a wide variety of roles that had been given to computers or artificial intelligences prior to Von Neumann's War (see Chapter 7). Thus a plan was born to create "human computers" whose logic and rationality would be joined not only to deep intuition and perceptiveness but also empathy. The Delphic proved extraordinarily well suited to their designated roles, quickly assuming a wide variety of prominent positions in the Old Federation and, by some accounts, staved off its fall for several generations due to their clever stratagems and long-range plans. Though the Age of Warring States shattered the Federation, the Delphic continued to find their talents in demand on many worlds, a fact that remains true today.

## **Culture**

Unlike the Myrmidons, the Delphic do not possess interstellar states of their own. Instead, they exist within the states of other species, particularly Terrans, with whom they have lived and worked since the days of the Old Federation. Consequently, Delphic culture generally resembles that of baseline Terrans, but there are a few notable differences.

First and foremost, Delphics possess a rigid notion of honesty. For them, honesty is an intellectual virtue and its practical applications exceed any concerns for personal feelings. What this means is that Delphics rarely conceal even the harshest truths (as they see them) from any who ask their assessment of a situation. Delphics understand the need to be diplomatic at times, but they see no point in doing so when circumstances do not demand it. Indeed, Delphic culture emphasizes that the value in "telling it like it is" as an antidote to the Terran cultural tendency toward self-deception. Indeed, Terran popular culture often portrays Delphics as tactless boors who nevertheless possess keen insights that prove useful in spite of their harshness.

Although not as obsessed with genetic purity as the Myrmidons, Delphics still treat the continuation of their bloodlines with great import. In general, Delphics defer to their elders when it comes to marriage and procreation. Arranged marriages are the norm, while children are usually raised not by their actual parents but by an extensive network of family tutors and extended relatives. Delphics typically marry early compared to Terrans and produce offspring as soon as possible. However, spouses spend little time together and even less time with their children, focusing instead on their occupational vocations. These cultural practices have softened somewhat since the days of the Old Federation but not enough for Delphics to avoid being deemed "cold" by most Terrans.

## Traits

The Delphic gain Perception +1, Presence +1, Empathy +1, Observe +1, Eidetic Memory, and 2 bonus points with which to purchase Abilities and Skills.

## Czanik

The Czanik are the first intelligent non-human species the Terrans contacted and have played an important role in interstellar society ever since. Heirs to an ancient starfaring civilization, the Czanik nevertheless greeted the Terrans with open arms, freely sharing their knowledge of the galaxy with them and instructing them in its mysteries. The two species have thus enjoyed a unique friendship for centuries.

## Physiology

The Czanik look like nothing so much as ambulatory alien palm trees, standing close to 3 meters tall. Their trunk-like bodies look heavier than they are, with the average Czanik weighing approximately 100 kilograms. Their bodies rest on a series of muscular ciliated roots, which they use for locomotion. Czanik brains are located near the tops of their bodies, just below the many “branches” that fan out from their tops. Czanik come in a wide variety of forms, with extensive variations to the basic shape depending on the ancestry of the individual Czanik, as well as the location on their homeworld of Galj from which they hailed.

The Czanik body is fibrous and “woody” in nature, beneath which run its circulatory and nervous systems. The bark-like outer covering of the body is fairly flexible, giving Czanik a good degree of mobility. As they age, this outer covering starts to harden, so that, over time, Czanik become less capable of movement. The oldest living members of the species are completely sessile. A Czanik’s ciliated roots allow movement speeds close to that of a human at walking speed, but only the most determined Czanik can exceed this.

Czanik possess two to three dozen “branches” on the tops of their bodies. These branches range in length from one half to 2 meters in length and end in “leaves” that function both as sensory organs and as photosynthetic receptors. While Czanik are capable of using all their branches as manipulators if necessary, they are, at best, crude instruments. Over time, Czanik can learn how to use a small number of their branches more precisely, giving them something better approximating Terran arms. Czanik senses, with the exception of taste, is equivalent to that of Terrans as well.

Czanik reproduce by means of seedpods, which drop from the Czanik and, if they find fertile soil, grow into seedlings that, after several years, acquire sentience. The Czanik

place no great value on seedlings or the process of reproduction, seeing both as outside their immediate interest. If they have ready access to light and nutrients, Czanik can live for hundreds of years, barring accidents.

### **Psychology**

Despite their alien appearances, the Czanik possess minds not so unlike those of Terrans that they are incomprehensible and this fact has no doubt played a large part in the ability of the two different species to get along so well since First Contact. The first and most immediately apparent psychological trait of the Czanik is their intense curiosity. For as long as they have been sentient, these beings have sought out new knowledge and new experiences. Indeed, the Czanik view their lives as a continual process of growth, not merely physically but also intellectually as well and look with a combination of consternation and pity on any individual who is unwilling or, worse, uninterested in learning all he can about the universe around him.

At the same time, the Czanik are not foolhardy. They are keenly aware that the universe is often a dangerous place. Consequently, the Czanik are great planners. They are patient and willing to take the time necessary to consider every possible contingency when undertaking any complex and/or hazardous endeavor. The Czanik are frequently annoyed by Terrans, whom they consider rash and impetuous, overlooking genuine risks in their zeal for adventure. No doubt the Czanik propensity for forethought is due to a great extent to their long lifespans and the slow pace of their society, but there is more to it than that. The Czanik view the universe as a vast, interlocking mystery whose secrets cannot be uncovered without a thorough and methodical approach. Even then, the universe defies easy explanation, but, without a solid plan, there can be no hope of learning or growth, a lesson the Czanik have tried many times to impress on their Terran allies.

Given all of the above, it should come as no surprise that the Czanik are xenophiles. They enjoy the company of other species and appreciate seeing the universe from other points of view. They have learned innumerable lessons from the Terrans, both technological and cultural, and have, in return, taught the younger species many lessons of their own. The Czanik view this as important part of the learning process – to learn, one must also teach and so these beings have made it their mission to spread their knowledge to all interested parties.

### **History**

Czanik history extends back over at least ten millennia, nearly half of which they have spent as starfarers. Like the Terrans, they discovered artifacts of the Travelers in their home system, which enabled them to use D-Drives to expand outward into the galaxy. Since then,

they have ventured into innumerable star systems, slowly exploring and seeking out new evidence of the Travelers, whom the Czanik regard as one of the foremost mysteries of the cosmos. The Czanik are thus very knowledgeable about the universe beyond the Thousand Suns, far more than almost any race currently in contact with the Terrans. Most species, even the Hen Jaa, look on the Czanik as the “elder statesmen” of the galaxy and seek out their knowledge, even when they ultimately choose a path of which the Czanik would not improve.

## **Culture**

Czanik culture is extremely conservative by Terran standards. As a species with thousands of years of recorded history and an abiding belief that equates knowledge with growth, these beings have long cultural memories. Events that occurred long ago are treated as important lessons for the present. Czanik frequently refer to the past to illustrate some philosophical point and apply it to the present. That few other species know what the Czanik are talking about is beside the point. For the Czanik, what is important is that the past neither be forgotten nor treated lightly. While their culture is not hidebound or stagnant, it nevertheless rejects the notion that “newer is better” and it takes great effort and experimentation before they adopt new ways.

Still, Czanik culture is not a closed one and there are always opportunities both for outsiders to interact with it and for Czanik “freethinkers” to put their unique viewpoints to good use. In part, this is because the literally slow pace at which the Czanik grow and move makes it next to impossible for them to react quickly. For this reason, they have little choice but to take the long view of things and change incrementally rather than all at once, as the Terrans and other species are wont to do.

In practical terms, most Czanik are keen experimenters, willing to try lots of unusual and even bizarre approaches to problems. They will not attempt anything that is obviously bound to fail or cause harm to themselves or to others, but the fact that something runs counter to conventional wisdom is insufficient reason for them not to try it. Should an individual Czanik come up a unique solution to a problem and be able to show its value, it might then be able to convince Czanik society at large to adopt it, but such a road is a long and arduous one that can take many years, if not longer.

Other than a vague respect for elders, the Czanik do not have much in the way of a social hierarchy on their worlds. Most decisions are reached by democratic consensus, with special weight given to individuals with knowledge or expertise in the subject under examination. Terrans find Czanik government to be ponderous and oddly anarchic, since it is rare to find a single Czanik (or even group of them) who have the sole power to make



decisions on behalf of anyone other than themselves. Consequently, the Czanik play little role in interstellar governance, quite happily leaving such responsibilities to others, with the caveat that they may choose either not to act or to act slowly to directives from authorities that theoretically have jurisdiction over them.

### **Traits**

Czanik gain +2 Body and -2 Dexterity, as well as Curious, Extra Arms (x2), and Hypersensitivity. They also have Armor Restriction and Equipment Restriction. They have 9 bonus points with which to buy additional skills and Abilities.

### **Hen Jaa**

The alien Hen Jaa have been at odds with Terran civilization since first contacted in the days of the Old Federation. Surviving a disaster that nearly wiped out their species, the Hen Jaa went on to achieve great things during the Age of Warring States and carved out a mighty empire for themselves. Now, they eye the Thousand Suns greedily and look for any sign of Terran weakness that they might exploit to their own benefit.

### **Physiology**

Hen Jaa are six-limbed cephalopod-like beings, standing approximately 1.6 m and weighing 50 kg on average. Their six limbs are muscular hydrostats, which is to say, arms that possess no skeletal structure but only powerful muscles. Because these hydrostats are arranged radially around the central body (including a bulbous head), Hen Jaa can use them equally well for locomotion or manipulation. Under normal circumstances, Hen Jaa walk on their three hindmost limbs and use the other three as hands. If circumstances require it, however, they may use more limbs for locomotion or manipulation, being completely ambidextrous.

Hen Jaa breathe chlorine rather than oxygen. Their skin is quite porous and elastic and runs a gamut of colors from dark brown to gray. It is also quite sensitive to touch and to smell. Indeed, Hen Jaa have extraordinarily highly developed senses of touch and smell, far greater than that of Terrans. This more than makes up for their comparatively poor eyesight and hearing. Consequently, Hen Jaa are less impaired by darkness than many other species.

Hen Jaa have an internal body temperature of 28° C and prefer slightly colder climates to warmer ones. They have two genders, male and female, and hatch from eggs, which are laid in clutches of three to six, after a month-long gestation period. Hen Jaa young, though

small, are born able to fend for themselves but are not deemed sentient, even by their parents, until they are approximately a year old and have shown themselves capable of attending to their own needs. Hen Jaa lifespans are short, approximately 50 standard years, although life extension technologies can add a decade or two to that span, after which all but the hardiest of Hen Jaa buck the toll of their harsh biology.

## **Psychology**

Outsiders typically describe the Hen Jaa as “cruel” or at least “uncaring.” They point to their disinterest in their own young and their willingness to eliminate the old and infirm as evidence of these psychological traits, not to mention the well-known Hen Jaa penchant for the “dirty” atmospheric terraforming in which they engage against worlds they intend to colonize, whether they possess native life or not. There can be little arguing with these facts, which are not mere propaganda, but those sympathetic to the Hen Jaa remind their interlocutors that these are, after all, alien beings and thus can hardly be expected to adhere to Terran or even Czanik ways of looking at the universe. Their supposed cruelty is simply a natural outgrowth of the harsh conditions of their original homeworld Luqin.

Interestingly, once a young Hen Jaa shows the ability to behave as an adult, it is readily welcomed back into society and assisted in almost every aspect of its life by other adults, not merely its parents (whom it may never identify or seek to do so). Hen Jaa have an amazing capacity altruism and tend toward natural communism in their thought patterns. Most Hen Jaa are willing to go to great lengths to assist others of their kind, as well as those who have proven their worth from other species. Many are likewise willing to sacrifice their own well-being or desires to the good of a larger group, a psychological trait that was strengthened after the destruction of Luqin.

Despite this, Hen Jaa are not without egos or a strong sense of self – quite the contrary! Hen Jaa are renowned as overbearing braggarts and tall tale tellers and will defend their accomplishments, whether personal or as a species, with sharp words and, if necessary, violence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hen Jaa are also renowned for their quick wits and skill at hurling creative insults. Because of the musical complexity of their most widely spoken languages, few non-Hen Jaa truly appreciate the bite of their insults. To some extent, these behaviors are the results of a deep-seated inferiority complex that colors much of their interactions with other species.

## **History**

Hen Jaa history is a tragic one. During the closing days of the Old Federation, a quantum singularity passed too close to the Hen Jaa homeworld of Luqin, permanently damaging

its atmosphere and creating tectonic disturbances on a mass scale. At the time, the Hen Jaa possessed only Class IV technology and the Federation had quarantined their planet to avoid cultural contamination. When the singularity wrought its devastation, the Federation broke the quarantine and transported as many Hen Jaa as they could save to another world (now named Panru) with a compatible biosphere. Though the Hen Jaa were saved, their culture was shattered. Not only did they have to cope with the existence of other intelligent species but also the realization that these species were vastly superior to themselves technologically.

The Hen Jaa nevertheless adapted to these revelations, quickly copying Terran technology and developing their own, which led to an interstellar empire founded during the Age of Warring States. The Hen Jaa viewed the rise of another Terran interstellar state with displeasure, seeing it as unwelcome rival. Over the last few centuries, the Hen Jaa have attempted to block Terran expansion wherever possible, with varying degrees of success.

## **Society**

As noted above, the Hen Jaa are psychologically prone to altruistic and communistic behavior toward members of their own species. This carries over into their society, which is based on similar principles. The concept of blood relation carries no meaning in Hen Jaa society, as young are raised in common and males and females do not generally form pair bonds that last longer than the month-long gestation period. There are exceptions, of course, but these are unusual and generally viewed with some suspicion by Hen Jaa society as a whole.

Hen Jaa society is thus a strange mix of decentralization and frightening organization. Hen Jaa prefer decisions to be reached by consensus and lack the hierarchical worldview of many other species, preferring instead to employ a distributed leadership model that encourages debate and the free exchange ideas. While this sometimes hampers the ability of Hen Jaa society to deal with controversial topics, even pressing ones, its corollary is that, once consensus is reached, the species throws its entire weight behind it and pursues it single-mindedly.

At present, the two pursuits about which Hen Jaa society has achieved consensus are the acquisition of new worlds through terraforming, colonization, and conquest and checking Terran expansion at every turn. Because the worlds on which Hen Jaa may live comfortably without technological assistance are few, the decision was made long ago to seize them by any means necessary, lest the species be boxed in and without any means to extend its influence among the stars. This has resulted in a cold war with the Terrans and their allies, as each looks for signs of weakness in the other. Open warfare has historically been limited

to only a few minor skirmishes, but that may change in the future, particularly if Hen Jaa society reaches consensus in favor of war.

### **Traits**

Hen Jaa gain +1 Will, Extra Limbs (x2), Hypersensitive, and Scent. They also have Armor Restriction, Equipment Restriction, and Weak Immune System. They gain 9 bonus points with which to buy additional skills and Abilities.

*“What was the use of this struggle to keep a decaying civilization from being eaten alive, if you never got a chance at any of the decadence yourself?”*

*– Poul Anderson, “The Game of Glory,” (1958)*

### **Kriilkna**

The trilaterally symmetrical, mute Kriilkna are one of the strangest species Terrans have encountered among the stars. Their unique physiology has led to the creation of an equally unique culture, one that might be called “tripolar,” as three different facets of Kriilkna psychology vie for control of this species and their interstellar empire.

### **Physiology**

The Kriilkna are a trilaterally symmetrical species whose ancestors’ closest terrestrial analogs are arthropods. Strictly speaking, the Kriilkna are not arthropods at all, lacking many of the characteristics of that phylum. Nevertheless, there are many similarities, including a chitinous body and segmented legs. The chitinous outer coating of a Kriilkna is not a true exoskeleton, but it does serve to protect the body and the organs within it.

Kriilkna’s basic body shape is like that of a Terran shrimp, except that it stands vertically. The body splits into three parts near the base, with three muscular appendages that can be used interchangeably as legs or arms. Typically, a Kriilkna balances itself on two appendages while walking, using the third to manipulate or carry things. To run, though, requires the use of all three appendages.

A Kriilkna’s trilateral symmetry is not limited to its externals. Most of its organs are triply redundant or at least tripartite. A foremost example of this is the Kriilkna’s brain, which consists of three lobes connected by a minimal amount of nerve tissue. This strange cerebral structure has had a profound impact on Kriilkna psychology, culture, and society and is perhaps one of the things for which the species is most known. Each Kriilkna favors one lobe of its brain over others, much in the way that a Terran might favor his left or his right

hand. Depending on which lobe a Kriilkna favors, his psychology might be completely different from others of his kind. Though the Kriilkna equivalent the corpus callosum is smaller and possessing fewer axons than in most other species, there is communication between the three lobes, albeit infrequent at the highest levels of brain function, which explains much about these beings.

The Kriilkna possess three genders: fertilizers (males), egg layers (females), and incubators (neuters). Kriilkna young are born live in small clutches of two to three. After fertilization, Kriilkna eggs are deposited in a pouch on the underside of an incubator's body, where they grow and develop over six months, after which they are ready to leave the safety of the pouch and be cared for by their parents. Kriilkna senses are mostly superior to those of Terrans, with the exception of hearing. Kriilkna depend strongly on sight and smell, at which they excel. Kriilkna have average lifespans for advanced species, with a typical one living approximately 90 standard years, although medical care can extend this by another decade or more.

## **Psychology**

Kriilkna psychology is utterly unlike that of any sapient species the Terrans have encountered. As noted above, their three-lobed brain affects their minds in profound ways. Any given Kriilkna favors one of his lobes and which one he favors determines his caste, which is thus a genetic characteristic, at least in part. Those who show evidence of proficiency with abstraction, mathematics, and music become priests. Those who show evidence of proficiency with spatial relationships and kinesthetics become warriors. Finally, those who show evidence of proficiency with creative endeavors become workers.

In general, a Kriilkna favors one lobe or another insofar as higher brain functions are concerned, which is to say, those skills and abilities that connect most directly to his caste. Thus, a warrior is strongly "in tune" with that lobe of his brain that governs physical abilities and sensing the world around him. This does not mean, however, that he lacks creativity or abstraction. What it does mean is that he possesses less affinity for those mental characteristics than members of other castes, which is why, returning to the example, warrior Kriilkna are renowned as literal minded blockheads, even if this is far from true.

The three lobes of a Kriilkna's brain are in constant contact with one another, but the connections are far weaker and more tenuous than between, say, the hemispheres of a Terran's brain. When connections do occur at a higher than usual levels, they manifest as auditory and sometimes visual hallucinations. These flashes of insight into another part of their mind have a profound effect on those Kriilkna who have them and they are far more likely to take heed of them than other thoughts more consistent with their usual psychology.



Such insights also forge newer, stronger connections between the lobes, which also has an effect on a Kriilkna's personality, altering it over time and giving it a more "well rounded" character than the stereotypes Terrans and other associate with the various castes.

## **History**

Kriilkna history, as one might expect, is chaotic and often violent. Until the widespread acceptance of Ybaaraa, their homeworld of Teektii suffered from nearly constant civil strife, as one tribe or state sought advantage over its neighbors at one time and peace at another, according to the dictates of whatever religion held sway there. Ybaaraa changed all that by helping to codify behavior, creating honor codes by which all three castes could live (relatively) harmoniously and which encouraged cooperation among tribes and states. Over several centuries, Teektii grew more unified and strife was significantly reduced, although even the most rigorous honor codes could not fully counteract the nature of Kriilkna psychology. The discovery of the D-Drive took the Kriilkna into the wider universe and gave the species a perfect societal safety valve. Since then, the Kriilkna have established themselves a important, if frustrating, players on the interstellar stage.

## **Culture**

Kriilkna culture is heavily influenced by Ybaaraa, a religion that arose to make sense of the sometimes-conflicting nature of Kriilkna flashes of insight. Prior to the religion's appearance, individual Kriilkna often interpreted their flashes of insight as revelations from their many gods and acted on them as if they were divine commands. Unsurprisingly, many such insights did not agree either with existing tradition or the insights of other Kriilkna, creating an environment in which new cults, ideologies, and philosophies rose and fell with amazing rapidity, in the process sparking wars and societal disruption.

Ybaaraa changed all that by seeking the commonality behind all insights as evidence of a divine plan that transcends the particulars of any single individual's insight and joins it to a larger picture. This is done through a variety of methods, foremost among them being an extensive cataloguing of all known insights and the circumstances under which they occurred. The priestly caste then examines and debates these insights in light of other known insights, which in turn has created a vast collection of laws, traditions, and taboos, all of which work as precedents in determining the precise meaning of any given insight. Over time, Kriilkna have been taught not to treat any given insight as necessarily having a plain meaning apart from what he gone before and this has helped to maintain social cohesion among these beings.

Of course, Ybaaraa is not universally accepted and some Kriilkna still cling to the "old

ways,” acting on their insights according to their own personal interpretations of them rather than those of the priestly caste. Thus, rebellions and upheavals still occur, though not as regularly as they once did. Still, Kriilkna society remains far more fractious than that of many interstellar species. Their starfaring empire is a collection of dozens of quasi-autonomous principalities and theocracies, engaged in a crazy quilt of alliances and antagonisms, all kept under wraps by a desire to avoid disruptive strife and stake a claim among the Thousand Suns. Thus far, this approach has worked well enough. How long it shall continue to do so remains an open question.

## Traits

Kriilkna gain Armor Restriction, Bony Spurs, Extra Arms, Natural Armor (AV 5), and Observe +1. They have 3 bonus points with which to buy additional skills and Abilities.

## Homeworld Packages

After having selected a species, you should choose one Homeworld Package for your character. A Homeworld Package is a collection of skills and Attribute bonuses that represent what your character learned or experienced as a result of growing up on a particular planet. Homeworld Packages are divided into four broad categories: Core, Civilized, The Marches, and Wildspace. Some categories are further sub-divided to provide additional means to distinguish one world from another.

### Core

The Core worlds are the most populous, sophisticated, and influential worlds in the Thousand Suns. They also tend to possess very stratified societies, where wealth and family history count for more than talent or ingenuity. Consequently, characters from the Core worlds are more class-conscious than are their counterparts elsewhere in the galaxy and this reveals itself in the skills and Attributes they favor.

#### *Upper Class*

Computers 2, Cultures (Terran) 2, Diplomacy 2, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Will +1,

#### *Middle Class*

Bureaucracy 2, Computers 2, Culture (Terran) 2, Driving 2, Language (Lingua Terra) 2

### Non-Human Homeworld Packages

As presented, these Homeworld Packages presume the character is a native of a Terran-dominated interstellar state and the skill choices reflect that. If a character is not native to such a state, small tweaks may be necessary, substituting appropriate specializations for skills such as Cultures or Language. In some cases, it might also be appropriate to substitute different skills to reflect the differences between non-Terran and Terran society. As always, the Game Master is final arbiter of what substitutions are most appropriate for his campaign.

### *Lower Class*

Bureaucracy 2, Computers 2, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Perception +1, Streetwise 2

### **Civilized**

The Civilized worlds are those either located astrographically outside the Core worlds or those whose populations or galactic influence are simply less than those of the Core. Nevertheless, as their name suggests, the Civilized worlds are technologically and socially advanced and their inhabitants contribute much to the Thousand Suns. In many ways, they are the foundation upon which interstellar governance rests. Characters from these worlds are therefore the standard by which those from other Homeworlds are judged.

Computers 2, Culture (Terran) 2, Driving 2, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Any Science Skill 2

### **The Marches**

The frontiers of the Thousand Suns are known colloquially as the Marches. The worlds of the Marches are a diverse lot, but all share a number of characteristics, the most important of which is their distance from the central government. Characters from the Marches thus tend to be independent-minded and resourceful compared to those from Civilized and (especially) Core worlds. Choose either one of the following to represent growing up on either a high or low population world in the Marches.

#### *High Population*

Computers 2, Perception +1, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Technical Sciences 2, and either two different non-native Languages at Rank 1 each or one non-native Language at Rank 2.

#### *Low Population*

Athletics 1, Perception +1, Language (Lingua Terra) 2, Survival 2, Technical Sciences 1, and either two different non-native Languages at Rank 1 each or one non-native Language at Rank 2.

### **Wildspace**

The region outside the Thousand Suns is called Wildspace and its inhabitants are typically deemed to be barbarians. The reality is far more complex, with some Wildspace planets be-

ing technologically advanced, particularly those whose native species are not human. What does differentiate Wildspace from the rest of the galaxy is its cultural isolation. Wildspace was never part of the Old Federation and characters hailing from this region, whether human or alien, will be outsiders and viewed with some suspicion by many inhabitants of the Thousand Suns.

### ***Low-Tech World***

Athletics 2, Body +1, Brawl, Melee, or Shoot 2, Language (Native) 2, Survival 2

### ***High-Tech World***

Computers 2, Culture (Native) 2, Driving 2, Language (Native 2), Technical Sciences 2

## **Career Packages**

After having selected a Homeworld Package, you may choose three Career Packages for your character. As its name suggests, a Career Package is a collection of skills and Attribute bonuses that represent training and experiences gleaned while “on the job.”

Each Career Package has three levels: Novice, Experienced, and Veteran. Each level subsumes the previous level in terms of skill ranks and Attribute bonuses. Thus, if a player chooses to spend all three of his character’s Career Packages in the Navy, for example, he need only look at the Veteran level Navy skills and Attributes to determine those he receives. On the other hand, if a player chooses to spend two Career Packages in the Navy and one in Pirate, he would then look at the Experienced level of Navy and the Novice level of Pirate and add together the bonuses to determine those he receives.

### **Adding Skill Ranks**

Skill Ranks acquired through the choice of Homeworld and Career Packages are additive, meaning that you should simply directly add the Ranks from each to determine your total skill Rank. For example, a character from a High Population world in the Marches receives Technical Sciences 2. If this character is a Veteran of the Navy, he also receives Technical Sciences 2. Adding the two together yields Technical Sciences 4. Likewise, a Middle Class character from a Core world receives Bureaucracy 2. If he is a Novice Academic and an Experienced Civil Servant, he receives Bureaucracy 1 and Bureaucracy 3 from his Career Packages respectively. Adding these all together yields Bureaucracy 6.

### **Specializations**

You may choose a specialization for any skill above Rank 2. By doing so, your chosen

specialization's starting Rank is equal to one greater than the Rank of the skill of which it is a specialization, while the original skill is lowered by one Rank. For example, if your character has Physical Sciences 3 and you decide you want him to specialize in Chemistry, his new skill write-up would be Physical Sciences (Chemistry) 2/4.

Any time you gain additional Ranks in a skill, you may choose to apply them either to a specialization or its parent skill. Using the example above, if your character gained an additional 2 Ranks in Physical Sciences, you could apply them either to Physical Sciences or to Chemistry provided that the parent skill is always at least one Rank lower than the lowest Rank of specialization. Thus, if your character has Physical Sciences (Chemistry) 2/4 and gains 2 Ranks in Physical Sciences, you can apply them to gain either Physical Sciences (Chemistry) 3/5 or Physical Sciences (Chemistry) 2/6, but not Physical Sciences 4/4.

You may also acquire additional specializations at any time, but every time you add another one, the parent skill drops by one Rank and the new specialization begins at one Rank higher than the previous Rank of the parent. For example, if your character has Physical Sciences (Chemistry) 2/4, you can choose another specialization (say, Physics) and this specialization would begin at Rank 3, while Physical Sciences itself drops to Rank 1. Your character can gain no additional specializations until the parent skill increases to at least Rank 2 (and thus the lowest specialization is at least Rank 3).

#### **Specialization Reminder**

1. Specializations always start at Rank 3 or higher.
2. Specializations always start at one Rank higher than the parent skill.

### **Other Important Phrases**

Some Career Packages use one of two specific phrases that limit the choices you may make in choosing between various options. These phrases are bolded in the Package listings and are defined here to avoid confusion. They are:

- **[number] additional:** This means you may choose a the appropriate number of new skills that meet the criteria that follow, which is to say skills your character does not already possess from the Career Package. Thus, if the Package says you may choose “two additional Dexterity-based skills, one at Rank 3 and one at Rank 2,” you may choose any two skills you wish based on Dexterity provided that you did not already acquire Ranks in those skills from the Career Package.
- **a total of [number] Ranks:** This means you may choose to an appropriate number of ranks from new or existing skills, including specializations. Thus, if a Package says



you may choose “a total of three Ranks from any skills you choose,” you may use those ranks to buy new skills or increase the Ranks of skills or specializations you already have. You may also to use them to buy new specializations, bearing in mind the usual rules regarding specializations (see above).

#### **Free-Form Career Packages**

If for some reason you'd like to create your own career packages or simply dispense with them entirely, use the following formulas:

Novice: 25 points

Experienced: 50 points

Veteran: 70 points

Skills: 1 point per level (and rarely granted above level 6)

Specialization: 1 point per specialization

Attribute Bonuses: 2 points per level (and rarely granted above +2)

A character created according to free-form rules would thus have 70 points with which to buy skills and attribute bonuses, using the aforementioned costs.

## **Academic**

Academics are professional scholars rather than researchers. Many are also educators teaching at universities and colleges through the Thousand Suns. Academics have a reputation for being removed from reality, living in so-called ivory towers without any cares except their studies and the petty disputes they have with other academics. This reputation contains some truth, but the reality is that galactic society derives many benefits from their scholarship and, in their own way, academics stave off the process of decivilization as fiercely as anyone.

*Novice:* Perception +2, Two Academic Specialty Skills 2 (each), Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 2, Computers 2, Cultures 2, Diplomacy 2, Language 2, Performance 2, Profession (Academic) 2, Socialize 1, and a related secondary Academic Specialty Skill 1.

*Experienced:* Perception +2, Two Academic Specialty Skills 4 (each), Bargain 3, Bureaucracy 4, Computers 4, Cultures 4, Diplomacy 4, Language 4, Performance 4, Profession (Academic) 4, Socialize 3, and a related secondary Academic Specialty Skill 3.

*Veteran:* Perception +2, Two Academic Specialty Skills 6, Bargain 5, Bureaucracy 6, Computers 5, Cultures 6, Diplomacy 5, Language 6, Performance 6, Profession (Academic) 6,

Socialize 5, and a related secondary Academic Specialty Skill 4.

## **Aristocrat**

An aristocrat is a wealthy individual whose wealth buys him respect and influence. In an imperial setting, an aristocrat may in fact be a titled member of the nobility, while in a federation setting he is most likely the scion of a powerful political or mercantile family. In either case, an aristocrat is skilled at making friends and influencing people—as well as whatever other personal hobbies he may have chosen for himself.

*Novice:* Will +2, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 2, Cultures 2, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Language 2, Observe 2, Socialize 2, plus two additional skills of the player's choice at Rank 2 each.

Knight, Baronet

*Experienced:* Will +2, Bargain 3, Bureaucracy 4, Cultures 4, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 4, Intimidation 3, Language 4, Observe 4, Socialize 4, plus three additional skills of the player's choice at Rank 4 each.

Baron, Marquis

*Veteran:* Will +2, Bargain 5, Bureaucracy 5, Cultures 6, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Intimidation 4, Language 6, Observe 6, Socialize 6, plus four additional skills of the player's choice at Rank 4 each.

Count, Duke

## **Army**

Often considered its least glamorous branch, the Army (more formally known as the Ground Forces) is nevertheless a vital part of any interstellar military, providing the ground troops that protect and defend worlds during times of peace and war.

*Novice:* Athletics 2, Bureaucracy 1, Defend 2, Diplomacy 1, Dodge 2, Heavy Weapons 2, Medical Sciences 1, Melee 2, Profession (Army) 2, Shoot 2, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Vehicle Operation 2, and either Intimidation 2 (if Officer) or Technical Sciences 2 (if Enlisted). E: Private, Lance-Corporal, Corporal; O: Second Lieutenant, First Lieutenant, Captain

*Experienced:* Athletics 4, Bureaucracy 3, Defend 3, Diplomacy 2, Dodge 3, Heavy Weapons 3, Medical Sciences 2, Melee 4, Profession (Army) 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 4, Vehicle Operation 2, and either Intimidation 3 (if Officer)

or Technical Sciences 4 (if Enlisted) and a total of two ranks from any of the following: Cultures, Engineering, Gaming, Gunnery, Intrusion, Language, and Streetwise.

E: Sergeant, Staff Sergeant; O: Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel

*Veteran:* Athletics 5, Bureaucracy 4, Defend 4, Diplomacy 4, Dodge 4, Heavy Weapons 4, Medical Sciences 2, Melee 5, Profession (Army) 5, Shoot 6, Stealth 4, Survival 4, Tactics 4, Unarmed Combat 5, Vehicle Operation 3, and either Intimidation 4 (if Officer) or Technical Sciences 4 (if Enlisted) and a total of three ranks from any of the following: Cultures, Engineering, Gaming, Gunnery, Intrusion, Language, and Streetwise.

E: Sergeant Major; O: Brigadier, Major General, Lieutenant General

## **Athlete**

Competitive sports remain a popular form of entertainment in the galaxy. Professional athletes enjoy both celebrity and wealth on many worlds and are viewed as role models and heroes by the young. With so many inhabited worlds and intelligent species, sports in the Thousand Suns are diverse, from the fast-moving gravball games preferred in the Core to the rough and tumble, almost gladiatorial pastimes of the Marches and Wildspace.

*Novice:* Body +2, Dexterity +2, Athletics 3, Defend or Dodge 2, Medical Sciences 2, Melee or Unarmed Combat 2, Profession 2, Socialize 2, and a total of four ranks from any skills of your choosing.

*Experienced:* Body +2, Dexterity +2, Athletics 5, Bargain 2, Defend or Dodge 4, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Medical Sciences 2, Melee or Unarmed Combat 4, Observe 2, Profession (Athlete) 4, Socialize 4, Tactics 2, and a total of seven ranks from any skills of your choosing.

*Veteran:* Body +2, Dexterity +2, Athletics 7, Bargain 4, Defend or Dodge 6, Diplomacy 3, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3, Medical Sciences 2, Melee or Unarmed Combat 4, Observe 4, Profession (Athlete) 6, Socialize 6, Tactics 3, and a total of ten ranks from any skills of your choosing.

## **Barbarian**

Societies on many worlds collapsed alongside the Old Federation, descending into cultural and technological barbarism, a situation only made worse during the Age of Warring States. Although the Concord brought peace to the Thousand Suns, even after five centuries there remain worlds that never enjoyed the boons it promised, least of all high technology. Barbarians call such worlds home and, while most remain trapped on them, a few manage

to make it to the stars and see the wider galaxy of which their world is but a small part.

*Novice:* Animal Handling 2, Athletics 2, Bargain 2, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Medical Sciences 1, Melee 2, Observe 2, Profession (Specialization) 2, Streetwise 1, Survival 3, Unarmed Combat 2, and a total of two ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Experienced:* +2 to any one Attribute, Animal Handling 4, Athletics 4, Bargain 4, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Medical Sciences 2, Melee 4, Observe 4, Profession (Specialization) 4, Streetwise 2, Survival 5, and a total of five ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* +2 to any one Attribute, Animal Handling 5, Athletics 6, Bargain 6, Defend 6, Dodge 6, Medical Sciences 3, Melee 6, Observe 6, Profession (Specialization) 5, Streetwise 3, Survival 7, and a total of seven ranks from any skills of your choice.

## **Bounty Hunter**

The diffuse nature of interstellar government, combined with the vast number of worlds easily accessible by jumpline, makes it easy for criminals and lawbreakers to flee rather than face prosecution for their misdeeds. Consequently, bounty hunters fill a much-needed role, even if many government and law enforcement officials view them with disdain.

*Novice:* Body +1, Bargain 2, Intimidation 1, Investigation 2, Melee 1, Observe 2, Profession (Bounty Hunter) 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2, Tactics 1, Unarmed Combat 2

*Experienced:* Body +2, Bargain 4, Intimidation 2, Intrusion 2, Investigation 4, Melee 2, Observe 4, Profession (Bounty Hunter) 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Survival 3, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 4.

*Veteran:* Body +2, Bargain 6, Intimidation 4, Intrusion 4, Investigation 6, Melee 3, Observe 6, Profession (Bounty Hunter) 6, Shoot 6, Streetwise 6, Subterfuge 5, Survival 5, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 6.

## **Civil Servant**

The civil service is the oil that lubricates the machinery of interstellar governance. Although the job is often boring, the best civil servants work to ensure that bureaucracy doesn't become an end in itself and that the needs of citizens are every bit as important as political expedience.

*Novice:* Perception, Presence, or Will +2, Bargain 2, Bureaucracy 3, Computers 2, Diplo-

macy 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Observe 2, Profession (Civil Servant) 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1.

*Experienced:* Perception, Presence, or Will +2, Bargain 4, Bureaucracy 5, Computers 4, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Investigation 4, Observe 4, Profession (Civil Servant) 4, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 3, and a total of three ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* Perception, Presence, or Will +2, Bargain 6, Bureaucracy 7, Computers 5, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Intimidation 6, Investigation 6, Observe 6, Profession (Civil Servant) 6, Socialize 4, Subterfuge 4, and a total of five ranks from any skills of your choice.

## **Criminal**

The return of interstellar governance guaranteed the return of interstellar crime. Whether belonging to small planet-bound gangs or true galactic mafias, criminals are a part of life in the Thousand Suns. Like pirates, some take advantage of the short arm of interstellar authority and the multiplicity of worlds to hide in the shadows and undertake their illegal ventures. A few operate more openly, going so far as to run entire worlds right under the nose of the law.

*Novice:* Bargain 2, Empathy 2, Intrusion 2, Intimidation 2, Melee 1, Observe 2, Profession (Criminal) 2, Socialize 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Unarmed Combat 2.

*Experienced:* Bargain 4, Empathy 3, Intrusion 4, Intimidation 4, Melee 2, Observe 4, Profession (Criminal) 4, Socialize 3, Shoot 4, Stealth 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4, Unarmed Combat 3, and a total of three ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* Bargain 6, Empathy 3, Intrusion 6, Intimidation 5, Melee 3, Observe 5, Profession (Criminal) 6, Socialize 4, Shoot 6, Stealth 5, Streetwise 6, Subterfuge 6, Unarmed Combat 4, and a total of five ranks from any skills of your choice.

## **Diplomat**

War may be a constant, but it's the job of diplomats to ensure that it's not common. Diplomats seek compromise and negotiated solutions to problems before they boil over into conflict.

*Novice:* Will +2, Bargain 2, Diplomacy 3, Cultures 2, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Language



2, Observe 2, Profession (Diplomat) 2, Socialize 2, Social Sciences 2.

*Experienced:* Will +2, Bargain 4, Bureaucracy 2, Diplomacy 5, Cultures 4, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Language 4, Observe 4, Performance 2, Profession (Diplomat) 4, Socialize 4, Social Sciences 4, and one rank from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* Will +2, Bargain 6, Bureaucracy 4, Diplomacy 7, Cultures 6, Empathy 6, Intimidation 6, Language 5, Observe 6, Performance 3, Profession (Diplomat) 6, Socialize 5, Social Sciences 4, and a total of two ranks from any skills of your choice.

## Doctor

In this context, a “doctor” is any medical or health care professional, whether or not he possesses an actual medical degree.

*Novice:* Perception +2, Computers 2, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 2, Investigation 1, Life Sciences 2, Medical Sciences 3, Observe 2, Profession (Doctor) 2, Socialize 2, Technical Sciences 2.

*Experienced:* Perception +2, Bureaucracy 2, Computers 4, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 4, Investigation 3, Life Sciences 4, Medical Sciences 5, Observe 4, Profession (Doctor) 4, Socialize 4, Technical Sciences 4, and a total of four ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* Perception +2, Bureaucracy 4, Computers 5, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Investigation 5, Life Sciences 6, Medical Sciences 6, Observe 6, Profession (Doctor) 6, Socialize 6, Technical Sciences 4, and a total of six ranks from any skills of your choice.

## Entertainer

From the Core to Wildspace, people want to be entertained and are willing to pay for the privilege. Entertainers, ranging from singers to zero-G ballet dancers, can be found on nearly every world of the Thousand Suns. The most celebrated entertainers travel from world to world and enjoy the accolades of millions of admirers.

*Novice:* Any one Ability +2, Bargain 2, Cultures 2, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 2, Performance 3, Profession (Specialization) 2, Socialize 2, and a total of six ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Experienced:* Any one Ability +2, Bargain 4, Computers 2, Cultures 4, Diplomacy 4, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Observe 2, Performance 5, Profession (Specialization) 4, Socialize 4, Streetwise 2, and a total of nine ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* Any one Ability +2, Bargain 6, Computers 4, Cultures 5, Diplomacy 6, Dodge 3, Empathy 6, Observe 4, Performance 7, Profession (Specialization) 6, Socialize 6, Streetwise 4, and a total of nine ranks from any skills of choice.

## **Law Enforcer**

Law enforcers take a variety of forms, including planet-bound cops and interstellar investigators. This career covers any civilian whose primary occupation is the investigation of crimes and the apprehension of lawbreakers.

*Novice:* Athletics 2, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 1, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Diplomacy 1, Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Observe 2, Shoot 2, Streetwise 2, Tactics 1, Unarmed Combat 2, Vehicle Operation 1.

*Experienced:* Athletics 3, Bargain 2, Bureaucracy 2, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 4, Intimidation 3, Investigation 4, Observe 4, Shoot 4, Streetwise 4, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 4, Vehicle Operation 3.

*Veteran:* Athletics 4, Bargain 3, Bureaucracy 3, Defend 6, Dodge 5, Diplomacy 3, Empathy 6, Intimidation 4, Investigation 6, Observe 6, Shoot 6, Streetwise 6, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 5, Vehicle Operation 4.

## **Marines**

The Marines (more properly, Naval Infantry or, sometimes, Fleet Infantry) are a branch of the Navy, although most Marines tend to downplay this fact, preferring instead to think of themselves as a branch all their own. Nevertheless, Marines serve as security guards on naval vessels and at military bases. Their primary role, though, is as drop troops that establish beachheads on enemy-held worlds and installations. Consequently, the Naval Infantry possesses some of the toughest and most battle-hardened troops in the Thousand Suns.

*Novice:* Acrobatics 2, Athletics 2, Bureaucracy 1, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 1, Medical Sciences 1, Melee 2, Profession (Marine) 2, Shoot 2, Survival 1, Tactics 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Vehicle Operation 1, and one of the following: Gunnery, Heavy Weapons, Piloting (if an Officer), Stealth, Technical Sciences at Rank 2.

E: Armsman, Leading Armsman, Lance Petty Officer; O: Cadet, Subaltern, Sublieutenant

*Experienced:* Acrobatics 3, Athletics 3, Bureaucracy 2, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Intimidation 3, Medical Sciences 2, Melee 4, Profession (Marine) 4, Shoot 4, Survival 3, Tactics 4, Unarmed Combat 4, Vehicle Operation 2, and one of the following: Gunnery, Heavy

Weapons, Piloting (if an Officer), Stealth, Technical Sciences at Rank 4.

E: Squad Petty Officer, Platoon Petty Officer; O: Lieutenant, Subcommander, Commander

*Veteran:* Acrobatics 3, Athletics 4, Bureaucracy 3, Defend 5, Dodge 5, Intimidation 4, Medical Sciences 3, Melee 5, Profession (Marine) 6, Shoot 6, Survival 5, Tactics 6, Unarmed Combat 6, Vehicle Operation 3, and one of the following: Gunnery, Heavy Weapons, Piloting (if an Officer), Stealth, Technical Sciences at Rank 6.

E: Gunnery Petty Officer, Master Gunner; O: Captain, Captain-General

## Navy

The Navy is the perhaps the most celebrated branch of the military for it is a prime guarantor of the Concord by protecting the jumplines from piracy and foreign powers. Unfortunately, the Thousand Suns are large and, even with an infinite budget, the Navy could never patrol their entirety. Most naval commanders are thus given wide discretion to act according to their own judgments and this reality has only added to the service's fame, as starship captains throughout history have shown astounding resourcefulness in the face of remarkable odds and come out on top.

*Novice:* Acrobatics 2, Athletics 2, Bureaucracy 2, Computers 2, Defend 1, Diplomacy 1, Dodge 2, Medical Sciences 1, Melee 1, Profession (Navy) 2, Shoot 1, Tactics 2, Technical Sciences 2, Unarmed Combat 1 and two of the following: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences at Rank 2 each.

E: Apprentice (Specialty), Able (Specialty), Senior (Specialty); O: Cadet, Subaltern, Sublieutenant

*Experienced:* Acrobatics 3, Athletics 3, Bureaucracy 3, Computers 4, Defend 3, Diplomacy 2, Dodge 3, Medical Sciences 2, Melee 2, Profession (Navy) 4, Shoot 3, Tactics 3, Technical Sciences 4, Unarmed Combat 3, and two of the following: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences at Rank 4 each.

E: Petty Officer (Specialty) 3rd Class, Petty Officer (Specialty) 2nd Class, Petty Officer (Specialty) 1st Class; O: Lieutenant, Subcommander, Commander

*Veteran:* Acrobatics 4, Athletics 4, Bureaucracy 4, Computers 4, Defend 4, Diplomacy 3, Dodge 4, Medical Sciences 2, Melee 3, Profession (Navy) 6, Shoot 5, Tactics 5, Technical Sciences 6, Unarmed Combat 4, and two of the following: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences at Rank 6 each.

E: Chief Petty Officer (Specialty), Senior Chief Petty Officer (Specialty), Master Chief Petty Officer (Specialty); O: Captain, Commodore

## Pirate

Where there is commerce, there are pirates. While the Navy does its best to put down piracy whenever it appears, there are only so many naval vessels and far too many star systems. In the Marches and in Wildspace, pirates find many places to hide and so this dishonorable profession continues to thrive in the Thousand Suns.

*Novice:* Acrobatics 2, Bargain 2, Defend 1, Dodge 1, Intimidate 2, Melee 2, Profession (Pirate) 2, Shoot 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Tactics 1, Technical Sciences 2, Unarmed Combat 2, and one of the following: Engineering 2, Gunnery 2, Piloting 2, or Space Sciences 2.

*Experienced:* Acrobatics 3, Bargain 3, Defend 3, Dodge 3, Intimidate 4, Melee 3, Profession (Pirate) 4, Shoot 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Tactics 3, Technical Sciences 3, Unarmed Combat 4, and two of the following, one at Rank 4 and one at Rank 2: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences.

*Veteran:* Acrobatics 4, Bargain 4, Defend 5, Dodge 4, Intimidate 5, Melee 5, Profession (Pirate) 5, Shoot 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5, Tactics 4, Technical Sciences 4, Unarmed Combat 5, and two of the following, one at Rank 6 and one at Rank 4: Engineering, Gunnery, Piloting, or Space Sciences.

## Psion

Psionic powers were studied in the final days of the Old Federation, but it's only now, since the Concord, that the powers of the mind are being systematically researched. Psionically-gifted individuals—psions—are slowly finding a place for themselves in the Thousand Suns, but they face many obstacles, not least being the fear and prejudice of those not so gifted.

*Novice:* Will +2, Empathy 1, Observe 1, Profession (Choice) 2, Resist 2, any one psionic skill at Rank 3, any three psionic skills of your choice at Rank 2 each, and a total of six ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Experienced:* Will +2, Empathy 3, Observe 2, Profession (Choice) 4, Resist 3, any three psionic skills at Rank 4, any four psionic skills of your choice at Rank 3, and a total of ten ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* Will +2, Empathy 4, Observe 2, Profession (Choice) 4, Resist 5, any four psionic skills at Rank 6, any four psionic skills of your choice at Rank 4, and a total of ten ranks

from any skills of your choice.

### **Psions**

The psion is an unusual Career Package for two reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, you cannot select it for your character unless your Game Master allows you to do so. Psionics is an optional element of *Thousand Suns*. Some campaigns will not include it. Be sure to check with your GM beforehand to make certain he allows psionic characters. Secondly, this Career Package represents not so much a career in the sense of an occupation but rather advancing degrees of knowledge of and proficiency with psionic powers. Consequently, if you do choose this Career Package, you should give some thought to what kind of job your character actually held and how his psionic abilities were used in it. Some suggestions and examples can be found in Chapter 7.

### **Rebel**

If war is the continuation of politics by other means, then rebels are among the greatest politicians in the galaxy. From the Core worlds to Wildspace, there are individuals who have taken up arms against the authorities when they believed they had no other recourse for their grievances. Although the Civil War put an end to the largest rebel groups, plenty of others still exist and, despite government propaganda to the contrary, they are growing.

*Novice:* Bargain 2, Defend 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Observe 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1, Survival 2, Tactics 1, Unarmed Combat 2 and a total of three ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Experienced:* Bargain 4, Defend 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Observe 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 4, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3, Survival 4, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 4, and a total of four ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* Bargain 5, Defend 6, Dodge 6, Empathy 5, Observe 6, Shoot 6, Stealth 6, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5, Survival 6, Tactics 4, Unarmed Combat 6, and a total of five ranks from any skills of your choice.

### **Scientist**

Scientists differ from pure academics in that they are researchers and experimenters rather than scholars. Scientists study a wide variety of phenomena, from jumpline physics to Traveler technology. Because such research generally has more immediately practical applications than academic work, megacorporations and governments, as well as institutions of learning, employ scientists and some are quite well recompensed for their work.



*Novice:* Perception +2, Bureaucracy 2, Computers 2, Diplomacy 2, Investigation 2, Observe 2, Profession (Scientist) 2, Socialize 2, and three additional Perception-based skills (one at Rank 3 and two at Rank 2).

*Experienced:* Perception +3, Bargain 2, Bureaucracy 4, Computers 4, Cultures or Language 1, Diplomacy 4, Investigation 4, Observe 4, Performance 2, Profession (Scientist) 4, Socialize 4, and three additional Perception-based skills (one at Rank 5 and two at Rank 3).

*Veteran:* Perception +3, Bargain 3, Bureaucracy 5, Computers 5, Cultures or Language 2, Diplomacy 5, Investigation 6, Observe 6, Performance 3, Profession (Scientist) 6, Socialize 6, and three additional Perception-based skills (one at Rank 7 and two at Rank 5).

## Scout

The galaxy is a big place and someone has to explore it. A Scout is a professional interstellar explorer, usually employed by an interstellar government (and sometimes as a member of a paramilitary or military organization), megacorporation, or local authority. Scouts possess a wide variety of skills and are accustomed to operating far outside civilized space without anything but their own resources to call upon.

*Novice:* Cultures 1, Diplomacy 2, Language 1, Life Sciences 2, Medical Sciences 2, Observe 2, Physical Sciences 2, Profession (Scout) 2, Shoot 1, Social Sciences 2, Survival 2, Technical Sciences 2, Unarmed Combat 1, and a total of three Ranks from any of the following skills: Engineering, Investigation, Piloting, Space Sciences, and Vehicle Operation.

