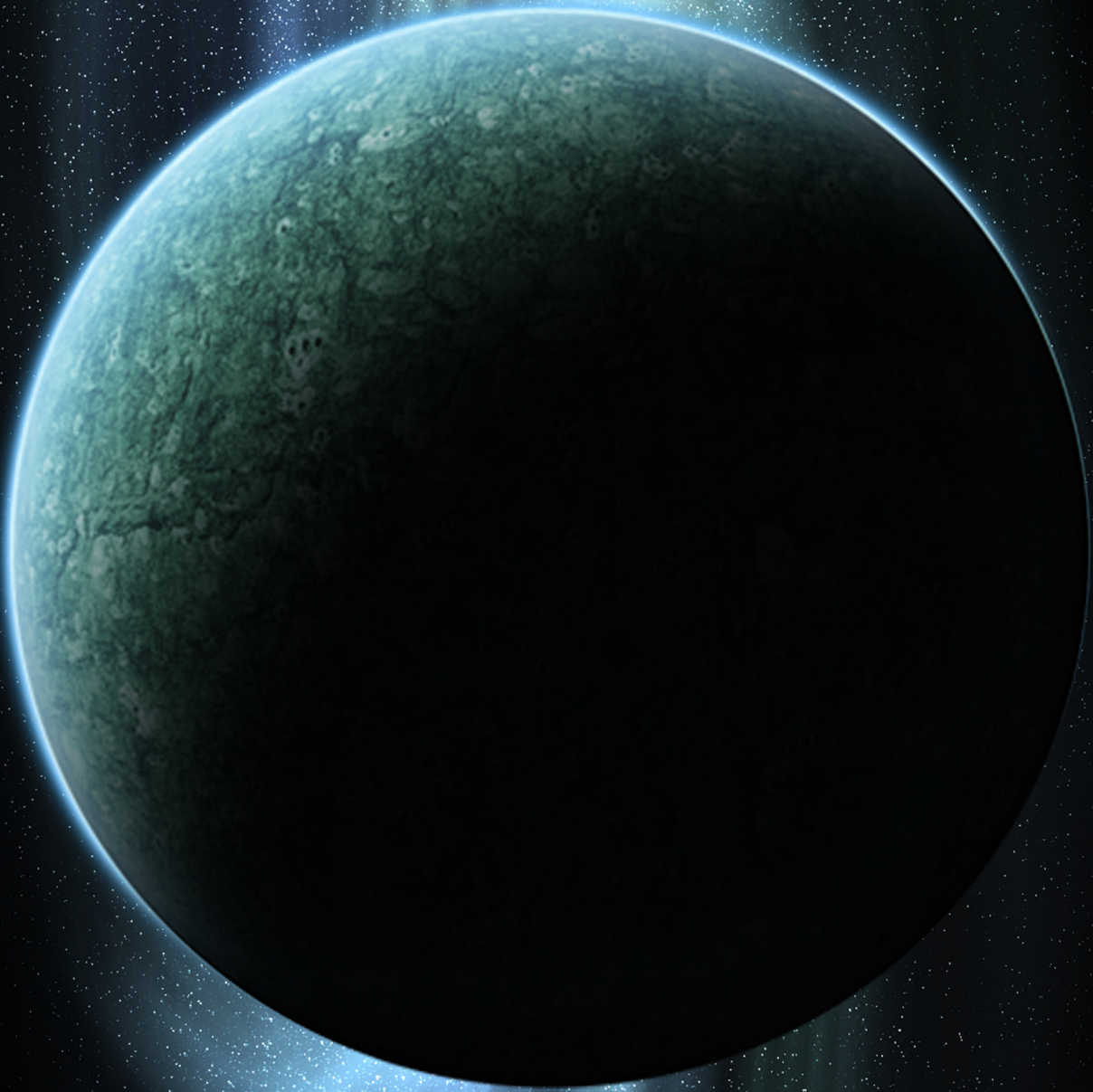


COLD AND DARK **BETTER WORLDS**



BY
MISCHA L THOMAS

COLD AND DARK

Credits

Writing, Game Design & Layout

Mischa L Thomas

Interior Art

Illustrations: Johan Fredriksson & Jimmy Dahlin

Map & Planetary Art: Tobias Tranell

Cover: Tobias Tranell & Mischa L Thomas

Proofing & Editing

T.R Knight & Mischa L Thomas

Webpage

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Glossary

AES: Adaptable Encounter Skin

AI: In Cold & Dark the AI is an abbreviation for Adaptable Intelligence and is a title used to describe the person managing the game (juxtaposed to Artificial Intelligence in computer games). Some call this person storyteller, game master, dungeon master, director (or whatever really).

AR: Armor Rating

ASP: Arrival Safety Protocol

Avatar: The alter ego/gestalt the player controls in the game.

BD: Base Damage

Belinium: A very energy rich crystal that is used to fuel short range ships, appliances and auxiliary systems.

BIE (Bureau of Interstellar Exploration): This branch of the GIC is responsible for exploratory space operations.

Big Black, The: Space as a whole.

Big Empty, The: Sometimes space as a whole but more often the reaches between planets and solar systems. Interstellar Space.

CAV (Caliphrian Aggression Virus): An utterly dangerous pathogen that kills and reanimates the victims. The abbreviation is pronounced cave.

Chapter: The AI creates the stories and in order to get an overview (while playing and while designing them) the story is divided into chapters. And in turn, each chapter is divided into three levels which are even smaller pieces of the story.

CIM (Clandestine Industrial Militia): A fringe group that fights the rule off the GIC using whatever means necessary.

COG (Customized Operation Gear): A collective name for a highly advanced type of upgradable nanotech supported suit, vital in the world of Cold & Dark.

Coreanium: An extremely valuable source of energy that is harvested from the molten core of planets (destroying the planet in the process). This substance is what allows mankind to travel the reaches of space (with such extent).

CSNC (Cortex Stimulation Node Cauterizations): An alternative to the death sentence, leaving the criminal as a docile, simple-minded but productive member of society.

D: 8 sided dice.

DU: Durability.

E&R (Evacuation & Retrieval): A network of rescue units that usually are the first one on the scene when a ship/station/colony is in trouble. This is a combination of the triple A and 911 of deep space. They're funded by the GIC and are not allowed to salvage wreckage.

EES: Enemy Encounter Suit

GIC (Governmental Industrial Complex): This is the ruling body of the Sirius galaxy consisting of a Chairman, Senate and political forum.

GLC (Ghost Line Calculations): These are the algorithms and equations used when travelling through the extra dimensional plane known as the Ghost Lines. The GLCs are fed into the Ghost Drive.

Ghost Lines: A faster than light way of travel that uses (a type of) dimensional distortion.

Grav-cuffs: A system of artificial gravity tethers working off a receiver/transmitter system. This is often used in automatic docking procedures.

HUD: Head Up Display.

IMC (Interstellar Mining Corporation): One of the largest corporations.

Infinitology: The largest religion in the C&D universe. They believe that everything in the universe is connected and that all the energies of sentient beings will end up in the Great Stream, a sort of heart blood of existence and only by leading a good and pure life will a person's energy grow into a strong and positive influence to the universe. Infinitologists strongly oppose the aggressive mining industry, believing that it harms the universe and in the end will harm mankind.

ISA (Interstellar Security Agency): This clandestine agency works directly under the GIC senate and chairman and handles all kinds of operations.

ISS: Internal Seal System.

ITS: Internal Tram System

JB (Justice Board): The GIC branch that handles everything that has to do with the law and due process.

LED (Law Enforcement Division): This is the main arm of the Justice Board when it comes to dealing with criminal elements.

LSA (Line Signal Amplifier): Also known as "the scare" or "scare box". This device is used to send and receive transmissions through the Ghost Lines.

MEC (Military Economic Corporation): A fringe group that opposes the GIC, similar to the CIM.

MPG: Mining Prospector Gear.

MRG (Medical Research Group): Beyond handling all medical responsibilities this GIC branch oversees DoX 2 (Department of Xenomorphology).

MSU (Military Strategy Unit): GIC branch in charge of the Consolidated Fleet, Marine Corps and all military operations.

NETSS: Nano Environmental Tactical Stealth Suit.

NFVH: Nano-Flex Visor Helmet.

NIS (Nano-Interface Screen): The most common way of displaying information and managing button controls. This is a pressure sensitive holographic nano system.

NPA: Non-Player Avatar, an avatar controlled by the AI.

OMCP (Office of Mining and Core Purification): All operations having to do with mining and core purification within the GIC is handled by this branch.

OMCP also includes the sub-branch. DoX I (Department of Xenoarchaeology).

PCR: Planet Construction Rig, a multi-purpose vehicle used in mining, colony construction and similar industrial work.

PNR: Polymer Nano Repair

PSD: Per Success Damage

PSG: Polymer Sealant Gun

Rippers: A deadly insect/reptilian-like alien species.

RMD (Resource Management Division): GIC branch in charge of economics and gathered resources.

SAC (Simulated Atmosphere Containment): The self-sufficient life support system used in larger ships, stations and colonies.

SCT (Standard Core Time): The 24 hour day used in the Divius system. It's used as a standard in most colonies and ships to measure work days and time.

Segment: Period of time which represents three seconds in the game world. It's often used to keep track of the action oriented parts of in-game events.

SER: Standard Exploration Rig.

SES (Space Exploration Salvagers): The biggest corporate competitor to IMC.

SRS: Scientific Research System.

SWG: Standard Work Gear.

TARGET (Tactical Armed Response Group and Explosives Technicians): The SWAT teams of the C&D universe and they work under the Law Enforcement Division, LED.

TCE: Tactical Command Emersion

TIS: Tactical Investigation System

VAC: Visual Audio Communication

VPS (Void Psychosis Syndrome): A psychological ailment of unknown origin which can affect people that are involved with deep space travel and those who are isolated from human contact when in space or on remote colonies. VPS will in the end result in paranoia, hallucinations and homicidal/genocidal/suicidal tendencies and behaviors.

VES: Vacuum Environmental Suit

VIN (Virtual Intelligence Network): The advanced computer systems employed in the C&D universe. They operate off a nanotechnological core and can emulate sentience, emotions and intelligence.

Void,The: Space as a whole but this epithet is usually thought of as having a mystical and even religious connotation.

ZGE: Zero G Engineering



Introduction

Better Worlds is a sourcebook for Cold & Dark which will explore and shed light over the planets, colonies and cities in the Sirius galaxy. The core book lays the foundation but Better Worlds will provide you with a much more elucidating, in-depth and solid breakdown of the different setting environments.

The star chart in the core book contains nineteen systems; these are the systems known to the general public. All of these will be covered and have been fleshed out so that you may use them in your sessions. Some of them have been given more attention while others have been given less, depending on their usefulness as setting material. However, there are probably thousands of more discovered star systems out there which are used for mining and eligible for colonization.

This book is not written to support real world astrophysics, gravitational exacts or similar disciplines. It is however designed to be entertaining, game world expanding and approachable. I have tried to walk the line between set game world physics and abstracts designed to be calibrated by the AI. Yes, single star systems are very unusual and, yes, many planets might have dozens of moons, but I elected to keep it simple. Modify the world as you see fit, utilizing more or less real world science as you desire.

Everything Will Kill You

The universe of Cold & Dark is very dangerous and in this book you will find a plethora of potentially world ending scenario hooks, most are derived from voider technology. Use them carefully. Like with the creators in the core book, it is advised that you build up to a massive war or similar situation throughout a lengthy and epic campaign. You always have the option of destroying the campaign universe as I have created it and start over with your own. That is one of the wonderful aspects of roleplaying games.

Arrival Safety Protocol (ASP): The ASP is in effect on many large worlds, colonies, stations and ships. It involves a full body medical scan that takes about thirty seconds. The subject stands still on a platform while a large scan array goes to work. It checks for the displacement of organs, does a snapshot x-ray, viral scan and temp check. It can detect CAV or ripper infestation in an individual with only a 5% margin of error. If the CAV is in its early stage it has a margin of error of 15%, and it has a 7% margin of error if the burrower just has attached itself as it can become hard to detect. This system of course checks for contraband and illegal weapons as well. Anyone who arrives off world (or has been beyond the ASP checkpoint by the flight hangars) is subjected to the ASP.

Travelling Costs

Listed are the typical traveling costs when flying commercially to legal and safe destinations with a C- or D-class ship. The cost can vary some, but these are a good jump-off point.

Interplanetary normal space: 75 c/day
Interplanetary Ghost Jump (1-500 LY): 1 000 c
Interstellar Ghost Jumps: 1 000 c + 250 c per week

Planetary Description & System Description

The location of systems that contain planets which have been cleared for core harvesting is kept secret by the GIC and the corporations involved. The GIC believes that it is in the best interest of the people. Basically, there is no official record of how many systems have been harvested. Those who work on active harvesters and have access to the flight route have to sign a non-disclosure agreement. The penalty for violating it is one year in prison followed by a one million credit fine (basically bankrupting the person, putting him in an impossible situation) and having one's right to vote withdrawn for ten years, as well as the revocation of all GIC granted licenses for up to five years (drivers license, merc license, piloting license, gun license, etc.).

In general, only LED or C-Sec/S-Sec (colony /station security) are allowed to carry firearms on their person inside space stations and mining colonies.

Each system will be given an overall description and this will be followed up with a more detailed planetary description. Following are the planetary description points.

Assets: Shows the natural assets found on the planet such as belinium, metals or natural gases. Assets only lists those materials which are in relatively high concentration. For example, there might be some magnesium scattered about on a planet even if it is not listed as the low concentration does not warrant a large scale mining operation. Also, it would be no use in listing all the known minerals and metals as this would be a lengthy and unnecessary process that would not add anything to the game. Naming a few types adds some flavor as it is much more immersive to be able to say that a mining crew is going to mine iridium or palladium than just saying "they're going to mine metals and stuff." Liquid cores are usually only mentioned as Assets if the GIC might authorize a core depletion. Feel free to decide which planets have a liquid core whenever it might suit your needs. Ice and water is an asset as well but is mentioned under Terrain. Some rocks in the terrain will also contain minerals and such naturally. Assets can also include salvage, artifacts and other treasures.

Atmosphere: To keep things simple, eight different atmospheric classifications have been listed. Breathable, Thin, Suffocating, Corrosive, Radioactive, Toxic, Pressure and Vacuum. The AI will decide if a Thin, Suffocating or

Toxic atmosphere will be breathable using an SWG (if not otherwise stated). Then there might be combinations, such as a breathable but radioactive atmosphere.

Breathable is basically comprised of the gaseous mixes humans require to breathe comfortably.

Thin means that the atmosphere is breathable but taxing on the body. Humans will exert themselves quickly. It is up to the AI to determine the thinness of the atmosphere.

Suffocating simply indicates the lack of any breathable air for humans. No other damaging atmospheric aspects are present.

Corrosive atmospheres will eat away at flesh and equipment that are not properly shielded. The corrosion levels are usually pretty low, meaning that it will kill humans and eat away at most things but ship outer hulls will usually be able to handle it.

Toxic atmospheres will generally not damage equipment but will poison humans to an extent which is decided by the AI.

Pressure causes physical harm to individuals, use the radiation rules in the core book to set up a pressure atmosphere. A PCR, vehicle (with an airlock) or a COG is needed to avoid taking damage. If the atmosphere is marked with a high, like **Pressure (High)**, it means that a vehicle, PCR or a HPS (High Pressure Suit) is needed in order to avoid injury.

Radioactive is pretty self-explanatory and simply means that enough radiation is present to cause damage to humans. The AI decides the level of radiation.

Vacuum see core rules for vacuum exposure.

Also take into account other sources of dangers such as hot/cold climates.

Climate: Shows the temperature range, describes weather, and lists dangers such as solar flares and electrical storms.

Factions: Important and powerful organizations with a presence and a vested interest.

Fauna: Possible animal and creature encounters.

Gravity: Shows the gravity, starting at Earth/Claret norm (1.0). Moving in high/lower gravities can cause complications as well as be a source of benefits depending on the situation. Use your logic when dealing with this. If not stated otherwise, all colonies and settlements use grave-cube grids, creating Earth norm inside the buildings on planets with gravity different from Earth norm.

Light/Dark: Shows how many hours it takes for the planet to rotate on its axis and how many hours/days/weeks/months of sunlight the planet has. This is shown in h (hours), d (days), w (weeks) and m (month), so 5h/9h means that it will take the planet fourteen hours to rotate 360 degrees on its own axis with five hours of sun light and 9 hours of darkness. If it says 6h/2d it would mean that each day is 54 hours long, with only 6 hours of daylight

and 48 hours of darkness. Feel free to regulate the light/darkness hours as you see fit as every planet will have different seasons but the time given shows the "average" sun/darkness hours over local planetary year.

Moon(s): The names of the moons orbiting the planet. Some are described in greater detail while others are merely named. Take advantage of this as a moon might be filled with resources or even eligible for terraforming.

Circumference: The planets circumference measured in kilometers.

Population: An approximation of the number of people living on the planet.

Structures: Describes the different sort of structures found on the planet. City, colony, subterranean settlement, etc. It will also list any special ruling bodies or laws.

Terrain: Explains the general terrain, natural/terraformed landscape and materials found on the planet.

Year: Shows how many months it takes the planet to complete its journey around its sun.

Information: The overall state and condition of the planet.

Story Seeds: Here some short notes that can be used to build a story. Most but not all systems will have one or more notes. They are meant as short pieces of inspiration you can use as mental jump-off points to build your stories. At other times, there will be a discussion regarding possible stories in a system. There are thousands more scenarios you can come up with but these might give you an idea or two. The story seeds are often described with the avatars conveniently being in a position to take part of the story (correct packages, contacts, situation, etc.) but this is just done to simplify things. Each group of avatars will differ and might not be suited to be thrown into the story in the way and in the capacity described, but you as the storyteller can easily tie in the avatars to the concept as you know your group and the players.

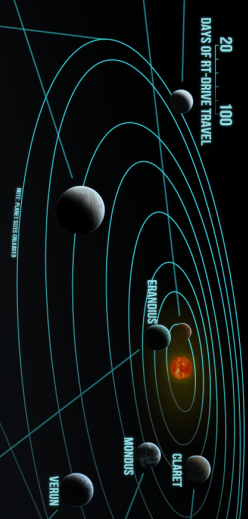
The Nebula Storms

The Starack and Dead Rift nebula storms are massive. They stretch on for thousands of light years. Those few who have entered them have never returned, yet the interest in these two giant areas is enormous. Though impossible to get a clear scan in either storm, a few faint and unclear scans have been accomplished. These partial scans have shown a transmission of some sort, an even repeating pattern which only can be produced deliberately. Amazingly, an identical signal has been picked up from both nebulas even though they are located on opposite sides of the galaxy. Explorers hope that the technology of magnetic and electrical shields will allow them to enter these nebulas safely in the near future.

HERAKLES
POPULATION: 800 MILLION
CIRCUMFERENCE: 22,430 KM
MOONS: ARI, YODIN
ATMOSPHERE: BREATHABLE
GRAVITY: 1.1

QUINTUS
POPULATION: 5,000
CIRCUMFERENCE: 12,500
MOONS: SEGUR, NEW CATYSHAK
ATMOSPHERE: THIN/COMPOSITE GARDINO
GRAVITY: 1.2

LINEA
POPULATION: 380 MILLION
CIRCUMFERENCE: 6,300
MOONS: VI
ATMOSPHERE: BREATHABLE
GRAVITY: 0.3



CLARET
POPULATION: 5 BILLION
CIRCUMFERENCE: 40,400 KM
MOONS: LUNA 2
ATMOSPHERE: BREATHABLE
GRAVITY: 1.0

MONIUS
POPULATION: 4 BILLION
CIRCUMFERENCE: 30,200 KM
MOONS: FES'PS
GRAVITY: 1.0

VERIN
POPULATION: 500,000
CIRCUMFERENCE: 9,400 KM
MOONS: BILBO, CHISM
ATMOSPHERE: BREATHABLE
GRAVITY: 1.0

ERANODUS
POPULATION: 500,000
CIRCUMFERENCE: 7,400 KM
MOONS: SISU, VEROL, COOH
ATMOSPHERE: THIN
GRAVITY: 1.0

GHOST JUMP CHART

LIGHT YEARS	TIME
1-500	24 HOURS
501-2000	2 WEEKS
2001-6000	1 MONTH
6001-24000	2 MONTHS
24000-72000	4 MONTHS

1 HEXAGON = 1500 LY

SIRIUS GALAXY

Basala

"We call it Helldon for a reason. This fucking planet is kind of in the ass-end of space. Thin air, forty eight hours of darkness with six hours of sun. Goddamn magma geysers, rippers and nothing more than jagged stone. I've been here for a year now and by Kendrin, I think I'm going crazy. Sometimes we can hear the rippers, scratching at the base of the tower, trying to dig their way through. This job sucks, I have no idea what I was thinking joining up."

- Clair LaFonge, twenty year old Border Guard on her first Assignment.

This far-out and utterly dangerous system also provides a lot of opportunities, but the surface of some planets as well as interplanetary sectors have a tendency to turn into veritable warzones from time to time. The GIC and corporate presence are high as they have a vested interest in the system, shipping home billions of credits worth of mined resources every year. Soon after the discovery, in 457 IT, CIM and MEC also showed up.

The consolidated fleet presence increased in order to protect GIC resources and several border guard outposts are present on most planets. The corporations also have their own security ships in the area, often recruiting legionnaire teams to guard their operations. Things got even worse in 497 IT when rippers were discovered on Zevric and Felldon. They seemed to pour out from the depth of the planet Zevric and a freelance mining crew was infected but managed to leave the planet, their ship later crashed on Felldon, spreading the infestation. There have been ripper sightings on Demios and Qory as well. Thirty squads (eight man strong squads) of GIC marines were shipped to the sector with orders to jump in whenever the ripper activity threatened GIC profits and operations. These marines are also used as hit squads for special operations dealing with the MEC and the CIM.

The fleet has an E-class Icarus model heavy destroyer in the system which acts as a mobile command center. Even though they cannot match the fleet when it comes to hardware, the CIM and MEC fare pretty well. They play by no one's rules, using fake emergency signals to lure fleet ships into traps, hide explosives inside mineral shipments and basically use any means necessary to succeed. During a recent coupe, they managed to capture one of the fleets D-class Titan heavy war carriers. They managed this through years of planning, deception and infiltration. This gave them access to an accelerated photon cannon which has served them well. The fleet is unsure if the MEC or the CIM is in command of the ship, unaware that the two factions are actually working together.

Demios

Assets: Bilinium, osmium, molybdenum, copper, titanium, helium-3, platinum, gold.

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: -24/+14, heavy winds, rain and hail.

Factions: GIC, MEC, CIM, IMC, SES.

Fauna: Mountain goats, arachnoids, insects, rodents, foxes, armadillo wolves. All animals are engineered to cope with the thin atmosphere.

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 6h/12h

Moon(s): Serid, Kajaril.

Circumference: 15,000 km

Population: 300,000

Structure: Underground mining colonies, temporary mining colonies and outposts.

Terrain: Rock ridges, ravines, smaller pine forests, rivers, lakes and grass fields.

Year: 20 months

Information: Demios is an active mining planet, with a constantly shifting and rotating population. There are usually one to three E-class mining ships nearby, belonging to the GIC and corporations. They are of course escorted by the fleet or hired guns.

The surface is a clutter of mining colonies and settlements and most are movable. An ongoing war wages on the planet. The CIM and MEC mine resources secretly, or hijack shipments using guerilla tactics while the GIC and corporations shoot them on sight. The odd ripper also makes life dangerous and at times whole mining colonies have been found empty, the only trails left are blood, corrosive damage and ripper tracks. Armored walls and armed personnel surround most mining colonies.

SES has opened an underground research facility in cooperation with the GIC on the southern hemisphere, built around an archeological dig. They have found artifacts of some sort. No one knows exactly what the research entails, but mining crews have reported that they experience electrical disturbances in their equipment and "lost time" when within five kilometers of the facility. After hearing these reports, the GIC expanded the perimeter of the facility to nearly ten kilometers, shutting down all other operations in the area and deemed it a highly restricted military zone.

There are of course a lot of freelance crews with fraxenses working different contracts.

Food is produced in SACs owned by the GIC and purchased by crews and companies that are not part of the GIC. Some smaller crews actually hunt for food as the mountain goat population is pretty dense.

A vast network of tunnels weave under the surface of the planet. Some colonies are located hundreds of meters beneath the ground, the miners never seeing the light of day for months. Several trolley and tram lines run along some of these tunnels. In most larger colonies, which have lasted for more than a couple of months, one can



The Interstellar Mining Corporation is setting up a temporary mining colony on Demios using the massive Mobile Mining Operation vehicles.

find bars, small makeshift stores and even the odd illegal brothel. As there is no LED presence in the area, small merc teams are usually paid on a monthly basis by larger civilian colonies to act as sheriffs, enforcing their own brand of justice. Of course, it would be possible to call in the border guards, but many smaller mining outfits don't want the GIC up in their business. Besides, it can take days or even weeks before they get any assistance from the GIC. The GIC seldom bother to address smaller disputes and petty illegal activities out here (assaults, payroll robbery, etc). So in general, the colonies are better off using mercs or legionnaires.

Battles between different factions also rage underground, sometimes the explosions have buried hundreds of workers. Working underground imposes other risks. There is nowhere to run if the rippers come calling and dig teams risk digging out smaller clusters of rippers lying in multibiosis. Needless to say, most miners carry weapons and dig crews scan new sites carefully for any sign of rippers.

One of the most notable mining colonies is Zeta Tau. It houses as few as sixty miners and belongs to a small splintered outfit called Red Source. The colony's largest area of interest lies in the mining of helium-3 which they sell to other colonies on the planet. The other colonies use the helium-3 in order to gain their independence, no longer having to depend on the larger corporations and the GIC to provide them with belinium and coreanium. As a fuel source, helium-3 is much more volatile than belinium and coreanium, and the reactors require a lot more space and maintenance. Not to mention that it's illegal to use as a fuel in the core systems and many terraformed worlds. Out here, helium-3 allows smaller outfits to gain a certain amount of freedom. The GIC and the corporations are not particularly fond of this setup. Red Source has begun to plan the construction of a large CSAC. This would allow them complete autonomy, something they are in all likelihood going to extend to

the other smaller mining operations for a small yearly fee sliced off the top of the mining profits, adapted to the size and means of the operations in question. A far better deal than the GIC is offering for food and breathable air. Red Source seems to have been lucky, leasing land with a very high concentration of helium-3. The GIC have discussed shutting them down, not renewing their license, but are holding off as they fear this might spark an uprising. With the CIM and MEC in the area with access to a Titan ship they don't want to risk it.

Felldon

Assets: Small mineral, platinum, vanadium and darmstadtium deposits and large quantities of salvageable equipment.

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: -15/+25

Factions: GIC, MEC, CIM.

Fauna: Algae eating oxygen producing insects.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 6h/2d

Moon(s): -

Circumference: 10,340 km

Population: 1000

Structure: Decommissioned above ground and subterranean mining colonies, border guard outposts.

Terrain: Jagged granite rock, planet crack craters and low ph level water creeks. Unstable seismic activity, melting magma geysers. Terraform algae.

Year: 7 months

Information: Felldon, nicknamed Helldon by stationed border guards, is pretty much a dead planet besides the algae and the insects. Most of the resources have been mined dry. Felldon used to be a very lively and active mining planet, but when the rippers came only skeleton crews stayed behind to wrap things up. Wanting to get out quickly, they left a lot of equipment behind. The border

guards are basically stationed there by the GIC to keep the MEC and CIM from getting their hands on salvage. Having 1000 men stationed there is easier than launching a large scale salvage operation. The official story is that Felldon has a strategic value.

The stationed border guards (and the fifty or so other GIC personnel such as engineers and medtechs) are the only permanent residents on the planet and are evenly distributed into groups of twenty underground bases. They all feed off a CSAC which delivers food, air and water along pipelines and an automated underground trolley system. The CSAC lies under one of the bases and is as such heavily guarded. Using A-class and B-class ships as well as ground vehicles, the border guards make sweeps, looking for illegal salvagers and ripper activity.

Few access points lead down to the trolley system. These lie within ten meter high outpost towers. Each tower is equipped with a ten battery missile turret and dual rail cannons. They also have scanners such as LIDARs and signal scanners, and they are heavily armored. The towers have three levels. Level one consists of the munitions and nutrient storage. It also contains the vault door which leads down to the pipeline. This door can only be opened from the inside after the stationed guards have sent the right code to command. Level two holds a small room with five cots and a deployable platform which is used to get out and down to ground level. It is also used as a launch pad for their one man carbine mounted A-class patrol ship (they have four of these per tower). Not having a door leading out on the first floor will hinder any intruder from gaining momentum when they try to breach the door. In order to get in (if not using a plasma torch or explosives) enemies have to climb the wall one story and try to breach the extendable platform. Some rippers have actually dug their way to the base of the tower, emerged and killed one or two of their own, letting the corrosive gas eat through the walls and floors. Nowadays some of the towers have ground penetrating radar arrays and upgraded corrosive shielding.

Level three is the "command center" which contains weapon controls, scanner screens and access to the outside guard balcony. A tower is usually manned by three to six border guards. Even though the setup is pretty good, the overall quality and maintenance of a lot of the gear is subpar. Stationed border guards are pretty pissed that the brass basically have left them on the planet to fend for themselves.

There are a lot of salvageable resources around in the form of whole colony structures, left behind vehicles and equipment. But between rippers and guard patrols (and the dangerous terrain), a salvage crew has to be crafty to pull off a job. Who knows, one might find a bribable group of disillusioned border guards that want to stick it to the GIC while getting paid.

CIM have several smaller enclaves deep underground. They have even setup their own CSAC system. It took them several years to organize everything. The enclaves contain refineries and actual production facilities. They

collect salvage and use the material to build weapons, ship hulls and whatever they need. Every third month a ship swoops in, on different pick-up spots each time, and collects the equipment which then goes wherever it's needed. This system is much safer than gathering unrefined raw material and making dozens of smaller of pick-ups. They only engage the border guards when forced to, otherwise they lay low.

Qory

Assets: Minerals (especially quartz), belinium, iron, tantalum, lithium, vanadium, iridium, platinum, molybdenum, helium-3, tungsten.

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: +50/+150

Factions: MEC, CIM GIC, SES, IMC, Girshaw Amalgamated.

Fauna: None.

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 6h/13h

Moon(s): Dasi

Circumference: 12 500

Population: 200 000

Structure: Ground and subterranean mining colonies, border guard outposts.

Terrain: Large sharp quartz pillars and lava based rock.

Year: 17 months.

Information: Qory is a lucrative and active mining planet. Massive amounts of resources are mined and shipped every 12 months. Parts of the planet are veritable warzones, MEC and CIM square off against GIC and corporate security. At times, there are intense ripper attacks and five of the GIC marine squads in the system are positioned here. They suspect that there's a small hive or deposit of eggs somewhere on the planet, but as of yet they haven't found it.

Most colonies feed off a CSAC and corporate security and the border guards have several outposts in place to protect the pipeline access points and colonies. Overall, it's like the other planets in the system: Lucrative but dangerously unstable.

Qory has a lot of illegal mining crews who use the confusion of the skirmishes to gain access to dig sites. CIM and MEC are also about, mining illegally or hijacking hauls right off. The overall situation on the planet is chaotic at best, as the warfare takes up as much time as the mining. There is a rather high frequency of illegal affairs due to the scattered nature of smaller colonies. Most colonies have their own way of doing things and, even though most belong to the corporations, they have little control over them. As long as the resources keep coming, the corporations are happy.

With MEC and CIM having a combined force of 4,000 men, and the GIC and corporations have 10,000 men in place, things tend to get heated. CIM and MEC fares pretty well due to their tactics. Hit and runs, bombings and sabotage make out the three main pillars of their

strategy. They work in small cells, not having that much contact with each other to avoid detection and as such they have no central command on the planet.

Svirac

Assets: Minerals, iron, iridium, cobalt, bilinium, tungsten, mercury, diamonds, vanadium, silver, mercury, tin.

Atmosphere: Toxic (and is also counted as corrosive during the most violent storms).

Climate: -130/-30, sporadic high velocity wind storms. Extreme and localized heat changes due to the terrain.

Factions: GIC, MEC, CIM, SES, IMC, Girshaw Amalgamated.

Fauna: -

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 5h/40h

Moon(s): Opalek, Midas, Zqoras.

Circumference: 27,000 km

Population: 500,000

Structure: Subterranean and above ground mining colonies and the CryoCore settlement.

Terrain: Sharp jagged jaspillite rocks, boiling rivers and geysers of superheated mercury.

Year: 9 months.

Information: Svirac is an extremely inhospitable planet. Mercury pours out of the ground, propelled by the heat of the planet's core. It runs in rivers, blasts up from geysers and gets picked up by the sporadic violent winds and freezes. These pellets can eat through a COG given time and will strip a man's flesh clear off the bone. The hotspots can have a temperature of eight hundred degrees while the planet otherwise is deathly cold and the atmosphere is deadly. Early on, planet engineers gave their verdict: Svirac was near impossible to terraform. It was simply cheaper and easier to build an underground network of CSACs.

But, Svirac is *extremely* rich in a wide array of soluble resources and all major groups, as well as freelancers, have a vested interest in the opportunities presented by the planet. Due to the conditions of the planet, most colonies and docking bays are located underground and ground vehicles are the norm when travelling the planet due to the dangers of the sudden storms.

CryoCore is the only real settlement with a permanent population.

MEC and CIM have joined forces and are about five thousand men strong, which make this one of the absolute hotspots for the organizations. They set up legal mining operations through shell companies but also hijack loads from the GIC and the corporations, stowing the haul away until things have cooled down, after which they forge the needed documents to get the stolen goods off planet and sent to wherever needed.

The GIC has a rather strong presence on the planet, having stationed a squadron of seven thousand border guards. All are spread out across the planet and assigned to different GIC and corporate mining operations as security. Needless to say, violent conflicts erupt quite often.

Two of the three moons, Midas and Zqoras, are used for ice mining and send payloads down to the planet via orbital delivery systems.

CryoCore: CryoCore has a permanent population of five thousand and roughly another ten thousand temporary visitors at any time. CryoCore has its own reactors and SAC. The settlement is located one hundred meters below ground with the entire structure surrounded by a thick layer of liquid nitrogen and supportive heat reducing nano-polymers. This system is in place since the area is susceptible to a river of boiling mercury which comes rolling in from time to time. When CryoCore was built the river wasn't active, but the layer was put in as a security measure just in case, which in retrospect was a very prudent move. During floods, the elevator to the surface is restricted as it's too dangerous to use under these circumstances.

CryoCore was built as a joint effort by hundreds of freelancers sponsored by funding from Girshaw Amalgamated. Girshaw Amalgamated own fifty one percent of the facility and receive five percent of all mined resources of any companies who used the facility to conduct their business, housed their workers or otherwise used the facility in any capacity. It was a risky investment, but it worked.

Legal escorts, bars, gambling houses and even a Slide Sphere rink are in place. It didn't take long to become successful, since every miner on the planet showed up. GIC and the corporations faced an all out strike when they tried to forbid their workers from going there, and their promise to build a center on their own didn't impress anyone as they have a miserable track record. So CryoCore became the center of activity and Girshaw Amalgamated got five percent of all mined resources. CryoCore was established ten years ago, same year Girshaw Amalgamated went public and this facility is part of the reason for the company's success, allowing it to become one of the largest corporations in the galaxy during such a short time.

After the CryoCore incident, as the GIC and other corporations call it, the GIC changed the law so a similar situation couldn't arise. However, Girshaw Amalgamated still have the same deal going for them with CryoCore as the laws were tangled in other laws and a reversal of the CryoCore deal would set a precedent, allowing a lot of lucrative contracts to be overturned. To the ire of the GIC and other corporations, Girshaw Amalgamated



made one hell of a deal for themselves. Since CryoCore is a business building there are no LED-officers or armed border guards, only a well armed freelance security force. GIC has tried to get Girshaw Amalgamated to allow LED to take on the job of security but Girshaw Amalgamated simply says that they wouldn't allow LED to occupy their head office on Claret and they won't have it here. Unless there's a martial law situation, they have the law on their side. Unbeknownst to Girshaw Amalgamated, the GIC has several operatives in place. MEC and CIM also have their people in place. CryoCore is basically a giant sphere with a diameter of four kilometers built into the planet. Getting around is done by elevators and a tram system.

There are of course criminal elements dealing in drugs, prostitution and racketeering. But the C-Sec has done a good job of handling the situation, resulting in many small time operators instead of a few powerful ones.

Level 1

This is the business and security sector. The local C-Sec has its offices here as well as most of the other companies. Security is tight and every new visitor is screened. In order to move around CryoCore, visitors need a Cryo-ID. Applicants are required to show their business license or record of employment and their GIC ID. The information is transferred to the Cryo-ID. This will let C-Sec see when the individual enters and exits the locale and is also the only valid form of payment in registered establishments. Credits are deposited in CryoCredits (C-Cred for short) at the local bank. The user can then make payments with his Cryo-ID. The user can at any time withdraw his money from the CryoCredit format.

Level 2-8

These levels house all the living quarters and entertainment centers. It's about seven meters to the ceiling and establishments often have two stories, built around a system of promenades. The upper levels are often connected with walkways and terraces. There are a lot of bars, stores and escort houses. There are always miners on R&R, so these levels never sleep.

Level 9

This level contains the SAC and reactor.

Level 10

The storage and industrial sector is located here. It is capable of manufacturing most spare parts needed to keep CryoCore up and running. The storage is used to keep real meat which has been delivered from Cekos on ice.

Zevric

Assets: Mineral, platinum, vanadium, darmstadtium, titanium, iridium, belinium, cadmium, osmium.

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: +150/+450, solar winds and electrical storms.

Factions: GIC, IMC, SES.

Fauna: Silicon based oxygen producing algae eating insects (terraform tool).

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 3h/21h

Moon(s): Bodarus, Vexaris.

Circumference: 9,500

Population: 12,000

Structure: Above ground fortified mining colonies.

Terrain: Phonolite extrusive pillar formations and stalactite rich caverns.

Year: 6 months

Information: Some call working here a death sentence and all miners receive double dig pay for being stationed here. Every colony is basically a movable military base with high walls, gun turrets and dig safe flooring. This is a very ripper dense planet. The creatures live under ground, so all colonies are located above ground. The miners still have to go beneath the ground to work and are always accompanied by armed guards. Five of the marine squads are stationed on Zevric, aiding the local border guards to deal with the ripper threat. In most cases, rippers attack in clusters of dozens but colonies have been overrun by swarms of a hundred or more rippers. Attacks seem random and follow no logical order.

The MEC and CIM simply stay clear. They have no interest in getting involved with combating the ripper menace on the planet. It's too risky and really isn't worth it. So they leave it to the corporations and the GIC.

The electrical storms make it hard to use flying crafts on a regular basis so most transportation is done using ground vehicles. The colonies are capable of filtering the thin atmosphere, creating breathable air, but food and water is produced in ten well protected above ground SACs. Digging several below ground pipelines would be too dangerous due to the ripper menace. Digging is only done when a team has scanned and found a rich find. An above ground pipeline is too vulnerable and an easy target. So they use large armored trailer trucks to transport food from the SACs. These eighteen wheelers are heavily armored and armed. The cab holds four people and the trailer has an attached roof cab which can hold ten people while the outside of the trailer roof has another ten stations with ten manned rail gun turrets. The cab has cots, food and scanner controls and for long runs the crew work in shifts. Six hours on the turrets and six hours inside. They leave food and water and pick up dirty water which is delivered to the SAC for recycling. The vehicles have been especially designed for Zivrac use. Clumsy though the method may be, it's the safest and most cost efficient way of handling deliveries.