*Experienced:* Cultures 3, Diplomacy 4, Language 3, Life Sciences 4, Medical Sciences 3, Observe 4, Physical Sciences 4, Profession (Scout) 4, Shoot 2, Social Sciences 4, Survival 4, Technical Sciences 4, Unarmed Combat 2, and a total of five Ranks from any of the following skills: Engineering, Investigation, Piloting, Space Sciences, and Vehicle Operation.

*Veteran:* Cultures 5, Diplomacy 6, Language 4, Life Sciences 5, Medical Sciences 4, Observe 6, Physical Sciences 5, Profession (Scout) 6, Shoot 3, Social Sciences 5, Survival 6, Technical Sciences 5, Unarmed Combat 3, and a total of seven Ranks from any of the following skills: Engineering, Investigation, Piloting, Space Sciences, and Vehicle Operation.

## Spy

Espionage is as old as civilization itself and that hasn't changed. Interstellar and planetary governments, as well as militaries, corporations, and even organizations employ spies. Indeed, the scope for espionage is probably greater in the Thousand Suns than it has been in many millennia and individuals adept at surreptitiously undertaking missions without being detected are in high demand.

*Novice:* Bargain 2, Defend 2, Diplomacy 1, Empathy 2, Intrusion 2, Investigation 2, Observe 2, Profession (Spy) 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Unarmed Combat 2, and a total of three Ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Experienced:* Bargain 4, Defend 3, Diplomacy 3, Empathy 4, Intrusion 4, Investigation 4, Observe 4, Profession (Spy) 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 4, Streetwise 3, Unarmed Combat 4, and a total of five Ranks from any skills of your choice.

*Veteran:* Bargain 5, Defend 4, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 5, Intrusion 6, Investigation 6, Observe 6, Profession (Spy) 5, Shoot 5, Stealth 6, Streetwise 4, Unarmed Combat 5, and a total of seven Ranks from any skills of your choice.

## Survivalist

Life on many worlds in the Marches and Wildspace is harsh and it takes a special breed of person to master it. Survivalists are individuals who've learned how to live off the land and avoid the worst dangers of unforgiving environments. While not all Survivalists are natives to inhospitable worlds, most find such worlds the best places to ply their unique trade, whether as guides, scouts, or surveyors.

*Novice:* Body +2, Animal Handling 2, Athletics 2, Defend 2, Dodge 1, Medical Sciences 1, Melee 2, Observe 2, Shoot 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Unarmed Combat 2.

*Experienced:* Body +2, Animal Handling 4, Athletics 4, Defend 4, Dodge 3, Life Sciences 2, Medical Sciences 3, Melee 4, Observe 4, Shoot 4, Stealth 4, Survival 5, Tactics 1, Unarmed Combat 4.

*Veteran:* Body +2, Animal Handling 4, Athletics 6, Defend 6, Dodge 5, Life Sciences 2, Medical Sciences 3, Melee 6, Observe 6, Shoot 6, Stealth 6, Survival 7, Tactics 3, Unarmed Combat 6.

## Trader

The free flow of trade is one of the cornerstones of the Concord and the lifeblood of interstellar governance. Many traders work for megacorporations or other commercial ventures, but many more work independently, plying their wares to individual worlds in the Marches or even in Wildspace. Traders thus keep the Thousand Suns connected and play a role every bit as essential as the Navy in ensuring that the wreck of the Old Federation is not repeated.

*Novice:* Bargain 2, Bureaucracy 2, Cultures 1, Diplomacy 2, Empathy 2, Language 1, Observe 2, Profession (Trader) 2, Socialize 2, Technical Sciences 2, and three of the following, one at Rank 3, the others at Rank 2: Engineering, Gaming, Piloting, Shoot, Space Sciences, Streetwise, Unarmed Combat, and Vehicle Operation.

*Experienced:* Bargain 4, Bureaucracy 4, Cultures 3, Diplomacy 4, Empathy 4, Language 4, Observe 4, Profession (Trader) 4, Socialize 4, Technical Sciences 4, and three of the following, one at Rank 5, the others at Rank 3: Engineering, Gaming, Piloting, Shoot, Space Sciences, Streetwise, Unarmed Combat, and Vehicle Operation.

*Veteran:* Bargain 6, Bureaucracy 6, Cultures 6, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Language 5, Observe 5, Profession (Trader) 6, Socialize 5, Technical Sciences 5, and three of the following, one at Rank 6, the others at Rank 4: Engineering, Gaming, Piloting, Shoot, Space Sciences, Streetwise, Unarmed Combat, and Vehicle Operation.

## Hooks

Characters begin the game with five Hooks: one for his species, one for his homeworld, and three for his career(s). Hooks are noteworthy qualities, people, events, locations, or even objects that both link your character to them and describe him more fully. For example, a Terran from the city-world of Meridian might choose “Nosy” as his species Hook (playing off the fact that Terrans are renowned for their curiosity) and “Strato Gang Member” for his homeworld Hook (indicating that, as a kid, he was a street tough on the Strato, the dark, crime-ridden

### Career Hooks

You can spend your career hooks any way that you wish, but, as a general rule, it's best to think of each of the three hooks as being associated with one level of your career(s). For example, a Veteran Marine will typically have one Hook associated with his Novice years, one with his Experienced years, and one with his Veteran years. Each hook represents something noteworthy about each phase of his time in the Naval Infantry. This pattern holds true even for characters with multiple careers, such as someone who is an Experienced Scout and a Novice Trader. In this case, the character will likely have two Hooks associated with his years as a Scout and only one for his years as a Trader.

surface of the planet). These Hooks help describe the character and flesh out his personality, history, and other elements that both the player and the GM alike can use as hooks on which to hang an adventure.

Hooks have another purpose beyond roleplaying: they let you gain and spend Action Points (see below) for your character. Hooks provide you with a justification for using Action Points at an appropriate time in an adventure. Conversely, if you can connect one or more of your Hooks into the current adventure in a way that makes your character's life more difficult (which is to say, more exciting), you gain an Action Point. Likewise, the Game Master may at certain times decide that one or more of your Hooks is relevant and introduce new obstacles to your character's progress because of this, in which case you also gain Action Points.

Hooks should be noted on your character sheet in the section entitled "Action Points" (see below).

### **Action Points**

Every newly created character starts with five Action Points. Action Points are a meta-game element that allows you, as a player (rather than as your character), to influence events in the game in small but interesting ways. Action Points can be used in one of several ways.

#### **+1 Bonus**

The most basic use of an Action Point is to grant a +1 bonus to the Target of any dice roll.

*I don't confuse greatness with perfection. To be great anyhow is...the higher achievement.*

*--Lois McMaster Bujold, Mirror Dance (1994)*

### **Hook**

If you have a Hook that you feel is applicable to your character's current situation, you may mention this to the GM and, if he agrees, you may then spend an Action Point to do one of the following:

- Re-roll any dice roll
- +2 bonus to any Target.

You may use as many Hooks as you wish to any single action, provide the GM agrees that they apply to the situation and you have sufficient Action Points to do so. You may not,

however, use the same Hook multiple times to spend multiple Action Points on the same action.

### **“Editing”**

Action Points can also be used to “edit” an adventure to introduce additional elements, provided that they don’t directly contradict anything that’s already been established by the GM or otherwise disrupt its flow. For example, your character and his companions are having a drink in a seedy cantina on some world in Wildspace when a pair of bounty hunters enters intent on capturing them. You spend an Action Point to establish that the cantina not only has a back exit but your table is conveniently located near it so that you and your friends can make a hasty retreat unseen by your pursuers. Unless the GM had specifically stated that there was either no back exit or that your table was located far from any exit, this is a perfectly legitimate use of an Action Point. On the other hand, if you had attempted to use an Action Point to say that the ceiling collapsed on the bounty hunters just as they entered the cantina, killing them in the process, the GM would have been well within his rights to overrule you.

In general, GMs are encouraged to be fairly lenient with the use of Action Points to edit adventures, particularly if the player makes some connection to one of his Hooks. In the example above, if one of the player’s had had a Hook for his character called “Easy Getaway” and has established that he always made sure that he knew where multiple exits were to escape from potentially dangerous situations, the GM would have even less reason to deny his use of the Action Point to find a back exit.

More information on the use of Action Points can be found in Chapter 3.

### **Ranks as Hooks**

Certain Career Packages, primarily military ones, have ranks associated with them. These ranks (not to be confused with skill Ranks) are listed in italics after the appropriate level of the Package. These ranks indicate the typical level of professional recognition a character at that stage in his career is likely to possess. Thus, an Experienced Aristocrat, in a setting that features titled nobility, is probably a Baron or a Marquis. In the case of military Career Packages, the listed ranks have one of the following notations before them: E: or O:. These indicate Enlisted and Officer ranks respectively.

Ranks are a type of Hook. If your character took one or more Career Packages with ranks associated with them, you should generally use one of your character’s three career-related Hooks to gain a rank. You are completely free to choose whatever rank you wish from those



listed at the appropriate stage of your character's chosen Career Packages. The choice is, of course, subject to Game Master approval and there should be some leeway given to allow for certain types of character concepts, such as very experienced soldiers constantly passed over for promotion or individuals with friends in high places who've advanced their careers well beyond their level of competence. The listed ranks are good guidelines, though, so that if the GM wishes to create the Captain of a Naval vessel, chances are he is at the Veteran stage of his career.

As Hooks, ranks can provide in-game benefits. You can use them like any other Hook. For example, if your character is a former Naval Infantry Master Gunner, you can use this Hook to give him an easier time interacting with Marine troopers on a garrison in the Marches. Likewise, if your character is a noble, he will probably be able to use his title to wrangle an audience with an imperial satrap who might otherwise deny it to a commoner. Ranks can thus be very useful Hooks and should not be overlooked.

### **Benefit Points**

All characters gain a number of Benefit Points with which to acquire things that would be of use to them in the course of a campaign, such as money, connections, or even a starship. Characters gain a number of Benefit Points based on the level of the Career Packages they chose. Benefit Points are accrued as follows:

<u>Career Level</u>	<u>Benefit Points</u>
Novice	1
Experienced	2
Veteran	3

Benefit Points are cumulative, so a Veteran of a single career starts with 6 Benefit Points, whereas a character who is Experienced in one career and a Novice in another starts with only 3 Benefit Points. Players may, if they choose, pool their Benefit Points to acquire more expensive things. The only exceptions are those things listed as "Character Specific," which can only be acquired by drawing on a specific character's pool of Benefit Points.

Depending on the campaign, Benefits Points can be used in several ways, none of them exclusive. The first is the most straightforward: cash. Each Benefit point represents 5000\$ (see Chapter 5 for more information on the currency system in *Thousand Suns*). Thus, a Veteran of a single career begins the game with 30,000\$ with which to buy his starting equipment, whereas a character who is Experienced in one career and a Novice in another starts with only 15,000\$. Note that this use of Benefits Points represents only cash on hand or liquid assets. A character may, at the GM's discretion, based on Hooks and other

background elements, have more money that is not easily usable.

The GM also rule that a character who is formally “retired” from his profession may have a pension which he receives every standard month. This pension is equal to one-twelfth the amount of starting cash he receives. Thus, a character with 15,000\$ starting cash receives a pension of 1250\$ per standard month. This pension is automatically deposited in his personal bank account and is easily accessible on any world where he may normally access his funds. Pensions are only available to careers that would reasonably grant them – the military or civil service, to cite two examples. Criminal or independent careers rarely grant pensions, though the GM may rule that a “pension” represents a similar steady influx of cash from some other source, as appropriate to the character concept.

Finally, in games where the characters possess their own ship, each Benefit Point represents one-fortieth of the total price of a starship. Generally, starships are acquired through forty-year mortgages, with monthly payments, just like a house. Each Benefit Point equates to a single year off the total years of the mortgage. Characters may pool their Benefit Points on a single starship, thus lowering both the number of years remaining till full repayment of the mortgage and its monthly payments.

A full list of equipment and starships on which you can spend Benefit Points is found in Chapter 5.

*The price we paid was the price men have always paid for achieving paradise in this life--we went soft, we lost our edge.*

*- Frank Herbert Dune (1965)*

## **Experience Points**

As your character completes adventures, he will earn experience points. Experience points are used to buy Ranks in existing Skills, or used to buy new Skills. See Chapter 3 for more information about Skills.

## **Finishing Touches**

After having selected a species, Homeworld and Career Packages, and Hooks, your character is almost complete. You still need, at minimum, to choose a name, an age, and a gender for your character. It'd also be a good idea to have at least a basic background for your character, since this will give you a better sense of how to play him in adventures and can provide hooks for the Game Master to use in creating compelling scenarios. Of course,

your character's Hooks cover some of this ground, but more is always better when it comes to fleshing out your character.

## **Name**

Your character's name is important, since it's something that (likely) sticks with him throughout his many adventures, even as he learns new skills, takes up new jobs, and acquires new equipment. There are lots of schools of thought regarding the "proper" way to name a character in a roleplaying game. Truth be told, there is no right or wrong way to name a character. Provided you like the name and it suits the type and style of game your GM is running, whatever you choose is fine.

It's worth noting, though, that the science fiction that inspired *Thousand Suns* had naming conventions you might wish to consider. By and large, the writers of the Golden Age of Sci-Fi assumed the future belonged to a multi-ethnic, multicultural polyglot society in which names would be as convoluted as physical appearance. If you go this route, mix and match freely between cultures. Names like Themistocles M'Benga, Hideki Keogh, or Arturo Dillingham are all perfect examples of the kinds of names you might find in older science fiction stories. Another possibility is the slight alteration of contemporary names, like Daneel instead of Daniel or Andray instead of Andrew. Of course, alien characters will have their own unique naming conventions.

## **Age**

Your character's age is also important. Even in the far future, when lifespans are longer than in the 21st century, there will still likely be the equation of youth and inexperience and old age and wisdom. Consequently, think carefully about how you want to portray your character and how you wish others to view him. Is he a hotshot pilot still wet behind the ears and aching to prove his worth? Or is he a hard-bitten Scout who's been from one end of the galaxy to the other and seen it all?


There is no game mechanical benefit or penalty to being either young or old, but there are roleplaying consequences to your choice. In making your choice, bear in mind the Career Packages you've chosen. A character who is a Veteran of a single career is more likely to be older than someone who's a Novice in three. There's no direct correlation, of course. After all, a wunderkind scientist could easily be a Veteran in his chosen profession skill-wise, even if he's still quite young. Likewise, an aged dilettante might never have mastered a single career, instead having Novice level in three different ones.



## Gender

Your character's gender matters less than his name or even age, but it's still important. *Thousand Suns* assumes that, in the future, there's little to no discrimination based in gender. It's just as likely that the Grand Admiral of the Marches is a woman as a man, for example. That said, human beings being what they are, men and women relate to one another differently and there's little reason to assume a lack of discrimination will totally eliminate the recognition of gender differences. If you choose to make your character a man or a woman, they may encounter certain benefits or hindrances that they wouldn't if they were the opposite gender. Naturally, aliens are another matter entirely.

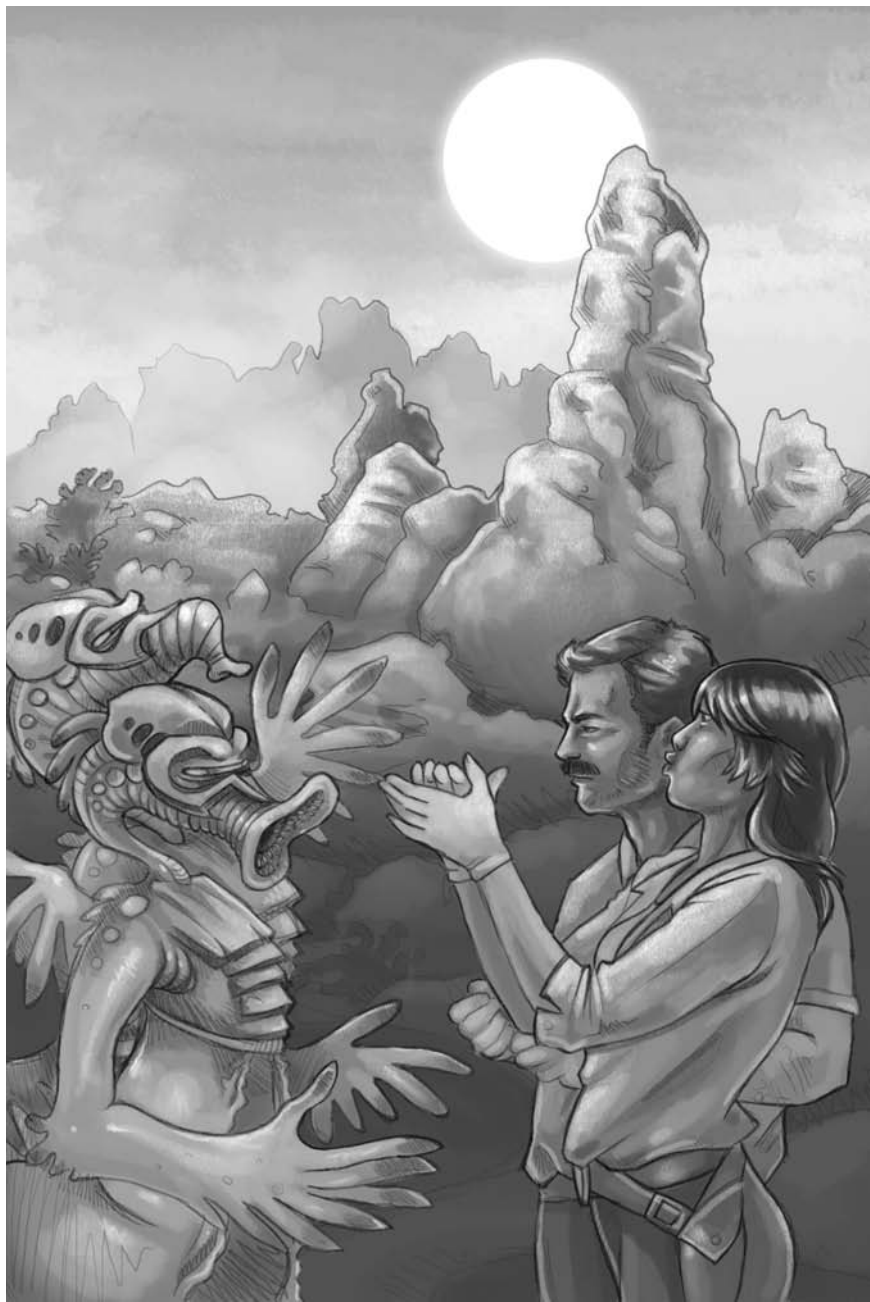
It's up to each Game Master to decide for his game whether the choice of gender has any consequences. In some settings, only women might be allowed to become starfighter pilots while only men serve as ground troops. In others, men and women serve side by side without comment. The default assumption throughout this rulebook is that gender differences are insignificant. It's not the only assumption and not necessarily the best, but it's the simplest one, which is why we've adopted it.



*“We’re hollow and corrupt and death has marked us for its own. Ultimately, though we disguise it, however strenuous and hazardous our amusements are, the only reason we can find for living is to have fun. And I’m afraid that isn’t reason enough.”*

*–Poul Anderson, “Hunters of the Sky Cave” (1959)*







# CHAPTER 3: SKILLS, HOOKS, AND PSIONICS

*“You’re interested in history?” Rathmore asked.*

*“A hobby. All spacemen have hobbies. There’s very little work aboard ship in hyperspace; boredom is the worst enemy. My guns-and-missiles officer, Vann Larch, is a painter. Most of his work was lost with the Corisande on Durendal, but he kept us from starving a few times on Flamberge by painting pictures and selling them. My hyperspatial astrogator, Guatt Kirbey, composes music; he tries to express the mathematics of hyperspatial theory in musical terms. I don’t care much for it, myself,” he admitted. “I study history.”*

*--H. Beam Piper, Space Viking (1963)*

**S**kills in *Thousand Suns* define what your character knows, whether it's shooting a blaster, speaking an alien language, hacking a computer, or piloting a starship. Most skills are quite broad, covering several related areas of expertise. Thus, Shoot covers all types of ranged weaponry, from blaster rifles to slug throwers, while Life Sciences covers all sciences that deal with living things.

In Chapter 1, we covered the basic mechanics of *Thousand Suns*. In this chapter we will go into greater detail about how skills are used and what types of skills are available for your character.

## **Ranks**

All skills are associated with one the five character Abilities described Chapter 2. The numerical value of a skill's associated Ability provides the skill's Base Rank. Every time you buy a new skill, you always buy that skill at its Base Rank. Every time you raise a skill one Rank, you spend Experience Points equal to half of your Skill's Base Rank.

For example, your character has gained Experience Points as a result of adventuring (see Chapter 6) and you want to gain the Investigation Skill, which your character did not previously possess. Investigation is associated with Perception and your character has a Perception of 8. Thus, it costs 8 Experience Points to gain a new Skill at Rank 1.

On the other hand, suppose you want to improve an existing skill your character already possesses, like Computers. To do this, you purchase one more Rank in Computers, which increases your character's Computers Rank from 6 to 7. Purchasing one more Rank equates to half of your Base Rank, rounding down for odd numbers. In this case, your Base Rank is 8, so you would spend 4 Experience Points to your Computers Rank from 6 to 7.

The higher the Rank in your skill is, the easier it is for your character to perform tasks associated with. No skill can have a Rank higher than 12 and any character with a skill that high would be a celebrated virtuoso, literally one of the best in the galaxy.

## **Skill Test Modifiers**

Sometimes a situation arises that makes a Skill Test easier or harder. Modifiers come into play when the situation demands it, and the GM uses them to determine the final Target Number (TN). Every Skill listed in this book can be modified depending upon the situation in game and whether or not the GM feels that a modifier is necessary.

Situation	Modifier to TN
Impossible	-4
Challenging	-3
Difficult	-2
Hard	-1
Routine	+1
Easy	+2
Trivial	+3
Simple	+4

So how does this work? Suppose your character is trying to intimidate a group of colonists on a world in Wildspace to make them afraid of him, so your GM asks you to make an Intimidate Test with no modifiers. If your Character is trying to intimidate the same group of colonists and the group noticeably shies away from your character's blaster, your GM might say that the Intimidate Test is Easy and give you're a +1 modifier to the TN. However, if your character tries to intimidate the same group of colonists under the watchful eyes of a Naval Infantry garrison, your GM might say the situation is Difficult and give your Character a -2 penalty to the skill's TN.

*Important Reminder:* When modifying the difficulty of a Skill Test, the modifier always applies to the Target Number, not the roll. Thus, Tests that are easier than normal get bonuses to the TN, while Tests that are harder than normal get penalties to the TN.

## Degrees of Success

More often than not, skill rolls will beat a Target Number by two or more. For example, your character is making a Piloting Test to perform a tricky maneuver in combat. Your character's Dexterity is 7 and his Piloting is also 7. This gives him a TN of 14, modified by -3 because the GM rules it is a Challenging Test. His final TN is 11. You get lucky and roll 6 on 2D12, meaning you beat the TN by 5 points!

Strictly speaking, beating a TN by 1 is no different than beating it by 10. Except in combat, where the degree of success determines the damage done, the degree of success has no specific mechanical benefit. Nevertheless, the GM should often reward beating a TN by more significant amounts, as an acknowledgement that the character has performed exceptionally well. Thousand Suns is a roleplaying game, after all, and most players take pride in their characters' accomplishments and like to see some benefit to particularly good rolls of the dice.

In the end, it is up to the Game Master to decide what an appropriate benefit should be. As a general rule, degrees of success greater than 2 should be rewarded with, at minimum, some small in-game effect. In the example above, perhaps the skill with which the character executed the maneuver was observed by other members of his squadron, who spread tales of his fancy flying throughout the sector, to the point where the maneuver is named for him and younger pilots look to him as an inspiration. This is but one possibility; the GM can no doubt come up with many more. The higher the degree of success, the greater the reward should be, but, by and large, such rewards should enhance roleplaying and add to the overall story rather than grant significant game mechanical benefits.

#### **Automatic Successes**

Test rolls represent attempts to perform difficult actions under stressful circumstances, when failure can mean the difference between life and death. Consequently, if the GM wishes, there is no reason you need make a roll for every thing your character does, particularly routine tasks, such as driving a vehicle to get from one place to another or using a computer to find very basic information. In such cases, the GM would be wise to assume your character simply succeeds without calling for a Test. Not only does it speed up play but it also lets everyone concentrate on those aspects of the adventure that really matter.

#### **Dramatic Success**

Anytime you roll a “2” on a 2d12, you score a Dramatic Success. The meaning of a Dramatic Success varies with the type of Test, but it typically means that your character has not only succeeded but succeeded in a spectacular, memorable fashion, granting your character either a +2 to the TN of a future roll related to his success or penalizing an opponent with a -2 to the TN of a future roll related to the success. In combat, a Dramatic Success indicates that you have dealt your opponent maximum damage for his weapon type, whereas in a Skill Test it indicates that you’ve achieved all you were attempting and more.

Here are some examples of Dramatic Successes:

- Through the use of Investigation, your character uncovers a clue or item that not only solves an immediate problem but also points the way toward the resolution of a more protracted problem.
- By using Observe, you realize you are being followed and gain a +2 bonus to Initiative when those individuals following you attempt to jump you in a dark alley



- Your character uses Defend to avoid a punch and finds himself in an advantageous position, gaining +2 to the TN of either your next counterattack or your next attempt to Defend against the same attacker.

## **Dramatic Failure**

Rolling a “24” on a 2d12 means your character experiences a Dramatic Failure. What this means is that your character not only failed his Test, but he performed his action so badly that he has either placed himself in danger or otherwise adversely affected himself (and possibly his companions), granting your character either a –2 to the TN of a future roll related to his success or granting an opponent a +2 to the TN of a future roll related to the success. In combat, a Dramatic Failure indicates that your weapon suffered a jam or malfunction, while in a Skill Test it indicates that you are either badly mistaken or have failed in such a way so as to make his situation more precarious.

Here are some examples of Dramatic Failures:

- While attempting to use Kriilkna sign language negotiate with a member of the priestly caste, your character inadvertently uses the wrong sign and insults the Kriilkna’s ancestry.
- Your character’s Dodge attempt fails, making him an easier target for a bounty hunter, who gains a +2 TN on his next shot at your character.
- Your character misreads a combat situation while making a Tactics roll and gives faulty orders to his comrades, penalizing them with a –2 TN on their next combat rolls

## **Retries**

Provided a failure does not have immediately negative consequences, most tasks may be attempted again. Each additional attempt lowers the Target Number by 1, in addition to taking more time. Thus, if your character is trying to find a particular piece of information in a computer database, he makes a Computer roll against the appropriate TN (in this case, 13). If that roll is a failure, he may try again, with the TN being 12 this time.

## **Untrained Skill Use**

Some skills can be used even if your character does not possess them. If a skill has the word “Untrained” in parentheses after its name in the list below, it may be used even if your character does not possess it. Using an untrained skill means your Character will take a –4 penalty to the TN, and will use only its Base Rank.

For example, your character is unskilled in Shoot. Surrounded by a band of Kriilkna marauders, your character grabs a nearby blaster pistol and hopes to defend himself. Though untrained, your character can still fire the blaster in hopes of hitting someone (or some thing). The TN would equal your character's Dexterity (the Ability associated with the Shoot skill) reduced by 4 Ranks due to the -4 penalty of using an untrained skill.

## Action Points

One way to improve the odds of a Test is through the use of Action Points. As noted in Chapter 1, Action Points are a kind of dramatic "currency" you can use to alter the Target Number of any skill roll. You do not need to spend the Action Points in advance; you can do so after the fact if you wish. For example, your character has a TN of 13 and you roll 14 – a failure. Since the success of the Test is important to your character's survival, you decide to spend an Action Point and boost the TN to 14, turning a failure into a success.



You may spend as many Action Points as your character current has to improve the TN of a Test. You may not, however, use Action Points to improve the TN of another character's Test. To do that requires the use of Hooks, which are described below, along with several other uses of Action Points.

Characters regain their pool of Action Points at the beginning of each game session provided that they used them in dramatic appropriate ways or ways that enhanced the fun and enjoyment of everyone playing the game (in the GM's opinion). Each character starts the game with a pool of 5 Action Points, but additional points may be purchased to increase that pool with the expenditure of Experience Points (see Chapter 6).

## Skill List

Each skill entry listed here includes the name of the skill, its associated Ability (which determines the skill's Base Rank), and if it can be used as untrained. In addition, the entries describe the skill's scope and offers sample specializations (if any).

### Acrobatics (Dexterity)

Acrobatics is the skill of performing physical feats either at a great height or under adverse

conditions that affect your innate sense of balance.

Specializations: Balancing, Falling, Gymnastics, Tumbling, Zero-G

**Animal Handling** (Presence)

Animal Handling is the skill of caring for, training, and (if applicable) riding animals.

Specializations: Specific Animals

**Athletics** (Body, Untrained)

Athletics is the skill of performing activities that depend on your physical strength and endurance.

Specializations: Climbing, Jumping, Specific Sports, Swimming, Throwing

**Bargain** (Presence, Untrained)

Bargain is the skill of convincing others through deception.

Specializations: Bluff, Bribery, Charm, Fast Talk, Seduction

**Bureaucracy** (Perception, Untrained)

Bureaucracy is the skill of understanding and manipulating organizations and power structures.

Specializations: Academic, Business, Government, Legal, Military

**Computers** (Perception, Untrained)

Computers is the skill of using computers and similar devices.

Specialization: Hacking, Programming, Research, Simulation

**Culture** (Perception)

Culture is the skill of knowing about the history, society, and culture of a particular species or world.

Specialization: Specific Cultures

**Defend** (Body, Untrained)

Defend is the skill of avoiding melee attacks.

Specializations: None

**Diplomacy** (Presence, Untrained)

Diplomacy is the skill of convincing others by swaying them to your point of view.

Specializations: Debate, Etiquette, Leadership, Negotiation, Persuasion

**Dodge** (Dexterity, Untrained)

Dodge is the skill of avoiding ranged attacks.

Specializations: None

**Empathy** (Perception, Untrained)

Empathy is the skill of reading and understanding other people's feelings and mental states.

Specialization: Body Language, Emotions, Intuition, Lies, Motives

**Engineering** (Perception)

Engineering is the skill of building, maintaining, and modifying technological systems and devices.

Specializations: D-Drive, Material, Naval Architecture, Specific Systems

**Gaming** (Perception, Untrained)

Gaming is the skill of playing non-physical games of strategy and chance.

Specializations: Specific Games

**Gunnery** (Perception)

Gunnery is the skill of using emplaced or vehicle-mounted weaponry.

Specializations: Direct Fire, Energy Weapons, Indirect Fire, Missiles

**Heavy Weapons** (Perception)

Heavy Weapons is the skill of using large, military grade weapons.

Specializations: Autocannon, Grenade Launcher, Flamethrower, Machine Gun, Rail Gun

**Intrusion** (Dexterity, Untrained)

Intrusion is the skill of finding and defeating security procedures or devices designed to prevent others from entering an area.

Specializations: Electronic, Mechanical

**Intimidation** (Presence, Untrained)

Intimidation is the skill of convincing others through fear.

Specializations: Bluster, Interrogation, Orders, Torture

**Investigation** (Perception, Untrained)

Interrogation is the skill of finding clues and uncovering evidence.

Specializations: Criminal, Interview, Mysteries, Research, Search

**Language** (Perception)

Language is the skill of speaking a language other than your own.

Specializations: Specific Languages

**Life Sciences** (Perception)

Life Sciences is the skill of studying living organisms, whether plants or animals.

Specializations: Biology, Botany, Ecology, Genetics, Zoology

**Medical Sciences** (Perception)

Medical Sciences is the skill of diagnosing and treating physical ailments.

Specializations: Diagnosis, First Aid, General Medicine, Pathology, Surgery

**Melee** (Dexterity, Untrained)

Melee is the skill of fighting with a weapon.

Specializations: Axe, Fencing, Long Blade, Short Blade, Traditional

**Observe** (Perception, Untrained)

Observe is the skill of being aware of your surroundings and noticing small details.

Specializations: None

**Performance** (Presence, Untrained)

Performance is the skill of entertaining people.

Specializations: Acting, Dancing, Oratory, Singing, Specific Musical Instrument

**Physical Sciences** (Perception)

Physical Sciences is the skill of studying the physical universe and its properties.

Specializations: Chemistry, Computer Science, Geology, Mathematics, Physics

**Piloting** (Dexterity)

Piloting is the skill of controlling space vehicles, regardless of whether they possess a D-Drive.

Specializations: By class

**Profession** (Perception)

Profession is the skill of being knowledgeable about a particular career or vocation.

Specializations: Specific Professions

**Resist** (Will, Untrained)

Resist is the skill of resisting psionic powers used against you.

Specializations: None.

**Weapon Skill Specialization**

Chapter 5 describes most of the weapons a character can acquire in *Thousand Suns*. Each weapon includes, in addition to its other traits, a notation indicating the type of weapon it is, so you can tell which specialization applies to, say, a blaster pistol or a monoblade.



**Socialize** (Presence, Untrained)

Socialize is the skill of interacting positively with other people in a social situation.

Specializations: Carousing, Formal Events, State Dinners

**Shoot** (Dexterity, Untrained)

Shoot is the skill of fighting with a ranged weapon.

Specializations: Archaic, Energy, Gauss, Handgun, Neural, Rifleman

**Social Sciences** (Perception)

Social Sciences is the skill of studying various aspects of sapient society and culture.

Specializations: Anthropology, Archeology, History, Philosophy, Theology

**Space Sciences** (Perception)

Space Sciences is the skill of studying extraterrestrial phenomena and their properties.

Specialization: Astrogation, Astrography, Astronomy, Astrophysics, Jump Theory

**Stealth** (Dexterity, Untrained)

Stealth is the skill of hiding oneself and moving without being seen.

Specializations: Camouflage, Disguise, Hiding, Shadowing, Sneaking

**Streetwise** (Presence, Untrained)

Streetwise is the skill of being able to interact with individuals engaged in illegal and quasi-legal activities.

Specializations: Contacts, Contraband, Hagglng, Scrounging

**Subterfuge** (Perception)

Subterfuge is the skill of using your hands to engage in illicit activities.

Specializations: Forgery, Pick Pocket, Sleight of Hand

**Survival** (Perception)

Survival is the skill of being able to survive in the wild.

Specializations: Arctic, Desert, Jungle, Ocean, Specific Planet

**Tactics** (Perception)

Tactics is the skill of organizing and planning a military operation.

Specializations: Defense, Guerrilla Warfare, Mechanized, Small Unit, Starship

**Technical Sciences** (Perception)

Technical Sciences is the skill of using, building, and repairing technological devices.

Specializations: Demolitions, Electronics, Mechanics, Robotics, Specific Technical Systems

### **Unarmed Combat** (Dexterity, Untrained)

Unarmed Combat is the skill of fighting without weapons.

Specializations: Boxing, Brawling, Martial Arts, Wrestling

### **Vehicle Operation** (Dexterity, Untrained)

Vehicle Operation is the skill of driving a powered vehicle.

Specializations: Atmospheric, Close Orbital, Grav, Ground, Water

## **Hooks**

As noted in Chapter 2, starting characters begin the game with five Hooks. Hooks are special attributes that describe important elements of the characters' personality, background, or relationship to the world around him. They are shorthand ways of painting a more detailed picture of the character, aiding both the player and the GM not only in how the character is portrayed and how others relate to him but also in just what the player considers his character's role to be in the campaign. They are thus both a player and GM's tool.

Hooks are also the best way by which players can spend Action Points to give their characters an edge in the course of an adventure.

### **Choosing Hooks**

Hooks are, by definition, non-standard. There is no grand list of them that players can look at and select from. Each character and, therefore, each Thousand Suns campaign will have its own unique list of Hooks. What constitutes an acceptable Hook is entirely up to the GM, but GMs are encouraged to be very lenient in allowing players to choose Hooks. The primary way of knowing if a Hook is an acceptable one is if it makes not just the character but the wider campaign more interesting. If they do, there is usually little harm in allowing a player to have the Hooks he desires.

Players should nevertheless take great care in choosing their character's Hooks, since they will, in many ways, define their character far more than their Abilities and skills. Hooks highlight the things a player thinks are important about their character and tell the GM the kinds of plots and dramatic elements they would like to see in adventures involving their character. If a player chooses "On the run from the Black Hole Gang" as a Hook, chances are he wants to have this vicious band of space pirates appear as recurring villains in the campaign.

## “Bad” Hooks

There is no requirement that Hooks be “good” or otherwise positive. Indeed, some of the best Hooks are ones that might be considered negative in some way. That may seem counterintuitive but it is not. Remember why Hooks exist and what they do. First and foremost they define a character and tell a GM about the kinds of dramatic situations the player of that character finds interesting. Secondly, a Hook provides an occasion to spend Action Points. So, if a player chooses the seemingly negative “Suspicious of Non-Terrans” as a Hook, it is as much a blessing as a curse. Sure, it means the character will behave standoffishly to aliens and human clades, no doubt earning him enemies and landing him in trouble throughout the campaign—but that’s a good thing! It’s the stuff of good adventure and, just as importantly, it provides opportunities for the player to spend Action Points where appropriate.

It would be a mistake to think of Hooks as unambiguously positive traits; they are not. They are, however, unambiguously fun traits. They exist to reward players who flesh out their characters and give the GM the skeletons of fun situations to throw at the character and his companions.

## Using Hooks

Either the player or the Game Master can activate Hooks. A player activates a Hook when he feels it is relevant and, if the GM agrees, he can spend an Action Point to gain a bonus relating to his Hook. The GM activates a Hook when he feels it is relevant and, if the player agrees, he gains a free Action Point that he can either use immediately (if the situation the GM has created warrants it) or that he can save for later use, either with this Hook or another one.

Hooks can be used whenever either the player or the Game Master believes they are relevant to the current situation and the other party agrees. As with the creation of Hooks, it is recommended that both players and GMs be very lenient in defining “relevant” in this context. After all, Hooks are intended to be used rather than sidestepped and no one has any fun if everyone allows their use only in a very narrowly defined set of circumstances.

As noted previously, the activation of a Hook gives Action Points greater utility, namely:

- Re-roll any Test result, or
- Add 2 to your Target Number.

There is theoretically no restriction on how many Hooks (and thus how many Action Points) may be used in a given circumstance, but no Hook may be used more than once for the same situation.

## A Final Word on Hooks and Action Points

Hooks and Action Points are meta-game elements, which is to say, they represent a rare example where the player (or the GM) rather than the character influences the game world of *Thousand Suns*. Generally speaking, the outcome of events in the game is the result of the interaction between your character's Abilities and Skills and the GM's adventure plots, with the additional random element that dice rolls bring. In a sense, certain things happen in the game independent of both the player and GM's desires and part of the fun of a roleplaying game is being surprised at how things unfold. Everyone playing is thus as much a watcher of the game as a participant in it.

Hooks and Action Points, though, give everyone a chance to push the game this way or that, to influence dice rolls so that certain Tests turn out well at the moment when the player or GM wishes them to do so. *Thousand Suns* may be a game that includes plenty of random elements, but there is more to roleplaying than letting the dice fall where they may and reacting accordingly. Very few people enjoy feeling as if they are impotent flotsam on the waves of fate, particularly in a form of entertainment like roleplaying. That's why Hooks and Action Points exist: as a vehicle for letting players and GMs alike tailor the story of their campaigns to their wishes. So long as these meta-game elements are viewed in this light, they will be used properly and add greatly to the fun and excitement of your campaigns.

## Psionics

In *Thousand Suns*, a character who possesses mental, or "psionic," powers is known as a psion (see the psion Career Package in Chapter 2). The presence of psionics in your campaign is entirely optional and each Game Master must decide for himself whether he wishes to allow psionics or not. Indeed, some GMs may wish to rein in psionics either for dramatic or scientific reasons, particularly the latter. In the descriptions below, psionic powers that strain credibility, even within the Imperial SF genre, are noted with an asterisk (\*) following their name. Players are advised to check with their GM beforehand to see if he allows any of the powers noted with an asterisk.

Most human-descended cultures are suspicious of psions and their unique abilities, even if they recognize their value. Consequently, many worlds and interstellar governments restrict or even proscribe the use of psionics without varying degrees of official sanction. Naturally, attitudes among non-human alien species can vary greatly from the human norm. Each Game Master must decide for his own campaign the extent to which psionics is tolerated.

More information on the role of psionics in the Thousand Suns meta-setting can be found in Chapter 7.

#### **How Do Psionics Work?**

Beats me.

Less flippantly, this game provides no answer to the question, because there is no answer that could either stand up to serious scientific scrutiny or would satisfy every player. Psionics exist in the game because they're a common part of the Imperial SF genre, since older science fiction tended to assume that, in time, science would understand the human brain to such an extent that powers previously believed to be supernatural would become much less rare, even if far from commonplace.

Thousand Suns makes the same assumption: psionics is wholly natural and not at all "magical" in nature. However, its precise origin, whether it be a consequence of quantum mechanics or an application of chaos theory, is left to each GM to decide for his own campaign. Future discussions of psionics will follow this pattern, thereby avoiding any specific comments about psionic abilities that might contradict an individual GM's choice.

### **Acquiring Psionic Powers**

Psions acquire psionic powers by purchasing them in the same manner as skills. Typically, the purchase of psionic powers is restricted to characters who have taken one or more levels in the psion Career Package, since psionic ability rarely manifests in human beings late in life. There are always exceptions, of course, and there may be good reasons why a player might wish to purchase psionic powers after character creation. The Game Master is the final arbiter of what constitutes a good reason in this case, based on his own judgment and the nature of his campaign.

### **Base Power Rank**

Psions have a power Rank that functions exactly like a skill Rank, measuring the overall effectiveness of the psion's powers.

### **Abilities**

Each psionic power has an Ability associated with it. A psion's total power rank with any known power is his power Rank + appropriate Ability. So, a psion with Pyrokinesis 4 and



Perception 10 has a power Rank of 14.

## **Using Psionic Powers**

Unless otherwise stated in their descriptions, all psionic powers use the following guidelines.

### **Action**

Using psionic powers is primarily an act of will. Consequently, a psion can use his powers with nothing more than intense concentration. Using a power takes a particular amount of time, given in the power's description below. Most powers take up a character's Action in combat. Others require more time. Psionic powers are subject to the normal rules regarding actions (see Chapter 4).

### **Power Tests**

Some psionic powers call for a Test using the Rank of the power. This is the same as any other sort of Test: a 2D12 roll under the Target. The degree by which you roll under the Target often determines the effectiveness of the power. Some psionic powers do not require Tests; they operate automatically.

### **Attack Rolls**

Some psionic powers require an attack Test to affect a target, particularly in the midst of combat. Any power requiring an attack Test also takes at least an Action and counts as the psion's attack for that round. Powers requiring attack Tests are subject to the normal combat modifiers detailed in Chapter 4.

### **Resistance**

Psionic powers that affect others can be resisted through an Opposed Test that pits the psion's Power Rank (or Will) against the opposing character's Resist skill. This Test functions exactly like any other Opposed Test, as detailed in Chapter 1.

Subjects of psionic powers can choose to forego the resistance Test by willingly accepting the power's effects. This choice is made before the subject knows what that effect is! This assumes a certain level of trust toward psions that is typically lacking in most human-descended societies, making it a rare occurrence indeed.

## Range

Specific limitations on the range of a psionic power are noted in its description. While researchers believe that psionics operates according to physical laws, many powers do so in ways that are currently inexplicable. For example, psionic powers can affect targets anywhere. However, using powers against targets out of sight and unfamiliar to the psion is still difficult, effectively limiting the range of most powers to somewhat familiar targets or things in the psion's line of sight. If a power's description doesn't specify a range, assume it is line of sight.

## Familiarity

An important factor for some psionic powers is how familiar the subject is to the psion. In powers descriptions mentioning a familiarity modifier, determine the relationship between the psion and the target on the Familiarity table and apply the appropriate modifier to the Difficulty of the power Test. For example, using the Telepathy power on a somewhat familiar target lowers the Target Number by 4.

<b>Familiarity</b>	<b>Target Number</b>	<b>Vitality Damage</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Present	+0	0	A subject visible to the naked eye or in physical or mental contact with the psion.
Very Familiar	-1	1	A subject currently seen or sensed through another power, a close friend or relative, an item made by the psion or owned and used for at least a year, a place where the psion spent at least a year's time.
Familiar	-2	2	A subject the psion has been acquainted with for at least three months, a casual friend.
Somewhat Familiar	-4	3	A subject the psion has been acquainted with for at least a week, reading someone else's memory of a familiar subject.

*(cont. next page)*

Casually Familiar	-8	4	A subject the psion has only seen briefly or had described in detail.
Slightly Familiar	-16	5	A subject totally unfamiliar and unknown to the psion and
Unfamiliar	--	--	

### **Mental Contact**

Some psionic powers refer to the psion being in mental contact with the subject. This involves the use of the Telepathy power, allowing the psion to contact another character's mind. Subjects in mental contact are considered present to the psion in terms of familiarity, regardless of the physical distance between them (no decrease in the TN). Mental contact does not count as line of sight for powers requiring it.

Psionic powers that require mental contact also require it to maintain the power, unless the power description says otherwise. That means if a psion loses mental contact with the subject for any reason, the dependent power stops working as well.

### **Mass**

Some psionic powers affect solid objects and creatures. The Target of these powers and the Ability damage suffered by the psion is often modified by the mass of the target. When a power description calls for a mass modifier, find the target's mass on the Mass table and apply the listed modifiers to the Target Number and the Vitality damage caused. So, using a psionic power to affect a mass between 51 and 499 kg has a -4 modifier to the TN and deals an additional 2 points of Vitality damage.

<b>Mass</b>	<b>Target Number</b>	<b>Vitality Damage</b>
Up to 5 kg	0	1
Up to 50 kg	-4	2
Up to 500 kg	-8	4
Up to 5000 kg (5 tons)	-12	8
Up to 50,000 kg (50 tons)	-16	16
Up to 500,000 kg (500 tons)	-20	32
Up to 5,000,000 kg (5000 tons)	-24	64

## Multiple Subjects

Although it is easiest to use a psionic power on a single subject at a time, a psion can affect multiple subjects with the same power at once: lifting multiple objects, making mental contact with multiple minds, and so forth. This requires time, skill, and effort to achieve.

A character attempting to use a psionic power on more than one subject at once increases the TN and Vitality damage by +2 for every additional target. So affecting three subjects at once is -4 to the TN and +4 additional Vitality damage. If the power does not require a Test, then reduce the power's resistance Test TN by 2 per additional subject. Additionally, the power requires an Action to use. If the power normally requires an Action or more, then it requires an additional Action, with the usual penalties associated with taking more than one Action in a round (see Chapter 4).

The various subjects must all be within range. If the psionic power requires mental contact, then the user must be in mental contact with all subjects. The Game Master has the final say on whether a power can affect more than one subject at a time and, if so, how many.

## Vitality Damage

Using psionic powers is particularly taxing. Each use of a psionic power deals Vitality damage to the user, with all the usual effects, as described in Chapter 4. Vitality damage caused by psionic powers heals normally. If the Vitality damage from using a psionic power causes the user to become unconscious, then the power effect still happens, but cannot be maintained. So a psion can, for example, teleport or make a psionic attack before becoming unconscious, but a psion who establishes a power such as Dominate or Mind Reading and then becomes unconscious due to Vitality damage cannot maintain the effects of the power, which lapse.

## Maintaining Powers

Some psionic powers can be maintained. That is, their effects can continue at the same level achieved by the initial use. This maintenance requires at least a modicum of concentration on the psion's part. Maintaining an effect requires an Action each round.

Using another psionic power (or another application of the same power) while maintaining one or more powers is extremely difficult and incurs an additional -2 TN penalty in addition to the usual multi-action penalty (see Chapter 4 for more details).

A psion distracted while maintaining psionic powers must make an unmodified Will Test, with a -2 TN for each additional power maintained after the first. Additional modifiers may apply for damage and other distracting conditions. A failed Will Test means the psion stops

maintaining all the powers. Optionally, the Game Master may rule that the psion stops maintaining one power for every two degrees by which the Will Test failed (rounding up). A psion unable to take any actions (due to being stunned, for example) cannot maintain powers.

### **Concentration**

Some psionic powers require intense concentration to maintain. The psion must devote an Action each round to concentrate and maintain the ability. Will Tests remain the same as maintenance.

### **Psionic Power Descriptions**

The psionic powers in this chapter operate similarly to skills, with a few modifications. No psionic power can be used untrained. A description of what the psionic power does follows, along with any rules for using the power. If a power causes Vitality damage, this is indicated. If a power requires maintenance, concentration, or mental contact, these are also indicated.

Some psionic powers have a Retry section, describing whether or not it is possible to attempt a failed use of the power again and the conditions for doing so. If this section is absent, assume the psionic power may not be attempted again without restriction.

Each description ends with the time it takes to use the psionic power. In some cases, this varies depending on the conditions when the power is used.

### **Adaptation (Perception)**

#### **Damaging**

You can adapt your body to survive in hostile environments. Whenever you are required to make a Body Test to resist the effects of the environment, you can make an Adaptation Test instead, using your psionic power to improve your ability to withstand different environments. Note that Adaptation does not help you against anything that requires a Dexterity Test or anything other than environmental conditions. It does not, for example, protect against falling damage or catching on fire.

*Time:* Adaptation takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 1 per Test.



## Apport (Perception)\*

### Damaging

You can teleport objects or creatures to other locations. The Target Number of the Apport Test is modified the object's mass, further modified by its familiarity to you and the familiarity of the destination (see Familiarity above).

Target	Number	Modifier	Mass
		0	1 kg
		-2	2.5 kg
		-4	5 kg
		-6	12.5 kg
		-8	25 kg
		-10	50 kg
		-12	100 kg
		-2	x2 mass

For example, apportioning a 1 kg object (+0) in your line of sight (+0 modifier) to a destination in your line of sight (+0 modifier) has a combined TN modifier of +0. Apportioning the same object in your line of sight to a somewhat familiar destination (-4 modifier) has a modifier of -4.

Unwilling creatures may make a Resist Test to resist apportioning of themselves or any object in their possession. If they succeed, it means that there is no effect. You must apportion an entire object, not just part of it, although unattached materials may be left behind. For example, you can apportion a rope or a set of manacles without affecting the creature bound by them. Targets cannot be apportioned inside another object; attempts to do so simply fail.