As it is a dangerous thing to fly on the planet, ore deliveries are handled by a modified ODS. The device is extremely high-powered and the pods are smaller, designed to leave the atmosphere and gravitational pull. The pods carrying the mined materials are aimed, shot and then caught by an electromagnetic decelerator, same model used by the ODS planetary deposit system but it's simply located in space. Basically the process has been reversed. Ships then pick up the haul. This method only makes it necessary to risk flying down to the surface when rotating crews. Due to the situation on the planet it's considered a military operation and is conducted under martial law. MSU runs the show.

Story Seeds

1. The GIC hires a freelance team to infiltrate Red Source and plant evidence that makes them out to be CIM or MEC sympathizers, giving the GIC a "legitimate" reason to shut them down.
2. The avatars are loyal to Red Source and have to track down GIC infiltrators within their midst who are trying to sabotage them. But who can they trust? Each other?
3. The avatars are sent to Felldon in order to root out and assassinate a prominent CIM commander. However, they have been sent by a private party so they have to duck the GIC as well. Between that and the rippers this is quite a hard mission, especially as their employer wants to make it look like a GIC hit.
4. There have been a series of mining sabotages, industrial espionage incidents and an actual assassination. All these incidents have been aimed at Girshaw Amalgamated on Svirac in CryoCore. Is it the other corporations, the GIC or CIM/MEC that is behind it? Girshaw has hired the avatars as they want to use outsiders. The avatar's job is too covertly investigate these incidents and find the motive and people behind them.
5. On Zevric, two food and water delivery trucks and their crews have disappeared during the last month. They have just vanished without a trace. Has CIM or MEC finally decided to take an interest in the planet? Are the rippers even more crafty than humanity has been led to believe or is something else entirely going on? The avatars are part of the GIC group responsible to find out what is going on.

Blackwind

"Well, Blackwind is a lucrative enough system for someone like me. There is always someone willing to pay me and my crew to grab something up. But if you're going to freelance you have to be careful and have a handle on what's what and who's who. On the Slate we have the Dictors and the Charkas. Those two are local gangs but they have juice in that little world. Then we have the Dark Suns, the largest pirate fleet in the entire galaxy. You don't want to cross them so watch out so you don't accidentally get in their way or nab something they're fixing to steal...or worse, something that belongs to them. And finally there is the Stark Dogs. Those legionnaires are a damn freight train. So yeah, you know...don't piss them off or steal from someone who can afford to hire them to hit your team... Other than that it's all good."

- Akira L. Mendez, known raider based out of the Slate.

Blackwind is a dangerous system with brooding conflicts. The presence of raiders is rather high and the GIC patrols in the system have a reputation of being corrupt. The two planets, Adelva and Memphi, are rumored to serve as hot-spots for raider drop offs and hidden bases of operations for several illegal crews. Cekos and Stoneshade are still active mining colonies and an important source of income for several factions. In the middle of it all stands the Slate trading station. Officially under GIC rule, the station is truthfully in the clutches of criminal elements. MEC and CIM presence seem to be on the rise in the entire system. The MEC and CIM mostly use a covert approach while going about their business in this system. On the surface, Blackwind seems rather calm but in actuality it is a powder-keg and it is only a matter of time before someone strikes a match.

The consolidated fleet has a presence in the system. They have five fully loaded Osiris light hunter ships patrolling the area.

Adelva

Assets: The odd mineral and iron deposit.

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: -20/- 120, frequent blizzards.

Factions: MEC, Dark Suns

Fauna: None

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 4 h/13 h

Moon (s): Jelona, Varkas

Circumference: 12,500 km

Population: 2,000

Structure: Self-sustaining subterranean fortifications.

Terrain: Lava based rock, ravines, ridges, mining shafts, mining craters.

Year: 4 months.

Information: For all intents and purposes, Adelva is a dead planet. Its crust is filled with shafts created by aggressive mining, sections the size of small countries have been ripped up by mining ships and mined in orbit. Vast systems of abandoned tunnels run under the surface and old pieces of abandoned machinery lie scattered about, long since forgotten. Though appearing abandoned, activity continues under the surface.



A MEC lookout on watch duty while her comrades unload a shipment on Adelva.

MEC has five facilities hidden away under the surface. Each one has a crew of approximately two hundred. The facilities consist of weapon production factories and medical research labs. The cover is that of geophysics labs (the shell company is known as The Dryer Group), researching the effects of aggressive mining on a small stellar body. The GIC couldn't bother less about a small research group on a dead planet and having this official cover allows the MEC to get shipments on and off the planet. Each facility feeds off a powerful solar array and its own coreanium reactor. All five facilities are located within a radius of 1,000 kilometers from each other, all feeding off a CSAC which is placed in the middle. MEC has managed to assemble a squadron of Raven fighters, thirty ships all in all, which is on standby at all times hidden in an underground hangar. These are in place to act as interference if the GIC ever discovers the bases, giving the chance for key personnel to escape. All in all, the MEC has approximately 1,250 men stationed on Adelva. They have a rather advanced defense grid hidden near all their facilities and their CSAC. It consists of dozens of rail cannons and plasma missile grids which can be elevated to the surface. They also have a self-destruct system in place which will allow them to destroy everything with a ten minute trigger to prevent the base from being overrun.

The Dark Suns have several safe-houses and storage facilities on Adelva and this is one of their most centralized bases of power. In exchange for information and smuggling services, the MEC provides them with food, water and air when they need it as the small underground facilities of the Dark Suns basically are constructed by patching together old mining enclaves and installing smaller reactors and solar arrays and oxygen tanks supported by CO₂ scrubbers. As raiders, they see the use in being able to pull stakes at any time without leaving behind a major investment like a SAC. The Dark Suns mine the

minimalistic assets at a snail's pace, using a modest legal mining operation as a cover. The location is optimal as a base of operations as it allows them to travel to all of the core systems and some of the fringe systems rather quickly, making a strike and returning to base.

The Dark Sun crew is on constant rotation, always having a crew of 250 men distributed among their seven facilities. Each facility has an underground ship yard attached to it which can support a dozen C-class ships or half a dozen D-class ships if need be.

Cekos

Assets: Osmium, lead, titanium, tin, tantalum, iron. There is still belinium around but it's getting harder to find the veins.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +30c to +70c, the proximity to the sun generates a very warm and dry climate which makes Cekos susceptible to droughts from time to time, but they keep emergency water reserves and the two moons have large ice deposits which are mined during the worst lows. There is, however, a natural rain period once a year where the sky opens up and sends down a heavy rain for almost a week.

Factions: CIM, GIC,

Fauna: The planet has been terraformed and a substantial amount of animal-life has been planted. There are a lot of herbivores in the form of wildebeests, oxen and monkeys. The settlers keep cows, sheep and pigs for farming. The planet also has several poisonous snakes, hyenas, armadillo wolfs and the odd pride of tigers. The desert holds different kinds of arachnids and insects, including the dreaded Giant Burrowing Centipede. The lakes and rivers are filled with hybrid fish.



Gravity: 1.4

Light/Dark: 4h/9h

Moon(s): Tarkia, Bem, Tyval. All three moons hold ice mining colonies bearing the same name as the moons. Each colony houses ten miners rotating a fresh crew every three months. They use an Orbital Delivery System to send the water when needed. So far there is ice still left in the moons but no one knows what will happen when it dries up.

Circumference: 33,000 km

Population: 156,000

Structure: Established settlement and underground mining outposts.

Terrain: Mostly, the planet is a desert world but along the Straight Cross Ridge, a mountain ridge stretching 5,000 kilometers along the northern hemisphere, a rich and thick jungle grows. It's along this ridge most people on Cekos live

Year: 16 months.

Information: Due to the assets being concentrated under the Straight Cross Ridge, all the larger settlements have been built here. What used to be above ground mining outposts have become larger settlements with proper buildings and an infrastructure. The main settlement is called Brisko, named after the mining foreman Laura Brisko who was the first to work the mines and establish a colony. Brisko has about 40,000 permanent residents. Most buildings along the Straight Cross Ridge are carved directly out of the limestone and have been laced with metal beams.

Under the ridge lies a vast network of belinium mines. To the south lies the Chanar Plains under which large deposits of water resides. These supply Brisko with its water. On top of the plains lies several SACs, only adapted to support vegetation and water in order to sustain cattle, vegetables and grains.

The other settlements along the ridge are much smaller, some mere mining outposts. There are also several lesser mining outposts out in the desert as well as underground water deposit stations responsible for receiving the ice pods from the moon based orbital delivery systems. They purify the water before pumping it into the pipelines. Those who live and work out in the desert can be out for months and are usually tightly knit crews.

LED has a small contingent in place in the middle of Brisko and they are two hundred men strong, led by a local marshal. They answer directly to the GIC. As they get their orders from the local fleet (which is known to be corrupt), the LED-officers tend to actually ignore a lot of the orders they receive. The LED-officers of Cekos are mainly composed of local talent who want their home world to be treated justly. A lot of the offences that LED-officers in the Divius system would pursue (unregistered vehicles, unregistered pistols) as a criminal matter, are often handled with a slap on the wrist or by issuing a warning.

There is a CIM presence in the area, (about one hundred active members) but the CIM keep a very low profile. Their mission is simply to infiltrate the mining business in order to generate profits and to keep their ear to the ground, listening in on anything having to do with the GIC.

It's only recently that the GIC has received data which would indicate that Cekos is a rather large source of income for the CIM and that there might be a substantial number of Ceko's citizens that are CIM sympathizers, possibly even in the ranks of the local LED. In light of this, GIC has sent out a small group of ISA operatives who have infiltrated Brisko, half are working in LED while the other half are keeping tabs on the mining industry. Only the chairman, senate and a selected few of the senate chief of staff are aware of this operation.



A raider crew has invested time and credits to patch up an abandoned underground facility on Memphis. It will serve them well as a place to lay low and to stash loot.

Memphi

Assets: Small deposits of minerals, titanium, rutherfordium and copper.

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: -5 to -50, heavy winds.

Factions: None, freelancing crews.

Fauna: Rich in cryo-algae, a terraform algae which lives in ice and produce oxygen through water and sun based photosynthesis.

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 3h/7h

Moon(s): -

Circumference: 15 400 km

Population: 500

Structure: Under and above ground mining colony outposts.

Terrain: Lava based rock, ravines, ridges, mining shafts, mining craters.

Year: 6 months.

Information: There isn't much to say about Memphis. The planet is home to a few freelancing miners who extract the minerals and copper left. They live in an underground network of colony structures, filtering and refining the ambient oxygen into earth norm inside the structures. There are several forgotten and empty colonies as well which might fetch a small price if disassembled and sold as salvage. Quite a tough job though as these facilities are located below ground. If fixed up (which will require some money and quite a lot of work) an abandoned underground colony would serve a crew well as a safe house, storage facility or base of operations.

Stoneshade

Assets: Copper, minerals, gold, platinum, tantalum, iridium, cadmium, belinium, plutonium, lithium.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +30 to - 35.

Factions: GIC, Dark Suns, MEC, Stark Dogs.

Fauna: Stoneshade has a fauna similar to that of Scandinavia of old Earth. Foxes, deer, elk, wolves and domesticated farming animals.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 12h/12h

Moon(s): Sakano, Veritas.

Circumference: 10 500

Population: 1.5 million

Structure: Established city and settlements.

Terrain: As with the fauna, it's similar to that of Scandinavia of old Earth with pine, oak and cedar forests. The terraforming has been very successful. There are hundreds of lakes, rivers and a large saltwater sea filled with aquatic life.

Year: 8 months.

Information: The planet Stoneshade is teeming with life and the inhabitants live a rather comfortable life raising cattle, farming and mining. Some even call it idyllic. People who have grown tired of living in the inner core systems have started to migrate to Stoneshade. The locals aren't too happy about this as more people will in the end mean a stronger GIC presence planetside. They like to live their lives undisturbed. What most of the civilian population don't know is that they only live in the illusion of being "untouched" by the problems of the galaxy.

Dark Suns have a stronghold on the planet in Stoneshade Prime (the largest settler hub with a population of 400 000), as does the CIM. Due to this, GIC has a lot of operatives in place and even a clandestine ISA headquarters. The Dark Suns use the planet as a way station for contraband and

personnel training camps. MEC owns a lot of property and small companies, bought through shell companies and use these to clean money and give their people ample covers when they need to go to ground.

The Stark Dogs have one of their largest training camps and base of operations on the planet (850 man strong), located in a large wooded area they bought. Blackwind is a system which is perfectly positioned. It's not smack down in the middle of the core systems which mean that the GIC isn't as zealous and can be bought off and it's only a two month jump to the core and a twenty four hour jump to Tsu-Lang and Caliphrian. Stoneshade is a nice place to lay low when on R&R.

There's a five hundred man strong LED-officer presence on the planet, most are locals. They tend to run things with tighter reins than those on Cekos due to the difference in population size.

The Slate

Population: 10 459

Factions: Dark Suns, Stark Dogs, GIC, MEC, CIM, Dictors, Charka.

Information: The Slate is a trading outpost space station. Resources collected in Blackwind are taken here and auctioned out before they move on. Goods from the core systems are taken here as well and sold to trading delegates representing the different planets. This is the contact point for all trading in the system and as one might imagine, there are a lot of opportunity for criminals, soldiers of fortune, raiders and mercs alike.

Dark Suns and the Stark Dogs use the station as a way to get in contact with employers and to set up new contraband pipelines. The GIC tries to keep the order as they do have a base located on the Slate. But between the enormous influence of the two crime syndicates Dictors and Charka, all the other factions and the fact that the local commander of the Consolidated Fleet don't mind turning a blind eye as long as she gets paid, it's a hard job at best.

MEC and CIM lie low on the station as they do in the rest of the system, but Dictors and Charka show a flagrant disregard for the law in the levels they control. When violence erupts it is often between these two syndicates. Dictors and Charka make profits of illegal prostitution, smuggling, arms dealing and the illegal distribution and manufacturing of drugs. MEC and CIM simply use it as a place to gather information and infiltrate the GIC.

Levels

Level 1: GIC HQ

The uppermost level is completely reserved for the GIC. It holds a fleet hangar, engineering bay, LED station, a barracks holding fifty border guard soldiers. It also holds a GIC medical bay, small research facility and administration center and GIC personnel living quarters. The prison block is also located here.

Level 2-10: Civilian Sector

The main part of the station combines living areas, bars, stores, plazas and entertainment centers. The whole sector is built around enclosed areas as well as walkways, suspended hanging gardens and parks. Due to the design, it has a rather open feel, but there are dozens of dark corners, rundown service tunnels and similar environments where the shady business takes place. A lot of illegal activity goes on in this section. The upper levels also hold the offices of several corporations and the Church of Infnitology.

The higher up one comes in the sector the nicer it is, so level 8 is pretty posh while level 3 of the civilian sector is dark, gritty and rundown.

Level 9: Civilian and commercial docking bay

A whole level is devoted to the docking and maintain of ships. This docking bay has a large built in engineering bay as well which can meet the demands of most repair jobs.

Level 10: Commercial Sector

It is here most legal business is conducted. All the major corporations have an office here and this sector also contains the resource trading floor which would make the historical Wall Street stock market trading floor of old Earth seem as quiet as a library.

Level 11-12: SAC

These two levels are under heavy GIC guard and contain two enormous SACs which pretty much make the station self-sufficient. Part of level twelve is reserved for garbage recycling.

Level 13

Also under heavy guard, this sector contains the main reactors and power grid. There are several belinium power coils. These are recharged by the solar arrays which coat the entire station.

Story Seeds

As members of the Dark Suns, the avatars are to investigate a rumor that hints the GIC has learned of their bases on Adelva. Is it true? How did they find out and what's the next move? Another version may have the avatars working for GIC looking for the Dark Suns.

Intelligence indicates that either CIM or MEC has a strong presence on the dead planet Adelva, they might have infiltrated the geophysics lab. The avatars are sent by the GIC or a corporation to investigate.

On Cekos the CIM are hiding out, gathering resources and the GIC suspects as much. Either the avatars are working for the GIC to root out the CIM or they are part of the CIM, suspecting that the GIC have infiltrated the planet. Let's plot some cloak and daggers...



A watering hole in one of the less upscale establishments in The Slate.

Memphi is basically abandoned but there is potential to establish a small base of operations or safe house here. The avatars have been hired to do just that for a small and shady corporation. But a while after they have begun things start to go wrong. Equipment begins to fail, scanners give off weird readings and soon things turn dangerous. What is going on? Are they being sabotaged by competitors to their employers or is something even more sinister and mysterious going on?

The Dictors and Charkas have ruled the slate long enough and a new outfit is on the rise. The avatars are top lieutenants in the new gang and have a lot of responsibility. But they can't go in guns blazing, first they have to lay the ground work. Spread rumors, muddy the waters and sway those on the take, as well as groups like the Stark Dogs and Dark Suns that the Dictors and the Charkas are done for. It won't be easy.

Berion

"You know, we're a core system and all but I like working here on Mallick in the Steeple. It ain't as hoytie-toytie you know. And I mean we're kept safe. The GIC has rolled out all em' big gunships and doohickies. We're important. We make sure that the rest of the system gets what it needs, and other systems as well. Yup, we're the spider in the web. My old man always said that the future is built by working hands and that the devil finds work for idle hands. And may hands are the working kind. You know that right there fancy ship you came in on? I helped build those heat shields and aft turbines. Now that's some honest to God old fashion work right there. Yep, I like it here. Cus like I said, we're important."

- Claudette Ivanko, ship production engineer on the Steeple.

This core system is basically one of production. The GIC and corporations mine resources and send them to the Steeple production facility on Mallick. Everything from ships to weapons are being constructed and sent all over the galaxy.

As with all the core systems, the GIC presence is very high. The fleet has two Icarus model E-class destroyers cruising the system and the LED presence on every planetary surface, with the exception of Catheras, is strong. Berion is highly valuable and is an important cog in the machinery of galactic industrial progress.

Due to the heavy GIC presence, MEC and CIM try to fly under the radar and use assassinations, bombings, sabotage and covert operations to get ahead. They would never survive an all-out confrontation on any larger scale in a core system.

Raiders seldom make actual hits in the area as it is too risky, but they often sell their goods and get in touch with employers. There are a lot of freelance crews looking for an opportunity to earn creds. Soldiers of fortune, mercs and kirus are quite common since there's always something or someone that needs to be protected, killed or brought back.

Catheras

Assets: Iron, osmium, vanadium, tin, gold, aluminum, uranium.

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: +40/+100

Factions: GIC

Fauna: None

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 5h/9h

Moon(s):

Circumference: 5 300

Population: 1000

Structure: Fortified underground research facilities.

Terrain: Vanadium mixed lava rock.

Year: 6 months.

Information: The atmosphere is dying. After the carpet bombing back in 411 IT, most of the terraforming algae died and since that day the atmosphere began to fail. The deterioration of the atmosphere is of little concern to the GIC as their facilities lie beneath ground. The GIC has established four top secret research facilities on the planet, each one concerned with the research of rippers.

The carpet bombing killed most rippers but couldn't affect those who were located beneath the ground.

In the year 421 IT, a decade after the Marines had been created, the GIC used them to sweep the infested underground tunnels. This was a highly classified operation. Most rippers were killed but they had one specific mission: To secure a queen. After days of skirmishes and heavy losses they were victorious. In collaboration with DoX 2, the MSU built their facilities: Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta. All the labs are positioned around the habitat. The habitat is a vast network constructed of corrosive resistant nanite coated alloy. It features thousands of cameras connected to wall sockets, protected by anti-corrosive glass. Behind every wall runs a service tunnel which allows engineers to fix any technological problem. There is one way in and it consists of an airlock with four thick bulkhead doors and the entire habitat is hooked up to a purge system, which can flood sectors or the entire structure with burning plasma or liquid nitrogen. In this habitat there are thousands of rippers and the captured queen. It's like a giant and deadly ant farm. It might seem insane to enclose such a dangerous species, but the facility and the work being conducted in it has saved a lot of lives.

The studies of rippers have generated better ways to fight them which is necessary. A lot of the equipment the marines use nowadays has been constructed using data generated at the facility. Sulphur/ammonia markers, COG

corrosive shields, the discovery of the ripper nerve cluster and hundreds of useful implementations and snippets of vital information has been generated.

The marines, border guards and researchers on site have signed a release form which basically means that they're expendable if a lethal outbreak occurs.

All labs (and areas in the labs) are restricted and only accessible with the proper clearance. The Omega labs are even more secretive and are highly restricted. The internal security of Omega labs are run by the marines and ISA. While the other labs are devoted to the study of rippers and how to eradicate them, Omega labs has another agenda all together. The use of ripper DNA in weapons applications and genetic engineering. This information is highly restricted and the research is considered illegal and ethically reprehensible by the GICs official Scientific Ethical Practices (SEP). It is unclear who is aware of the exact nature of the research but some heavy hitters are keeping the lid on it and reaping the benefits.

MEC and CIM, and in all likelihood some of the corporations, have tried to infiltrate the labs in order to get a handle on what's going on but so far all their attempts have been thwarted and their operatives assassinated on site.

Delos

Assets: Belineum, titanium, iridium, led, silver, platinum.

Atmosphere: Breathable.

Climate: +15/+60, rainforest in the northern hemisphere and desert in the southern.

Factions: GIC, IMC, SES, CIM

Fauna: Most species found in rains forests and deserts on old Earth can be found here as well as farming animals.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 8h/16h

Moon(s): Smyrr, Ferdan, Åbelas.

Circumference: 10 300 km

Population: 1 billion

Structure: Cities, settlements and mining colonies.

Terrain: Dense rain forests and wide desert ranges, sixty percent ocean, lakes and rivers.

Year: 12 months.

Information: In the southern hemisphere, the MSU has corded off a 50 x 50 km area. This is heavily guarded and the home of an extremely large military training base named Alpha Regalis. The base is one of the largest training centers for the GIC Marine Corps and scout units. The base isn't a secret but it's a restricted zone. It contains enormous environmental enclaves of all sorts, both above and beneath the ground, in which they simulate different planetary conditions. Recruits are trained to learn how to cope and navigate in high and low gravity, toxic and radioactive atmospheres and basically anything else the galaxy can throw at them. Full on space training is done onboard the *Erasmus*, a D-class heavy carrier used to simulate different boarding situations and missions in space. The MEC and CIM are very interested in the base, often trying to infiltrate it.



GIC Marines preparing for a training sweep in Alpha Regalis using experimental war walkers.

The MEC and CIM have invested a lot in the planet. They have operatives in place, secret hijacking guerilla teams living far out in the deserts and jungles. They have several broadcast stations which splice into the GIC and corporate channels, streaming bursts of propaganda. In the core system, spreading information can be more useful than spreading bullets.

The docking station *Parabellum*, lies in orbit. It's basically a way station for travelers and is structured like an airport with some shops, entertainment and a hotel which are available for travelers. People who don't have the proper verification code that shows that they have business (deliveries, political attaches onboard, etc) which require that they actually land have to dock at Parabellum and take a shuttle down. This has to do with military security as the base Alpha Regalis lies on the surface. The fly permit also shows where the ship is headed and how long it's going to stay. Any deviation from this will result in a Fleet patrol being dispatched to find out why the ship deviated from the set route and time limit.

Established mining colonies are rather cozy, there's no problem having the living quarter's interiors kept homely and most miners working here are locals, being able to fly home during the weekend.

Delos is a lively planet with five larger cities, clusters of large settlements and hundreds of mining colonies. Due to the excellent terraforming, the planet is very suitable for humans. A lot of the inhabitants are involved in mining but many have other day jobs, working as construction workers, bartenders, reporters and simply filling available jobs in the cities.

The five cities are named Omizu, Kilima, Standish, Lopek and Ado.

Omizu is a spectacular city in the north with a population of 300 million. The city is built on top of and partly inside a gigantic mountain range by the ocean and about thirty percent of the city extends under water to a depth of fifty

meters. Gigantic buildings stretch up into the air and the massive sprawl rolls itself out over a 1,500,000 km² area. This is truly a core system city. It's bustling with life, LED-officers are aplenty and the traffic is heavy. The Church of Infinitology has a strong presence and approximately twenty-five percent of the population of Omizu are believers. The infinitologists have several churches in place and they have fared very well.

There is a lot of politicking going on in the city and senator delegates try to outmaneuver each other, trying to set up the best angle for the next campaign and gain power. The MSU senator is often popular as the local population takes pride in Alpha Regalis. However, many delegates have realized the influence of the Church of Infinitology in the area and often make it a point to present themselves as believers. There are of course a lot of criminal elements in a city of this size but the LED presence is strong and their investigators usually do a good job of tracking down offenders. Kilima, Standish, Lopek and Ado are similar in size to each other and have populations of approximately seventy five million. They're also hot-spots of activity and gleaming core system cities. Lopek and Ado lies on the equator while Kilima and Standish lies to the south. The rest of the population is spread out through settlements and colonies of varying sizes.

Gallos

Assets: Minerals, belinium, led, titanium, iridium, copper, wolfram, tungsten, silver, platinum.

Atmosphere: Corrosive

Climate: +150/+400

Factions: GIC, freelancers.

Fauna: None

Gravity: 0.8

Light/Dark: 6h/12h

Moon(s): Shelos

Circumference: 5 300 km

Population: 50 000

Structure: Above ground and subterranean mining colonies.

Terrain: Uneven foidolite rock formations and chasms.

Year: 9 months

Information: Gallos has been annexed by the GIC and they use it to extract the material they need for their operations in the system. Ten years ago they declared that major corporations, in the interest of overall industrial growth, couldn't renew their mining leases on Gallos. They continued to lease some short term mining rights to freelancers. Officially they say that they use the planet to provide opportunities for freelancers, giving smaller companies an opportunity to grow, but in reality they found something ten years ago. Restricting the planet completely would raise suspicion so basically they use the freelancers as cover.

During the digging of a new mining shaft, a GIC crew ran across a doorway hundreds of meters down. It was fashioned right into the stone using a method that left no carving marks, plasma burns or any other tool marks. The doorway was sealed with a biometallic lock using a structure of glyphs as codes. Not wishing to damage the door they spent months decoding it and in the end they managed to open it. Inside they found a circular room with a monolith in the middle. The circles on the floor were covered by glyphs which could be aligned in different sets. They seemed to be part of a coding system. The researchers theorize that the whole room is some sort of transmitter and transceiver. They have tried several experiments but failed in most cases. MEC and CIM have begun to suspect that there's something going on but they haven't been able to figure out how to gather information. There are about five thousand active mining colonies on Gallos and the research facility is disguised as one of them.

Mallick

Assets: Belinium, led, iridium, palladium, gold, platinum, tantalum, titanium, osmium, iron.

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: -300/-50

Factions: GIC, MEC, CIM, IMC, SES, Girshaw Amalgamated, Dark Suns, Stark Dogs, Deltronix, Ishimoto Systems, Ladus Mark, Church of Infinitology.

Fauna: None.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 8h/16h

Moon(s): Omudan, Karjin.

Circumference: 23 000 km

Population: 4 million.

Structure: Mining colonies, orbital and planetary production facilities.

Terrain: Dacite rock ridges, chasms and ravines, methane geysers.

Year: 8 months.

Information: Mallick is a production planet. Ships, weapons and all manner of industrial manufacturing processes and research projects are conducted here. There are about a dozen ship manufacturing stations in orbit which has the capacity to produce everything from A-class to E-class ships. Four of them are owned by Ladus Mark. Mined raw material is sent from the surface of the planet to the ship stations. A ship manufacturing facility has a crew of about five hundred. Most live, eat and sleep on the station and are rotated every third month for planetary duties. Each station has its own security array consisting of plasma missiles and rail cannons to ward off possible raider attacks.

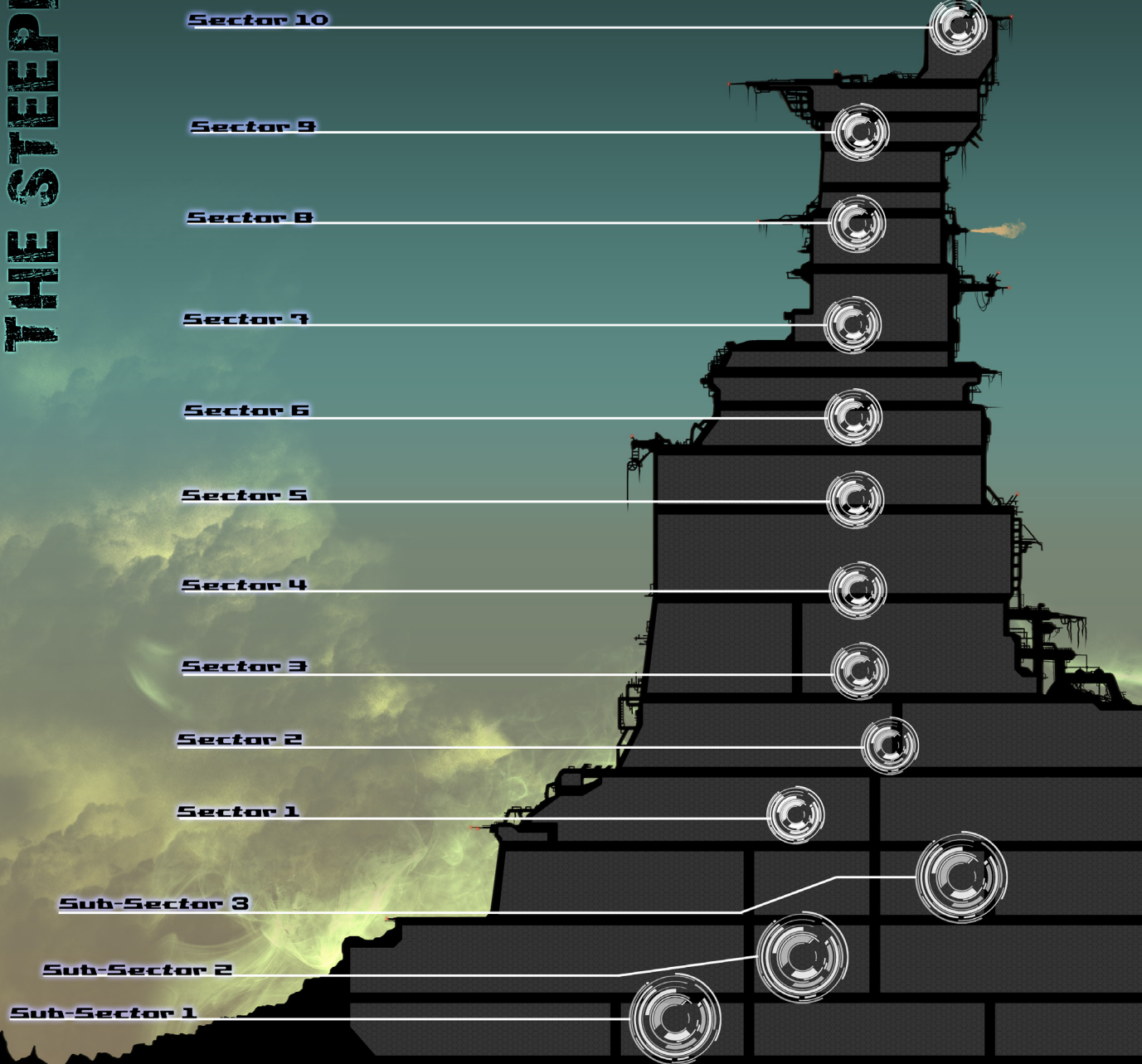
The Steeple: The planet and its orbit are patrolled by LED units as the Steeple, as well as the ship manufacturing stations, are very important to the welfare of the GIC and corporate growth.

The Steeple is an enormous structure. It reaches two kilometers above ground and one down. Its five hundred meters wide at the base and it is home to the majority of the population. It's divided into hundreds of different sectors belonging to a myriad of enterprises. The GIC owns the station and corporations lease different sectors. Everything from COG manufacturing, weapons research to medical testing is performed in the different sectors. A vast network of trams and elevators are used to get around.

Sub-Sector 1: Buried deep beneath ground, heavily guarded lays the dozens of levels containing SACs and CO₂ scrubbers. There are thousands of environmental engineers working down below. The VIN core array is also located here. There are several VIN cores, all working together to sustain Samael, the VIN that controls and regulates all major systems in the Steeple.

Sub-Sector 2: This is the reactor and energy sector. Due to the fact that the planet's atmosphere is made up of methane, the Steeple collects billions of tons of the gas through thousands of methane harvesters which sends

THE STEEPLE



the gas to the sub-sector through pipelines. The methane is then used to power large parts of the station. This sector also contains several coreanium reactors which can be switched on if needed as well as a massive array of belinium back-up coils which are recharged using the vast network of solar arrays which are installed all over the outer walls of the Steeple.

Sub-Sector 3: The industrial engineering sector is used to produce material needed to keep the place running. Everything from hull material, nano-circuit boards to furniture is produced here. The equipment produced here are GIC standard and if a company wants luxurious or upgraded equipment they have to turn to a corporately owned and specialized production unit.

Sector 1: The civilian docking sector is used by fractured companies, mine workers and visitors, at least if they don't

have a lot of credits or are considered VIP guests. Beyond being a combined garage, docking bay and engineering bay, the sector is filled with bars, strip clubs, arcades and cheap hotels. It is a bit rundown and there are a lot of criminal activities going on here. Most sex-workers are illegal, but there are a few registered escorts here as well. This sector is the favorite hot spot for freelance crews, mercs and raiders. There is a LED presence but they try only to get involved when it's necessary, as when more violent crimes or extremely rowdy behavior occurs. Due to the shady nature of a lot of the business the sector is often called "Lowdown". There are of course several watering holes with questionable clientele.

Sector 2: Called the permanent sector, this sector houses middle class living quarters, stores, restaurants, gardens and all that is required to lead a comfortable life.

Most permanent residents live here, this is the hub for the live-in working class. Of course, everyone is welcome to visit as it's a public place. The hotels are much nicer than those in Lowdown and most facilities are a bit more upscale. The LED presence is more prominent here. It is in this sector the Church of Infitology is located. It's a large structure located near one of the outer glass walls.

Sector 3: The corporate industrial sector houses the production units for the corporations. Medical packaging, computer construction, clothing line sewing units and similar hands on production is restricted to this area. Most people living in the permanent sector work here or as miners or in a similar capacity.

Sector 4: This is the corporate research sector and all corporate research is conducted here. This sector is heavily restricted and only corporate security and the researchers are allowed entrance. The research ranges from medical to weapon tests and artifact study.

Sector 5: While the production is restricted to sector 3, the actual business is conducted here in the corporate sector. Here, one can find the offices and boardrooms of the corporations. The whole sector is an impressive monument to corporate wealth and power. The security is high, both corporate and LED security is keeping an eye out.

Sector 6: In the political sector lie senator offices, forum locales and the Gerion embassy. It is here local senate delegates and forum representatives discuss intergalactic politics and policies as well as local political agendas. This sector is restricted to those who actually work here or those given a guest pass. The security is extremely high and is run by ISA, backed up by LED.

Sector 7: This is the VIP sector. Only the rich and famous, politically important or otherwise privileged can afford to live here. The living quarters are spacious and extremely lavish. Same goes for the bars, night clubs and restaurants. Here patrons can find opulent registered escort houses, art galleries and sport arenas.

Sector 8: Political figures, GIC priority staff (LED, military, researches, etc) and those with a permanent residence in the VIP sector use this level when they dock. This is simply the VIP docking bay and holds an engineering bay as well. The security is tight and each ship is carefully screened and must have a docking pass.

Sector 9: This is a combined MSU and Consolidated Fleet sector. It has a Fleet docking bay and houses the barracks, mess halls and bars used by the fleet, border guards and the GIC marines. This sector also holds an impressive command center and training facility. All in all, the Steeple has twenty five thousand battle ready Fleet and military men and women. The Fleet has access to an impressive armada in the form of Osiris hunters and Ravens. The command center also houses the fire controls for the defense grid. The defense grid consists of dozens of deployable missile arrays, rail cannons, plasma cannons and one accelerated photon cannon. The GiGi is located on top of the Steeple. Beyond this, the GIC has eight

defense platforms in orbit, also housing plasma missiles and rail cannons. Of course, this sector is restricted.

Sector 10: The GIC main sector is somewhat of a combo sector. Here all the branches of the GIC have facilities. Research labs for Dox 1 and 2, ISA offices and everything needed to build a miniature version of the GIC. Each branch is corded off from the other and they have several official meeting locals as well. Very important and high-ranking GIC personnel lives here, guarded by ISA. Of course, this sector is restricted to outsiders without special dispensation.

Story Seeds

1. The avatars are approached by a very wealthy private industrialist. It seems his son, a brilliant biologist, has gone missing. The father has come across some information that has led him to believe that his son is on Catheras in a clandestine lab and that something has gone wrong (and it has). The avatars are paid handsomely to find and bring him back. Good luck.
2. CIM and MEC are trying to intensify their propaganda and grip on the local circuit grid in one of the major cities on Delos. This means that they have to bribe the right people, hack the right access points and reroute several security protocol nodes. This will require undercover work, infiltrating secure locations and all this in a large and heavily patrolled GIC controlled city. Well, as trusted CIM/MEC agents with the right skillset the avatars got the job.
3. Working for the one of the major corporations, CIM/MEC or a wealthy private party, the avatars are charged with the task of posing as workers on Gallos. Their true mission is to verify the suspicions of their employer, that the GIC is hiding a secret lab on the planet. If they find it, their employer also wants them to bring back information and evidence of the research going on there.
4. Something unprecedented has occurred. There has been an assassination attempt made on the Gerion ambassador in the Steeple on Mallick. Who would dare to try such a thing and why? And how did the would be assassin get in and out of the political sector? An inside job? Does the intended Gerion victim have any insights? The avatars work for the GIC and are part of the investigative team. It's a tense politically sensitive situation and dealing with secretive (and not all that happy at the moment) Gerions is difficult to say the least.

Caliphrian

"I don't know how to explain it...it is like the images are projected onto the back of my eyes. The digs are progressing and the more biometal we find the more I understand and see. There is a connection between us and them. Us and the universe. The knowledge and insight I have is unique and with it I will be able to reconfigure the energy wavelength and maybe open a gateway to them. But the others wouldn't understand so I will have to fly under the radar. But I will succeed. I have to. Our whole existence will be elevated by their presence. And they are not only showing me the truth, they are telling me. I've begun to hear them, they are singing to me. A song of truth."

- Unidentified log extracted from hidden memory block in the Burrow Peak VIN network on Garmin.

Ominous, dark and restricted, this system is known to be the origin of CAV. The system is still active but sectors of planets are corded off and restricted and most people know very little about what is going on as the GIC has kept a tight lid on things. The planet Bedos is, for example, mostly restricted and heavily guarded due to the findings of alien structures and artifacts. The fleet has a mediocre presence in the system but discussions to increase it are on the table since raiders connected to MEC and CIM have hijacked several GIC and SES ships leaving Garmin and Bedos. The GIC believe that they are trying to get their hands on research data and actual artifacts. Garmin and Bedos have two Osiris light hunters each patrolling the orbit while two others are responsible for patrolling the rest of the system.