*Time:* Apport takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 1 plus familiarity and mass modifiers

*You don't pay back your parents. You can't. The debt you owe them gets collected by your children, who hand it down in turn. It's a sort of entailment. Or if you don't have children of the body, it's left as a debt to your common humanity.*

*--Lois McMaster Bujold, A Civil Campaign (2000)*

## Body Control (Perception)

### Damaging, Maintenance

You have great mental control over your body. You can make a Body Control Test for a number of different tasks.

Task	Target Modifier	Vitality Damage
Sleep normally despite distractions	+4	1
Sleep normally despite difficult distractions	+0	2
Slow breathing to half normal rate	+0	2
Ignore pain or injury	-2	3
Body awareness	-2	3
Resist fear	-2	3
Speed recovery	-2	3
Slow breathing to one quarter normal rate	-2	3
Willpower	-2	3
Feign death	-4	4
Overcome disease	See below	2
Overcome poison	See below	2

*Body Awareness:* You can become very aware of your body while asleep or concentrating. This allows you to sense if you are touched or moved in any way while using Teleperception, for example. If you are damaged, add the attack's damage to the Target of your Body Control Test.

*Feign Death:* By exerting supreme control over your body, you can enter a deep trance almost indistinguishable from death. A successful Observe Test opposed to your Body Control is required to determine whether you are still alive. Effects that detect life still work normally on you. While in this state, you also suspend the effects of any disease or poison in your system for as long as you remain in the trance.

*Ignore Pain or Injury:* You can ignore the effects of pain or injury (see Chapter 4) while awake or asleep. If you choose, nothing can wake you, as long as you make a successful Body Control Test.

*Overcome Disease or Poison:* By concentrating for a round, you can use a Body Control Test instead of a Body Test when trying to resist a disease or poison in your system. This usually means you can only use Body Control against the effects of a disease or poison, unless it is slow acting and you are warned soon enough to use Body Control to resist the initial effects (in the GM's judgment).

*Resist Fear:* You can override your body's natural response to fear. With a successful Body Control Test, you gain a +4 bonus to the Target of any Will Test against fear.

*Sleeping:* A successful Body Control Test allows you to sleep in difficult conditions, including bad weather, noise, buzzing insects, and so forth.

*Slow Breathing:* You can deliberately slow your rate of breathing so that you consume less air, vital in situations where there is a limited amount of breathable air available.

*Speed Recovery:* You can speed your natural healing process, regaining Vitality in half the normal time, so long as you spend that time in a deep, healing trance.

*Willpower:* By making a successful Body Control Test, you can continue to act while disabled without your condition worsening. You still suffer additional damage normally.

*Time:* Body Control takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* See chart above.

### **Combat Sense (Perception)**

#### **Damaging**

You can improve your ability in combat by sensing the flow of events around you. A Combat Sense Test grants you a combat bonus (see the accompanying table). Each round you can use the bonus for a single attack or defense as you see fit. You can select a bonus lower than what you get on the table to reduce Vitality damage.

<b>Degree</b>	<b>Target Number Bonus</b>
0-2	+1
3-6	+2
7-10	+3
11+	+4

*Time:* Activating Combat Sense takes an Action. The bonus lasts for 10 Rounds.

*Vitality Damage:* 2 plus the amount of the bonus

## **Cryokinesis (Perception)\***

### **Damaging, Maintenance**

You can freeze things with the power of your mind. By making a successful Cryokinesis Test, you can lower the temperature of an area about 30 centimeters across, enough to deal cold damage. A targeted creature suffers cold damage equal to half your Cryokinesis Rank (round down). Protective clothing has no effect.

You can freeze roughly four liters of water into solid ice in a round. For every 2 degrees by which you beat the Target, you affect an additional 30 cubic centimeters (or four liters of liquid).

You can also decrease the size and damage potential of a fire by 1 point (and 30 square centimeters) for every 2 degrees by which your Cryokinesis Test beats the Target. A fire reduced to a size or damage potential of 0 or less goes out permanently (this requires a Cryokinesis Test for a 30 centimeter-square flame). Otherwise, the reduction in the fire requires concentration.

*Time:* Cryokinesis takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 3

## **Cyberkinesis (Perception)\***

### **Damaging, Maintenance**

You can make mental contact with computers through a Cyberkinesis Test, modified by familiarity. Once you are in mental contact with a computer, you can make Computers skill Tests as if you were accessing that computer normally. Whenever you need to make a Computers Test, you can use your Cyberkinesis power instead, but then each Test causes Vitality damage (so it's generally easier on yourself to have training in Computers).

When dealing with sentient computers or robots, this power functions like Telepathy (described later in this section) and counts as mental contact for using other powers or requiring it on those subjects.

*Time:* Cyberkinesis takes an Action

*Vitality Damage:* 1

## **Dominate (Will)\***

### **Concentration, Damaging, Mental Contact**

You can mentally control another creature's actions. The target makes a Resist test opposed to your Dominate. If the Test fails, you control the target's actions. You can force the subject to perform any action you wish, within the limits of his abilities. You're aware of what the subject experiences via your mental link, but you do not receive direct sensory impressions from him. Subjects forced to take actions against their nature receive a new Resist Test with a bonus of +1 to +4 to the TN, depending on the nature of action. A successful Test breaks your control.

*Time:* Dominate takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 6

## **Electrokinesis (Perception)\***

### **Damaging, Maintenance**

You can control the flow of electromagnetic energy, allowing you to direct electricity, drain electrical power sources, and focus magnetism to affect metallic objects.

*Direct Electricity:* You can direct electricity from a free-flowing power source in your line of sight, including outlets, generators, or even storm clouds. The target makes a Resist Test opposed to your Electrokinesis to avoid being struck. If the Test fails, the target takes 2 points of damage for every degree by which you beat the Target.

*Drain Power:* You can drain a power source of its energy. Unattended power sources are automatically drained, while creatures may make a Resist Test for power sources in their possession. The Vitality damage of the power use is based on the size of the power source: 2 for a simple source such as a chemical battery, 4 for a vehicle battery or larger power pack (like those in weapons), 8 for a powerful fuel cell or similar high-power storage device, and 12 for a generator. A generator is only drained for as long as you concentrate. You can also direct electricity as above, using drain power to fuel an electrical attack the following round.

*Magnetokinesis:* You have the ability to manipulate magnetic fields, allowing you to move metallic objects as if you were using the Telekinesis power, with the same Targets and ability damage, based on the object's mass. You can also create a magnetic pulse that erases



magnetic storage media with a Difficult (-2 TN) power check. The pulse affects a radius of 5 meters +30 centimeters per degree by which the power check beats the Target.

*Time:* Magnetokinesis takes an Action

*Vitality Damage:* 3 to direct electricity, otherwise as given in the description above.

### **Enhance Other (Perception)**

#### **Damaging**

This works like Enhance Self, except you can enhance others' abilities by touch, and you cannot enhance your own abilities.

*Special:* The subject of this power must also take ability damage (same amount as the psion) when its duration runs out, to represent the strain placed on the subject's body.

*Vitality Damage:* 3

### **Enhance Self (Perception)**

#### **Damaging**

You can improve your Body or Dexterity for a short time. An Enhance Self Test adds a bonus to either your Body or Dexterity score for 10 rounds. The degrees of success indicate the amount of the bonus. If desired, you can split an even bonus equally between Body and Dexterity.

*Time:* Enhance Self takes an Action. The bonus lasts for 10 Rounds.

*Vitality Damage:* 3

### **Enhance Senses (Perception)**

#### **Damaging**

You can enhance your normal sensory abilities. An Enhance Senses Test adds a bonus to your Observe Tests. It also adds to skill Tests made to find or follow tracks. The degrees of success indicate the amount of the bonus.

*Time:* Enhance Senses takes an Action. The bonus lasts for 10 rounds.

*Vitality Damage:* 3

### **Healing (Perception)**

#### **Concentration, Damaging**

You can heal injuries by touch. Using an Action, you can grant a subject an immediate recovery Test using your Healing Test result in place of the usual Body Test. If the recovery Test fails, you must wait the normal recovery time. You can stabilize a dying character with a Healing Test.

You can use Healing on yourself. You can't heal your own unconscious condition or stabilize yourself while dying, since you have to be conscious and able use this power. You can use Healing to cure your own disabled condition, but doing so is a strenuous action. If your recovery Test is successful, you suffer no ill effects. If it is not, however, your condition worsens to dying.

*Retry:* See above. Otherwise you can retry freely.

*Time:* Healing takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 1

### **Manipulate Object (Perception)\***

#### **Damaging, Maintenance**

You can manipulate objects at distance as if with a pair of invisible, intangible hands. Your power has the same Dexterity as you, while lifting the object has the same TN modifiers as Telekinesis (see below), except you cannot increase the weight lifted by suffering *Vitality damage* (Manipulate Object's damage comes from the extra precision required).

You can use your normal skills via Manipulate Object, but you are at a -2 penalty for having to operate remotely, and you can't perform tasks at all if you can't see your target, since your power has no sense of touch.

*Remotely Wielding Weapons:* A psion can wield a melee weapon using Manipulate Object. Picking up the weapon takes an Action. Attacking with it also takes an Action. Concealment is determined by the attacker and defender's positions, not the weapon's, while cover

is determined by the defender and weapon's positions. The attacker makes a normal attack roll, but with a -4 penalty for the difficulty in controlling the weapon from afar, but uses his Perception as the associated Ability rather than Dexterity. The weapon deals its normal damage with no modification for Body. A psion can specialize his Melee skill in remotely wielded weapons to eliminate the -4 penalty to hit

A remotely wielded weapon can be struck normally. Attempts to disarm the psion by knocking the weapon out of his arcane grasp are resolved by opposed attack rolls as normal or an opposed attack roll and Manipulate Object check, if the psion's Manipulate Object bonus is greater than his Melee skill.

*Time:* Manipulate Object takes an Action. The skill use lasts for 10 rounds.

*Vitality Damage:* 0 plus mass modifier.

### **Mind Probe (Perception)**

#### **Concentration, Damaging, Mental Contact**

You can mentally probe a subject's mind for information. You must be in mental contact with the subject. Make an opposed Test, pitting your Mind Probe power against the target's Resist.

If successful, you can ask any one question and receive the answer from the target's mind. If the target doesn't know the answer, then you know that. Especially personal or guarded information grants the target a +1 to +4 bonus on the Resist Test, while information the subject doesn't consciously know (because it is subconscious or forgotten due to amnesia, for example) grants a +4 to +8 bonus on the Resist Test.

You can continue to ask questions, one per round, for as long as you maintain your Mind Probe. Each question requires a new power Test, an additional Resist Test, and further Vitality damage.

*Retry:* Yes, but the target gets a cumulative +1 bonus to the Resist Test for each new attempt in the same scene.

*Time:* Mind Probe takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 2 plus modifiers for familiarity

## Mind Reading (Perception)

### Damaging, Maintenance, Mental Contact

You can read another creature's thoughts. Make an opposed Test against the target's Resist. If successful, you can read the target's surface thoughts (whatever the target is presently thinking). Mind Reading transcends language; you comprehend the target's thoughts whether or not you share a language. If you fail your Mind Reading Test, you cannot read the target's mind.

If you can interact with your subject, a successful Bargain Test against the target's Will causes the subject to think consciously about a particular piece of information you're looking for, such as a password or name, allowing you to pluck it from the subject's surface thoughts.

*Retry:* Yes, but the target gets a cumulative +1 bonus to the Will Test for each new attempt in the same scene, and retries with Mind Reading are damaging.

*Time:* Mind Reading takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 4

## Photokinesis (Perception)\*

### Damaging, Maintenance

You can mentally control light. Make a Photokinesis Test to psionically manipulate light waves. With a successful Test, you can warp light around yourself, making your outline blurred and indistinct or even becoming invisible. Attacking does not negate the effects of this power. You can also create holograms—realistic three-dimensional images of light—that occupy a 3-meter cube. Each additional 3-meter cube the image occupies decreases the Target Number by 2.

Subjects seeing the hologram get a Resist Test to realize it is an illusion if they have any reason to suspect it, such as the fact that the illusion makes no noise. You can also create a point of light that illuminates a 5-meter radius that you can move at will anywhere in your line of sight as an Action. You can create photokinetic effects anywhere in your line of sight and they last as long as you maintain them. Creating multiple effects at once (such as becoming invisible while also creating the illusion that you are elsewhere) count as maintaining multiple powers.

Task	Target Number Modifier
Illuminate	0 (-1 per additional 3-meter radius)
Visual Illusion	-2 (-2 per additional 3-meter cube)
Blur (20% miss chance)	-3
Blur (50% miss chance)	-4
Invisibility	-5

*Time:* Photokinesis takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* Target Number modifier expressed as a positive number times 5 (so Invisibility does 25 points of Vitality damage)

### **Precognition (Perception)\***

You can get visions of future events, as if you were actually present at a particular future event. The visions you receive are by no means assured; the future can be changed by the actions of those in the present.

*Spontaneous Visions:* At the Game Master's discretion, you may receive a vision when you are in contact with a subject or when there is a momentous event approaching in the future. This vision can occur while you are awake, yet spontaneous visions often take the form of dreams. You know when a dream is actually a vision although, you may not necessarily know what the vision means.

*Danger Sense:* Whenever you would normally be surprised in combat, you can undergo a Precognition Test with a -2 TN. If successful, you receive a split second warning; you are not surprised and can take an Action when others might be surprised.

The Game Master should make Precognition Tests secretly so the player doesn't necessarily know if a particular vision is accurate or not. Consult the table for the results of a vision, based on the Precognition check, or choose a suitable result, based on the character's Precognition Rank and the requirements of the adventure.

Target Number Modifier	Result
0	A vague vision of the future that may be accurate.
-1	An accurate glimpse of the future.
-2	Awareness of how long before a particular event occurs.
-3	Awareness of the people involved in a particular future event.
-4	Awareness of the time, subjects, and location of a future event.
-5 or more	Near-complete knowledge of a particular future event and everything involving it.



Things seen in visions count as slightly familiar in terms of familiarity, possibly more if the vision was long or extremely accurate (in the GM's opinion).

*Time:* Precognition takes an Action (at least).

*Vitality Damage:* 1 for spontaneous visions, 0 for danger sense.

## **Psychic Assault (Presence)**

### **Damaging**

You psychically assault a target's mind. You can affect any target in your line of sight or in mental contact. Your Psychic Assault has a Damage Rating of 2, using the degrees of success obtained from Test as the multiplier, just like a normal attack. The target makes a Resist. Success halves the damage. Armor does not protect against this attack.

*Time:* Psychic Assault takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 3

## **Psychic Shield (Perception)**

You can shield your mind from psychic influences. When you are the target of any psionic power granting a Resist Test, make a Psychic Shield Test. The attacker must make a power Test using the attacking psychic ability. If your Test result is higher, the power fails. If the attacker's result is higher, the power affects you normally, but you still get a normal Resist Test. You may choose to voluntarily lower your Psychic Shield at any time and can raise it again just as easily. Otherwise, your shield is always active, even if you are unconscious or sleeping.

**Shields and Maintained Powers:** Once a power has overcome your Psychic Shield, it continues to affect you as long as the other psion maintains it. You're still entitled to your normal Resist Tests, if any, but your shield no longer protects you from that power. Once the attacker needs to make a new powers check, however, your shield comes into play again and must be overcome again. For powers requiring mental contact, so long as the other psion remains in mental contact with you (inside your shield), he can use those powers freely without worrying about your shield.

*Overcoming Psychic Shields:* An attacker can choose to suffer Vitality damage to automatically overcome your Psychic Shield. This is in addition to any damage caused by the power used against you. For each point of Vitality damage that the attacker suffers, your Psychic

Shield Target is reduced by 1 (but not to less than 2). If you also choose to suffer Vitality damage, your Psychic Shield Target is restored by 1 (but not greater than its normal value). This continues until both sides choose to stop, at which point a power Test is made to determine whether the shield holds. This process takes no actual time; it happens as part of the Test to overcome the Psychic Shield. An attacker trying to avoid notice cannot use this option, since it makes it immediately apparent that you are under psychic attack.

*Deathblock:* In extreme cases, a psion can prevent mental tampering of any sort by setting a deathblock. This requires an Action by the psion. Thereafter, if the psion fails both a Psychic Shield check and a Resist Test against a psionic power that requires mental contact, his mind collapses in on itself rather than bend to the invading psyche. In essence, the psion dies rather than allowing the psionic power to affect him. Among other things, this prevents the character from being telepathically interrogated, controlled, or altered in any way.

Deathblocks are considered a last line of defense. Another psion who achieves mental contact with the character can tell that there is a deathblock in place unless there's a deliberate attempt to hide it, in which case an opposed Mind Probe and Psychic Shield Test is required to detect it. A psion can set a deathblock for specific circumstances, such as to protect a specific piece of information, or only to guard against specific psionic powers (such as Telepathy or Domination). The character who has set the deathblock can always choose whether to activate it and can choose to deactivate it at the last second if desired.

*Time:* Psychic Shield takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 0 (plus any damage due to overcoming a psychic shield)

## **Psychic Surgery (Perception)**

### **Damaging**

Psychic Surgery allows you to remove psychic influence or to alter memories and behavior. Make a Psychic Surgery test, with the Target Number difficulty determined by the task.

*Remove Mental Influence:* Make a Psychic Surgery Test with a TN penalty equal to the degrees of success of a mind-affecting power. If you succeed, that power no longer affects the subject. Note this only removes the effects of ongoing powers, not permanent aftereffects. This means you could use Psychic Surgery to remove a Dominate or Illusion effect, but not to restore damage caused by a psychic attack (for that, use the Healing power). You can undo the effects of Psychic Surgery used to alter the subject's mind by equaling or exceeding the Psychic Surgery check used to make the alterations.

*Alter Psyche:* You can make changes in the subject's mind. The TN modifier is based on the extent of the change you wish to make.

Target Number	Difficulty	Alteration Time
-1	Alter a single unimportant fact or brief recollection, about 5 minutes worth of memory.	1 round
-2	Alter a single fact or an hour's worth of memory.	1 minute
-3	Alter a single significant fact, such as the name of the subject's spouse, or a day's worth of memory.	10 minutes
-4	Alter a deeply personal fact, such as the subject's name or alignment, or a week's worth of memory.	1 hour
-5	Alter up to a month's worth of memory.	6 hours
-6	Alter up to a year's worth of memory. Give the subject an entirely new personality, complete with false memories, or erase the subject's entire memory, causing total amnesia.	10 hours

False or altered memories can cause dissonance within the subject's mind, depending on how well they fit into the subject's other memories. If the subject notices a conflict between the false and true memories (GM's discretion), he gets an additional Resist Test to shake off the effect and regain his true memory. He gains a bonus of +1 to +4 to the TN depending on how strong the dissonance is between the true and false memories.

*Special:* You must be in mental contact with the subject. Generally, this means the subject must be cooperative, unconscious, or restrained in some way.

*Retry:* If you fail a Psychic Surgery Test, you must wait at least 24 hours before attempting the same task on the same subject.

*Time:* Removing psychic influence takes an Action. For altering a person's psyche, see the table.

*Vitality Damage:* 2 to remove psychic influence, three times the Target Number Difficulty, expressed as a positive number, to alter psyche.

*Pyrokinesis (Perception)\**

## **Damaging**

You can mentally start and control fires. You can make a Pyrokinesis Test to ignite a fire or to increase the size of an existing fire.

*Ignite Fire:* You can set any flammable object in your line of sight on fire as an Action with a successful Pyrokinesis Test. Targets must make a Resist Test to avoid taking fire damage (Damage Rating 1). The target must Resist each round. A successful Test means the fire goes out; although, you can reignite it with another Action and successful Pyrokinesis Test. A character on fire can automatically extinguish the flames by dousing in water. Spending a full round rolling on the ground grants a +4 bonus to the Resist Test. In addition to using it as an attack, you can use the power to light candles (up to a dozen candles in a 2-meter square with a single power Test), torches, hearth fires, and so forth. At the Game Master's discretion, lighting small fires, like candles, is not damaging.

*Increase Fire:* You can increase the size and intensity of a fire. The Target Number of the Pyrokinesis Test is decreased by 1 per 30 square centimeters of increase. Every 100 square centimeters increase the fire's Damage Rating by 1. The fire maintains its increased size and damage as long as you concentrate, and it can even burn in the absence of fuel; although, smothering still puts it out. While you maintain an increased flame, a victim does not get a Resist Test to put the fire out (although it can still be extinguished by dousing with water), and the fire does additional damage based on your Pyrokinesis Test.

*Time:* Igniting fires and increasing flames take an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 3

### **Sense Minds (Perception)**

You can determine the presence and location of other minds. Make a Sense Minds check to sense the presence of any sapient creature within 10 meters of you. For every factor of 10 you extend your sensing radius, the penalty to your TN increases by 1.

<b>Target Number</b>	<b>Difficulty</b>	<b>Radius</b>
	-1	10 meters
	-2	100 meters
	-3	1000 meters
	-4	10,000 meters
	-5	100,000 meters
	-6	1,000,000 meters

With a successful Test, you sense the presence of other minds, their approximate number, and their approximate location. The larger the number of minds, the more general the information tends to be. Psychic Shield opposes Sense Minds. A Psychic Shield Test greater than your Sense Minds Test allows a creature to go unnoticed.

You can focus your attempt to Sense Minds on a particular place you can see, such as a building or island within range, for example.

*Time:* Sense Minds takes an Action.

### **Suggestion (Presence)\***

#### **Damaging**

You can implant suggestions into the minds of others. The suggestion must be worded in such a manner as to make the activity sound reasonable. Asking a creature to stab itself, throw itself onto a spear, immolate itself, or do some other obviously harmful act automatically fails. However, a suggestion that a pool of acid is actually pure water and that a quick dip would be refreshing is another matter.

If the target's Resist Test fails, the suggested course of action is followed for up to 10 minutes per Rank, or until the course of action is complete, whichever comes first. You can also specify conditions that trigger a particular course of action, in which case the duration is counted from when the triggering event occurs. A very reasonable suggestion may impose a Resist Test penalty of -1 or -2, at the Game Master's discretion.

*Retry:* No. You can attempt to affect the same character after some time has passed, but not in the same scene.

*Time:* Suggestion takes an Action. It lasts for 10 minutes per rank.

*Vitality Damage:* 4

### **Telekinesis (Perception)\***

#### **Damaging, Maintenance**

You can Telekinesis with the power of your thoughts. A Telekinesis Test allows you to move an object in your line of sight. The TN Difficulty of the Telekinesis Test is based on the mass of the object you want to move and whether or not you choose to risk Vitality damage. A damaging use of Telekinesis can move ten times the mass listed on the table (so 10 kilograms at Difficulty 0, up to 1000 kilograms at Difficulty -6) and doubles the listed damage.



Target Number	Difficulty	Mass	Damage Rating
	0	1 kg	1
	-1	2.5 kg	1
	-2	5 kg	2
	-3	12.5 kg	3
	-4	25 kg	3
	-5	50 kg	4
	-6	100 kg	5

You can move the object a distance of 2 meters times your Telekinesis Rank per Action. If two psions vie for control of an object, use opposed Telekinesis Tests. The winner controls the object for that round. If a creature is holding the object, make a Telekinesis check opposed by the creature's Body Test.

*Grappling Creatures:* You can use Telekinesis to grapple a creature (see below). If you successfully pin your target, you can treat them as an ordinary object for purposes of moving them with this ability.

*Moving Multiple Objects:* As an Action, you can attempt to move multiple objects at once. Use the TN Difficulty of the heaviest object, then subtract 1 for each additional object and increase the Vitality damage by +1 for each additional object. You cannot strike a target with multiple objects as part of the same action.

*Striking with Objects:* You can hurl objects at opponents. This requires a ranged attack roll and the object deals damage based on your Telekinesis skill Test, as shown on the table. Since using Telekinesis takes an Action, you cannot move an object and strike with it (as a standard action) in the same round without incurring the multi-action penalty.

*Time:* Telekinesis takes an Action. The skill use lasts for 10 rounds and requires concentration to maintain.

*Vitality Damage:* 0 plus mass modifier

### **Telekinetic Blast (Perception)\***

#### **Damaging**

You can attack with a blast of telekinetic force. Make a ranged attack against a target in your line of sight. Your Telekinetic Blast has a Damage Rating of 2, using the degrees of success obtained from Test as the multiplier, just like a normal attack. The target must also make an opposed Will Test against your power fly back 2 meters and be knocked prone.

*Time:* Telekinetic Blast takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 4

### **Telekinetic Shield (Perception)\***

#### **Damaging**

You can create a psionic barrier that protects you from attacks by providing a bonus to your Defend and Dodge skills. The shield lasts for 10 rounds but requires no effort on your part to maintain once it's created. It lasts until you are rendered unconscious or the duration runs out. You can renew an existing telekinetic shield before it runs out as an Action, suffering the Vitality damage for invoking the power again but with no additional power Test needed. The degree of success of your Telekinetic Shield Test determines the amount of bonus you get to your Defend and Dodge skills for the duration.

*Time:* Telekinetic Shield takes an Action. The bonus lasts for 10 rounds.

*Vitality Damage:* 2

### **Telepathy (Perception)**

You can sense the emotions of other creatures. A Telepathy Test allows you to determine the subject's emotional state. The target gets a Resist Test to resist. Whether you succeed or fail, the subject does not know you are reading his emotions.

If the target's Test fails, you get a general idea of his emotions and mood. This grants you a bonus equal to your degrees of success on the next interaction skill Test you make against the subject within the next 10 rounds.

*Retry:* You can only use Telepathy on a subject once per encounter.

*Time:* Telepathy takes an Action. The bonus lasts 10 rounds or until you make an interaction skill Test against the target, whichever comes first.

### **Telepathic Projection (Perception)**

#### **Damaging, Concentration**

You can impose emotions on others. The target makes a Resist Test. If the Test fails, you can impose any one of the following emotional states:

*Despair:* The target suffers a -2 penalty on all Tests. Despair dispels the effects of hope.  
*Fear:* The target flees from the object of its fear (chosen by you). Fear dispels the effects of rage.

*Friendship:* The target's attitude shifts to the next more positive attitude (antagonistic to unfriendly, unfriendly to neutral, and so forth). See Chapter 4 for more information. Creatures involved in combat continue to fight back normally, however. Friendship dispels the effects of hatred.

*Hatred:* The target's attitude shifts to the next more negative attitude (neutral to unfriendly, unfriendly to antagonistic, and so forth). See Chapter 4 for more information. Hatred dispels the effects of friendship.

*Hope:* The target gains a +2 bonus on all Tests. Hope dispels the effects of despair.

*Rage:* The target gains a +2 bonus to Body, Dexterity, and Will, as well as melee damage, but suffers a -2 penalty to Perception, Presence, and all Defend and Dodge Tests. They are compelled to fight, heedless of danger. Rage dispels the effects of fear.

*Time:* Telepathic Projection takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 3

## **Telepathy (Presence)**

### **Damaging, Maintenance**

You can establish contact with another mind. The Target Number is modified by familiarity. If the subject has a Psychic Shield, you have to make a separate Telepathy Test to overcome it. An unwilling subject also gets a Resist Test to avoid contact. If the Test is successful, no contact is made.

If you do not want the subject to know you are making mental contact, you can make a separate opposed Telepathy check against the subject's Empathy or Psychic Shield (whichever is higher). If you win, the subject is unaware of your attempt. If the subject wins, he is aware of your attempt (whether you succeed or fail in actually establishing contact).

While you are in mental contact with another being, the two of you can communicate at the rate of normal speech, hearing each other's thoughts. You can also send a single visual image each round instead of speaking. Both you and the subject can choose to lie or omit

information; you're "speaking" to each other mentally, not reading each other's thoughts. Telepathy is two-way, meaning you are in mental contact with the subject for purposes of his powers and vice versa.

If a friendly mental contact turns hostile, the subject can make a Resist or Psychic Shield Test to break contact. Once the subject has failed an attempt to eject the intruder from his mind, he can't break the contact.

If your Telepathy is broken, any other powers you are maintaining requiring mental contact are also broken.

*Deathcry:* If a creature you are in mental contact with dies, you must make a Resist Test at TN -3 to avoid being dazed for 1 round by the psychic feedback. Since mental contact is two-way, this applies to any creature in mental contact with another. A creature can deliberately avoid letting out a deathcry when it dies by making a Will Test at TN -2.

*Mentally Aiding Others:* While in mental contact with another character, you can offer aid to grant that character a +2 bonus on Will-based Tests or on any skill Test where your skill rank is equal to or greater than the subject's.

*Mental Rapport:* Two or more characters with the Telepathy skill can enter a mental rapport with each other, an intense state of mental contact. Each character establishes mental contact with the other, each of whom must be willing. Characters in rapport are like one mind, each instantly aware of everything that the other thinks and experiences and able to share information instantly. Characters in rapport cannot deliberately lie to or deceive each other.

*Retry:* You can retry Telepathy freely, but retries on the same subject within an hour's time are damaging.

*Time:* Telepathy takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 2 plus modifiers for familiarity

## **Teleperception (Perception)**

### **Concentration, Damaging**

You can sense distant events as if you were physically present. Make a Teleperception Test to sense a particular place, creature, or thing known to you. The Target Number is

modified by familiarity. If successful, you can observe the subject as if you were present. The vision lasts for as long as you maintain it, but your ordinary senses are overridden, so you are unaware of what is happening near you while you are observing events elsewhere. A subject observed via Teleperception is considered present in terms of familiarity, but not in your actual line of sight.

Teleperception creates a psionic disturbance, which creatures with Perception 2 or better can sense. Any such creature under observation can make an Empathy Test, opposed by your Teleperception Test.

Creatures with no psionic abilities get the intense feeling of being watched. Psions see a glowing or shadowy image of you. You also have a present familiarity for any creature that senses you for the purposes of that creature's powers, meaning they may affect you in return.

*Time:* Teleperception takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 2 plus familiarity modifiers

### **Teleport (Perception)\***

#### **Damaging**

You can move instantly from one place to another without crossing the distance in between. Make a Teleport power Test. The Target is modified by the familiarity of your destination. If you carry additional mass along with you, the Difficulty is modified by the amount, as follows:

Target	Number	Difficulty	Mass
		0	up to 10 kg
		-1	25 kg
		-2	50 kg
		-3	125 kg
		-4	250 kg
		-5	500 kg
		-6	1000 kg (1 ton)

You choose whether objects you are touching are carried along or left behind (allowing you to teleport out of things such as rope or manacles, or your clothes, for example). You cannot teleport only a part of an object or creature. All the material must be touching you or another solid object that is touching you in order to be carried along. Creatures



that don't wish to be teleported can make a Resist Test, with success meaning they're left behind. A failed power Test means you don't go anywhere, but still suffer normal ability damage.

*Time:* Teleport takes an Action.

*Vitality Damage:* 1 plus familiarity and mass modifiers.

### Advanced Psionic Techniques

While psionic powers cover most of the applications of psionic ability, there are some more advanced uses of various basic skills, described in the following section. Game Masters should consider these techniques optional. While they can add detail and tactical options to psionic characters, they also increase the complexity of psionic abilities, which may not be desirable in every Thousand Suns campaign.

#### Extending Psychic Shields

A character with the Psychic Shield power can extend his shield to protect others at the cost of Vitality damage and a reduction in shield effectiveness. The subjects to be protected must be either in the shield user's line of sight or in mental contact. Extending a psychic shield takes an Action and costs two points of Vitality damage per additional subject protected by the shield. Each additional subject reduces the psion's effective Psychic Shield Rank by 2. A psychic shield Rank cannot be reduced below 1. All protected subjects receive the normal benefits of the Psychic Shield power at this reduced effective Rank and the shield user controls the entire shield.

The extended shield can be maintained by paying the Vitality damage cost every 10 rounds and the user can withdraw any or the entire extended shield without using an Action.

#### Teleportation

Despite its psionic nature, teleportation is still bound by conservation of momentum. Consequently, Apportation and Teleportation are limited to an effective distance of 500 kilometers on the surface of a planet. Greater distances result in serious injury or immediate death. Even at distances less than 500 kilometers, characters must make a Will Test to avoid being dazed for 1 round after teleporting due to disorientation.

Changes in altitude and gravitational potential are even more limited. These result in potential energy gains or losses, increasing or decreasing the subject's temperature. Teleportation is thus limited to no more than 400 meters increase or decrease in altitude per jump. Any more results in death or serious brain damage. These limitations do not apply if both the departure and arrival points for the teleportation are in deep space, away from any large masses or gravitational disturbances.

## **Psionically Aiding Others**

A psion in mental contact with another character can use the aid another action (a standard action) to grant that character a +2 bonus on Will-based Tests or any skill Test where the psion's skill Rank is equal to or greater than the subject's.

## **Psionic Combat**

Just as characters can grapple physically, psions can grapple opponents mentally, initiating a struggle of two minds locked in psionic combat. Psionic grappling is a useful means of occupying an opponent or of putting opponents into a position where you can more easily use other psionic powers against them, but it does involve a certain measure of risk, particularly where strong-willed opponents are concerned.

## **Grapple Tests**

Repeatedly in a psionic grapple, you need to make opposed psionic grappling Test against an opponent. A psionic grapple Test is made using your Will.

## **Initiating a Psionic Grapple**

To start a psionic grapple, you must be in mental contact with the target. Attempting to start a psionic grapple takes an Action.

## **Concentration**

You can attempt a psionic grapple on the defensive. This requires a successful Will Test at a -2 penalty. If the Test succeeds, you can attempt to initiate the psionic grapple. If it fails, your attempt to initiate the psionic grapple fails as well.

## **Psionic Lock**

Make an opposed psionic grapple Test against your opponent. If you win, you and your opponent are locked in psionic combat. If you lose, the opponent may break off the psionic grapple or may choose to grapple you, with the normal results.

## **Joining a Psionic Grapple**

If your target is already psionically grappling with another target, you can attempt to grapple normally. The target still gets an opposed psionic grappling Test against you. Multiple

characters can attempt to psionically grapple a single target.

### **If You're Psionically Grappling**

While you are psionically grappling (regardless of who started the grapple), you can make an opposed psionic grapple Test as an Action.

If you win, you can do one of the following:

- **Damage Your Opponent:** You deal a number of points of Vitality damage equal to the degree of success of your psionic grapple Test.
- **Psionically Pin Your Opponent:** Your opponent is rendered immobile for 1 round. While you're pinned, opponents get a +4 bonus on attack rolls against you (but you're not helpless).
- **Psionically Influence Your Opponent:** You can use a psionic power on your opponent that requires less than an Action. If the psionic power can normally be resisted, your opponent is at a -4 penalty, since you have a psionic advantage. For example, if you win the psionic grappling check, you use powers such as Dominate, Psychic Assault, or Suggestion on your opponent and the opponent has a -4 penalty on the Resist Test against the power's effects.
- **Break Another's Pin:** You can break the psionic hold that an opponent has over.
- **Break Mental Contact:** You escape the psionic grapple and break off mental contact. You can take whatever movement you normally get. If more than one opponent is psionically grappling you, your psionic grapple Test has to beat them all in order to escape and break mental contact. (Opponents don't have to try and maintain contact if they don't want to do so.) Once you have broken mental contact, your opponent must reestablish it to psionically grapple you again.

### **If You're Psionically Pinned**

When an opponent has psionically pinned you, you are held immobile (but not helpless) for 1 round. You can make an opposed psionic grapple Test as an Action. If you win, you escape the psionic pin, but you're still psionically grappling.

### **Other Actions While Psionically Grappling**

Taking an action other than a short move while psionically grappling requires a Will Test at TN -2. Failure of the Test means you automatically lose any opposed psionic grapple Test that round. Taking another Action while psionically grappling also means that you automatically lose any opposed psionic grapple Test that round, since the psionic grapple check requires an Action.

## Using Psionic Powers

You can attempt to use psionic powers while psionically grappling. Doing so requires a Will Test penalty equal to your power Rank. A failed Test means that the attempt to use the psionic ability fails, but you still suffer the appropriate Vitality damage. A Will Test is not required if you win the psionic grapple Test for that round and have your opponent psionically pinned.

## Multiple Grapplers

Multiple attackers can attempt to grapple a single opponent. Additional attackers can aid their friends, granting a +2 bonus on that character's psionic grappling Tests for that round.

## Psionic Grappling Consequences

While you're psionically grappling, your ability to act, attack, and defend yourself is limited. The psionic grapple Test requires an Action each round. If you choose not to take the psionic grapple action each round, you automatically fail the opposed psionic grapple Test. Since the psionic grapple Test takes an Action, you can choose to move before or after (but not during) the psionic grapple Test. However, you must make a Will Test at TN -2 to do so and failure means that you automatically lose the opposed psionic grapple Test that round.

## No Defense

You may not use either Dodge or Defend while you are psionically grappling. If you choose to psionically grapple on the defensive, you may Dodge or Defend if you make a successful Will Test at TN -2 each round. Failure means that you automatically lose any opposed psionic grapple that round.

## Vitality Damage

Psionic grappling causes no Vitality damage apart from that needed to establish and maintain mental contact with the target.

## Self-Imposed Memory Alteration

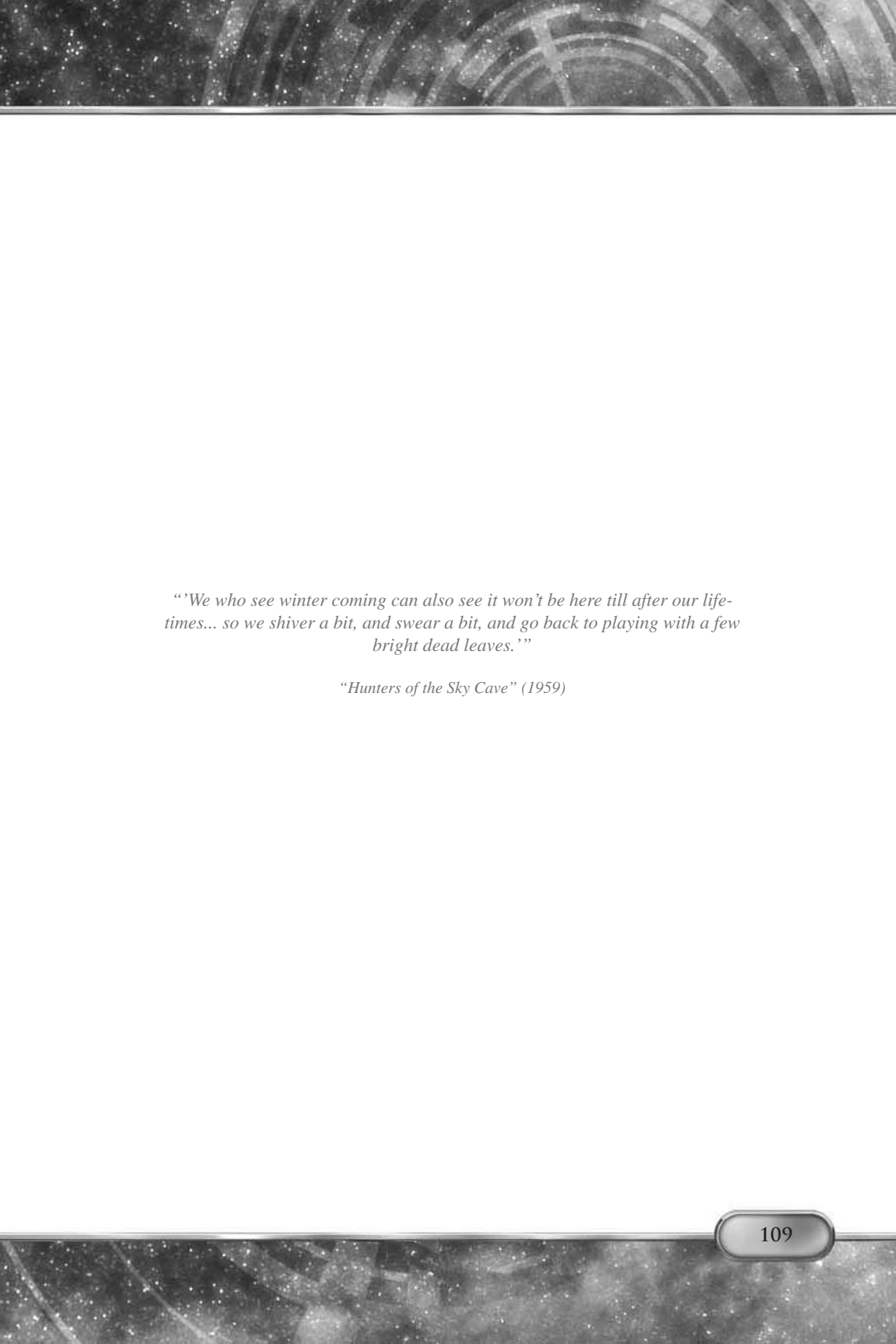
In some cases, a character may wish to perform Psychic Surgery on himself, usually to conceal particular information and memories from a telepath or to enhance a disguise (allowing the character to really believe he is who he claims to be, for example). The

Psychic Surgery Test is at TN +2 since the character is performing the alterations on himself. The character may set up a particular trigger to undo the alterations, restoring his mind to normal. This may be the passage of a particular amount of time or a particular stimulus, such as a code word or seeing a particular person. When the trigger is activated, the character makes another Psychic Surgery Test at TN +2 (requiring no time or Vitality damage). If it succeeds, the alteration is undone immediately. If it fails, the alteration remains for 24 hours. After that, the character may be exposed to the trigger again and attempt another Psychic Surgery Test. On a roll of 24 on the Test, the trigger fails entirely. The alterations are permanent unless another character uses Psychic Surgery to undo them. Self-imposed alterations can also be undone normally using Psychic Surgery, but the Target Number for these outside efforts is not reduced, so it is more difficult for someone else to eliminate the self-imposed alterations.

### **Teleportation and Sneak Attacks**

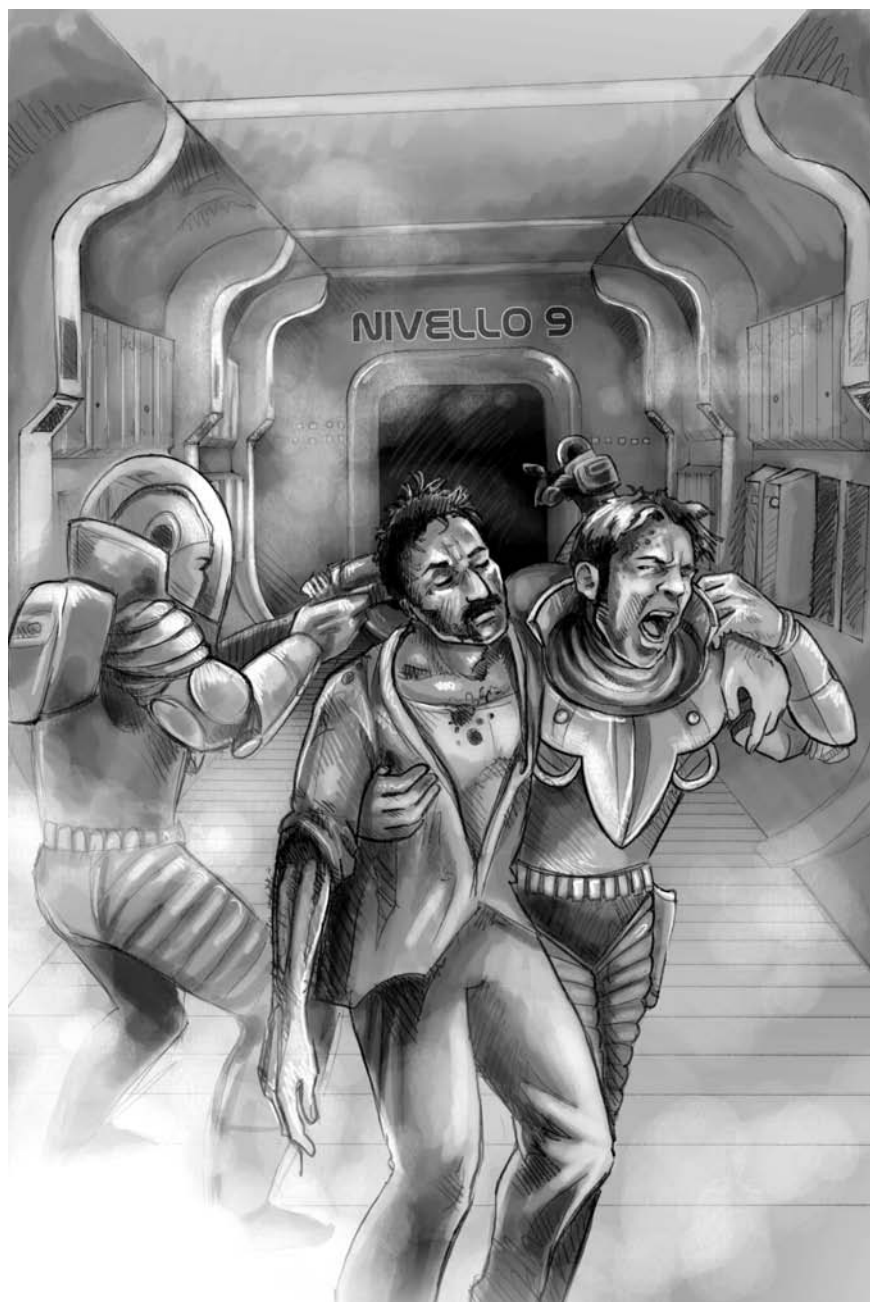
A character who teleports behind or out of sight of an opponent can make a Stealth Test opposed by the target's Observe check. If successful, the character gains a +2 bonus on attack rolls against that target and prevents the target's ability to Defend or Dodge the attack.





*“We who see winter coming can also see it won’t be here till after our life-times... so we shiver a bit, and swear a bit, and go back to playing with a few bright dead leaves.”*

*“Hunters of the Sky Cave” (1959)*





# **CHAPTER 4: ACTION**

*Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.  
--Isaac Asimov, "Bridle and Saddle" (1942)*

Your character is your means of interacting with the science fiction worlds of Thousand Suns, but what your character does and how he does it, is governed by the 12° system, described in the previous chapters. This chapter builds upon this foundation, providing expanded sub-systems for important actions your character can take during the course of an adventure.

## Personal Combat

Despite the fondest hopes of many dreamers, traveling to the stars has not altered the fact that Terrans – and most of the alien species they have encountered – resort to violence to solve their problems when other avenues either fail or prove too difficult. Consequently, Thousand Suns includes a personal combat system to handle everything from brawls in seedy starport bars to running blaster battles between enemy forces. Like everything else in the game, personal combat is intended to be fast and easy to use, providing enough detail to adjudicate these tense, dramatic situations without bogging down in minutiae. Because the system is fairly simple, it should be easy to add or subtract complications to suit your preferred style of play.

### Telling Time

Personal combat is divided into units of measurement called Rounds. A Round does not necessarily correspond to any specific length of time in the real world. Instead, a Round is how long it takes for all the characters involved in a combat to complete all their available Actions. Thus, it is an arbitrary unit intended to help the Game Master and players keep track of who does what when in the course of a combat. Rounds are not realistic representations of anything; they are a game convenience.

### Initiative

Which character gets to act first in a Round is determined by his Initiative rating. Initiative is determined by the following formula:

$$D12 + (Dexterity + Perception/2) +/- modifiers = Initiative Rating$$

#### Initiative Modifier

Initiative Rating can be modified by any number of factors, as determined by the GM. Characters who wander into an ambush might rightly receive a penalty to their Initiative Ratings, while those who lay a trap for their opponents might receive a bonus. Likewise, previous combat experience might modify Initiative Ratings as well. If the GM chooses, he may grant a bonus of +1 per level in a military Career Package. Thus, someone who is a Novice soldier receives +1, while someone who is a Veteran receives +3. These bonuses are entirely optional and some GMs may not wish to grant them, as they give a certain edge to characters who spent time in the military.

Actions proceed throughout a Round based on Initiative Rating, from highest to lowest. In the case of ties, the character with the highest (Dexterity + Perception/2) acts first. Once initiative order is determined, it remains fixed until the combat is completed. The only exception is if a character chooses to delay acting in a Round until later than his Initiative Rating would normally warrant. If he does so, his Initiative Rating drops to the new, lower rating and stays there until the combat ends.

Initiative can be determined either on an individual or “per side” basis. What this means is that the GM can have every character, including NPCs, roll individually for their Initiative Rating or he can designate a single character per side in the conflict whose Initiative Rating he will use to determine who acts when. Typically, the character with the highest Tactics skill is the best person to designate for this task, but players should feel free to offer alternative suggestions. In general, individual initiative works best when there are smaller numbers of combatants, while per side initiative works best for large fights between many opponents.

### **Actions**

An Action is whatever your character chooses to do in a Round. Normally, a character has only one Action per Round. If he wishes to attempt more than one Action per Round, he must suffer a multiple action penalty, described below.

### **Tactics**

The Tactics skill has an additional use in combat. At the beginning of each combat Round, the character with the highest Tactics skill (or the one designated as the “leader,” which is to say, the one who will be directing the actions of the other members of his team) must make a Tactics Test. That character can then divide the degrees of success (if any) among the characters as bonuses to any Test during that Round provided that the characters in question are in communication with him (whether by voice or through a technological device). This represents the leader’s direction of the combat through his command of tactics. No character may receive a bonus in this fashion greater than his own Tactics Rank or 1, whichever is higher.

### **Multiple Actions**

If a character chooses to attempt more than one Action per Round, he suffers a penalty, the severity of which is determined by how many additional Actions he attempts. For each additional Action beyond the first, a character suffers a -2 TN penalty to every Action he takes that Round. Consequently, if a character attempts three Actions in a single Round,



he suffers a -4 TN to all three of his Actions, including the first one he would normally get without penalty.

## Range

Thousand Suns uses a simple system of ranges, dividing distance into categories: point blank, short, medium, and long. Individual weapons include range listing that follow this same pattern, allowing you to know when firing a blaster pistol incurs a bonus or a penalty due to range.

### Range Modifiers

Long: -4  
Medium: -2  
Short: +0  
Point Blank: +1

## Personal Combat Basics

The actual sequence of personal combat, whether melee or ranged, is straightforward and proceeds in this fashion:

### 1. Choose the Right Skill

For firing ranged weapons, use Shoot

For hand-to-hand combat, use Unarmed Combat

For armed combat, use Melee

### 2. Roll 2d12

If the result is less than or equal to your Target Number (including any modifiers), you score a hit.

### 3. Determine Damage.

Take note of the degrees of success in your roll to hit. Multiply it by your weapon's base damage to determine the Vitality damage you deal.

## Additional Modifiers

There are additional complications that can affect this sequence, such as armor, avoiding attacks through dodging, and other modifiers.