Overall, it is not a very popular system even though it is not much further out than Blackwind or Tsu-Lang. Those who travel to Caliphrian often describe it as very eerie and the fact that it's the birth place of the CAV strain doesn't sit well with most people. The planets bathe in the turquoise faint light of the system's sun. Ironically enough, those who travel here often visit Peldios, the location for the first CAV outbreak, due to the unique beautiful structure and terraforming conditions of the planet.

Bedos

Assets: Titanium, palladium, led, iron, copper, tantalum.

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: - 60/-150, constant winds.

Factions: GIC, SES, freelancers.

Fauna: None.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 3h/16h

Moon(s): Wor, Felkus.

Circumference: 9 300 km

Population: 6000

Structure: Research facilities, excavation sites and mining colonies.

Terrain: Sharp jagged jaspillite rocks.

Year: 12 months.

Information: Since the discovery of the alien structures and artifacts, most parts of the planet have been restricted. It is a GIC sponsored SES project. Several abandoned

and shut down mining colonies dot the surface of the planet. Being in a hurry to clear the area, GIC and SES actually bought the colonies in order to be able to get the different teams out quicker, giving economic restitution for lost equipment to the involved companies.

Beyond the GIC and SES, no one really knows what it is that they've found. CIM and MEC have some information, but it's sketchy at best. They managed to infiltrate some of the low level maintenance teams and through that channel they got some snippets. This is something the other corporations are trying to do as well. They have only heard that there is some form of large alien structure under the planet and that it's ancient.

In truth, there is a vast system of tunnels under parts of the planet. The tunnels have been created using an unknown method, very much like the doorway found on the planet Gallos. The tunnels stretch on for kilometers. There are slates of bio-metal on some of the walls, located in front of circular platforms on the floor. Both the slates and the platforms are covered with glyphs and the wall slates seem to respond to touch. So far the research teams have had limited success but these billion years old devices seems to be some sort of teleportation system connected to the planet Garmin. If the science behind them were to be unlocked, enabling the researchers to move matter from one point to another instantly, basically ignoring distance, it would be worth an astronomical sum. Both the instigation process and the energy consumption seem to be a problem. It does not help that the powering up of the system seems to heighten the risk of the onset of sudden VPS. There are some other finds as well which consists of fragments of bio-metal. There are a dozen research stations all feeding of a CSAC. The dig sites and areas showing readings which indicate the presence of bio-metals are kept under guard. These locations have outpost towers manned with border guards or SES security (see the information of Felldon for details regarding outpost towers). The rest of the planet has a couple of freelance mining teams working in small makeshift colonies.

Garmin

Assets: Mineral, platinum, vanadium, darmstadtium, titanium, iridium, belinium, cadmium, osmium.

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: -10/+30

Factions: GIC, SES.

Fauna: None.

Gravity: 1.5

Light/Dark: 8h/10h

Moon(s): -

Circumference: 4 300

Population: 1000

Structure: Abandoned mining colonies and active archeological dig sites and artifact research facilities.

Terrain: Lava based rock formations.

Year: 4 months.

Information: The whole planet is a restricted zone. There is one hidden underground research facility and fourteen active archeological dig sites. The research facility is called Peak Burrow and has been built for highly advanced biometal studies. They have found biometal lodged inside the lava rock of the planet. These are small strands, the largest are approximately one centimeter thick and one meter long. What astounded the scientists when they first discovered them was that the samples seemed to have grown inside the rock. The energy signatures and glyphs they were able to identify indicated that all the strands are a piece of a greater whole. And they were right. The team has managed to assemble about one square meter, a couple of millimeters thick. It has formed a slate, one that coincides with the many slates found on Bedos. The slate is in all likelihood a part of the teleportation system.

The teams on the planets have been able to send a short burst radio signal from Bedos to Garma through the system without any time lag. An incredible feat as the time lag from the same distance using an LSA is one minute. This incredible breakthrough was made in 500 IT. But the price was high. First off, the operation required a massive amount of energy, the equivalent of three percent of a coreanium reactor with a ten year energy life. Secondly, seven percent of the staff within a fifty meter radius suffered a sudden onset of the early stages of VPS at the moment of activation, while four percent suffered full blown symptoms. However, these effects were limited to Bedos, the transmitting end. The dig sites are finding more and more biometal each year while the research teams have made new calculations and are preparing to make a new attempt soon. This time they believe they have things under control.

The Peak Burrow staff mainly consists of researchers, about eight hundred of them. The remaining two hundred consist of engineers, maintenance crew and a small security detail of fifty men (ISA and LED specially assigned).

Peldios

Assets: Minerals, belinium, iron, tantalum, lithium, tin, vanadium, iridium, platinum, molybdenum.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +70/+120, strong winds.

Factions: GIC, SES, IMC, Girshaw Amalgamated

Fauna: Subterranean herbivore and predatory large reptiles and amphibians. Use the template for Large Dog, Wolf and Cougar for the predators and the template for Large Herbivore for the others. The predators have the pounce attack and the ability to move half their speed along walls and ceilings.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 4h/19h

Moon(s): Qepin, Manfred.

Circumference: 10 300.

Population: 2 million.

Structure: Subterranean settlement hubs and mining colonies.

Terrain: Above ground there is flat dry limestone with the occasional ravines. Underground terrain is lush moist jungles, clear blue rivers, lakes and limestone stalactites and stalagmites, often covered with luminescent oxy algae.

Year: 9 months.

Information: Peldios was the epicenter for the first CAV outbreak back in 459 IT. However, at that time, Peldios wasn't fully terraformed and most mining facilities were above ground. In 465 IT the upper crust had been mined dry and the dig teams realized that some climactic and geological event some hundreds of thousands of years ago had resulted in a shift. Most of the assets were located another three thousand meters down. So they began to dig. In the forty years that passed since then, the underground tunnels and chambers has been converted into more than just mining burrows. Aggressive terraforming and the implementation of animals and vegetation genetically modified to live and grow under the surface has led to a unique and beautiful subterranean world filled with life.

The underground world is a work of marvel. Most settlement hubs have outer glass walls which allow the florescent light created by the algae and vines growing on the cave walls and the stalactites and stalagmites flow inside. Some particularly large stalactites and stalagmites have been fortified and converted into small settlements with hanging bridges in-between. There are several smaller communities and settlements in the underground but one outshines them all: *Pangaea*.

Pangaea houses some five hundred thousand people and it's connected directly to the surface. The city looks like a tightly knit cluster of shining skyscrapers which are hanging from the planets crust, some two kilometers deep. Large tunnels and walkways connect the large structures as well as busy air traffic. The above ground portion of Pangaea is a large hangar platform which opens up as ships land, storing them safely underground but close to the surface. Pangaea is the center on Pelidos and most corporations have a branch set up in the city. As with any cities, there is a criminal element and several gangs engage in small skirmishes, trying to outmaneuver each other.

A year ago, some mining crews reported workers gone missing. Some of their remains were recently discovered and it looked like some kind of animal had attacked them and basically eaten them down to the bone. The local LED outfit investigated but kept it quiet, fearing that it could be another outbreak of CAV. But there was no trace of the pathogen. They sent down a heavily armed team to investigate further and they did find *something*. They were viscously attacked, there were some injuries but no deaths on the LED side of things but they managed to kill one of their attackers as the others fled. What they found was a creature that was humanoid in form but it had sickly grey skin, no atrophied eyes and a large jaw filled with translucent uneven fangs. It was also much smaller than an average man, standing one hundred and fifty centimeters tall. After researching the creature it was determined that it was simian in nature and in all likelihood the creature



The Peldios underground environment is one of a kind but holds many dangers.

had been mutated by belinium radiation and adapted to the conditions of the deeper darker caves. Further traces indicates that their indeed are quite a few of these beings living down in the dark burrows, hunting humans and animals alike. They're simply called *Gnawers* and miners are often accompanied by a small armed security team these days. But from time to time the gnawers manage to drag down some poor soul to the deep and feast on his flesh.

Zedo

Assets: Rich in fauna, flora & fresh water (minerals and metals are scattered about as well).

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +20/+50, tropical heat and humidity.

Factions: CIM/MEC

Fauna: It is practically identical to that of Borneo on old earth but also contains additional bizarre genetically engineered animal and plant life contained in high-risk hunting sectors.

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 12h/12h

Moon(s): Cherdal, Blidal

Circumference: 4,500

Population: 15,000 (+300,000 hunting tourist a year).

Structure: Smaller luxurious truism centers located near beaches and hunting grounds.

Terrain: Rain forest

Year: 9 months (2 rain periods)

Information: This planet has been engineered as a playground for the very rich with a taste for the hunt. Zedo has been inspired by Borneo of old earth but of course has a lot of "added features" when it comes to flora and fauna. The more extreme additions have been restricted to the so-called "true hunter zones".

There are about ten luxury tourism centers scattered about on the planet. These are high-end and the price starts out at 1,000 credits per night for the most humble of their accommodations (which is still quite nice) to 10,000 credits a night for a luxury bungalow suite with private staffing. And of course, there are all manner of hunting packages and safaris which comes with an extra price tag. These run from 1,000 credits (hunting easy and common game) to 100,000 credits for specialized hunting experiences in the true hunter zones. The planet is GIC controlled but has a rather low GIC presence. Most businesses on site are smaller specialized tourism corporations.

MEC and CIM have several operatives here which are embedded in the hotels, hunting centers and local escort guilds. This might seem odd but a lot of top GIC politicians and corporate leaders vacation here and these men and women of power seldom leave all their work at home. On average, CIM and MEC keep a very low profile, gaining information through hacks, surveillance and pillow-talk. This low key approach is surprisingly effective. However, they have to be careful as Zedo do have a small contingency of ISA-operatives due to the frequent presence of high-ranking corporate figures and politicians.

The rumors of a low tech tribe are indeed true. Approximately three hundred years ago a C-class ship crashed on the planet. The wreckage tumbled down into a deep cavern lined with a naturally magnetic mineral. The ship was a settler carrying craft, carrying over five hundred people in stasis on its barge, families. Most survived.

It is unclear how the social structure and belief of the survivors changed during the generations. Maybe there was something wrong with the stasis tubes, rendering them susceptible to a VPS, or all of them might have been of the same faith under one influential leader who was driven insane by the isolation and the others followed

his words still. Whatever the circumstances behind its creation, the tribe now lives on in isolation, hiding from the modern world. The reactor of the ship, and the belinium back-up (supported by solar power) has been built into a bizarre form of altar. It's still operational, as is the VIN. The VIN is however damaged, only repeating a single phrase once a week: "Good morning children, it is yet another wonderful day filled with opportunities and learning." In all likelihood the VIN is stuck in a loop from the children learning program. The phrase is spoken in English (not intra) and the tribe speaks a form of English which is very hard to understand even for those who speak the language (think of an extreme form of Patwa). The tribe performs animal blood sacrifices to the image of their female VIN, believing that it's their god. It is their faith that it gives them good hunting fortune and long lives. Outsiders are viewed as demons who have stolen the relics of their god (technology). They often sacrifice outsiders to their god and store their technology in their cave, revering it as holy relics.

The tribe lives in the same cavern system in which they crashed. The natural magnetic traits of the rock and the depth of the caverns make the tribe and the reactor invisible to scanners. The tribe consists of about seven hundred individuals, divided into several smaller underground villages. Tribesmen use bows, spears, boomerangs and swords. They are primitive but do have the knowledge to forge metals. They understand how a firearm works and actually have a rather large working cache of these "holy relics of vengeance". If in dire need, they will use them as their god will allow the tribe to take vengeance upon her enemies. The tribe's knowledge of the area in combination with their trained armadillo wolves and war oxen can make them very dangerous. Their cavern system and the area around it are riddled with pitfalls and snares. The area in which they live is not a part of any regular hunting ground, so up until now they've basically been left alone. Only a small number of tourist hunters have gone missing, but their disappearances have been attributed to animal attacks. Some hunters go off the grid purposely, believing in the rumors and attempt to hunt down the tribe. Keep in mind that the tribe isn't evil as such; they just have their beliefs and faith. It is not impossible to negotiate with them under some circumstances.

The avatars work in the secret labs on Bedos. They might be scientists actually working on the project or part of the engineering or security team. Whatever their job is they all end up in trouble when an activation of the device causes dimensional distortions and a mass outbreak of VPS. With the systems under the control of one of the scientists gone mad, they are now locked inside and have to survive and escape.

The avatars are on Peldios on a routine job down in the mining shafts. They might be prospectors, researchers or handle the security for a dig team. But an underground quake brings the entire section down, and the avatars and their followers with them. Their communication is cut off and they are trapped in the darkness. Worse yet, the gnawers are on the hunt and begin to stalk them as they try to find their way back to safety.

The avatars are on an expedition in the jungle of Zedo. The expedition aims at finding the rumored lost tribe. Well, this one kind of writes itself...

Cradle

"Me? No, I don't do runs to Cradle. Do you know how far out that system is? And I know that it's virtually dead but I've heard a lot of strange shit. There are rumors about weird experiments, hidden research facilities and a lot of other bizarre crap. If you have a client who wants to go to Cradle you gotta ask yourself why he wants to go there and what kind of man he is. Why does someone want to go to a planetary fragment cluster? Why would someone want to visit dead planets? What do they know, what can you expect? My advice to you is to stay clear of a job that takes you to Cradle. Trust me, it won't end well..."

- Stefan Vosgi, unregistered freelance pilot.

Yes, Cradle is basically a dead system of little interest... At least that's the official story. The system was basically left alone after the harvest, only subjected to the odd GIC control run. It wasn't until 495 IT that one of these patrols picked up a reading from within the HV-09. The massive rocks, remnants of the first core harvest, had orbited the system star in quiet disarray for centuries. But now they seemed to speak. After some back and forth, analyzing the information, the GIC decided to dispatch a crew to the cluster. And they found something quite remarkable.

On the surface, the system is dead and the GIC presence seems low, but in truth their presence is quite prominent. This has also led to the presence of MEC and SES undercover operatives since the reason for GIC being in the system is quite interesting.

Denton, B Odess

These planets are dead, without resources and are of no interest. They're cold, uninhabitable and overall utterly useless. The stats of these planets are unimportant so we decided to cluster them together. If you for some reason need to use them just give them a toxic or suffocating atmosphere, high gravity and rocky surface without any real assets or settlements, they are about the size of Mars.

HV-09

Assets: Artifacts

Atmosphere: None (vacuum)

Climate: None

Factions: GIC

Fauna: None

Gravity: None

Light/Dark: -

Moon(s): -

Circumference: -

Population: 800

Structure: Built in research stations

Terrain: -

Year: -

Information: After the GIC had dispatched a survey team to the cluster they took readings and found the presence of several biometallic energy signatures. Upon closer examination they found the presence of artifact fragments in several of the larger rocks in the cluster. These had been missed since they've been imbedded deep within the planet. After the discovery the GIC saw it fit to start up a research operation. They began with mining inside the actual rocks in search for additional fragments. As they were mining they started to build their research station inside. In the end they found a virtual goldmine of biometal in four of the largest rocks and ended up building four research stations with mining capabilities, they were completed 497 IT.

The Find: The biometal that have been discovered (about 100 kilos of it) has a particular resonance, one that makes it capable to communicate with human technology on a basic level before any technologic hybridization. Through electromagnetic signals the metal can understand binary code. It can be made to make simple changes, such as shifting its melting point by a few degrees. This in itself might not seem all too impressive, but the fact that biometal in theory is capable of fusing with organic organisms this small change suddenly means a whole lot. The find they made on the planet Nerios have been pivotal in the development of the experiments.

The Experiments: DoX1 and DoX2 are collaborating in order to create an artificial form of life which is capable of fusing with organic life as well as technology and it's meant to be deployed within the enemy ranks in an inert state, awaiting activation. Upon activation it will grow by siphoning material from whatever matter available, killing all organic life in the process after which it once again will go inert. The main thought is that it would act as a living smartbomb to be used against rippers and cavers. Though using it against humans would be quite possible as well. The codename for the experiment is *Frozen Cell*. They haven't succeeded yet. But when they do the result will in all likelihood kill them all.

The end result will be something that is similar to the Steel Seeker in the core book. The main difference is that it can replicate itself by killing a large enough mammal and injecting it with its micro machines. The cadaver will then siphon technology from its surroundings and become an entity of its own with the capacity to do the same. It takes a body no more than five minutes to rise as a replication. It is also incapable of controlling technology and it has no resemblance to the infected species, it's a revolting cluster of flesh and squirming technology slightly larger than the infected host. These weapons emit a wet but electronic squeal at times, but if it's a side effect if they're actually communicating will be up for debate.

When inactive, the inert original weapon format of the actual frozen cell, is in the same shape and size of a basketball. A faint glow can be seen emanating from within its translucent shell and wormlike mechanical tendrils can be seen moving inside. When given the signal from command (well, if all works as it should) it becomes

active. When active it will blow up when it senses that the correct bioelectric impulses (human, ripper, caver, etc.) is within ten meters or less and in relative free line of sight. If it kills (or causes 20 points worth of damage if a CAV victim) its target, it infects the dead flesh and the process begins. One frozen cell can infect up to ten creatures in one blow. To succeed, they have to perfect the artificial life and successfully funnel the Trident pulse (see Nerios below) into it.

The Research Stations: These have about two thousand square meters of floor space and are dedicated to the frozen cell research. They differ quite a lot in actual layout as they have been built into the cluster. Sections are interconnected through pressurized walkways and tunnels. All have life support which lasts for four months and its own reactor. Approximately two hundred people live and work in each station. Most are scientists and engineers, but each station has a fifteen man strong security force. The stations are simply called Cluster 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Nerios

Assets: None

Atmosphere: Pressure

Climate: -40/-70

Factions: GIC

Fauna: None

Gravity: 1.4

Light/Dark: 4h/8h

Moon(s): Evrin

Circumference: 1,700

Population: 80

Structure: Research and military station.

Terrain: Basaltic lava rock

Year: 6

Information: The rumors about artifacts on Denton are wrong, but not the ones about making finds on Nerios. Actually, they made *one* find. They unearthed something they simply refer to as *The Trident*. The trident is a large artifact, standing seven meters tall. When able to siphon electric power from a nearby source, the artifact emits a pulse which is capable of affecting bioelectric systems. In other words it can affect organisms. After its discovery in 496 IT, the trident was moved to one of the cluster's research stations (which were still under construction).

The pulse the trident emanated could be stored in specified developed containers which were lined with biometal. The stored charge could in turn be funneled into the frozen cell configuration. This allows it to fuse with technology as well as genetic structures. There is a small research station and MSU facility on the planet's surface. A squadron of Raven fighters and four Osiris hunters use this as a base when in need of repairs. There are also five squads of border guards in place. On a regular basis, three of these guard squads and two Osiris hunters are deployed to the cluster.

Story Seeds

1. Frozen Cell. This can spawn whole campaigns worth of stories. Characters can be there to conduct the research, come in later to view the horrid aftermath or actually hunt down a madman who has managed to steal several inert but complete frozen cells and are unleashing them on smaller isolated colonies as a trial before heading for the core.

Divius

"You can't just do run and gun jobs here. The planets in Divius, and the space around them, are heavily guarded. The GIC is everywhere and they keep an eye on everyone and everything. Though you seldom have to worry about rippers and cavers here, GIC operatives, LED, the Marines and the Fleet will crawl up your ass as soon as you look funny at a security checkpoint. But I guess that's why you hired me. I can get in, get what you need and out without a trace. But you better be ready to pay up. After this job I will need to take a long vacation several Ghost Jumps away.

- Ophelia R. Mahaulo, Rouge Operative.

This is the center of the core systems, which makes it the hotspot of the galaxy. It is heavily patrolled and there are few places that have not been mapped out in great detail. The traffic is heavy and ships are jumping in and out of the system every second. It's a buzzing living thing.

Each planet is a place of business and resources. The heavy presence of LED, MSU and the Fleet makes it very hard to conduct any overt or clumsily performed criminal activities. Being a successful criminal in Divius can be very lucrative but it requires contacts, greasing the right wheels and surgical precision.

MEC and CIM are quite active but their operations mainly consist of information gathering, espionage, propaganda and the odd act of sabotage. Outright violent acts are seldom performed as any open confrontation would surely be won by the GIC.

Claret

Assets: n/a

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: -45/+45

Factions: All, though GIC is the superior.

Fauna: Old Earth and genetically engineered.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 12h/12h

Moon(s): Luna 2

Circumference: 40 400 km

Population: 5 Billion

Structure: Gigantic interconnected city sprawl

Terrain: Old Earth

Year: 12

Information: The word overzealous isn't enough to describe the patrolling efforts of the GIC around and in Claret. A D-class heavy Icarus destroyer, the *Caliper*, is situated in deep orbit around the planet, acting as a mobile defense platform. Beyond the Caliper, the Fleet and LED have divided the airspace and the immediate space around Claret in sectors which are patrolled and monitored with excruciating vigilance. Planetside, the area outside Claret City is equally patrolled vigorously by the Border Guard.

Claret is the shining beacon of human civilization. Some historians claim that it is the kind of home world that old Earth never was. There is next to zero pollution, no wars, plagues or famines. On the other hand, some claim that this "utopia" is paid for with the freedom and integrity of the people. Best guess, it's in the eye of the beholder.

Claret City

This city sprawl covers about a tenth of the planetary surface and is constantly growing. Most of the five billion people inhabiting the planet live within the city limits. Those who wish to live outside the city have to live in special enclaves.

Living in one of these enclaves is just like living on the countryside on old Earth, the perimeter is far away from the suburban setting and not noticeable. However, you can't just jump into the car and drive to Claret City. You have to take the air shuttle. Very few choose to live in the enclaves though as the city way of life simply feels safer. The enclave system is in place to ensure that there are no CAV or ripper infestations (even though none have been discovered yet).

Inner City

The Inner City is the corporate and political center of Claret. It is set hundreds of meters above ground, based on large towers. The bottom layers of the towers contain the actual reactors and maintenance sectors. The city levels are divided into Sky, Midpoint and Below. In most parts of the city, Below (especially the area between the towers of the city) lies a dangerous system of old power stations, sewers, tunnels and this is only patrolled and checked to make sure that the structural integrity is upheld. Although not a very pleasant place, Below in the Inner City has several permanent LED outposts and maintenance stations in order to properly secure the safety of the political center.

In Sky and Midpoint the airways are filled with electromagnetic guided scintillating lines of nanites, acting as air roads and signs which organize the busy air traffic. The airways are constantly buzzing with activity. Everything from rich stockbrokers in their extravagant sport flyers and taxis to ISA escorted motorcades can be seen here. There are of course several regular roads as well running between the buildings via tunnels and bridges.

Smack down in the middle, surrounded by a ridiculous amount of obvious as well as hidden security, lies the Ivory Hall, home to the Chairman. Externally, this building

resembles the Pantheon in Rome on old Earth, though the Ivory Hall has a much more modern design, is larger and stark white. The interior is very different and structured to act as a home as well as a political center. It has five stories above ground and several (exact number is classified) basement levels (if there is such a thing in a plot of land which stands upon a gigantic spire, hundreds of meters from the actual crust of the planet). It is rumored that there in fact is a very large hangar bay beneath the basement itself. This is sealed and supported by a SAC and also holds a D-class warship (which is unique as it can break free of orbit). In the event of a crisis the chairman can live beneath the Ivory Hall or actually enter the ship and leave the planet. The building itself stands on top of a very large spire-like structure and is the highest point of the entire city. The spire itself (which has a diameter of one kilometer) contains the SAC, hangar and basement.

In close proximity to the Ivory Hall, one can find the senate and the forum. Although they're not as impressive buildings as the Ivory Hall, they are still striking and imposing. Each building has its logo projected through large nano screens in front of their facades.

The Senate: The senate is a rather small building and is basically a locale that combines some offices with several conference rooms. Here, all the departments and senators meet up to make decisions and make policies. No particular department has its center here and the staff mainly consists of senate staff members. When not in meetings in the senate, each senator has his offices in the building belonging to the branch they manage.

Center of Military Strategy: This is the main building of the Military Strategy Unit. It's a large monolith shaped building which is wide at the base. It is dark gray with dark tinted window panes and is basically an elaborate skyscraper. In here all the paperwork for every military action, project and order is handled as well as a fair amount of actual research. Here the offices of the Marines, Boarder Guard and Consolidated Fleet are located as well. Though not of the actual staff, a large number of lobbyist from various interest groups, political agendas and corporations stalk the halls and meeting rooms along with forum members.

Note: Scout Training Centers are located off world. The main training center is located on the Banshee, a D-class ship of unknown model and configuration. The exact nature of the training is shrouded in confidentiality and even though all scouts remember most of it there are always certain moments that have been blotted out (as the exact conditioning and training involved when learning to master the stealth module).

The Forum: Like the senate, the forum is a rather small building as well. Its main function is to be the meeting point for forum members and ordinary citizens. It is reminiscent of the Colosseum, though it is modern, slightly chromed and its roof consists of a large glass dome. The middle is a massive debate hall where all the forum members sit in the middle around a slowly rotating and levitating podium where the current forum member or other speaker may

stand and address the people. Beyond this (positioned in a stadium-like fashion), there are a large number of seats where anyone who wants to listen is welcome to sit.

ISA Head Office: The Interstellar Security Agency building consists of a large jet black elongated octahedron supported by four immense beams which run from the middle corners to the ground. There are no visible windows or entrances and the only thing that stands out is the ISA logo which moves within the surface, flowing slowly in a circular fashion. There is a pair of steps on one side which seems to be of the exact same material as the rest of the building and they have been integrated seamlessly. In fact, there are no visible seems or integrated parts. These stairs, it appears, leads directly into the wall. However, the entire outer shell of the building has been coated in a nano-based glass, rendering it completely smooth. When someone approaches the wall on top of the stairs a large pane of glass slides away, acting as a door and from every room along the outer walls those inside the building can look out, just as through a normal pane of glass. The ISA building is the only place in the galaxy where GIC operatives are officially trained. The midsection of the building, the broadest part, has devoted ten stories to the ISA academy. All manner of terrains, environments and scenes can be found simulated here. These are used to train the operatives in everything from infiltration, security breach, security fortification, stealth, combat, assassinations and sabotage. Approximately ten acres is devoted to different simulated training environments.

Justice Board Center: This building is chromed with a visual design of several cylinders stacked on top of each other, the widest cylinder at the base. The lowest level holds myriads of courtrooms and adjoining holding cells (for those awaiting trial) while the upper levels are devoted to office space. Here laws and legislations are discussed and passed.

LED-Plaza is located just above all the courtrooms. Here the most high-ranking officers of the LED work and manage the city LED officers. The inner city jail is also located here. Only the most merited and top graduate LED offices are transferred here. Also, the very best LED detectives have their base here and are part of the HPS (High Profile Squad). They are charged with the task of investigating important cases (often violent crimes and murder) which involve prominent members of society. Ex-politicians, celebrities, corporate heads and the murder of fellow LED officers are examples of victims that might require the attention of the HPS. At some instances, the HPS and ISA cooperate, and at other times they squabble over jurisdiction when political profiles are involved.

Resource Management Division: Very businesslike, the RMD tower is a large chrome and glass skyscraper. Every day, billions of credits pass through here in the form of deals and mining deeds. The amount of data that flows through these computers staggers the imagination as this is the economical center of the entire galaxy. The stock market is also located here. The OMCP and the BIE are incorporated in this massive building.



Nighttime in a business district located in the Nimbus on the border of the Ribbon.

The DoX Towers: Though DoX 1 (Department of Xenoarchaeology) is a part of the RMD while DoX 2 (Department of Xenomorphology) is a part of MRG, these two sub-departments are located side by side in two skyscrapers named the DoX Towers. The secrecy of these departments equals and the work they conduct often flow into each other. The DoX Towers are in fact one building, joined at the base but separating after ten floors into two different towers, though there are bridges in between the two towers. The access to this building is very limited as a lot of experimentation goes on here.

Medical Research Group Center: This is the largest and most advanced hospital in the galaxy. It combines the office of the MRG with the main city hospital, medical school, research institute and medical technician academy. This is more or less organized as a campus located in a spacious lush forest park. There are five massive main box-shaped buildings, spaced out as the five on a six sided dice and interconnected by tram systems. Four of the buildings are dedicated to actual hospital work, while the center building contains the MRG main office (which included the Public Health Institution), research facilities (restricted and university), medical school and medical technician academy.

Sirius Museum: The history of the journey that took humanity from old Earth (as well as the history of the Resource – and Ripper Wars) can be explored here. Here those interested can take part of (the official) historical and more current finds and discoveries involving alien technology and alien life forms, which also includes aberrant mutations and the history of CAV.

On a daily basis, school classes and tourists walk through the chambers looking at stuffed and preserved Rippers and pieces of (safe) bio-metal. Full size and lifelike dioramas (as well as NIS based- or supported scenes) of different planets and terrains (including Ripper nests) can also be enjoyed. There is of course a war section in which similar dioramas (some as lively as a movie, based on NIS technology) depict Marines battling Rippers, dramatization

of the first CAV outbreak on the Haze colony in Peldios and scouts and ISA agents sabotaging the installations of the sinister MEC and CIM terrorists.

The Corporate Sector: All the major corporations have their head offices here. The corporate sector encircles the political center, like a great wall of skyscrapers just beneath the line of the political hill. In some instances the buildings are owned by a corporation (like the headquarter of IMC, SES, Deltronix and so on) while many corporations rent floors in a building.

The Nimbus

Those with prominent and high paying jobs live here. The Nimbus offers a wide range of luxury homes, nightclubs, and restaurants. You can chose to live in one of the luxury apartments or penthouses in the state of the art shimmering skyscrapers or in a villa or townhouse in one of the myriads of forest enclaves which emulate the feel of an upscale old Earth neighborhood. There are of course businesses other than those that lean toward entertainment in the area. Law firms, real-estate agencies, upscale vehicle sales companies and enterprises of that nature blossom here. Also, the movie and game design studios tend to have their offices here rather than in the Inner City. The security and LED presence is pretty high in the Nimbus.

Ribbon

This is basically the middleclass area. Those areas that are closer to the Nimbus house the upper middleclass. These areas include forest and garden areas where people live in villas. Closer to the Outer Ring there are only apartment clusters with park platforms in between. The lower middleclass live closer to the Outer Ring. Here the apartments are smaller and the crime rates are much higher. When it comes to security and LED presence it's adequate. Many blocks hire private security firms as LED presence can be too low and infrequent at times and the response time isn't always the best.

The Outer Ring

Only the poorest actually live here, but a lot of middleclass citizens work in the Outer Ring. Food is grown, items produced and all the coreanium reactors are located here. This is basically an industrial area with very few apartment buildings. The air traffic consists of delivery hauls or work shuttles coming in from the Ribbon. Getting around is often done by using the tram system. In The Outer Ring there are more private security firms than LED presence and the response time of the LED is a joke.

Perimeter: The perimeter is located about two kilometers from the Outer Ring. This fifty meter wide and two hundred meter high wall is interconnected and every fifty kilometers features a hundred man strong outposts which includes a squadron of fifty raven fighters each. The wall itself has an internal tram system and several SACs which makes it basically self-contained. As it is interconnected and encircles Claret City (which takes up ten percent of the planetary surface), the Outer Ring Perimeter is the largest military base in existence. The Border Guard and LED patrol the wall and it has been put in place in order for the GIC to be able to respond quickly if anything hostile launches an attack from without the city, however unlikely it seems.

Sky, Midpoint and Below: All the areas in the city are divided into Sky, Midpoint and Below. Claret is built around massive pillars and platforms. Sky constitutes the upper plateaus where natural sunlight fall upon the buildings, Midpoint makes out the area beneath this. Here very little natural sunlight trickles down but a powerful system of artificial sunlight emitters does a good job of providing the residence with "daylight". On average, the Midpoint is less expensive since it is less desirable. Some sections of the city adjust that cost of living. For example, it would be cheaper to live on the Sky level in the Ribbon than on the Midpoint level in the Nimbus.

Below is the lowest level, consisting of maybe thirty or so stories including a network of old sewer systems, power plants, tunnels, production units and waste handling stations. Except for the Below of the Inner City, this level is a seldom patrolled and thus a very dangerous place. Only the most important and rudimentary areas (such as the massive supportive collars) are patrolled with any regularity. This is a route most LED-officers would like to avoid. Down here, the darkness is thick as next to no sunlight reaches down. The smog is thick with near perpetual rain as all manner of coolant fluids and even waste water constantly pours down from the city above.

Surprisingly, some areas of the Below are actually brimming with life. Homeless and criminals who want to stay off the radar have formed shantytowns complete with bars, trading squares and all manner of stores. Rumors and urban legends of carnivorous mutants, psychotic serial killers and all manner of monsters that lurk in the dark run rampant in Below. Some (like bounty hunters, LED officers and MEC/CIM/GIC operatives and criminals) spend a lot of time in Below conducting business without

actually living there. If you are in Mondus or Claret City and want to disappear without going off world then going Below is your best bet, even though it is very dangerous if you do not have contacts there and know your way around. As there is no real law down there it is often run by criminals or roaming bands of violent scavengers. Those who actually live down there full time are simply known as Dwellers.

Erandius

Assets: n/a

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: +40/+80

Factions: GIC

Fauna:

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 18/6

Moon(s): Sisto, Verdi, Codir

Circumference: 7,400

Population: 500,000

Structure: MSU weapons R&D facilities.

Terrain: Jagged lava based rock and quart sand deserts.

Year: 6

Information: This planet is limited to MSU personnel working on site and those with special dispensation. It is devoted to MSU weapons testing. There are about twenty different combined research and military bases scattered across the planet. Here they test everything from new bio-weapons to plasma technology. The defense platform station *Nemesis* lies in orbit. It has a live-in personnel of 2,000 and houses a vast armada of Raven fighters and Osiris hunters. The ship's twin photon canons can be used to take down any incoming threats and can even be directed to fire upon the planetary surface with surgical precision. Same goes for the missile platforms and rail gun arrays.

The screening of personnel is tight as is the security. It is here some of the cutting edge of military defensive and offensive technology is being developed and the GIC wants to keep their secrets and investments safe. Understandably, this place is of great interest to the MEC and CIM who constantly attempt (and at times have succeeded) to get operatives into place.

The planet is terraformed but the water content is very low so water is delivered via ODSs located on the ice mines on the three moons Sisto, Verdi and Codir. Each mine has a crew of fifty. The crew is rotated every three months.

Aerakels

Assets: Belinium, platinum, iron, titanium, silver, gold.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: -25/-60, frequent blizzards

Factions: GIC, CIM, IMC, Pirate Guild, Ladus Mark, Merc Guild, Lego Guild

Fauna: Similar to that of old Earth Siberia with the addition of armadillo wolfs and tundra cephalopods.

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 7/17

Moon(s): Afia, Vodin

Circumference: 22,430

Population: 800 million

Structure: Large mining colonies, settlements and cities.

Terrain: Icelandite rock formations and mountains, tundra, glaciers, scattered pine forests.

Year: 20

Information: This cold icy planet is extremely rich in assets, but the mining is methodical and careful, opposite to the aggressive strip-mining many other planets suffer outside the core systems. Herakels is quite a busy planet. Most of the assets they mine are sold to on-site industries, with the biggest client being Ladus Mark. Ladus Mark has several large shipyards planetside as well as in orbit. They produce many of their civilian ships here.

The Pirate Guild also has a rather strong presence. Though a core system planet, Herakels lies on the fringe of the Divius system and the many scattered colonies and cities are ideal as they allow guild members to stay on the move while still being able to rustle up a lot of business. The GIC presence is far from as prominent as on Claret or Mondus. From here, the Pirate Guild can be offered jobs from prominent clients, have a direct line of communication with Claret and Mondus and have access to a lot of guild teams which they can send all over the galaxy. Herakels is also notorious for being the most crime riddled core planet and thus the Merc Guild has a lot to do. As many pirates have a bounty on their heads, neither guild can claim that their daily lives are without excitement. In most cases, LED is quite thankful that there are a lot of mercs around as they just don't have the manpower to conduct manhunts on such a massive scale.

Colonies and settlements vary immensely in size, ranging from populations of a few hundred to hundreds of thousands. Then there are about a hundred cities, the smallest have one million citizens while the largest have ten million. The cityscapes of Herakels are not as massive or layered as those of Claret and Mondus, but they are still huge. That it is a mining community is obvious even in the largest of cities. The architecture in the cities is based on very high steeple structures filled with walkways, platforms and dark nooks and crannies. As darkness rules most hours on the planet, the cities compensate with a myriad of scattered large NIS screens flickering with corporate logos and commercials. Most cities do have a Below here as well, though they are not as rancid and desolated as in the two core cities, but still quite dangerous. The illusion that it is always rainy is something that every city suffers as most surfaces of the structures are kept above subzero to stave off the forming of ice and a misty steam often swirls in the cramped alleyways. All in all, the cities are dark, dripping networks with shining screens and neon scattered about sporadically. As the structures are built tight and connected through all manner of supporting beams, heating cables and walkways, foot chases on the exterior of buildings are best left to the more dexterous free runners. Needless to say, bounty hunters working

the cities have a tendency to be very quick on their feet and proficient athletes. However, seeing breathtakingly dangerous chases involving jumping over deep shafts and chasms between buildings are quite common due to the high rate of criminals and bounty hunters.

The largest cities are the following: Dirge City (10 million), Shylo (9 million), Cape Steep (9 million), Shaddock (8 million), Wrought Valley (8 million), Miner's Crossing (8 million), Cinderwood (7 million), Yama (6 million), Vermillion (5 million), New Gothenburg (5 million).

Linea

Assets: Titanium, silver, gold, tin.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +10/-40

Factions: GIC, IMC, MEC

Fauna: Similar to that of the active fauna in the northern hemisphere of old Earth during winter time with the addition of armadillo wolfs and tundra cephalopods.

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 10h/14h

Moon(s): Vi

Circumference: 6,300

Population: 350 million

Structure: Scattered mining colonies and settlements and a few larger cities.

Terrain: Similar to old Earth.

Year: 14 months

Information: Linea is beset by sporadic conflict. In the year 483 IT, IMC broke the belinium mining laws which resulted in the release of a radioactive cloud which rolled down over the mining colony Gear Town. Gear Town had a population of nine hundred thousand. One hundred thousand died within hours as a result of radiation poisoning while almost four hundred thousand suffered incurable genetic mutations which left them chronically ill. IMC blamed the mining foreman who was arrested by the GIC and the IMC got away with paying a few fines and some damages. This did not sit well with the population or MEC. As a result, many people joined the MEC and ever since then MEC has been attacking the IMC and GIC institutions in the area. Everything from bombings, propaganda, sabotage, assassinations and open conflicts are common. Linea is a problem for the GIC, a big problem. As a result of what happened to Gear Town, approximately five percent of the population are active members of MEC, ranging from everything from informants to soldiers and a total of thirty five percent are MEC sympathizers (though few admits to this in the open). This means that there are 17,5 million active MEC members and 122,5 million inactive MEC sympathizers.

ISA has a special taskforce in place called "The Magistrates". The Magistrates specialize in hunting down and rooting out MEC and CIM agents. They try to infiltrate the groups and their existence is kept secret. However, word of their existence floats around as urban legends and MEC propaganda. It is said that they are apt at prying



One of the many Border Guard stations surrounding Gear Town.

information from the most stubborn and strong willed individuals. It is also said that those unlucky enough to see the inside of one of their interrogation cells either dies, are found mad or disappears, probably shipped off to the penal colony of Cerik on Quintus. The GIC is also planning to send in five million additional Border Guards. Many believe that Linea will be the stage for an all-out war in the near future.

Gear Town is now a desolated area. The evacuation was swift so people just up and left. It's cordoned off by the Border Guards and the radiation is still strong in the area (Ranging from an Intensity of Slight to Concentrated and a Severity of Soft to Hard, page 96 in the core book).

Mondus

Assets: n/a

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: -45/+45

Factions: All, though GIC is the superior.

Fauna: Old Earth and genetically engineered.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 12h/12h

Moon(s): Fespos

Circumference: 39,200 km

Population: 4 Billion

Structure: Gigantic interconnected city sprawl

Terrain: Old Earth

Year: 10

Information: Overall, Mondus is extremely similar to Claret when it comes to structure and layout. Both cities have been and are still being built according to identical city planning. However, Mondus does not sport the Ivory Hall, forum and the senate. It also has one billion less citizens.

Note: As the similarities are so many, it serves no purpose in describing Mondus in detail by just changing some surface words of the Claret description. Basically, use the outline set for Claret when travelling to Mondus.

Quintus

Assets: n/a

Atmosphere: Thin/Corrosive (burning)

Climate: +800 (daytime)/ +60 (nighttime)

Factions: GIC

Fauna:

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 13h/1h

Moon(s): Segur, New Chatuchak

Circumference: 12,500

Population: 5,000 (give or take 200).

Structure: Interlocked underground research and detention facility.

Terrain: Jagged lava based rock, magma, hot air geysers, firestorms and ash winds.

Year: 5

Information: This planet is beset by rumors. The rumors vary, some of them saying that the planet is the location of a secret research facility where genetic experimentation goes on, others that it's a detention center for high risk and "anomalous" prisoners, and some even speak of it being a hidden away holding center for rogue ISA operatives. Well, all of them are true.

The planet's harsh environment makes it ideal for keeping unwanted people away, creating a natural security perimeter. Quintus is considered restricted and only those with the right GIC clearance codes are allowed to visit as it is the home of the penal colony of Cerik. The official story is that Cerik is a penal industrial work colony and nothing more. The truth, however, is far more complex and heinous.

Cerik was built 447 IT and in the beginning it was nothing more than a very small and experimental penal colony. The idea was that a prison located under the crust of a super-heated planet would be hard to escape from and break into. The facility consists of one main central hub which is connected to several others through an underground tram system. The central hub makes out the largest holding area and is placed in the middle and the tram lines to the other facilities sprawl out from it like the arms of a squatting squid. Today, Cerik is a highly sophisticated penitentiary facility combined with state of the art research facilities. In orbit of the planet Quintus one can find the moon New Chatuchak, which is the largest prison colony in the entire galaxy. New Chatuchak currently houses five hundred thousand prisoners. The policy of cool burning the most violent and dangerous criminals has kept down the overall prison population significantly. The prison on New Chatuchak (simply named Chatuchack) was built 453 IT, based on the model of the original central hub of Cerik.

Cerik Penal Colony (CPC)

Central Hub

This is a high-tech prison with a capacity of 3,000. Cerik was meant to be an experiment for future underground facilities housed in superheated environments. But as time went by the central hub was upgraded and the other sectors were added. The central hub is a cylindrical structure with four levels. The top level houses the SAC, the security office as well as the warden's office and industrial block where most prisoners work. The three lower levels are basically a typical prison. Each cell houses two prisoners.

High-Risk Wing

According to law, serial killers and dangerous repeat sex offenders have to be cool burned, but for experimental purposes a select few are kept alive on Cerik and placed in the high-risk wing. They also keep their most valued prisoners here, such as ISA defectors and the odd MEC or CIM member of value.

The security is very tight; every prisoner is kept in a reinforced glass cube cell. The glass can be made as transparent or opaque as the guards wish. The cells contain everything the prisoner needs, bathroom, bed, desk and a small terminal with access to the internal information network (completely cut off from any outside contact or internal control systems). The cells are arranged on a large scaffold type cylindrical structure. Large robotic auto loaders can grab a cell and transport it over a fifty meter free fall to connect it to the main structure when the staff wants to interact with the prisoner face to face or when delivering food through the hatch. This system ensures that the prisoners have no contact with one another and this reduces the risk of escapes, information exchange and assassination attempts. Each prisoner is allowed four hours a week of solitary exercise in a gym. And of course, these prisoners do not work in the industrial area. Most that occurs in Cerik is classified and quite illegal.

G-Lab

The G-Lab (genetic lab) is a high-tech facility in which genetic material is stored and experimented upon. The lab houses a small amount of cells in which they keep test subjects. They are trying to manipulate the human genome in different ways. They have even been toying with the introduction of Ripper DNA into the human genetic structure. They use prisoners that are genetically suited for the experiments.

T-Facility

Here in the T-Facility (technological facility) they perform tests involving human-machine interaction. A common theme involves attempts to use bio-metal to mentally connect the human mind with actual software. The T-Facility is the smallest compound.

M-Lab

The M-Lab (master lab) is used to take experiments to the next stage. When they have reached their goals in one of the other labs and want to take it to the next stage, the experiments get moved to the M-Lab. They can combine the integration of technology with genetic alterations.

Personnel Quarters

The housing unit for all the Cerik staff has its own SAC, small shuttle bay and is completely self-contained. There are about 500 people working on Cerik (including scientists and engineers). Beyond apartments, there is a small bar, a store, gym and pool area made to look like a beach. The personnel quarters take up four levels.

H-Unit

This is the Hangar Unit and is a two level installation. The top installation is the flight hangar where all arrivals and departures are handled. Due to the harsh atmosphere, all ships are kept under ground. The hangar has room for ten C-class ships. The second level is a storage area where spare parts and emergency provisions are kept.

The Moon New Chatuchak

New Chatuchak is the largest prison in the galaxy consisting of a massive underground network which includes one hundred units, each unit capable of sustaining ten thousand prisoners. All the units are placed in a circular disposition and interconnected by an underground tram system. The personnel live in the central hub and have access to their own hangar bay. Prisoners are delivered to what is referred as the main port, and this is a hanger which connects directly to the central tram system. From here, the prisoners are delivered to whichever unit they are going to serve their time in. The moon itself has no atmosphere to speak of and only a gravity of 0.3 or earth norm. The surface is constantly bombarded with the deadly radiation emanating from the local star.



One of the many prison hubs under the surface of New Chatuchak

Verun

Assets: Gold, silver, iron, belinium, platinum, iridium.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +20/+50

Factions: GIC, SES, The Families (see below).

Fauna: Sand Tigers, Mineral Leech, Dune Runner and old Earth type desert animals.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 14h/10h

Moon(s): Blarid, Chasin.

Circumference: 9 400

Population: 500 000

Structure: Mining communities and small cities.

Terrain: Sand desert, limestone ridges.

Year: 12

Information: As far as small mining planets go, Verun is very active. Though it is in a core system, Verun has been left pretty much alone by the GIC in the ways of control. It is true that LED heads up the security and investigates crimes, but almost every officer is a local who understands how things work. Verun call their LED officers marshals and deputies. Usually, a region has a marshal with several deputies at his disposal.

Verun is overall a pretty peaceful planet, at least on the surface and the majority who live there are descendants of the original settlers who decided to stay when the main interest of the planet had faded in the minds of the GIC back in 399 IT. So family ties and traditions are quite important. There are three major families who hold most of the power: Tisdale, Bazhenov and Wuxhan. They are rich and influential, and even though they are poor in comparison to the awesome resources SES has at their disposal, the word of The Families has much more weight on Verun than that of SES.

Bazhenov is the largest, most ruthless and influential family. Through a combination of literal and figurative cut-throat tactics, they have been able to control a large portion of the shipping industry and mining railroads, as well as several rich finds. Tisdale and Wuxhan are a bit less inclined to resort to actual criminal acts to pave the way for their success, but they're not completely innocent. In order to survive and stay afloat, Tisdale and Wuxhan often join forces in different endeavors to usurp Bazhenov. Though, it is said that a Tisdale mining foreman murdered a Wuxhan miner in cold blood over a woman fifty years ago. This is a wedge that hinders the families ability to join forces fully, which is a lucky break for Bazhenov. Wuxhan and Tisdale are into mining, construction and ore refinement.

Being married into or being born into one of the great families comes with many advantages such as a guaranteed job, economic security and respect. But it often comes with a lot of responsibilities as well. Some young family members who are very close by marriage or by blood to the head of their particular family can be very rude and arrogant, being used to being the big fish in a small pond. Criminal cases where prominent family members are involved often "go away" as a result of bribes, threats or outright killings. However, this nepotism and near fascist tendencies has also made a few men of the law to grow harder, more determined and incorruptible.

The overall architecture and style of the colonies and cities of Verun are quite low tech in their outward design. Most houses are built out of limestone and in Bemoth, the largest city, the tallest building is no more than fifteen stories high. There is a remembrance of old Earth style mixed in with the high-tech aspects of the core systems, giving it a charm of its own. In the larger colonies, water is aplenty as large SACs have been created under the cities and additional water can be transferred via ODS from the ice mines of the planet's moons Blarid and Chasin.

SES has some mining interest in the area and most of their foremen are members of one of the families. SES saw it

best to hire powerful locals in order to gain the favor of the population. MEC and CIM have little interest in the planet and The Families seem to side more with the GIC than any other as they're mostly interested in profits.

Story Seeds

1. This is more of a discussion concerning the main cities of Claret and Mondus. The great cities offer thousands of stories. In all honesty, you can have entire campaigns which are played out in one single city. A city campaign often differs quite a lot from those that are interplanetary or interstellar in nature. A lot of emphasis should be put on local allies, resources and contacts. Politics, law enforcement and constant surveillance are things that will be important factors as well. When you live and work in the city, things can get far more complicated in a much more subtle way. The avatars have to tread lightly. In the city, resources and environmental hazards and the threat of Rippers and cavers is seldom a problem. However, there are a lot more people about that can present just as big a threat. When constructing a city campaign, it might be a good idea to take hints from inspirational sources that are not usually associated with Cold & Dark. Games and movies like *Syndicate*, *Bladerunner*, *Total Recall* (both versions) and *Ghost in the Shell* can offer up some angles. Maybe the avatars are top corporate Operatives involved in a fierce corporate conflict or maybe the story revolves around avatars who live a normal life but soon they discover that their memories are false and they have bizarre flashes of a lab; cloning of human beings is illegal but that doesn't mean that no one hasn't tried to breed genetically enhanced sleeper agents. Or why not take a more mundane story set in the world of Cold & Dark: The avatars are delegates and investigators charged with handling the defense (or prosecution) of a powerful politico charged with murder. Here the whole thing might play out as a futuristic version of *CSI* or *Law & Order*. The cities offer a lot of cool stories which you definitely should explore when your group feels the need to hang up the space spurs for a while.
2. All-out war. It has happened. The MEC has openly attacked and are occupying one of the largest cities on Linea and the GIC has sent in their planned Border Guard reinforcements. Whichever side the avatars are on, the story will be quite similar. You can structure it around a series of missions in the warzone or make it into a narrative that shifts between combat and actual large scale strategy decisions and resource management. Here, the most obvious and prominent inspiration you can use is *Red Alert* and *StarCraft*.
3. Getting in or getting out unlawfully is equally hard when it comes to Cerik and New Chatuchak. A prison escape/ spring story can be quite intense and interesting. When it comes to Cerik, the story can be an actual undercover operation where the avatars are trying to find information regarding the

clandestine research. Maybe something goes wrong and a mutated and fierce specimen escapes the lab while the prison goes to lockdown. Now the avatars have to survive and find a way out.

4. While on Verun, the avatars are drawn into Family business. Each Family is in need of freelancers to do their dirty work, but they probably will not take kindly to folk who work for all sides. In the ways of the movie *Yojimbo*, maybe the avatars can play the different sides to their own ends.

Hardek

"This is one of those systems that seems to be so very calm and safe. Almost idyllic. But there is a lot of crap going on here. I used to work on Dregas as a miner. And let me tell you, the weirdness in that place is not just a rumor. Man, the shit I saw down there. Then we have the Tribes on Erandus, the spy games played by the powers that be on a political level. And I even heard that they found some alien crap out in the Sarossa desert on Rilk. So if you want to retire to somewhere safe and quiet this ain't the system for it. Honestly, these days it feels like there isn't a safe place in the entire galaxy, which is quite messed up when you think about it..."

- Zito Lancaster, mining foreman.

This star system is known for its general tranquility. There are no great conflicts, specific landmarks or anything else that makes this system extraordinary on the surface. However, Rilk and Merik are very similar to old Earth in many aspects when it comes to structure and terrain. As always, there are a lot of things that go on under the surface of every placid lake, and this is as true for most calm seeming systems as well. In the intelligence community, Hardek is known for its intricate spy games as it is filled with MEC, CIM and GIC operatives. They fight for the political upper hand, but political information, assassinations made to look like accidents and subtle rumor mongering are the tools used here. In a place this calm and "safe", you have to use a delicate touch.

Dregas

Assets: Osmium, cadmium, vanadium, titanium, silver, tungsten.

Atmosphere: Toxic/Pressure (High)

Climate: -40/-100

Factions: GIC, CIM, SES

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.5

Light/Dark: 4h/20h

Moon(s): -

Circumference: 10 500

Population: 50 000

Structure: Mining colonies

Terrain: Gneiss and obsidian ridges, caves and canyons and mixed sands. Often quite windy.

Year: 4

Information: Often referred to as *The Tomb*, this planet is filled with precious metals. The nickname comes from the fact that the atmosphere will kill you by its toxins, there is almost no sun and there is no animal life to speak of. This is true for many planets, but Dregas also has a reputation for being haunted by a malevolent force and for its many mining accidents.

Due to the high pressure atmosphere a COG, suitable vehicle or HES is required if you want to venture outside. The mining colonies range in size. Some are very small, only having a staff of 8 while some are quite large, supporting a staff of 5000. Of course, every colony is supported by a SAC or refillable life support system. Smack down in the middle of all the colonies lays *Briar's Crater*. This is a naturally formed crater which runs approximately 1000 meters across. It has been filled with a settlement which runs several stories above as well as below ground. It houses some 10 000 people and is simply called Briar's Crater or the Crater. It is from here, most large C-class freighter ships arrive and depart. The largest ore refineries are located here as well as the trading floor where corporate delegates and lobbyists buy and sell resources and mining rights. All the colonies also hire their personnel here. It is quite the busy place with constant arrivals and departures, trades, political innuendo and backroom deals. The upper level of Briar's Crater is part hangar and part upscale miniature city with parks, bars, offices and apartments. The lower levels combine the underground train station, SAC, refinery, industrial block and mid- to low class living quarters along with the odd illegal booze den. The underground train line is used to transport ore and workers all over the planet, which allows companies to save on fuel cost and ship maintenance. The trains run on an electromagnetic track at a speed of 2000 km/h.

There are also several archeological digs on Dregas. It is rumored that GIC and SES have found the remnants of an underground structures dating back millions of years. SES invests millions of credits in the digs and they have been given quite the latitude by the GIC, as long as they disclose their finds. The CIM has several operatives in place and they try their best to gain access to these sites, gathering information, industrial secrets as well as sabotaging the work whenever they get a chance.

There is and has always been a strange air to Dregas. VPS is not more common than anywhere else but those who are struck often go off the deep end in a heartbeat and almost every single one of them speak of ghosts, faces of mist and dark spirits that live in the deep mines, rocks and the very sand.

Dig Sites and the Ghosts of Dregas: There are several dig sites, in most of them SES has encountered lesser artifacts, but in one (the Black Straits dig, discovered in 478 IT) they encountered a crumbling underground system of mined out and a fashioned system of caves. It was here, in the middle of dozens of kilometers of mazelike caverns that they found a sealed chamber. They managed to remove the still pristine obsidian gate. As they did, a huge black cloud came roaring out. The entire dig

team was instantly struck with severe VPS. Some became aggressive while others crawled into their own minds, entering a state of catatonia. They all, in one fashion or another, spoke of the ghosts and dark spirits of the deep caverns. The scientific dig team could never figure out exactly what happened, but since then miners have reported very strange sightings; there have been deadly and unexplainable accidents and from time to time VPS flares up without warning. SES and GIC have a small special team on Dregas which is clandestinely investigating phenomena having to do with whatever got released in the Black Straits dig. They have not been able to conclusively determine what got released, but they do believe it is an alien force of sorts that has a kind of sentience.

What actually got released was an experimental piece of voider technology. Its original purpose is unknown and probably inconceivable to humans, but it consists of a large cloud of polymorphic biometallic particles. They often travel by the wind but can also propel themselves by the aid of electromagnetic propulsion. Why it does what it does today is unclear, but in all likelihood it is affected by the hostility voiders harbor towards humans.

While moving around it looks similar to ink floating in water, but it can move quite fast and has a diameter of about five meters. When it does not wish to be seen, it simply spreads itself thin and is no more visual than dust floating around in the room. There seems to be no real pattern to its actions. It keeps itself hidden and from time to time it pops up in order to harass a small mining colony, outpost or even a single individual, driving them mad and causing deadly accidents. By some, it is referred to as the Straits Cloud.

Powers and AI Notes: The nature and powers of the Straits Cloud is deliberately kept vague. This is a great tool when you want to play a story that has elements of the classical ghost stories. The outline for this entity can be used to create your own versions. The following are some options for powers and abilities.

Destruction: Overall, it's impossible to destroy or harm the cloud by using simple physical means such as firearms and other kinetic methods. It basically acts as a large cloud of sand, so shooting it has no effect. Extremely strong winds will affect it, though it has some resistance due to its electromagnetic propulsion. It might be possible to capture or destroy it through very strong electromagnetism or with the aid of extreme high grades of radiation or heat. In other words, one has to lure it into a pre-set trap of sorts.

Mobility: It can travel by wind in which case it moves at the same speed as the wind. It can also move by magnetic propulsion, vectoring off planetary/artificial gravity or the magnetism in organic objects. It moves about as fast as a running human at this speed. If you feel that it is appropriate, it can move extremely fast if it can siphon suitable energy (It might be able to zoom along the magnetic train tracks at high velocity in order to get around the settlements quickly).

Many Forms and Mind Sight: The cloud can see into the minds of humans and create echoes of people and sounds relating to individuals that the person has a strong emotional and/or traumatic connection to. Loved ones, long lost friends, and brothers in arms you lost in battle, etc. It can form itself into full-sized versions of the person using the memories of the individual. The image is a bit blurry and has a strange air about it (the voice sounds similar to the person it is emulating but it is a bit distorted), but it will upset the target. If the person who is being affected has three or more in the Dark they won't make the distinction. The facsimiles can only interact by light touch and if they are hit or hit something with any force they break apart and reconstruct. The Straits Cloud uses this to harass and confuse its victims.

VPS: Here you should use your discretion freely. Does just being close to it put an individual at risk of suffering from VPS or does the cloud actually have to "pass through" an individual, and then impose a roll?

Disruption and Sync: By pouring a small part of itself inside a machine or piece of electronics it can affect it. It can shut down electrical grids, turn off coolant valves and mess up navigation (or set off detonators prematurely). Roll 6D, the more successes the more it can affect.

Possession and Travel: Alternatively, the cloud can actually possess a person (entering the mouth and nose) who has 4 or more in the Dark. Roll 6D and each success gives it a half an hour worth of control. It can only try to possess every third hour if it fails. It likes being inside a body as it can feel, smell and taste (very much like a classic spirit or ghost in horror literature). It has access to the memories of the one it possesses but it can only emulate human behavior and a possessed person is distant, overall weird and if one looks closely at their eyes one can see that the blood vessels are darker than usual. If a possessed person dies the cloud is expelled. You also have to consider this: Is the cloud bound to the planet or can it in fact leave and does it want to? If it does, what does it want?

Erandus

Assets: Belinium, platinum, tin, vanadium, gallium, iridium, silver, helium-3.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +5/-60

Factions: CIM, MEC, GIC, IMC, SES, The Tribes (see below).

Fauna: Tundra Cephalopods, Saber Tooth Ice Wolves, White Stalk Wasps, Armored Glacier Wilder Beast, Runners, and Old Earth alpine and tundra wildlife.

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 12h/12h

Moon(s): Wilko, Deri, Samburio, Cheeria.

Circumference: 17,000

Population: 70 million

Structure: Cities, mining outposts.

Terrain: Lava based rock, gneiss ridges, glaciers, large lakes, underground ice caves, pine forests, tundra, Alps.

Year: 20

Information: To snowmobile over the tundra, ice climb the great glaciers or ski down the Alps while watching the four blue moons arch over the Erandus sky is indeed a breathtaking experience. Erandus has some rather large mining assets, though these mines are located in subterranean dig sites and the planet is mostly known for its beautiful terrain, rich fauna, adventure trails and snow safaris. It is also known for being the home planet of *The Tribes*.

The Tribes

The Tribes is something of a social and anthropological mystery. There are approximately ten million members of The Tribes living on Erandus, and genetically they can be traced back to the Native Americans and the Maori people of Old Earth. It is unknown how it came to be that they arrived at Erandus almost simultaneously, and in their vast numbers. There are several theories, some speak of large ships in which cloning took place, while others speak of some form of recessive gene which became progressive. In truth, no one really knows, even members of The Tribes claim to be unaware of their true origins.

The spoken language of The Tribes beyond intra is Te Reo, the language of the Maori people of Old Earth. Of course, it differs some due to linguistic evolution. There are four great tribes: *Pae*, *Koha*, *Upoko*, and *Aroha*. Each tribe has their own territory on the planet. Back in 402 IT, the GIC granted The Tribes actual ownership rights over their own territories. The reason for this was the fact that all the members of The Tribes (10 million) lived in close proximity with each other and were and still are the largest and most close knit group of ethnically connected people. They share traditions, ethics, genes and world view (for the most part). Sadly, even though they lived peacefully, many people felt threatened by them. In order to actually give them a voice and GIC laws that could protect them, the GIC granted them their very own (large and lucrative) territories. Early on some of the more racist people of Erandus went against it, but with time (and some GIC pressure) they were silenced. The territories (simply called *The Territories*) of The Tribes are the closest thing the Sirius galaxy has to a country/principality.

On the whole, The Territories are governed by the same laws as the rest of Sirius under GIC rule, though what differs is that they own all their resources. They do not have to lease the right to mine. The Territories are self-contained and the way of life the tribe members live is much less wasteful and it has been speculated that they can live off their lands indefinitely.

Tribal Way of Life: The Tribes have access to the exact same technology and knowledge as the rest of Sirius, and use it as well, but they use it much less. Most of their heating is provided by actual fires in their homes and they rely much more on solar power than others. They have access to spaceships, cars and hovercrafts, but mostly they get around by walking or using snow runners. In most cases, they hunt and grow their food. By using genetics to

clone and plant animals and strengthen crops from time to time, they avoid hunting anything to extinction. They do not hold back with their technology when it comes to medical science in any way.

Their way of life is an active choice. They believe that lending oneself too much to technology will soften the body and weaken spirit, but casting it out completely not wanting to learn and keep up with the times will soften the mind and put them at a disadvantage.

Tribal Cities: You will find no apartment buildings, high-rises or shopping malls here. Each family lives in their own house or villa. They're constructed from local stones and wood. Basically they resemble brick houses from the 22nd century with a slant ceiling and a white or black exterior finish similar to stucco (though very smooth and of a much higher quality) while some prefer log cabins. The interior is that of a modern home but with much less technology and the largest rooms have a hearth. Ritual weapons, traditional tribal arts and hunting trophies usually adorn the walls. All homes have a NIS terminal, usually located in the central room. Through this they have full access to the Circuit. Though most entertainments are based on actually meeting others and interacting.

Religion: The Tribes believe that everything living (cloned or not) has a spiritual essence and when it dies this essence travels to the Great Hall of Trials. Here, the court of the pure, those whom have already passed the trials, will subject the spirit to the trials. This trial will reveal the truth of the life you have led. Have you lived honorable, with truth and with bravery? Are you honest to yourself? If you pass the trial, you are granted a place among the pure, if not, you are reborn into a form suiting the life you led. Some who just have a little more to learn become human again, while those whom have lived lecherous, dishonest and cowardly lives are reborn as a simple beast as they first have to learn how to be human again. They also believe that some are left as spirits on the physical plane where they act as guides for a while before they can be reborn or become one of the pure.

Couples who plan to start a family are expected to marry, the ceremony entails binding their spiritual essence together and only upon death does the bond sever. It is quite similar to many cultural marital ceremonies. There is a hand binding, the couple walk up the row of truth (the main walkway in the Temple of Purity, their main religious building) in front of their loved ones and it is followed by a two day feast of drinking and eating.

Traditions: The most important tradition is that of The Trial of Life. This is something that every tribal member has to go through when they reach the age of sixteen to eighteen. The men are sent out to slay a tundra cephalopod and bring back its gland and the women are sent out to tame a wild saber tooth ice wolf. Through their feat, the men show their courage and ability as hunters and providers, while the women show their courage and ability to nurture. Outsiders who hear about the women trial often believe they are sent out to get a cub, but this is not the case. The women are sent out to tame a saber

tooth ice wolf that has just passed one year. At this point, they have just left their mother, weigh about 120 kilos and are surging with growth hormones which makes them the most aggressive they have ever been. Basically they have just hit puberty. A failure will not lead to the person being shunned, as long as the failure was not the result of cowardness. About 1 in 20 actually die during this trial. The Trial of Life is a journey you have to take on alone. The teenager is left in the middle of the wilds with a settler rifle with two extra clips, two days worth of food, a knife, a hunting spear, some ropes, three doses of regen and a medkit. After one week a search party is sent. The men are expected to have the gland and be able to show the body or place of the kill and the woman are expected to at least have been able to have caught the wolf without harming it and are expected to continue to tame it after they have brought it home. Preferably they are supposed to be able to be close to the wolf and have a calming effect on it. Crippling wounds that were sustained during



A tribal member out on the hunt.
She is tracking her prey through the blizzard.

the trials are healed with a medtank when it is over. Scars, even disfiguring ones, are in most cases kept and worn as a badge of honor. Make no mistake, the men and women of The Tribes are as tough as they come.

Tribal members are also adorned by tattoos. These tell the story of their lives. The first tattoo a tribal member receives is the one telling the story of his Trail of Life. This is the largest one and covers the left side of the face. The tattoos continue on telling tales of everything from feats in business, hunts, Trials of Blood (a duel that stops short of death that can be undertaken when your honor is at stake, barehanded or with a knife, actually killing your opponent is considered cowardly and dishonorable) and wars.

The Outside World: Even though racism isn't as common in Sirius as it was on old Earth, some individuals on both sides of the fence on Erandus have racist views but it is not a big problem nowadays. The Tribes allow their members to travel freely, but the matter of marrying or conceiving children with those outside the Tribes is complicated. It is allowed, but there is only one way: If you marry or conceive a child with someone outside The Tribe you are not allowed to live within the territory until your child has gone through the Trial of Life. So, for at least sixteen years you are forbidden to live within The Territories. However, after the trial (if the child didn't show cowardness that is, in which case you are not allowed back), you are free to move back in. Either way, you are free to visit with your family seven days out of the month and sleep within territory grounds for one of these nights. Being half tribe and half outsider can be difficult for a child on Erandus, as they at times get the feeling that they do not belong on either side.

LED: Simply put, the law is handled by LED officers who are tribal members in most cases. Others are allowed but they often have a hard time understanding local concerns. The Tribes do encourage outsiders to work within territory limits as part of the local LED as they believe it will lead to mutual understanding and prevent The Tribes from drifting too far into their own world.

Army: They have no official army, but most own weapons and all of them can take care of themselves. If they are ever attacked there will be hell to pay. They do have access to armed ships as well. Even though they have never had to use them, they stand primed and ready. Every tribe member is expected to have undergone their internal six month militia training before the age of twenty five.

Hunting Trails: The Tribes are known for leading the best hunting trails for tourists. All those who hunt are adorned with temporary huntsmen tattoos, positioned over the right eye and forehead. These are all done traditionally with handmade dyes, and bone chisel and a stone tipped hammer. The dyes fade after about two weeks and some regen salve will remove all possible scarring. These trips are expensive and they only take on people who have some type of experience with hunting or war situations.

MEC & CIM: Many attempts have been made to recruit or infiltrate The Tribes, but to no avail. Overall they want nothing to do with MEC or CIM. They are grateful to the GIC for allowing them to keep their way of life, but they will not actively hunt MEC or CIM in their territories as long as these do not harm or disrupt their society.

Note: *The four tribes are very similar and work well together; they only have slight differences in some ceremonies and in dialect. There is no real bad blood between them, rather a friendly type of rivalry. Every five years they hold The Game of Superiority. The tribe who wins this will have their leader (Ariki) heading up the Tribal Council, which gives him some veto rights when it comes to business dealings with the outside world and matters of law concerning the four tribes.*

The Game of Superiority entails a weeklong festival where a selection of six of the best from each tribe has to go through several trials. These involve hunting, tracking dueling to first blood, surviving and evading as well as the understanding and use of cutting edge technology.

Overview of Erandus

Erandus is generally a peaceful planet. The size of the cities varies from four thousand to three million. Most cities have heated streets due to the cold and taller buildings, such as high rises and such, often have a cylindrical shape in order to stave off the harsh tundra winds that come rolling in from time to time.

Due to the stability and suitable size of the cities, many smaller companies make their homes here, working solely on a local level. Many smaller companies still have thousands of employees and assets of billions of credits at their disposal. This has led to an intricate web of industrial espionage and sabotage among competitors. This silent corporate war is seldom noticed by the general public, but it is as ruthless and deadly as it is clandestine. A team of reliable freelance agents can make a good living here.

The planet's position within the core and its lack of political heavy players (and the lack of the heightened security that comes with it) has made it a hotspot for MEC and CIM operatives and cells. They use it as a meeting place and staging area, seldom engaging the GIC on site; they prefer to send out operatives to the other core planets. IMC and SES do a lot of business here; majorly they invest in smaller companies and manage mining resources. Often they use smaller companies as fronts in order to strike back at each other. This adds another stratum to the already convoluted network of spies and the corporate underbelly is teeming with double agents, high-end extortion rackets and cold hearted assassinations.

Outside the cities the wilds that are not used as hunting trails (and owned by the GIC) has a fair amount of mining colonies. Several lie at the bottom of lake Fade.

A local delicacy is the white stalk wasp. In similarity to the Japanese blow fish, it has to be cocked just right or it's deadly. Many non-local people have a problem eating the dish. Not only because of the risk, but eating the garlic sautéed intestines of a giant insect turns most people off. The Tribes only eat the animal if they are out on a trail and have no other choice; otherwise they prefer not to eat it.

Religious-wise, this planet (not counting The Tribes) has the highest rate of agnostics and atheists. They comprise approximately eighty percent of the population. No one knows why. The city of Verta is considered the capital of the planet.

The largest cities are the following: Pomni (3 million), Verta (3 million), Pernum (2.9 million), Sewata (2.5), Moon Fall (2.4), Azuda (2.4), Oler Basai (2.3), Akmak (2.2), New Anchorage (1.9), Lerdi (1.5).

Faveli

Assets: Cobalt, silicon, silver, belinium, iron.
Atmosphere: Pressure
Climate: +120/+400
Factions: GIC
Fauna: None
Gravity: 2.3
Light/Dark: 6h/18h
Moon(s): Trass, Ferodin
Circumference: 9,500
Population: 500 000
Structure: Interconnected mining operation.
Terrain: Silicon and gneiss.
Year: 8

Information: This planet is one giant and very effective mining colony. It is completely controlled by the GIC and every mining outpost on site forwards their material to what is known as Source Central through their underground tram system. Source Central is a 5000 man strong ore refinery and multiple ODS. Here all the material is processed and shot up into orbit where it is snatched up by Source Sky, the ODS reception station which is placed in Faveli's orbit (500 man operation). After the payload has been caught, it is divided and loaded unto transport ships which deliver the goods to wherever the GIC needs it most. The material is destined for high-priority GIC projects such as military bases and cutting edge research facilities. This planet is a miner's planet and only a few have their families with them. Everything, bars and domiciles included, are very industrial, rough and effective in design. Beneath Source Central lies Miner's Nest, this is a large underground plaza. It has been put together by mining colony module scrap material and forms a makeshift city. Most bars, brothels (legal and illegal) and stores are located in the Nest and it is always pulsing with life as off shift miners blow off steam. The ceiling is high and ends in a metal beam supported natural stone dome. GIC did not want any bars or entertainment systems from the beginning, but the workers would not stand for it and created Miner's Nest. Nowadays, GIC has signed off on it and they even got a small LED outpost in the center of it in order to keep the peace. If not a GIC official with some connections which can give you a state room in the GIC living section of Source Central, those who stay short term will have to get a room in one of the boarding houses available in Miner's Nest.

Gesalion

Assets: None
Atmosphere: Toxic
Climate: -4/-50
Factions: GIC
Fauna: None
Gravity: 1.0
Light/Dark: 10h/14
Moon(s): Irda
Circumference: 53 000
Population: 500
Structure: Abandoned mining colonies
Terrain: Lava based rock, mining craters
Year: 4

Information: Gesalion has a small contingency of 500 border guards divided into five smaller outposts. They are in place to keep an eye out for possible Ripper infestations and to deter raiders, MEC and CIM from using the planet as a staging ground. Basically, this is a planet that has been mined dry decades ago and is of little value to anyone. There are a few colony remnants left, but not enough to be worth the risk of an illegal salvage job.

Merik

Assets: Small amounts of assorted mining resources, rich in flora and fauna.
Atmosphere: Breathable
Climate: +15/-60
Factions: GIC, CIM
Fauna: Runners and Old Earth Scandinavia wild life.
Gravity: 1.0
Light/Dark: 12h/12h
Moon(s): Yamara
Circumference: 20 400 km
Population: 1.5 Billion
Structure: Cities, suburbs and farming communities.
Terrain: Old Earth Scandinavia
Year: 14

Information: This planet is very similar to that of Old Earth Scandinavia when it comes to terrain, flora and fauna. It is somewhat colder though, but the animals and plants have been genetically altered to thrive under the conditions. Merik is a very serene and calm planet. Most food comes from actual farming and the raising of cattle (though vastly improved by genetic engineering and technology). The cities vary in size from 4000 to five million, with the planetary capital being Oressy (5 million). CIM has several cells here and are active politically, running propaganda and hacking networks. They also have an interest in infiltrating Fort Brask.

Fort Brask is a GIC Marine training facility, which has a staff of 1000 and about 6000 Marine cadets in training. It's located to the far north in the middle of Brask Woods, a large wooded area surrounded by mountains.

Rilk

Assets: Small amounts of assorted mining resources, rich in flora and fauna.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: Southern Hemisphere (similar to Old Earth Sahara), Northern Hemisphere (Similar to Old Earth Amazon)

Factions: GIC, SES, MEC

Fauna: Old Earth Sahara (and Sand Tigers)/Old Earth Amazon

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 12h/12h

Moon(s): Yacata

Circumference: 32 000

Population: 1.5 Billion

Structure: Larger cities and smaller settlements.

Terrain: Southern Hemisphere (similar to Old Earth Sahara), Northern Hemisphere (Similar to Old Earth Amazon)

Year: 9

Information: As a warm planet with a rich wild life and several striking sights, it has become quite popular as a vacation resort for the everyday Joe. Like Merik, the inhabitants of this planet rely more on traditional ways of generating their food. And even though Merik is the opposite of Rilk when it comes to climate, the two planets are quite similar when it comes to way of life.

Even the southern hemisphere where the climate is similar to the Sahara of old Earth is thriving with agriculture. This is due to a multitude of several artificially created farming enclaves.

Back in 497 IT, SES set up a large dig site in the Sarossa desert. Rumor has it that they found an ancient alien craft and are working with the GIC to dig it out and harvest the technology and that MEC and CIM have sent operatives in order to infiltrate the site. The only thing that is certain is that there is in fact a closed off SES dig site in the Sarossa desert and that GIC has cordoned it off.

It is uncertain why, but Rilk has a very high ratio of Protestants, much more than any other core system planet and they outnumber the Infinitologists which is rare. The Church of Infinitology has increased its presence and many of their arbiters are wandering the planet.

MEC has started to build numerous bases in the northern hemisphere as well as they have begun to stockpile weapons. There have been several skirmishes between the Border Guards and MEC in the jungle. It is unclear what MEC is planning but the GIC has increased the number of Border Guards in the area.

Story Seeds

1. The avatars have been hired to investigate a series of accidents (which can possibly be murders) on Dregas. As the investigation progresses, they uncover more and more peculiar and eerie testimonies and crime scenes. Soon they find themselves investigating a far

out mining colonies, feeling a dark presence watching them. Maybe there is something to the Ghosts of Dregas?

2. After a successful mission on Dregas, the avatars hop on their ship and steer for their next paying job. But something is wrong. First the electronic acts up, then the navigation and soon they find themselves losing control over more and more of the ship as mechanical and electrical problems pile up. It does not take long until they begin to see moving shadows in the corner of their eyes. A presence seems to have followed them from Dregas, one that is intent on harming them. What is it, what does it want and how do they stop it. They better figure it out soon as they are now dead in the water and close to turning on each other as VPS and the presence affect them. What is real and what is in your head?
3. The avatars are a team that serves as agents in the corporate war on Erandus. One local company is willing to take a huge risk and actually wants to steal a piece of technology from IMC. The avatars will have to steal the prototype, erase all research data and backups and kill the head researcher so that their employer has all the material. But it does not end there. They also have to shift the blame to another corporation and frame them as IMC will not stop looking for the guilty ones until they have someone to blame.
4. The avatars are investigators that become involved in a criminal investigation involving The Tribes. The body of a young woman who is the daughter of a powerful local corporation head is found in The Territories. The avatars have to work with tribal LED officers to solve the case. But tension runs high as the corporation is pushing hard for justice and bigotry arises on both sides of the fence. Did someone from The Tribe kill her or was it an outsider? Maybe it is a setup of some sort, a crime aimed at causing racial tension? If you want to change it up you can make some of the avatars tribal investigators. This will open the door for some very interesting avenues of roleplay and in game dialogue.

Joss

"I have no idea why the GIC have restricted the system. They claim that there are dangerous artifacts and stuff out there. But what I know is that whenever the GIC restricts a system there is always something very valuable there. I mean, I've heard that Darmi is filled with million's of credits worth of prime salvage. To be honest, I'm looking for a crew that is heading that way. Your ship looks like it can handle the trip..."

-Alice Babineaux Krutz, unemployed gear jammer.

Oper and Darmi were mined dried in 498 IT and Joss was cleared after it was declared dead since none off the planets had been properly terraformed and drained of resources. However, KJ-L4 and HJ-5 holds some (according to GIC) dangerous archeological finds and they have been corded

off and restricted by the GIC. Oper and Darmi are still filled with a lot of resources in the form of salvage. The fleet has about five Osiris hunters that patrol the system.

Darmi

Assets: Salvage

Atmosphere: Corrosive

Climate: -50/-100

Factions: GIC

Fauna: None

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 2h/22h

Moon(s):

Circumference: 6200

Population: 200

Structure: Abandoned underground mining facilities and Border Guard outposts.

Terrain: Jaspillite rocks and foidolite ridges.