## Area Attacks

Some weapons deal damage covering an area rather than a specific target. Examples include grenades and explosives. If the attacker successfully hits the area he wishes (by making an appropriate Test, modified by range and other factors), all targets in the area of effect of the attack must make Dodge Test (see below). If successful, they may deduct the

degrees of success of their Test from the degrees of success of the attacker to determine damage. However, each character that dodges deducts his own degrees of success, meaning that multiple characters within an area attack's effect may take different amounts of damage, depending on how well they managed to dodge.

### Called Shots

A called shot is an attempt to hit a specific area on a target, such as shooting a blaster out of the hand of an opponent. Because this is harder to do than a normal shot, a called shot suffers a penalty. If the specific area of the target is between 10 centimeters and 1 meter in

size, the TN penalty is  $-2$ . If the specific area is smaller than 10 centimeters, the TN penalty is  $-4$ .

### Careful Aim

When making a ranged attack, you may declare that your character is taking careful aim. In this case, your character spends one entire Round aiming, during which time he may neither attack nor defend. On his next Action, he receives a  $+1$  TN bonus to his attack ( $+2$  TN if the weapon has a scope). If anything interrupts the character while undertaking careful aim, his concentration is disrupted and he loses the TN bonus on his next attack.

### Cover

The easiest way to avoid being hit in combat is to seek protective cover. Cover is any type of physical barrier that stands between your character's body and your opponent. Cover comes in three varieties:

#### *Full Cover* (-3 TN)

Full cover completely protects your character, making him extremely hard to hit. Examples of Full Cover would be firing from inside a building through a window, in between dense trees, or crouched behind a large rock.

#### *Partial Cover* (-2 TN)

Partial cover provides more limited protection to your character. Hiding in tall grass or shooting from behind a tree are examples of partial cover.

#### *Prone* (-1 TN)

Prone describes your character when he drops to the ground in an attempt to avoid being hit. Prone is considered a form of cover because not only is your field of vision altered, but you are much harder to hit because you are not a target standing up on the field of battle. Alternately, a character who is

#### **Additional Combat Modifiers**

Shooting weapon off-handed $-2$
Shooting while walking $-1$
Shooting while running $-2$
Shooting from moving vehicle $-2$

immobilized or otherwise unable to act is much easier to hit, granting a +3 TN to anyone firing on them.

## Darkness

Another form of cover is darkness or other types of visual impairment. Not being able to see one's opponent makes it harder to hit them in combat. Darkness incurs the following TN penalties to the attacker:

- Full Darkness (-3 TN)
- Partial Darkness (-2 TN)
- Weak Light (-1 TN)
- Smoky/Hazy (-1 TN)

“Darkness” need not be taken literally in every case. Other effects that mimic darkness or have similar consequences merit the same combat penalties.

## Size

The relative size of the target of an attack affects the difficulty of hitting it in combat. For every doubling of a target's size compared to that of the attacker, grant a +1 TN bonus. Contrariwise, for every halving of a target's size compared to that of the attacker, impose a -1 TN penalty.

## Two Weapons

Some characters may attempt to use two hand-held weapons at the same time. This sort of action is possible but it is extremely difficult, even for the most well trained combatants. In addition to suffering the usual penalty for taking two Actions in a Round (-1 TN per attack), the character suffers an additional -2 TN to each attack, for a grand total of -3 TN per attack. Furthermore, unless a character has been established as being ambidextrous (through a Hook), the off-handed weapon penalty also applies to the second attack, bringing it to a -5 TN penalty.

Species with more than two arms may not suffer the full effects of this modifier. See Chapter 6 for more details.

### Shock

Combat in *Thousand Suns* is often fast and deadly, but some Game Masters may wish to add a further layer of lethality to it. In such a case, shock rules can be used to represent the possibility of a character's becoming suddenly incapacitated by an attack. Under this option, any time a character takes more damage from a single attack than the sum of his Body + Will, he must make a Will Test or be overcome with shock. A shocked character is incapacitated and incapable of doing anything, including defending himself, for a number of Rounds equal to the degrees by which he failed his Will Test.

## Zero-G

All Actions performed under zero gravity conditions suffer a  $-2$  TN penalty unless the character makes a successful Acrobatics Test.

### Automatic Fire

Automatic weapons have a few special rules governing their use that warrant special mention. Firstly, for the purposes of this discussion, an automatic weapon is any weapon that can fire multiple shots during a single Action. Because automatic weapons fire multiple shots, they are harder to dodge than normal attacks. When a single target is making a Dodge Test against an automatic weapon, the degrees of success are halved. For example, a Naval Infantry trooper opens fire with an automatic rifle. His target attempts to dodge and achieves 4 degrees of success on his Test. For the purposes of lessening the damage dealt by the automatic rifle, the target achieved only 2 degrees of success.

### Multiple Targets

The above rules apply only to automatic weapons fire against a single target. One of the advantages of such weapons is that they can easily be used to attack multiple targets in a single Round by spraying adjacent areas with fire. Your character may attempt to attack a number of adjacent 2-meter squares equal to his Shoot skill. Your character suffers a penalty to his Shoot Test equal to the number of squares he wishes to spray with automatic weapons fire. Thus, if he wishes to spray three 2-meter squares, his Shoot Test is at TN  $-3$ . However, your character may freely make a number of Shoot Tests equal to the number of targets within the squares he is spraying. Each attack is resolved individually and the success or failure of each individual attack has no bearing on the others. Damage is thus determined separately for each target and Dodge Tests are resolved normally rather than according to the rules for single target automatic weapons fire.

### Covering Fire

Automatic weapons can be used to give an ally cover from attacks by making it harder for an opponent to target him. To use covering fire, a character must choose one ally and one opponent, both of whom must be in line of sight. By using his Action in a Round doing nothing but spraying the area around the opponent with fire, he grants the ally a  $+3$  TN bonus to any Dodge Tests to avoid attacks from the opponent whom the character is targeting. Multiple characters providing covering fire adds no additional benefit. While using covering fire, your character can take no other Actions. Covering fire may not be used to provide cover for an ally in melee combat.

## Suppression Fire

Suppression fire is the reverse of covering fire, making it harder for an opponent to hit an ally by spraying the area with automatic weapons fire. The same rules apply for suppression fire as for covering fire, except that instead of granting a Dodge Test bonus, the character imposes a -3 TN penalty to an opponent's Shoot Tests against an ally.

## Damage

Attacks that are both succeed and are not avoided (see "Avoiding Damage" below) inflict damage on their target. Taking damage makes it harder for a character to perform Actions, including those relating to combat. When a character takes damage equal to one-fifth of his total Vitality, he suffers a -1 TN to all tasks until healed. This penalty increases by an additional -1 TN for each additional one-fifth of his total Vitality he takes in damage. Thus a character who has 50 total Vitality suffers a -1 TN penalty when he drops to 40 Vitality, a -2 TN when he drops to 30 Vitality, and so on.

When your character is reduced to 0 or less Vitality, he is unconscious and will die in a number of Rounds equal to his Body Rank unless he receives medical attention. A successful Medical Sciences Test is sufficient to stabilize a wounded character for one hour and prevent his immediate death. However, if he does not receive such attention, another Medical Sciences Test must be made each hour thereafter. Failure results in death.

## Unarmed and Melee Combat Damage

Like all damage, unarmed combat damage is dealt by reference to the degrees of success of the attack that dealt it. The base damage of unarmed combat is  $\frac{1}{2}$ , modified by the attacker's Unarmed Combat skill Rank. For example, a character punches a security guard and achieves 4 degrees of success, resulting in 2 points of damage, to which he adds his Unarmed Combat Rank of 7, for a total of 9 points of unarmed combat damage.

Melee weapons function very similarly, dealing damage based on the degree of success achieved by the attacker using them, they add to the result the attacker's Melee skill Rank as well. For example, a character attacks a Kriilkna marauder with a memory knife, achieving four degrees of success. A memory knife's base damage is 2, meaning the character deals 8 points of Vitality damage. To this number he adds his Ranks in Melee combat, in this case 6, meaning that he deals a total of 14 points of damage to the marauder.



## **Ranged Combat Damage**

Armed combat deals damage according to the base damage of the weapon and the degrees of success achieved while attacking with it. For example, a character shoots a blaster pistol at a Hen Jaa soldier and achieves two degrees of success. A blaster pistol has a base damage of 5, so the character deals 10 points of armed combat damage.

## **Dramatic Successes and Maximum Damage**

Most armed weapons have a maximum damage listed in their description. This means that, no matter how many degrees of success a character achieves, they can never deal more than the maximum damage for the weapon type. Attack rolls that achieve a Dramatic Success (sometimes called a “critical hit”) automatically do maximum damage. This maximum is absolute; nothing allows a character who achieves a Dramatic Success to do more damage with the weapon in question than the maximum listed under the weapon description. This applies to unarmed, melee, and ranged combat weapons without exceptions.

## **Healing**

Vitality damage can be healed except in extremely unusual cases. A short period of rest, followed by a successful Test against the average of your character’s Body + Will allows him to recover a number of Vitality points equal to the degrees of success of the Test. A successful Medical Sciences Test also heals a number of Vitality points equal to the degrees of success of the Test, if your character is resting while it is administered. After this, your character regains Vitality at a rate equal to the average of his Body + Will per day until fully healed. Advanced medical technology may increase the rate of healing, of course. Details of medical technology can be found in Chapter 5.

## **Other Types of Damage**

Characters can suffer damage in Thousand Suns from hazards other than weapons and fisticuffs. A few of the most common of these damage-dealing hazards are described below.

### **Diseases and Ailments**

Although many worlds among the Thousand Suns possess biochemistries completely incompatible with those of Terrans, this is not universally true. For that reason, diseases and other ailments can and do arise and spread from world to world. Likewise, many ancient Terran diseases still exist and take their toll as they have for untold millennia.

When faced with the potential to contract a disease, your character must make a Body Test. If they fail this Test, they become sick with the ailment and, unless otherwise noted, will be stricken with the disease until it either runs its course or is cured. If you roll a Dramatic Success on your character's Body Test, he is cured the next day of all ill effects associated with the disease and becomes immune to that disease.

## Drowning

Characters can hold their breath underwater for a number of Rounds equal to their Body. Every Round after that, they must make a Body Test. A failure results in 1D12 points of Vitality damage every Round thereafter until either the character is dead or he is able to breathe again.

## Falling

Every 20 meters fallen from a height (or fraction thereof) causes 1D12 damage under standard gravity. Damage is increased or decreased based on local gravity's difference from standard. Thus, a world with heavy gravity would do double damage per 20 meters fallen, while one with light gravity does half damage.

## Fire and Smoke Damage

Fire, like that of a small campfire, causes 4 points of damage per Round until it is put out. Larger fires deal double that amount of damage with each doubling of size. Fire also causes smoke, which obstructs vision, as well as makes it difficult to breathe. Breathing in smoke, without the protection of any equipment, will cause your character to lose one point of Vitality per Round until the smoke clears.

## Sample Diseases

There are simply too many diseases catalogued on the worlds of the Thousand Suns to list them all, but here are a few samples to give the GM an idea of how to create diseases for use in his own campaign:

- **Malsano:** This common ailment arose on an unknown world and has now become widespread among the Terran population. Marked by fever and chills, Malsano is more of an annoyance than a serious throughout, particularly where advanced medical care is available. If your character contracts Malsano, roll 1D12 to see how many days the disease lasts. While suffering from it, your character suffers a -1 penalty to all Body-related Tests until cured.
- **Nikandro's Disease:** An unpleasant disease named after its discoverer, Nikandro's Disease reduces your character's Body by 4 and his Vitality by 20. It takes 2D12 days for the disease to run its course.
- **Pranijja:** This disease only afflicts Czanik; Terrans and human clades are immune, as are most other known species. If contracted, the Czanik suffers from extreme fatigue for 1D12 days. While suffering from it, the Czanik suffers a -2 penalty to all Body and Dexterity-related Tests.

In addition, smoke obscures vision, as noted in the section above.

## Poison

There are many substances, both natural and manmade, that are poisonous to Terrans and their allies and enemies among the Thousand Suns. Poisons function mechanically very similarly to diseases, except that not all poisons offer a Body Test to resist their effects. A Dramatic Success, however, does result in future immunity to the poison (in those case where resistance is possible).

### Sample Poisons

Here are a couple sample poisons to use as models in creating your own:

- **Kolerego:** Favored by Myrmidon assassins, this is a particularly deadly. Once in a character's bloodstream, he loses 1 point of Body per hour until the Ability reaches 0 and the character dies. There is no chance to resist the effects of this poison but antidotes exist.
- **Veneno:** Extracted from a plant on Kriilkna worlds, veneno is a virulent poison. Exposure to it demands a Body Test. Failure results in extended unconsciousness (for 1D12 days), during which time the character loses 1 point of Body each day permanently. Though few people die of veneno poisoning, most suffer significant ill effects for the rest of their lives.

## Radiation

Radiation can be exceedingly lethal in large doses, leading either to immediate or lingering death. Most commonly encountered forms of "normal" radiation deal 1D12 points of Vitality damage every two Rounds while exposed and an additional 1 point of damage every day thereafter until cured. Harder forms of radiation might deal temporary or permanent damage to Abilities both during exposure and afterwards.

## Vacuum

A character exposed to vacuum without protection will die in a number of Rounds equal to half his Body.

## Avoiding Attacks

Characters can attempt to avoid incoming attacks if they so choose. There are several ways

they can do this, depending on the type of attacking they wish to avoid.

### **Dodge**

Ranged attacks can be dodged with a successful Dodge Test. So long as you have an Action remaining in a given Round, you may dodge an attack. Making a Dodge Test counts as an Action. If the Dodge Test is successful, you may deduct the degrees of success achieved on your Dodge Test from your opponent's degrees of success on his attack. If this reduces your opponent's degrees of success to 0 or less, you have completely dodged the attack and take no damage whatsoever. If your character wants to Dodge more than one ranged attack, you can expend more Actions, provided you are willing to accept the multiple action penalty described above.

### **Defend**

This skill allows your character to avoid a melee attack, whether armed or not. Like all other skills, when your character defends, it counts as one Action. Making a successful Defend Test means that your character deducts the degrees of success achieved on his Defend Test from his opponent's degrees of success on his attack. If this reduces your opponent's degrees of success to 0 or less, you have completely defended against the attack and take no damage whatsoever. If your character wants to Defend against more than one melee attack, you can expend more Actions, provided you are willing to accept the multiple action penalty described above.

### **Armor**

Wearing is another effective means to defend oneself against damage. All armor (described in Chapter 5) has an Armor Value (AV). You should deduct the AV from any damage rolled against you to determine how damage you actually take from an attack. For example, if your character is wearing armor with an AV of 10 and he is hit by an attack dealing 20 points of Vitality damage, your character only suffers 10 points of damage. There are a few minor exceptions to this rule. Some types of armor are only affective against certain types of attacks. This will be noted in the armor's description.

### **Social Interaction**

Personal combat is not the only way a character can interact with others among the Thousand Suns. Indeed, violence is generally viewed with distaste by most civilized beings, who see it as a last resort rather than a preferred course of action. Consequently, skills besides Shoot and Unarmed Combat play a prominent role in Thousand Suns and both

players and GMs are neglecting an important part of science fiction adventure by limiting their adventures to firefights and brawls.

## Resolve

As noted in Chapter 2, all characters have an Ability called Resolve. Resolve is a mental counterpart to Vitality and represents a character's determination and the strength of his convictions. Resolve is equal to  $(\text{Perception} + \text{Will}/2) \times 5$ . Like Vitality, Resolve possesses five levels, each equal to one-fifth of the total. Thus, a character with 60 Resolve has five levels, each with 12 points. These points correspond to five levels of attitude toward others. These levels are shown below.

- **Antagonistic:** Antagonistic characters will go to great lengths to oppose their enemies.
- **Unfriendly:** Unfriendly characters hope harm comes to their opponents.
- **Neutral:** Neutral characters have no strong opinions either way.
- **Friendly:** Friendly characters hope good things befall their friends.
- **Helpful:** Helpful characters will go to great lengths to aid their friends.

When your character meets an individual, you must decide how he feels about him, using one of the five levels of Resolve to describe it. For example, your character meets an officious customs officer who is nosing around his starship, looking for contraband he believes your character is smuggling through an embargo. You decide your character is Unfriendly toward the customs officer, because he hopes he feels in his mission but your character is not willing to go to any lengths to oppose him. Alternately, your character runs into an old Navy crewmate who once saved his life and is now in dire need of assistance. You decide your character feels Helpful toward him, because he would go to any lengths to aid his old friend. Non-player characters are no different in this regard than player characters. Each of them has a Resolve Rank and five levels of attitude toward others. The GM determines how they feel about other NPCs and your character, based on their role in the campaign or adventure.

## Changing Attitudes

The purpose of any social interaction in *Thousand Suns* is to change the attitude of non-player characters toward your character or, in the case of the GM, to change the attitude of your character toward NPCs. This is accomplished by social skill Tests, such as Bargain, Bureaucracy, Diplomacy, Empathy, Intimidation, Investigation, Socialize, and Streetwise. Each of these skills functions much like the combat skills of Shoot or Unarmed combat, except they are used not to deal damage against another character's Vitality but against



their Resolve. Social interaction can thus be likened to bloodless combat, as characters attempt to weaken each other's Resolve to the point where their attitudes change in a manner amenable to their interests.

Here is a simple example. Suppose your character is trying to convince a doctor at a hospital to let him look at a patient's medical records. The doctor has a Resolve of 40, meaning that each of his five levels of attitude has 8 points. Using a zero (0) to represent each point, the doctor's Resolve looks like this:

00000000 Antagonistic  
00000000 Unfriendly  
00000000 Neutral  
00000000 Friendly  
00000000 Helpful

The doctor is unfriendly toward your character, because his superiors have given him orders not to provide information to outsiders about this particular patient, but he has no personal stake in opposing the character. That means the antagonistic level doesn't enter into the equation, with the doctor starting at unfriendly, which is to say, eight points less than his full Resolve of 40.

To get the doctor to help you, your character must change his attitude so that he is at least friendly toward him. Social interaction skills allow you to do that. Let us assume your character decides to use Bureaucracy to do so, quoting rules and regulations to convince the doctor that he ought to release the records to him. He makes a Bureaucracy Test and achieves three degrees of success. This successful Test deals "damage" to the doctor's Resolve. The base damage of all social skills is 1, to which the Rank of the skill involved is added. Thus, three degrees of success are added to your character's Bureaucracy Rank of 6, meaning a total of 9 points of damage to the doctor's Resolve. That is enough to move the doctor's attitude from unfriendly to neutral, but he still has 7 more points in neutral before he becomes friendly and therefore willing to help your character.

You can continue to "attack" a character's Resolve until either you fail your Test or you do enough damage to move his Resolve to the attitude level you seek. Of course, your opponent gets the chance to resist your social interaction Tests. Unlike normal combat, characters can freely "defend" against social interaction each Round without incurring a multiple action penalty. Most social skills can be resisted with an Empathy Test, although in certain circumstances other skills might be more appropriate.

The degrees of success achieved on a Test to resist your character's social skills are

deducted just like a normal Defense or Dodge roll against an attack. Unlike normal combat, if a defender achieves more degrees of success than your character does, the defender's attitude hardens, which is to say, it goes upward, "healing" damage and making it more difficult for you to influence him. In addition, the social skill you had been using when you failed can no longer be used, representing that the defender is no longer impressed by your efforts. You can continue to try and influence the defender's attitude with other social skills, if they can plausibly be used. Otherwise, the social interaction ends at that point. For example, if your character fails to use Bureaucracy to convince the doctor, he must either admit defeat or find another appropriate skill to use – perhaps Bargain, trying to fast-talk the doctor into doing what he wants.

### **Regaining Resolve**

Resolve is gained and lost on a per interaction basis. That is, unlike Vitality, it is not a permanent value that rises or falls throughout an adventure or that requires "healing." Rather, it is an abstraction representing the strength of your character's feelings toward a particular character at the time of the interaction. Consequently, the only way a character's Resolve can change is through other social interactions. Thus, if a character feels friendly toward a character, he will continue to do so until either other interactions or outside circumstances change his attitude.

The GM should bear in mind that outside circumstances can and do affect Resolve, but not in an easily quantifiable way. For example, if a NPC feels helpful toward your character but then witnesses your character do something that is obviously and unambiguously to his detriment, chances are he will cease to feel helpful. How many points of Resolve does your character's betrayal cause the NPC to lose? There is no definite answer to this and each GM must decide for himself. NPCs should behave in a fashion that is logical and rational. In some cases, a NPC might become outright antagonistic toward your character, while in others he might simply drop to neutral. The GM is the final arbiter on these points, based on how the NPC has been portrayed in the campaign thus far. The social interaction system exists primarily for "on the spot" attempts to change attitudes in the course of an adventure. It is not intended to track long-term attitudes, although it can certainly do so if the GM so desires.

### **Social Interaction and Your Character**


The social interaction system is intended to function for both player and non-player characters. What this means is that it is possible for NPCs to use their social skills against your character and change his attitudes toward them. As noted above, you decide for yourself how your character feels about any NPC, setting the initial attitude level. Once that is done,

however, NPCs can do their best to make your character feel better disposed toward them, just as your character might do to an NPC.

Some players might balk at this notion and that is understandable. Players frequently do not like losing control of their character's actions and having a femme fatale seduce a character or a wily merchant cheat him out of hard-earned sols only emphasizes this fact. However, it is important to remember that your character is not you and, while you created him, he might not necessarily behave as you would in the same circumstances. Likewise, as a player, you often know more than your character does. That is, you may know that the beautiful woman who has taken a romantic interest in your character is a Myrmidon spy, but would your character know this? Consequently, having your character "suffer" as a result of social interaction sometimes makes perfect sense and is a natural result of how an adventure unfolds. Embrace it rather than resist it.

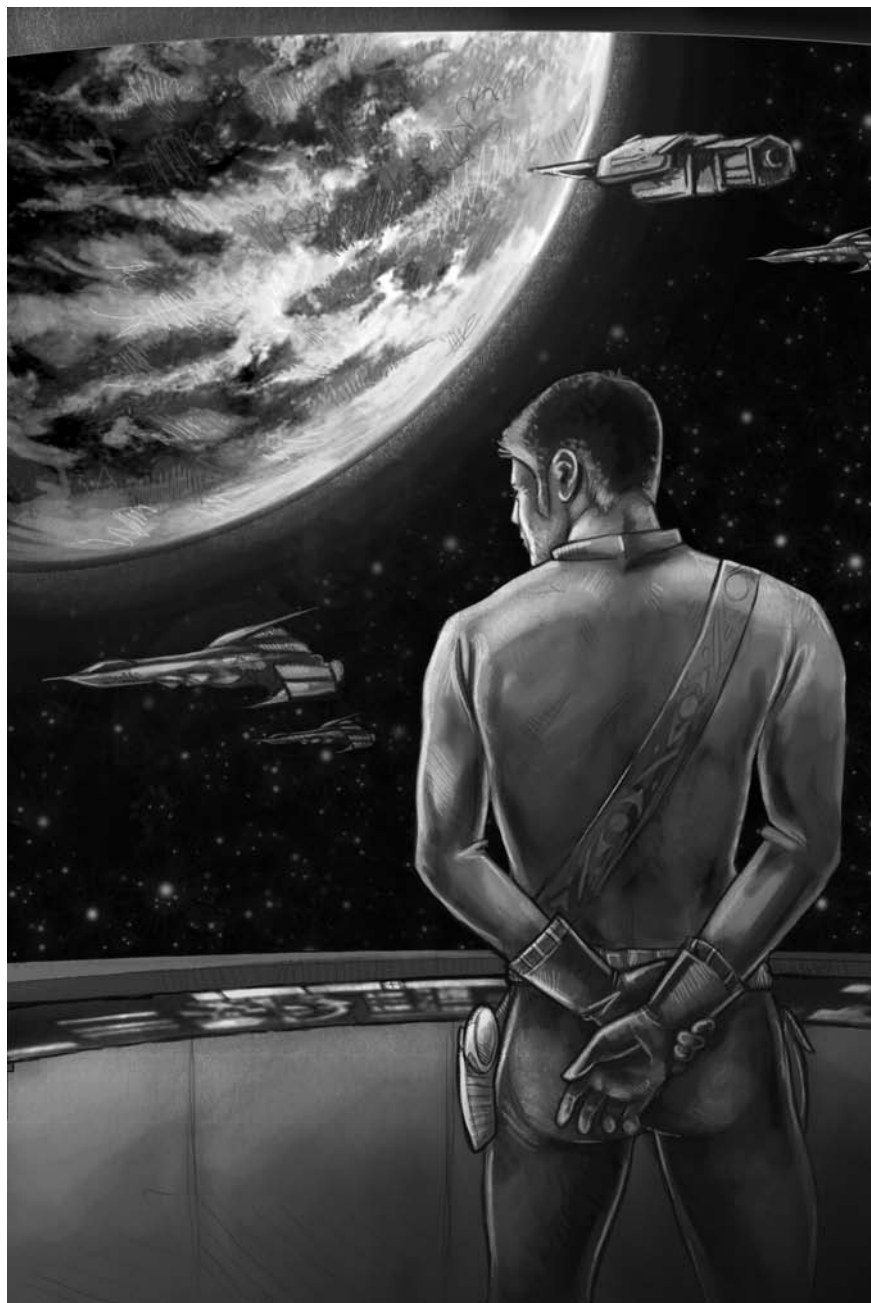
There is another consideration to bear in mind as well. The combat system also takes control of your character away from you. If a Hen Jaa soldier fires his blaster rifle at your character and does a large amount of damage, your character suffers significant penalties to his ability to act. If the damage exceeds your character's current Vitality, he may even die—the ultimate loss of character control! Try to think of social interaction as just another type of combat, one whose unfavorable consequences are generally not as bad as those of armed combat. If you have no trouble accepting more traditional types of combat, social interaction should not cause any more consternation.

If you have a problem with the result of a social interaction, mention it to your GM. He may be willing either to overlook or ameliorate its results. After all, the goal of roleplaying is to have fun and there might be times when applying the rules as written without any consideration simply is not fun. By the same token, do not use this as an excuse to get your character out of unpleasant situations without good cause. After all, what kind of science fiction adventurer avoids unpleasant situations? They are the stuff of great adventures and, oftentimes, failure can lead to far more fun and excitement than success.



*Empires do not suffer emptiness of purpose at the time of their creation. It is when they have become established that aims are lost and replaced by vague ritual.*

*- Frank Herbert, Dune Messiah (1970)*







# **CHAPTER 5: TECHNOLOGY, EQUIPMENT, AND STARSHIPS**

*Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.  
--Arthur C. Clarke, Profiles of the Future (Revised 1973)*

Science fiction is inextricably linked to technology, for it is technology that allows many of the most interesting and exciting elements of science fiction to come to light. This is particularly true in the Imperial SF genre, where technology enables the protagonists to travel easily from world to world in a vast, inhabited galaxy. *Thousand Suns* remains true to its literary inspirations in this respect and this chapter describes many of the myriad technologies that exist in the far future envisioned by this game.

Naturally, this chapter, even if infinitely long, could never be complete. What is included here just scratches the surface of the technological wonders available in the Year 500 of the New Calendar. Game Masters are encouraged to use what is presented here as guidelines in creating their own technologies, always bearing in mind that, in Imperial SF, it is the characters, not the technology, who should be the most important elements of any adventure. Future supplements to *Thousand Suns* will add new technologies and expand on what is provided in this all-too-brief chapter, but there should be more than enough options provided here to keep players and GMs alike satisfied for many adventures.

All prices in this chapter are given in sols, the most common currency unit in the *Thousand Suns*, which is represented with a \$ after the amount. Each sol is divided into 100 cendos, although these rules do not include prices below the cost of a single sol.

## **Armor**

Every advance in weaponry throughout history has been met with an advance in the ability to defend against it. Because of longstanding fears resulting from Von Neumann's War, Terrans do not widely use robots or other artificial beings for military purposes, relying instead on human and alien soldiers. Consequently, a vast array of personal armor has been developed over the centuries, some of its remarkably effective.

### **Combat Armor**

Combat armor comes in three distinct varieties, depending on both the protection it affords and the types of additional features it offers. All three varieties see continuous use among the *Thousand Suns*.

#### **Light**

Light combat armor provides less protection than later, heavier types, but also allows increased mobility. Most light combat armors consist of a reinforced blast vest, shoulder and upper arm pads, thigh and abdomen pads, and kneepads. Some light combat armors

also include helmets and visors, though not all incorporate this aspect of the armor.

### **Medium**

Designed for heavy warfare and dangerous situations, medium combat armor covers the user almost head to toe in armor plating. Medium combat armor comes with a helmet that fits snugly on the head and does not interfere with the soldier's field of vision.

### **Heavy**

The ultimate step in the creation of the one-soldier army, heavy combat armor is an all-in-one package that makes the wearer a formidable opponent in combat. The wearer is covered from head to toe. The helmet includes a built-in heads-up display and a visor that changes tint to dampen the effects of sudden bright lights, making flash-bang grenades useless against the wearer. Additionally, the armor usually has built-in slots for the addition of onboard computer systems, though not all armors make use of the option.

### **Flight Suit**

The flight suit and helmet combination worn by combat pilots doubles as body armor that protects grounded pilots. The flight suit contains kevlar-lined pouches on the chest, back, arms, legs, and abdomen, into which armor plates are inserted. The helmet protects the head.

The armored flight suit carries over into later tech levels. Most military pilots at higher tech levels wear armored flight suits and helmets essentially the same as this version, though in the design appropriate to their society.

### **Militisto Armor**

The Militisto combat system was originally invented as part of the ongoing effort to increase the efficiency of the individual soldier. The primary benefits of Militisto armor are found in its communications and sensor gear; each suit has a built-in computer that is capable of sending and receiving text and image transmissions (via a display built into the armor), including images captured from the scope of a linked assault rifle or sniper rifle. Additionally, the display can be linked to the scopes on those weapons to provide real-time representations of what the scope can see, allowing the wearer to fire around corners with ease. In addition to the communications and data equipment, the armor functions as standard infantry battle armor complete with bullet-resistant plating and kevlar protective gear. The armor allows for instantaneous transmission of coordinates and targeting information,

allowing teams of Militisto-capable soldiers to communicate and coordinate with ease and efficiency.

Militisto armor is uncommon in the Thousand Suns, having been superseded centuries ago by more advanced forms of armor. Nevertheless, it is common on backward worlds in the Marches and in Wildspace, where its relative lack of expense and high performance values make it extremely attractive.

### **Ŝteleco Suit**

The ŝteleco suit uses cutting-edge sonic dampening technology to increase the stealth of the user. Ŝteleco suits look like form-fitting bodysuits with padding on the shoulders, elbows, and knees. Sonic dampening field generators are built into the suit, reducing to a minimum the noise made by movement. A character wearing a ŝteleco suit gains a +4 bonus on all Stealth Tests.

### **Skolto Armor**

Skolto armor is similar in many ways to light combat armor, but with a few notable exceptions. Skolto armor is painted with camouflage patterns: woodland, desert, winter (primarily white), urban (gray patterned), and black are available. When worn in an appropriate setting, the armor grants a +2 bonus on Stealth Tests.

Additionally, skolto armor lacks the kneepads and legwear of the light combat armor, increasing mobility but decreasing protection to the lower body. Skolto armor more often incorporates survival mods as fits the terrain for which it is designed.

### **Space Combat Armor**

Space combat armor is the first true powered armor to reach common use. Space combat armor consists of heavy body armor with an environmental seal and built-in communications gear. Additionally, space combat armor boasts a jetpack specifically designed to function in space, allowing the user to maneuver in zero-g conditions. Space combat armor can be difficult and unwieldy, but makes even individual soldiers a threat in ship-to-ship combat.

### **Space Suit**

The standard space suit is a completely enclosed environment suit capable of sustaining life in extremes of temperature and a lack of breathable air. The suit is large and bulky,

composed of a thick body suit and helmet with a transparent mask, all parts of which are capable of deflecting micro-meteors and other space-borne projectiles. Inside the suit, internal air tanks and environmental filters maintain temperature and pressure. Additionally, a communications system not only allows for radio transmissions to the space shuttle but also allows internal sensors to monitor biological functions that can be observed from mission control. The space suit is poor combat armor, but allows for movement and action in space.

## Survival Suit

The survival suit is the natural evolution of wilderness survival gear. Thanks to the continued miniaturization of technology along with advancements in chemical engineering, the survival suit allows its wearer to function for days or even weeks on end without a source of water or rations. The basic premise of the survival suit is that in order to continue living in harsh environments the human body must conserve and recycle resources. As a result, the survival suit, which looks much like a modern-day wetsuit covered with matte-black pads, is able to control the intake and waste of the human body in an efficient manner.

Water is stored in small pouches all over the survival suit and can be drawn through a small tube that protrudes from the collar; the suit recycles sweat and urine (which it chemically purifies) and then refills those pouches as needed. The outside of the survival suit bears a number of partially reflective black

Armor			
Type	Armor Value	Weight	Cost
Flight Suit	10	1 kg	120\$
Heavy Combat Armor	50	15 kg	5000\$
Light Combat Armor	15	3 kg	200\$
Medium Combat Armor	20	4 kg	350\$
Militisto Armor	30	20 kg	2000\$
Šteleco Suit	5	0.5 kg	1200\$
Skolto Armor	10	2 kg	150\$
Space Combat Armor	45	20 kg	3000\$
Space Suit	35	20 kg	2000\$
Survival Suit	5	1.5 kg	650\$

pads, which absorb solar energy and heat and store that energy in tiny heat cells throughout the suit. If the temperature begins to drop, these heat cells can release energy and sustain a comfortable temperature for the human body for up to 8 hours without needing to recharge. If these cells are empty, the suit also has chemical pouches that can be activated one time for another 8 hours of heat. A tiny intravenous feeding system provides nourishment when rations and food run out for up to six days. Tiny fans and vents built into the suit cool the body in temperatures of extreme heat without losing any body moisture.



## Weapons

The types of weapons available among the Thousand Suns are indeed immense. While no catalog of them could possibly be complete, the following provides a good overview of the types in common use, with a few exotic weapons thrown in for good measure.

### Blaster Weapons

More properly called plasma weapons, blaster weapons come in many varieties. Most blasters generate their destructive ammunition by superheating gasses held inside specialized power packs and then compressing those gasses into a focused plasma round. Blaster weapons do not use ammunition, but are instead powered by power packs.

### Laser Weapons

Laser weapons come in many shapes and sizes, from pistols to rifles and other longarms. Many different forms of technology can be used to create laser weapons, resulting in many different forms of lasers; short, self-contained beams are as common as longer, solid stream lasers, while others produce spherical balls of energy and others fire laser rings. The coloration and noise created by the laser may vary, but the effect is the same. Laser weapons do not use ammunition, but are instead powered by power packs.

### Pulse Rifle

The pulse rifle is a fully automatic laser assault rifle capable of firing a rapid barrage of laser rounds. The pulse rifle is the standard issue weapon given to most heavy assault soldiers in advanced interstellar states. Pulse rifles do not use ammunition, but are instead powered by power packs.

### Melee Weapons

Melee weapons are uncommon among the Terrans, but play a prominent role in both Kriilkna and Myrmidon culture, where proficiency with these archaic weapons is deemed a sign of nobility and sophistication. Consequently, adventurers may find themselves having to deal with melee-armed opponents from time to time.

#### Monoblade

A weapon favored by dissolute rakes and other ne'er-do-wells, the monoblade is a long melee weapon whose cutting surface is exceeding sharp owing to its molecular edge. Unlike the vibroblade, the monoblade is considered "civilized" and thus many cultures and

sub-cultures within the Thousand Suns do not frown on its use in duels in the same way that they do with other melee weapons.

### **Vibroblade**

The vibroblade is made of a durable metal alloy many times tougher than steel. Inside the blade itself, and controlled by a switch on the hilt of the weapon, are microscopic machines that cause the blade to vibrate at incredibly high speeds. Though the wielder of the weapon is shielded from these vibrations by a soft hilt, any character or object struck by the vibroblade finds that the weapon is given extra cutting power thanks to its technological enhancements.

### Miscellaneous Ranged Weapons

#### **Gravity Gun**

A gravity gun fires an artificial gravity pulse at the target with enough force to hurl it through the air (along a path away from the shooter). The discharged gravity pulse is mostly transparent, but bends light around itself, creating a ripple effect along its path. The pulse deals damage with a successful hit. In addition, the target is thrown back 1.5 meters for every degree of success dealt by the weapon's attack. The target must also succeed Body Test or be knocked prone. If the thrown target strikes a wall or other solid surface, it takes damage as though it had fallen from a height equal to the number of meters it was thrown back.

#### **Personal Grenade Launcher**

The personal grenade is somewhat different from its predecessors at lower tech levels in that it is reduced to roughly the size of a large pistol. Additionally, the ammunition it uses, while still as potent as hand-held counterparts, is reduced in size to match the weapon.

#### **Sonic Blaster**

The sonic blaster fires a pulse of destructive sound at the target. In addition, any creature damaged by the sonic pulse must succeed on a Body Test at TN -2 or be shaken and unable to attack or defend for the next Round.

Sonic beams do not use ammunition, but are instead powered by power packs.

## **Tangler**

A unique nonlethal weapon eagerly adopted by law enforcement agencies throughout the Thousand Suns, the tangler gun fires condensed balls of an incredibly sticky compound that can render a target immobile in a few short moments. The tangler gun fires pellets of an inert compound that, when broken, expand into a gelatinous substance that covers large portions of a target. Unfortunately for the target, the disgusting mess soon becomes more problematic as the compound hardens. Within second, a single pellet no larger than a fingernail has expanded into a ball of goop and then hardened into an immobilizing layer of tough chitin.

Any time a character is struck by a tangler gun, that character suffers a cumulative -2 penalty to Dexterity. This penalty remains in place until the compound is dissolved. If the character is struck with enough tangler pellets that the penalty is equal to or greater than his Dexterity, he is immobilized and may take no actions until the compound is dissolved. Dexterity penalties from tangler guns stack with those from tangler grenades. Hardened compound dissolves naturally after 8 hours or can be removed by using solvaway chemical or some other spray solvent.

## **Slug Throwers**


Even in interstellar societies, the transfer of kinetic energy through projectiles remains one of the most efficient means of inflicting damage against a target.

## **Assault Rifle**

The weapon known in the Thousand Suns as an “assault rifle” is in fact a high advanced combination weapon.

The weapon houses a 5.56mm compact assault rifle as well as a 20mm grenade launcher (the weapon uses the alternate weapon mod to add a mini- grenade launcher). The grenade launcher features multiple detonation modes, including detonate-on-impact mode (in which the grenade explodes on impact) and air burst mode (in which the grenade explodes in the air after traveling a certain distance).

The rifle includes a combat-capable scope with built-in targeting computers that are designed to link into the Militisto armor system. This system functions as a built-in night vision scope as well as a range-finding scope (the scope, range-finding laser mod). Additionally, the weapon has an integrated computer link that can hook directly into the Militisto armor and transmit images and data to the armor’s onboard computer system. On



its own, separate from the Militisto armor system, the assault rifle remains one of the most dangerous and effective low-tech weapons in the Thousand Suns.

### **Sniper Rifle**

With the success of the assault rifle, a sniper rifle equivalent was developed. The rifle itself fires a standard 7.62mm round and sports a range-finding scope (the scope, range-finding laser mod) that can connect to a Militisto combat armor computer. Additionally, the sniper rifle features a flash suppressor as well as an effective sound suppressor, ensuring maximum stealth.

### **18mm Shotgun**

Old fashioned though they may be, pump-action shotguns are still used on many worlds and remain favorites for self-defense in the Marches.

### **.50 Caliber Machine Gun**

The .50 caliber machine gun is a reduced-recoil weapon capable of dispensing roughly 260 rounds per minute. The machine gun is designed for use in combat by two soldiers, a single gunner and an aide to feed the ammunition belt into the weapon. What makes this machine gun unique compared to its predecessors is that its reduced recoil allows for greater accuracy over longer distances with less variance in the aim of the user.

### **9mm Automatic Pistol**

Self-loading automatic pistols of this type can be found in the hands of many on lower tech worlds throughout the Thousand Suns.

### **9mm Revolver**

Revolvers are rarely seen in the Thousand Suns but a handful of collectors and other enthusiasts keep them in circulation nonetheless.

### **9mm Submachine Gun**

Often possessing collapsible stocks, submachine guns, or SMGs, are popular for their ease of use and the ability to spray an area effectively with gunfire.

## Thrown Weapons

### Grenade

By all reasonable measurements, thrown grenades are inefficient and often ineffective weapons. Self-propelled weapons of this sort are far better alternatives. However, Ter-ran culture remains deeply scarred by Von Neumann's War and frowns on self-propelled personal weapons, thus explaining the continued use of the grenade.

Grenades are purchased in boxes of twenty.

#### Acidic

This grenade releases a cloud of gas that dissolves organic matter, dealing acid damage each round to all living creatures and organic materials in a 2-meter-radius burst. Suspended in an artificial gravity well, the cloud persists until the gravity well collapses after 10 Rounds. The gravity well prevents even strong winds from dispersing the acid cloud.

#### Chemical

A chemical grenade contains a chemical compound that combusts immediately upon contact with oxygen. When it detonates, it produces geysers of flame that fill a 3-meter burst radius. All creatures and objects within the burst radius take 2D12 points of damage. The blast also ignites clothing and other flammable items.

#### EMP

An EMP grenade releases an electromagnetic pulse that instantly shorts out all electronic devices (including computers) within a 5-meter burst radius. Affected devices remain nonfunctional until repaired.


The EMP grenade deals no damage to living creatures. However, a creature with cybernetic attachments takes 1D12 points of Vitality damage per cybernetic attachment (maximum 5D12) and must succeed at a Body Test or be stunned for the next Round.

An EMP grenade deals 3D12 points of electricity damage to a robot.

#### Fragmentation

The fragmentation grenade propels dangerous shards of metal outward at high velocity





when it explodes. The grenade incorporates aerodynamic metal shards and directional tubes to ensure that each shard is propelled at lethal velocity along a set path. The result is a calculated field of flying shrapnel that is far more effective than the simple pop-and-spray chaos of lower-tech grenades.

### **Gravitic**

When this grenade detonates, it releases incredible gravitational forces. All creatures within a half-meter burst are crushed for damage. A successful Dodge Test halves the amount.

### **Sonic**

A sonic pulse grenade deals damage to any living creature in the burst radius. (Robots and other nonliving creatures are not affected.) In addition, creatures that take damage from the sonic pulse grenade must also make a successful Body Test at TN  $-2$  or be shaken and unable to attack or defend the next Round.

### **Stun**

A stun grenade deals no damage, but any creature within its 5-meter burst radius that fails a Dodge Test at TN  $-2$  must immediately make a Body Test or be stunned for 2 Rounds. A creature that succeeds on the Dodge Test is not required to make a Body Test and is unaffected by the grenade. A stun grenade has no effect on robots and other creatures immune to stunning effects.

### **Tangler**

The tangler grenade operates on the same principle as the tangler gun, but targets an area rather than one specific character. Any time a character is struck by a tangler grenade, that character suffers a cumulative  $-2$  penalty to Dexterity. This penalty remains in place until the compound is dissolved.

If the character is struck with enough tangler grenades that the penalty is equal to or greater than his Dexterity, he is immobilized and may take no actions until the compound is dissolved. Dexterity penalties from tangler grenades stack with those from tangler guns.

Hardened compound dissolves naturally after 8 hours or can be removed by using solvaway chemical or some other spray solvent.

## Weapons

Type	Damage Value	Range	ROF	Cost
.50 Caliber Machine Gun	5 (75)	30 m	A	3500\$
18mm Shotgun	4 (60))	9 m	S	500\$
9mm Automatic Pistol	4 (60)	12 m	S, A	450\$
9mm Revolver	3 (60)	9 m	S	350\$
9mm Submachine Gun	4 (75)	12 m	S, A	450\$
Assault Rifle	5 (75)	12 m	S, A	1200\$
Blaster Pistol	5 (75)	12 m	S	900\$
Blaster Rifle	7 (90)	25 m	S, A	1500\$
Gravity Gun	5 (60)	6 m	S	3500\$
Grenade, Acidic	2 (40)	1.5 m	1	350\$ (box)
Grenade, Chemical	3 (40)	3 m	1	1200\$ (box)
Grenade, EMP	Special	6 m	1	500\$ (box)
Grenade, Fragmentation	6 (75)	6 m	1	1200\$ (box)
Grenade, Gravitic	7 (75)	3 m	1	2000\$ (box)
Grenade, Sonic	3 (40)	5 m	1	500\$ (box)
Grenade, Stun	Special	3 m	1	900\$
Grenade, Tangler	Special	1.5 m	1	350\$ (box)
Laser Pistol	4 (75)	12 m	S	900\$
Laser Rifle	6 (90)	25 m	S, A	1500\$
Laser Sniper Rifle	6 (80)	35 m	S	2750\$
Monoblade	4 (60)	-	-	650\$
Personal Grenade Launcher	Varies	20m	1	2000\$
Pulse Rifle 7	(90)	5 m	S, A	2750\$
Sniper Rifle	5 (75)	35 m	S	2750\$
Sonic Blaster	3 (40)	12 m	S	1200\$
Tangler Gun	Special	6m	S, A	650\$
Vibroblade	3 (50)	-	-	500\$

*Damage Value* = The number in parentheses is the weapon's maximum damage.

*Range* = Each doubling of the stated range defines the range category (short, medium, etc.)

*ROF* = "S" indicates single shot capability, while "A" represents automatic capability.

## Ammunition

In the interests of speeding up play, no costs are given for ammunition in these rules, as the costs involved are small enough that all but the most destitute characters will be able to afford sufficient ammunition to keep their weapons loaded. There are two exceptions to this, however. The first pertains to those weapons that use a power backpack (see below). The

backpack provides effectively unlimited ammunition, but a backpack must nevertheless be purchased for the weapon to work. The second pertains to grenades, which are purchased in boxes containing 20 grenades.

Game Masters who prefer a “grittier” or more realistic approach to ammunition are free to establish magazine sizes for each weapon and set costs for them. In our experience, players and GMs alike find keeping track of ammunition to be tedious bookkeeping that gets in the way of the action of the game. Nevertheless, GMs are encouraged to make *Thousand Suns* their own by modifying and expanding it where these rules are stylized or less concerned with detail than is desired.

## **Other Technologies and Equipment**

The *Thousand Suns* encompasses so many worlds and species that it is impossible to describe all the technologies and equipments. What follows is a listing of the more common and universally used ones. GMs are encouraged to create additional pieces of equipment, using these as models.

### **Computer Equipment**

#### **Display Contacts**

Like display glasses described below, display contacts are part of the miniaturization of computers. These contact lenses fit perfectly over the eye and project a semitransparent image that appears to be roughly 1 meter from the user and comparable to a 130-centimeter monitor. This can be used to show the character any computer display it is linked to, and is also frequently implemented into the heads-up display device (using the multiple use item mod) to provide real-time data on objects and people in the character’s field of vision.

#### **Display Glasses**

A logical advancement of video display and VR technology, display glasses provide on-the-go monitors that can be hooked up to everything from computer systems to televisions and other audiovideo equipment. Each pair of display glasses looks like a darkened pair of sunglasses and features one or two earpieces that wrap around the back of the ear. The glasses are semitransparent and allow the wearer to see both the display and the user’s surroundings simultaneously.

## **Karto**

As has been the case since the invention of the computer, the miniaturization of technology is most often seen in the area of computer size. The karto functions as a standard computer but is no bigger than most credit cards or kodmulos. The karto may be hooked into any computer interface or display (including paint-on LCDs) and functions exactly like a personal computer.

## **Kodumulo**

A marvel of computer technology, the kodumulo is a disposable, one-use item designed to allow those who are not computer savvy to bypass technological and computer barriers or perform computer-related tasks. Each kodumulo is an individual data-carrying card roughly the size of a credit card with a hole in its center and a magnetic strip on one side. Each kodumulo carries a single program designed for a single purpose; this may be to open doors, bypass security restrictions, crash a computer, or even to modify information. Almost any task that can be performed by using the Computers skill can be encoded into a kodumulo. Kodumulos can be swiped in magnetic keycard readers and can be inserted into disc drives on computers with the same ease.

When a character uses a kodumulo for its designated purpose, the kodumulo's Computers bonus (+4) is used in the place of the character's. After a single use, the card triggers small fibers of combustible material and the kodumulo self-destructs, leaving behind no trace of tampering.

## **Neural Computer Link**

The most advanced form of computer interface in the Thousand Suns, the neural computer link creates a direct connection between the brain and a computer system. The neural computer link eliminates the need for a physical interface. Instead, the user simply "thinks" commands to the computer. Output from the computer is sent straight to the user's brain, tapping into the visualization centers to project images and displays directly into the user's mind, eliminating the need for any sort of display device. In all other ways, the neural computer link allows the user to access the computer as if used conventionally. The neural computer link connects to a computer system via a network jack built into the base of the skull.

One advantage this gives a character is that information may be downloaded directly into the brain. The character's own mind becomes a hard drive for basic information, granting the character direct knowledge of a particular subject almost instantaneously.

Though this does not allow the character to gain skill ranks, it does reduce the time required for Computers and Investigate Tests. This applies only when the user is connected to a specific computer used for the Computers or Investigate Tests.

The neural computer link can be connected, via the body's central nervous system, directly into the user's safisto chip. Whenever data is transferred via the safisto chip, such as a person's identity, that knowledge is immediately loaded into the character's brain. Essentially, this means that any two characters with safisto chips and neural computer links may instantly know one another simply by shaking hands. Neural computer links can also be connected to nanites in a character's bloodstream. As in the case of piloting and driving assisting nanites, these nanites interface directly with the neural link and allow the character to give commands simply by thinking them.

### **Neural Network Jack, Wireless**

A natural extension of neural computing technology, the wireless neural network jack plugs into the neural computer link and allows for remote access to computer networks. Additionally, the wireless neural network jack with the satellite datalink mod can connect to any global computer network instantaneously. If the neural computer link is the basic means of connecting the human mind to a computer, the wireless neural network jack is the means of connecting the human mind to massive computer networks. A wireless neural network jack is useless unless the user also has a neural computer link.

Medical Equipment

### **Biosculp Kit, Personal**

The personal biosculp kit is fashionable with the rich and famous of the Core worlds—and the criminal underworld. Consisting of a mask that fits neatly over any human face, the personal plastic surgery kit is a one-use item that completely and permanently changes a character's facial appearance.

The personal biosculp kit is first linked to a special imaging computer that programs the kit with the desired outcome. The kit is then placed on the face and activated. The kit sedates the person using it and then proceeds to alter his face according to the specifications, and can even go so far as to permanently alter eye and hair color. Using the kit takes one hour, during which the character is unconscious.