Year: 3

Information: Dark, freezing and with a corrosive atmosphere this is not the most welcoming place. Most mining operations were located beneath the ground and even though the SACs have been dismantled, the anti-corrosion filters are still working in most of the subterranean corridors and facilities. So even though there is no air to breathe in these places, you do not have to worry about being melted by the atmosphere.

Beyond the 200 man strong border guard contingency divided into ten small outposts, the planet is empty. Many illegal salvage crews have been able to go in under the radar and line their pockets. Too many of them according to some. In all likelihood, they pay off the right people to get access.

HJ-5

Assets: Archeological findings

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: +80/+150

Factions: GIC

Fauna: None

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 6h/18h

Moon(s): -

Circumference: 36 800

Population: 500

Structure: Archeological research facility.

Terrain: Granit and limestone ridges and plains.

Year: 14

Information: This dead planet has been deemed restricted by the GIC due to the presence of dangerous artifacts. DoX 1 and 2 have set up a research facility which is focused on conducting research on the object they found. In 485 IT they found the structure that made them restrict the planet. The research facility is well guarded. It has 300 research staff members, 150 Border Guards and they have five ten man strong TARGET squads.

They also have one fully loaded Osiris hunter and two Gabriel drop ships which they use to patrol the planet and the atmosphere. In addition to this, they have remote controlled anti-ship and ground vehicle turrets hidden all over the surface and two defense platforms in orbit which are capable of engaging targets within as well as outside the atmosphere. What the GIC has uncovered is worth protecting.

The Larkham Facility: This facility was built to specifically handle the artifact that was found and the research connected to it. It is structured around a SAC and is a secure facility mostly located beneath the ground. Larkham is part research facility and part military outpost. The main artifacts lab is located in the bottom floor behind rigorous security checkpoints.

The Find: The artifact they discovered is simply referred to as *The Navigator*. The Navigator is a one meter high circular platform with a 10 meter diameter. Like all other artifacts, it is fashioned from biometal. However, the structure seems almost biomechanical with bonelike ridges and crevasses. In the middle, there is a pattern of 20 interlocking code rings each rimmed by glyphs. This pattern has a total diameter of 2 meters. This section also seems to have an artificial gravity field. This field is also capable of connecting neurons to the device. When activated, the person in the middle is floating about two meters above the circles and is (in theory) capable of manipulating the code rings by will alone. While this is done, the entire Navigator is covered by a dome like 3D modulator, similar to that of a NIS in function and this gives a 3D version of the galaxy (and possibly the entire universe when calibrated correctly) in an orrery type constellation. Only through advanced computer technology (artificial neural network) and a coreanium reactor have the scientists been able to fire it up and test the most rudimentary function (though it is believed that it has its very own internal power source and is supposed to be controlled by will alone). However, only a fraction of its true power has been brought forth. They have been able to focus on one point in the other end of the Sirius galaxy and been able to receive live fragments of transmissions. They have even been able to pick up bursts of radiation from another galaxy. This is indeed a breakthrough as this is the first signs of another galaxy mankind has been able to pick up in centuries. However, as it is impossible to determine if this information is stored in the memory banks of the device or if it in fact is live info, the scientists are in a heated debate. The radio burst within our own galaxy can be verified through logs and a test run but there is no way to determine if the bursts that come from the other galaxy (dubbed The Fray Galaxy due to the heated arguments its discovery led to) are stored or live.

It is however believed that the Navigator can be used to home in on a destination and lead a vessel there instantaneously. This vessel is believed to be the artifact found on KV-L4.

KV-L4

Assets: Archeological findings

Atmosphere: Pressure

Climate: -50/-150

Factions: GIC

Fauna: None

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 4h/16h

Moon(s): Palqar

Circumference: 24 400

Population: 500

Structure: Archeological research facility.

Terrain: Granit and gneiss ridges and plains.

Year: 9

Information: KV-L4 has been cordoned off and set up exactly as HJ-5 by the GIC. In 481 IT, they discovered a large artifact. It seemed to be inert and the GIC simply posted a small batch of Border Guards and a couple of scientists to keep it safe. But when the Navigator was first activated on HJ-5 (first activation of the Navigator by the scientific team was done in 492 IT), the artifact on KV-L4 seemed to rev up some, giving off a faint bio-reading and electromagnetism.

The Find: This artifact has been dubbed *The Scepter* by the science team. It is believed that the Scepter is a kind of craft, or carrier. It is quite large, about forty meters long and ten meters wide at the base. Scans have shown that portions of it are indeed hollow, which might indicate that it can accommodate passengers. Though all attempts to get a look inside (x-ray, ultrasound, etc.) have failed and the Scepter is without seams. What they have discovered is that the Navigator and the Scepter are communicating. Whenever the Navigator locks on to an area in the galaxy the bio-signature, as well as the energy signature, of the Scepter changes. The further away the Navigator has locked on, the stronger and more intense the energy spike in the Scepter seems to become. The scientists believe that the Scepter can be sent and returned instantaneously by means of a wormhole with the Navigator. Needless to say, these experiments are of extreme importance as it might be a way to take humanity outside the Dark Rim and overall provide them with an entirely different way to travel.

Story Seeds

1. The avatars are working with or near the Scepter and the Navigator. They might be scientists, guards or engineers. Whatever the case, it seems that the Scepter is responding to their bioelectrical signatures. After a lot of research, it is concluded that the scientists might get the Scepter to work and actually open up but it will only accept the avatars. When they are inside, however, it revs up in response to an automated coordinate set by the Navigator. Before they know it they are traveling in an alien craft through a wormhole. Where will they end up, outside the Dark Rim? And if that is the case, how will they get home?

Mal

"I was stationed in the Mal system for a year back in 497 IT. Some places are perilous due to the electrical storms. Mal is so far out it is not even funny. I got stuck out there after some inter-fleet political backroom dealings. My then commanding officer saw me as a threat to his position due to my exemplary service record and successful battles. Anyway, I took shore leave on Delton. Let me tell you, the Infinitologists there are a weird bunch, almost aggressive in their fervor. So if you are an unbeliever you should keep it to yourself while you are there. And during my patrols we were often stationed around RV-36, you know the planet where we found the core harvester technology. Don't know why we patrolled it though. They probably found something else down there all those centuries ago. I heard that Mal is derived from the Latin word Malum, which means bad. There is defiantly something bad about the system. It is too quiet, you know. Either way, I am glad to be out of there and out of the Consolidated Fleet as well."

- Blanche Jacott, ex Consolidated Fleet officer, currently freelance flight instructor.

Mal is a system that most raiders, illegal salvagers, and most civilians not involved with MEC or CIM, tend to stay away from. The reason is simple: Three of the five planets are annexed and deemed restricted by the GIC and those that remain, lucrative resources they may hold, are surrounded by deadly electrical storms that are capable of tearing a ship apart.

There is some presence of MEC and CIM, though they are in deep cover often holding low ranking positions as engineers or low clearance security personnel as they try to infiltrate the energy artifacts research facility on RV-36. The exception to this rule is the CIM on Delton.

This is a very far out system and many do not want to work or even travel here. The local fleet and GIC contingency are often corrupt and ruthless as they have been stationed out here without supervision for a long time. A lot of the unwanted, GIC personnel and civilians alike, can be found out here in this backwater system.

Cemaria

Assets: Vanadium, tin, osmium, silicon, belinium.

Atmosphere: Toxic (Thin in the underground caverns)

Climate: +100/+750 (+50 in the underground caverns)

Factions: -

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.3

Light/Dark: 18h/6h

Moon(s): Trilos, Vardo

Circumference: 10 350

Population: 0

Structure: 0

Terrain: Carbonatite and scoria lava rock plains and chasms.

Year: 5

Cemaria has never been properly swept and scanned. The electrical storms surrounding it and the fact that no corporation has shown any interest made a proper

sweep redundant. Even though there are vast resources on the planet, the electrical storms make it too dangerous for ships to land. These days no one really cares or even knows that the planet has not been properly swept (same goes for Famios). This is why no one knows that in 399 IT, the illegal science ship *Origins* crashed on the planet, carrying something extremely lethal.

Origins is a C-class research vessel. It is unclear why it ended up in the Mal system, possibly looking for a place to lay low or maybe they were meeting someone there. In the end, they got caught up in Cemaria's electrical storm which knocked out their navigation. They plummeted to the surface, crashing through the crust and ending up some two hundred meters down in a system of underground caverns. Though the surface of the planet is red hot, the caverns hold a temperature of around +50, which makes it bearable. The atmosphere is regarded as Thin in the caverns as the heat and gases present on the surface is less intense down there. The caverns are vast, and stretch beneath the entire planet. Even though the crew could survive, they died on impact. Their deadly cargo left in stasis. The planet in itself is a hellishly hot wasteland where nothing can live and is only worth anything from a mining standpoint.

The Origins: *Origins* was piloted by a rogue crew who had infiltrated the GIC and SES and made off with their research/find. As the VIN is fried, it is impossible to trace the ship to its last destination. The most important cargo is however viable...Unfortunately.

The ship is a Triton Model (similar to the *Damocles* but decommissioned some fifty years ago). A large portion of its engineering bay has been retrofitted to house a state of the art science lab with the emphasis on genetics (keep in mind that it was state of the art a hundred years ago or so). Some of the equipment here, and some of the equipment in the medbay, can also be sold or used. In the cargo hold there are some valuables in the form of spare parts and scientific gear. All in all there is about 70 000 credits worth of gear on the ship.

The floor in the cargo hold has a hatch, a specially designed high grade vault door (Advanced security system) which is near impossible to burn through. It will take a security expert to get it open. The vault below is about 25 square meters and in the middle of the room stands a secure stasis box. It is completely sealed but still active. On the side it says in red letters SPECIMEN – X3. In order to get it open, one has to hook it up to a computer and hack (pretty advanced system) the computer controlled lock mechanism. Inside lays an elongated man sized chrysalis.

The Chrysalis: This is an old covert bio weapons experiment which the SES and GIC buried in their black files and today most people with access to the information are not even aware of the existence of this experiment: Project name BRDS (Biological Replication and Destruction Strain). It is based on a single cell alien life form, a life form whose existence never has been made public. It was found frozen in meteorite shards floating around in the Cradle system back in 350 IT by a GIC

funded SES excursion. It is not clear where they come from originally. As they thawed the cells sprung back to life.

The cells were polymorphic and could devour and imitate simple single cell organisms. The organism was unable to affect cells belonging to a multicellular life form, but due to genetic engineering in the laboratory this was all changed.

The SES and the GIC wished to create a bioweapon that would be able to kill and imitate complex creatures. The very DNA of this new strain would contain a breakdown marker that which after first imitation would begin to break it down so after a set time (days, weeks or months) all the copies would simply die and be left inert. The science team managed to engineer it so it had the capability to kill and imitate prey but they were never able to create the breakdown trigger. The chrysalis contains this bio weapon and it's primed and ready.

As soon as the stasis is interrupted, the weapon becomes active. On the inside there's a human mold. It is genderless and without features (a skinless grey muscle mass over bones in a sludge of artificial stem cells). It analyzes the immediate (within 100 meters) most complex life forms and will take on an attractive form of the opposite sex of the most numerous gender in the area. It will scan its proximity for about four hours before beginning to shift. The actual shift only takes a couple of minutes. It has been engineered this way, as an attractive opposite sex form of complex and social life forms have an easier time to gain trust, or so the scientists who designed it for human interaction believed.

Methodology: The chrysalis itself has a very tough exterior (rivaling that of a highly upgraded Enemy Encounter Suit). With the right tools one can cut into it. It is also quite resistant to extreme heat and cold. If the actual entity on the inside is subjected to damage (feeling too much heat, being cut into beyond a light biopsy or injected with something hazardous), the outer shell explodes as the creature will spring forth and try to flee (killing all that stands in the way). Even though it has no skin, gender or face it's fully functional. It will try to hide after which it will pick off its discoverers one by one. If left undisturbed, it will rise calmly fully formed and begin to communicate.

Several human language patterns are hardwired into it and while it scans the life forms around it in the chrysalis it absorbs knowledge as well. When it rises, it will be able to speak all the languages of those it analyzed, and have a firm grip on the state of the world and year (if the people it scanned had that knowledge). It also has a story hardwired into it. It remembers nothing and behaves as someone with retrograde amnesia. The creature will pass a full medical and genetic screening.

It will do its best to fit in and earn trust and whenever it gets a crew member alone it will strike. It will kill the

crew member, absorb him and then expulse him again as a perfect replica using the mass of the original to create the replica, effectively doubling its numbers. The replica will have the very same goal, to copy another crew member.

Polymorphic Horror: The creature can mutate into a horrid fleshy dissonance of bone spikes, maws and tentacles in an instant. It can reach up to three meters with its attacks while doing so. The only restriction is that it cannot exceed its biomass while shifting. The entity usually employs this method when it attacks people as it can overwhelm them quickly. It can also make its limbs detach at will (see resilience).

Resilience: Lost limbs become entities by themselves and can polymorph into ambulatory forms. Parts that are not connected to the brain only have the most rudimentary of instincts: avoid harm, kill and replicate. Even smaller appendages, like a severed arm, is strong and can be capable of entering the mouth, eyes or even penetrate the skull of a victim, killing him and replicating him. The creature can be frozen solid and subjected to vacuum without being killed. As long as it is frozen it simply becomes inert, becoming fully active when thawed out. Fire is the best way to go when one wishes to kill it. But if not burnt to a crisp it might only become inert, slowly regenerating.

The Replica: A replica is identical to the victim physically (until it turns into a screeching visceral mess that wants to kill you) and bears the same knowledge as the victim. It also has most of the victim's memories, but the knowledge and memories are somewhat fragmented and thus there can be lapses from time to time (which might act as a red flag for the humans around).

During the actual replication, the creature has to be in physical contact with the victim's organs and muscle tissue. It usually burrows inside with tentacles or wraps itself around the victim, creating a quivering mass of flesh and bone as it converts the victim to a replica. The whole thing is a bloody affair which leaves a sludge of blood and stem cells on the spot where it happened. The creature can only replicate a cadaver if the brain is intact and if the body has not been subjected to too much decomposition (no more than 24 hours in room temperature). The being cannot replicate things such as medical implants, piercings, embedded shrapnel and tattoos (or other substances that are not part of the body).

Replica Stats: The creature is generally a whole lot stronger than the being it replicates and a whole lot harder to kill. The added strength is only active when the creature enters its polymorphic state. Before it has replicated someone, it has a rank of 3 in all Aptitudes and 1 in every Ability. A replica has the exact stats of the person /animal it has replicated (it will retain rudimentary technological understanding even if it replicates an animal). When it turns polymorphic, it gains +3 to Brawn and can perform up to 3 close combat attacks per segment as long as it has a body mass that is the equivalent of a human being or a larger animal. The being is also capable of merging several replicas into one giant horrid mass, resembling an eldritch with aspects of every replica. In this case it becomes very strong but quite slow.

It is virtually impervious to damage. It might be slowed down and hacked up but it will keep coming until it is rendered inert or burned to a cinder. It does register pain and will recoil from fire, acids and electricity.

When people are on to it, when they realize that one or more in the group might not be who/what they say they are, the creature does its best to spread mistrust in order to divide and conquer. Its only goal is to replace all life forms with a replica and it will try to get to large civilized worlds. The experiment was never finished so it has no standing orders other than endless replication.

Delton

Assets: Belinium, titanium, gold, copper, helium-3.

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: 0/-90

Factions: GIC, CIM, Church of Infinitology

Fauna: None

Gravity: 0.8

Light/Dark: 7h/9h

Moon(s): Sita, Devlin

Circumference: 22 400

Population: 1 million

Structure: Mining facilities and established settlements.

Terrain: Jaspillite rocks, obsidian, gneiss.

Year: 24

Information: This mining colony is almost four hundred years old and has grown into a lively world. It is owned by the GIC and used by them exclusively, but most of the staff is comprised of freelancers. Some bloodlines go back for generations and many who live here know little else and have never travelled beyond the Mal system or even the planet.

The Church of Infinitology has a strong hold on the planet and over fifty percent of the population are believers. Arbiters made their way here in 320 IT, just years after the religion was founded and it is said that Elain Kendrin, the founder herself, resided on Delton for a few weeks, spreading her knowledge. The infinitology on Delton is a bit slanted, slightly intolerant of other religions and the believers protect their beliefs with fervor.

Besides the city of Horizon (see below) there are Vale, Tuss and Rodenta, smaller towns with a population of about 40 000 each. These grew out of mining outposts and are now vibrant communities.

Horizon: Horizon is the one settlement which has developed into an actual city. Approximately 300 000 people live here. The city is centered on The Tower of Devotion, a sixty story tall temple of infinitology. It's the largest known structure devoted to the faith in the galaxy. This has led to it being the destination of Infinitology pilgrims. At the top floor, surrounded by a NIS depicting vast space, stands a ten meter tall statue of Kendrin.

Horizon is (like most other towns here) comprised of high-rises, fifteen to thirty stories tall. They are sealed and air filters and CO₂ scrubbers provide the occupants with clean air and several SACs supply food and water.



Arjen Peak mining colony on Delton.

An intricate network of roads, monorail tram lines and walkways connect the buildings. All ground vehicles on site are capable of filtering the air, allowing the drivers to use the roads as normal from one building to another. So ground vehicles are used just about as much as on terraformed worlds.

The Largest Mining Colonies: There are six large mining colonies on site. They are all over a hundred years old and are several kilometers deep as the miners dig deep down for resources. The colonies are called Clifton, Qui, Edara, Ozu, Grinder's Field and Arjen Peak. Each has approximately 8000 – 10 000 crewmen on site. At ground level, the colonies are pretty much the standard fair: A cylindrical complex divided into four stories which hold everything from the SAC to living quarters and entertainment sectors. Beneath them are the shafts.

The shafts are like a world unto themselves, a vast network of tunnels, support beams, power stations and dig sites. Down here, hidden away in abandoned tunnels, one can find illegal drinking holes, brothels and much more. There are dozens of kilometers of abandoned tunnels in the shafts and the illegal activities move about. There are even illegal bazaars where one can buy drugs and weapons.

Even though the population is rather small in these colonies, the criminals make a lot of money. They ship in new prostitutes and wares from the cities and sell them to bored miners with weeks of dig pay burning in their pockets.

Most of the illegal business is handled by the CIM. They use the money to fund operations in the Mal system and Delton is a small but rather lucrative operation. LED has a number of undercover officers in the area who try to infiltrate the criminal rings. The GIC has also deployed a handful of operatives who not only are trying to get rid of the illegal activities but try to trace the main suppliers and CIM affiliates in the cities as well as off world. One gets around the shafts by large industrial elevators, small

ground vehicles, treacherous walkways and stairs. If you get pinned down in the dark by enemies who know the terrain, the odds of getting to the surface is slim.

Famios

Assets: Belinium, fluorite, diamonds, iridium, zinc, curium, uranium.

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: -25/-80, harsh winds and sand storms.

Factions: Ladus Mark

Fauna: Ice based oxy algae and algae eating oxygen producing insects.

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 5h/9h

Moon(s): Gemini

Circumference: 34 000

Population: -

Structure: -

Terrain: Charnockite and basalt mountains and monzogranite sand plains and ice deposits.

Year: 14

Information: This planet holds an abundance of resources, but due to the violent electromagnetic storms that surround it setting down a ship is very dangerous. None of the corporations have been willing to start an operation here. Ladus Mark has however set up a one hundred man strong research facility on the moon Gemini. The facility is used to study the electrical storms and the data is used to develop new alloys and nano coatings which Ladus Mark can use in their ships, making them even more resistant to electromagnetic disturbances. They also test out the materials in the storm. The facility is aptly named Mjöltnir. The station has an armed C-class ship (retrofitted Damocles) and access to a couple of Archimedes survey ships. They also have a small ten man

strong armed security detail on site. The moon has no atmosphere or gravity so the facility is sealed and uses a SAC.

Famios itself is filled with natural caverns and tunnels rich with belinium and other minerals. However, deep down, near the core of the planet, a dangerous secret lies in wait. Here one can find a creator bio-ship (see page 286 of the core book).

Jeliko

Assets: Belinium, strontium, beryllium, iron, yttrium.

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: -20 /+120

Factions: GIC

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.3

Light/Dark: 14h/4h

Moon(s): Azur

Circumference: 8 900

Population: 10 000

Structure: Mobile mining operations.

Terrain: Dunite mountains mixed with komatiite and underground sulfur mixed water deposits. Some seismic instability and volcanic activity is present.

Year: 6

Information: Even though this planet is rich with resources, mining is quite hard. The two major reasons are the planetary instability (volcanic activity and earthquakes) and the fact that the deposits are quite small. Due to this there are several small and mobile mining operations, each having a crew ranging from 100 to 200. Each and every mining operation is based around a MMO and constantly on the move. Each mining crew has a small contingency of border guards with them (12 man squads) just in case.

A small cluster of dormant Rippers lie beneath a rich belinium deposit. It's only a matter of time until some unfortunate crew dig them out and unleash hell. The survey team that was supposed to scan the planet a couple of years ago simply neglected to do so in order to save time and money.

RV-36

Assets: Artifacts, belinium, uranium, iridium.

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: -40/-150

Factions: GIC, MEC

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 6h/9h

Moon(s): Derringer, Zer

Circumference: 6 500

Population: 8 000

Structure: Large artifacts research facility.

Terrain: Obsidian and gneiss mixed jagged rocky terrain.

Year: 21

Information: It was here the GIC set down with their ship the Kari back in 101 IT and found the artifact which

lead to the development of core harvest technology. Soon after, in 103 IT, the GIC found another artifact, one that the public never got wind of. As this artifact was impossible to safely move the GIC sat up a research station *Omoikane*.

What they found was a gargantuan synkrocyclotron-like device. It was built right into the planetary rock, about a dozen meters down. The scientists simply call it *the ring*.

Omoikane: Omoikane is a large research station formed like a disk. It has eight levels above ground and three below and sits right on top of the ring. The building has a diameter of 1 000 meters. As the atmosphere is toxic, the facility makes use of a SAC which is located in the bottom subterranean level.

Omoikane is a highly secured facility with six fully loaded Osiris hunters patrolling the planet. A five hundred man strong border guard contingency waits in reserve as well. The station security procedures are harsh and sections which are classified are highly restricted. Only a handful of the scientists are allowed to work directly with the ring. There are also ten ISA operatives in place. They are highly skilled assassins and security experts. They are of course undercover and work incessantly to root out any infiltrators. They can be found on all levels. Some hold down covers as low ranking mechanics or engineers while others work in the inner sanctum of the lab. There are also a handful of MEC operatives in place. However, they have only been able to infiltrate the low security areas as of yet and have no idea of what is really going on in the lab but do their best to find out.

The Ring: The ring is in the form of a bio-metallic tube. It has a complete length of 3 kilometers. The interior has a diameter of 8 meters. The GIC didn't dare to move it, fearing they would break it. The device also seems to be feeding off the planets natural gravity. The lining of the interior walls has been found to have an effect on accelerated particles.

It took almost a century just to fuse the ring with human technology, effectively setting up a synchrocyclotron within it. Since then the GIC have slowly been making progress in various fields dealing with everything from energy weaponry to energy efficiency but the last decade they have been trying to fuse coreanium particles with helium-3. The ring's influence seems to be able to fuse the two in a way that would make it possible to increase the efficiency of coreanium by thirty percent as well as enabling it to be utilized at room temperature. This would mean that they would crack the dream of cold fusion. As of yet, it's all theoretical and mathematical as they haven't been able to succeed fully. The technology, if successful, will be world changing and the research is worth a ridiculous amount of money.

Story Seeds

1. On a mission, the avatars manage to land on Cemaria and they run across the Origins and they strip it for resources and load it on to their ship. Naturally they will get to the chrysalis and... You have probably seen

the movies that inspired this monster. The story will be kind of like that... But in space... Because space is awesome.

2. As professional criminals in Delton, working down in the shafts, the avatars are trying to make a buck and stay afloat. They work with the CIM from time to time (selling them guns and such) but rumor has it that GIC operatives are sniffing around. Worse yet, the avatars own organization seems to be have been infiltrated by these operative, at least according to some sources and rumors. Their associates and CIM take a step back and the avatars now have to root out the operative or otherwise find evidence that they are reliable and without undercover agents to gain back the trust of the criminal underworld. Other gangs are just waiting to take their place so they better hurry.
3. Working for Ladus Mark on the ice moon Gemini of the planet Famios isn't that exiting. However, one day the station Mjölñir they are working on picks up some peculiar transmissions from the planet. The avatars are sent to investigate. As they do they soon discover an alien structure. Little do they know what danger they and the entire human race are in...
4. While on a routine mining dig on Jeliko all hell breaks loose. The crew apparently came across a small cluster of Rippers that the scans missed. Now the avatars have to fight for their life in order to survive. But how did it get missed? The families of the dead miner's wants answers and the avatars are charged with finding them.
5. It is spy versus spy. The avatars are either CIM or GIC operatives working on RV-36. Amidst scientific trials, inter-office politics and pressures from their superiors they are hunting for information and the hostile operatives. And they have to do so while never breaking cover.

Merax

"This is what it is all about. New discoveries, a chance to make a difference and go down in history. We have no idea of what we might discover. Who knows, we might be the ones to come across new alien life or technology. But make no mistake, this is new territory and the dangers involved might even get you killed. Remember your training and the chain of command and this will be one of your greatest adventure, one that you will live to tell about."

- Russell Placencia, captain of the D-Class GIC *Intrepid* to his crew fifteen minutes before commencing the ghost jump to Merax.

Brave new worlds. The system of Merax is up for grabs, if you can afford it. No one has laid claim to any of the planets yet and those who will be part of the first excursions will be true settlers and explorers as the system was discovered 498 IT. MSU are about to send in the Fleet and the Marines to make a sweep. They are also sending in teams with xenobiologists, prospectors, archeologists and science researchers. The corporations are greedily and anxiously awaiting the results of the GIC sweeps as they want to start the bidding war for the worlds. They fund some of the GIC ships, place their own scientists and delegates (and even hidden operatives) in place to get the upper hand. The CIM and the MEC are also on site, wishing to secretly set up an operation that might be able to siphon off resources as well as get a jump on any archeological finds. So far, the GIC have mapped out the planets and given different regions temporary names. There are discoveries to be made but as in many cases, there are dangers out there.

Antos

Assets: Platinum, helium-3, uranium, tungsten, tin, roentgenium, silver, liquid core.

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: -90/+90

Factions: GIC, CIM, MEC and all the major corporations are standing by.

Fauna: -

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 8h/8h

Moon(s): -

Circumference: 17 000

Population: -

Structure: -

Terrain: Norite, troctolite and andesite rocks and ravines, underground frozen ice deposits.

Year: 15

Information: Like many planets in the system Antos has a lot of resources, is terraform friendly and possesses a liquid core. The planet is clean and free from Ripper infestation and there are no artifacts on site. All in all it is only remarkable in that it's so perfect and valuable. As soon as mankind will begin to squabble over it, things are sure to heat up.

Dekos

Assets: Belinium, tantalum, titanium, osmium, magnesium, cobalt, liquid core.

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: -60/+60, strong winds.

Factions: GIC, CIM, MEC and all the major corporations are standing by.

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 6h/8h

Moon(s): 2 moons, not yet named.

Circumference: 10 000

Population: -

Structure: -

Terrain: Basalt, granite and gneiss rock formations and gneiss sand plains. Some seismic instability in the form of trembles and the occasional quake. There is also some mild volcanic activity. Large quantities of ice deep beneath the ground with large deposits of oxygen as well as a system of underground caverns.

Year: 15

Information: Dekos is of immense value with its vast resources and terraforming possibilities. The large quantities of ice with oxygen locked inside it will greatly speed up the terraforming process, bringing the atmosphere to Thin within months if the ice is melted in conjunction with terraforming efforts. This would make any mining operation much easier as there would be no need for SACs. So from this point of view the planet is perfect. The initial scanner sweeps have showed no trace of Rippers. However, there are horrors awaiting deep in the Dekos caverns.

The Beacon

Down in the Basalt Chasm, in one of the many caverns several thousand meters below lays an artifact of immense power and danger. Yet it has no human name and will simply be referred to as the *Beacon*.

The Beacon is about as large (and about five to six times as heavy, clocking in at 50 kilos) as a bowling ball and comes in the form of an icosahedron. It is an extremely dense piece of bio-metal. Each one of the twenty sides is adorned with a voider glyph. As soon as an intelligent and sentient being comes within 20 kilometers of it, the beacon will begin to transmit a signal. The signal is faint and manifests as an unidentified bio signature and as a bizarre static if caught in a signal scanner (the static has the sound and feel of an organized language but is not). It will also show up as a non-descript and fluctuating energy spike on an energy scanner. The signal is also capable of lining itself up with the brain waves of humans and cause headaches, sleep disorders and nightmares. Onset of whispers that are similar to that of the static can also manifest themselves, audible only to those that are affected. Only one out of a thousand will be affected this way if mentally stable but the chance of being affected increases exponentially with the degree of VPS in the person. You as the AI have to decide

by how much the chance increases depending on the level of The Dark. The beacon also has an intensity (see page 259 in the core book) based on direct proximity. See the table below.

Distance from the Beacon	Intensity
2000 meters	Low
1000 meters	Severe
500 meters	Overpowering
100 meters	Relentless
10 meters	Consuming

Those who reach level five of The Dark and gain an obsession as a result will be obsessed by the beacon. The beacon has a specific goal and those with the obsession will heed its call (see specific obsession below).

Function and method: The artifact will activate itself if an advanced code is entered into it. This is done by pushing the right glyphs in the correct sequence (actually willing the glyphs to be responsive). The affected glyphs will glow softly and all (even if completely mentally sound) in close proximity will hear eerie soft whispers (this is only a mental echo) as each glyph is pushed. However, it is only possible to crack the code if the person is obsessed.

When the code has been entered the artifact opens, creating an intricate web of spiky and thin (but very hardy) bio metallic thorns. It spreads across the floor, it has a base of about two by two meters and is no more than a meter high. The Beacon craves fresh, dead human flesh. Those who do its bidding will kill humans, strip them naked and impale and tangle the remains in the bio-metallic mesh. The Beacon requires between twenty to thirty bodies. It will mutate them, twist them and harden them through crystallization. In the end it will have formed a five meter high blackish spire adorned with glyphs, faces and other parts still visible, bulging out here and there equally crystalized. It can change one body per hour. When the spire is completed the artifact will be even more dangerous.

Every new dead body that is within ten meters of the beacon while in its spire form will begin to change. At first the skin melts, reforms and thickens to form a chrysalis. This happens within an hour. After another hour, the chrysalis hatches and a viscutope emerges. The spire is capable of mutating dead human flesh by using a bizarre form of radiation. The mutation is identical to the one caused by the spores in the Arch (see page 272 in the core book, Infection and Infectors) .

The actual spire can be destroyed by explosives or large quantities of high-caliber bullets, but the actual Beacon artifact will withdraw into its original form and it's very hard to destroy. The Beacon in its original form shares some energy signatures with active coreanium and scientists will be very interested, and the artifact itself will captivate archeologists. Freelance crews will want to sell

it as artifacts can fetch a very good price. So when it is found it is pretty much guaranteed that it will be taken aboard a ship.

Specific Obsession: Those struck with an obsession because of the influence of this thing will focus on it. They tend not to show as much signs of VPS and seem quite balanced, but secretly they can only think about decoding it and getting their hands on dead bodies. They will not begin to kill people (if that is not their nature to begin with) but will try to get their hands on dead bodies. They also want to be close to the artifact. Hallucinations, dreams and other effects will center on the artifact. When they do begin to kill people as they become more affected by the VPS, they will do everything in their power to haul them to the artifact. When a group of people suffer from this obsession it can be really dangerous and a massacre is sure to ensue. When the spire has been built, most (but not necessary all) of the obsessed will commit suicide at the base of it, offering themselves to the thing as they see it as a way to eternal life (or some such thing).

Rovas

Assets: Belinium, platinum, vanadium, gallium, tantalum, bohrium, magnesium, led, liquid core.

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: -120/-20

Factions: GIC, CIM, MEC and all the major corporations are standing by.

Fauna:-

Gravity: 0.8

Light/Dark:-

Moon(s): 3 moons, not yet named.

Circumference: 2 500

Population:-

Structure: -

Terrain: Boninite and hornblendite mountains and rock bed, frozen subterranean ice deposits.

Year: 4

Information: This seemingly unassuming and small planet is packed with resources and is ideal for terraforming as well. The GIC believes they were the first humans to discover the Merax system but this is not so.

Children of Light: In 473 IT, Children of Light (CoL) discovered it and set up a research station and small mining operation. They constructed the station beneath the surface to avoid detection.

CoL is a small religious group that mixes Judeo-Christian texts with their reverence for technology. Today, they are all but extinct as there were only about ten thousand of them. They formed soon after the Ripper wars and only at times have they been noticed as they have conducted illegal genetic experiments and stolen research data from corporations.

They are searching for God in technology and they believe that only through rigorous genetic modification and technological advances can they live forever and in a

sense become part of God. According to them, we were created in God's image but are a far cry from the Supreme Being and only by using the intellect God has given us might man strive to become one with God.

Zanoah Research Station: The facility is a rather large genetic research lab where they conducted very dangerous (and highly illegal) cloning experiments. They managed to create genetically enhanced clones aimed at combat and to that mix they added the CAV strain, in hopes of containing it and take advantage of the properties which allowed reanimation. Like so many before them, they paid with their lives as the experiment turned on them. Most were infected, a few survived and managed to contain the cavers in the SAC, sub-basement and in one of the genetic labs. The survivors died soon thereafter as the facility was locked down and when the reactor failed life support went offline. Now it is frozen, and so are all the cavers. There are about one hundred cavers and thirty Goliaths (the genetically enhanced soldiers). Ten of the Goliaths are suspended in stasis which feeds off a dying backup generator. They are located in a hidden area of the station.

The reactor can be fixed with some work. As soon as it starts the back-up generator will blow and short circuit the power feed to the Goliaths, which will wake up immediately looking for blood. They have access to the air ducts and will use them to move around and to attack any humans they encounter. About an hour after the reactor has been started, the other cavers will begin to thaw and move around...And well, do what they do.

The research, specimens and the equipment is worth a lot of credits (some 10 million credits or so) but if someone does manage to clear out the cavers, disassemble the station, haul it back past all the GIC security (and dodge



A group of explores discovers the dangers of Zanoah.

raiders) and find buyers they will probably only end up with twenty five percent of the full value after all the costs and payoffs. It is still an okay payday if you're ready to work hard and risk you're life. But who knows, maybe there are some CoL still around that might go after the avatars for stealing their research.

The Goliath: These are an enhanced version of cavers. They are stronger, faster and harder. But most dangerous of all is the fact they are smarter. They are still primitive and are unable to use firearms and technology to any greater degree but they can coordinate their attacks, skulk in the shadows, set up simple ambushes and they know enough not to run into direct gunfire (though they don't fear it). So they have the most rudimentary sense of self-preservation.

Goliaths are a bit over two meters tall, broad and muscled like a champion bodybuilder. They have grey semi-translucent skin, no body hair and a maw filled with what looks like rows of small shark teeth. They can extend a nasty bone spike from their forearms and use them as a weapon and have a tendency to snarl as they fix their black empty eyes on their prey, preparing to strike. All have a barcode in their forehead, showing in which order they were "produced".

Attention: 3, **Brains:** 1, **Brawn:** 6, **Clout:** -, **Cool:** -, **Gut Feeling:-**, **Quickness:** 3, **Reaction:** 3

Defense: 0,

HP: 40 (for total dismemberment) 12 (called head shot)

AR: 3 (head)

Movement: 23

Attacks: Bare hands 2/1 (Bashing), Bite 2/3 (Fatal), improvised weapon (wrench, pipe, etc.) 2/2 (Fatal/Bashing), bone spikes 5/2 (Fatal), Impale (with bone spikes)

Abilities

Close Combat 1, Search 2, Stealth 2, Strategy 2 (instinctual back mentality)

Carnivores' metabolism: For every kilo of fresh (no more than 24 hours dead) flesh, bone and viscera they consume they regenerate 1 hit point. They can at times mutilate a victim or otherwise capturing him while alive and hide him away to be used as provisions.

Spec: A horde of goliaths are capable of pulling off parts of a COG in order to get at their foes if these are heavily armored. It might take some time, but eventually they will get at a downed armored enemy through this method

Viri

Assets: Belinium, platinum, led, mercury, palladium, plutonium, titanium, liquid core.

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: -90/+30

Factions: GIC, CIM, MEC and all the major corporations are standing by.

Fauna: Alien fungus (undiscovered).

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 8h/10h

Moon(s): Tedas, Kerdon, Vaquam

Circumference: 4 500

Population: -

Structure: -

Terrain: Granite and andesite sediments and plains, small frozen subterranean deposits of ice.

Year: 4

Information: Viri is a small and quite unstable planet. With all the seismic and volcanic activity and the toxic atmosphere, it does not make it ideal for terraforming. In all likelihood it will be mined dry and then cracked open in order to get to the core.

Beneath the surface there is simple life frozen in the ice in cryobiosis and crusted in small quantities in dry crevasses in hydrobiosis. It is a slow growing alien fungus never before discovered, which makes it a very important find. If it is discovered it is very likely that the GIC will annex off the planet and set up a research facility as it is an undiscovered life form. The fungus only needs water and trace amount of nutrients in order to thrive and is about as hardy as a tardigrade.

Early tests will show that it has the capacity to latch on to living blood cells, feeding off the proteins in the blood. They promote brain activity, the kind that affects a person's ability to withstand VPS. The change is very minute and does not make any significant difference, but if there was a way to boost it there might be a method to create a drug or treatment which would allow people to withstand VPS better. Problem is that the fungus grows and spreads when in the blood stream, siphoning off more and more nutrients and in the end (after only a month or so) they have grown to such a degree that they will clog the bloodstream, killing the subject. The fungus can be removed with radiation therapy within a week.

All in all the fungus is very interesting for many reasons but it requires a lot of study. Some genetic engineering will be required to make the fungus into an effective VPS "antigen" but the result of genetic tampering might be very dangerous. After all, it is an alien form of life with a DNA structure like we never seen before, there is no way of telling how it will react when we begin to tamper with it...And inject the result into a test subject...

Story Seeds

1. Merax offers a lot of dangers and opportunities and one of the most fun ways to deal with this system is having the avatars being part of GIC (or illegal SES) exploration ship. They get to discover all the dark secrets of the system. They will be part of such mundane things as evaluating finds to exploring the hidden and alien assets of the system. Beyond that they might be able to conduct research on things they find. If this is the case you should have them be part of a D-class ship. This will allow you to have a large crew and town-like setting. Flesh out the officers

and other important crew members and see to it that there is some tension and personal issues going on. Merax is empty of life so it is important that the avatars still have other people they can interact with. Why not toss in a couple of infiltrators to heighten the tension (maybe the avatars are the infiltrators)? And make the ship itself come alive. What is the small cantina named? Does the VIN have a personality? Where has the ship served and how old is it? Draw some maps of the important locations such as the avatars quarters, the cantina and lab. An exploration campaign of this nature can be very rewarding. There is nothing that says that they are the only ship out here. Maybe the remaining CoL is searching for their lost research station. Have these fanatics managed to genetically enhance themselves and what threat do they pose?