*“What depth does the foreknowledge of doom give to your loves?”*

*—Poul Anderson, A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows (1975)*

## **Chemicals**

### **Akcel**

A drug that is both beneficial and highly dangerous, akcel functions as a temporary adrenaline-enhancer. Akcel was originally conceived for military purposes in an attempt to make soldiers stronger, faster, and more combat-capable. A single injection of akcel grants the character a +4 bonus to Strength and a +2 bonus to Dexterity-related Tests, and increases the character’s movement speed by 5 meters. These effects last for 10 Rounds.

Unfortunately, the side effects of akcel almost outweigh the benefits. For one, the chemical is addictive and can alter the perceptions of a character so that he thinks he cannot live without a dose of the drug. Additionally, repeated use of akcel has debilitating effects on the body’s immune and nervous systems.

Each time a character uses a dose of akcel, he has a 10% chance of suffering a –2 penalty to his Dexterity and a –1 penalty on Body-related Tests. These penalties last for 24 hours. If the character uses the drug again before recovering from these penalties, the penalties increase and the recovery time extends for an additional 24 hours. For example, if a character uses another dose of akcel while still under the effect of the penalties, the character suffers a –4 penalty to Dexterity and –2 on Body-related Tests, and the recovery time increases to 48 hours.

### **Antitox**

A chemical found in many first aid kits, antitox is a special hypodermic injection that can be used to save the life of any character infected with a poison. Each antitox injector contains a specialized analyzer linked to chemical generators. When the needle penetrates the skin of the target, it samples the target’s blood and sends the data back to the analyzer, which determines the nature of the poison and generates an antidote from stored chemical compounds. Once the antitox delivers its specially formulated chemicals, the target character is completely cured of the poison and its effects in 1 Round.

## **Biocort**

Biocort is a unique chemical compound that enhances the human body's natural ability to heal. Biocort pushes the immune system into overdrive, and can cause the character to heal from grievous wounds at a greatly increased rate. Any character injected with biocort heals at twice the normal rate for a 24-hour period.

## **Mortinta**

Also known as "slow," mortinta is a drug that places a sentient being in a state of suspended animation for up to six months, after which its effects wear off and (in principle anyway) the subject awakens, having neither experienced the intervening time nor aged biologically. A mortinta user can be awakened prematurely through the use of an antidote. Interstellar travelers frequently use mortinta if they have no interest in remaining awake during a long jump.

Mortinta is generally effective without any ill effects. However, on each use, the GM should roll 2D12. On a 24 result, a character using it must make a Body + Will Test. Failure results in death. Unsurprisingly, mortinta is used primarily because of its cheapness, although some thrill seekers actually enjoy the possibility that their next interstellar jump could be their last.

## **Neutrad**

A chemical found in many first aid kits, neutrad is a special hypodermic injection that can be used to neutralize the effects of radiation poisoning. Each neutrad injector contains a specialized analyzer linked to chemical generators. When the needle penetrates the skin of the target, it samples the target's blood and sends the data back to the analyzer, which determines the nature of the radiation sickness and generates an antidote from stored chemical compounds. Once the neutrad delivers its specially formulated chemicals, the target character is completely cured of the radiation poisoning and its effects in 1 hour.

## **Plastiflesh**

Contained in a small spray can, plastiflesh bonds with human skin on contact and accelerates the healing process by providing a layer of artificial skin to seal the wound. The target of the spray immediately recovers 1D12/2 Vitality. No Medical Sciences Test is required to use plastiflesh.

## Rapide

Also known as “wake,” rapide is a drug that speeds up the perception of time to four times the usual rate. Each dose lasts 24 hours, during which time the character who has ingested it experiences the day as if it lasted only 6 hours. Rapide is taken by interstellar travelers in order to overcome the boredom of long jumps.

Extended use of rapide has no known side effects, unlike its counterpart, mortinta.

## Solvaway

Solvaway is a special spray-on chemical designed to break through the restricting compound fired by tangler guns and tangler grenades. A single application of solvaway completely dissolves any hardened compound and frees the character as though the compound had dissolved on its own.

## Sporekill

A chemical found in many first aid kits, sporekill is a special hypodermic injection that can be used to neutralize the effects of most diseases. Each sporekill injector contains a specialized analyzer linked to chemical generators. When the needle penetrates the skin of the target, it samples the target’s blood and sends the data back to the analyzer, which determines the nature of the disease and generates an antidote from stored chemical compounds. Once the sporekill delivers its specially formulated chemicals, the target character is completely cured of the disease and its effects in 1D12 hours. Some genetically engineered diseases are created to circumvent sporekill chemical, and are unaffected by this piece of gear.

## Psi-Stam

Psi-stam is a drug used by psions to give them the ability to use psionic powers for longer than usual or in a way previously unavailable to them. What this chemical does is grant temporary Vitality points that may be used only for the purposes of psionic powers. That is, while under the effects of psi-stam the psion first uses the temporary Vitality points gained for power rather than his standard Vitality points. The chemical comes in several varieties based on the number of temporary Vitality points it grants. Psi-stam works for only 10 minutes, after which all temporary Vitality points remaining (if any) disappear. Likewise, for every 10 points of temporary Vitality gained, the psion must make a successful Body Test at  $-1$  TN or immediately suffer the Vitality point loss to his permanent Vitality. For example, if a psion takes a  $+20$  dose of psi-stam under whose effects he suffers 18 points of Vitality damage because of his psionic powers, he must then make a Body Test at  $-2$  TN

(+20 = -2) or immediately lose 18 points of Vitality from his permanent Vitality (which may be healed normally)

### **Truthtell**

Truthtell is a specially formulated chemical that targets areas of the brain that handle creativity and, particularly, lying. By temporarily neutralizing these areas of the brain, truthtell makes it impossible for a character to lie while under the drug's influence.

A character injected with truthtell may make a Will Test to negate its effects. On a failed Test, the character is compelled to speak truthfully for the next 3D12 minutes. A subject under the effect of truthtell is aware of its influence and may still refuse to answer questions.

### **Medkit, Advanced**

The advanced medkit functions exactly like the fast-use medkit described below. It also grants its user a +2 bonus on all Medical Sciences checks.

### **Medkit, Fast-Use**

The fast-use medkit functions as both a first aid kit and a medical kit. In addition, specialized computers and sensors prepare exactly what is needed to restore a character's Vitality, treat a disease, stabilize a dying character, or revive an unconscious character. A character may use the Medical Sciences skill with the fast-use medkit as a normal Action in combat. Use of a fast-use medkit immediately restores a number of Vitality equal to the treated character's Body + Will, after which they gain this same amount per day.

The fast-use medkit cannot be used as a surgery kit.

### **Regen Wand**

A regen wand is a tubular device roughly 40 centimeters long. It emits waves of energy that promote cellular growth and healing. A character can use a regen wand as a first aid kit or medical kit. Because of the device's simplicity, Medical Sciences Tests made with the regen wand gain a +2 bonus.

## Miscellaneous Equipment

### Disguise Kit, Morphic

Most people forced to work undercover for extended periods rely on the morphic disguise kit. The kit features a pair of contact lenses that change color, a hair prosthetic that changes color, length, and texture, a paint-on LCD injector for instant tattoos that transform, and a vocal encoder (vocoder) that is attached to the throat to alter the user's voice. Each component can be altered on command. The morphic disguise kit grants a +4 bonus on all Stealth (Disguise) Tests while in use.

### Duracable

Strong as steel, flexible as rubber, and almost as light as normal rope, duracable replaces most cables and ropes as the standard device for lifting, pulling, and support. Duracable is made of lightweight and durable wiring wrapped hundreds of times in a swirl that reinforces itself as more stress is placed on the coil. Duracable is able to support up to 10 metric tons of weight.

### Explorer Outfit

The explorer's outfit is the standard uniform for adventurers taking their first steps into the unknown. It includes a set of cargo pants and a utility vest, each covered in numerous pockets and pouches for holding miscellaneous gear. Additionally, the explorer outfit features a pair of durable all-weather boots with a built-in knife sheath, as well as a neck-shading cap, a pair of utility sunglasses, and a belt that holds pouches of all kinds. The chief premise of the explorer's outfit is versatility, giving the explorer a basic set of clothing that can be added to and augmented for each particular mission.

### Flash-Seal

Flash-seal looks like a block of metal roughly the size of a thin brick. It attaches to any doorframe. When activated, chemical compounds inside the block of metal burn fast and hot enough to melt the metal into a liquid form. Almost instantaneously, a second chemical compound freezes the molten metal back into its solid state. The result is that the metal melts, sinks into the space between the door and its frame, and then solidifies again, essentially welding the door shut. A door that has been flash-sealed may not be opened by normal means and must be destroyed or cut through as though it were a wall.



## **Force Field, Personal**

The most reliable and powerful personal defense mechanism available, the personal force field projects a defensive bubble around a single character or item. The personal force field comes in two varieties, one that reduces all damage done to the target by 5 and another that reduces it by 10. The device contains a power pack that provides up to 2 hours of use. A power backpack may be used to extend this duration to 8 hours.

## **Fusion Torch**

The fusion torch produces a small, thin gout of flame that burns with such intensity that it creates temporary blobs of plasma all around it. The fusion torch consists of a small fuel canister attached to the torch generator. The torch deals 3D12 points of damage each round to immobile objects. Due to the nature of the fusion torch, a character using the torch must be meticulous in the way he cuts to maximize damage to whatever he is slicing through. If used as an improvised weapon, the fusion torch deals only 1D12 points of damage since it is being wielded in a more haphazard fashion.

## **Grappler Tag**

Often used in conjunction with duracable, the grappler tag is a small disc roughly 15 centimeters in diameter. When placed against a solid surface, the grappler tag attaches to that surface by magnetism (if the surface is ferrous) or by an array of nearly microscopic metal barbs (if not). The tag can then be attached to duracable and used as an anchor for climbing, pulling, or any other purpose. A button on the top of the disc releases the grappler tag's hold.

## **Heads-Up Display (HUD)**

One of the most valuable innovations in portable information technology is the personal heads-up display (HUD). A HUD is composed of optical sensors for taking in data and a display device that projects an overlay in the user's field of vision. A HUD also typically incorporates some sort of communications link or data link to allow another person or computer to see what the wearer sees and transmit valuable information back to the HUD.

Over the centuries, the HUD display device transforms from a simple eyepiece worn on a headband to contact lenses that can display data, all the way up to a neural interface that simply taps into the bearer's optical nerve and tampers with the signals sent to the brain. The standard HUD can be used to highlight the outline of a person or object on voice command, granting a +1 bonus on Observe Tests when pursuing a specific target. Additionally,

a person with a link to the HUD can freely send data and images to the wearer at any time. Individual software packages (represented as mods) can further augment the abilities of a HUD.

### **Hologram Player**

A hologram player is a small disc with several small light projectors arranged around its outer edge. When activated, the device projects a three-dimensional image in full color as small as 5 centimeters in height or as large as a typical Terran. The hologram player can be hooked into a hologram recorder (capable of storing three-dimensional images), or even to a unicom to receive three-dimensional images for real-time communications.

### **Hologram Recorder**

A hologram recorder is a cylinder no larger than a pen with a bulbous, transparent cap on one end. The device can make a three-dimensional recording of anything within its cone-shaped recording area. Hologram recorders can store up to one hour of three-dimensional images to be played back on a hologram player or transferred to a computer as video data. Most hologram recorders can also be attached to a unicom to serve as a video input device for real-time holographic communications. Law enforcement agents commonly carry the hologram recorder, as it allows for the accurate collection of evidence and can prevent abuse on the part of the authorities.

### **Hologuise**

The hologuise is a combination hologram projector and digital imaging computer system that is worn like a headband over the forehead. When activated, the hologuise projects a three-dimensional image over the face that completely obscures the character's natural features. This image is commonly a different face, but can be a black veil or some other decorative image instead. With practical and fashionable uses, the wealthy elites of the Core worlds regularly employ hologuises, as do criminals and spies. An active hologuise grants the wearer a +4 bonus on all Stealth (Disguise) Tests.

### **Intellipicks**

Though not technically an actual set of lockpicks, intellipicks are a cluster of several tiny machines (though not quite small enough to be called nanites) that can pick almost any lock and open almost any door. Intellipicks come in a small box that, when placed on the lock to be opened, releases the miniscule robots to do their work. Once the intellipicks penetrate the lock, they move tumblers and shift bolts in an efficient and rapid manner, opening the

lock in way that no human could. Intellipicks have an effective Intrusion modifier of +10 (this skill can only be used to open conventional locks). Intellipicks cannot open electronic or computerized locks, though they can open magnetic locks by generating a magnetic field of opposite polarity.

### **Micro-Aural Communicator (Microcom)**

The micro-aural communicator consists of three components. A tiny earpiece transmits incoming communications directly into the ear, at a volume far too low to allow others to hear. A small node placed on the inside of the lip allows the user to broadcast while speaking no louder than a whisper. Finally, a wristband functions as the input/output port for hooking other devices into the microcom. Using a microcom cannot be heard by any normal means.

### **Nanobeacon**

An invaluable device used in tracking and search and rescue, the nanobeacon is a small microchip that is placed on a target's body (or on an object). It sends out a pulse every second that can be detected by sensors attuned to the beacon's frequency. The nanobeacon projects its pulse at up to a 800-kilometer radius, each nanobeacon with its own unique identification code. Nanobeacons are often used to coordinate combat squads, track wanted criminals, and even to help recover kidnapped or lost children. A beacon can be placed on any character or object by making a simple touch attack against the target.

### **Neural Recorder**

A flexible cap that resembles a grasping clawed hand, the neural recorder can collect data directly from the human mind. Any visual or auditory memories or thoughts can be transmitted through the neural recorder and stored in its memory. Capable of storing up to two hours of data, the neural recorder requires a Computers Test to activate and operate. If the subject of the neural recording is willing, the neural recorder collects images and sounds from the subject's mind and stores them as either two-dimensional or three-dimensional recordings. An unwilling subject may make a Resist Test at TN -2 to prevent the recorder from functioning.

### **Neural Scrambler**

The neural scrambler is a restraint device used by many law enforcement agencies in the place of physical restraints such as handcuffs. The neural scrambler consists of a six-pronged device that, when placed over the head, interrupts brainwave activity. A character wearing

a neural scrambler may not take any actions whatsoever, though he moves his normal speed under the command of another individual. When the neural scrambler is removed, the character has no knowledge of events that took place while he was restrained.

### **Polyvox**

The polyvox translates the languages of different known cultures and species.

### **Projectile Deflector**

A defensive item that is in many ways the predecessor to the personal shield, the projectile deflector generates a field of gravity-altering energy around its user. Often worn as a belt or other piece of jewelry, the device actually bends the path of incoming high-speed projectiles, making the target harder to hit. The projectile deflector grants a +2 bonus to Dodge Tests against ranged attacks. Melee attacks are unaffected by this device.

### **Viziero**

The viziero allows a person to see through solid objects. Through a combination motion-sensor data, gravity fluctuations, ambient light penetration, x-rays and ultraviolet light, heat and infrared signatures, sound waves and sonar, and other sensory inputs, the viziero creates an accurate computer-rendered image of what lies beyond intervening objects. Any character wearing a viziero may, as an Action, activate its sensors and see through a wall, floor, object, or creature at a range of up to 30 meters.

The viziero can penetrate 15 centimeters of metal (except lead, which it cannot see through) and 30 centimeters of other materials, including concrete, wood, and plaster.

### **Power Backpack**

The power backpack is essentially a portable generator. While worn, the power backpack can replace the power packs used by laser and plasma weapons, granting an infinite supply of ammunition while attached. Additionally, the power backpack can provide energy to almost any device requiring electrical power.

### **Ŝafisto Chip**

The ŝafisto chip is a tiny microchip implanted beneath the surface of the wrist. It contains the bearer's identification information. Some computers can read the ŝafisto chip and extract its information, while all ŝafisto chips can be made to receive another person's

identification information via handshake—once a mere method of greeting, the handshake becomes a permanent way to introduce oneself and clearly identify yourself to another person. Of course, the safisto chip can be made to not broadcast information via handshake for privacy's sake.

In addition to basic identification information, many people in the Thousand Suns, especially in the Core worlds, have their banking and credit information keyed to their safisto chips so that they no longer have to use physical money or credit cards. Businesses love this as it allows them to prevent shoplifting; if a person carries an item from the store, that item's value is immediately deducted from their bank account. Additionally, at higher tech levels the safisto chip can be linked to computers (particularly neural implants) such that any information can be transferred between two safisto chips—a great boon to the espionage community as it allows for discrete information transfers.

Some governments use safisto chips (occasionally combined with nanobeacons) to monitor the activities of their citizens. This oppressive, watchful eye of the government is exactly what opponents of the safisto chip fear. Additionally, a black market for forged or stolen safisto chips emerged as soon as the chips themselves became widespread, making identity theft and falsification an ever-present crime in some communities.

## **Spray LCD**

The rise to prominence of paint-on LCDs allowed many people freedom and portability with computing never before felt. The spray LCD is the logical extension of this technology. A pressurized canister similar to a can of spray paint, it can spray an LCD onto almost any surface. Any object coated with spray LCD automatically gains the paint-on LCD mod for 1 hour. After that hour, the spray begins to dissolve and no longer functions. Each canister of spray LCD is enough to produce one working LCD.

## **Sensor Equipment**

### **Armacomp**

The armacomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to detect and locate weapons of all types. It grants a +3 bonus on Investigate (Search) Tests when searching for weapons. Additionally, the armacomp sensor's advanced data on weapons of all types makes it a valuable resource when repairing weapons, granting a +2 equipment bonus on all Technical Sciences Tests made on weapons. This does not include explosives and other demolitions devices, which are covered under the democomp sensor.



### **Chemicomp**

The chemicomp sensor computer is a handheld computer or computerized gauntlet designed to find individual chemical compounds. Chemicomps can locate a specific chemical, providing a +4 bonus on Investigate (Search) Tests when attempting to find chemical compounds.

### **Democomp**

The democomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to detect and locate explosives of all types. It grants a +3 bonus on Investigate (Search) Tests when searching for explosives. Additionally, the democomp sensor's advanced data on explosives of all types makes it a valuable resource when planting them, granting a +2 bonus on all Technical Sciences Tests made involving explosives.

### **Electricomp**

The electricomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to detect and locate electronic devices of all types, including computers. It grants a +3 bonus on Investigate (Search) Tests when searching for electronics of a specific type. Additionally, the electricomp sensor's advanced data on electronics of all types makes it a valuable resource when repairing computers and other electronics, granting a +2 bonus on all Technical Sciences Tests made on them. Additionally, the electricomp can be used to identify any flaws in cybernetics.

### **Geocomp**

The geocomp sensor computer is a handheld computer or computerized gauntlet designed to find individual minerals. Geocomps can locate a specific mineral, providing a +4 bonus on Investigate (Search) Tests when attempting to find minerals.

### **Mechanicomp**

The mechanicomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to assist in the evaluation and repairs of mechanical devices. Thanks to the mechanicomp's extensive library of mechanical blueprints, any repairs made using the mechanicomp as a reference are more efficient, granting a +2 bonus on all Technical Sciences Tests made to vehicles, starships, or mechanical devices.

## **Medicomp**

The mechanicomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to assist in the evaluation and healing of Terran and other common physiologies. Thanks to the medicomp's extensive library of medical records and biological knowledge, any treatments administered using the medicomp as a reference are more efficient, granting a +2 equipment bonus on all Medical Sciences Tests.

## **Motion**

The motion sensor is capable of not only detecting motion but also of plotting it on a display screen in relation to other objects. The motion sensor plots motion relative to its own position, but can sense motion through walls and solid surfaces, indicating the location of any moving object within 30 meters.

## **Robocomp**

The robocomp sensor is a hand-held computer or computerized gauntlet designed to assist in the evaluation and repairs of robots and robotic life forms. Thanks to the robocomp's extensive library of robotic blueprints, any repairs made using the robocomp as a reference are more efficient, granting a +2 bonus on all Technical Sciences Tests made to robots.

## **Survival Equipment**

### **Aquaconverter**

Also known as "mechanical gills," the aquaconverter is a simple device that takes in water, separates its molecules into hydrogen and oxygen atoms, and then feeds the oxygen into a breather tube and the hydrogen into power-generating mechanisms. Worn as a backpack with a breather tube placed in the mouth, the aquaconverter is a limitless and self-powering way to breathe safely underwater.

### **Portable Environment Generator**

As an important piece of survival gear that can be taken on almost any expedition, the portable environment generator is an all-in-one device coveted by explorers and outdoors enthusiasts alike. Resembling a tall cylinder roughly 60 centimeters in height, the portable environment generator can project a 10-meter sphere of custom environment under any conditions. In cold weather areas, the generator produces heat. In arid deserts, the generator produces both cool air and moisture.

At night, the generator acts as a glow lamp and provides the area with light. Thanks to a special energy bubble produced by the generator, any atmospheric changes stay within the 10-meter radius and do not escape until the device is deactivated. Essentially, the portable environment generator can produce a sphere inside which a group of people can be relatively comfortable despite extremely harsh conditions outside the generator's influence.

### **Portable Glow-lamp**

The portable glow-lamp is the most efficient and beneficial form of lighting equipment known to man. It can function as a directional lighting device (like a flashlight) or as an area-covering lantern. Glow-lamps have long-lasting power cells and bulbs that never need to be replaced, and can be adjusted to provide light in any radius up to 15 meters.

### **Puritizer**

The puritizer is a small, semitransparent cylinder roughly one foot tall that removes impurities from water food. The puritizer's onboard computer recognizes chemicals that can be harmful to the human body and separates them from the food and drink.

### **Standard Rations**

The standard rations of advanced militaries are entire meals that come in pill form. The pill is placed under the tongue and dissolves, releasing not only the flavors of various foods but also the consumer's daily supply of nutrients and vitamins. Each ration is the equivalent of a single meal and is nutritious, filling, and relatively appetizing.

### **Universal Communicator (Unicom)**

The unicom is an all-in-one piece of equipment that handles the communication needs of a single person. Each unicom has its own frequency and can send transmissions both directly to another individual unicom as well as to an entire group of unicom. The unicom also has a data port so that it can be linked to a computer system and receive data as well as audio and visual communications. At higher tech levels, the unicom also frequently incorporates the hologram recorder and projector devices (via the multiple use item mod).

## Equipment

Type	Cost
Aquaconverter	275\$
Biosculp Kit, Personal	150\$
Chemical, Akcel	40\$
Chemical, Antitox	40\$
Chemical, Biocort	40\$
Chemical, Mortinta	20\$
Chemical, Neutrad	40\$
Chemical, Plastiflesh	40\$
Chemical, Rapide	120\$
Chemical, Solvaway	30\$
Chemical, Sporekill	40\$
Chemical, Psi-Stam	40\$ per +10 Vitality (max 50)
Chemical, Truthtell	70\$
Disguise Kit, Morphic	200\$
Display Glasses	200\$
Duracable	20\$
Flash-Seal	70\$
Force Field, Personal (AV 5)	1200\$
Force Field, Personal (AV 10)	3500\$
Fusion Torch	120\$
Grappler Tag	30\$
Explorer Outfit	40\$
Heads-Up Display	55\$
Hologram Player	40\$
Hologram Recorder	90\$
Hologuise	500\$
Intellipicks	275\$
Kodumulo	350\$
Medkit, Advanced	60\$
Medkit, Fast Use	55\$
Micro-Aural Communicator	40\$
Nanobeacon	70\$
Neural Computer Link	5000\$
Neural Network Jack, Wireless	200\$
Neural Scrambler	120\$
Polyvox	120\$
Portable Environment Generator	275\$
Portable Glow-Lamp	20\$
Power Backpack	70\$
Projectile Deflector	500\$

Type	Cost
Puritizer	90\$
Regen Wand	1200\$
Safisto Chip	200\$
Sensor, Armacomp	1200\$
Sensor, Chemicomp	1200\$
Sensor, Democomp	1200\$
Sensor, Electricomp	1200\$
Sensor, Geocomp	1200\$
Sensor, Mechanicomp	1200\$
Sensor, Medicomp	1200\$
Sensor, Robocomp	1200\$
Sensor, Motion	350\$
Spray LCD	70\$
Standard Rations	30\$ (per week)
Universal Communicator	40\$
Viziero	500\$

## Equipment Mods

The mod system described here is a way to customize weapons, armor, and equipment to more appropriately fit a given campaign or character. Since each campaign will likely use very different items based on its own interpretation of the Thousand Suns setting, the mod system allows total freedom in designing specific models of equipment from the generic base items found throughout this chapter.

Using the mod system is a simple matter of mixing and matching various elements of a piece of gear until it fits what is needed.

First, pick a base weapon, armor, or piece of equipment to be modified. Select a mod for the appropriate type (armor mods for armor, and so on). Modify the cost of the base item according to the mod's instructions, and then purchase the mod-modified item as normal. Remember that cost modifiers are cumulative. Some mods have additional restrictions placed on them that must be considered before making the mod modification.

## Weapon Mods

The following mods can apply to weapons, provided all mod-specific restrictions are observed.



## Alternate Weapon

Some weapons are capable of serving multiple purposes by integrating two types of weapon into one. This can encompass everything from having a bayonet installed on a rifle to allowing a weapon to switch between two different energy types at any given time. When dealing with firearms and other ranged weapons, this usually involves only mixing like types; for example, energy weapons are only combined with energy weapons, and ballistic weapons are only combined with ballistic weapons. This is not a hard-and-fast limitation but rather a suggestion based on the logistics of designing such a weapon.

When selecting the alternate weapon mod, choose a second weapon. That weapon is integrated into the base weapon and can be used at any time. Additionally, you must choose whether or not the alternate weapon may be physically separated from the base weapon or not at the time of purchase. This mod may be selected multiple times, each time adding a single additional weapon to the base model.

**Restrictions:** The character must also purchase the weapon to be integrated separately from the primary weapon, before the mod modification is made.

**Cost Modifier:** +20%

## Autofire Module

Some firearms and energy weapons are capable of firing in singleshot or semiautomatic forms only. The autofire module mod allows these weapons to be fired on autofire.

**Restrictions:** Ranged weapon without autofire only.

**Cost Modifier:** +10%.

## Collapsible

In situations that call for stealth and deception, it is of great value to be able to separate an item into its parts and transport them in their broken down state. A weapon that makes use of the collapsible mod is easily disassembled and reassembled at a moment's notice. Breaking down a weapon into its individual parts requires an Action, while reassembling them in the correct order requires another Action. Obviously, the weapons must be fully assembled to be used. In its disassembled state, a weapon is not easily identified; a Technical Sciences Test at TN -4 is required to identify a collapsed weapon for what it really is.

**Restrictions:** None.

**Cost Modifier:** +10%.

## Genetic Tags

Some law enforcement agencies and military units go out of their way to track the exact actions of their members by placing an identifying marker on any ammunition expended. This marker may come in the form of a serial number stamped on a weapon's casing, or may be as subtle as a chemical compound sprayed on the outside of the ammunition it leaves the weapon's chamber. Regardless of form, each round of ammunition that is fired from the weapon bears a unique tag that corresponds to the genetic code of the person to whom the weapon is assigned, immediately identifying the attacker to any forensic analysis.

**Restrictions:** Ranged ballistic weapons only.

**Cost Modifier:** +10%.

## Integrated Equipment

A particular piece of non-weapon equipment has been integrated into the weapon and can be used by the weapon's bearer at any time. This mod is often used to give ranged weapons features like glow-lamps or flares, though it is not limited to those applications. Some weapons may use the integrated equipment mod to incorporate a small computer or sensor module, reducing the amount of equipment the character has to carry.

When selecting the integrated equipment mod, choose a piece of equipment. That equipment is integrated into the base weapon and can be used at any time. Additionally, you must choose whether or not the equipment may be physically separated from the base weapon or not at the time of purchase. This mod may be selected multiple times, each time adding a single additional piece of equipment to the base model.

**Restrictions:** The character must also purchase the piece of equipment to be integrated separately from the weapon, before the mod modification is made.

**Cost Modifier:** +5%.

## Scope, Range-finding Laser

One of the most valuable additions to any weapon is a scope, allowing the bearer to target opponents farther away than normal. What makes the range-finding laser scope mod so valuable is that it serves two purposes. First, a weapon with this mod increases its range increment by one-half (multiply by 1.5). Additionally, the scope also sends out an invisible laser that can determine the exact range to a target, and then relay that information via a computer link. If that information is relayed to another weapon with the range-finding laser scope mod targeting the same character or object, the second attacker gains a +1 bonus on his first attack against the target. This allows multiple characters with range-finding laser scope mods to triangulate the exact position of a target and ensures greater accuracy.

**Restrictions:** Ranged weapons only.

**Cost Modifier:** +5%.

### **Sensor Baffling**

From simple metal detectors to advanced x-ray scanners, there's a way to detect every weapon. As the technology level increases, so does the accuracy of weapons sensing devices. The ability to confuse these sensors can be invaluable, especially when smuggling weapons past security. Any weapon with the sensor baffling mod grants a +4 bonus on any checks made to conceal the weapon from sensors or other detection devices.

**Restrictions:** None.

**Cost Modifier:** +10%.

### **Variable Charge**

A variable charge mod takes advantage of an energy weapon's ability to modify the damage caused by its own shots. This mod gives the user the ability to "power up" his or her shots by focusing more energy into a single blast. A weapon with the variable charge mod may be primed as an Action, increasing the damage of its next shot by 1 degree of success on a successful attack. A weapon may be primed for up to three Rounds. If primed for more than three Rounds, it becomes unstable; on the fourth Round the weapon must be fired or else it explodes and deals the fully charged damage (normal weapon damage, +4 degrees) to the user. When this occurs, the weapon is completely destroyed.

**Restrictions:** Ranged energy weapons only.

**Cost Modifier:** +30%.

### **Voice Recognition System**

A countermeasure commonly built into weapons is the voice recognition system mod. It requires any user to speak a command word to unlock the weapon before it can be used. Some weapons couple the voice recognition system with the booby trap mod to require a voice command to reset the weapon to its previous state. Any weapon with the voice recognition system mod will not fire or activate unless the owner (or designated group) gives the command word to the weapon.

**Restrictions:** None.

**Cost Modifier:** +5%.

## Armor Mods

The following mods can apply to armors, provided all mod-specific restrictions are observed.

### Environment Seal

Since many armors are designed with a particular environment in mind, this mod provides the wearer protection from harsh conditions. The environment seal mod transforms any armor into a stable and insulated artificial environment. This provides the wearer with the right amount of breathable air and external pressure to assure comfort and survival for up to eight hours, ensuring that the armor can function in the extremes of the deep sea or deep space, along with any environment in between. Only certain types of armor can handle this modification and those that do usually integrate a sealed helmet, body glove, and emergency air tanks to generate internal atmosphere.

**Restrictions:** None.

**Cost Modifier:** +20%.

### Integrated Equipment

A particular piece of non-weapon equipment has been integrated into the armor and can be used by the armor's wearer at any time. This mod is often used to add features such as glow-lamps or duracable to armor, though it is not limited to those applications. Indeed, some armors are intended to make their wearers into independent one-person armies, and sport a dozen or more such equipment integrations.

When selecting the integrated equipment mod, choose a piece of equipment. That equipment is integrated into the base armor and can be used at any time. Additionally, you must choose whether or not the equipment may be physically separated from the base armor or not at the time of purchase. This mod may be selected multiple times, each time adding a single additional piece of equipment to the base model.

**Restrictions:** The character must also purchase the piece of equipment to be integrated separately from the armor, before the mod modification is made.

**Cost Modifier:** +10%.

### Integrated Weapon

Some armors are designed with specific combat purposes in mind and build in certain weapons as standard equipment. Examples run from a pair of pop-out wrist blades to

shoulder-mounted plasma cannons. Additionally, many armors link their weapons to integrated heads-up displays, turning the user into a walking combat machine.

When selecting the integrated weapon mod, choose a single weapon. That weapon is integrated into the base armor and can be used at any time. Additionally, you must choose whether or not the weapon may be physically separated from the base armor or not at the time of purchase. This mod may be selected multiple times, each time adding a single additional weapon to the base armor.

**Restrictions:** The character must also purchase the weapon to be integrated separately from the base armor, before the mod modification is made.

**Cost Modifier:** See text.

### Storage Compartment

A simple but often overlooked modification that can be of great benefit in almost any situation is the ability to store and carry small items in a safe place. The storage compartment mod accomplishes just that, incorporating an empty space where other objects can be carried by the wearer with relative ease. Each storage compartment mod allows the wearer to carry two items of small size in a container built into the armor. This mod may be taken multiple times, each time providing another compartment where small items may be carried.

**Restrictions:** None.

**Cost Modifier:** +5%.

### Universal Equipment Mods

The following mods can apply to equipment, provided all mod-specific restrictions are observed.

#### Multiple Use Item

Similar in function to the alternate weapon mod, the multiple use item mod allows the character to integrate the function of two separate items into a single device.

When selecting the multiple use item mod, choose a second object. That object is integrated into the base object and can be used at any time. Additionally, you must choose whether or not the alternate object may be physically separated from the base weapon or not at the time of purchase. This mod may be selected multiple times, each time adding a single additional piece of equipment to the base object.

**Restrictions:** The character must also purchase the piece of equipment to be integrated separately from the armor, before the mod modification is made.

**Cost Modifier:** +5%.



## Paint-On LCD

One of the most revolutionary advances in computer technology is the paint-on LCD mod. This allows almost any surface to be used as a computer display, as it grafts the color-changing pixels common to all display devices onto another surface.

Any piece of equipment with the paint-on LCD mod can be used as a display for any piece of computer or communications equipment. Additionally, weapons and armor may make use of the paint-on LCD mod at the normal cost, but gain no special benefit from the modification other than being able to display data.

**Restrictions:** None.

**Cost Modifier:** +10%.

## Satellite Datalink

The ability to connect to a global communications network is critical to the success of any army, as intelligence traveled at the speed of light across the globe to command centers safe behind defended battle lines. The satellite datalink mod enables any piece of equipment, from computer to communication device to heads-up display, to connect to a global (or, if in place, galactic) satellite network and communicate with computer systems in far remote areas.

**Restrictions:** This mod may only be used with gear containing computerized communications equipment.

**Cost Modifier:** +5%.

## Storage Compartment

Like the mod used for armor, the ability to store and carry small items in a safe place can sometimes be of critical importance. The storage compartment mod accomplishes just that, incorporating an empty space where other objects can be carried with relative ease. Each storage compartment mod allows the wearer to carry two small items in a container built into the piece of equipment. This mod may be taken multiple times, each time providing another compartment where small items may be carried.

**Restrictions:** None.

**Cost Modifier:** +5%.

## Cybernetics

Two kinds of cybernetics exist in the Thousand Suns: replacements and enhancements. Neither is particularly common, since cloned body parts and other biological options are

available and are generally viewed more favorably by Terran culture (see below). GMs are advised to take care when allowing characters to obtain cybernetic enhancements, as some of them may increase their effectiveness beyond what the GM desires for his campaign.

*Replacements:* Replacements are prosthetic or artificial units intended to replace lost limbs and damaged organs. Common replacements provide no benefits other than duplicating the essential functions of their biological counterparts, and they present little strain on the beneficiary's overall well-being. In appearance, a cybernetic replacement can be recognizably artificial or virtually indistinguishable from the real thing.

*Enhancements:* Enhancements bestow new abilities or improve the recipient in some fashion. Enhancements include skeletal reinforcement, subcutaneous communications hardware, and weapon mounts. Some enhancements have visible external components, while others are hidden beneath the skin. Enhancements put more of a drain on the body's resources, and recipients frequently suffer debilitating physical or mental side effects.

### **Construction and Repair**

Cybernetic attachments are complex instruments with both electrical and mechanical components. Repairing a damaged or nonfunctional cybernetic attachment requires 10 hours of work and a successful Technical Sciences Test. A character needs both an electrical tool kit and a mechanical tool kit to facilitate repairs. Without one or the other, a character takes a -2 penalty on the Test; without both kits, the penalty increases to -4.

### **Installation and Removal**

Installing or removing a cybernetic attachment, regardless of whether it's a replacement or enhancement, requires a successful Medical Sciences Test. Removing a cybernetic attachment without proper surgery causes lasting physical trauma to the patient's body, permanently lowering his Body score by 1 per attachment removed.

### **Number of Attachments**

Only living creatures can have cybernetic attachments. In addition, a living creature can have a maximum number of cybernetic attachments equal to the creature's (Body + Will/2).

A creature may have more cybernetic attachments installed on its body than it can bear. However, the creature suffers for each cybernetic attachment that exceeds its maximum allowed. For each one beyond its limit, the creature takes a -1 penalty on all skill and

ability Tests and a number of Vitality points equal to his (Body + Will/2). Further, a character with psionic powers loses the ability to use one psionic skill of the highest level he possesses (player's choice). This loss persists until additional attachments beyond the limit are removed.

### **Electrical Vulnerability**

A creature with one or more cybernetic attachments takes 50% more damage from any attack that deals electricity damage. This vulnerability to electricity can be offset by an anti-shock implant (see Cybernetic Enhancements, below).

### **Replacements**

The most basic replacement limbs and organs don't bestow any special benefits, but they suffer the usual drawback described above. Some replacements are built to counter certain drawbacks, as noted.

Each replacement description includes the following information:

**Benefit:** What the cybernetic replacement allows its recipient to do.

**Type:** Replacements can be external or internal. External replacements are subject to sunder attacks; internal replacements are not.

**Base Cost:** The cost of the replacement (or the components to build it).

**Restriction:** The availability of the enhancement in the Thousand Suns.

### **Artificial Organ**

An artificial organ fully replaces a defective or destroyed biological organ, such as a heart, lung, eye, or ear.

**Benefit:** The artificial organ duplicates the function of its biological counterpart. It provides no special game benefits.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 1500\$.

**Restriction:** None.

### **Advanced Artificial Organ**

This advanced version of the artificial organ not only replaces a defective or destroyed biological organ but is also more resilient and less impairing than its technological predecessors.

**Benefit:** The advanced artificial organ does not count toward the total number of cybernetic

attachments the recipient can have before suffering ill effects

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 5000\$.

**Restriction:** None.

### **Prosthetic Arm**

A prosthetic arm fully replaces a lost or destroyed biological arm. The prosthetic arm may begin at the shoulder, elbow, or wrist.

**Benefit:** The prosthetic arm duplicates the function of its biological counterpart. It provides no special game benefits.

**Type:** External.

**Base Cost:** 900\$.

**Restriction:** None.

### **Advanced Prosthetic Arm**

This upgraded version of the prosthetic arm and not only replaces a lost or destroyed arm but is also more resilient and less impairing than its technological predecessors.

**Benefit:** The advanced prosthesis duplicates the function of its biological counterpart. In addition, this advanced prosthesis does not count toward the total number of cybernetic attachments the recipient can have before suffering ill effects.

**Type:** External.

**Base Cost:** 3500\$.

**Restriction:** None.

### **Prosthetic Leg**

A prosthetic leg fully replaces a lost or destroyed biological leg. The prosthetic leg may begin at the thigh, knee, or ankle.

**Benefit:** The prosthetic leg duplicates the function of its biological counterpart. It provides no special game benefits.

**Type:** External.

**Base Cost:** 900\$.

**Restriction:** None.

### **Advanced Prosthetic Leg**

This upgraded version of the prosthetic leg and not only replaces a lost or destroyed leg but is also more resilient and less impairing than its technological predecessors.

Benefit: The advanced prosthesis duplicates the function of its biological counterpart. In addition, this advanced prosthesis does not count toward the total number of cybernetic attachments the recipient can have before suffering ill effects

**Type:** External.

**Base Cost:** 3500\$.

**Restriction:** None.

## Enhancements

Unlike standard replacements, cybernetic enhancements bestow new abilities upon their recipients. Unless otherwise noted, enhancements don't add measurably to a recipient's weight.

Each enhancement description includes the following information:

Benefit: What the cybernetic enhancement allows its recipient to do.

**Type:** Enhancements can be external or internal. External enhancements are subject to sunder attacks; internal enhancements are not.

**Base Cost:** The cost of the enhancement (or the components to build it).

**Restriction:** The availability of the enhancement in the Thousand Suns.

## Body Repair Weave

A delicate weave of subdermal biowires stimulates and repairs the body's damaged tissue.

Benefit: The recipient heals naturally at twice the normal rate.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 2750\$.

**Restriction:** Licensed.

## Data Archive

A data archive is a microcomputer implanted in the recipient's skull. It contains skill-related information stored on a series of biological data chips, or biochips.

Benefit: The recipient treats all skills as class skills. Furthermore, the recipient gains access to an information database that grants a +2 bonus on all knowledge-based Tests (GM's discretion as to what qualifies as "knowledge-based").

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 6500\$.

**Restriction:** None.



## External Weapon Mount

The recipient's prosthetic arm ends in a weapon instead of a hand.

**Benefit:** The recipient has a melee or ranged weapon attached to a prosthetic arm.

**Type:** External.

**Base Cost:** Melee weapon mount 500\$, ranged weapon mount 900\$ (the base cost does not include the prosthetic arm or weapon).

**Restriction:** Military.

## Identity Chip

Identity chips provide identification without requiring visual recognition— high-tech ID cards that function even when the wearer is unrecognizable.

**Benefit:** An identity chip functions as both legal ID and a credit card. The recipient can access his wealth even when separated from his funds.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 30\$.

**Restriction:** None.

## Initiative Implant

The initiative implant consists of a series of wires threaded around the recipient's spinal cord and attached to the recipient's nervous system. The implant stimulates faster response times.

**Benefit:** The recipient gains a +2 bonus to his Initiative rating.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 2000\$.

**Restriction:** Military.

## Injector Unit

This unit, attached the recipient's forearm or thigh, incorporates three medical hyposyringes. Upon command, the unit can inject any or all of the medicinal substances into the recipient's bloodstream.

**Benefit:** The injector unit has three built-in hypos, and each hypo holds a single dose of one of the following medicinal chemicals: akcel, antitox, neutrad, sporekill, or biocort. As an Action, the recipient can contract his muscles to inject himself with any or all of these hypos, gaining the benefits immediately. A drained hypo can be removed and replaced as an Action.

**Type:** External.

**Base Cost:** 500\$ (medical hypos must be purchased separately).

**Restriction:** Licensed.

### **Internal Weapon Mount**

The recipient has a subcutaneous weapon embedded in her body, usually in a prosthetic forearm or hand. The weapon extends from the prosthesis and is visible when in use.

**Benefit:** The recipient has a melee or ranged weapon hidden under her skin. Spotting a subcutaneous weapon requires a successful opposed Test between the user's Subterfuge and the spotter's Observe.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** Melee weapon mount 900\$, ranged weapon mount 1500\$ (the base cost does not include the prosthesis or weapon).

**Restriction:** Military.

### **Nightvision Optics**

The recipient's eyes are replaced with ocular implants that enable the character to see better in the dark. All of the recipient's eyes must be replaced to gain any benefit.

**Benefit:** The recipient can see clearly in darkness out to a range of 20 meters.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 1500\$.

**Restriction:** None.

### **Skill Implant**

This small brain implant enables its recipient to perform a specific skill more adroitly.

**Benefit:** The recipient gains a +2 bonus on Tests made with one known skill of his choice.

Different skills require different implants, and a skill implant cannot be modified to grant a bonus to another skill.

A recipient may have multiple skill implants, but each is considered a separate cybernetic attachment.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 2000\$.

**Restriction:** None.

### **Skill Plexus**

This unit, implanted in the recipient's brain, allows multiple skill implants to function as a

single cybernetic attachment (see Skill Implant, above).

**Benefit:** The recipient may have up to four skill implants attached to the skill plexus, and together they are treated as a single cybernetic attachment.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 9000\$ (does not include skill implants).

**Restriction:** None.

### **Stabilizer**

A stabilizer releases chemical coagulants into a dying recipient's bloodstream to prevent excess blood loss, effectively stabilizing him. A stabilizer is usually installed near the recipient's heart.

**Benefit:** If reduced to 0 Vitality, the recipient automatically stabilizes.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 3500\$.

**Restriction:** None.

### **Subcutaneous Body Armor**

Subcutaneous body armor consists of small plates of flexible armor implanted under the recipient's skin.

**Benefit:** The character gains a natural armor value. The value depends on the density of the armor: Light 5, Medium 10, Heavy 15. This armor value does not stack with worn armor from any other source.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** Light 500\$, Medium 2000\$, or Heavy 9000\$.

**Restriction:** Military.

### **Subcutaneous Communicator**

The recipient has a small transceiver installed underneath the skin of her throat. The transceiver is connected to a tiny speaker located in the recipient's ear.

**Benefit:** The recipient may carry on conversations using the subcutaneous cell phone without raising her voice above a whisper; Observe checks made to hear the recipient suffer a -4 penalty. The tiny speaker implanted in the recipient's ear enables her to hear the other side of the conversation, but others cannot.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 650\$.

**Restriction:** None.

## Targeting Optics

The recipient's eyes are replaced with ocular implants that use a projected targeting reticle to improve the recipient's aim. All of the recipient's eyes must be replaced to gain any benefit.

Benefit: Targeting optics grant a +1 bonus on all attacks made with ranged weapons.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 900\$

**Restriction:** Military.

## Telescopic Optics

The recipient's eyes are replaced with ocular implants that simulate the effects of binoculars, enabling the recipient to perceive distant objects more easily. All of the recipient's eyes must be replaced to gain any benefit.

Benefit: Telescopic optics reduce range penalties by -1 for every range increment.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 500\$.

**Restriction:** None.

## Voice Stress Analyzer

Sensors attached to the recipient's optic nerves and inner ear analyze minute physical indicators from living beings (including increased pulse galvanic skin response) and enable the recipient to better determine the emotional states of others.

Benefit: The recipient gains a +2 bonus on all Empathy Tests.

**Type:** Internal.

**Base Cost:** 900\$.

**Restriction:** None.

## Replacement Parts

By the time of Thousand Suns, technology has advanced to the point where it has become possible to use cloning technology to grow specific organs without first creating a viable embryo. Scientists are able to stimulate cells in the lab so that they spontaneously develop into a liver, lung, or kidney. This eliminates the need for organ donation and make possible huge advances in the science of organ transplantation. Unlike the 21st century, cloned replacement organs are available in the Thousand Suns whenever they are needed and match the recipient exactly, down to the last chromosome. (This has the added bonus of practically eliminating the chance of the body rejecting the new organ.) Cloning can also

replace much of the need for blood banks, since doctors can clone as much replacement blood as necessary. Some stores of donated blood remains necessary, though, for use in times of emergency.

Cloning a replacement organ can take anywhere from days to hours, depending on the availability of the necessary medical technology. Generally, the Core worlds possess the most advanced hospitals and equipment, while the Marches (let alone Wildspace) are much more likely to have archaic or at least out of date medical systems. Cloning blood can take anywhere from hours to seconds, again depending on the availability of the necessary medical technology, which is often heavily dependent on the location of the world on which the hospital is located.

## Robots

Robots are extremely uncommon among most cultures of the Thousand Suns. This is due, in part, to the effects of Von Neumann's War, which has left Terran society with a lingering distrust of robots in general and artificially intelligent ones in particular. Nevertheless, robots are used in a few areas. What follows are descriptions of a couple of common robot models. Future supplements to Thousand Suns may include lengthier treatments of robots, including rules for robot construction. For now, the Game Master should use the examples given here as models should he feel the need to create new types of robots.

### Security Robot

This robot looks like a Terran-sized, mechanical guard dog with four powerful legs, wicked jaws, and armor covering its body. It growls and barks at intruders with the aid of a vocalizer. The robot functions as a robotic watchdog and can only be mistaken for an actual dog at distances of 30 meters or more.

Body: 7 Dexterity: 12 Perception: 10 Presence: 2 Will: 8

Vitality: 40 Resolve: Not applicable

Skills: Athletics 6, Observe 6, Stealth 5, Unarmed Combat 2

Armor: 30 AV

Weapons: Bite (DV 1)

### Robots as Characters

For a variety of reasons, Thousand Suns includes no rules for creating player character robots. Artificially intelligent robots of the sort who would make enjoyable characters are rare to non-existent in the setting, although not without precedent. If a player wishes to play such a robot, he will face extraordinary prejudice and even persecution unless he hides his true nature behind a humanoid form. In such a case, the character can be created according to the rules presented in Chapter 2, with the understanding that he is a robot rather than an organic lifeform.



## War Drone

The Hen Jaa war drone is a cheap, low tech robot constructed by the Hen Jaa and sold to clients in Wildspace, as well as to terrorists and insurgents elsewhere in the Thousand Suns. This robot resembles a mechanical Hen Jaa, clad head-to-toe in interlocking duralloy plates. The robot's tentacles can be used for grappling or carrying items. It usually carries an assault rifle. In addition, it has a personal grenade launcher (with a compartment for sonic grenades) mounted in one of its tentacles and a laser pistol mounted in another.

Body: 14 Dexterity: 8 Perception: 10 Presence: 5 Will: 12

Vitality: 65 Resolve: Not applicable

Skills: Athletics 8, Investigate 4, Observe 8, Shoot 5

Armor: 40 AV

Weapons: Assault Rifle (3 DV), Laser Pistol (3 DV), Personal Grenade Launcher (3 DV)

## Vehicles

While starships are the means by which adventurers journey from world to world, on a world itself other means of transportation are necessary. This section briefly describes a few of the most common types of vehicles used throughout the Thousand Suns. As always, the descriptions here are by no means exhaustive.

Vehicles possess the following statistics:

**Crew:** Number of persons needed to pilot the vehicle.

**Passengers:** Number of additional persons able to fit safely within the vehicle.

**Initiative:** The bonus or penalty to the pilot's Initiative Rating while piloting the vehicle.

**Handling:** The bonus or penalty to the pilot's Piloting skill while piloting the vehicle.

**Speed:** The vehicle's top speed.

**Armor Value:** The vehicle's AV.

**Durability:** The vehicular equivalent of Vitality.

**Cost:** The cost of the vehicle in sols.

**Restriction:** The availability of the vehicle in the Thousand Suns.

## Hovervehicles

Hovervehicles are extremely popular throughout the Thousand Suns. Air traffic control on most worlds restricts hover traffic to 1500 meters or less. Police and well-marked hoverlanes keep traffic in line. Unless otherwise noted, civilian hovervehicles provide partial cover for their occupants. The operative skill for hovervehicles is Piloting.

## Cirkuo

Unlike other hovervehicles, the cirkuo is only capable of landing on water or on specially constructed brackets. When piloted on the water, the cirkuo's top speed is 225 kilometers per hour. It has a 1500-meter legal ceiling on most civilized worlds, but it doesn't trouble with traffic lanes when used over open water.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 3 **Initiative:** -2 **Handling:** +0 **Speed:** 250 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 30

**Cost:** 350,000\$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

## Hoverbike

The hoverbike can travel as high as 4500 meters, and that limit is set due to the rider's inability to breathe at higher altitudes without an oxygen mask. When driven on the ground, the hoverbike's top speed is 600 kilometers per hour. The hoverbike provides its rider with no cover.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 1 **Initiative:** +1 **Handling:** +2 **Speed:** 650 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 15

**Cost:** 275,000\$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

## Hoverbus

The hoverbus provides the flying version of mass transit. The hoverbus's top speed is 200 kilometers per hour.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 38 **Initiative:** -4 **Handling:** -4 **Speed:** 400 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 45

**Cost:** 1.5 million \$

**Restriction:** Licensed

## Hovercar

The hovercar is capable of flying up to 9000 meters when the cabin is sealed. When driven on the ground, the hovercar's top speed is 350 kilometers per hour.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 4 **Initiative:** -1 **Handling:** +0 **Speed:** 400 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 30

**Cost:** 200,000\$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

## Hovertruck

The hovertruck is frequently used by emergency services personnel (with modifications) for rescuing stranded hoverists or reaching hikers and mountain climbers lost at high altitudes. When driven on the ground, the hovertruck's top speed is 230 kilometers per hour.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 1 **Initiative:** -3 **Handling:** -4 **Speed:** 300 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 35

**Cost:** 1 million \$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

## Civilian Cars

Civilian automobiles, on worlds where they are still used, are required by law to carry remote shutdown systems in the event the vehicle is involved in a high-speed chase. Cars can be equipped with options like heated side mirrors, power seats, and sunroofs for additional cost. Unless otherwise noted, civilian cars provide partial cover for their occupants. The operative skill for cars is Piloting.

Aero

The Aero four-door economy sedan offers comfort and performance for a reasonable price. Slower than most civilian automobiles, the Aero offers all the usual luxuries included in the base price—keeping the cost down by selling budget components, rather than the high-end electronics usually installed.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 4 **Initiative:** -1 **Handling:** -1 **Speed:** 330 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 32

**Cost:** 28,000\$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

## Lukso

The Lukso is widely recognized as the finest four-door luxury sedan in production.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 4 **Initiative:** -1 **Handling:** +1 **Speed:** 410 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 35

**Cost:** 200,000\$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

## Metropola

The Metropola is the ultimate in chauffeured luxury. Powered by a particle reactor, it is loaded with every available luxury feature. A partition divides the driver's seat from the rest of the vehicle. The solid construction lends the Metropola a slightly higher Durability

than other civilian vehicles, and armored versions with even higher Durability are available at higher prices.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 7 **Initiative:** -2 **Handling:** -2 **Speed:** 350 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 40

**Cost:** 1 million \$

**Restriction:** Licensed

### Saliko

This mid-size, two-door sedan is a common car model. It has improved air filters to keep out the kind of dust found in the environments of other planets. They are less popular on the Core worlds, except when they are adapted to desert driving.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 4 **Initiative:** -2 **Handling:** -2 **Speed:** 330 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 35

**Cost:** 20,000\$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

### Spirito

The Spirito is a comfortable, four-door, midsize sedan with a powerful minireactor engine.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 4 **Initiative:** -2 **Handling:** +0 **Speed:** 450 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 35

**Cost:** 27,500\$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

### Taksio

The Taksio is a computer-driven taxi equipped with a driver autocomp. It features two facing bench seats with room for six passengers, and a small view screen and speaker that hang down from the ceiling. The friendly voice of its automated driver requests destination information as well as displaying the question on the view screen. The computer calculates the fare and pre-charges the passenger. In case of emergency, a manual stop button mounted in the middle of the speaker allows passengers to safely halt the vehicle. Although there are no manual controls, the computer is equipped with an access jack behind the front seat. A computer with the appropriate interface program can be plugged into this jack to override the computer and allow an occupant to manually control the vehicle with a successful Computers Test.

**Crew:** 0 **Passengers:** 6 **Initiative:** -3 **Handling:** -2 **Speed:** 275 kph

**Armor Value:** 25 **Durability:** 35

**Cost:** 50,000\$

**Restriction:** Licensed.

## Military Vehicles

Despite being grouped together under the military vehicle heading, some of these vehicles are used by law-enforcement and emergency services. The operative skill for these vehicles is Piloting.

### APC

The standard APC is fusion-powered and fully enclosed. The crew consists of a driver and two gunners. The vehicle has three topside hatches, located directly above each crew position, with a large door/ramp in the back for infantry troops to board or disembark. Entering or disembarking through a top hatch requires an Action. The APC provides full cover to all its occupants.

The vehicle has a pair of mounted twin .50 caliber machine guns mounted near two of the three topside hatches.

**Crew:** 3 **Passengers:** 8 **Initiative:** -1 **Handling:** -1 **Speed:** 575 kph

**Armor Value:** 60 **Durability:** 55

**Cost:** 1.5 million \$

**Restriction:** Military.

### Gyrocopter

This one-seat helicopter is used primarily by the military, but many exist in the law enforcement roles and in the corporate sector. The mostly enclosed cockpit gives its pilot partial cover.

**Crew:** 1 **Passengers:** 0 **Initiative:** -3 **Handling:** -2 **Speed:** 575 kph

**Armor Value:** 20 **Durability:** 25

**Cost:** 350,000\$

**Restriction:** Military.

### Hovertank

The Hovertank is powered by a particle reactor and crewed by a pilot, gunner, gun loader, and commander. It comes equipped with a fully turreted mass cannon as its main gun and a chaingun in a separate turret located above the commander's hatch. Each crew position has a topside hatch located directly above it. Entering or disembarking through a top hatch



requires an Action, and starting the Hovertank requires another Action. The Hovertank provides full cover to all its occupants.

Statistics for the Hovertank's mass cannon and chaingun are presented here:

Type	Damage	Value	Range	ROF	Cost
Chaingun	7	(90)	20 m	S, A	3000\$
Mass Cannon	9	(120)	30 m	S	20,000\$

**Crew:** 4 **Passengers:** 0 **Initiative:** -3 **Handling:** -2 **Speed:** 200 kph

**Armor Value:** 100 **Durability:** 65

**Cost:** 12 million \$

**Restriction:** Military.

## Turto

One of the last military helicopters in use before they were replaced with hovervehicles, the Turto remains a familiar sight over the battlefields of lower-tech worlds.

**Crew:** 3 **Passengers:** 12 **Initiative:** -3 **Handling:** -2 **Speed:** 575 kph

**Armor Value:** 45 **Durability:** 45

**Cost:** 6.5 million \$

**Restriction:** Military.

## Starships

Starships are what make the interstellar civilization of the Thousand Suns possible. Thanks to the creation of the Dillingham Drive, often called simply the D-Drive, ships can travel from world to world despite the vast distances between stars. Although the principles behind the D-Drive are not widely understood, even by many who regularly jump from system to system, this technology has proven safe and reliable over the centuries since Terrans first left their homeworld.

D-Drive travel is slow, though far faster than many believed possible in earlier eras before the breakthroughs in physics that made faster-than-light travel a reality. Jumps are thus measured in weeks rather than days or hours, with the longest jumps taking as long as three standard months. Consequently, many interstellar travelers resort to the use of drugs such as rapide or mortinta to overcome the length of such journeys.

The length of an interstellar jump seems to bear no relationship to the distance between the two stars in real space. The underlying logic – if any – between actual interstellar distances and length of travel through D-space (the alternate reality into which D-Drive capable ships jump to reach their real space destinations) remains unknown. What has been determined

is that the length of travel remains constant and that jumps are only possible from certain “jump points” within a given system, which in turn lead to another star system, creating a “web” of jump lines throughout the Thousand Suns.

D-Drive vessels remain the fastest means of sending information from world to world, meaning that most planets must wait weeks before receiving news from adjacent systems, let alone from ones farther away. Interstellar governments rule lightly by necessity, al-

lowing significant local autonomy unless circumstances require otherwise. The same holds true for military organizations, whose ships are often weeks away from headquarters, meaning that individual initiative is demanded while on patrol far from home.

### How does the D-Drive Work?

Beats me.

Less flippantly, this game provides no answer to the question, because there is no answer that could either stand up to serious scientific scrutiny or would satisfy every player. FTL drives are one of those things that divide science fiction fans, most of whom have their own ideas and theories about how they might work. On principle, Thousand Suns offers no definitive explanation of the “physics” behind the Dillingham Drive. Beyond the fact that D-Drive vessels can only travel along pre-determined jump lines and, while traveling, they are outside real space and located in some other dimension known as D-space, this game is agnostic. Game Masters are encouraged to come up with their own explanations and interpretations to make Thousand Suns their own game, right down to how this or any other technology works.

### Starship Combat

It is in the space surrounding star systems where starship combat takes place; such combat is impossible in D-Space. The rules governing such combat presented here are straightforward and allow you to quickly run space battles on the tabletop. They cover battles involving comparatively small numbers of vessels of the sort player characters are likely to own, pilot, or face off against. A future supplement, *Fighting Ships of the Thousand Suns*, will describe a more detailed system for starship combat and construction, as well as large battles between entire fleets. For now, the simple rules presented here should suffice for most campaigns.

### Basics

Ship combat in Thousand Suns does not require any miniatures or terrain. Everything is card-based. Ship cards (included at the back of this book) act as not only the physical counter for the ship, but also as a tool to track the status of your ship. With these cards and some empty table space, you have all you need to run fun and exciting battles in space. These rules provide three-dimensional miniature gaming pushed into a two-dimensional game. Everything you need is on the ship card, and you move your ship card across the

table to represent its position in combat.

## **Ship Stats**

All ships, regardless of type, have the same stats. No matter how big, or small they are, they have a few things in common.

### **Offense Modifier**

Offense modifier (OM) is a general indication of a ship's combat effectiveness. OM is an abstraction, representing a variety of factors, from the ease with which it can be piloted in combat to the power and precision of its targeting computers. All ships have a base OM that is used for the attack rolls of all its weapons and which modified by the skill of the gunner.

### **Defense Modifier**

Defense Modifier (DM) is used to determine how difficult others find it to hit your ship. A ship's DM modifies an opponent's OM. Like OM, DM is an abstraction. It is the sum of many parts and takes into account a ship's defensive maneuverability as well as its general size. All ships have a base DM that is modified by the pilot's skill in combat.

### **Hull**

All ships have a hull rating, which represents both its material superstructure but also the ability of its crew and automated systems to maintain the integrity of the ship under stress.

### **Move**

All ships have Move, which represents how many Spans the ship can move each Round. A Span is the length of the ship card. You move the card forward by the length of the card. Thus if your ship has a Move 6, your ship can move forward six card lengths. For more on movement, see below.

### **Turn**

Turn indicates how many degrees a ship can move in a Round. For more on turning, see

below.

### **Crew**

The Crew represents how many people it takes to pilot the ship.

### **Cost**

The represents the cost of the ship in sols.

### **Weapons**

The number and types of weapons a ship possesses. Weapons listed as “linked” are fired in groups of 2. They require only a single attack roll. If successful, the damage is multiplied by 2. If unsuccessful, both linked weapons miss. Both linked weapons may only be fired at a single target.

### **Damage Control**

Damage control represents the ability to repair the ship during combat. The number listed is the multiplier used for the degrees of success obtained from a repair Test. See below for more information on repairs.

### **Characters and Ships**

Your character’s Abilities and skills have a direct effect on a ship they pilot, or help pilot. All ships, regardless of size, have a base OM and DM, as well as an adjusted OM and DM. When your character is piloting a ship, their Rank in Piloting or Gunner raises both the OM and the DM by a number equal to their Rank.

### **Fighting Range**

Before we begin, the most important concept to keep in mind is Fighting Range. For the purposes of starship combat, all ships must be within 12 Spans of one another, if a ship is more than this distance, they are not considered to be in Fighting Range, even by missiles. In order to engage in combat you must move within 12 Spans. Any ship that moves 12 or more Spans away from its opponents is considered to have fled the combat and may safely escape should its pilot wish to do so.

For the purposes of these rules, this is true for the following ship classes: Ultralight, Light,

and Medium. For more advanced rules, as well as rules covering larger class of ships, the upcoming *Fighting Ships of the Thousand Suns* addresses combat between larger ships. Since most adventures typically center on small group of characters, Ultralight, Light, and Medium are the ship classes they commonly come in contact with.

### **Forward Movement**

Moving forward is moving in a straight line. Your movement is equal to the Span of one card. If your ship has Move 4, you can move forward up to 4 Spans. Keep in mind, you cannot move backward, since an object in motion stays in motion, meaning that you cannot move fewer Spans on your next move than you did the previous move. A ship cannot easily slow its movement forward. To do this, the ship must initiate a breaking maneuver that slows its current forward movement down by one-half of its current move. Thus, a ship with a current move of 4 Spans can slow its movement to 2 and come to a full stop the next Round.

### **Up and Down**

Space is vast.

This vastness allows you to move not only forward, but up and down as well. To represent this vertical movement, two 12-sided dice of different colors are used. One die represents “Up,” and the other represents “Down.”

Why 12-sided dice? Firstly, they are the dice you need to play *Thousand Suns*. Still, more importantly, 12 Spans or less is considered Fighting Range. Once your ship passes beyond 12 Spans, combat is effectively over.

If your ship is up 4 Spans, place the “Up” 12-sided die next to the ship card with the 4 showing. If your ship is down 10 Spans place the “Down” 12-sided die next to the ship card with the 10 showing. For the purposes of determining distance, a Span up or down is no different than any other Span; you simply add it to the “horizontal” distance between your ship and your opponent to determine the final distance.

Going up and down, counts as movement in the similar way as moving forward. You can move up and down as many Spans as you want as long as your Movement allows it. In addition, you can do a combination of movements, such as moving forward and going up or down as well.

For example, your ship has Move 5. You can elect to move forward 5 Spans. You could also



move up and move forward, or move down and move forward. You could move Forward 1 span, and move up 4 Spans. You could move down 4 Spans, and forward 1 Span.

### **Turning**

Ships can turn. Some can turn better than others. Some ships are so large that they have great difficulty making all but the most simple of turns.

Ships engaged in starship combat are able to make turns of varying degrees depending on their class. Turning counts as 1 Span per 45°. If you think of each card as sitting in an imaginary circle with the four cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west), a 45° turn equates to the ordinal directions (northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest). Thus if your ship has a Move 3, on your turn you could make up to a 135° turn. Remember in space an object is in constant motion. Your ship is always moving forward even when turning. And yes, you can turn as well as move up and down as well. For example, you are in a ship with a Move 6. On your turn you could turn 180°, and move down 2 Spans.

Note that not all ships can turn as easily as others. The description of each starship notes how many degrees it can turn in a single turn.

### **Handling Combat**

A ship's OM (Offense Modifier) and DM (Defense Modifier) represent a ship's weapons systems and defensive systems. Where the OM is used to modify the Target to hit an enemy, the DM is used to modifier an enemy's Target in hitting your ship.

### **Hitting a Target**

OM modifies the Target, and the higher a ship's OM is, the easier time you will have in hitting enemy ships. To determine your ship's Target for an attack, the gunner must make a Gunnery Test. He adds his Rank in Gunnery to the ship's OM. This number is the number he must then roll under on 2D12 to score a hit. Typically, there is only one gunner per weapon system; linked weapons count as a single weapon for these purposes.

### **Firing Arcs**

Because of the abstract nature of starship combat in *Thousand Suns*, the concept of firing arcs does not exist. The rules here assume that, during its turn, any starship can maneuver sufficiently to be able to bring any of its weapons to bear on any target within their range, whether they are located in front, behind, above, or below the starship.

## Defending

A ship's DM modifies the Target and makes it harder for an enemy to hit your Ship. To determine your ship's Target number, the pilot must make a Piloting Test. He adds his Rank in Piloting to the ship's DM. This number is then subtracted from his opponent's attack rolls. For example, you are piloting a ship with DM 4. Your Piloting Rank is 6. This means that your opponent must subtract 10 from the TN of his attack roll.

## Damage

All ships have weapons, and a successful hit causes damage to a starship's hull. To determine the damage a weapon does, consult the weapon table to find its Damage Value (see Starship Weapons, below). The amount of damage a weapon is determined exactly like personal weapons: the degrees of success the gunner obtains on his attack roll is multiplied by the DV to determine the amount of damage inflicted on the enemy ship.

When a ship's hull rating is reduced to 0, the ship is considered disabled and its superstructure will begin to lose integrity with sufficient additional damage. Most ships possess escape pods and other evacuation devices to safeguard the surviving crew in this event. Unless there are reasons to assume otherwise, the GM should allow characters to escape a disabled and about to be destroyed ship without much concern. After all, being cast adrift in space and possibly marooned on a nearby inhospitable planet is vastly more interesting than being reduced to space dust.

When an attack roll scores a critical hit, instead of simple doing maximum damage, the GM may choose to use the following optional table:

### Optional Critical Hit Results

**Table:** Optional Critical Hit Results

<b>2D12</b>	<b>Effect(s)</b>
2-7	Normal critical hit
8-9	Normal critical hit, crew casualties
10	Severe critical hit, artificial gravity disabled
11	Severe critical hit, crew casualties
12-13	Damaged system: comm system
14-15	Damaged system: defense system
16-17	Damaged system: engines
18-19	Damaged system: sensors

20-21	Damaged system: targeting system
22-23	Damaged system: weapon
24	Destroyed weapon

*Normal Critical Hit:* The weapon does maximum damage

*Crew Casualties:* A number of crewmembers and passengers are killed (this effect applies only if the ship isn't destroyed). Roll 1d10 to determine the number of crew fatalities and, if the ship carries passengers, 1d10 to determine the number of passenger casualties. This affects only NPCs, although the GM may rule that a character is harmed by this result. A starship with less than one-half of its normal crew complement takes a -2 penalty to the TN of all attacks.

A starship with less than one-quarter of its normal crew complement takes a -4 penalty the TN of all attacks.

A starship with no crew flies is immobile. If this result is rolled again and the ship has no living crew or passengers, ignore this result and reroll.

*Severe Critical Hit:* The weapon does double maximum damage. In addition, the crew is so shaken by this damage that the entire vessel is unable to act during the next Round.

*Artificial Gravity Disabled:* The starship's artificial gravity is disabled for 1d12 Rounds. During this time, anyone without Ranks in the skill Acrobatics (Zero-G) suffers a -4 penalty on all Tests while coping with the zero-gravity conditions. Those possessing the skill are unaffected. Ignore this result if it comes up again while the artificial gravity system is disabled.

*Damaged System:* A damaged system remains inoperable until it is repaired, which requires 10 hours of work and a successful Technical Sciences Test. A starship's engineer (or engineering team) can perform jury-rig repairs on the system as an Action with a successful Technical Sciences Test at TN -4, but the repairs last only until the end of the battle (or until the system is disabled again). During that Round of jury-rigged repairs, the starship can continue to take other actions.

*Comm System:* One communications system of the attacker's choice is disabled. If this result is rolled again and the ship has no undamaged comm systems, ignore this result and reroll.

*Defense System:* A defensive system is damaged, resulting in a temporary degradation of its DM by -1. This result can be rolled multiple times, each time lowering the DM by -1. It is

possible for the DM to drop below 0 because of this critical hit result.

*Engines:* The starship's Move decreases by 1 until the engines are repaired. If this result is rolled again, the effect is cumulative. If the ship's Move has already been reduced to 0 due to engine damage, ignore this result and reroll.

*Sensors:* The starship is blinded until repaired. The Pilot and Gunners suffer a -4 If this result is rolled again, ignore the result and reroll.

*Targeting System:* The starship's targeting system ceases to function, resulting in a temporary degradation of its OM by -1. This result can be rolled multiple times, each time lowering the OM by -1. It is possible for the OM to drop below 0 because of this critical hit result.

*Weapon:* One of the starship's weapons (attacker's choice) ceases to function. The weapon remains inoperable until it is repaired. If this result is rolled again and the ship has no functional weapons, ignore this result and reroll.

*Destroyed Weapon:* One of the starship's weapons (determined by the attacker) is destroyed. It cannot be repaired and must be replaced. If this result is rolled again and the ship has no weapons, ignore this result and reroll.

If the destroyed weapon was linked, the other weapons to which it was linked continue to function normally.

## Range

All weapons have a range, listed in a number of Spans. Ranges are Short, Medium, and Long. If a target falls outside of a weapons range, that weapon is unable to hit the target. In addition, the further the target, the harder it is to hit. Weapons might have different distances for each range, but the penalties are all the same.

Range	Modifier
Short	+0
Medium	-1
Long	-2

Missiles do not have a range and are exempt from range penalties, because of their internal guidance systems. Missiles that are fired may make their attacks against any other vessel in the combat, regardless of distance.

## **Repairs**

Each starship has a damage control rating. Each Round, the ship's engineer may make a Technical Sciences Test. If successful, he may multiply the degrees of success by the damage control rating to determine how many hull points he may repair that Round.

## **Starship Weapons**

Though not exhaustive, the list below describes the weapons most commonly encountered aboard starships in the Thousand Suns.

### **Fusion Beam**

The fusion beam initiates a fusion reaction and then directs the blast at the target.

### **Gauss Gun**

The gauss gun is an electromagnetic accelerator that fires tiny ball bearings at an extremely high velocity.

### **Laser**

The simplest beam weapon, the laser is used generally for small craft. It consists of a focused beam of white-hot light.

### **Laser, Heavy**

The heavy laser is simply an oversized laser that pours more energy on the target. It's too big to install on light spacecraft, but is common on destroyers and larger warships.

### **Maser Cannon**

Maser cannons channel an enormous amount of power through a linear antenna array, creating a broad-spectrum blast of energy that devastates the target with heat, light, and intense radiation.



## **Mass Cannon**

The mass cannon uses gravitic technology to “charge” a small bit of matter with incredible gravitational energy, then hurls it at the target, where its increased gravitational pull causes it to slam into the target like a wrecking ball.

## **Mass Cannon, Heavy**

The heavy mass cannon is a larger and more powerful version of the mass cannon.

## **Missile, Submunition**

This warhead consists of a bundle of dozens or even hundreds of tungsten steel darts, each mounted on small rocket motors. As the weapon approaches its target, the warhead splits open, unleashing a lethal hail of high-velocity metal arrows. The impact alone can vaporize several square meters of heavy armor.

## **Missile, Nuclear**

This 1-megaton warhead is essentially a fusion bomb rigged to a guided rocket.

## **Missile, Plasma**

The plasma warhead improves on the lower-tech chemical explosive. It creates a burst of white-hot plasma that can blast a small ship out of space with one shot.

## **Needle Driver**

The needle driver is a larger, heavier version of the rail cannon (see below), with an extremely high rate of fire. It fires small metal flechettes at the rate of thousands of rounds per minute.

## **Particle Beam**

The particle beam projects a stream of protons, neutrons, or alpha particles at the target—each particle accelerated to near light-speed.

### **Particle Beam, Heavy**

This weapon is simply a larger version of the particle beam.

### **Plasma Cannon**

Using a powerful electrical charge to convert a mix of chemicals into white-hot plasma, this weapon then accelerates the plasma mass toward the target with a simple rail gun. The result is a bolt of incandescent plasma that can explosively vaporize objects in its path.

### **Plasma Cannon, Heavy**

This weapon is simply a larger version of the plasma cannon.

### **Rail Cannon**

Rail cannons use a series of electromagnets to propel projectiles down a magnetic track. The projectiles are kinetic-energy weapons with no explosive charge, but at close ranges, they can still be quite devastating.

## **Sample Starships**

Presented here are a small number of starships to use either as conveyances in traveling from world to world or as combatants in the starship combat system. More detailed treatments of starships, including rules for their construction, as well as many more types of vessels and components, can be found in the upcoming supplement, *Fighting Ships of the Thousand Suns*.

### **Assault Fighter**

The assault fighter is similar to the fighter described below, but with superior engines, armaments, and defenses at the cost of less cargo capacity.

**Class:** Light

**OM:** 8 **DM:** 9 **Hull:** 20

**Move:** 8 **Turn:** 180° **Crew:** 1

**Base Cost:** 6.5 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked particle beams

**Damage Control:** 2

## Bulk Freighter

Bulk freighters usually carry cargo in bulk containers, and carry out regular runs between densely populated systems.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 2 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 250

**Move:** 5 **Turn:** 45° **Crew:** 8

**Base Cost:** 200 million\$

**Weapons:** 4 linked heavy lasers

**Damage Control:** 4

### Starship Weapons

Type	Damage Value	Range	ROF	Cost
Fusion Gun	4 (60)	3	S	90,000\$
Gauss Gun	3 (50)	4	S	150,000\$
Laser	2 (40)	3	S	20,000\$
Laser, Heavy	4 (40)	4	S	50,000\$
Maser Cannon	5 (75)	6	S	650,000\$
Maser Cannon, Heavy	8 (100)	8	S	2 million\$
Mass Cannon	3 (50)	5	S	275,000\$
Mass Cannon, Heavy	5 (75)	6	S	650,000\$
Missile, Submunition	2 (40)	n/a	S	3500\$ (per 10)
Missile, Nuclear	5 (60)	n/a	S	2.75 million\$ (per 10)
Missile, Plasma	6 (90)	n/a	S	3.5 million\$ (per 10)
Needle Driver	2 (45)	4	A	200,000\$
Particle Beam	4 (60)	4	S	200,000\$
Particle Beam, Heavy	6 (75)	5	S	500,000\$
Plasma Cannon	5 (60)	3	S	200,000\$
Plasma Cannon, Heavy	6 (75)	4	S	250,000\$
Rail Cannon	3 (50)	3	S	35,000\$

Damage Value = The number in parentheses is the weapon's maximum damage.

Range = Each doubling of the stated range defines the range category (short, medium, etc.)

ROF = "S" indicates single shot capability, while "A" represents automatic capability.

## Clipper

This small liner or personnel transport is intended for passenger use, as opposed to heavy cargo. Clippers are frequently fitted with top-of-the-line engines for the best possible speed.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 2 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 300

**Move:** 7 **Turn:** 45° **Crew:** 32

**Base Cost:** 200 million\$

**Weapons:** 5 lasers

**Damage Control:** 3

### Corvette

Essentially a larger version of the escort ship, the corvette serves as both a gunship and fleet escort. Of the military vessels designed to operate independently in wartime, corvettes are the smallest.

**Class:** Light

**OM:** 4 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 80

**Move:** 7 **Turn:** 135° **Crew:** 16

**Base Cost:** 65 million\$

**Weapons:** 4 linked fusion guns

4 linked submunition missiles

**Damage Control:** 3

### Courier

A courier is capable of extended operation away from its base (frequently a larger ship). Many low-end star yachts fall into the courier category.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 2 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 15

**Move:** 6 **Turn:** 180° **Crew:** 4

**Base Cost:** 6.5 million\$

**Weapons:** 1 laser

**Damage Control:** 1

### Cruiser

The cruiser is a warship that serves several roles. It may be part of a task force, escorting capital ships or laying mines. It may operate independently as a scout and raider. Conversely, it may serve in diplomatic and scientific tasks. Light cruisers frequently have outstanding endurance and can operate with little or no resupply for months on end. A cruiser hull could serve equally well as an escort carrier or assault transport.

**Class:** Medium

**OM:** 6 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 400

**Move:** 6 **Turn:** 90° **Crew:** 120

**Base Cost:** 650 million\$

**Weapons:** 7 fusion guns

6 submunition missiles

**Damage Control:** 4

### **Destroyer**

Destroyers take their name from the torpedo-boat destroyers of the late 19th century. They are integral to the defense of a task force, screening it against small craft and attack ships. Destroyers are often armed with one or two bombs or missiles useful against much larger ships. A destroyer is usually about 125 to 200 meters long and masses about 7,000 tons.

**Class:** Light

**OM:** 4 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 150

**Move:** 6 **Turn:** 135° **Crew:** 80

**Base Cost:** 200 million\$

**Weapons:** 6 linked fusion guns

6 nuclear missiles

2 needle drivers

**Damage Control:** 3

### **Escort**

Escorts are a long-range patrol craft employed for various duties, including the protection of merchant ships and remote bases. Gunships or missile boats could qualify as escorts.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 4 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 40

**Move:** 6 **Turn:** 180° **Crew:** 8

**Base Cost:** 20 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked rail guns

1 submunition missile

**Damage Control:** 1

### **Fast Freighter**

Fast freighters are small commercial starships generally employed in frequent runs, such as delivering supplies to small outposts and bases, or occasional runs of valuable cargo, such as technical specifications or luxury goods. They are the starships of choice among independent traders in the Thousand Suns. Fast freighters often carry some minor defensive armament.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 2 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 32



**Move:** 7 **Turn:** 180° **Crew:** 4  
**Base Cost:** 20 million\$  
**Weapons:** 2 linked heavy lasers  
2 linked rail cannons

### **Fighter**

Designed for action against other small craft, fighters lack the punch to be effective against large targets unless they've been modified to carry warheads.

**Class:** Ultralight  
**OM:** 8 **DM:** 9 **Hull:** 16  
**Move:** 7 **Turn:** 180° **Crew:** 1  
**Base Cost:** 6.5 million\$  
**Weapons:** 2 linked fusion guns  
**Damage Control:** 1

### **Frigate**

A military vessel used for scouting and escort duties, the frigate is primarily intended to act as a screen for larger vessels against attacks by small craft.

**Class:** Light  
**OM:** 4 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 120  
**Move:** 6 **Turn:** 135° **Crew:** 60  
**Base Cost:** 200 million\$  
**Weapons:** 4 nuclear missiles  
2 needler drivers  
2 fusion guns  
**Damage Control:** 3

### **Hauler**

The hauler is a space-going tug that drags heavy, non-powered loads and modular cargo containers, though they have precious little cargo space of their own. Haulers are fitted with big power plants and huge engines, at the expense of crew quarters and armaments.

**Class:** Light  
**OM:** 2 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 72  
**Move:** 5 **Turn:** 135° **Crew:** 8  
**Base Cost:** 65 million\$  
**Weapons:** 2 linked heavy lasers  
**Damage Control:** 2

## Launch

A launch is a shuttle designed simply to move small amounts of people from one point to another. Launches are rarely armed or armored. Evacuation pods and lunar landers fit into this category.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 2 **DM:** 3 **Hull:** 8

**Move:** 7 **Turn:** 180° **Crew:** 1

**Base Cost:** 650,000\$

**Weapons:** 1 laser

**Damage Control:** 0

## Scout

Scouts are designed to cross great distances and locate enemies quickly without engaging in serious combat.

**Class:** Ultralight

**OM:** 2 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 30

**Move:** 7 **Turn:** 180° **Crew:** 8

**Base Cost:** 20 million\$

**Weapons:** 2 linked fusion guns

2 submunition missiles

**Damage Control:** 1

## Strike Cruiser

These armored cruisers often serve as the centerpiece of raiding or patrolling task forces, especially if heavier warships are unavailable. Many strike cruisers are configured for task force command functions; the command cruiser is a common variant of this hull type. A strike cruiser hull could easily serve as a light carrier or assault carrier.

**Class:** Medium


**OM:** 8 **DM:** 1 **Hull:** 500

**Move:** 7 **Turn:** 90° **Crew:** 160

**Base Cost:** 2 billion\$

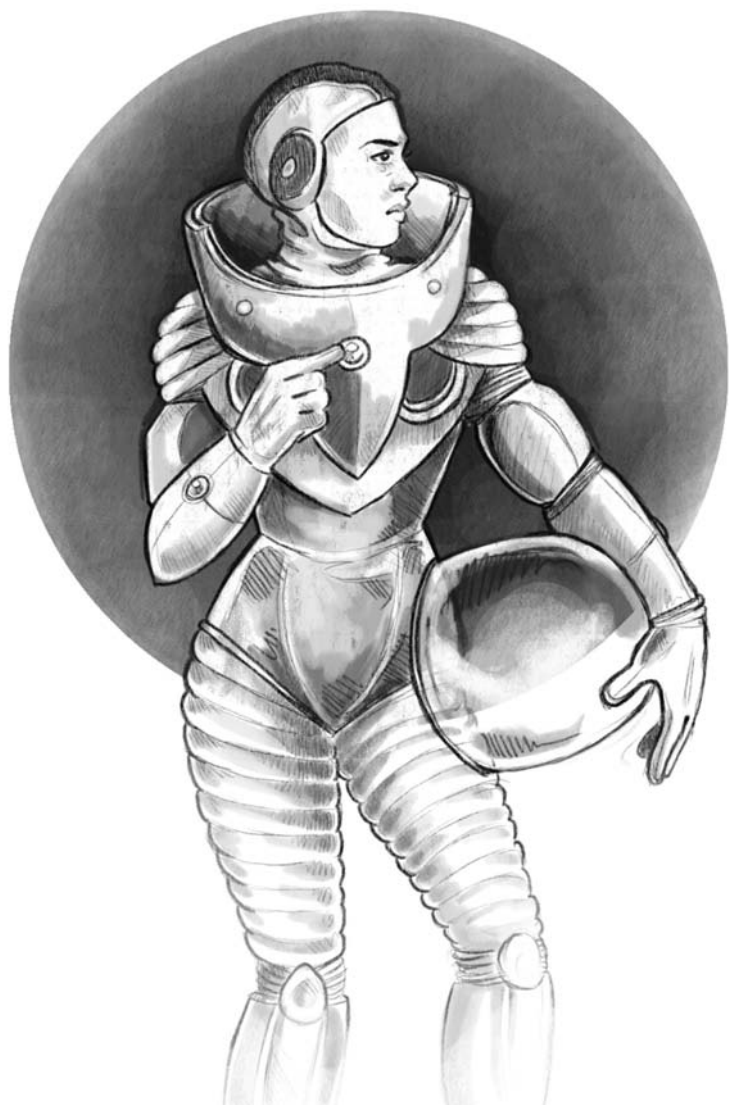
**Weapons:** 6 plasma missiles

8 fusion guns



*Any community's arm of force—military, police, security—needs people in it who can do the necessary evil, and yet not be made evil by it. To do only the necessary, and no more. To constantly question the assumptions, to stop the slide into atrocity.*

*--Lois McMaster Bujold, Barrayer (1991)*









# CHAPTER 6: SETTING DESIGN

*Real unity is impossible—the universe is too large. The common experience of the opening of space ended forever the possibility of one common culture. Which is just as well. It would have been dull.*

*--Alexei Panshin, The Thurb Revolution (1968)*

The action of *Thousand Suns* takes place in the future, after humanity has left its home-world and ventured into the boundless reaches of the galaxy. While some of the galaxy is described in Chapter 7, the vast majority of it is intentionally left without description, to allow Game Masters to fill in the details as they wish. This chapter provides some assistance to the GM (and, by extension, to players as well) in designing the setting in which they place their adventures among the *Thousand Suns*, as well as a brief overview of the Imperial SF genre to make it easier to include its themes in the game.

## World Design

Although *Thousand Suns* is, among other things, a game of interstellar travel and exploration, the reality is that most adventures will take place not aboard a starship or in the cold depths of space but on the surface of one or more planets. This section presents a simple system for generating these planets.

It's worth noting that most star systems generally have one world of significance within them. There may be other inhabited worlds within any given system, but they tend to have smaller populations and limited political clout. The system presented here can easily be used to generate these lesser worlds in a star system, but the GM is advised to use his judgment in accepting the results. Of course, there may be systems with several worlds of importance, such as Sol, where both Luna and Mars boast high populations, and this is a perfectly legitimate option should the GM choose it.

## World Generation

Presented here are several tables to aid the Game Master in generating worlds for use in his *Thousand Suns* campaign. By default, these tables each use either 1D12 or 2D12 to generate the most important characteristics of a planet and its inhabitants. However, the GM is under no obligation to use random rolls in creating worlds for his game. Indeed, a good mix of random rolls and deliberate choice is probably the best mix, since this approach both avoids the most nonsensical results of pure random generation while still introducing elements of the unexpected.

The world generation process consists of the following eleven steps:

1. Primary World Profile
2. Primary World Type

Skip Steps 3-7 if the world does not possess the Terrestrial or Satellite type.

3. Primary Terrain
4. World Climate
5. World Atmosphere
6. World Hydrographics
7. World Gravity
8. Native Sapients
9. World Population
10. World Government
11. Tech Level

It should be noted that *Thousand Suns* uses an almost purely descriptive format for worlds, which is to say that it generally uses terms that give players and GMs alike a sense of what the world is like to visit rather than exhaustive details about its precise atmospheric composition, albedo, or the types of rare minerals to be found beneath its surface. Rarely is such information directly useful in running scenarios and when such details do become important, the GM is free to invent them as he wishes, in accordance with the other details he has already created. Consequently, you will find no formulae or equations herein to calculate surface pressure or planetary mass or anything of the kind. *Thousand Suns* is a game of science fiction adventure, not astrophysics, and the world generation rules presented here reflect that emphasis without apology.

### 1. Primary World Profile (2D12)

- |       |                           |
|-------|---------------------------|
| 1-2   | Administration/Government |
| 3-4   | Academic/Research         |
| 5-6   | Military                  |
| 7     | Entertainment             |
| 8-11  | Commercial                |
| 12-13 | Homeworld                 |
| 14-15 | Colony                    |
| 16-17 | Luxury/Rare Goods         |
| 18-20 | Manufacturing/Processing  |
| 21-22 | Agriculture               |
| 23-26 | Resource Extraction       |

Modifiers: -2 if Core, +2 if Wildspace

*Academic/Research*: The world's primary purpose is one of intellectual or scientific ad-

vancement. This could mean that the planet is home to a prestigious institution of learning or a research station of some type, but it could just as easily mean that it is an archeological or historical site of some interest and it for this that the world is most well known.

*Administration/Government:* The world plays a role in interstellar governance, perhaps being home to an important department, ministry, or other organ of state.

*Agriculture:* The world produces some form of natural comestible not derived from animals. This could be something as simple as grains or vegetables or something as exotic as psychoactive fungi. The foodstuff must be a significant trade item to neighboring worlds, as worlds with this profile are not home to subsistence farmers.

*Colony:* The inhabitants of this world are immigrants, having come here to establish themselves for any number of reasons. Colonies can be self-governing or subservient to some offworld authority, but all are comparatively recent (within a generation or two) additions to the world.

*Commercial:* The world is an important center of trade and commerce. It could be home to one or more corporations or be a meeting place for independent traders. Whatever the case, the primary role of this world is economic.

*Entertainment:* This world exists to provide diversions to those who visit it. Such a world could be a resort planet, a center for the production of holovideo dramas, an amusement park, a nature preserve, or something else, but its main purpose is entertaining those who come to its surface.

*Homeworld:* The planet is the birthplace of one or more sapient species (see Native Sapient, below).

*Luxury/Rare Goods:* The world produces luxury and/or rare goods of interest to neighboring worlds or even the wider interstellar community. These goods can range from exquisite icewine to valuable hardwoods to alien sculptures. The goods can be manufactured or natural, but they always command a premium price offworld.

*Manufacturing/Processing:* The world is home to one or more production facilities that create goods for sale elsewhere. This can be done by hand, automation, robotics, nanotechnology, or other methods. The goods could be as small as personal chronometers or as large as starships.

*Military:* The primary purpose of the world is military in nature. It might be a base or depot or even the site of a military academy.

*Resource Extraction:* The world's primary industry is the extraction or reclamation of valuable natural resources, such as diamonds or uranium or gadolinium.

## 2. Primary World Type (1D12)

1-8	Terrestrial
9-10	Asteroid
11	Satellite
12	Other

*Terrestrial:* A Terrestrial world is one whose environmental conditions are broadly hospitable to human and other life. "Hospitable," of course, has a wide definition and includes worlds whose environments can be overcome or mitigated through technology. Thus, not every Terrestrial planet will resemble Terra and many will actually be quite unpleasant without technological or other assistance.

*Asteroid:* An Asteroid world is a rocky object without an atmosphere. It may be a singular object floating somewhere in the solar system or it may be part of a belt in a stable orbit around a star. In either case, the world is an airless bit of space debris, albeit a large one. Asteroids have no primary terrain, their climate is always freezing, and they possess no atmosphere, water, or gravity.

*Satellite:* Satellite worlds are usually moons of a gas giant or (more rarely) a terrestrial planet. In the former case, the world may be one of the few habitable objects in the entire star system or may exist for some scientific, commercial, or military purpose. In the latter case, the world would indeed be unusual, since most starfaring civilizations prefer to colonize terrestrial worlds rather than satellites if it all possible.

*Other:* Worlds in this category are out of the ordinary, perhaps not even truly "worlds" in the traditional sense. They might be artificial structures, such as space stations, ring worlds, or other constructs.

*Principles come and go... human souls are immortal, and you should therefore throw in your lot with the greater part.*

*--Lois McMaster Bujold Brothers in Arms (1989)*



### 3. Primary Terrain (2D12)

2-3	Barrens
4-5	Desert
6-9	Mountainous
10-11	Plains
12-13	Forested
14-16	Urban
17-18	Frozen
19-20	Swampy
21-23	Ocean
24	Other

*Barrens:* The primary terrain consists of rocky, uneven ground with only the hardiest vegetation.

*Desert:* The primary terrain is sandy and devoid almost any obvious plant life.

*Forested:* The primary terrain consists of large stands of trees, along with lesser vegetation that grows beneath these canopies.

*Frozen:* Ice and snow dominate the landscape, which can be almost any sort terrain. If the GM wishes, he may roll again on this table to determine precisely what the ice and snow cover or he may simply choose as he wishes. The world climate (see below) must be either Cool or Freezing.

*Mountainous:* The primary terrain is covered with hills and mountains.

*Ocean:* The majority of the world's surface is covered with liquid. There may be islands or small continents at the GM's discretion.

*Plains:* The primary terrain consists of vast grasslands.

*Swampy:* Wetlands dominate the world's terrain and there is likely an extensive network of rivers and lakes as well.

*Urban:* The world has been highly developed by technology, with much of its land surface devoted to cities and the infrastructures needed to support them.

*Other:* The world's primary terrain is something unusual, such as crater fields or canyons or volcanoes.

#### 4. World Climate (1D12)

1	Blistering
2-5	Warm
6-9	Temperate
10-11	Cool
12	Freezing

*Blistering:* The world possesses a local mean temperature in excess of 45° C.

*Warm:* The world possesses a local temperature in the 30 to 45° C range.

*Temperate:* The world possesses a local temperature in the 0 to 30° C range.

*Cool:* The world possesses a local temperature in the 0 to -15° C range.

*Freezing:* The world possesses a local temperature below -15° C.

#### 5. World Atmosphere (1D12)

2-8	Standard
9-10	Near-Standard
11	Thin
12	Hazardous

*Standard:* Standard atmospheres are those possessing a breathable oxygen-nitrogen mix.

*Near-Standard:* Near-standard atmospheres are breathable but may possess trace elements or contaminants that can, under certain circumstances, cause harm. Filter masks are thus recommended.

*Thin:* Thin atmospheres are not breathable, owing to a lack of either oxygen or sufficient oxygen to support life. Breathing masks are thus recommended.

*Hazardous:* Hazardous atmospheres are not breathable, either due to a total lack of oxygen (or indeed any other gases) or because the gases that make them up are insidious, corrosive, or otherwise dangerous. Space suits are thus recommended.

## 6. World Hydrographics (1D12)

1	None
2-4	Dry
5-8	Moderate
9-11	Wet
12	Water World

*None:* This world has no water present on its surface in any form.

*Dry:* 10-30% of the world's surface is covered in water in some form.

*Moderate:* 30-50% of the world's surface is covered in water in some form.

*Wet:* 60-80% of the world's surface is covered in water in some form.

*Water World:* 90% or more of the world's surface is covered in water in some form.

### Coping with Improbable Results

Because the world generation system is entirely random, without any mechanical connection between its various elements, it's possible to generate a world whose Primary Terrain is Ocean and whose Hydrographics is None. Likewise, it's possible to generate a Water World whose Primary Terrain is Desert. How is this possible?

Interpreted strictly, the results of those random rolls make no sense whatsoever. However, if you're willing to be a bit looser in your definition of the terms, those rolls not only make sense but can become the springboards for describing interesting worlds. That water-free Ocean World? It really doesn't have a drop of water on its surface, but it does have huge oceans of hydrochloric acid. That desertified Water World? It has plenty of water, but the few islands that dot its oceans are barren and devoid of life.

The advantage of a random world generation system is that it's quick and easy to use. Most of the time, it will produce very straightforward worlds whose various elements make sense and which the GM can easily integrate into his game. In a few cases, it will create unexpected and indeed unusual results that, with some thought and imagination, can be resolved. Sure, after a while, if all your "Ocean Worlds" have no water but instead acid, they'll grow as stale in play as any temperate, terrestrial world with a breathable atmosphere. That's why the GM should always be prepared to disregard results that don't suit his game or what he wants to do with it. There's no substitute for individual creativity, but, in a pinch, the random generation system can prove quite useful and might just come up with a few worlds you'd never have otherwise imagined.

## 7. World Gravity (1D12)

1	None
2-4	Light
5-10	Standard
11-12	Heavy

*None:* The world possesses no gravitational field of its own, most likely due to its being extremely small, such as an asteroid.

*Light:* The world has local gravity in the 0.2 to 0.6 G range.

*Standard:* The world has local gravity in the 0.7 to 1.5 G range.

*Heavy:* The world has local gravity of 1.6 G or higher.

More information on the effects of gravity can be found in Chapter 4.

## 8. Native Sapient

If the Primary World Profile is Homeworld, then the world has one or more native sapient species. The Game Master can create such species by using the Species Creation System later in this chapter. The GM should also determine whether the native sapients are the dominant species on the world or not. If they are, then the information that follows, such as Government, Population, and Tech Level pertain specifically to them. If they are not, as in the case of a world with a large Terran (or other) colony or colonies, then that information pertains to the offworlders.

## 9. World Population (1D12)

0	Uninhabited
1	Tens
2	Hundreds
3	Thousands
4-5	Tens of Thousands
6-7	Hundreds of Thousands
8-9	Millions
10	Tens of Millions
11	Hundreds of Millions
12	Billions
13	Tens of Billions

Modifiers: +1 if Core, -1 if Wildspace

World population refers only to the number of permanent residents. Some worlds, such as government centers, may have a large transient population as well. These individuals are not included in the world population figure.

## 10. World Government (2D12)

1-1	Corporate
2-4	Oligarchy
5-6	Dictatorship
7	Direct Democracy
8-10	Governor
11-13	Representative Democracy
14-16	Monarchy
17-18	Multiple States
19-20	Theocracy
21-22	Junta
23	Criminal
24	Tribal
25	Anarchy

Modifiers: -1 if Core, +1 if Wildspace

*Anarchy:* There are no governmental units larger than families, if that. If the world's population is low, anarchic worlds may simply never have developed a need for a formal government. Alternately, an anarchic world might be one in the throes of a disaster or rebuilding after one, in which case no central authority has reasserted itself. In rare cases, a world may be "philosophically" anarchist, which is to say that its inhabitants are so skeptical of political power that they have chosen to live without formal governmental authority.

*Corporate:* A corporate world is one whose central authority is a corporation or megacorporation. The corporation may choose to govern directly through its own organs or indirectly through representatives selected from the local populace. In either case, it is the corporation and its interests that are paramount and whether it governs justly or unjustly is only a reflection of its concern for the financial bottom line.

*Criminal:* A criminal organization has assumed control of the world. They may do this openly or through proxies.

*Dictatorship:* One individual rules the world through personal decree. He may do so justly or unjustly, but he does so with few or any legal or constitutional barriers. Some worlds



have elected dictators, who then rule for life or after a lengthy term, but most dictators seized power through force and maintain it in the same fashion.

*Direct Democracy:* A direct democracy is one in which most, if not all, important decisions are put to the vote of its citizens. Direct democracies are most common on worlds with either low populations or at least Stellar technology.

*Governor:* For whatever reason, an official appointed by some authority offworld governs the planet. This could be the result of a new colony being established, a war, a disaster, or something else.

*Junta:* The world's military has seized control of the government and rules either as a temporary measure or permanently.

*Monarchy:* A king, queen, or some other titled individual governs the world. A monarchy differs from a dictatorship in that it is usually a constitutional form of government. The monarch may govern directly or through subordinates, but he is legally recognized as the world's ruler and has the weight of tradition to support his claim.

*Multiple States:* The world has no single unified government but is instead home to a number of independent states. Those states may be at odds with one another or may work together in an alliance or federation. In the latter cases, the world might have a functional world government but one rent with internal conflict or strife to some degree. In the Thousand Suns meta-setting (see Chapter 7), no world subject to the Concord may have this government type. If such a result is rolled, you should either re-roll or devise some explanation as to why this type of government has escaped the strictures of the Concord.

*Oligarchy:* A small group of people, usually un-elected, governs the planet. As with dictatorships, the rule of an oligarchy can be popular or unpopular, just or unjust, depending on the local situation.

*Representative Democracy:* A representative democracy is one in which the citizenry elects individuals to handle the governance of the world. Representative democracies tend to be ponderous and slow and provide many opportunities for corruption, but they also less susceptible to public whims than are direct democracies.

*Theocracy:* A religious figure or religious organization governs the planet according to the dictates of their faith. This can result in anything from a totalitarian state based on theological principles to a state where religion is observed more in theory than in practice even if it is theoretically the basis for political power.

## 11. World Tech Level (1D12)

- 0 Stone Age (Class I): Stone tools, hunter/gatherer society
- 1 Iron Age (Class II): Metal, pottery, basic architecture and mathematics
- 2 Medieval (Class III): Distilling, windmills, basic metallurgy, waterwheels, clockworks, and other simple machines, feudal society.
- 3 Modern (Class IV): Simple manufacturing, advanced metallurgy and mathematics.
- 4 Industrial Age (Class V): Steam engines, electricity generation, crystal radios, simple tubes, mechanical and electromechanical computers, antibiotics.
- 5 Information Age (Class VI): Advanced electronics, space travel, computers, controlled fission, computer networks, GPS, basic DNA mapping, simple genetic engineering and gene screening.
- 6-8 Stellar (Class VII): D-Drive, contragravity, controlled fusion, simple robots, advanced genetic engineering, basic life extension, tissue regeneration, cryostasis.
- 9-13 Interstellar (Class VIII): Synaptic computers, miniature contragravity, small fusion reactors, advanced robots, advanced life extension, limited genetic modification of adult life forms.