Murion

"This is one of the five core systems and it is a great place to hang your hat for a while when you get back from the Big Empty. It's not brimming with the GIC even if it's in the core. Just dock at one of the Three Pearls and enjoy what they have to offer. But just don't get into any shit, the Trinity Corporation security guys are aplenty and quick on the trigger."

- Serina Biehl Adella, Legionnaire on R&R

This three planet core system is buzzing with activity. No one really knows why but thousands of space farers have a tendency to come here and restock and blow some steam when coming back from the outer systems. This has led to a lot of space stations being constructed. It also houses several prison stations.

Carras

Assets: Iron, copper, farming recourses.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: -45/+45

Factions: GIC, MEC, CIM (

Fauna: Similar to old Earth, with the addition of armadillo wolfs and runners.

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 12h/12

Moon(s): Ced, Mapira, Gwendolyn, Flataria

Circumference: 16 500

Population: 1 000 000

Structure: Scattered larger settlements and smaller cities, farming communities.

Terrain: Similar to that of old Earth.

Year: 14

Information: This is quite an idyllic planet and is one of the largest farming communities. Carras sells a vast amount of livestock and meat which is shipped to other systems. Those living here have perfected the art of breeding and genetically adjusting livestock which has led

them to be the most esteemed producers of high grade meat. They are also known for their high-quality old Earth meats, grains and fruits.

MEC and CIM are present here but are very subtle, basically nurturing grass root movements going against the high trade taxes and such. At times they manage to inspire some to leave the planet and join them.

There are a couple of thousands of settlements on the planet and some smaller mining outposts. The settlements range in size, from as small as 1 000 to 50 000. They are quite rustic and quite similar to towns and cities of old earth in architecture. The GIC has a fairly strong presence and most settlements have LED presence.

The Three Pearls

This is the collective name for three almost identical orbital stations which can be found circling Carras (P1, P2 and P3). They are combined trading stations, shipyards and entertainment centers. It is here the goods from Carras are transported. Ships dock here to restock and the crew gets some R&R. Each station has a permanent crew of three thousand but they have a capacity of ten thousand and this limit is for the most part reached in all three stations as the traffic is pretty hectic. The three Pearls are owned by the Trinity Corporation, a splintered company whose only business is the three Pearls. On the Pearls, all factions can be found but no one has established dominance as the Trinity Corporation runs a pretty tight (and unforgiving) ship, so to speak.

The stations are divided into the following levels.

Level 1: The Dome

The top of the spire is divided into several areas; each one looks up on the starlit sky through reinforced glass. Here you can find anything from bars, store plazas and brothels. Each facet of the glass is of course able to be covered by security titan screens.

Level 2: Residential

Here you can get a hold of everything from a luxury suite to a simple sleeper tube. All those who visit the station for more than twelve hours within a twenty four hour period are required to rent commendations and are not allowed to stay on their own ships.

Level 3: Trading Sector

This is where all delegates make their business. Most corporations have a small office and there are locales one can rent for meetings and a trading floor.

Level 4: Staffing & Control

Everyone who works on the station lives here. People have small apartments and there are several families in residence as well. This means that there is a learning center for the children. Below the actual living area, the control center and security office (as well as the jail) are located. The three Pearls have their own S-Sec force. They are highly trained and have first rate equipment.

They have a tactical team, patrolling officers and crime scene investigators.

Level 5: Main Docking

The pearls can house several hundred A, B and C-class ships. Larger ships have to use shuttles in order to get to the station. There is of course a large engineering bay here where folks can buy spare parts. Main docking is also a good place to hire deck hands and freelance engineers.

Level 6: SAC & Industrial

This level is restricted and the Trinity Security force patrols the area rigorously as it is what makes the station breathe and live.

Sliver

Assets: Iron, belinium, osmium, iridium, tin, silver.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: -80/+10

Factions: GIC

Fauna: Similar to the northern hemisphere of old Earth, with the addition of armadillo wolfs (ice saber-toothed wolfs as well) and runners.

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 8h/12h

Moon(s): Fadatis, Xerio

Circumference: 10 500

Population: 5 000 000

Structure: Small settlements and mining outposts.

Terrain: Similar to that of the northern hemisphere of old Earth.

Year: 14

Information: Sliver is a rather unremarkable planet. It has some mining resources and some farming resources. Life moves at a slow pace. Some come here just for the slow pace, to take a pause from the hectic or desolated life they lead. The GIC security is rather lax but LED does of course have offices in the larger communities. It's a good place to lay low in the core systems.

Virki

Assets: Scattered mining resources.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +25/+60. This entire planet is basically a rain forest with high humidity.

Factions: GIC, CIM, MEC

Fauna: Similar to old Earth rainforests with the addition of Hybrid Blood Moray, Ravaging Leeches, Flesh Dwellers and Runners.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 10h/14h

Moon(s): Benedict, Skara

Circumference: 6 000

Population: 1 000 000

Structure: MSU outposts and guerilla camps.

Terrain: Similar to old Earth rainforests.

Year: 4

Information: Officially this is a tightly guarded planet which is in complete control of the MSU, a military training and deployment planet, but in reality this is far from the truth. Five years ago it started out that way, but somehow CIM had managed to infiltrate the ranks of the MSU. For years they had been siphoning off material and Intel with the intent of sabotaging all the installations on sites. They managed to bomb several, killing thousands. They had planned to broadcast a message to the other planets, claiming Virki for the CIM but the MSU managed to jam the signal (and have been jamming long range signals from the planet ever since). The GIC didn't want to admit that the CIM had been able to infiltrate the MSU to such an extent so officially the planet remained an MSU controlled domain. MSU flooded the planet with their men but they had a hard time rooting out the CIM as they lived scattered in smaller camps, often in deep subterranean caves. When the MSU sent additional men it turned out that some of them in fact were MEC affiliated and they too disappeared into the jungle, seemingly joining the CIM forces. The GIC was stumped, the whole thing seemed to have been carefully planned and calculated.

Today, seven hundred thousand of the population is MSU personnel while the rest are MEC or CIM soldiers. The GIC have been very careful when deploying more men as the CIM and MEC seems to be able to infiltrate the group so they have not dared to flood the planet with their men. The GIC suspects that they have been infiltrated on the highest level.

So in essence, there is a war on the planet. The GIC is superior in numbers and equipment but the MEC and CIM know the jungle, are divided into small but well organized cells and use blitz attacks to win ground. It is unclear what their endgame is, but some believe they want to use the planet as an example that resistance on this scale is possible. So far no hard evidence of this conflict has been able to reach the general population. All long range transmissions are jammed and severely controlled and no ships are allowed to leave without the highest of scrutiny and security. There is no way to determine how the rest of the planets would react if the truth were to come out.

Story Seeds

1. For years the Trinity Corporation has kept order on The Three Pearls but something is going on. Crime rates are up, there is an influx of dangerous drugs and more and more raiders and syndicators seem to set up shop. It appears that two or more organized gangs have begun setting up shop. The avatars are agents working for the Trinity Corporation and they are now given the responsibility to investigate what the hell is going on and put a stop to it. The violence is spilling out and it is costing the corporation money and business. But is it as simple as it seems? Is it really two gangs squaring off or is it an elaborate setup instigated by a rival corporation who is using the distraction to position itself for a takeover?

2. A story of guerilla warfare might be very interesting. The avatars are CIM/MEC soldiers on the planet Virki. They have been here for five years, since the first attack. Now command believes that they have a way to send the signal. The avatars have to infiltrate a hanger installation and get on board one of the ships and send the message. Before doing this they have to disable several jamming stations and temporarily knock out some planetary defense systems. Get to work soldier!
3. The avatars are part of a MSU squad. On their last patrol something went very wrong and they got lost behind enemy lines. Now, low on ammo, with little equipment and no way of communicating with HQ they have to navigate the dangerous Virki jungle where fauna and heat are as likely to kill them as the CIM/MEC squad who is breathing down their necks. They seem to be running into bad luck all the time...A little too much bad luck. Might someone in their very own squad be a rebel sympathizer?

New Barak

"New Barak? It should just be called Xindos. It's on Xindos everything happens. There are a lot of deals to be broken and credits to be made on Xindos. Just watch your step. There are a lot of mercs and gangs here. I'm an equal opportunist and do business with both. And many of the folk that come here just want to disappear so there is a steady flow of credits and fake IDs and work permits. And I am happy to oblige."

- Eddy Jo Luc, Syndicator

There are no planets in this system, only a vast amount of asteroids. Several of them hold precious resources and have mining colonies built directly into them. Then there is Xindos, a large space station which is very active.

Overall, New Barak is system that offers many lucrative opportunities but only for those who have enough guts, skills and determination. New Barak is a dog-eat-dog type system and the GIC is only in charge on paper. Xindos is a world unto itself where the criminal elements try to out maneuver each other to keep the upper hand. The GIC in place is mostly corrupt and stay out of the way as long as they get paid.

Xindos

This massive space station has approximately one hundred thousand permanent residents and houses fifty thousand short term visitors at any given time. On the surface, it might look like the GIC is in control but influential criminal organizations and illegal guilds are calling most of the shots. MEC and CIM are of course present and this station is perfect for the purposes of recruiting and asset acquisition. It is of course a trading nexus for all the resources mined in the surrounding mining colonies. Some whom have burned too many bridges on their home worlds come here to start over.

Xindos is known to be as giving as it is unforgiving and many come here with hopes and dreams of becoming rich and successful. Only a few make it, but every day the docking bay overflows with new arrivals, young people with nothing more than dreams and the shirts on their back. Sadly most are exploited, used up and tossed away by the established and successful predators.

There are a lot of mercs on Xindos as it is a haven for criminals. The mercs usually work in teams ranging from just two to twenty in size in order to stay alive. Mercs are hated, feared and respected as many of them are the only way some private citizens are able to get justice on Xindos as most of the high ranking LED officers are corrupt.

At Xindos, Infitology is quite common but the Islamic community is slightly larger, which is quite uncommon as Infitology is the most widespread religion. The prominent Islamic community has influenced the style of clothing, food and design of many parts of the station, reminiscent of traditional old Earth Saudi Arabia.

Several of the surrounding mining colonies located on the asteroids are owned by Girshaw Amalgamated so their presence and influence on Xindos is quite strong.

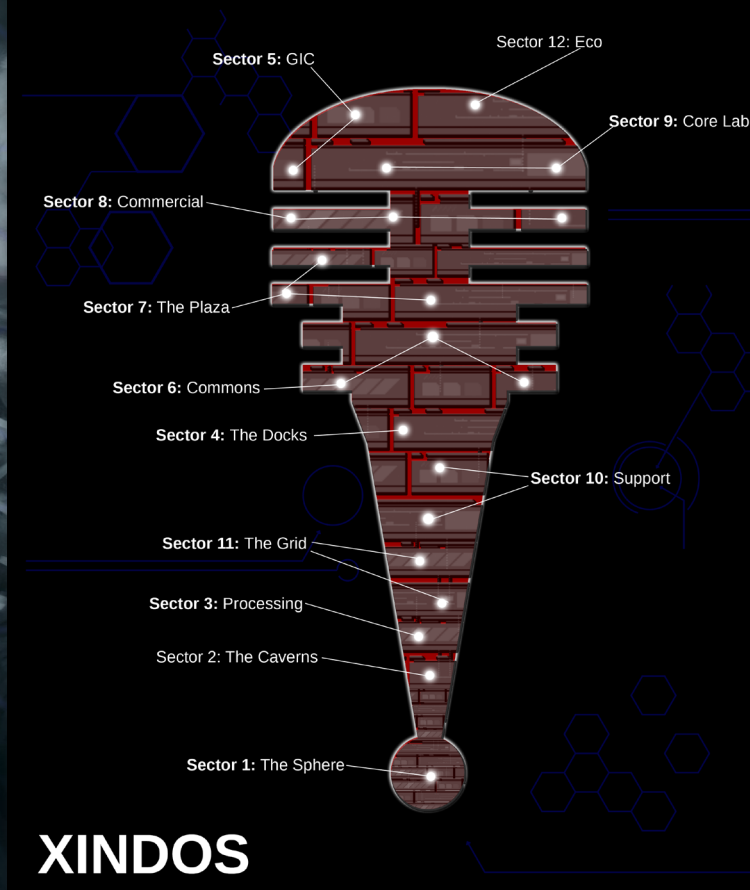
Sector 1: The Sphere

This is an extremely large and specially designed SAC. Its only job is to produce breathable air so oxy algae has replaced the protean pools and adaptable greens. Nutrients are pumped down from the Support sector. This sector is of course under heavy LED guard. The Sphere consists of level after level of large vats filled with liquid oxy algae which are connected through aqueducts and tubes and most are transparent to easier allow the UV light to flow. The high concentration of UV light requires that all personnel wear a COG (visor up) or a UV suit and protective goggles. It is easy to get lost in there and the layout and look instills a bizarre and almost alien feeling. The filters and pumping stations constantly hum.

Sector 2: The Caverns

This is the belly of the Processing sector including recycling and waste stations, large sewer systems and incineration chambers used to dispose of hazardous biological material. The place is divided into dozens of waste station units which are manned with a crew. However, in between these units, and even in some of the decommissioned ones, hundreds of people make their homes. This is the slum of Xindos. The GIC on site do not care as it takes care of several problems for them. The poor and desperate stay down there for the most part and kill each other off. From time to time, LED performs small raids to show their presence, but mostly they lift cash of squatters to look the other way.

In the Caverns, one can find illegal drug dens, brothels and gambling houses as well as gang members and drug dealers. It is like a small community unto itself. Workers that live above take the multilateral tram system to work



XINDOS

and this system never stops in-between. Often, but not always, the tram cars that run down here have two armed security guards (provided by the waste management companies). When you really want to disappear (and are brave or stupid enough) you might rent a small living space in the Caverns.

The Caverns run the gamut from narrow corridors, abandoned waste stations to large chambers when it comes to layout (barring the active units) and the improvised residential areas, plazas and locales looks like some kind of futuristic indoors shanty towns, sometimes several stories high and connected with walkways and narrow tunnels.

Sector 3: Processing

The highly advanced Processing unit can produce and process everything from quilts to coreanium reactors, as long as the raw material is provided. A large portion belongs to the stations upkeep unit which produce things that are needed to keep Xindos running smoothly. Several factory units are leased by small local businesses as well as giants like IMC and SES. A lot of the wares and materials available on Xindos come from this nexus of production.

Sector 4: The Docks

Xindos docking bay is so much more than the name implies. It can hold hundreds of ships. The bay even has a dock designed to hold up to fifty D-class ships and houses a massive engineering bay. Beyond this, it holds several bars, ore trading floors, merc offices and low-rent motels. It is here a lot of the criminal activity is centered as illegal cargo is being cleaned by relabeling and LED corruption.

Every day droves of the hopeful embark here only to walk straight into the hands of the flesh peddlers. The whole place is a bizarre mix of huge docking bays, security zones, busy engineering units and industrial-like corridors which form walkways and back alleys filled with bars, strip-joints and offices of shady characters in the "security business". The place is of course teeming with mercs, raiders, legionnaires and associated guild members. There are a lot of unwritten rules. Some bars are only for a certain kind of people while conducting "business" in certain areas can get you killed if you have not asked the right people for permission and paid tribute.

Sector 5: GIC

This could best be described as the governmental and law enforcement sector. Here one can find the local political GIC representatives, LED main office, administrative division (which handles permits and such) as well as the Xindos jail. It is basically a fortified "town hall" combined with LED. The jail and LED office are of course highly restricted but large portions of the administrative area are open to the public. Long lines persist every day as people constantly need to renew licenses, handle their taxes or wish to file an administrative complaint.

Sector 6: Commons

There are a lot of people living on Xindos and this large sector houses most of the permanent residents. The living spaces range from sleeper tubes, low-rent one room sleeping quarters without a kitchenette to two story luxury condos. The religious center is also located here. It offers offices for the clergy and a neutral congregation hall where each different religion simply run a program which project their symbols of faith using the NIS.

Sector 7: The Plaza

When it comes to shopping, entertainment and socializing, the Plaza offers the most variety. This large sector is constructed as a gigantic shopping mall but also contains a wide range of night-clubs, bars, sports arena and legal brothels. The Plaza got it all.

Sector 8: Commercial

Billions upon billions of credits pass through Xindos and many local as well as the intergalactic corporations have a great interest in the station. In the Commercial sector, a myriad of corporations have their offices. The whole sector has a sleek design, with chrome, glass and free floating NISs brandishing directions, corporate infomercials and virtual guides. Each corporation has its own security within their premises and only in the lobby area can one see the odd LED officer swing by. The corporations prefer to hire and vet their own security as it is easier for them to avoid corruption and corporate espionage. The walkways and lobby area are fairly open to civilians but for the most part (at least when it comes to the larger corporations) one needs an appointment.

Sector 9: Core Lab

This sector ties directly into Commercial and consists of a collection of high-end laboratories which corporations (or wealthy private people) may lease. As in Commercial, the corporations have arranged their own security around their labs. Only authorized personnel are aloud since everything from weapon design to medical and artifact research is conducted here.

Sector 10: Support

The Sphere produces a large amount of oxygen but the Support sector aids in the process and also produces adaptable greens and protean. The two interconnect through large regulated exchange tubes. The two were constructed at a distance and apart for security reasons. As food processing and pick up requires a higher presence of staff and comings and goings, they elected to keep the main air production unit (the Sphere) separated from the food production. In essence, in combination these two sectors make out an enormous SAC. Support still enjoys a high-level of security though but not quite as high as the Sphere.

Sector 11: The Grid

The Grid holds the main coreanium reactors, solar energy power stations and several backup belinium arrays. As one might imagine, the security is tight and rivaled only by the Sphere sector. Only high-level engineers with the proper clearance are allowed in here or personnel with special GIC dispensation. Xindos holds several backup systems in other locations in the form of belinium arrays and solar batteries, but the Grid is the single most important energy source on the station.

Sector 12: Eco

Eco is a perfectly simulated ecosystem with smaller wooden areas, a lake and some hillsides. It is organized as a large park with some restaurants, a small amusement park (Star Deck) and simulated weather conditions (rain, blue sky and such). Eco is located right on the top under a great dome with several glass facets (which of course can be sealed by emergency screens in the case of a breach or risk thereof) that can be used to watch the stars in certain areas. Eco is a very nice and safe sector where LED actually does a good job of keeping away illegal activities. This place makes it a whole lot easier to cope for those who are not use to live in space. Eco is also home to Darcy Stadium, a large sport arena which can be adapted to host all manner of sports. As New Barak is a system without any planets, Eco is the only place for light-years where one can enjoy a nice stroll in the woods. Size-wise, it is about as large as eight football fields combined.

The Mining Colonies

New Barak is home to several mining colonies which are built into or on top of one of the many asteroids. They vary in size from as small as a large C-class ship to big enough to support thousands of workers, but their main

structure is the same. Mining colonies with less than 300 workers rely on having supplies and air delivered every four months while larger colonies feed off a SAC/C-SAC.

The larger colonies often have a cantina and smaller plaza where people can meet and congregate. Some very small colonies often rotate a fresh crew every four months in order to avoid VPS as the loneliness and isolation has a tendency to fragment the mind.

Note: Some asteroids have gravity but it will diminish over the years as mass is reduced during mining thus all asteroid colonies make use of artificial gravity.

Biskopsgården

Population: 9

Gravity: n/a

From the beginning, this Girshaw Amalgamated colony housed approximately six hundred workers but as the silver dwindled more and more were laid off. A large chunk of the colony has been decommissioned and there are only 9 crew members left. They are mining the very last out of the asteroid and have begun to deconstruct the modules that are not in use. So far no raiders or scavengers have made any attempt to loot the colony as messing with Girshaw Amalgamated while in New Barak is not the smartest of things. This is somewhat out of system so smash and grabbers need not worry about... Too much.

Claire

Population: 13

Gravity: 0.2

While the colony is very small the ball of ice and granite it is located on is very large, having a circumference of fifteen thousand kilometers. Claire is a very lucrative ice colony, also owned by Girshaw Amalgamated. The ice is very accessible, so only a small crew is needed to meet the monthly quota. Mined ice is then sold to Xindos where it is used to refill the water and air supply (extracting oxygen from water) of passing ships and other mining colonies. The crew is rotated every two months and a Girshaw Amalgamated fully loaded Osiris hunter often patrols the area as the mine is very valuable. They are thinking of expanding, tripling the number of crew members as demand is rising.

The crew always works in zero-G while using PCRs or just COGs. They cut out large chunks of ice which are easily transported in weightlessness. They then tether them on the outside of the asteroid where they remain until it is time for pick up (every other month).

Krol

Population: 29

Gravity: n/a

Krol is a combined ice, iron and tungsten mine which is built into an asteroid with a circumference of four thousand kilometers. It's another mine owned by Girshaw Amalgamated. The crew reported an increase of mild VPS



Mining crews are being shuttled to Solomon 2 after the reconstruction.

symptoms some months ago and recently they sent a report that they had found several smaller alien artifacts in the ice. As soon as they discovered them they sealed the shaft, reported it in to the GIC. GIC and Girshaw are about to send a joint team to investigate.

Ravenhope

Population: 6834

Gravity: 0.5

With a circumference of twenty thousand kilometers, this asteroid is the largest in New Barak and also home to Ravenhope, the largest mining colony in the system. Ravenhope is divided into six main hubs interconnected through a tram system, main plaza and C-SAC. Large portions of the asteroid are hollow and huge shafts have been dug out. Inside they also have several smelting facilities and the colony delivers its spoils purified. Every two months a D-Class mining ship (*The Titus*) comes by to pick up the quota. Osmium, tungsten, titanium and belinium are the most prominent resources.

Ravenhope, like many other colonies of this size, is a city unto itself. The plaza is divided into several locales such as bars, stores, movie theaters and sport centers. The colony has several rail cannons and missile arrays as part of its defenses as well as a squadron of twelve Raven fighters. There are also one hundred C-Sec officers in place. Girshaw Amalgamated is quite adamant on protecting one of their most valuable mining operations in the system.

Scheherazade

Population: 799

Gravity: n/a

This SES operation is a combined mining colony and research station. The asteroid is rich in iridium, iron, copper and aluminum. Only a small part of the facility is used for research and in actuality it has nothing to do with the actual mining. SES use this facility to conduct research in a secure facility far away from prying eyes and transports projects from all over the galaxy here. There are approximately fifty scientists working here and the lab and the living quarters of the scientific personnel are off limits to the mining crew. SES has four armed Gabriel drop ships and a C-Sec force of twenty which handles the security and patrolling.

Solomon 2

Population: 92 (200)

Gravity: n/a

Eight months ago the mining colony of Solomon sent out a frantic distress call. The exact nature of it has never been revealed by IMC who owned the colony but as the rescue E&R crew showed up there was nothing left of the colony structure but debris and the odd body parts floating around. The only thing that could be determined was that the reactor must have gone critical somehow and incinerated the colony. Now, eight months later, the colony has been rebuilt by the IMC. During the construction the onsite team reported a lot of equipment malfunctions, accidents and a general uneasy feeling among the workers. IMC has

just begun repopulating the colony, which has a capacity of two hundred, so they are still hiring. Just a month in some miners are already reporting minor VPS symptoms and there are rumors that the asteroid is hiding something dangerous and sinister. Some even whisper that the IMC know about it and use the new crew as a sort of control group. The largest assets are tungsten and osmium.

Stint Town

Population: 46

Gravity: n/a

This is an efficient but rather unremarkable ice colony owned by the GIC. The asteroid is comprised mostly of ice and has a circumference of ten thousand kilometers. The GIC transport mined ice to Xindos to restock their own ships as opposed to paying Girshaw Amalgamated for the service. In theory, they can simply demand water but would rather mine their own as long as possible as it is usually a bad political move to annex the resources of a large and influential corporation.

Willard's Fall

Population: 2498

Gravity: 0.2

The greatest asset mined here is belinium. Girshaw Amalgamated makes a very good profit off this mining colony. The colony is similar in layout to that of Ravenhope but divided into only three hubs connected through a main plaza and C-SAC via a tram system. There is a forty man strong C-Sec team in place and one Osiris hunter and a rail cannon defense grid. The asteroid has a circumference of six thousand five hundred kilometers.

Xerxes

Population: 72 (300)

Gravity: n/a

On paper this is owned by Derion Corporation. The corporation is registered as a small splintered mining company but in reality it is just a shell. Xerxes is a covert GIC laboratory where they experiment with bio-metallic DNA. They are trying to integrate it with human DNA. The main focus is to allow humans to safely siphon, store and release bio-electrical and electromagnetic energy using only their bodies. Basically, they are trying to create a human weapon. However, they are far off the mark but it is only a matter of time until they experiment with the wrong artifact sample.

Only seventy two miners are registered but in reality there are only scientists, engineers and security personnel in place. The colony only looks like a mining colony on the surface and in the docking bay. It also has several defense grids and a contingency of twelve raven fighters hidden away. Approximately fifty percent of the people on the colony are MSU and ISA personnel who handle the security. Xerxes is a highly classified operation and it is also illegal. Only a few high ranking MSU and ISA members are the driving forces and not even the senate or the Chairman has any knowledge of it. It is a facility that operates under complete deniability.

Story Seeds

1. When it comes to New Barak the possibilities are endless. One suggestion is to have the avatars being employed by a powerful organization (crime syndicate, corporation, CIM, etc.) and giving them an area of responsibility each new story (looking for a infiltrator, handle security for a VIP, investigate why one of the mining colonies their employers have backed has gone off the grid, and so on). The better they fare each story the more perks, influence and responsibility will they be given. New Barak offers a wide range of locations and the possibility to lean on shifting backdrops, from all that Xindos has to offer to fleshing out the many colonies. Keep in mind that the style and culture on Xindos is very much inspired by the Islamic community. The Plaza can be more like a bazar and the air is filled with the scent of striking Middle Eastern spices, sweet coffee, dried dates and rich tobacco. Many are speaking Classic Arabic, Egyptian Arabic and the natives on Xindos, even those who do not subscribe to the faith of Islam, often blend their intra with Arabic words and expressions as it is something that is ingrained in the very essence of Xindos. The local kirus have nano-blades fashioned like scimitars and cloak their COG in a traditional bisht.

Rykos

"Take you where? Fuck no! I don't care about the pay! Get the hell out of my face!"

- Erasmo Michaud, freelance pilot.

According to the records, no one has been here for the last fifty years, but in truth no one has been here since 299 IT. After a GIC mediated dispute concerning core harvesting rights between IMC and SES, the system was abandoned in 293 IT, only four years after its discovery. However, some of the colonists stayed behind on Old Marl. The aggressive belinium mining that had been conducted had left large parts of the planet irradiated. Instead of killing the colonists (approximately eight thousand) it mutated them. All of the colonists had gone through an experimental gene-therapy which would allow them to withstand harsher environments. This, in combination with the radiation, lead to the mutation. The results were Marls, the rumored spacefaring savages.

And all of this has virtually gone unnoticed since the GIC sent a patrol back to the system in 299 IT in order to find out how the colonists had fared. Due to an administrative mix up, the ship (a C-Class exploration ship, the *GIC Vulture*) was logged to be on route to Joss and when it disappeared everyone assumed it had been lost in the ghost and the footnote on checking in one of the many backwater systems was lost. Now, some two hundred years later, no one gives it a second thought. The Vulture's signal was jammed before the marls shot them down and the surviving crew was savagely killed.

Due to extremely aggressive mining none of the planets have any natural resources to speak off (all do however

possess a liquid core). There are of course trace amounts left but not to the degree its worth mentioning. Salvage is present but keep in mind that all technology and materials are about two hundred years old.

Baldos

Assets: Salvage

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: -60/+12

Factions: -

Fauna: -

Gravity: 0.8

Light/Dark: 13h/16h

Moon(s): 3 (unnamed, rich in ice)

Circumference: 13 000 km

Population: -

Structure: Large mining craters and underground mine shafts.

Terrain: Gneiss, phonolite and granite.

Year: 8

Information: Baldos is a dead planet that has been torn apart by mining. It is dead and hostile. There are a couple of hundred thousand credits worth of salvage in the form of old mining equipment but it is scattered throughout the underground mining shaft system so getting it would take quite some time.

LV-237

Assets: Salvage

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: -40/-90, blizzards and heavy winds.

Factions: -

Fauna: Oxy-algae designed for cold climates.

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 12h/12h

Moon(s): 2 unnamed

Circumference: 20 000 km

Population: -

Structure: Large mining craters and underground mine shafts.

Terrain: Foidolite and jaspillite mountain ridges and chasms combined with glaciers.

Year: 34

Information: Very much like Baldos, this planet has been ripped apart by mining, but at least it has some residual oxy-algae. LV-237 also holds one intact building in the northern frozen wastes, an old mining colony and combined artifact research facility. This facility had some of the last miners to leave but some of the crew members who arrived to help with the dismantling were infected and within no time the entire facility was overrun. All fifty workers were infected. So in the sub-basement, beyond the reactor core and in parts of the ventilation system, approximately fifty rippers, including some burrows and a queen, wait in multibiosis. They will begin to awaken when prey walks into the facility. Slowly but surely it will

become apparent that something is alive in there. Salvage-wise there are probably a couple of hundred thousands of credits worth but the risk is enormous.

The reactor and air filtration system still work after some fiddling and most of the technology (computers and such) is also operational (though a bit unreliable) which is quite impressive given that the facility is some two hundred years old. It belonged to the Shandara mining corporation, a splintered corporation that went out of business back in 409 IT.

The interior of the facility is frozen as the heat is off and the only traces one can find of the ripper attack are frozen puddles of blood and the odd claw mark. As none of the rippers were injured during the attacks there are no acid marks. The crew did not get out a distress call as the first ripper sabotaged the main array. There are however some recordings scattered about which tell the tale of what happened as a handful of the crew managed to stay alive for a few horrifying days in hiding.

Old Marl

Assets: Belinium, titanium, iron, tungsten, copper, osmium and salvage.

Atmosphere: Breathable (Radioactive, Mild/Mild)

Climate: -50/+40, dry and windy climate.

Factions: Marls

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 6h/24h

Moon(s): Trego, Avardo, Lor, Befaso

Circumference: 27 000

Population: Unknown

Structure: Abandoned mining colonies, mining shafts, and a plethora of downed ships.

Terrain: Gneiss, granite and obsidian rock bed, jagged mountains and chasms.

Year: 7

Information: This is a dark, foreboding and quite inhospitable planet due to the radiation and terrain. The marls live on their ships most of the time and use this planet as a source of belinium and mining assets. They have some smaller active mining operations beneath the ground which they use to replenish their supplies. There are several marl fleets scattered across the space surrounding the planet as most marls tend to live on their ships. Most are C-Class ships but there are several hulking D-Class crafts as well. They can barely be recognized as the models from which they originally came as the marls have modified them using all manner of scrap metal and bizarre ornaments.

Savage though they may be, marls are surprisingly well organized and each fleet has a general of sorts and is divided into different squads with its own chain of command and squad leaders. Fighting marl ships can be very difficult as there is no way to predict what they are going to do. They are fearless and use unorthodox strategies and weapons. For example, that they use supped up gravity chains to

fire fortified escape pods with a magnetic pull unto hulls of other ships, only to have breach teams storm out from the pods unto the hull is not something most people expect. Marls are capable of surviving and withstanding a massive amount of g-force and concussive force. Some of their cluttered together ships are actually several ships pulled together by grav-chains and split apart one second to attack in a swarm after which they pull together again to concentrate their fire. To underestimate a marl fleet is a death sentence.

For all intents and purposes, this is the marl home world, but their fleets are scattered across the galaxy and the exact number of marls are impossible to determine but their numbers are growing.

Sellis

Assets: -

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: +90/+400

Factions: -

Fauna: -

Gravity: 0.5

Light/Dark: 18h/3h

Moon(s): None

Circumference: 9 000 km

Population: -

Structure: -

Terrain: -

Year: -

Information: Like Baldos, this is torn apart and barren world and with a toxic atmosphere. There are rumors of old experimental weapon systems being left behind as well as talk of old abandoned mining operations. Though it is unclear which outfit that has been active on the planet, what they were digging for, what types of weapons they were developing and why, and how, they disappeared..

Story Seeds

1. When out scavenging, the avatars run across an old mining colony on LV-237. At first they count their lucky stars but then they discover that they are not alone. There are two ways to handle this story. Either you can make into a big hunt if the avatars are the military type, otherwise you can make it into a true survival horror story. In this maybe only one or two Rippers are roused and one has cut off the avatars communication. The only chance they have to get picked up is to get the colony up and running and fix the sabotaged main array. They are being stalked by one of the most dangerous species known to man.
2. A low level administrator on Claret City stumbled upon some notes on a ship named the GIC Vulture. It was on route to Rykos some centuries ago but never reported back. The avatars are relatively close by and are asked to check in on the system. When they arrive at the planet Old Marl they are in for a shock. They have found the source of the marls and if the

massive fleet on site is any indication they might be a real threat to larger and well-defended colonies. But first things first, now they have to survive and get the hell out. If they escape, how will the Marls react to having their home world exposed. Will they mobilize all their scattered forces and go on the offensive, now actually going to war?

Sumizome

"The whole damn system is dying but until then it will remain a messed up place. Especially Leary. Cold as hell and crime riddled beyond belief. But that is why I live here on Lery. With this much crime there will always be bounties to collect."

- Keena Lapin, Merc

Due to a dying sun, Sumizome is to be evacuated in fifty years and the population relocated. Until then it will remain a quite active and conflict riddled system, this is especially true for the planet Lerion and its surrounding space. Though the population is rather sparse in general, the conflicts are still quite intense. Maybe the pressure of a dying sun and wanting to get as much as possible out of the system before relocating has something to do with it? For whatever the reason, things have been tense since the discovery of the system in 478 IT.

Kellios

Assets: Cadmium, osmium, titanium

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: -15/+30

Factions: GIC, IMC, SES, Girshaw Amalgamated, MEC, CIM.

Fauna: -

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 2d/18h

Moon(s): Preston, Gloria, Agara, Bufos

Circumference: 19 000 km

Population: 200 000

Structure: Small spread out mining colonies.

Terrain: Anorthosite, diorite and nephelinite plains, mountains and natural underground rock formations. Some seismic instability makes certain regions prone to lesser earthquakes and tremors.

Year: 3 months

Information: Kellios is exclusively a mining planet and its being aggressively mined on all fronts. The GIC just granted several new mining permits to a variety of companies so the planet will be getting a massive influx of three hundred thousand more workers and a whole host of colonies will be constructed. The GIC deemed that the mining needed to speed up significantly in order for them to be able to mine the planet dry as quickly as possible. So the hiring is ongoing.

MEC and CIM are conducting some illegal mining operations on site and are collaborating with raiders to get the spoils off world. There have been some minor conflicts between the powers that be and the two rebel

organizations but these have been local skirmishes contained to a handful of small colonies. Most colonies are movable ones using one or more MMOs so a tram system or infra-structure has never been established. The GIC does however have several smaller satellites in orbit which help with the communication.

Kellios is a dry planet and as movable colonies with access to an MMO are incapable of sustaining more than five hundred people, the four moons are used to mine ice. The ice is transported down by ship and used to provide the colonists with water and air. Food deliveries come in from Lery every three months.

Lery

Assets: Belinium, led, tungsten, cadmium, osmium, titanium, iridium, vanadium, molybden.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: -50/-100, blizzards and heavy winds.

Factions: GIC, IMC, SES, Girshaw Amalgamated, MEC, CIM.

Fauna: Runners (corralled), cold resistant oxy-algae.

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 9h/1d

Moon(s): Hikui

Circumference: 20 000 km

Population: 800 000

Structure: One large main colony with a population of 500 000 and scattered subterranean mining colonies.

Terrain: Gneis, itacolumite, granulite rock formations and mountains combined with glaciers.

Year: 6

Information: Lery is the most active planet in the system. The main colony, simply referred to as the Lery colony or Lery Prime, has a population of five hundred thousand people while there are another three hundred thousand people scattered across various underground mining colonies. Most of the resources are located beneath the ground so large areas of the planet have an intricate network of old mine shafts and tunnels, while others have active ones with trams and all.

Tensions run high on Lery as MEC and CIM have a strong foothold and a lot of support.

Lery Prime is a large city sprawl interconnected through an underground tram system built into the old mining tunnels. After the Lery Prime mining operation shut down back in 487 IT, the tunnels were stabilized and used to house the infrastructure of the growing colony. This vast network is now filled with everything from shining and secure tram stations with integrated shopping malls, apartment projects to dark and dank sewer tunnels, power stations and forgotten sealed off mining shafts.

The upper city is centered on downtown, a bustling hub of high-rises where the corporations and GIC neighbor hot nightclubs, luxury spa hotels and sports arenas. Outside downtown there is mostly upper middle class to lower middle class housing projects sporting smaller

supermarkets, dive bars and motels. While on foot, most get around by the subterranean tunnels or enclosed bridges connecting buildings due to the extreme cold. There are no industries of any magnitude within city limits as most wares are produced in nearby industry hubs some fifty kilometers outside town. It is here about a third of the population works.

Crime

Lery suffers from a rather high-crime rate. This is an indirect result of the CIM and MEC activities. The CIM and MEC are quite active on Lery as it is the center of this out of the way but economically important system. These organizations need weapons, contacts, smugglers and a plethora of other commodities and where there is a need there are bound to pop up providers. As a result, local criminal gangs came to be and soon they began to trade in drugs, human trafficking, prostitution and a whole array of other criminal enterprises that had nothing to do with MEC or CIM. As the market grew so did the competition and, in a literally cut throat business, competition means bloodshed. While MEC and CIM sabotage, manipulate and assassinate, the gangs shoot it out in the streets. There are three major criminal organizations on Lery that are ruthless and numerous. In a colony with only five hundred thousand people, this is something that is quite noticeable and the number of hardcore criminals gathered here is nothing less than a statistical anomaly.

The Kazakhs: Khazakh is a Russian word that means vagabond and this concept it something this syndicate takes to heart. The Kazakhs are ethnically diverse and the name was chosen by the founder, Akira Alistratov, who is a Japanese-Russian. They have about seventy five core members and about thirty new prospects. The group does not have any type of stronghold or regular "social club" they hang out in, they rent a new space on a month by month basis through one of their shell operations. This is also true for their many caches. They keep their assets divided up in small moveable units. It is hard on logistics and man-hours but very effective. The fact that the space is rented by a shell company with no legal ties to the Khazakhs can make it hard on search warrants and such and create reasonable doubt if any members are arrested. Their main income comes from drug distribution, prostitution and arms dealing. They are known to desecrate the corpses of enemies, witnesses and the like in the most brutal manner and leave them for all to see as a warning.

Riggers: The Riggers are a rather high-tech gang that focuses on frauds, ransoming, loansharking, toe-cutting and extortion. They have, however, begun to take an interest in smuggling and drug dealing. The Riggers usually hack smaller companies and check their finances. If the company is in trouble, they offer them a loan and crank up the interest. When they cannot pay they are forced to sell whatever they own (or get killed basically) and the Riggers siphon off most of the profit, laundering it through different dummy acquisition firms they have set up. It is a lucrative business but the city only has so many



The center of Lery Prime upper city downtown.

vulnerable companies so the Riggers are broadening their horizons in order to expand. They are a rather small group, with about thirty core members and twenty prospects but their vast monetary resources allow them to hire legionnaires and freelance assassins on a large scale when in need. Their technological aptitude also gives them access to a lot of information such as LED investigations and the movement of their competitors as they hack into dozens of networks daily. When it comes to being listened in on, other criminals need to worry about the Riggers even more than LED as they do not need a warrant. This is how the Riggers conduct their toe-cutting (stealing from other criminals); they listen in and when they get wind of an operation that seems lucrative they send in a group of legionnaires or assassins to kill the opposition and grab the goods. The Riggers are led by Natasha Haramish. This thirty five year old woman is cunning, cold as ice and manipulative. She can, in most cases, be found in the secure office of *Chromadrine*, a large and hot nightclub downtown which the Riggers own and use as a base of operation. The security is extreme.

When the Riggers want to make a statement by killing someone, there is only three things left at the scene: Seventy five percent of the victim's blood, their ID and a card with the text FILE DELETED. There is a rumor going around that they have one particularly skilled assassin on retainer, probably a Kiru, who is charged with "removing" people in this manner. The method used is exsanguination, which leaves about twenty five percent of the victims blood in the body.

The Wraiths: As a gang they are opportunists, violent, large, and quite successful but held back by a lack of organization. The members of the Wraiths take pride in their way of life and who they are. They have one hundred members and about fifty prospects. All wear tattoos and emblems on their clothes which show off their membership and status. Officially, they are a hover-bike club and each

member owns a high-powered and tricked out hover-bike, but in reality they are a brutal street gang. The Wraiths make their money off human trafficking, smuggling, arms dealing, drug dealing, protection rackets and whatever else comes their way. They are quite poor at laundering their money and mostly use less than subtle tactics and this is why their members are in and out of prison. They all abide under the Alpha, a member who has proven to be resourceful and strong. The Alpha is just as brutal and cold as the next Wraith, but they have a tendency to know when to bark, when to bite and when to lie low and does his best to influence the rest of the gang.

They own several club houses, garages and bars outside of downtown. They are also the silent partner of Hover Hard Bikes, a successful bike manufacturer, located in one of the production units outside of Lery Prime. What money they manage to launder usually goes through here.

The Wraiths seldom hire outside help and like to handle things themselves. When they wish to make a statement they fasten their enemies in chains between four hover bikes (arms and legs) and rip them apart.

Other Gangs and Criminals: There are several other smaller gangs with no more than twelve or so members that are scrounging for a foothold and often do the bidding of the other gangs as well as numerous burglary rings, freelance high-jacking crews and assassins.

LED: Due to the high gang ratio, CIM and MEC influence and the overall dangerous state of Lery Prime, the local LED office undergoes special training and has one of the toughest LED units in the galaxy: SCEG (Syndicate Crime Eradication Group). This group is specially trained in infiltrating, investigating and combating the local gangs. Members are not allowed to have any family within the Sumizome system and they are not allowed to be born and raised there. They are also discouraged from having sexual partners other than legal escorts; all this in order to make them less vulnerable to gang threats and corruption.

SCEG officers move about once a month and have hidden identities. They are trained in forensics, urban warfare and undercover operations. Only the best are headhunted from all over the system.

Viurak

Assets: Belinium, led, tin.

Atmosphere: Corrosive

Climate: -40/+200

Factions: GIC, IMC

Fauna:-

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 1d/12h

Moon(s): Tritas, Clorid, Befuras

Circumference: 12 000 km

Population: 50 000

Structure: Mobile mining operations

Terrain: Granit and obsidian fields, ridges and chasms, prone to frequent earthquakes and violent volcanic eruptions.

Year: 3 months

Information: While the planet is filled with belinium, the violent volcanic and seismic activity makes it impossible to establish any static mining operations. All operations use MMOs and drop ships to handle their operations and the most important crew members are the geophysical navigators. They plot out safe (as safe as possible) routes and windows of time for mining operations after which the crew has to move on before an earthquake or volcanic eruption strikes. Working here is extremely dangerous. MEC and CIM have no interest in having more than a dozen or so men on site and usually hijack cargo ships that come off the planet filled with ore.

Story Seeds

Crime rate is going up even more on Lery Prime as the gangs engage in turf wars. The avatars are part of the SCEG - Syndicate Crime Eradication Group and are part of the taskforce that is spearheading the investigation. It appears things are even more dangerous than they had imagined. The MEC and CIM aide the syndicates some as these groups are in business together and the fact the ISA tries to slow down the investigation (probably because they have an undercover operation going) does not help. From all out firefights in the dark tunnels to assassinations and corruptions going high up the ranks. The avatars have to be careful and smart if they are to win or even survive this one.

Sylvian

"This system, or at least some aspects of it, is of great interest to me. Why? I am not at liberty to say. The one thing I can say is that I have been recruited and that the work I am going to be doing has the potential to change everything. Everything."

- Bryn Lee Tawana, Archeologist.

Sylvian is a system few ever have reason to visit. Hathos and Mefune are two small planets which have inhospitable atmospheres and are used for mining while Y-34 is restricted by the GIC and heavily patrolled. It is said to contain a combined DoX1 and DoX2 research facility which was set up soon after the Orion disappeared in connection to the discovery of the artifact only referred to as the Arch back in 490 IT. A lot of resources, especially belinium and tungsten, the GIC mine are shipped to their facilities on Y-34.

Hathos

Assets: Beryllium, polonium, aluminum, gold, tungsten.

Atmosphere: Corrosive

Climate: +20/+400, acidic harsh winds and rains.

Factions: GIC, Girshaw Amalgamated, SES, IMC, CIM

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.4

Light/Dark: 2d/1d

Moon(s): Perum, Daquan, Jovia, Olandu

Circumference: 22 000

Population: 900 000

Structure: Several underground mining colonies.

Terrain: Breccia, Phyllite, Pyroxenite plains and mountains.

Year: 4 months

Information: This is a mining planet of mid-level importance. It has a lot of resources but working here can be quite tough due to the corrosive atmosphere and high gravity. The corrosive storms make flying quite the ordeal and an undertaking that has to be planned out ahead and most transportation on the planet goes through the underground tram system. Mined resources are sent into orbit through different sites which has an ODS. Water is mined from the four moons and sent to access points through an ODS. The colonies range in size, going from one thousand to twenty thousand in population. CIM has several operatives and infiltrators in place here as it puts them closer to Y-34. They are trying to gain access to the restricted facilities on Y-34.

Mefune

Assets: Helim-3, belinium, tungsten, platinum.

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: -80/+70

Factions: GIC, SES, MEC

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 1d/2d

Moon(s): Paka

Circumference: 5 500



C-Sec patrol ship on approach to Banner's Hill

Population: 300 000

Structure: Several mobile mining colonies.

Terrain: Coquina, hornfels and ljolite plains and low altitude natural pillar formations. Planet is prone to violent seismic activity.

Year: 23 months

Information: This small planet is highly unstable due to the seismic activity and due to this most mining colonies are mobile, using MMOs which are the standard procedures when conducting mining on these types of planets. As such, Mefune lack established colonies or infrastructure. As CIM does on Hathos, MEC operatives are trying to infiltrate GIC mining operations in order to reach the restricted facilities on Y-34. Again, GIC send all the belinium and tungsten they mine to Y-34.

Y-34

Assets: Artifacts, led, titanium, helium-3.

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: -70/+30

Factions: GIC

Fauna: Planted algae eating oxygen producing insects.

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 12d/8d

Moon(s): Tretys, Linak, Felt

Circumference: 14 000

Population: 5000

Structure: Handful of highly secured research facilities.

Terrain: Basaltic lava rock and large ice deposits.

Year: 20 months

Information: After the disappearance of Orion and the bizarre emergency transmission, the GIC sent a team to investigate. They did not find the ship or the crew, but they did find the location from where the Arch had been removed and the place gave off some strange readings when scanned; readings which indicated that a very powerful artifact had in fact been kept there. After

further investigation they found molecular remnants of the Artifacts. Further tests of the samples indicated that the artifact could (in theory) produce and amplify energy and be used as a cheap and renewable source of energy. With this information on hand, the GIC decided to set up several facilities on the planet with the intention of searching for more scattered remains of the artifact and to conduct research on site. As the planet had natural ice deposits, they decided to bombard it with terraform algae and terraform insects, this has led to the atmosphere going from suffocating to thin during the last decade, enabling the facilities to rely on air filters instead of SACs.

It is widely believed that only DoX2 has set up shop on the planet but it is in fact both DoX1 and DoX2. During the ten years they have spent on the planet they have managed to find larger fragments. All in all they have put together material that size-wise is equal to a pinhead. However, this was enough for them to set up a replication experiment. They also discovered traces of an additional material; a material they believed to be spores. So there are four distinct facilities and two distinct lines of experimentation.

Mining & Security Facility: Banner's Hill

Banner's Hill is home to the mining crew and security personnel. It holds a smelting facility, engineering bay, brig, crew quarters, entertainment plaza and C-Sec HQ. The miners are by far the most numerous crew members on the planet (approximately two thousand five hundred) as they are working constantly looking for more evidence and fragments of artifacts. Each dig team is spearheaded by an archeologist who leads the work together with the mining foreman of the team to ensure that nothing is missed. The C-Sec personnel are quite numerous as well with a staff of five hundred. It might seem that having ten percent of the crew be part of the security team is a bit much, but they have had trouble with VPS and near riots among the miners so a strong and numerous security force is quite necessary. It seems that the mines themselves affect the crew, as if being underground on this

planet messes with the head of the miners. The structure is a simple cylindrical tower structure and each day the miners are flown to or from their shifts.

Production & Power: The Hearth

The production and power center, referred to as the Hearth, contains the reactor, hydroponics and protean pools, communications array, engineering and production facility. Those who work here also live over at Banner's hill. Here most of the engineers, factory workers and maintenance crew spend most of their waking hours. The Hearth has five hundred workers and the box-like industrial building is located in the center of the facility. It is connected to the other facilities by transportation tunnels with a trolley system and along these tunnels the main power lines run to the different buildings. Each tunnel is about five hundred meters long. The Hearth runs off a helium-3 reactor as the material is abundant on the planet (and the planet isn't located in the core system).

DoXI Lab: The Museum

Called the Museum by the workers (as they believe the place to be filled with artifacts), this lab is dedicated to the replication experiment. With the scarce material they have, the researches here try to actually grow the Arch. Biometal bridges the gap between the organic and the inorganic and it is the belief of this research team that this particular artifact can be recreated through a combination of engineering and bio-genetics. They are trying to reconstruct it by forging biometal of their own. They produce a sort of metal grain they combine with specially prepared genetically adapted bacteria (which fuses with the metal and actually allows it to grow). Their hope is to create the base for a biometal of their own which then can grow in a special nutrient solution. They measure the bioelectrical signature in the material and try to match the one given off by the fragments they found. They are close but not there quite yet. They have however been able to grow small fragments of biometal of their own. They differ from the biometals found in artifacts but the team has made great strides and the materials they have grown do have certain properties. The basic metal grains have to be heated to very high temperatures before they can be used as part of the process but cannot be allowed to melt or expand to much as a result. This, and the bacteria infusion used, is why tungsten is in such high demand here. Tungsten has the highest melting point of all metals and the lowest coefficient of thermal expansion rate. It is also a transitional metal which occurs naturally in bio-molecules used by some bacteria. It is this property which allows the genetically enhanced bacteria to incorporate the metal into itself and grow it, effectively creating a bio-metal of sorts which can be vat grown by humans. Adjusting the bioelectrical signature by infusing it with belinium, they are trying to recreate the exact signature of the fragments.

The Museum is a large cutting edge research facility and it houses several floors of lab areas with different security clearances as well as the living quarters of the scientists working here. There are approximately one thousand

scientists living and working here but only fifty or so are high-ranking. Most work on smaller aspects of the project and are prohibited from sharing information with each other. These low lever scientists and archeologists never see the big picture and actually have no idea what the facility itself is for, only what they and their small team is working on.

DoX2 Lab: The Carnival

Basically identical in layout as the Museum, this laboratory dedicates itself to replicating the fragments of alien fungi found in the fragments. The epithet Carnival has been given to the place by the miners. They know that there are about one thousand xenobiologists working here and they assume that there might be alien organisms inside thus they make the tasteless reference to a freak show at an old Earth carnival.

The work is split up in the same manner as it is in the Museum, most scientists only work on and see small bits and pieces. The goal is to recreate the fungi, clone it and grow it in order to find out what properties it has. It is in fact an alien organism so the work is of utter importance.

The Truth

If the spores are recreated the scientists will have recreated the spores found in the Arch. If introduced into a living (or dead) biological creature it will turn it into a Viscutrope. And scientists will be tempted to research it as the spore will show off regenerative properties that might be transferred and used or turned into a genetic altering agent which could (but will not) benefit mankind greatly.

If the Arch is recreated through the bio-metal replication experiments it will basically work as the Beacon (see planet Dekos in the Mal system above) and begin to spawn the spore within the material. If replicated, the material will soon begin to form glyphs on the surface as well. Yes, the Arch replica will be able to produce an abundance of energy and even give insight (in theory) but mankind will never be able to tap these resources. It is only an instrument of madness, death and our undoing.

The planet itself is infused with black resonance, but it is the strongest beneath the ground, near the stone. This is what is getting to the miners. It is unclear why this planet has such a strong presence of black resonance but it is possible that it once held several artifacts which rivaled the power of the Arch and their dark echo still linger. Now, as the experiments have begun to ramp up as they find more and more fragments, this planet is becoming even more dangerous. In all likelihood the disaster is just around the corner.

Story Seed

1. As CIM operatives or freelancers hired by CIM the avatars have infiltrated Hathos or Mefune as part of the workforce. Their intent is to get to Y-34 in order to gain accesses to the secret lab facility. The CIM

wants photos, copies of any files they can get access to and preferably access to blueprints of the facility. Infiltrating it will be perilous and the nature of the research is dangerous in and of itself.

2. The research being conducted on Y-34 is exciting and groundbreaking and very important. The avatars are part of the crew. They might be anything from part of the security team, pilots, engineers, scientists or administration. As time passes they become aware that violent crime and deadly accidents seem to rise. It intensifies as the research amps up. It seems that the intensity of the VPS is increasing as well. The avatars learn that the head scientists are trying out some new experiments and it becomes quite clear (at least to the avatars) that these experiments have something to do with the increase in problems. But the head scientist does not want to listen and seems to become more and more unhinged. With his high rank he is in charge but when is it enough? At what point will the avatars try to put a stop to the madness without being considered traitors to the GIC? Or is it in fact the avatars that have become affected by VPS, sharing a paranoid delusion?

Tsu-Lang

"Listen kid, I usually don't tell people what to do but if you are signing up for the Border Guards I wouldn't recommend doing so in Tsu-Lang. You will just get shipped off to the Niloufar jungle. It is a goddamn meat grinder. Where I am going? The Niloufar jungle of course, it is where the money is. I've been doing this for twenty years. Most of my limbs are vat grown. I can't even remember how many times parts of me have been blown off and replaced."

- Jaymine .V Catazarno, veteran Legionnaire.

It is unclear exactly how, but CIM and MEC have an exceptional strong hold on this system. From the jungles of Culiath to the snowy mountain peaks of Kujan, the GIC run into resistance. Each planet has mining resources and is terraformed. This makes it easier for smaller cells to operate independently. As each planet provide them with a lot of hiding places, there is no need to hold up on a colony with a SAC or air filters. MEC and CIM also hide in plain sight, among the local population. This presents a problem as the GIC is reluctant to draw civilians into the conflict. These conflicts have been going on for nearly a hundred years.

Culiath

Assets: Gold, led, copper, iridium, tin, silver, aluminum.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: Old Earth southern hemisphere.

Factions: GIC, MEC, CIM

Fauna: Southern hemisphere animals plus runners, armadillo wolves, ravaging leech and flesh dwellers.

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 12h/8h

Moon(s): Cheddock, Verdanti, Lao

Circumference: 6 000 km

Population: 3 million

Structure: Towns, cities and military outposts.

Terrain: The northern hemisphere is reminiscent of old Earths rainforests while large parts of the south are near identical to that of southern Africa of old Earth.

Year: 12h

Information: This planet is quite small but very dense and most citizens enjoy a rather comfortable lifestyle. Many regions have strong farming, fishing and fruit plantation communities and lively street markets. The cities and towns range from one hundred thousand to a few thousand in size. The architecture is often rather simple, using local stone in combination with modern technology. Today, most that are religious adhere to Infinitology as on most worlds, but the original settlers were faithful to Islam and greatly respected the architectural style of old. This was especially true for the original chief architect, an Anglo-Japanese woman named Amanda Natsuko. Her aesthetic appreciation can still be seen. Most buildings, clothes and local foods are inspired by old Earth Middle Eastern styles. Even the local dialect can be hard to understand at times as the accent bears heavy traces of Persian. Many words have been exchanged with their Farsi equivalent. Farsi is also the mandatory second language in the local schools. Nowadays, about twenty percent of those with a religious conviction living on Culiath are faithful to Islam and they are the second largest religion on the planet next to Infinitology. As a result, mosques are quite common here. The actual ethnicity of the inhabitants is mixed like in most places in the Sirius galaxy.

On Culiath, CIM is quite active and winning some ground with the locales. They propagate that self-reliant planets, such as Culiath, should be allowed to secede from the GIC and be left to create their own democratic systems and leadership. They often act through propaganda and operatives, but a full on violent conflict has been going on for years in the Niloufar jungle.

The Niloufar jungle covers an area of two hundred thousand square kilometers (about sixty thousand square kilometers larger than the Appalachian-Blue Ridge forests in the USA of old Earth). Here and there within this area one can find small farming, fishing and plantation towns. It is also in this area where the openly local CIM guerilla has made its home. Strategically it is ideal. They hide in small cells, using movable camps and the GIC cannot overtly carpet bomb them or even canvas the jungle in full force. This would require the relocation of thousands of people that have lived in the jungle for generations. The political backlash and growth of CIM support would be devastating for the GIC. Instead, the GIC use small mobile squads. Some are specially trained Border Guards while some are comprised of skillful and tactical Legionaries or Marines. Some of the towns in the area are actual fronts for the CIM. The CIM does everything it can to make their presence known, spreading propaganda and gaining

support. In a way, it is a quiet war since few people outside the jungle are affected by it. The battle is ongoing and it is bloody and brutal.

Helos

Assets: Vanadium, tungsten, platinum, radium, gold.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: Similar to that of Scandinavia and northern Europe of old Earth.

Factions: GIC, IMC, Girshaw Amalgamated, MEC.

Fauna: Equivalent that of Scandinavia and northern Europe of old Earth with the addition of tundra cephalopods, runners and saber toothed ice wolves.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 8h/16h

Moon(s): Zivi

Circumference: 14 000

Population: 10 000 000

Structure: Mining colonies, towns and cities.

Terrain: Equivalent that of Scandinavia and northern Europe of old Earth.

Year: 30 months

Information: Helos is a very active trade world. The technological level changes drastically depending on the region. The larger cities (Vertal being the largest with a population of three million) have the same technological level as most core worlds, while some communities refrain from hooking their systems up to the local circuit.

Some towns are centered on mines owned by IMC or Girshaw Amalgamated. The corporate mining business has made the planet quite wealthy. Overall, there is a rather strong support for the GIC and corporate growth here so MEC work by infiltrating and sabotaging the corporations and GIC. The MEC attempt at make the GIC and corporations look as bad as possible without being seen themselves, hoping to undermine the support they have garnered in the area.

Kujan

Assets: Helium-3, belinium, tungsten, molybdenum, iron, radium.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: As Antarctica of old Earth.

Factions: GIC, IMC, SES, Girshaw Amalgamated, CIM, MEC.

Fauna: As Antarctica of old Earth.

Gravity: 0.9

Light/Dark: 12h/1d

Moon(s): Campini, Cosly

Circumference: 9 000

Population: 5 000 000

Structure: Established and mobile mining colonies and one large city hub.

Terrain: As Antarctica of old Earth.

Year: 8 months.

Information: Though terraformed, the cold climate makes it rather inhospitable for humans to live here

comfortably, but the lucrative mining opportunities keep a large workforce on the surface. The first mining colony, Blue Gate, has been converted to a full blown city hub. It has a population of five hundred thousand and is quite a lively place. Most walkways and such are located beneath the ground, as is the tram system. One can also use enclosed tunnels that run between the buildings. As on other cold planets, this design is put in place to avoid the freezing climate.

In Blue Gate City, one can find everything you might expect in a city hub. Everything from shopping malls, religious centers, corporate offices to night clubs and escort houses can be visited here, but it is apparent that this is an industrial mining colony. The dark metal framework has been adapted to fit more upscale architecture and the mining transportation system still shines through in some of the stations even if new cars have been put on the tracks. There are also all manner of decommissioned sections beneath the ground and in the outskirts of the city.

Blue Gate produces most of its food in huge farming enclaves outside of town. Real meat, fruit and vegetables are common and price worthy even with the harsh climate.

The rest of Kujan is mostly comprised of mobile mining colonies and a few established ones. There are a lot of resources here, but the veins are shallow so moving around is often the best option. CIM and MEC use infiltration in Blue Gate City but often resort to all out raids on GIC and corporate shipments. They hide using old and forgotten mining colonies and shafts as temporary bases. Here it is all about taking as much as they can get away with to fund their war. In response, the GIC and corporations have established several small guard outposts and often patrol the planet. They have also set up mine fields and automated turret systems. The problem is that many automated security systems have been forgotten and even decades later they are still active. In fact, it is rumored that several larger military installations have been abandoned decades ago and forgotten, maybe even entire subterranean hangar bays. If this is true, there might be a fortune waiting out there, but not only is it illegal to salvage this, it is also very dangerous due to the violence that seems to erupt out of nowhere at times. If they exist, many of these installations are sure to have automated defenses as well. According to some conspiracy theorists, the GIC experimented with autonomous armed robotic walkers on Kujan some sixty years ago and never deactivated them, who knows what a salvage team might run across if they do find one of these places...

Salin

Assets: Gold, silver, copper, aluminum, osmium, belinium.

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: Similar to that of the Sahara desert of old Earth but with some increase in oasis systems and underground caverns.

Factions: CIM, GIC, SES, IMC.

Fauna: Runners, Sand Tigers, Mineral Leech, Shelled Devourer, elephants, giraffes plus animal life found in old Earth Savanna

Gravity: 0.8

Light/Dark: 2d/12h

Moon(s): Fundalis, Ewar, Donahue

Circumference: 10 000

Population: 23 000 000

Structure: Cities, towns, settlements, mining colonies and military outposts.

Terrain: Similar to that of Sahara of old Earth.

Year: 15 months

Information: There are natural (as natural as can be when terraformed) and ODS created water holes spread out on this desert planet. On Salin, the locals tend to live in small settlements which are located on bedrock or mountains. Generally, the population is quite widespread living in small clusters. Due to the long hours of daylight, movable encampments and smaller settlements make do with some rechargeable belinum coils. These take them through the short twelve-hour nights while the sun panels handle most of the daytime hours. The largest concentration of people can be found in GIC and SES mining colonies. Each and every one of these mining colonies have well armed security forces. This is due to the presence of shelled devourers.

Shelled devourers have been around for many decades and it is believed that they are the result of a mutation which occurred due to belinum and coranium radiation. Back in 430 IT, one E-class (*The Caramassa*) and one D-class ship (*The Muldoon*) collided above the planet. It is believed that one of these GIC mining ships were subjected to sabotage. It resulted in them being pulled down to the planet, through the atmosphere and both crashed down right next to Thajala, the main colony that had been established decades ago and housed five million people. The entire city was affected. Large parts were blown to bits while others were severely damaged. Approximately eighty percent of the population died. This area (which covers about four thousand square kilometers, roughly the size of Los Angeles) is now a radioactive and poisonous wasteland called the Thajala Badlands (or just The Badlands). Mutated humans and animals are said to still live there. Lots of salvage could be found, but the dangers are immense. Getting an overview, other than satellite images, is quite difficult since it is impossible to fly in the area as all instruments seem to be affected by the radiation and the electromagnetism. It is from here the shelled devours come, gigantic insect-like creatures that are drawn to vibrations. They seem to eat everything from organic matter, to metal and all manner of other living creatures, humans included. They travel freely through sand but mountains and bedrock are too dense for them to penetrate. Therefore, larger settlements that plan to stick around for a while are set up on bedrock or mountains. Most of the locals live as nomads, farmers or miners. The nomads herd livestock and make a simple and comfortable living while the farmers live in farming enclaves located high up in the mountains.

Mining colonies are often surrounded by several devourers as the mining activity attracts them due to the vibrations. As the buildings are protected by being located on mountains/bedrock, the miners are quite safe. Many times there is need to work the belinum fields, many of which only have a thin crust of rock. At other times, the walls in a mine are thinner than expected and the creatures break through. Mining here is a risky business, often more so than on other planets. As they do on Kujan, the CIM raid the GIC and corporations and send off resources to be sold in order to fund the struggle. CIM often hide in plain sight as nomads and there is also talk that they have a HQ of sorts in the outskirts of the Thajala Badlands.

Story Seed

1. On Culiath there have been a string of beatings and murders. All the victims have been Muslims. It seems that there is a group of Infinitologist fanatics who have twisted the faith and made it into a hateful thing. They wish to eradicate the Muslims and claim all of Culiath for the Infinitologists. The avatars are caught up in the case (they might be arbiters, specially called in investigators, influential local freelancers or local marshals). The Church of Infinitology condemns the crimes and the Muslim community wants justice. It is a tense situation, both politically and religious. The avatars have to find the fanatics before things get out of hand.
2. As a freelance equal opportunity team, the avatars are hired to conduct a mission on Kujan. They are to locate an ex-GIC navigator in order to buy some coordinates. One of these will lead to a closed down underground military base. The employers of the avatars want them to infiltrate the base and download certain files from the mainframe. It is dangerous, CIM might be about (and they might even be after the same thing) and the automated defense system is probably activated as well so they will probably run into sentry guns and RAWs.
3. The Badlands on Salin are livable but very dangerous. Some areas are extremely irradiated while others are free of radiation. Some high-rises still stand, while others have plummeted through the street and into the sewers and tram system. Bands of raiders, bizarre mutants and even cavers thrive here. Worse things tend to come out at night. It is very easy to play out an entire campaign within the badlands. Basically, you can take inspiration from any odd wasteland game and filter it through the universe of Cold & Dark. Are the avatars there just to loot, to find something or someone or simply assess the value of salvage for a client? Maybe they crash in the middle of it all and have to find a way out? Or are they GIC undercover agents that have to establish themselves as capable raiders and survivors in order to get the attention of the local CIM cell so they might be contacted and given a chance to infiltrate? There are tons of ways to use the Badlands. Keep in mind that the technology

found here is about seventy years old. It will still be compatible with most technology in 501 IT with some tweaking.

Valdis

"Only the most intelligent, beautiful and sophisticated escorts are selected by the guild to work here. It is a great privilege. Use discretion, charm and sincerity. Here we share the lives and beds of the most powerful, prestigious and important people in the entire galaxy. We are with them in their highs and lows. And in a way we become the most important person in their life. Remember this and respect it."

- Adam Vance, escort guild etiquette instructor, first class.

This core system is one in which the planets have become the most influenced by human planetary engineering and terraforming. All have been terraformed and manipulated in order to be as beautiful and diverse as possible. The cost of living in the city cores as well as in the upscale rural areas is very high and as such the system has attracted those of wealth. There are of course billions of middle class individuals living here as well, but their way of life is quite limited in the cities as they seldom afford to visit the upscale city cores or resorts. Mostly they work there to provide service for those of means. However, people who don't live in the system (visitors, tourists and such) are given a special pass which makes them exempt from the local taxes. This means that you as a tourist can afford a quite luxurious stay in this system. This has led to a lot of tourism coming in from the other systems. Middle and upper class tourists alike come pouring in and this bolsters the local economy. Seasonal workers from other systems are only tax exempt in certain areas, usually restricted to the resort they work in. As the pay is a bit higher here than in the other core systems, many come here and work their ass off for a season and then return home, able to add some cash to their nest egg.

This system is heavily patrolled by LED and the overall security is very tight.

Note: Resources in the form of mining assets will not be listed as any form of mining is illegal within the system. All factions can be found here, but GIC and the escort guild are the ones of note. The escort guild wields quite a lot of influence and escorts that live here are well off as they (like tourists) are tax exempt. Some of the richest and most influential citizens are escort house matriarchs or patriarchs and most escorts themselves have a very comfortable life here. The guild is very selective and will screen every applicant in order to determine if they are sophisticated enough to work the system (if not they are sent somewhere else). Some are hired for an entire season by a single individual, during which period they not only get paid very handsomely but also have their every need seen to. The CIM and MEC have several operatives in place in order to keep tabs on important individuals and to gather information but they don't have any operations of note. Of course, the Church of Infinitology has a strong presence in all cities. Valdis is quite important to them as they receive quite large donations from the well-off locals.

Asendor

Assets:-

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +10/+38

Factions: GIC, Escort Guild

Fauna: Similar to that of old Earth South America.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 9h/15h

Moon(s): Druss, Casata

Circumference: 24 000 km

Population: 3 billion

Structure: Large cities and luxury resorts.

Terrain: Similar to that of old Earth South America.

Year: 8

Information: Asendor is the central planet of Valdis and has a population of three billion. The number of people is approximately the same as on Lida, Beck and Properis, but Asendor is home to Oneda, the largest luxury city in the system housing two billion people.

Asendor's high season is summer on the southern hemisphere where Oneda and most of the resorts are located. The high season lasts for about six weeks, but there are still a lot of tourists for another four weeks (about half of the high season crowd).

Oneda is an enormous city located along the coast of the Sendian sea. This body of water is lined by beautiful beaches and contain underwater caverns perfect for cave diving as well as a wide array of beautiful coral reefs. Part of Oneda (the most exclusive) is built under water. One can take an elevator down from the kilometer high luxury entertainment towers (which sport a gorgeous view and hundreds of restaurants, nightclubs and high-end escort houses) down to a sub-aqua world. Down there, huge luxury entertainment plazas await with a view over the coral reefs and exotic aquatic life. One can even take underwater trams to underwater city hubs further out at sea. These places house several hundred thousand people. The rest of the population is scattered across the planet in smaller cities and resorts. Jungle hunting trips are also quite popular and many resorts are located close to the tropical rain forests and humid jungle areas.

Beck

Assets:-

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: -60/+60

Factions: GIC, Escort Guild

Fauna: Varies island-wise but covers most of old Earth's and Sirius animal life.

Gravity: 0.1

Light/Dark: 3D/1D

Moon(s): Revit, Jorali, Fuce, Luriaw, Frenton, Buvir

Circumference: 10,000 km

Population: 3 billion

Structure: Resorts located on artificial levitating islands.

Terrain: Varies island-wise but covers most of old Earth's terrain.

Year: 12

Information: When it comes to planet engineering, Beck is the most advanced and considered to be a shining example of the ingenuity of mankind. The idea of actual islands floating in the air has been a concept in fantasy and science fiction but the low gravity of Beck in combination with technology has made it a reality.

Working off gigantic ground based gravity chains, the artificial islands are kept in the air: Some hundreds of meters off the ground while others hover some six thousand meters above ground. Each island is lined with specifically designed and extremely powerful interconnected gravitational matrixes, giving each island a gravity of Earth norm. To be exact, each island is a gravity factory and within each island foundation hundreds of engineers live and work managing reactors, gravity fluctuations and climate control. This is, however, invisible to those spending time on the islands as these floating behemoths have jungles, fields, alps and even their own oceans. Beck has some thousand islands. The smallest are about the size of old Earth Tobago while the largest is the size of old Earth Ireland.

Each island has its own climate and terrain. Some are large oceans with tropical islands while others are desert, jungle worlds or snow-clad alp ranges, perfect for skiers. The actual ground of the planet is littered with fog generators which hide the machinery and boring grey gneiss ground. So why use floating islands instead of simple ground enclaves? It's a matter of uniqueness and aesthetics. Standing on the edge of an island, looking out over hundreds of other islands contrasted against the mist shrouded ground and seeing the seven moons is indeed awe inspiring. There are also several cruise ships on sight. These are very large luxury ships. They have been

designed to operate within an atmosphere and specifically on Beck. The low gravity and the back-up of the on sight gravitational grids allow these giants to operate within an atmosphere. They can only operate within a set route where additional gravitational lanes have been set up.

Kerrion

Assets: Artifacts

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +10/-25

Factions: GIC, SES, CIM

Fauna: Tropical rain forest fauna engineered to survive cold climates.

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 1d/2d

Moon(s): Fleetwood, Wells, Rake

Circumference: 23 000 km

Population: 2 billion

Structure: Four large mega cities and several GIC and SES artifact labs and dig sites.

Terrain: Lava based rock, gneiss ridges, genetically engineered cold resistant tropical forests and underground caverns and lakes.

Year: 12

Information: Most of the population lives in one of the four cities: Dustin, Markel, New Shinjuku or Arkia. These cities combine large commercial business hubs with massive entertainment centers. The cities of Kerrion hold the largest amount of sports arenas and casinos, and you can virtually bet on anything. The hotels, even the upscale ones, are fairly cheap and connected to the casinos. Doves of people come here every year to gamble. The four cities

An example of one of the many floating marvels of terraforming on Beck.



are basically extreme and massive versions of Las Vegas of old Earth combined with amusement parks of a grand scale. Each city is a shimmering and towering landscape of sky scrapers, flashing huge nano-screens and dense air traffic. The constant influx of tourist currency has made Kerrion quite rich. However, with so much cash flowing through the casinos the criminal element has settled down as well. Corruption has spread like a wildfire and money laundering, drug dealing, loan sharking and illegal prostitution are very common. There are several criminal syndicates that battle each other for dominance. The struggle is mostly subtle, involving financial manipulation, hacking, extortion and bribes. Violence is often kept away from the public eye as even the criminal element make their living on the tourism. Assassinations and violent confrontation between the syndicates do occur, but again, these things mostly occur outside the public eye. LED presence is equally subtle consisting of a large number of plain clothes detectives and officers. In the city of Markel, one can find a large and beautifully designed museum: Museum of Xeno Discovery. It has several displays with parts of alien ruins, artifacts and has chronicled the impact of alien (including Gerion) technology on mankind. Beyond the dazzling mega cities lies the other side of Kerrion, the restricted zones and artifact labs.

In 322 IT, the GIC discovered alien artifacts and ruins on the north side of Kerrion. This was almost two centuries ago and today the GIC and SES have discovered even more. Some of the ruins are fairly intact and consist of large underground chambers interconnected by carved out caverns. Here and there, some glyphs are intact and some have been partially translated with varying degrees of accuracy. The buildings seem to have been a sort of research facility but most of the technology was removed at the same time the aliens left, some five million years ago. There are six different underground alien facilities and all hold traces of bio-metal signatures, indicating that these places were filled with different devices needed for the research. The translation of the glyphs points to there being a seventh installation.

The size of the facilities (openings, height to the ceilings and such) gives an impression that the alien race was much larger than humans, almost double the height of an average adult man. Each area where the facilities are located have been corded off and deemed as restricted zones. The security is very high and is a combination of SES security operatives and GIC LED teams on special assignment, scouts and GIC operatives. There are also several Raven fighters patrolling the area. There are three research facilities located within the zones.

These laboratories are used to analyze, restore and reverse engineer the few artifacts that have been found during the years. From the beginning, each artifact piece was thought to be random fragments from different artifacts, but now the research teams are convinced that the pieces are fragments from the very same artifact. The research also points to it being a form of locator, one that if reverse engineered might lead the research teams to

the seventh installation. Specially authorized SES research teams are allowed to work on the project together with the GIC due to the massive economic investment SES has put into the GIC research fund for this project. Of course, the CIM is very interested in finding out exactly what is going on in these restricted zones and the labs.

The seventh alien installation was the smallest one, but it still holds active biometal devices. The danger is that the seventh installation was a voider advanced bio-robotics defense lab. The facility is located beneath the city of New Shinjuku. If the research team manages to activate the locator, the alien robotics facility will become active. This will lead to a cataclysmic event that might lead to the destruction of Kerrion and it might threaten all of mankind.

When in a physical state, the voiders were a diverse race. Their technological and biological evolution (and the different branches of it) is not something that humans can fathom. The end result was that some of them died out while others went on to become one with the universe. However, their different branches of evolution have left a diverse and mottled array of technology behind. The one thing that all remaining technology has in common is that it is based on biometal and, as such, it is affected by voider energy. The robotics defense lab has lain dormant for eons, but it has been affected by the voider energy and influenced by the humans above. Biometal is in a way a living thing, some configurations more alive than others. Some devices and configurations have the capacity to learn. If the lab team is able to reverse engineer and activate the fragments of the locator, the robotics defense facility beneath New Shinjuku will begin to produce biometal machines of death and destruction. At first, they will take the form of giant (100 meters long with a 15 meter diameter) jagged metallic worms (annihilators). They will have a biometallic core and are made out of whatever metal they have managed to harness from the planet's crust.

The facility will be able to produce a total of ten annihilators (it takes about 12 hours per annihilator to be forged), and these will target New Shinjuku. From the outside it will seem like they are randomly destroying the city, which in part is true. They are also gathering material. They are about as hardy as an E-class destroyer and self-repairing. They move quite fast for their size, about 100 km/h and basically use their heft to destroy buildings. They can fire plasma from their back in order to deal with flying enemies. They will scan human technology and collect human DNA. It will take them about a week to completely destroy New Shinjuku. Any surviving annihilators will go to ground, hide and forge production units. Guided by residual voider energy, technological specs scanned from humans and human DNA, these production units will begin to produce an army of semi biological entities as well as ships and weapons for these entities. These beings will refer to themselves as the *Phalanx of Tenebrous*. They are a corrupt version of human and voider technology, not adhering to either one side. The Tenebrous only goal

is to absorb as much of the human race as possible as well as assimilating all biometal in order to become more efficient. In a way, it is a very efficient machine. However, this "race" has potential to be spawned elsewhere in the universe as well.

Note: The Phalanx of Tenebrous (Tenebrous for short) is a race of creatures that seem to be biomechanical in nature. Here we will give you some barebones which will allow you to use a portion of this group as enemies. They are based on a human core but have been merged with a bizarre form of biotechnology. The only type of Tenebrous described in this book is the simplest one, the Legio. These are simple minded low ranking soldiers, basically programmed and have little free will of their own. Even if the Tenebrous awaken, their march will be a slow one as they will need to boost their ranks and learn more about humanity. At their inception, they are best used as a major scare as their discovery (if discovered on Kerrion) will lead to the deaths of millions as New Shinjuku will be leveled to the ground. They will hide, get off world, and regroup. After that, they will bolster their numbers and slowly begin to attack fringe colonies.

Lida & Properis

Assets: n/a

Atmosphere: Breathable

Climate: +20/+45 (tropical)

Factions: GIC

Fauna:

Gravity: 0.8

Light/Dark: 2d/12h (1d)

Moon(s): Pollux (Lida), Castor (Properis) actual artificial moons built for esthetic purposes.

Circumference: 5000 km (Lida)/5500 km (Properis)

Population: 4 billion (collectively, evenly dispersed).

Structure: Scattered large resort cities on island and peninsula clusters.

Terrain: Similar to that of old Earth Cayman Islands.

Year: 3 months

Information: These two planets are referred to as "the drunken twins". They are extremely similar in size, climate and layout. Once every three months (a planetary year), they pass each other. With a distance of only 900 000 kilometers from each other, they are clearly visible. This is called "The Meet" and is an annual festival event.