Modifiers: -1 if Wildspace, +1 if Core

Tech Level refers to the highest level of technology available through local manufacturers. In many cases, higher tech items are available for purchase through offworld vendors, but they are both highly prized and expensive, making them difficult to obtain. Tech level is almost entirely a descriptive quality in Thousand Suns, which is to say, it has no specific game effect. The technologies described in Chapter 5 have not been assigned tech levels, for example. Instead, the GM should use a world's tech level as a general description of its society and culture rather than anything more specific. Thus, a Class III world will likely follow the cultural patterns of the Middle Ages, while those of Class VI will look more 21st century Earth. In addition, other world descriptors, particularly government type, should be considered as well, resulting in worlds that may be quite different than their Terran counterparts.

### Tech Level

Something to bear in mind is that travel in the Thousand Suns, while not always fast, is nevertheless pretty constant. Only the most far-flung worlds, generally in Wildspace, are so far removed the major jump lines so as to be completely disconnected from trade routes. Consequently, most worlds have access to advanced technology, at least for their wealthy elites, if not for their middle and other classes. These items may be expensive, as noted, but it will be a rare world where, for example, a blaster pistol or Unicom is completely unavailable, let alone unknown.

## Sector Design

A “sector” is a grouping of (typically) 10-20 star systems connected by jumplines organized according to their D-Drive pseudo-proximity. A sector is thus a somewhat arbitrary unit, designed for convenience rather than as an indicator of anything existing in the real world. That said, most sectors “make sense” in that worlds so grouped together often have a shared history or “culture” or some other defining characteristic that goes beyond their jumpline connections. This isn’t always the case, of course, but GMs are encouraged to think of sectors as the interstellar equivalents of “states” or “provinces” in the administrative sense, each with their own unique flavor and local color. Not only does this approach make it easier to distinguish, say, Betelgeuse sector from Proxima sector, but it also creates story seeds that can be used to good effect later.

### A Simple Approach

The D-Drive functions according to principles that have an erratic connection to normal space. Consequently, creating a sector “map” isn’t quite like creating a map of the United States or Canada. The map is actually rather abstract and uses jumplines rather than borders or physical landmarks. Likewise, the “distances” involved are the travel times between worlds for ships journeying through D-space. All of these factors make creating a sector a very simple affair.

You don’t need any special paper to create a sector map; an ordinary sheet of white paper will do, but almost any kind of paper will suffice. Start by rolling 2D12. The result is the number of worlds grouped into your sector. If you want a higher or lower number, feel free to roll fewer or more dice. Likewise, if you want a sector to have precisely 10 worlds, there is no need to resort to random generation. This method is offered simply as an option and for those times when you have no clear idea how many worlds you want in a sector.

Now, draw a small circle on the paper. This is the first world in the sector. You can either give it a name now or wait until after you have generated the details of the world before doing so. Sometimes planets are named after their physical or social characteristics, so that a world with very high mountain ranges might be named Pinnacle. Sometimes, planets are named after their discoverers, such as Emmet’s World. And sometimes worlds are given random designations, such as Alpha Draconis III or even M-32. Of course, worlds with native species might have names in their own languages (which may or may not be used by Terrans). There is no limit to the approaches possible to naming and, most importantly, there is no single “perfect” approach. Choose names that you like and that you think evoke the right feel and don’t worry about any other consideration.

Draw a second small circle, with a line connecting it to the first one. This second circle is the second world of the sector. Roll 1D12 and write the resulting number on the line between the two circles. That number represents the number of weeks a D-Drive capable vessel takes to journey between the two worlds. Repeat this process over and over again until you have a number of circles equal to the number of worlds you have in the sector. Typically, each world has no more than two jumplines connecting it to other worlds in the same sector but there can be exceptions. Choose a couple of worlds to have trans-sector capabilities; they're the ones that lead to other sectors among the Thousand Suns. Having done this, you will wind up with a "web" of jumplines connecting a number of worlds—your map of the sector!

### **More than a Map**

As noted earlier, a sector may be a unit of convenience but that does not mean there is no logic to its organization. Take a look at the map you have created. Pay close attention to the distances between worlds. Are the worlds close together in terms of travel time or are they far apart? Are there any "clusters" of short travel times or are all the worlds far-flung and weeks away from one another? After you have generated the details of the worlds themselves, take a look at each planet and compare it to its closest neighbors. Are there any obvious connections between nearby worlds? What about obvious rivalries or tensions? Are there any native species in the sector? High population worlds that might dominate the sector through sheer numbers?

There are, of course, an infinite number of ways to interpret the details of a sector and that's part of the fun of designing them. Two sectors, with the exact same world details, could be quite different from one another, depending on how the Game Master chooses to interpret those details. Differences are important, because it's all too easy to make one world or one sector seem just like every other one. Where possible, avoid that temptation. The Thousand Suns is a volume of space continually, literally, thousands of planets. Consequently, it's all too easy for those worlds to blend into one another after a while, making Aldebaran IV seem no more unique than Princo Georgio. Certainly there's no need to provide detailed histories and societies for worlds that are no more than a stopover for the characters as they journey toward a farther destination. At the same time, you should try to think of at least one thing for every world that makes it special, something that sets it apart from its neighbors. That way, you're ready in case your players decide that a world you thought was uninteresting is worth exploring further.

Like worlds, sectors are intended to spark adventures. They exist to give GMs a way to parcel out small pieces of the Thousand Suns setting in digestible chunks. There is no need to give your players the entire galaxy in the first few sessions of play. Indeed, entire

campaigns could profitably be set on a single planet. Think of all the adventures you could set on Terra alone! Multiply that by thousands of worlds and it's clear that you don't need to design more than a single sector to start off your campaign. Start small and build from there. The important thing is not to be overwhelmed by the immensity of space or the breadth of the Imperial SF approach to science fiction. Keep things in perspective and it will all be much more manageable.

A sample sector, Five Stars sector, is provided in Chapter 7 as an example you can use in designing your own sectors. Future supplements to *Thousand Suns*, such as the *Pilot's Guide* series, will detail new sectors, as will free support through the Rogue Games website.

## **Species Design**

The worlds of the *Thousand Suns* are teeming with life. This section helps you to design alien species, whether sapient or not. Like everything else in these rules, species design is simple and straightforward, geared toward ease of use and fostering fun roleplaying rather than scientific accuracy. That said, GMs are encouraged to make their alien species as plausible as possible. Imperial SF isn't a "hard" genre by any means, but it's not pure pulp of the bug-eyed monsters tradition of science fiction either. Try to make your aliens believable within the context of the world on which they appear and their role in the adventure or campaign.

## **Alien Traits**

Aliens in *Thousand Suns* are easily constructed. What follows is a list of unusual traits that can be chosen to give aliens unique abilities or "powers." Not all aliens need to have special traits. Indeed, many of them will not. However, this section is provided to aid the GM in creating aliens that do have special talents that differ from Terran norms. Each trait has a "cost." This cost pertains primarily to sapient species that could serve potentially as either player or non-player characters. As noted in Chapter 2, all Terran characters begin the game with 10 bonus points with which to buy Abilities and skills beyond what they receive from their initial allotments. Non-Terran characters sometime begin the game with fewer bonus points, owing to the cost of their traits. This section details a few of the most common traits.

In addition, there are a number of traits listed as "drawbacks." These traits are negative ones in that they do not provide the alien with any benefits but instead limit him in some fashion. Drawbacks grant the characters a number of additional bonus points that may be added to their total.



Game Masters are advised not to create alien species with more than 10 bonus points worth of traits if he intends for them to be used as potential player characters. If they are intended solely as NPCs, this advice may be safely ignored. Of course, the GM is free to create player character species with more than 10 points worth of traits if he so wishes. He should remember, though, that such characters may begin the game in a slightly more advantageous position than characters from less “powerful” species. This may not matter in some cases, so take this injunction as it’s intended—as advice and nothing more. *Thousand Suns* is your game, after all; do with it as you please.

### **Acidic Saliva**

The alien’s saliva can burn other creatures like acid, increasing the damage value of the alien’s bite by 1. The alien must have a natural bite attack to take this feature. If the alien already possesses the *Venomous Bite* trait, it cannot also possess *Acidic Saliva*.

**Cost:** 1.

### **Adrenaline Jolt**

The alien can flood its bloodstream with extreme amounts of adrenaline to temporarily boost its *Body* or *Dexterity*. Once per day, as an Action, the alien can temporarily increase either its *Body* or its *Dexterity* by 1D12/2 points. The increase lasts for a number of rounds equal to the alien’s *Will* score.

**Cost:** 2.

### **Armor Restriction (Drawback)**

The alien’s armor selection is limited. A species with this drawback cannot use standard armor, but instead must use armor specifically crafted for and by members of their own species. In game terms, this means that members of this species can only wear armor that is created by a member of their own species. Unlike weapons and equipment, the armor restriction drawback means that the character cannot even don the armor if it does not meet these requirements.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 4

### **Attack Bonus**

The alien is particularly talented at combat. The alien gains a bonus to all attack Tests. A conditional attack bonus only applies to attacks against a certain type of target (such as members of certain species or faction) or attacks under certain conditions (such as in extreme heat or cold or in the vacuum of space); this reduces the build point cost of the attack

bonus to one-half its normal cost, rounded up.

**Build Point Cost:** 5 (+1); 10 (+2); 15 (+3).

### **Attack Penalty (Drawback)**

The alien is less talented at combat. A species with this drawback suffers a penalty to attack Tests, either all the time or under certain conditions. A conditional attack penalty only applies against a certain type of target (such as members of a certain species or faction) or attacks under certain conditions (such as in extreme heat or cold or in the vacuum of space); this reduces the build points provided by the penalty to one-half its normal cost, rounded up.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 5 (-1); 3 (conditional -1).

### **Bony Spurs**

Chitinous spikes protrude from the alien's joints, giving it a jagged profile and making you dangerous to grapple. The spurs can do a DV 1 attack to any species the alien is grappling or any creature that grapples it. Furthermore, they deal 1 DV per Round to any creature that swallows you using the swallow whole ability.

**Cost:** 2.

### **Brittle Bones (Drawback)**

The alien's bones are so weak that you cannot withstand hard or sudden impacts. The alien also takes an additional 1D12 points of damage from a fall. The alien cannot possess this drawback if it already has the Skeletal Reinforcement trait.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 2.

### **Combat Fear (Drawback)**

Due to a chemical imbalance in the alien's brain, it is gripped by an inexplicable fear whenever it faces a dangerous or frightening situation. After initiative is rolled but before the alien takes its first action in combat, it must make a Will Test. If the alien fails the Test, it is shaken for the rest of the encounter, taking a -2 penalty on attack and skill Tests. If the Test succeeds, the alien overcomes its moment of fear and negates the ill effects.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 2.

### **Curious**

The alien is intensely interested in new knowledge and experiences and gains a +1 TN to

any Test it attempts either for the first time or while in pursuit of some knowledge or experiences it has never undertaken before.

**Cost:** 1

### **Dark Sight**

The alien can see in total darkness out to a range of either 20 meters or 40 meters.

**Cost:** 2 (20 meters); 4 (40 meters).

### **Echolocator**

The alien possesses the ability to absorb sound waves and translate them into mental images that accurately portray the surrounding environment. This ability is similar to a bat's ability to operate and hunt in total darkness via echolocation, resulting in non-visual "sight" to a range of 20 meters.

**Cost:** 3.

### **Eidetic Memory**

The alien possesses the ability to recall anything it sees or hears with perfect clarity. This includes written text, as well as spoken conversations and images. In addition, the alien may deduct one point from the Base Rank of a skill when buying new Ranks with XP in skills it already possesses (but not in new skills).

**Cost:** 2

### **Elasticity**

The alien can bend and twist its body in unnatural ways and squeeze through very tight spaces. Consequently, the alien can squeeze through an opening or passage one-fifth as wide and tall as its height, in centimeters, although it does so very slowly compared to its normal movement.

**Cost:** 2.

### **Equipment Restriction (Drawback)**

The alien's equipment selection is limited. This drawback restricts the type of mundane equipment that this alien species can use. A species with the equipment restriction has difficulty using standard equipment or computers and instead must use gear specifically crafted for and by members of their own species. In game terms, this means that members of this species have difficulty using any equipment other than gear that is created by a member of

their own species. If the gear does not meet one of these prerequisites, the character suffers a -4 penalty to any Tests made while using the equipment.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 4

### **Extra Arms**

The alien possesses an additional pair of arms. The extra arms look and behave exactly like its other arms. As a species with more than two arms, the alien gains a +2 bonus on Athletics (Climb) and Unarmed Combat Tests. For the purposes of combat, both extra arms are treated as “off hands” (that is, you still have only one primary hand).

**Cost:** 3 (per set of extra arms).

### **Frailty (Drawback)**

The alien’s body is particularly vulnerable to the ravages of poison, disease, radiation, and other ailments. It also has trouble stabilizing when severely wounded. The alien take a -2 penalty on all Body Tests, including Tests made to heal or stabilize after unconsciousness (but not Body-based skill Tests unless the GM rules it is appropriate).

**Bonus Points Provided:** 2.

### **Gills**

The alien possesses a set of gills that can draw the oxygen out of water. The gills appear on its neck, chest, or back (near your windpipe or lungs). Consequently, the alien can breathe both air and water and never has to worry about the possibility of drowning.

**Cost:** 1.

### **Glider**

The alien has fleshy flaps that allow its to glide on wind currents. The alien may glide through the air as though flying, but only while descending in altitude. For every 2 meters in altitude that it descends, the alien may move 8 meters horizontally. Thus, if it leaps off a 40-meter tall building, it may glide horizontally 240 meters.

**Cost:** 2

### **Heat/Cold Susceptibility (Drawback)**

The alien’s body does not react well to particularly hot or cold temperatures. The alien takes double damage from prolonged exposure to extreme heat or cold.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 1.

## Hypersensitivity

The alien is particularly sensitive to your surroundings. It gains a +2 bonus on Investigate and Observe Tests.

**Cost:** 2.

## Leaper

The alien gains the ability to leap incredible distances. The alien gains a +5 bonus on all Athletics (Jump) Tests or any other Tests where the GM rules that this trait has bearing.

**Cost:** 1.

## Lethargy (Drawback)

Thanks to slow electrical impulses along its central nervous system, the alien has trouble reacting quickly to danger. Consequently, it suffers a -2 TN to all Dexterity or Dexterity-based Tests.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 3.

## Light Sensitivity (Drawback)

The alien's eyes cannot adjust to bright light. Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight) blinds the alien for 1 Round. On subsequent Rounds, the alien suffers a -1 TN on attacks, Investigate Tests, and Observe Tests as long as it remains in the affected area.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 1.

## Low-Light Vision

The alien's eyes can see in minimal light. It can see twice as far as normal in starlight, moonlight, or under artificial illumination, such as a portable glow-lamp.

**Build Point Cost:** 1

## Mindslave (Drawback)

The alien has certain mental deficiencies that make it harder to resist mind-influencing effects. It suffers a -2 TN on all Will or Resist Tests.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 1.



## Natural Armor

The alien possesses some type of natural armor that makes it harder to injure. The alien gains a number of points of AV that function exactly like other types of artificial armor. However, the natural armor does not stack with any other type of armor.

**Cost:** 1 per point of AV (maximum 10).

## Natural Armor Penalty (Drawback)

The alien is particularly susceptible to attacks. An alien species with this drawback suffers more damage from attacks directed against them. Aliens with this trait generally cannot also possess natural armor (see above)

**Bonus Points Provided:** 1 per additional point of damage per successful attack (maximum 10). Cost is halved if it works against a single type of attack.

## Natural Weapon

The alien possesses a natural weapon of some kind. This trait grants the species a natural weapon that can be used even when the alien is unarmed. Natural weapons come in many varieties: bite, claw, tail slap, slam, and so forth. When this species trait is selected, you must choose a single type of natural weapon as well as the amount of damage it deals. Though the type of natural attack does not affect the cost, the amount of damage it deals does. In cases where it is logical to have two or more natural attacks (such as claws on each hand), each natural attack must be paid for individually. Otherwise, it is simply assumed that the natural attack represents using both parts of a pair at once.

**Cost:** 1 per damage value (to a maximum of 5).

## Pheromone Attraction

The alien can regulate the production of pheromones in its body and release them at will, altering the moods of other nearby creatures. The alien gains a +2 bonus on all social interaction Tests made against creatures within 10 meters of it. The GM may rule that any such creature's biology is too different from the alien's and thus immune to the effects of this trait

**Cost:** 3.

## Pheromone Repulsion (Drawback)

The alien releases pheromones that other creatures find repulsive. The alien takes a -2 TN on all social interaction Tests made against creatures within 10 meters of it. The alien can-

not have this drawback and the Pheromone Attraction trait (see above)

**Bonus Points Provided:** 1.

### **Prehensile Tail**

The alien possesses a tail that can grasp and hold objects. A prehensile tail grants a +2 TN to Acrobatics Tests. It can also grasp and manipulate a small, simple object. A prehensile tail cannot be used to operate a piece of equipment that requires opposable digits or fine motor control (such as a computer). An alien can “hang” from its prehensile tail indefinitely by wrapping it around a larger object, thereby freeing up its other limbs. The prehensile tail isn’t dexterous or strong enough to fire ranged weapons or make melee attacks, however.

An alien cannot possess both a Prehensile Tail and the Tail trait (see below).

**Cost:** 2.

### **Scent**

The alien can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. It can also identify familiar odors the way Terrans do familiar sights.

**Cost:** 1.

### **Second Wind**

The alien can shrug off minor wounds with ease. Once per day, as an Action, the alien can heal itself of a number of points of Vitality damage equal its Body Rank.

**Cost:** 1.

### **Skill Bonus**

The alien is more adept at certain skills. This trait gives the species a bonus to skill Tests. This bonus can apply only under certain conditions (such as only on starships or while in combat) if you so choose. The cost usually depends on the skill bonus provided, but a conditional skill bonus can either apply to multiple skills or reduce the build point cost of one skill. If the skill bonus only applies under certain conditions, you may select three skills for that bonus to apply to instead of the normal one skill. Alternately, the conditional skill bonus may apply to only one skill but halves the build point cost (rounded up, minimum of 1) of the skill bonus.

**Cost:** 2 per +1 (maximum +3).

### **Skill Penalty (Drawback)**

The alien is less adept at certain skills. This feature gives the species a penalty to skill Tests. This penalty can apply only under certain conditions (such as only on starships or while in combat) if you so choose. The bonus points provided usually depend on the skill bonus provided, but a conditional skill penalty can either apply to multiple skills or reduce the build points provided by one skill. If the skill penalty only applies under certain conditions, you may select three skills for that penalty to apply to instead of the normal one skill. Alternately, the conditional skill penalty may apply to only one skill but halves the build points provided (rounded up, minimum of 1) by the skill penalty.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 2 per -1 (maximum -3)

### **Tail**

The alien possesses a thick tail. The tail may be fur-covered, slender and whip-like, or scaly like a lizard's. Although the tail improves the alien's balance and can serve as a weapon, it cannot be used for gripping objects. The tail provides a +2 TN to all Acrobatics Tests. A species that already has the Prehensile Tail feature cannot gain this trait. This trait can be used in conjunction with the Natural Weapon trait to represent a stinger or barbed or spiked tail.

**Cost:** 1.

### **Thick Fur Coat**

The alien possesses a thick, protective layer of fur over its body. The alien gains a +4 TN on Tests against extreme cold temperatures. A species with fur, scales, or chitin cannot gain this trait.

**Cost:** 1.

### **Ultra Immune System**

The alien possesses a powerful immune system capable of repelling many poisons, diseases, and radiation sickness. The alien gains a +2 TN on all Body Tests to resist the effects of poisons, diseases, or radiation.

**Cost:** 1.

### **Ultraviolet Allergy (Drawback)**

Ultraviolet light burns the alien's flesh and causes it to ignite. Ultraviolet light (including direct sunlight) burns the alien, dealing DV 1 per Round.

Bonus Points Provided: 2.

### **Venomous Bite**

The alien's natural bite attack injects poison into its victim's bloodstream. Any creature the alien successfully hits with its bite attack must make a successful opposed Body Test against your attack or taking poison damage equal to the degree of success (in addition to the amount from the bite). The alien must have a natural bite attack to gain the benefit of this feature. The alien cannot take this trait if it already has the Acidic Saliva trait.

**Cost:** 2.

### **Wall Crawler**

The alien can walk walls and cling to ceilings like a spider. It has tiny barbs on its hands and feet to facilitate climbing, and its fingers and toes secrete a transparent adhesive that lets the alien cling to smooth surfaces. As long as the alien's hands and feet are uncovered, it can climb perfectly smooth, flat, vertical surfaces. In addition, the alien gains a +3 TN on all Athletics (Climb) Tests. Wearing gloves or footwear reduces the bonus to +1 TN, and wearing both gloves and footwear negates the bonus entirely.

You also gain a +3 TN on Athletics Tests when moving across a slippery surface. Wearing any kind of footwear negates this bonus.

**Cost:** 1.

### **Weak Immune System (Drawback)**

The alien's body has difficulty preventing infections from entering its system, and thus it is prone to sickness and disease. The alien suffers -2 TN for all Body Tests to resist the effects of poison, disease, and radiation sickness. The alien cannot take this drawback if it has the Ultra Immune System trait.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 1.

### **Weapon Restriction (Drawback)**

The alien's weapon choices are limited. This drawback restricts the type of weapons that this alien species can use. A species with the weapon restriction has difficulty using standard weapons and instead must use weapons specifically crafted for and by members of their own species. In game terms, this means that members of this species have difficulty using any weapons other than gear that is created by a member of their own species. If the weapon does not meet this prerequisite, the alien suffers -4 TN to any attacks made while using the weapon.

**Bonus Points Provided:** 4.

### **Webbed Digits**

The alien possesses webbing between its fingers or toes and can move more easily through liquids. The alien gains +3 TN on all Athletics (Swim) Tests. Having webbed digits does not interfere with the alien's ability to grasp or manipulate objects.

**Bonus Point Cost:** 1.

### **Wings**

The alien possesses a pair of birdlike or bat-like wings. The alien's wings grant a natural fly speed of 20 meters.

**Cost:** 3.

### **Intelligent Species**

Designing new intelligent species can take time and creativity, but it's well worth the effort. Part of the fun of playing *Thousand Suns* is the opportunity to interact with non-human species, to learn about their culture and society—and the exciting adventures they can inspire. Like everything else in this game, though, you must bear in mind two things. First and most importantly, alien species exist to provide meat for adventures. There's nothing wrong with world building for its own sake. However, this can sometimes go too far and bog the game down in details that mean very little in play. The Kriilkna, for example, adhere to a religion filled with taboos. It's important as the GM to know some of those taboos because they might have an impact on character's interactions with them or spark an exciting adventure, but there is no need to enumerate them all. Feel free to follow a similar pattern when creating your own alien species.

The second consideration is plausibility. *Thousand Suns* is a science fiction game and both "science" and "fiction" need to get equal play. While there's no need to delve into the deep intricacies of alien biochemistry or sociology when creating a new intelligent species, that doesn't mean that such things should be blithely dispensed with. In a game like this, play-

#### **Additional Species Traits**

The traits presented here are by no means exhaustive. While future supplements to *Thousand Suns*, as well as support on the *Rogue Games* website, will offer occasional traits, the GM should feel free to create his own, using those in this chapter as guidelines. There are no hard and fast rules for the point costs or bonus points gained, although the more generally useful a trait, the more points it costs. Likewise, most traits are fairly mundane, since alien species in *Thousand Suns* are "realistic" ones without "super-powers" or other abilities that verge on the implausible.



ers need to be able to believe in its setting and aliens whose biologies or cultures seem implausible jeopardize their ability to do so. Notice, though, that the word is “implausible,” not “unrealistic.” Science and fiction need to be equally balanced in *Thousand Suns*, so that means designing aliens that seem possible to those uneducated in advanced science rather than aliens whose every aspect holds up to intense scientific scrutiny.

The races described in Chapter 2 follow a fairly simple rule that helps in creating plausible intelligent species. When a race is humanoid in appearance, it is in fact not an alien at all but a clade. Clades allow GMs to come up with all manner of interesting and unusual variations on human beings without having to create a litany of “men in suits,” which is to say, anthropomorphic aliens whose differences from the Terran norm are so slight as not to justify their being aliens. The rest of the aliens in this book do not have a humanoid form, from the cephalopodic Hen Jaa to the crustaceous Kriilkna to the tree-like Czanik. This helps make these aliens different from the very start. After all, it’s hard to imagine a race of intelligent, walking trees and not conceive of their society as quite unlike that of Terrans.


Of course, each GM has sovereign authority to decide within his own campaign what constitutes a “good” alien design and what constitutes a “bad” one. Likewise, in Imperial SF, many alien species were little more than stand-ins for various human cultures, particularly the ones that European society interacted with in its colonial adventures across the globe in the 19th century. This is a perfectly valid approach and firmly in keeping with genre conventions. Nevertheless, *Thousand Suns* has opted for the “plausible” approach, hoping that it will spur creativity in both the players and the Game Master. In the end, though, the decision of approach is yours.

## **Unintelligent Species**

The same basic guidelines apply to the creation of unintelligent alien species—animals—whom the characters might encounter in their travels to other worlds, perhaps with more emphasis on their adventure role. Unintelligent aliens generally exist solely as antagonists; they are obstacles the characters must overcome while, for example, shipwrecked on an inhospitable world rather than a long-standing element of continued interest. There are exceptions, of course, but, by and large, unintelligent alien species are less prominent in most campaigns than are intelligent ones. Unintelligent species are otherwise not much different than intelligent ones in design.

## **What is “Imperial SF?”**

This might seem an odd question to ask in Chapter 6 and it would be if it were meant simply. Instead, we ask the question here as an aid to the Game Master in the construction



of his own Thousand Suns adventures and campaigns. As noted in Chapter 1, the literary genre we have termed “Imperial SF” features mighty galactic empires and plots whose primary inspiration derives events during the Age of Imperialism in the 19th century, when (primarily) European powers laid claim to vast swaths of the globe for a variety of political, economic, and military purposes. At the same time, Imperial SF isn’t limited by its historical inspiration and the fact that most of its greatest writers wrote in the decades immediately following World War II is important to bear in mind as well. These writers were often ardent humanists who nevertheless understood the human condition all too well—its glorious heights and its ignominious depths. Imperial SF reflects this and adventures inspired by it should grapple with the central themes of the genre.

### **Optimistic but Realistic**

Imperial SF might seem a naively optimistic genre, with its predictions of regular interstellar travel and vast empires populated with members of many intelligent species. This isn’t far from the truth. Many of the genre’s writers did believe that science and technology could pave the way to amazing opportunities and untold knowledge for humanity. Imperial SF is thus not a “dark” genre; its predictions of the future are positive ones, filled with the expectation that tomorrow will be not just another day but a better day.

At the same time, Imperial SF writers generally didn’t believe that science or technology would make human beings any better than their ancestors. Future men would fall victim to the same vices and sins as have all men. The only difference technology makes is that it gives human beings a broader canvas on which to exhibit their viciousness. Where tyrants in the past had to content themselves with killing dozens or hundreds of people, future villains might exterminate entire worlds or species. The figures of Hitler and Stalin cast long shadows over Imperial SF, as do the moral lapses committed in battling them. The same should be true in Thousand Suns adventures, where virtue and vice are never a function of one’s Tech Level and no one, from the most primitive sapient in Wildspace to the most sophisticated Terran from the Core worlds, enjoys a privileged moral position.

### **Power Corrupts but Not Absolutely**

A natural consequence of this perspective is that Imperial SF is—somewhat ironically given its emphasis on mighty empires and powerful star fleets—skeptical of unlimited power. Writers of the genre typically assumed that future humanity would be governed by a benevolent but autocratic empire, a free but corrupt federation, or something in between. Once again, the twin historical precedents or both the Age of Imperialism and World War II are important to consider here. Whether one looks at Victorian Britain’s bearing of “the white man’s burden” or America’s dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan, it’s hard not to

become somewhat cynical and this is reflected in the genre.

Nevertheless, it's also true that Imperial SF writers weren't wild-eyed utopians. They understood and expected that even the most benevolent and well-intentioned societies are neither above naked self-interest nor immune to the temptations of power. While far from excusing such immorality, Imperial SF writers didn't view them as uniquely worthy of opprobrium. All societies fall prey to pride and act accordingly; it is only those societies that make consistent positive contributions to civilization whose transgressions we single out as somehow unlike any others in history. Consequently, Imperial SF writers rarely preached from on high, preferring instead to take a longer view that acknowledges that societal corruption is not often so great that it blots out genuine goodness, however haphazardly accomplished.

### **The Beginning of the End (or the End of the Beginning)**

Imperial SF writers were profoundly influenced by a number of historians, such as Edward Gibbon, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold J. Toynbee. Although their approaches and conclusions were quite different, each of them studied the causes of the rise and fall of great civilizations. Following the wreck of World War I, which cemented the unraveling of the Victorian world, it became fashionable among many intellectuals to see Western civilization as headed toward an inescapable decline, a view made all the more plausible by the rise of fascism and Communism and the seeming collapse of capitalism in the Great Depression.

Many Imperial SF writers lived through these turbulent times and thus found it easy to buy into the theories of historians who predicted inevitable doom and the rise of a new Dark Age. Thus, many Imperial SF stories are filled with analogs of the Roman Empire in its final days, decadent and teetering on the brink of collapse with neo-barbarians at the gates. Of course, this theme is mitigated by several factors, including the rejection of historical necessity and the championing of free will. While it may be that all civilizations inevitably collapse, the time and circumstances of any collapse is not pre-ordained and the actions of one person—or a group of persons—can stand athwart history and yell “Stop!” Likewise, just as the end of the Roman Empire ushered in the Middle Ages, so too might the end of one galactic era spell not the end of civilization itself but simply of a particular civilization, which will be subsumed and surpassed by its descendant. Thus, imperial SF remains as skeptical of historical inevitability as it does of absolute power.

### **Space is Big, Travel Slow**

Imperial SF takes as its canvas the vastness of the Milky Way galaxy. Writers in the genre assumed that mankind would expand to every corner through the miracle of FTL travel, just as Europeans explored every continent of Earth and the United States expanded west-

ward. Like those historical forebears, though, travel in the galaxy is slow and communication between the far-flung outposts of Terran civilization even slower (thanks to the lack of FTL communications).

In practical terms, this means that each world is, at minimum, a week's travel from the next world, probably much farther. Each world must be more self-sufficient—or isolated—than would be all but the most remote and primitive of areas on 21st century Earth. Characters must naturally be self-reliant. They are thrown on their own resources, because a call for help will take no fewer than two weeks for a response. The cavalry is not just over the next hill, waiting to save you. Consequently, a lot of Imperial SF characters are rugged individualists, perhaps with a libertarian streak to their personal philosophies. Many adventures in *Thousand Suns* can be spun from the fact that the characters are the only people of action in a star system.

### **Authority is Distant**

Even the most tyrannical galactic empire cannot change the laws of physics. If space is big and travel slow, there are limits to the amount of control the central government can exercise with any reliability. Short of building a veritable police state, with star fleets in every system and soldiers garrisoned on every world, a light touch carries the day when it comes to interstellar governance. Most worlds, so long as they pay their taxes and do nothing to buck the central authority, are given a fair degree of independence.

This has several consequences. Firstly, galactic empires or federations are not monolithic. There may be a common “high culture” that unites the ruling elites, regardless of their homeworlds, but most planets will have their own unique societies and cultures. This is good, because adventures should always have a dash of local color that separates events on the surface of Beta Leonis II from those on Persephone. Secondly, the central government must rule through representatives rather than directly. These representatives must often act on their own judgment rather than according to strict marching orders from the capital. Thus, they may be “good” or “evil” and their actions necessarily say very little about the central government itself. This frees the GM to make the local sector Governor-General either a “government man” or an aberration, depending on how he wishes to portray the central authority. In any event, Imperial SF rarely describes a future in which jackbooted thugs can easily keep the whole of the galaxy under their thumbs and that provides lots of scope for adventure, whether the characters are beleaguered officers of the fleet or rebels seeking independence for their homeworld.

## Technology as a Prop

Finally, Imperial SF, unlike more contemporary science fiction, is not really about technology. That is, technology is obviously important, since it's the means by which adventurers travel from world to world, but it is not the focus of the genre. Throughout this book, you'll find comparatively few discussions of how the technology presented herein operates. That's by design rather than by omission. For one, there is no easy way to explain how, say, the D-Drive operates without resorting to pseudo-science and gobbledygook.

There's nothing wrong with such an approach, but it's one at variance with the tenets of Imperial SF, which, as a genre, is primarily focused on the adventurers of individuals who travel from world to world solving problems that, while local in focus, have larger consequences for the entire setting. Their solutions usually have little to do with technology. Indeed, as noted earlier, Imperial SF does not assume that future humans are any better than contemporary ones simply because they have shinier technology. Indeed, Imperial SF is often slightly skeptical of technology and its settings often include various explanations as to why technological development has been retarded or otherwise progressed less far than one might expect. Some of this springs from philosophical reasons but much of it has to do with the simple fact that too much technology can steal the limelight from the characters and that's a cardinal sin in both fiction and roleplaying games. Bear this in mind when creating your own Thousand Suns adventures. There's nothing wrong with flashy gadgets and amazing devices, but they should always take a backseat to the characters.

## The Travelers

Throughout this book, there are occasional references to an extinct race of ancient aliens called the Travelers. In point of fact, the term is a blanket one and might describe more than a single race. People in the Thousand Suns use the term for any putative species of aliens that has left behind artifacts of their civilization but little else. The first time the term was used in reference to the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map (see Chapter 7), a mysterious artifact that provided Terrans with an incomplete jump map of several thousand star systems. Given the nature of this artifact, the term "Travelers" quickly became attached to its creators and the name has stuck. Over the centuries, the term has become a generic one, not necessarily referring to any single extinct culture – of which scientists recognize many – but merely meaning an alien culture no longer extant in the galaxy.

What became of the Travelers? Incontrovertible evidence to support any thesis conclusively is rare but there is quite a lot of circumstantial evidence to suggest that many Traveler species destroyed themselves – sometimes quite spectacularly. Indeed, the Thousand Suns are littered with worlds that bear what appear to be the scars of high-tech warfare. Likewise,



the presence of many unfinished and/or partially destroyed technological projects, such as ring worlds and Dyson spheres, strongly suggests an abrupt end to many Traveler civilizations. An alternative explanation has been posited, which argues that at least some Traveler species did not destroy themselves but rather evolved en masse, transcending this plane of existence and moving on to some “higher” realm of consciousness. There is even less evidence for this thesis, but it nevertheless enjoys some support in the scientific community, if only because it offers a more hopeful interpretation of the mystery of the Travelers.

### Who Were the Travelers?

Beats me.

Less flippantly, there is no “official” answer to this question nor is there any answer to the question of what became of them or whether any of the three popular theses is correct. Each GM must decide for himself and his campaign the answer to these questions. In many, if not most, campaigns there is no need for a definitive answer one way or the other, as all Traveler species have been extinct longer than the Czanik have been a starfaring species—a very long time indeed.

If, however, you need a definitive answer for your campaign, come up with one. You need never fear that a future Thousand Suns product will invalidate your explanation. Some products, such as the free adventure *The Chabuli Conspiracy* (available for download from the Rogue Games website at the time of the publication of this book), will deal with the Travelers and offer possible answers to these questions but none will be the final, ultimate Secret of these aliens’ existence or disappearance. The Travelers are yet another area where GMs are encouraged to use their own creativity and make their Thousand Suns campaign unique.

The mostly widely held explanation borrows from both of these previous explanations. According to this interpretation, technology eventually reaches a hard limit, beyond which it is not normally possible to advance with ordinary means. There is some support for this contention, given that the technological advancement curve of Terran civilization has flattened over the past few centuries, with comparatively few breakthroughs in either scientific theory or application. To advance beyond this hard limit, a species must change its ways—and means!—of thinking to do so, which may involve some form of evolutionary shift, whether self-induced or as the result of natural processes. Such a change either pushes a species into a new mode of being, where science and technology may once again advance, or utterly destroys it.

Once again, there is little incontrovertible evidence to support this third thesis, but many scientists in the Thousand Suns tacitly accept it or some portion of it. Consequently, re-

search into areas such as artificial intelligence, psionics, biological augmentation, and other related areas is quietly discouraged, out of the fear that such things might push the human race to the brink of a new stage of evolution, one that is more likely to have disastrous results than positive ones. That elder species like the Czanik agree with this approach is taken as a sign of its wisdom.

## **Awarding Experience Points**


At the end of every adventure, you should reward your players with Experience Points (XP). XP indicates the measure of what each character has accomplished. By learning from their in-game decisions, characters become more proficient at what they do. XP is given if the characters succeeded at their tasks, accomplished their goals, roleplayed every well, or performed some great feat.

Anywhere from between 1 and 4 XP should be awarded per adventure, with the typical reward being 2 XP.

## **Spending Experience Points**

All skills have a Base Rank equal to the value of its associated Ability. Every time you buy a new skill, you always buy that skill with a number of XP equal to its Base Rank. To raise the Rank of the skill, you spend half of the skill's Base Rank in XP. No skill can be raised above Rank 12 and no Ability can be raised after character creation at all. Characters who acquire new skills should have some explanation for how they acquired such new knowledge and the GM is within his rights to restrict or otherwise limit the skills a character can plausibly gain through the use of XP without an in-game explanation. Ideally, a player will only spend XP on those skills he actually used in the course of an adventure. Likewise, the acquisition of new skills should be logical and stem from events in the campaign rather than mere player whim.

XP can also be used to purchase additional Action Points beyond the 5 all characters receive at character creation. Each additional Action Point costs 10 XP. At the same time, the new Action Point must be tied to a new Hook, which the character has acquired. A new Hook must make sense within the context of the character's development and his place in the campaign. That is, a character cannot suddenly acquire a hook like "Heir to the throne of Betelgeuse VII" when there has been no previous suggestion that the character was royalty or there had been no plot in the campaign that revealed his previously unknown blue blood. Once acquired, the new Action Point and associated Hook function normally according to the rules laid out in Chapter 3. Some GMs may wish to limit the number of Action Points and Hooks a single character may acquire through XP. As a practical matter, it's generally



best for no player character to have more than 10 Action Points or Hooks, but a GM is free to ignore this suggestion or institute a lower cap as he deems best for his campaign.

*Never let your sense of morals prevent you from doing what is right!”*

*—Isaac Asimov, “The Big and the Little” (1944)*



# CHAPTER 7: META-SETTING

*“Crime,” said Captain Dominic Flandry of the Terran Empire’s Naval Intelligence Corps, “is entirely a matter of degree. If you shoot your neighbor in order to steal his property, you are a murderer and a thief, subject to enslavement. If, however, you gather a band of lusty fellows in the name of honor and glory, knock off a couple of million people, take their planet, and hit up the survivors for taxes, you are a great conqueror, a hero, a statesman, and your name goes down in the history books. Sooner or later, this inconsistency seeps into the national consciousness and produces a desire for universal peace. That in turn brings about what is known as decadence, especially among philosophers who never had to do any of the actual fighting. The Empire is in this condition, of which the early stages are the most agreeable period of civilization to live in – somewhat analogous to a banana just starting to show brown spots. I fear, however, that by now we are just a bit overripe.”*

*--Poul Anderson, “The Warriors from Nowhere” (1954)*



While *Thousand Suns* is intended to be a toolkit for creating an imperial SF setting of your own, not everyone has the time or inclination to create an entire futuristic setting. That's why this chapter introduces what is known as the *Thousand Suns* meta-setting. What's a meta-setting, you may ask? A meta-setting is a flexible outline for a setting in which certain details have been provided, along with lots of options, but whose final shape and content is entirely up to you, the Game Master and players of *Thousand Suns*. Another way to look at it is to think of a large canvas onto which certain shapes and figures have already been drawn, but whose colors, shading, and contrast are left entirely up to you.

That's what the meta-setting is. Included in this chapter is a broad science fictional setting that gives you the broad outline of a portion of the Milky Way galaxy inhabited by Terran humans and numerous other intelligent species. Certain elements of this outline are drawn in sharper relief than others, such as key historical events, alien species, interstellar organizations, while others are drawn more faintly, so that you can choose either to embolden them or "paint over" them according to your vision of the meta-setting. The meta-setting is thus meant to be an aid to your own creativity rather than a replacement for it. To use a different metaphor, it's like a guidebook that points out lots of interesting sights to see but whether you visit any particular sight, let alone whether you wish to spend a lot of time there, is entirely up to you.

Future *Thousand Suns* products will make use of the meta-setting, but, like this book, will always provide plenty of options and alternatives rather advocating One True Way to use it. Imperial SF literature is diverse and encompasses many different approaches, even if they share certain commonalities. The meta-setting is a distillation of those commonalities into a flexible superstructure that you can shape to suit your interests and on which you can hang a wide variety of science fictional elements. The meta-setting is the raw material from which you can craft your own vision of the future.

In the same vein, the meta-setting includes very few important non-player characters or grand plots. This book assumes that the most important people in your campaign are your player's characters and the grandest plots are the ones you create for them. This probably isn't literally true. If the characters in your campaign are a bunch of down on their luck mercenaries in the Marches or intrepid explorers in Wildspace, they probably aren't as important politically as His Imperial Majesty, Rodriko III, emperor of the *Thousand Suns* or as important scientifically as D-Drive researchers on Olympus Prime. But from the perspective of your campaign, those mercenaries or explorers are more important than the emperor or famous scientists, because they are the "stars" of your ongoing series of adventures.

This is a guiding principle of the meta-setting: *no one is more important than your player characters.*

## History

The Thousand Suns meta-setting takes place in Year 500 of the Nova Kalendaro (or New Calendar, also sometimes called the Muelisto Calendar, after its creator), the timekeeping system established at the signing of the Concord, whose date was designated Year 0. All dates prior to that point are presented with a minus sign (-) to indicate how many years prior to the Concord they took place. Thus, the discovery of the D-Drive took place 1291 years before the present day.

The brief timeline shown in the boxed text presents the only specific dates and events that shall be referred to in this chapter or subsequent products detailing the Thousand Suns meta-setting. Everything else is left open for individual GMs to customize as they wish. You should therefore feel free to add as many or as few historical events to this timeline as you wish: wars, economic booms or downturns, scientific discoveries, religious awakenings – whatever suits your vision of the meta-setting.

As stated above, all dates use Year 0 as their reference point. Nowhere in this book or elsewhere will it be established when Year 0 is in relation to the present day. The timeline encompasses approximately 1500 years of history, but the first event on the timeline could take place in A.D. 2010, A.D. 2100, or any other date the GM wishes. As described in this chapter, it makes little difference whether Year 500 corresponds to A.D. 4000 or A.D. 10,000. To the inhabitants of the Thousand Suns, the 21st century is as far in the past as Alexander the Great is to us – if not more so – and thus events from the present day likely matter little and no attempt will be made herein to make connections between them.

### Timeline of the Future

-959	The Thirty-Hour War
-883	Discovery of the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map
-791	D-Drive Invented
-788	The Vojağanto Expedition
-700	First Contact
-667	Foundation of the Terran Federation
-550	Von Neumann's War
-420— -400	The Gene War
-400— -200	The Wars of Independence
-200—0	The Age of Warring States
0	The Concord
471—479	The Civil War
500	The Present Day

Each entry below includes a “Notes” section that explains the purpose of each entry in the timeline from a world design point of view. With this information, you’ll understand the benefits of including the entry, as well as the consequences for omitting it in your version of the meta-setting. The Notes are thus an aid to the creative process and another means of adding to the meta-setting’s flexibility and modularity.

### **The Thirty-Hour War**

The Thirty-Hour War was a worldwide political, military, and economic conflict that devastated the nations and environment of Terra’s northern hemisphere and threw the entire planet into a decades-long chaos. The conflict was so named because, according to popular accounts of the time, the opposing military forces all suffered such grievous casualties within thirty hours of the formal commencement of hostilities that continuation of the war after that point was all but impossible – but the damage had already been done. While such accounts are undoubtedly an immense exaggeration, there is no question that the Thirty-Hour War forever changed the face of Terra and the destiny of the human race.

**Notes:** The Thirty-Hour War is far enough in the past of the setting (almost 1500 years) that few people will know about or indeed care about the specifics of the war. This historical event is nevertheless significant because it establishes a break point between the civilization that exists today and the one from which Terra’s interstellar civilization springs. The most obvious evidence of this is *Lingua Terra*, which is a mixture of English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Afrikaans. If you wish to flavor your version of the meta-setting with a different culture or cultures, a major war or catastrophe in the past is a good way to rationalize the rise of a new culture to replace a formerly prominent one.

### **Discovery of the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map**

An artifact of the extinct extraterrestrial culture later dubbed the Travelers (on account of evidence of their presence on countless worlds throughout the galaxy), the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map was in fact a complex navigational computer whose partially intact memory core contained the coordinates for over 1000 star systems theoretically accessible from the Sol system. It was not until the invention of the D-Drive nearly a century later that these coordinates could actually be used, by which point those same star systems came to be known colloquially as “the Thousand Suns” in poet Johane Coelho’s poetic phrase.

**Note:** The Map is named for the two researchers who discovered it. In the standard version of the meta-setting, the Map was discovered at a Traveler site on Mars, but it could just as easily be found anywhere else in the solar system, including Terra itself, particularly if you wish to imply a greater involvement of the Travelers in human history.

## D-Drive Invented

The invention of the Dillingham Drive (named for its inventor Arturo Dillingham) is the foundational event of the interstellar era, without which none of what followed would have been possible.

**Note:** The D-Drive is the only type of FTL drive existing in the Thousand Suns setting, making its invention of prime importance. In a setting with more than one type of FTL drive, this event might still be importance, on par with Nicholas-Joseph Cugnot's invention of the steam wagon, which is to say, of interest to scholars but having little impact on the lives of most people.

## Vojaĝanto Expedition

The Vojaĝanto Expedition was the first successful use of the D-Drive to travel to another star system. Thanks to a correct interpretation of the Dane-Ohlmhorst Map, this star system contained a Terran-compatible planet, which was named Espero by the captain of the Vojaĝanto and soon became a hub from which countless other expeditions along the jumplines of the Thousand Suns was launched.

**Note:** The name Vojaĝanto, like the name Espero, is in the artificial language Esperanto, which stands in for Terra Lingua throughout this book. If the culture from which your version of the meta-setting evolves is different, you might wish to change these names. The Espero system is the oldest continuously inhabited system outside of the Sol system and, as such, an important place in the Thousand Suns – the equivalent of San Salvador or Plymouth Rock.

## First Contact

Humanity's first contact with an intelligent species occurred when Terran starships encountered their Czanik counterparts. The two species immediately got along well and a bond of friendship was formed that has lasted for centuries. Though the two races do not always see eye to eye, there is no question that they are inseparable companions as they explore the stars.

**Note:** First contact is a civilization-changing moment for the Terrans. Likewise, the alliance between them and the Czanik is an important pillar of the meta-setting. Should your version of the meta-setting either not include the Czanik or a different species in their place, it will have very significant consequences for the setting as a whole and how its history might have unfolded.

## Foundation of the Terran Federation

As humanity spread among the Thousand Suns, the need for a unified interstellar government became apparent over time. The Terran Federation, sometimes called the Old Federation nowadays, met this need. Initially, the Federation was a loose body whose responsibilities were few, primarily defense and the regulation of trade. Over the centuries, the Federation grew ever more powerful, centralized, and, according to some, authoritarian—tendencies that sparked the Wars of Independence, as system after system seceded from the Federation and sparked two centuries of sporadic warfare, economic disruption, and societal decline.

**Note:** The Old Federation serves several purposes in the meta-setting. It is at once a mythical “Golden Age” when Terran civilization was at its peak and cautionary example of civilizational hubris. People in Year 500 look back on the Old Federation with equal parts awe and loathing. Think of it as the Roman Empire of the meta-setting, for good and for ill. In addition, the Old Federation is the origin for most of the human clades that exist in the game – and just about any other technological terror you wish to add to your campaign, as it was a time of unfettered scientific tinkering without regard for morality or common sense. Finally, the Old Federation

*‘We’re mortal -- which is to say, we’re ignorant, stupid, and sinful -- but those are only handicaps. Our pride is that nevertheless, now and then, we do our best. A few times we succeed. What more dare we ask for?’*

*–Poul Anderson,  
Ensign Flandry (1966)*

## Von Neumann’s War

A perfect example of the kinds of mistakes the Old Federation made, Von Neumann’s War was a brief conflict between Terran forces and artificially intelligent machines, including automated starships and military vessels. The war ended in a victory for humanity, with the destruction of most—but not all—of the AIs. This left a deep scar on the Terran psyche. Since the War, most Terrans have not felt comfortable with the widespread use of robots. Those few that do exist tend to be employed in limited capacities where they are deemed to be least likely to cause trouble. Artificially intelligent machines are also treated with suspicion and, while not legally banned in the Thousand Suns, they are rare to the point of non-existence. That the Hen Jaa have no such concerns only adds to the sinister light in which these aliens are viewed. Rumors also persist of AI starships that escaped into Wildspace and even now pursue designs against the Thousand Suns.

**Note:** Von Neumann’s War is, of course, named after the early computer theorist John von Neumann, who, among many other achievements, proposed the development of



self-replicating spacecraft. Ever since, the notion of a machine capable of building copies of itself has been called a “Von Neumann machine.” Von Neumann’s War represents the Old Federation’s flirtation with artificially intelligent weapons of war and it provides an explanation as to why intelligent robots and androids are rarities in the setting.

### **The Gene War**

Following the debacle of Von Neumann’s War, the Old Federation turned increasingly to genetic engineering of human beings to replace robots. This resulted in the creation of numerous human sub-species (or clades), including the widely known Myrmidons and the Delphic. Over time, these clades proved themselves invaluable to the functioning of the Old Federation, a weakness that the Myrmidons exploited. The result was the Gene War, a rebellion instigated by several Myrmidon military units that grew to engulf the entire Federation. As they had in Von Neumann’s War, the Terrans triumphed but at great cost and the rot within the Old Federation, both political and moral, was laid bare.

**Note:** Like Von Neumann’s War, the Gene War provides an explanation for why genetic engineering is undeveloped and rare in the Thousand Suns. Of course, the GM is free to include whatever genetically engineered races and species he wishes, since the Old Federation freely dabbled in this area before the Gene War revealed its folly.

### **The Wars of Independence**

The Gene War delivered a mortal blow to the Old Federation, as individual worlds and even entire sectors recognized its weakness and made bids for independence from the tottering interstellar government. Racked by political and financial crises and rent with brushfire wars and insurrections, the Federation would soldier on for centuries more but it would be a shadow of its former glory. With each decade, it grew more insular and xenophobic, eventually succumbing to civilizational senescence, which ushered in a new era of galactic barbarism.

**Note:** This period represents the last gasp of the Old Federation and its echoes resonate still in the Thousand Suns, as worlds recover from the Civil War a generation ago. Many worlds and governments seceded from the Federation at this time and GMs wishing to provide an origin for them can easily point to this time period. Many of these states developed societies in reaction to the perceived excesses and vices of the Old Federation, which ought to provide lots of fodder for adventures.

## The Age of Warring States

This period lasted approximately two centuries, during which there was no unified interstellar government, the Thousand Suns instead being divided into numerous states of varying size and power. While it is certainly true that this era was characterized by a lack of unity and significant technological and social decline on innumerable worlds, it was a true dark age, despite recent propaganda to the contrary. Many worlds weathered the Age of Warring States quite well, while several, such as Meridian, only came into their own once the yoke of the Old Federation had been removed.

**Note:** Like the Wars of Independence, it was a civilizational shift and many events in the Thousand Suns can be traced back to it. In general, worlds and states that owe their origin to this period tend to be more “barbaric” and less concerned with cultural niceties than is common in the Thousand Suns.

## The Concord

The signing of this charter established the current interstellar government and its organs, as well as inaugurating the New Calendar by which all historical dates are now reckoned. More information on the Concord can be found below.

**Note:** The signing of the Concord ended the Age of Warring States and established the Great Peace under which the Thousand Suns new flourishes. It is, literally, the Year Zero event of the meta-setting. Whether the signing of this charter was an act by worlds united for a common future or something forced upon them by a powerful clique will set the tone for the State that now governs the Thousand Suns.

## The Civil War

The Civil War was an interstellar conflict between rebel and loyalist factions that began as an attempt to reform the terms of the Concord and quickly degenerated into violence when the reformists’ demands were not met. Further complicating matters were efforts by various political leaders to use the conflict as a vehicle for seizing greater power for themselves. Lasting nearly a decade, the Civil War ended with a restoration of the status quo ante bellum and promises of reform. To date, few reform proposals have been discussed, let alone enacted, leading some to fear that it is only a matter of time before further civil unrest results and once again plunges the Thousand Suns into war.

**Note:** The details of the Civil War are left for each GM to determine in his own campaign. An important factor to consider is how many of both the rebel and loyalist leaders survived

the conflict and what became of them. If, for example, the rebels were treated harshly, odds of another conflict are greater. Likewise, if the loyalists fought honorably and treated their opponents with a degree of respect, genuine reform may occur. In any event, the Civil War is the last great event of the meta-setting. After it, all that remains is whatever future you and your fellow players create.

## **The Concord**

The Concord is the name of the document signed by several dozen worlds (known to history as the United Worlds in Council) that decided, after a period of intense diplomacy, to pledge themselves to the re-establishment of a united interstellar government and put an end to the anarchy of the Age of Warring States. The Concord sets down the constitutional powers and responsibilities of this new government, as well of its member worlds. The Concord also created the organs of governance by which the new interstellar state would exert its authority.

## **Articles of the Concord**

While there is no need to enumerate the intricacies of the Concord, a few of its most important articles are worth mentioning, as they all have a profound impact on the meta-setting.

### **Supreme Authority of the State**

Though composed of many individual worlds, each with their own local laws and customs, the State of which they are members enjoys supreme legal and political authority. Laws passed by the Concordium (see below) are the ultimate basis for all other laws, which is to say that local laws generally cannot contradict federal/imperial laws. Likewise, all member worlds must acknowledge the authority of the State and its organs as the final arbiters of disputes or other conflicts.

### **Unified Standards**

The Concord establishes a number of standards for use by all member worlds. This includes a calendar, a currency, and a timekeeping system. All worlds must accept and use these standards when dealing with the State and other members. They are free to use other standards locally but these standards never take precedence over those established by the Concord.

## **No Multi-World Members**

Each world is an individual member of the State. There are no multi-world groupings of any sort, meaning that no world may possess colonies or subject worlds apart from those cases where the State has granted either a specific exception or a trusteeship. Consequently, most colonization efforts are instigated by the State or its organs or by independent organizations that are not agents of either the State or any of its member worlds.

## **Third Man In**

A consequence of the forbidding of multi-world members is that, while two member worlds may go to (limited) war with one another when no other means of resolving a dispute can be found, neither side may engage off-world allies or parties in the conflict. That is, the war must be between the two disputants and no one else. They may employ off-world mercenaries and turn to others not directly involved for materiel and other assistance, but third parties may not involve themselves directly in the conflict. Unsurprisingly, this article is probably abused more than any other and the State has been known to turn a blind eye to abuses of it when doing so serves its political purposes.

## **No Weapons of Mass Destruction**

The State reserves to itself weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear and biological weapons, and deals harshly with any world or group that attempts to seize, let alone use, such weapons for itself. While the State generally prefers a laissez-faire approach to most matters, the abuse of this article is always dealt with swiftly, lest others come to see weapons of mass destruction as a means for keeping the State at bay.

## **Equality before the Law**

Every citizen of the State is held accountable for his actions. In addition, every citizen possesses sovereign rights that are guaranteed by the Concord. Under the imperial option (described below), this article is somewhat weakened because of the presence of a noble class with greater political clout than common citizens. Even then, nobles are not, strictly speaking, above the law, as they too can be brought to trial for their misdeeds and can expect punishment should they fail in their responsibilities as peers of the realm.

## **No Slavery**

Any creature deemed to be sapient, however primitive, is considered a citizen of the State and possessed of the full rights pertaining thereto. Chattel slavery is thus strictly

forbidden by the State and anyone who attempts to flout this law is treated very harshly.

## The Concordium

Chief among the governmental organs established by the Concord is the legislature known as the Concordium. Divided into two chambers, the Assembly, whose representatives are chosen by member worlds at regular intervals, and the Senate, whose representatives are appointed for life, the Concordium debates and enacts laws. The extent of the Concordium's power and prestige will vary from one version of the meta-setting to another. In some, it will be very important and the true center of power, whereas in others it might be a corrupt, toy legislature, intended primarily for show rather than for the actual exercise of authority. Exactly which of these is the case will set the tone for one's campaign and thus the Game Master is once again encouraged to think carefully about how he wishes to portray this element of the meta-setting.

## The State

The signing of the Concord in Year 0 marks the end of the Age of Warring States. The Concord established an interstellar government that was heir to the best of the Old Federation while – it is hoped – avoiding its worst mistakes. The exact nature of the interstellar government it established is one of the most important decisions the Game Master, in conjunction with his players, must make about his version of the Thousand Suns meta-setting.

As noted in Chapter 6, Imperial SF usually assumed that the interstellar government of the future would be either a democratic but corrupt federation or an autocratic but benevolent empire.

The meta-setting likewise assumes these two alternatives and provides information in this chapter on how to tailor your game depending on which alternative you choose. What follows is a brief overview of each option. More specific information pertaining to the setting as a whole, as well as to the consequences of choosing one type of government over another, can be found in subsequent sections of this chapter.

### The Great Crest

The Concord also established numerous devices and insignia intended to be universally recognizable as symbols of the new era brought about in Year 0. Chief among these is the Great Crest, which shows a field of stars that represent the Thousand Suns. At the base of the crest are the words, in *Lingua Terra*, *Destino Pli Brila ol Mil Sunoj* – “a destiny brighter than a thousand suns,” which is a line from Johane Coelho's famous poem on the occasion of the *Vojaĝanto Expedition* in –1688.



## **Second Federation**

The first option is what will be called the federal option, which assumes that the Concord established a literal successor to the Old Federation – a Second Federation, sometimes called the Thousand-Sun Federation. Under this option, the Old Federation is often called the First Federation, to emphasize its role as predecessor to the Second Federation. The Federation is, nominally at least, a democratic republican union of worlds. Whether its commitment to democracy is more than words is for the GM to determine.

## **Empire of the Thousand Suns**

The second option is what will be called the imperial option, which assumes that the Concord established an empire, complete with an emperor and hereditary nobility – the Empire of the Thousand Suns. Under this option, the Old Federation is called simply that, so as to emphasize its failures were the result of outdated thinking that the Empire has wisely abandoned. The Empire can range from a tin pot dictatorship to a constitutional monarchy, but in all cases, the State is not primarily a democratic one.

## **Heads of State**

In keeping with the general philosophy of this chapter, it provides no specific names or biographies for the current leader of the State. Instead, we offer a number of alternatives, from which each Game Master can select and modify as suits his own interpretation of the Thousand Suns meta-setting. Below are descriptions of the First Citizen and the emperor, as well as eight archetypes (four for each campaign option) of the galactic leader drawn from Imperial SF literature. These archetypes are by no means exhaustive and the GM is encouraged to mix and match between them, as well as to create his own variants, according to his wishes and the needs of his campaign. Additional archetypes, as well as more specific interpretations of the head of state will be made available through the Rogue Games website.

## **The First Citizen**

The head of the Federation government is the First Citizen, which may or may not be his actual title. Depending on the structure and nature of the Federation, he might hold the title of First Citizen, Prime Minister, Premier, or Chancellor, among many others. He might govern by being an independently elected chief executive or he may be the leader of the largest political party in the Concordium. The exact nature and extent of his legal authority is entirely up the Game Master, bearing in mind that there are differences in flavor between a Federation headed by an American-style First Citizen, a European-style first minister, and

revolutionary-style elected leader.

In addition to his legal constituted powers, the First Citizen often possesses a great deal of “moral authority,” with which he can sway both the electorate and the Concordium to act as he deems best for the Federation. The extent to which a First Citizen can call upon this authority depends greatly on his perceived personal integrity, with some First Citizens having little or no credibility in this regard while others are (literally) unimpeachable and thus able to command great respect.

### **The Puppet**

This First Citizen archetype is a person who is not personally corrupt and may even be quite upstanding personally – but he is weak-willed and easily manipulated by his advisors, who use him as a vehicle for their own ambitions. The Puppet works well in campaigns where it is not the government as a whole or the First Citizen himself who is tainted but a cabal of schemers in the First Citizen’s inner circle. This archetype sets a conspiratorial tone, but also a hopeful one, in that the exposure of the advisors might either free the First Citizen from their grip or pave the way for the election of a better, stronger man to the office.

### **The Corrupt Politico**

This First Citizen archetype is a person who is personally corrupt and his assumption of the presidency is part of his plan for enriching himself and his cronies. He may or may not be a tyrant, who abuses both law and tradition in a bid for greater power, but he is definitely venal and vicious, with no regard for the well-being of the Federation beyond what serves his own ends. This archetype can set a dark tone by implying either that the electorate is, at best, corrupt itself or, at worst, stupid and easily duped. Likewise, if the Corrupt Politico is a tyrant, his actions may call into question the integrity of the Federation itself, creating an environment for adventures with a politically radical cast to them.

### **The Man of Vision**

This First Citizen archetype is a person who inspires greatness in others by his vision of a better future. He may or may not be personally flawed in some way, but he is nevertheless a person who hopes to bring about a better tomorrow for the Federation. The Man of Vision can be a tragic archetype if few people share his vision or if his personal foibles hobble the chances of his dream ever becoming reality. On the other hand, he can also be a very hopeful archetype, a light shining in the darkness around whom individuals of similar conviction can rally.

## **The Zealot**

Unlike the Man of Vision, this First Citizen archetype is not guided by a larger vision, but he has one issue – lifting the ban on AI, the equality of all planets, war with the hated Hen Jaa, stricter laws against psionics – that he will drive to the bitter end come hell or high water, and the law be damned. He might be a heroic zealot like Abraham Lincoln or a monster like Maximilien Robespierre. This archetype can be hopeful or dark, depending on the issue the Zealot takes as his own.

## **The Emperor**

The head of the imperial government is the emperor, enshrined in the Concord as its Final Arbiter and Supreme Guardian. The emperor reigns for life, although he may choose to abdicate his throne prior to his death for any reason he chooses. Traditionally, the firstborn child of the emperor succeeds him upon his death, although, again, exceptions can be made for a variety of reasons. Provided the Concordium concurs (as it has the responsibility of confirming heirs to the throne), someone other than the firstborn issue of the previous emperor, including someone not related to him by blood, may assume his mantle.

The emperor acts as the chief executive of the empire, administering it through an array of functionaries and promulgating laws for it through his Chancellor (with the consent of the Concordium). Only he has the authority to grant new patents of nobility above the rank of Baron. He also acts as the court of final appeal for both commoners and nobility, although it is rare for the emperor to hear cases in all but the most extreme circumstances. Law and custom limit the emperor's power, but individual emperors have used (and abused) their power to varying degrees throughout history.

## **The Doddering Fool**

Almost identical to the First Citizenial archetype the Puppet, the Doddering Fool is an emperor (usually elderly) who is not the true power in the empire. Someone else, whether it be an ambitious advisor, their heir to the throne, or a younger second spouse, manipulates the emperor to their own ends. This archetype can be either a dark or a hopeful one, depending on whether a virtuous replacement for the aged emperor is waiting in the wings. At the very least, the Doddering Fool archetype suggests a period of stasis or slow decline, as vultures circle in expectation of the emperor's death and the plays for power that will inevitably follow it.

## **The Naïf**

This archetype is a young and inexperienced emperor, newly on the throne and unsure of himself and his abilities. He may possess genuine talent and simply lack experience or he may be a Doddering Fool in the making. In either case, this archetype suggests an uncertain tone, during which time the Naïf – and the empire – discovers his true nature. Prior to this point, advisors, both good and bad, may attempt to find a place for themselves in court and which of them do so will set the tone for later years. If the Naïf evolves into a good and visionary emperor, this archetype sets the stage for a new Golden Age, while the evolution into either a mediocre or tyrannical emperor implies the slow slide toward Armageddon.

## **The Once and Future Emperor**

This archetype is much like the First Citizenial archetype the Man of Vision, right down to the possibility of the emperor's personal foibles. The Once and Future Emperor is, as his name implies, Arthur reborn – a man ahead of his time who ushers in a Golden Age for the empire. Whether that age is brief or lengthy can vary, depending on whether the GM wishes to set a dark or hopeful tone. In either case, the Once and Future Emperor is a personally attractive individual seeking only what is best for his realm and his subjects.

## **The Tyrant**

This archetype is a cliché but that doesn't make it unsuitable for use. The emperor in this case an iron heeled dictator who brooks no dissent to his rule and uses his formidable authority and unmatched military power to wipe out his enemies, both internally and externally. The Tyrant may or may not be personally corrupt, indulging in all manner of debauchery, but he always rules in a heavy-handed fashion. This archetype usually signals a dark tone, but it's possible to imagine well-intentioned Tyrants who act out of conscience and believe their harsh methods are the only way to preserve the empire from chaos.

## **Organizations**

Life in the Thousand Suns is partially defined by several organizations of interstellar scope, by governmental and civilian. What follows are descriptions of but a few of the most important of these organizations. Game Master should feel free both to alter the organizations provided here, as well as to invent his own. The Thousand Suns are a huge place and just about any type of organization you can imagine probably exists somewhere.

## **Military**

The military is, without a doubt, one of the most powerful and prominent organs of the State's power in the Thousand Suns. On many far-flung worlds in the Marches, the military may be the only regular contact that their inhabitants have with agents of the State. Consequently, the military tries very hard to maintain a positive image, for their actions color how the State is popularly viewed. That's not to suggest that the military is squeaky clean and without its share of problems—far from it!—but there's no question that the military tries harder than most organs of the State to present itself in as positive a light as possible.

### **The Navy**

The Navy, more commonly known simply as the Fleet, is the primary military force of the State. It is by far the most powerful in terms of sheer destructive ability. The Navy is an extremely political service; dominated by powerful families and used as a launching board for political ambitions.

At the heart of the Navy are the fleets themselves. There are many of these groupings, each tailored to the area and mission. The center of each fleet are the massive battleships and dreadnaughts, gigantic ships crewed by thousands that can devastate worlds either with their massive weapons or with the waves of fighters they carry. Supporting these monsters are the medium warships, battle cruisers and cruisers, and a horde of smaller vessels built for scouting and close defense, the corvettes, destroyers, and escorts.

Accompanying a fleet will be any number of tenders, repair ships, troop carriers for the Naval Infantry, couriers, and other vessels as needed. A full fleet gathered in one system is an impressive and terrifying sight.

Fleet activity is centered on the many naval bases scattered throughout the Thousand Suns. The bases are placed according to strategic need and response times. When possible, bases are put in systems that can provide essential support like dockyards and re-supply. Due to the needs of the State, however, a good number of bases are placed in backwater systems, in barren systems, or even in deep space.

Enlistment in the Navy is open to any citizen who can pass the fairly easy entrance exams. The basic term of service is ten years. Officers are trained, with very rare exception, at the naval academies. These facilities, located on Core worlds, train would be officers in a five-year program. The final year is spent as a midshipman in fleet service. Appointment to the academy is allegedly by merit; it is well known that political pull can secure a spot for an influential family.



## Naval Infantry

The Naval Infantry (NI or Marines) serves many roles as a semi-independent part of the Navy. They act as shipboard security, shore police, guard naval facilities, and operate the Navy's prisons. But perhaps their most important job is as a quick-reaction force for surface actions. NI troops are trained to hit hard, move fast, and accomplish their missions no matter the odds. To this end, their selection and training is the harshest of all the imperial services. Casualties are an expected part of training. Even the most junior recruit finds himself thrust into leadership roles early and often. Unlike the other services, the NI is fanatical about commissioning officers from the ranks. The vast majority of officers served at least a few years as an enlisted man before being sent to officers' school.

The unit most often deployed is the Surface Expeditionary Unit, roughly 800 NI strong. This unit is trained to be able to handle almost any task from disaster assistance to assaulting a fortified complex. A SEU is generally made up of five companies. For larger operations, several SEU will combine into a Surface Expeditionary Force. Several SEF create an Invasion Group, the largest NI force seen.

The Naval Infantry is a light force, lacking heavy armor and fire support (except for that provided by the fleet in orbit.) Because of this, NI troopers are liberally equipped with whatever they can carry. The image of a NI trooper, loaded down with gear, is a common one in the Thousand Suns.

*War is not its own end, except in some catastrophic slide into absolute damnation. It's peace that's wanted. Some better peace than the one you started with.*

*--Lois McMaster Bujold The Vor Game (1990)*

## The Army

Better known to most as the Legions, the Army is the largest of the military forces. Their unofficial motto is Marteli kaj Anvil—"hammer and anvil"—and refers to both their role in breaking attacks on the Thousand Suns by stout defense and their hammering of those enemies in the attack. There is nothing subtle about a legion on the attack.

The base unit of the Army is the famed Legion. Each legion has roughly 20,000 troops and scores of combat vehicles. Legions are divided into ten "Groups" of four different types. Each Group is further divided into ten 200-man Bands.

- Assault groups are the heavy infantry. Assault forces are mixed armored infantry

and fighting vehicles trained to work in close concert. Most legions have six Assault Groups.

- Hunter groups are light infantry/special operations. Trained in reconnaissance, raiding, and skirmish tactics, Hunters are experts in infiltrating enemy lines to raise havoc. Most legions have two Hunter Groups.
- Storm groups are the modern version of artillery. Using a variety of brilliant missile, saturation munitions, and micro-nukes, Storm groups unleash devastation from hundreds of miles away. Legions usually have a single Storm Group.
- Support groups provide all the battlefield support in terms of logistics, medical, repair, and administration services. There is one Support Group in each Legion.
- Each Legion also has a Command Band, supporting the commander and his staff.

The Army is constantly expanding, and will create new legions in vast numbers if needed. Legions tend to be raised from a single world (or a close grouping of systems) to foster a feeling of brotherhood among the troops. Academies for officers exist in many places with varying quality.

Legions are stationed where needed, although there is a bias to keep them on or near the worlds they were raised on. This has led to some Core Legions becoming parade ground troops not seeing much action. In contrast, some Legions from the Marches are rarely in their barracks, being on campaign almost constantly. This has led to the famous aphorism “Core legions are all spit and polish. Marcher legions are just the same, but without the polish.”

#### **Polvo**

Polvo is the name in Lingua Terra for a plant originating on the Czanik homeworld of Galj, characterized by broad leaves, which, when dried out, turn into a fine, black powder that is a powerful alkaloid. Most Czanik enjoy the smell of polvo smoke, which they burn like incense in their homes and even in some public spaces. After First Contact, some Terrans learned to appreciate the smell of polvo – as well as its mild psychoactive properties. Polvo cigarettes and pipes are now popular among some Terrans, who enjoy them not only for their inherent properties but also for their associations in Terran culture with being sophisticated and well-traveled.

### **The Encyclopedia Galactica Foundation**

One of the more influential organizations in the Thousand Suns is neither an organ of the State nor a great commercial enterprise (though it does make money – quite a lot of it, in

fact). This organization is the Encyclopedia Galactica Foundation, more commonly known as the Encyclopedia Foundation or simply the Foundation. Established shortly after the signing of the Concord, the Foundation produces an encyclopedia of all knowledge, which it sells to eager readers throughout the Thousand Suns. The Encyclopedia Galactica is a compendium of every subject, from jump physics to xenobiology to history. The encyclopedia has a well deserved reputation both for its thorough treatment of its contents and its relative objectivity. The Foundation has remained aloof from politics for centuries and makes a concerted effort to be seen as a “neutral observer” in the conflicts of the day.

The Encyclopedia Galactica is constantly revised and updated. The Foundation accomplishes this by sponsoring teams of researchers who travel throughout the Thousand Suns to visit historical sites, interview important people, explore ruins, observe alien species, and much more. As a result, the Foundation employs a vast number of people from all backgrounds and professions in the pursuit of knowledge. On occasion, the Foundation has come under fire because of hiring practices, particularly when it employs individuals Core worlds society deems “inappropriate.” The Foundation has always maintained that they make no judgments on the individuals they hire so long as commit no crimes or jeopardize the mission for which they were hired. To that end, they hire individuals based on their areas of expertise and usefulness to the job at hand. If that means hiring a hard-bitten mercenary captain from the Marches rather than a lauded research scientist from the Core, so be it.

## **Megacorporations**

Without a doubt, the megacorporations are among the most influential non-governmental bodies in the Thousand Suns. The megacorporations are businesses that concentrate on certain “niche markets” and produce little of great quality outside those markets. Competition between megacorporations within the same niche is fierce, but there are relatively few instances of cross-niche conflict.

There are thousands of megacorporations in the Thousand Suns. Many of these megacorporations are publicly owned and administered by a board of directors. Private families or individuals own others. In every case, the personalities of those who run the megacorporation strongly influence the nature of it and its business practices. Steele Unlimited is an especially good example of this principle.

As described in this chapter, the nature of commerce in the Thousand Suns is unlike that in past ages. Transporting large quantities of most goods via D-Drive is neither efficient nor cost-effective. The few cargoes that are transported from world to world are largely high-value goods and luxury items that cannot easily be reproduced. Megacorporations

thus distribute most of their product lines in a manner reminiscent of a franchise system.

The megacorporations themselves are primarily responsible for producing and distributing technical specifications. These specifications are designs and schematics that will then be purchased by local manufacturers. These manufacturers, all of whose methods and materials (most of which is also purchased from the megacorporation) must meet the standards of the megacorporations, will in turn produce items in accordance with the designs in the data package. This guarantees a consistency and uniformity among the products. Thus, a Takamatsu-Hegenauer laser pistol produced on a Core world will be identical to one produced in the Marches. A consumer can be assured of the quality of his purchase of a megacorporation product, no matter where he bought it.

Listed below are a few examples of megacorporations in the Thousand Suns meta-setting. This list is far from exhaustive and new megacorporations can be added to this number with ease.

### **Amalgamated Medical Industries Corporation (AMICor)**

A pharmaceuticals and medical manufacturer, AMICor also researches numerous advanced medical products, including psi drugs and cybernetics technology. A subsidiary of AMICor, Biologix, produces cell regeneration and replacement technologies for those who prefer it to cybernetics.

**Competitors:** Markov Medical Megacorporation, Pharmex Industries, Gameron Laboratories, Chihim Megacorporation, and Storwal-Couto.

### **Mathanakaran Megacorporation**

Mathanakaran produces high quality and reliable computer technology. The military has granted several major contracts to this megacorporation in recent years, a sure sign of the effectiveness of its products.

**Chief Competitors:** Steele Unlimited, Matsutoda, Mihev Megacorporation, Susini Technologies, Nkrumah, and Liu Expert Systems

### **Meridian Starlines**

Meridian Starlines is only the most prominent of several dozen interstellar travel businesses. Meridian became the most prominent simply because of its huge fleet of liners and stranglehold over the most lucrative routes in the Core worlds. Few other megacorporations can begin to compete with the resources and scope of Meridian Starlines

**Chief Competitors:** Hermes Carriers, Carveth Lines, Abdalyan, and Kwan Lines.

## Takamatsu-Hegenauer (T-H)

T-H is the premier weapons manufacturer in the Thousand Suns. Headquartered on Meridian itself, as it has been since before the Concord, T-H supplies the military with its latest weaponry. T-H also produces high-quality personal weapons for purchase by the public. The company has earned a well-deserved reputation for amorality in its business dealings. Profit and “progress” are paramount; little else matters to T-H.

**Chief Competitors:** Precision Arms, Hallam Corporation, Stojanov Weapons Systems, Intertech, Cross Arms, Huong Defence Megacorporation, and Steele Unlimited.

## Economics

The Core and civilized worlds of the Thousands are extraordinarily wealthy by the standards of past ages. Even most worlds on the Marches possess wealth beyond that imagined in earlier times. Automated factories mass-produce most items inexpensively. Likewise, the mining of asteroids and other stellar bodies is a largely automated and inexpensive process that provides most worlds with all the raw materials, whether they be metals or organics, they need. Between this and the use of fusion powered recycling, there is rarely any need to import metals or non-organic materials from one world to another; everything can be easily produced locally. This includes most organic materials as well, such as pharmaceuticals and foodstuffs.

Of course, there are some materials that are simply too expensive and/or too infeasible to synthesize locally. These are mostly luxury goods of one sort or another. Good examples of such luxuries include decorative materials, fresh food, exotic pharmaceuticals and intoxicants, as well as living creatures. Similarly, artworks hold special value, as do artifacts from earlier eras or from ancient civilizations, whether human or alien. Certainly replicas of these items can be made cheaply and easily but Terrans have a fondness for “real” items and are willing to pay premium prices for them.

Most manufactured goods are made locally as well. Unless conditions dictate otherwise, megacorporations find it far more economically viable to build an automated factory on every world to produce goods for sale than to import the goods from another world. Because fashions change and fads can spring up unexpectedly, even automated factories require new technical specifications to produce new goods in keeping with the change in public tastes. Independent merchants can make money by transporting new specifications to far-off worlds or by smuggling illegal copies of specifications. Likewise, megacorporations are not above producing artificial shortages to increase demand for manufactured items. Traders who can flout such megacorporate economic manipulation may make themselves rich – and incur the wrath of these mighty engines of interstellar commerce. The specifica-



tions for restricted items, such as high-tech weapons and armor, are usually only legally available to certain designated automated factories. A brisk trade exists in either bootlegged specifications or in surplus military gear in the Marches and, especially, in Wildspace.

Finally, travel from world to world is a lucrative endeavor and many traders sell passage aboard their vessels, particularly if they travel to worlds not serviced or at least not well serviced by the major transport lines of the Thousand Suns. Of course, travel aboard a trading vessel is fraught with its own dangers, from pirates to the often-poor quality of medical care available for slow passengers, making it risky. On the other hand, if faced with getting to a far-off world aboard a trading vessel or not at all, many adventurers freely choose the former—and the dangers it brings with it.

## **Psionics**

As noted in Chapter 3, psionics are powers of the mind possessed by talented individuals. They are a commonplace element in Imperial SF stories but their treatment is not consistent. Consequently, each GM may choose to approach psionics as he wishes. What follows is a brief overview of some possible approaches on the subject. It should be noted, however, that psionics is treated as supernatural in origin in Imperial SF. At its most mysterious, it is assumed that unknown physical principles govern its use rather than anything genuinely occult. The extent to which psionics is understood scientifically makes a difference, with those settings where it is better understood being more likely to be accepting of it than those where it is not. This isn't a universal rule; acceptance is not solely a function of knowledge and it's possible to imagine many settings where increased knowledge of psionics has in fact led to greater fear of these abilities. In any case, Thousand Suns assumes that psionics is natural rather than supernatural in origin, but leaves the specific details of its operation and the extent that Terran civilization understands those details up to each GM.

## **Accepted**

This approach assumes that people in the Thousand Suns view psionics without any fear or rancor. Mental powers are simply an accepted part of life and psions are treated no differently than anyone else. In a setting where psionics is both accepted and well understood, there may be entire professions or industries dedicated to employing psions. Depending on the number of psions in the setting, acceptance could also produce a society where criminal thoughts are illegal or where diplomacy is conducted with total honesty because of psions' abilities to read thoughts. Special military forces and spies with psionic abilities might be the norm.

## **Suspicion**

Acceptance is unusual in Imperial SF, where psionic abilities are usually treated with some degree of suspicion, either because of uncertainty about these powers' origin or the ways that their use might warp Terran society. While suspicion does not necessarily lead to outlawing, it does guarantee that psions must operate discretely and restraint. There will almost certainly be restrictions on the use of psionics. Governments and megacorporations may still employ psions but they will not boast about this. Instead, they will do so furtively in hopes of not arousing stronger reactions from the public.

## **Fear**

In some settings, people fear psionics, treating it as a dangerous aberration with the capacity to undermine society and bring about the fall of civilization. In such settings, psions are scapegoats and use of their abilities is severely restricted if not outright banned. They may hide their powers, lest they be arrested and given treatments to “cure” them of their “disorder.” Many psions might turn to crime or terrorism out of desperation or anger, while others might work quietly behind the scenes to change societal attitudes toward their special gifts.

## **No Psionics**

Of course, there is no requirement that you include psionics at all. Many Imperial SF settings do not include them, both because their presence can be potentially disruptive dramatically and because the scientific basis for mental powers is fuzzy at best. In the end, each GM must decide for himself whether he wishes to include psionics based on his plans for his campaign and the wishes of his players.

## **Interstellar Neighbors**

Though the State is by far the most important interstellar body in the Thousand Suns, it is far from the only one. Numerous other states exist and they interact with the State in a variety of ways. The most significant ones are described in this section, but the GM should feel no compunction about adding to or subtracting from those presented here, as suits his own campaign.

### **Hen Jaa Hegemony**

The Hen Jaa Hegemony is the main rival to Terran civilization among the Thousand Suns. This interstellar empire, though smaller than that of the Terrans, is growing, in part because

the Hen Jaa ensure that it does so. When diplomacy does not work to induce worlds to join their fold, outright conquest is always an option. In addition, the Hen Jaa are a young and vibrant species. Their numbers are growing and they see the stars as their birthright. They have even managed to impress many Terrans with their societal energy and determination, which they see as a welcome difference with jaded Terran civilization. Whether the Hegemony will one day overtake the Thousand Suns or fall victim to their own internal problems, only the future can say.

*There are always survivors at a massacre. Among the victors, if nowhere else.*

*--Lois McMaster, Bujold Ethan of Athos (1986)*

### **Myrmidon Domains**

The Myrmidon Domains are a collection of squabbling interstellar states over which the Myrmidon clade forms the ruling class. Each Myrmidon Domain is different than the next, though most tend to be militaristic “enlightened despotisms” whose rulers see themselves as philosopher-kings destined to make the galaxy a better place through their schemes. True to their nature, the Myrmidon Domains incessantly battle one another, both through force of arms and more subtle stratagems, constantly weeding out the “unfit” Domains and thus “improving” the clade as a whole. The Domains are often antagonistic toward Terran civilization, which they regard as “weak,” but they rarely engage in outright violence against it, preferring to play diplomatic chess matches against it, looking for the opportunity to play their advantage.

### **Kriilkna Consociation**

Much like the Myrmidons, the Kriilkna do not possess a single interstellar state, instead having a collection of them. Where they differ from the Myrmidons is that the Kriilkna states have a theoretical union through their religion Ybaaraa. This union encourages the Kriilkna to work together for a common purpose, most importantly the spread of the species throughout the galaxy. By and large this arrangement does work, keeping squabbles to a minimum, but it also lacks the political and administrative unity necessary to make the Consociation a major player in the Thousand Suns. Unsurprisingly, some Kriilkna have begun to think heretical thoughts, namely that Ybaaraa might be impeding rather than encouraging progress for the species. Some of these Kriilkna have turned to piracy and raiding, both on their fellow Kriilkna and on Terrans, leading to increased tensions.

### **The Warring States**

The Age of Warring States (see above) was a turbulent period in history after the fall of the

Old Federation. During that time, many interstellar states arose, most of which either did not last or were absorbed into the State sometime after the Concord was signed. A handful of them survived and continue to exist to this day. Disdainfully called the Warring States due to their origins, not all of these polities are militant and some are effectively clients and allies of the State. Of course, some are antagonistic and the generally rough nature of their societies (compared to Terran civilization anyway) contributes to their being viewed as “barbarians.” The Warring States exist in Wildspace and are inhabited by humans and aliens of several sorts

## **Five Stars Sector**

As an example of a sector, we present Five Stars sector, located in the Marches, several months’ travel from the Core worlds. Consisting of five worlds once part of an alien interstellar state, the sector also boasts a number of important Terran colonies. GMs can use this sector either directly or as inspiration in creating his own sectors. Free adventures available from the Rogue Games website will be set in Five Stars sector, but they will be easily adaptable to other sectors of your own creation.

### **Governance**

An appointed governor-general oversees Five Stars sector, acting as the State’s viceroy. Like most governors-general in the Marches, he is both the head of the sector’s political administration and its military commander-in-chief. Consequently, he is the single most powerful individual in the sector and his virtues or vices will set the tone for any campaign or adventures in this region of the Thousand Suns. The governor-general is assisted by a number of lieutenant-governors, one for each world. In the case of worlds with a majority Terran population, the lieutenant-governor is largely a figurehead representative of the State, with all important political and administrative work being handled by the local government. In the Garden Cluster, though, the lieutenant-governors are quite influential, overseeing many elements of local governance. Like the governor-general, their personal virtues and vices set the tone for events on the worlds of their responsibility.

### **The Garden Cluster**

The so-called “Garden Cluster” includes four of the the eponymous five star systems after which the sector was named: Lakal, Parashub, Unzaam, and the Chabuli homeworld of Savuul. These worlds are the most hospitable to Terrans in the sector and, not coincidentally, the worlds that once made up the Chabuli Union prior to its conquest by the Terrans.

The worlds of the Cluster remain under varying degrees of martial law, with Savuul, the

homeworld of the Chabuli being the most severe. Terran colonists and megacorporate interests have taken a keen interest in the Garden Cluster. The low population of the Chabuli (as they have a glacial birthrate compared to Terrans) made their worlds attractive spots for colonization.

Unsurprisingly, the Chabuli took a dim view of this behavior and many reacted violently, resulting in a grim history over the last century. Chabuli rebel and terrorist groups operate throughout the Garden Cluster and some receive support from sympathetic Terrans. There are also rumors that the Hen Jaa are supporting these Chabuli in order to contribute to the destabilization of the Terran regime. Of course, the Hen Jaa would most likely be even worse overlords over Five Stars than the Terrans, but the many missteps and outright crimes committed by Terrans since first seizing the Cluster has convinced many Chabuli that anyone would be a better master than the Terrans.

### **The Worlds of Five Stars**

Despite the name of the sector, Five Stars actually possesses 10 worlds within its borders. Five of these worlds were originally part of the Chabuli Union, a small interstellar state governed by the native of the planet Savuul. The Union expanded modestly over the course several decades, aided by the close pseudo-proximity of its five worlds.

Terrans first entered the sector in the years 400 and quickly explored from neighboring sectors. They first encountered the Chabuli at Ichkut and relations went badly from the start, with the Terrans seeing most of the Union's worlds as uninhabited and unexploited. Negotiations for colonization and resource extraction came to naught and the Terrans might well have ignored the sector but for two factors. Firstly, Five Stars is strategically close to Hen Jaa space. Terran policy has for centuries been not to allow the existence of independent states too close to Hen Jaa territory, lest they be used staging grounds for conflict against Terran civilization. Secondly, an attack by a Chabuli starship against a Terran military vessel sparked a strong public demand for retribution. Whether the attack was misunderstanding or even a staged event designed to provoke Terran reaction has never been determined. The end result was Terran occupation of the Garden Cluster and the annexation of the sector into the State.

What follows are thumbnail sketches of every world in the sector. GMs can use these descriptions as springboards for their own campaigns, whether fleshing out the details provided or creating entirely new ones according to the system provided in Chapter 6.



## *Arundel*

Profile: Commercial  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Plains  
Climate: Warm  
Atmosphere: Standard  
Hydrographics: Moderate  
Gravity: Standard  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Tens of Thousands  
Government: Representative Democracy  
Tech Level: Interstellar

Arundel is a thinly populated world whose primary industry is serving as a waypoint between the Garden Cluster and sectors beyond. Consequently, the planet includes impressive orbital shipyards and refueling facilities, as well as entertainment complexes intended for crews on shore leave. Unsurprisingly, rumors abound that the true power on Arundel is one or more criminal syndicates and the corrupt nature of the local government makes this plausible.

## *Bevois*

Profile: Luxury Good/Rare Goods  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Mountainous  
Climate: Cool  
Atmosphere: Standard  
Hydrographics: Wet  
Gravity: Standard  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Thousands  
Government: Representative Democracy  
Tech Level: Stellar

Bevois is barely an outpost of Terran civilization. Terrans live here primarily to engage in extracting unusual organic compounds found deep beneath the planet's surface. The megacorp AMICor believes these compounds have pharmaceutical value and so have riddled the world with shafts and tunnels from which to remove the stuff and transport it elsewhere for experimentation and possible processing. Security on Bevois is tight, leading some to

believe that there's more beneath Bevois' surface than rare organics.

### *Datraveno*

Profile: Administrative/Government  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Urban  
Climate: Freezing  
Atmosphere: Near-Standard  
Hydrographics: Moderate  
Gravity: Standard  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Hundreds of Thousands  
Government: Representative Democracy  
Tech Level: Interstellar

The first Terran outpost in Five Stars sector, Datraveno is home to the governor-general and his staff. The planet itself is a forbidding, frozen place, albeit one with vibrant and biologically interesting ecosystems outside the sprawling city of Unua, its only significant settlement. The planet boasts a major military base, in addition to offices by many larger organizations, including the Encyclopedia Galactica Foundation.

### *Ichkut*

Profile: Academic/Research  
Type: Asteroid  
Primary Terrain: None  
Climate: Freezing  
Atmosphere: None  
Hydrographics: None  
Gravity: None  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Thousands  
Government: Governor  
Tech Level: Interstellar

Originally established by the Chabuli, the asteroid colony of Ichkut exists to study the unusual orbits of the planetary bodies in the star system, which follow strangely elliptical orbits. Some have theorized that these bodies have had their orbits unnaturally altered at some point in the past and, of course, the Travelers are typically postulated to explain the

phenomenon.

### *Josian*

Profile: Commercial  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Plains  
Climate: Warm  
Atmosphere: Standard  
Hydrographics: Wet  
Gravity: Standard  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Tens of Thousands  
Government: Theocracy  
Tech Level: Industrial Age

Josian is home to a religious sect known as the Naivuloj, who reject most forms of advanced technology and prefer to live a simpler life on this pleasant planet. They eschew most outside contact, but the world's location in the sector makes this impossible. While the Naivuloj are generally deemed harmless, stories abound of scandals and dark secrets pertaining to the sect.

### *Lakal*

Profile: Entertainment  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Ocean  
Climate: Warm  
Atmosphere: Standard  
Hydrographics: Wet  
Gravity: Standard  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Tens of Thousands  
Government: Governor  
Tech Level: Interstellar

Lakal is a former Chabuli colony world whose wondrous natural beauty attracted many Terran admirers. Not long after the conquest of the Garden Cluster, a consortium of corporations bought a claim to the planet, which they then converted into a vacation spot for wealthy Terrans. The small Chabuli population didn't take this turn of events well, but

their heavy-handed treatment by the corporations did their best to keep their interference to minimum, lest it undermine Lakal's status as a resort destination.

### *Parashub*

Profile: Agriculture  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Plains  
Climate: Warm  
Atmosphere: Standard  
Hydrographics: Moderate  
Gravity: Standard  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Hundreds of Thousands  
Government: Governor  
Tech Level: Stellar

Parashub is an important Chabuli colony world that grows a large variety of foodstuffs to feed its population. The Chabuli who dwell here are generally less restive than those on other worlds of the Garden Cluster, but they still resent the Terran presence and incidents of violence are not unheard of.

### Princo Ĝeorgio

Profile: Colony  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Mountainous  
Climate: Warm  
Atmosphere: Near-Standard  
Hydrographics: Moderate  
Gravity: Light  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Tens of Thousands  
Government: Representative Democracy  
Tech Level: Interstellar

Princo Ĝeorgio is a growing colony world founded to secure permanent Terran hegemony over the sector. Colony ships from other worlds in the Thousand Suns come here on a regular basis, expanding the planet's population and industrial base. Because of this the world is a frequent target for terrorism by the Chabuli, which the local administration is not merely attempting to stomp out but to deny its very occurrence. Neither of these efforts has met with much success and many theorize it's only a matter of time before events come to a head.

### *Savuul*

Profile: Homeworld  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Mountainous  
Climate: Temperate  
Atmosphere: Standard  
Hydrographics: Moderate  
Gravity: Standard  
Native Sapient: Chabuli (see below)  
Population: Hundreds of Millions  
Government: Governor  
Tech Level: Interstellar

Savuul is the homeworld of the Chabuli and the center of their civilization. Since the coming of the Terrans, their world has been under a governorship, with various laws and regulations in place designed to simultaneously assimilate the Chabuli into Terran society and to curb their resistance to this very process. Neither has met with much success, but, thanks to the presence of Terran garrisons, the planet has not seen any major incidents of violence in several years.

### *Unzaam*

Profile: Commercial  
Type: Terrestrial  
Primary Terrain: Frozen  
Climate: Cool  
Atmosphere: Standard  
Hydrographics: Moderate  
Gravity: Standard  
Native Sapient: None  
Population: Tens of Thousands  
Government: Oligarchy  
Tech Level: Interstellar

Unzaam is part of the Garden Cluster, though it's by far the least pleasant of its worlds. For that reason, few Terrans have ever chosen to take up residence on the world and the world has become a haven for Chabuli seeking to live among their own unmolested. Naturally, some Terran officials suspect that Unzaam is a staging ground for anti-Terran attacks but



no evidence of this has ever been offered—not that that’s stopped some Terran bigots from looking.

## **The Chabuli**

The Chabuli are a sapient species native to Savuul/Five Stars. A proud species with a history of many accomplishments before their disastrous first contact with Terran civilization, they have since fallen on hard times and only time will tell if they can rise above their current circumstances and reclaim their birthright among the stars.

### **Physiology**

The Chabuli are non-humanoid sapients. Their basic physiognomy might be called “centauroid” in that their upper bodies rest on top of long four-legged lower bodies, giving a vague similarity to centaurs from Terran mythology. The upper body possesses two arms, ending in multi-fingered hands, and a head with two eyes sheltered by a bony ridge. Chabuli skin is covered with a layer of fur that varies in length, with the longest strands looking somewhat like feathers in appearance to the uninitiated. Chabuli also possess a tail with which they balance themselves.

The Chabuli are a two-gendered viviparous species with certain similarities to Terran marsupials. Their young are born live but spend approximately 20 standard months inside a pouch in their mothers’ undersides. During this time, they are nourished by enriched blood that they draw from teats inside the pouch. Adult Chabuli retain a liking for the taste of blood, making them primarily carnivorous in diet. Chabuli fertility is quite low, though, with a typical Chabuli female giving birth to no more than two offspring over the course of her lifetime, resulting in a very slow rate of population growth, almost to the point of stasis.

### **Psychology**

Psychologically, the Chabuli have many of the same basic drives and thought patterns as Terrans, but with many differences as well. Of course, their psychology is profoundly affected by their physiology, particularly their low birth rate. This manifests in a great concern for the future and a tendency toward risk aversion. Compared to Terrans, Chabuli may seem timid and overly thoughtful to the point of indecision. This is not in fact the case and once Chabuli have committed themselves to a course of action, they pursue it with a single-minded gusto is a match for that of Terran zeal.

## History

The Chabuli arose to intelligence on the planet Savuul and quickly dominated it. As their technology advanced, they eventually developed the D-Drive and established a small interstellar state called the Chabuli Union. The Union grew slowly and was thus no match for the might of the Terrans, who easily overwhelmed them after a series of diplomatic incidents that convinced the Terrans that conquest of the Chabuli Union was preferable to negotiation.

## Society

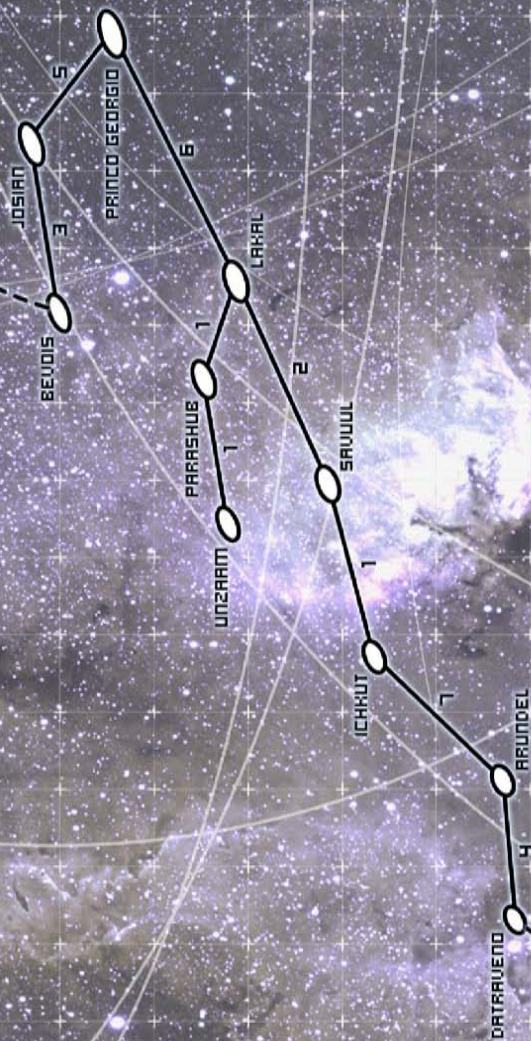
Chabuli society is extremely egalitarian, based around small families but with a keen awareness of social obligations beyond the narrow bonds of blood. From their earliest days, the Chabuli showed a preference for collaborative solutions and their governments were typically participatory democracies, a system made even easier once their technology advanced. At the same time, Chabuli society is often dismissive of dissent, particularly if a solid enough majority of the populace endorses one choice above all others. Consequently, their history is filled with many injustices against minority groups within their society. Modern Chabuli have tried hard to overcome this tendency in their culture, which is why there was initially a greater willingness to give the Terrans the benefit of the doubt after first contact. That that decision proved a poor one has reinforced their societal groupthink and fostered further conflict, often to the detriment of their species. If Chabuli society is once again to prosper, it must find a way to unite the best of its qualities with solutions that come to grips with the realities of Terran civilization. Anything less may prove an end to their unique way of life.

## Traits

Chabuli possess a Tail, in addition to 9 bonus points they may spend on additional skills and Abilities.



# FIVE STARS SECTOR



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## Assault Fighter

OM 8 DM 9  
MV 8 Turn 180° Hull 20  
Weapons:  
2 linked Particle Beams 4 (60) DV RNG 4  
Damage Control: 2

## Bulk Freighter

OM 2 DM 1  
MV 5 Turn 45° Hull 250  
Weapons:  
4 linked Heavy Lasers 4 (40) DV RNG 4  
Damage Control: 4

## Clipper

OM 2 DM 1  
MV 7 Turn 45° Hull 200  
Weapons:  
5 Lasers 2 (40) DV RNG 3  
Damage Control: 3

## Corvette

OM 4 DM 1  
MV 7 Turn 135° Hull 80  
Weapons:  
4 linked Fusion Guns 4 (60) DV RNG 3  
4 linked Submunition Missiles 2 (40) DV  
Damage Control: 3

## Courier

OM 2 DM 1  
MV 6 Turn 180° Hull 15  
Weapons:  
1 Laser 2 (40) DV RNG 3  
Damage Control: 1

## Cruiser

OM 6 DM 1  
MV 6 Turn 90° Hull 400  
Weapons:  
7 Fusion Guns 4 (60) DV RNG 3  
6 Submunition Missiles 2 (40) DV  
Damage Control: 4

## Destroyer

OM 4 DM 1  
MV 6 Turn 135° Hull 150  
Weapons:  
6 linked Fusion Guns 4(60) DV RNG 3  
6 Nuclear Missiles 5 (60) DNV  
2 Needler Drivers 2 (45) DV RNG 4  
Damage Control: 3

## Escort

OM 4 DM 1  
MV 6 Turn 180° Hull 40  
Weapons:  
2 linked Rail Guns 3 (50) DV RNG 3  
1 Submunition Missile 2 (40) DV  
Damage Control: 1

## Assault Fighter

OM 8 DM 9  
MV 8 Turn 180° Hull 20  
Weapons:  
2 linked Particle Beams 4 (60) DV RNG 4  
Damage Control: 2

## Bulk Freighter

OM 2 DM 1  
MV 5 Turn 45° Hull 250  
Weapons:  
4 linked Heavy Lasers 4 (40) DV RNG 4  
Damage Control: 4

## Clipper

OM 2 DM 1  
MV 7 Turn 45° Hull 200  
Weapons:  
5 Lasers 2 (40) DV RNG 3  
Damage Control: 3

## Corvette

OM 4 DM 1  
MV 7 Turn 135° Hull 80  
Weapons:  
4 linked Fusion Guns 4 (60) DV RNG 3  
4 linked Submunition Missiles 2 (40) DV  
Damage Control: 3

## Courier

OM 2 DM 1  
MV 6 Turn 180° Hull 15  
Weapons:  
1 Laser 2 (40) DV RNG 3  
Damage Control: 1

## Cruiser

OM 6 DM 1  
MV 6 Turn 90° Hull 400  
Weapons:  
7 Fusion Guns 4 (60) DV RNG 3  
6 Submunition Missiles 2 (40) DV  
Damage Control: 4

## Destroyer

OM 4 DM 1  
MV 6 Turn 135° Hull 150  
Weapons:  
6 linked Fusion Guns 4(60) DV RNG 3  
6 Nuclear Missiles 5 (60) DNV  
2 Needler Drivers 2 (45) DV RNG 4  
Damage Control: 3

## Escort

OM 4 DM 1  
MV 6 Turn 180° Hull 40  
Weapons:  
2 linked Rail Guns 3 (50) DV RNG 3  
1 Submunition Missile 2 (40) DV  
Damage Control: 1

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