Each planet's moon is artificial and basically nothing more than giant nano screens. Each time The Meet occurs, Properis and Lida live stream video to each other's moons and this is visible from the regions on each planet which have a full moon at the time. The moons are only 100 000 kilometers from each planet. Seeing a moon with a live streaming party video fill the sky with the planet it is streaming the feed from hanging huge in the backdrop is an awesome sight. The Meet also coincides with the longest night of the year and during the twenty four hour darkness, The Meet party rages on. It is a twenty four hour party and the intensity has no comparison.

The Drunken Twins are the most vibrant party planets in the galaxy. They are extremely popular with the young elite as well as the young middle class. However, there are resorts which are adapted for a more mature crowd as well. Beyond partying one can find all kinds of activities, such as reef diving, sky diving and water sports of all kinds. The criminal activity in the upscale areas is overall limited to the peddling of party drugs of different kinds and some illegal prostitution but there is heavy gang activity in the slums.

Many people cannot handle the life style and get addicted to drugs and alcohol. If not rich, they are often forced to move to the Tin Hives. These are the slums of Lida and Properis and are similar to the worst parts of the Favelas in old Earth Rio De Janeiro. Here the gangs rule and it is a very dangerous area. The LED does sweeps from time to time and the GIC like to keep it out of the media. CIM and MEC have little interest in the planets but they do arrange to meet contacts here as it's easy to go unnoticed in the party chaos or in the Tin Hives.

Story Seeds

1. Someone is extorting the GIC on Beck. They have taken over the gravity system of several of the artificial islands and have already shown that they mean business by dropping one to the ground. Fortunately their demonstration involved an empty island that was about to go online. Whomever is in control is watching everything and says that he will drop the islands if anyone tries to leave. He is asking for a ridiculous amount of money and either way, GIC do not negotiate with terrorists. The avatars are drawn into the drama. Maybe they are just on vacation and end up in a position to help or they might be part of the team responsible to stop the terrorist. It is not CIM, MEC or a religious fanatic. Who the hell is behind it, why and how did he manage to break the tight security protocols?
2. The facility under New Shinjuku on Kerrion is virtually impossible to discover without the successful reverse engineering and activation of the artifact fragment. As a story component, you might allow the fragments to show the way to the facility, guiding a group of scientific explorers to it. Only after they have arrived do they realize that something horribly dangerous is going on as the, before fascinating and now horrifying, technology is revving up and coming alive. Who knows, the facility might just need to be activated by sentient beings, guided there by false pretenses. Only after activating the technology do the explorers realize what they have set in motion...

Verbios

"No comment."

- Galina Suparando, GIC Bureau of Interstellar Exploration spokesperson.

The public knows little of this system other than the fact that GIC has restricted it. None of the planets are used as an actual home planet by humans, but from a xenobiological standpoint it is very important. It is believed that this system is the origin of the Rippers. Sekado and Millius are small dead rocks which have been devastated by meteor showers hundreds of thousands of years ago. They have no viable resources, trace of life and severely corrosive atmospheres. The only planet of interest is Faulkner.

The system is patrolled by several Osiris hunters and the D-class military science vessel *The Marionette* is stationed in the orbit around Faulkner.

Faulkner

Assets: n/a

Atmosphere: Suffocating

Climate: -50/-120

Factions: GIC

Fauna: Rippers and fossilized reptiles and mammals of unknown (not from Old Earth) origin.

Gravity: 1.2

Light/Dark: 12h/2d

Moon(s): Lenot

Circumference: 23 500 km

Population: 0

Structure: -

Terrain: Rock formation of shifting quality, caverns, chasms, underground cave systems and traces of fossilized plant life of unknown origin.

Year: 21

Information: The planet was discovered 315 IT. In 404 IT, a survey shuttle belonging to the SES mining ship the Talon set down on the surface. The GIC believe that the injury reported by one of the crew members, that he claimed he had suffered in a fall while exploring the planet, was indeed caused by a burrower. Affected by the creature, he went back to the ship where, later, the Ripper was born. In all likelihood it was a queen and it laid its eggs and the emerging burrowers infected the rest of the crew. This is what brought the Rippers back.

Faulkner suffered from a meteor shower several hundred thousand years ago, but it fared better than the other planets in the system. Still, the damage was severe and it also created several highly radioactive areas. There is some evidence that points to the Rippers being a mutation of several indigenous animals. However, a clear consensus of this theory has never been met among the scientists on site. Those who adhere to the theory of mutation believe that the radiation created the Rippers by changing the genetic structure over several generations in one of the indigenous predators. Over time, the animal became what humanity now call Rippers, and they killed off every large animal on the planet.

Those who believe differently say that Rippers are known to change genetically each generation, imbuing themselves with the genetic material of their most resent host. The traces of mutation they have found are in fact a sign of this and not as a result of a mutation caused by radiation. The creatures actually came from somewhere else, arriving with the meteor shower. It is hard to prove either theory, as Rippers seem to be virtually immune to radiation in their current form and any damage from it to their DNA is hard to ascertain.

Things are bound to go wrong when researching Rippers.



The GIC has not set up any buildings or outposts on the surface. There are thousands of Rippers in multibiosis beneath the ground, so setting up shop on the surface would be insane. Instead, they gather samples when they need and return them to the Marionette where they conduct their research.

The scientific team has found eight fossilized genetically distinct fragments on Faulkner. Three belong to different alien plants, two belongs to different alien animals (one a reptile and one a mammal, best classification available at least), and the remaining three belong to three different types of never before seen Rippers which seem to have used both animal types as hosts. The samples are approximately two hundred thousand years old. As of yet, the scientists have not been able to genetically reconstruct any of the material fully and clone it. The living Rippers on the surface have what the scientists call "neutral Ripper DNA", very similar to the ones the GIC Marines are combating but without any trace of human DNA. Whatever creature they used as hosts, the scientific team has not found any traces of its DNA on the planet, making it impossible to run a comparison. This is (at least for the scientists who support this theory) another sign that points to the Rippers coming from elsewhere and infesting the planet.

The Marionette has a crew of one thousand five hundred. A large portion is military personnel. They have several Marine squads and scouts as these are at times necessary to use when they have to explore new areas on the surface or obtain specimens from dangerous areas. This operation is on a need to know basis and only key members of the GIC hierarchy (including the Chairman) are aware of the operation. The screening and security surrounding personnel and the system is rigorous, the GIC will give ships two warnings, and if they do not comply with whatever order they have been given they are blown out of the black.

Millius

Assets: n/a

Atmosphere: Corrosive

Climate: +90/-60

Factions: -

Fauna: -

Gravity: 0

Light/Dark: 12h/2d

Moon(s): Vak, Xerlo

Circumference: 5 000

Population: 0

Structure: -

Terrain: Gneiss rock

Year: 6

Information: The GIC scanned this planet and sent down an excursion team but they have found nothing. They had hoped to find additional traces of the Rippers. However, here they didn't even find enough resources to warrant setting up a mining operation.

Sekado

Assets: Belinium, tungsten, helium-3, iron, osmium, led, tin.

Atmosphere: Toxic

Climate: +10/-80

Factions: GIC

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.1

Light/Dark: 4h/36h

Moon(s): Blythe 2

Circumference: 8 500 km

Population: 2000

Structure: Mobile mining colony.

Terrain: Dacite rock ridges, chasms and ravines.

Year: 5

Information: Sekado is packed with resources and GIC has sat down four MMOs. They have found no signs of Rippers or artifacts here and most resources are sent to Faulkner and used in the research. The miners that work here have no idea of what is going on when it comes to Faulkner and they have also signed a NDA. CIM and MEC have managed to place some of their people on this planet but they have not been able to get to Faulkner or the Marionette yet as the screening of personnel is so intense and thorough.

Za'keth

"Za...what? Never heard of it...sounds made up..."

- Eddy Korma, unemployed self-proclaimed explorer.

This system only has one planet: Terus 8. Za'keth was discovered quite recently, in 494 IT. It was discovered by the RMD (Resource Management Division) but after only a short survey operation on Terus 8, they found strong biometallic signatures. The readings were very odd and did not conform to any biometallic signatures they had on file. According to GIC protocol, they left the planet and informed DoX I (Department of Xenarcheology). After several weeks, they were informed to leave.

Terus 8

Assets: Belinium and substantial salvage.

Atmosphere: Thin

Climate: +5/+10, rain and storms due to terraforming in progress.

Factions: -

Fauna: -

Gravity: 1.0

Light/Dark: 4h/ 40h

Moon(s): None

Circumference: 17 500

Population: -

Structure: Destroyed mining colony

Terrain: Dunite mountains mixed with komatiite formations.

Year: 6



Surveillance footage from the Lerion colony several months before it went dark.

Information: The information regarding the existence of the system and the planet was kept secret. In a joint clandestine operation orchestrated by top ranking ISA, MSU and DoX I, they elected to set up a dummy mining operation. Their intent was to test how this new bioenergy would affect humans. It took several years before the plan was made reality, but the Lerion colony was set up in 498 IT. All the workers signed a confidentiality clause, nothing uncommon as many of the GIC mining systems are kept off the map. None of the mining crew were aware of the fact that they were part of an experiment. The GIC people behind the experiment (more or less a rogue and secret faction composed of several high ranking GIC members, referring to themselves as *The Accord*) saw it as an interesting opportunity to study the influence of a possibly VPS inducing energy on a real live crew. As the system was so far away from any established worlds, there was little chance that the “wrong” people would swing by and aide the miners if anything went wrong. They also prepared a protocol for a rescue operation. This was set in place so they could be involved from the get go when and if a VPS outbreak occurred. The Accord wished to learn of a way to use VPS as a directed weapon, so this experiment would provide them with additional information. Early 500 IT, the Lerion colony sent a distress call and the prepared protocol was initiated. It was spearheaded by a brilliant and deeply religious woman The Accord had manipulated by using her religion. Her name was Dr Seeley Fujiko and she was sent along on the D-class mining ship the Kagetsu (see *Lost Redemption* in the core book).

In secret, The Accord had streamed all information from Lerion and the Kagetsu, collating data. As they learned of the shards, their interest was piqued. However, after the disaster (see *Lost Redemption*) an illegal salvage crew boarded what was left of the Kagetsu and the shards were lost (see *Darker than Most* in the free quickguide). The Accord is now searching for survivors and more leads regarding these “shards”. There is nothing but radioactive rubble left of the Lerion colony and basically no evidence of what happened remains. No one in the Accord knows

how the information of the existence regarding Lerion leaked out. It might be that one of the survivors in hiding has spread the word, or maybe even someone in The Accord had a brief moment of regret... Needless to say, The Accord is working hard to find out how it happened.

New Hardware

Orbital Delivery System (ODS)

These are in orbit around the planet and connected to a mine located in an actual station, moon or other stellar. The harvested or mined material is loaded into a large pod which in turn is placed in a large rail catapult. The catapult has the capacity to propel a pod weighing 10 000 tons. The payload is fired when aligned to a deposit station on the planetary surface. These are located far away from any cities or settlements and are located underground. They are basically large shafts lined with electromagnets. The pod has small thrusters which will adjust the trajectory if needed. The magnetic lining will slow the pod as it enters the shaft, bringing it to a full stop after only 300 meters. At the bottom of the shaft lies a refinery, depository or transport tram (whatever is fitting for the delivered material). There are also reversed systems (same abbreviation) which fire a payload from the planet up into orbit.

Collective SAC (CSAC)

The collective SAC is a system used to provide food, water and air to several smaller facilities using a single SAC. The CSAC is a facility unto itself and managed by fifty or so environmental engineers who live on site. Water and air are pumped into the different facilities using pipelines while food shipments are sent using a high-speed tram system which has the capacity to propel the trains at a velocity of 1000 km/h.

Hostile Environment Suit (HES)

This suit can be hooked up to an air tank and works as a space suit in most regards. However, the suit is extremely resistant to most environmental hazards. The HES can be worn as a standalone suit or over a COG. Count it as having all shields to the third level, an AR (shock) of 2 and a durability of 40. It also features an internal sealant system. However, the suit is bulky and imposes a -2 to all relevant Quickness rolls and rolls involving finger dexterity or stealth. It also halves the movement of the user and imposes a -1 to all attacks rolls. The bulk of the suit also makes the user an easier target and gives all attackers a +1. It of course comes with a built in flashlight, helmet cam and mag-boots.

Cost: 1000

Mobile Mining Operation (MMO)

Type: Mining vehicle

Length, Width, Height: 500m, 200m, 120m

Description: These are the largest land vehicles in existence. They are often used at the inception of a mining colony as the vehicle can be secured to a site and used as the center of a new colony. It contains an internal coreanium reactor, the back-end holds a micro SAC which can support up to 500 people and it also has a belinium power plant and solar array.

The MMO has two modes: Mobile and Deployed. When mobile, it looks and moves like a huge hulking slow truck on massive tank treads. When it is deployed the width increases by 180 meters as the side panels slowly folds out and are turned into vehicle staging platforms, mechanical bay and ore storage units. It takes about three minutes for it to fully deploy and about 15 minutes in total for it to be completely ready and secured after the crew has made the necessary adjustments and calibrations. It requires about five engineers and fifteen crewmen (miners) to safely and speedily deploy it. When deployed, the MMO looks very much like a small mining settlement with the tank threads hidden away, three landing pads on top and the mini ore refinery working at full capacity.

The living quarters very much resemble that of a ship with smaller berths, a canteen and a gym. It, of course, has a medbay that can take up to 30 people.

Speed: 80 km/h

Acceleration: -4

Handling: -3

Scanners

Bio Scanner: -

Energy Scanner: +2

Environmental Scanner:

LIDAR:

Signal Scanner: +2

Targeting:

AR: 6

DHL

Immune: A,B,C

Vulnerable: D*

At Risk: E

Spec:

Cost: 4,000,000

Probes

These are unmanned and very small vessels. There are two types of probes: Static and Dynamic. Static probes only have the most rudimentary guidance and brake thrusters. They can be sent into an area in space or be launched down onto a planetary surface, using guide thrusters to tweak the approach vector in order to hit its coordinates. If the ship that launched them wants them back, they have to physically retrieve them. In most cases, this is never done as they are often severely damaged after landing. Static probes are used to take readings and samples within a couple of kilometers from where they land. These probes are cheap but very useful.

Dynamic probes are larger and have internal capacitance engines. They can be programmed to follow a certain protocol or be remotely controlled. They are used to scan in the same way as the static probes but they have the capacity to collect samples and maneuver. They can collect and carry hundred kilos worth of materials and they have ten different slots if there is a need to keep samples separated. They come with several robotic arms which have drills, grapplers and fusion cutters attached. These drones are of course more expensive.

Probes are vital when surveying new planets, abandoned ships and the like. Probes are fired from a probe bay. A probe bay is standard in all mining and military ships of C-class and upward. The bay uses a magnetic rail to accelerate the probe and fire it towards its destination. It travels at a speed of 2000 kilometers per hour. This means that while in space (or on a planet if calculating the trajectory) the probe can travel very far before there is a need to activate its thrusters, saving on energy. If you do not have a probe bay you simply push it out of an airlock. If a planet has any kind of atmosphere, drones seldom have the power to penetrate it and gets stuck in orbit.

Dynamic Probe

Type: Mining vehicle

Length, Width, Height: 1.5m, 0.5m, 1m

Description: This is a streamlined cone shaped machine; the thick end is in the front and is the placement of the tools and robotic arms. It has four robotic arms. Two are for grappling while the other two are designed to sport tools which can be changed during a mission. The standard tools a probe has are the following: fusion cutter, plasma torch, plasma drill, plasma saw, bolt gun, grappling gun and isotope marker. Beyond this, it has virtually all tools needed for smaller repair jobs remotely (same array as an engineering belt and a diagnostic screen, page 230 C&D core book). The robotic arms can be used to repair most things remotely; however, the user gets a -2 to all rolls dealing with more delicate operations.



Dynamic probe performing a surface scan on unknown planet.

The probe can be remotely controlled or set to perform simple tasks such as taking samples from certain materials. It is also possible to route a VIN through it, allowing the VIN to relay more complex human instructions to the probe, basically making it independent as long as the signal comes through. A probe can lift approximately two hundred and fifty kilos with its arms.

Speed: 100 km/h
Acceleration:
Handling:
Scanners
Bio Scanner:
Energy Scanner:
Environmental Scanner:
LIDAR:
Signal Scanner:
Mineral Scanner:
Targeting:
AR: 3
DHL
Immune: *A
Vulnerable: B, *C
At Risk: D, E
PNR: 4 000 km
Spec:
Cost: 5 000

Static Probe

Type: Mining vehicle

Length, Width, Height: 0.5m, 0.5m, 0.5m

Description: This probe is spherical and has thrusters which only allow it to adjust its decent and dampen its fall some. As it lands, the exterior is basically smashed and deformed but all the scanners are intact. Upon impact, it shoots out twenty miniature mineral scanners that travel about two hundred meters and takes a snapshot of the minerals in the area, sending the information to the probe before they go inactive. The probe then relays this information to the controller.

Speed: -

Acceleration:

Handling:

Scanners

Bio Scanner:

Energy Scanner:

Environmental Scanner:

LIDAR:

Signal Scanner:

Mineral Scanner:

Targeting:

AR: 3

DHL

Immune: *A

Vulnerable: B, *C

At Risk: D, E

PNR: The scanner has a battery life of 48 hours but if there is adequate sunlight (at least eight hours of clear sunlight per 24 hours) it can send indefinitely.

Spec:

Cost: 1 000 (it costs 500 to repair and reload a static probe).

RAW (Reactive Autonomous Walker)

Some years ago, the GIC experimented with robotics and came up with the RAW. The RAW is a rather small, four legged robot (the size of a medium sized dog). It is basically a moving sentry gun. It is armed with a miniature chain gun (basically a carbine with a five hundred round drum magazine) and six miniature rockets. The project was shelved as they were too unreliable. There are still some active walkers in abandoned bases. The RAW unit is very nimble and they are capable jumpers and climbers. They are completely autonomous, capable of repairing each other and restock on munitions and power in their assigned stations, or from other nearby power sources. The robots can run continuously for twelve hours on a belinium cell and it only takes an hour for them to recharge. There is no fail safe any longer and they attack everything in sight except each other. They target biological creatures (by identifying bioelectric signatures) and everything that is perceived as a threat (they have an extensive databank which identifies vehicles, explosives and such). They are also capable of interfacing with computer systems, performing simple tasks and breaches. Even though it is a vehicle, they are described partly as a creature as it is easier for this type of robotic entity. In lieu of Brains, they use Reaction.



RAW

Reactive Autonomous Walker

Attention: 4

Brawn: 2

Quickness: 4

Reaction: 3

Defense: 3

HP: 20

AR: 4

Movement: 25

Abilities: Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Computer 2, Repairs 2, Scanners 2, Search 2, Shooting 2, Stealth 2

Attacks: Chain Gun 6/2 (armor piercing, 100 m), miniature rockets 1-2m (8+1D) 3-4m (4+1D) 5m (2+1D) 6m (1D) (range 200 meters).

Special: They have small grappling arms which they use for repairs and such and they also have access to average tools and a fusion cutter (which they can use to attack when they have to). Two RAWs can collaborate and actually reload a stationary sentry gun if programmed to. They have several scanners such as motion trackers,

LIDAR, bio-scanners and such. They can jump four meters long and two meters high. And they have electromagnetic tipped legs.

Cost: Out of commission.

Sentry Gun

These are basically automated powerful carbines. They are set on a tripod and shoot automatically at targets with a predisposed profile. They have a drum magazine of 500 hundred and stand on a tripod. They can be set to scan an arc and are capable of scanning 360 degrees if so configured. The most common and most unforgiving sentry configuration has them shooting on anything that moves and has a certain size. Others use a specific bracelet for friendlies which allows the gun to identify them as such, holding their fire. They have a scan range of three hundred meters. They come in a large suitcase and weigh about fifteen kilos, standing one meter off the ground when set up. They can also be used from the

control terminal manually and the operator can see what they see through their camera system. They have an active battery life of twenty four hours while moving, a week if fixed and scanning passively (can cover 90 degrees in this mode). On installations they are hooked up to the local power supply.

Attention: 7

HP: 15

AR: 4

Attacks: Carbine 7/2 (armor piercing).

Cost: 4000

Organizations

Charka & Dictors

While mainly limited to the space station the Slate in Blackwind, these two organizations are still quite powerful. The Slate is important and the Chakra and the Dictors have their hands in a lot of pockets. What keeps them from expanding and controlling is each other. Each organization competes against the other with no end or resolution in site. They have eyes and ears on most other planets as well but both have their base of operations on the Slate. Though they only have about one hundred active members each, their influence of this vital junction in the system allows them to bargain with giants such as the Stark Dogs and Dark Suns in the area. These two organizations find it quite convenient that another group grease the administrative wheels and keep the GIC out of their business.

The Charka is ruled by Annette Ju Niam, a ruthless and fiercely intelligent young woman who took over after her father, Alex Ju Niam, was shot to death four years ago in a shootout with LED. Dictors are ruled by Hector Livingston. He has been at the helm for over a decade. He believed that the death of Alex would lead to the weakening of Charka, but to his distress it actually led to the expansion of the gang. Annette is fearless and much more unpredictable than her father and seems to have her eyes set on spreading her influence beyond the Slate and even beyond the system of Blackwind. When it comes to methodology, both behave as one would expect of drug dealing, robbing and pimping street gangs led by highly intelligent sociopaths.

Street Soldier

Attention: 2

Brains: 2

Brawn: 3

Clout: 2

Cool: 3

Gut Feeling: 2

Quickness: 3

Reaction: 3

Defense: 2

HP: 12

AR: 2 (Absorption Fibers)

Movement: 23

Abilities: Athletics 1, Close Combat 3, Driving 1, Fringewise 4, Search 2, Security 1, Shooting 2, Stealth 1

Attacks: GIC SOP MR: 4/2, Combat Knife: 3/2

Special:

Dark Suns

"Hey, everything is worth something to someone. So most things are worth stealing..."

-Trinity Ignacio, Dark Sun breach master.

The Dark Suns is the largest raider group in the Sirius galaxy. They are estimated to be two thousand men strong and march to the tune of Don Azita "The Cutlass" Tanaz. Her ship, the *Anne Bonny*, is feared. It is a unique specially designed catamaran built out of two Osiris hunters. Rumors have it that Don Tanaz actually carries a specially designed nano sword made out in a cutlass model, hence her nickname. This has also led many to believe that she used to be a kiru, but no one knows.

The Dark Suns are very influential within the Pirate's Guild due to their numbers, ruthlessness and capacity to generate earnings. *The Cutlass* is on the GIC top ten list of the most wanted in the entire galaxy and she has a bounty on her head worth 4.5 million credits.



Alleged image of "The Cutlass".

Her true appearance and origin (or even true name) have never been corroborated by anyone outside The Dark Suns and some even believe that she is a bogymen of sorts, a name made immortal. The *Anne Bonny* is real enough. It glides through space, painted jet-black and when she strikes the nano color coat changes, sporting a dark blue sun flaming with white on the nose, front and belly of the ship.

Don Azita "The Cutlass" Tanaz

Attention: 5

Brains: 4

Brawn: 4

Clout: 4

Cool: 4

Gut Feeling: 4

Quickness: 4

Reaction: 5

Defense: 3

HP: 18

AR: 6 (Shock Armor COG)

Movement: 24

Abilities: Administration 1, Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Driving 2, Explosives 1, Fast Talk 4, Fringewise 5, First Aid 3, GLC 2, Interrogation 3, Navigation 3, Politics 2, Piloting 4, Repairs 2, Scanners 2, Search 3, Security 2, Shooting 4, Stealth 3, Strategy 4, Xenoarcheology 1.

Attacks: Custom Platina plated 8 shooter revolver: 6/3, Cutlass Nano-Blade: 5/3, Spreadshift AC .50: 8/2

Special: She is counted as being able to use a nano-blade, she has the *Tough as Hell* feature, all the raider features with a +1 no botch to Close Combat and Strategy. She also has 3 save points to spend each story. Who she is and what she looks like is up to you... If she exists that is. If not, you have no use for these stats...

Dark Sun Corsair

Attention: 3

Brains: 2

Brawn: 3

Clout: 2

Cool: 3

Gut Feeling: 2

Quickness: 3

Reaction: 3

Defense: 2

HP: 15

AR: 3 (shock armor COG)

Movement: 23

Abilities: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Driving 2, Explosives 2, Fast Talk 1, Fringewise 4, GLC 2, Navigation 2, Piloting 3, Repairs 1, Scanners 1, Search 2, Security 2, Stealth 2.

Attacks: Merko L45: 4/2, Spreadshift AC .50: 8/2, Saber: 5/2



Phalanx of Tenebrous Legio

Phalanx of Tenebrous

"Drach aakh'azeth, toormakh la shell!"

- Tenebrous legio commander

These horrid biomechanical entities are part human, part biometal and part technology. They are built around a human torso but the rest of them are mostly mechanical. They look bizarre. Flesh carelessly and brutally fused with the machine. Flayed skin and exposed viscera that is unaffected by infections and pain.

Legio

This is their most common soldier. Their left arm is replaced with a powerful claw combined with a rail-plasma canon. The technology that powers them and their weaponry will be unfathomable and impossible for humans to understand or reverse engineer at this stage. They communicate using an aggressive sounding unknown language and electrical shrieks yet they can still understand and speak human languages as well. They usually stand a head taller than a large human man. They do not have a hive mind yet they have no real personality of their own, adhering to orders coming from a source that at the moment is unknown. They are fearless and impervious to pain. They are after all machines.

Attention: 3

Brains: 2

Brawn: 6

Clout: 3 (intimidation/interrogation)

Cool: 2

Gut Feeling: 3

Quickness: 2

Reaction: 2

Defense: 1

HP: 20

AR: 5

Movement: 25

Abilities: Athletics 1, Close Combat 2, Computers 1, Interrogation 2, Piloting 1, Repairs 2, Scanners 2, Search 2, Shooting 3, Stealth 2.

Attacks: Plasma rail gun: 7/2, Claw: 5/2

Special: They have access to virtually every scanner and vision mode as it is built into their bodies. They can jump almost five meters straight up and can fall from ten meters without being damaged as long as they land on their feet.

Stark Dogs

"Conflict is the engine which drives progress."

- Gunam Hynes, Stark Dog warhound.

Stark Dogs is one of the most feared legionnaire groups around. They are estimated to be five thousand men strong and sway a lot of power within the Lego Guild. The Stark Dogs have been around for about thirty years and they are highly organized and disciplined. Their leader is warchief Senji Dragilis, a brilliant strategist and warrior.

Stark Dogs work for just about anyone that can pay but they do not take on jobs that involve pure slaughter. If someone wants to kill a bunch of settlers, the Stark Dogs would not sign up no matter the pay. They like a challenge as they are indeed warriors, but they do not care if they work for corporations, the GIC, CIM, MEC or a rich private party. They enjoy a status of equilibrium. In a way, every large organization has a reason to hate them as they have been used against them by the competition, but those who do hate them also have a high regard for them as they themselves have used them against the very same competition. No one really wants to attack them as having this entire organization hunting them down is not an appealing thought.

Usually, they work in four to twelve man squads and they are highly recognizable as they wear a carbine wielding anthropomorphic Doberman with a cigar between its teeth on the chest of their COGs and armor. Most also sport this tattoo on the outside of their upper right arm. They are comprised of everything from ex Marines, fleet officers, lifetime legionaries to the odd kiru and engineer with a flair for explosives and combat. They are a semi-legal organization and, as of yet, the GIC has not issued any warrants as they have never been able to identify a single individual working against the GIC itself. It is said that warchief Dragilis operates out of *The Bristle Back*, a Titan heavy war carrier. This has however never been substantiated, nor if they even have access to such a powerful ship.

Warchief Senji Dragilis

Dragilis is an enormous man in his late forties. He is all muscle, sporting the physique of a body builder. It is believed that he has undergone some experimental

genetic alteration giving him a strength, endurance and size beyond a mere human. He wears all his scars proudly as they web his dark weather-beaten skin. He is part Asian, part Latino and part Scandinavian. He keeps his thick salt and pepper hair in a closely cropped mohawk and has a tendency to fix those he speaks to with his Siberian Huskey pale blue eyes. Dragilis is quick to laugh and likes a good party. He is a fair leader but make no mistake. He lives for the battle and is a ruthless warrior with hundreds of confirmed kills and more than thirty years of combat experience behind him.

Attention: 3

Brains: 5

Brawn: 6 (+1)

Clout: 3

Cool: 5

Gut Feeling: 4

Quickness: 3

Reaction: 4

Defense: 1

HP: 23 (+7)

AR: 10 (Shock, EES)

Movement: 20

Abilities: Administration 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 5, Fringewise 3, Interrogation 2, Know-How (survival) 4, Navigation 2, Politics 4, Piloting 3, Repairs 2, Rhetoric 3, Scanners 2, Search 3, Shooting 5, Stealth 2, Strategy 5.

Attacks: HAC: 9/4, Combat Knife: 3/2, Grenades

Special: He has all the Legionnaire bonus features as well as *Tough as Hell* and can't botch Strategy rolls. He has access to three save points per story and often uses stims reflected in the parentheses.

Stark Dog Warhound

Attention: 3

Brains: 2

Brawn: 4 (+1)

Clout: 1

Cool: 3

Gut Feeling: 4

Quickness: 2

Reaction: 2

Defense: 1

HP: 18 (+7)

AR: 6 (Shock, EES)

Movement: 22

Abilities: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Driving 2, Explosives 1, Fringewise 1, First Aid2, Know-How (survival) 2, Navigation 2, Piloting 1, Scanners 2, Search 3, Shooting 4, Strategy 3.

Attacks: Heavy carbines, heavy pistols, heavy...everything that can hurt people. Oh, and lots of grenades...

Special: They are often hopped up on stims, reflected in the parentheses.



Stepping into a nest of burrowing centipedes will not end well...

Zendo Tribe

Below you will get the stats of an average Zendo tribesman.

Attention: 4

Brains: 2

Brawn: 4

Clout: 2

Cool: 2

Gut Feeling: 5

Quickness: 3

Reaction: 3

Defense: 2

HP: 16

AR: 1 (bone and leather armor)

Movement: 23

Abilities: Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, First Aid (primitive) 2, Know-How (tracking, survival, traps) 3, Navigation 3, Repairs (crafts) 2, Search 4, Shooting 3, Stealth 4, Strategy 2.

Attacks: Combat Axe: 5/2, Bow 5/1, Spear 3/2 (have access to SHADs and SSDs if needed).

Special:

Thajala Badlands NPAs

The Badlands are filled with all manner of mutated creatures and humans. However, there is no real need to spawn a long list of stat blocks for these. With the NPAs and creatures listed in the core book and in this supplement, you will be able to create whatever you need from raiders to dangerous mutants. It is all about cosmetics and a few tweaks. The stats of the Zendo tribesmen can be used to emulate rabid cannibalistic

badlands raiders with filed down teeth. Sewer dwelling packs of frothing mutants might spill forth at night; use the stats for gnawers. Do you want a four legged slimy beast with a corrosive tongue? Use the base stats for an ice wolf but allow them to have a tongue that they can use to perform gripping attacks from a distance with. Add to this that the tongue causes Mild corrosive damage every third second. Slap some slime and ripped skin on it and you are all done. As you see, it is very easy to create all manner of critters and foes with what you already have.

Fauna

Giant Burrowing Centipede

Like many animals in the C&D universe, this is not a deliberate genetic creation, but rather it has in all likelihood been created as a result of ingesting other genetically changed animals during generations. No one has been able to study their reproductive cycle and most specimens that have been encountered have been fully grown. This creature looks very much as the description suggests, like a giant centipede. It usually ranges between four to six meter in length and its jointed black glistening body is as thick as a powerful boa constrictor. It has no poison or any subtle means of subjugating its prey. Powerful serrated mandibles, brute force and speed are the tools it uses. It is capable of burrowing extremely fast through sand and earth and it crawls equally fast above ground. It hunts thorough sight and vibrations. It has the ability to wrap itself around it prey and constrict them while chewing into them. When the prey is dead or otherwise

rendered motionless it begins with chewing into the soft areas such as large muscle groups or the abdominal cavity. It eats everything but the bones. It prefers to capture and consume mammals and it is highly aggressive. There have been some cases where these creatures have stowed away on ships and attacked the crew mid-flight.

Attention: 2

Brains: n/a

Brawn: 4-6 (depending on size)

Clout: n/a

Cool: n/a

Gut Feeling: 2

Quickness: 4

Reaction: 2

Defense: 1

HP: 20

AR: 2 (carapace, the belly is without armor though)

Movement: 20

Abilities: Athletics 3, Close Combat 2, Search 3, Stealth 3

Attacks: Mandibles 5/2

Special: If it has successfully bitten an individual, it can chose to wrap itself around them the next turn, still clambering on with its mandible. It has to succeed with contested test: Quickness + Close Combat roll vs its victims Quickness + Athletics. If it succeeds, the victim is caught. The victim can try to break free using his Brawn/Quickness + Close Combat to escape the grapple. It is a simple contested test, done every segment. If the constricted party wins, he is free. However, for every additional attempt he gets -2 on his rolls to break free. If reduced to zero dice, he is rendered unconscious and the centipede can have its way with him. Armor has no effect on constriction.

Gnawers

These mutated simian animals are clever, predatory and very aggressive. Luckily they are indigenous to Peldios (for now). Gnawers are blind and hunt by smell and echolocation. Clicks and shrieks are used to navigate and communicate. Their short slim frames (150 cm tall, 40 kilos) hide their physical prowess. Gnawers are extremely fast and run hunched down, alternating between hind legs and all fours. They live in packs and hunt in packs. They are also quick studies and seem to understand that armed humans pose a threat from afar and that they need to be lured and taken out up close. When not hunting humans, they hunt other animals and eat anything from fish to larger herbivores. However, they seem very keen on human flesh. Their sickly grey skin, thin clawed limbs, piranha like translucent teeth and milky atrophied eyes make out a horrifying visage indeed.

Attention: 4

Brains: 1

Brawn: 3

Clout: n/a

Cool: 2

Gut Feeling: 3

Quickness: 4

Reaction: 3

Defense: 3

HP: 15

AR:

Movement: 30

Abilities: Athletics 4, Close Combat 2, Search 4, Stealth 5

Attacks: Bite 3/1, Claws 2/1, Pounce

Hybrid Blood Moray

No one knows how this monstrosity came to be, in all likelihood this species fed off hybrid fish for generations which led to a severe genetic aberration. The blood moray looks like a very large moray eel but it is generally larger. It also has large wing-like fins it can extend, running from its head nearly to the tip of the tail. They usually clock in at six meters in length weighing 200 kilos of pure muscle. These creatures have highly oxygenated lungs and are amphibious. They can stay under water for twenty minutes and fare as well in as out of water. They are aggressive, carnivorous and predatory. When in water, they strike like a crocodile with a follow up akin to an anaconda. They bite their prey and pull them down into the water, spinning them violently after which they wrap themselves around the body of their food and constrict while drowning them. While on land, they usually attack from the trees (they are very good climbers). When attacking from the trees, they flip out their wide fins, which allow them to descend slower with some control over their aim. The blood moray then bite, wrap themselves around the victim and bite them repeatedly using their powerful pharyngeal jaws (second set of jaws) until the victim is dead. After that, they devour their prey by tearing chunks of meat from them, leaving nothing but bone. Their ability to change their skin tone to match their surroundings and move quietly makes them very dangerous. When they want to threaten another creature, they erect their body almost three meters off the ground, flipping out their fins, hissing loudly. They are solitary hunters and the females lay ten eggs a year in the water. They hatch after a month and grow to full size within a year. No one knows how old they can grow but the oldest they found was seventy five years old.

Attention: 3

Brains: 1

Brawn: 7

Clout: n/a

Cool: 2

Gut Feeling: 3

Quickness: 4

Reaction: 6

Defense: 2

HP: 30

AR:

Movement: 20

Abilities: Athletics 3, Close Combat 1, Search 2, Stealth 2

Attacks: Bite 5/2, Pounce (if attacking coiled in the water or in a tree).

Spec: When camouflaged and in hiding anyone trying to spot it gets a -3 to the roll. It is also capable of constricting its victim, see giant burrowing centipede above for rules.

Hybrid Fish

This genetically engineered fish is about the size of a northern pike and quite similar in appearance. They are very nutritious and beyond that they have been designed to eat a type of oxy-agley and plankton. When they do, they generate an abundance of oxygen which they vent out. This aids with terraforming. They are highly adaptable and can survive in low oxygen waters, on land (they actually have lungs as well), in cold water, in warm water and in salt as well as fresh water. Hybrid fish are very adept at hunting, if algae and plankton runs low, and eat smaller fish and frogs.

Flesh Dwellers

The flesh dwellers are thin hooked worms which are no longer than one centimeter long when fully grown. They reside under the skin to begin with but will eventually infest every part of the body, thus killing the host. The larvae (invisible to the naked eye) of this parasite live in the proboscis of the red bottomed mosquito, in fresh water and in the blood of infected mammals. In areas where the flesh dwellers are present about 10% of all mosquitos and 20% of all open natural fresh water (especially standstills) are infected. Boiling or nano-filtering the water is a good way to get rid of the parasite, as is thoroughly boiling or grilling the meat. It is lucky that the red bottomed mosquito only lives deep in the jungle near a special type of tree which is necessary for its reproduction (lays its eggs in the sap of the pined branched slope palm) as this helps contain most cases of the parasite to these uninhabited region.

If someone drinks from infected water or is bitten by an infected mosquito (or ingests blood or raw/bloody meat of an infected animal), they themselves become infected. One day after the introduction of the parasite into the system, the infected individual gets some rashes on their skin and they itch slightly. On day two, the itch is unbearable and the individual might scratch holes, just small ones (like when being overzealous in scratching a mosquito bite). The infected person also grows warm and will bathe in cool water if given the chance and feel much better afterwards. On the third day, they will run a fever and the rash is worsened (-2 to all actions). The small holes the individual has scratched opened have now grown and pus is running. Now they can feel things moving inside their body, under their skin as the parasite is fully grown. They are also running a fever and will do everything they can to submerge themselves in water. As soon as an infected person hits the water, many of the worms poke their rears out and deposit larvae in the water, infecting it. All mosquitos that bite the infected will be carriers of the larvae. On the fourth day of infection, the victim can hardly walk and has trouble breathing as the lungs are becoming infested. The skin is bloody, running with puss and bulging with worms. At this point, one can actually cough up blood and the odd flesh dweller. A day or two later, the victim is bedridden and he is growing blind as the worms have eaten their way into the eyes. Soon after this,

he will become delirious as the brain is invaded, hours later the victim is dead. Luckily enough the parasite can be driven out of the body with a special drug treatment which is administered through a drip for about a week. The person has to begin treatment before the eyes have been reached, or he is a goner. There is a special brew one can make out in the jungle which is comprised of a rare root and the leaves of a specific bush. This brew halts the infestation somewhat, stalling it one to three days. It can be a lifesaver if caught out in the thick.

Mineral Leech

Leech is a misleading name as these animals are in fact arachnids. It is believed that these large spiders were developed as a weapon by the GIC a very long time ago, escaped and became part of the fauna. Their metabolism is very peculiar as they feed off minerals and metals. In essence, they function as a type of battery. Their corrosive stomach fluids break down the materials and produce electrical energy which sustains them. They only need water (or acid) to sustain their digestive system. They use a combination of their powerful mandibles and a secretion of acid to partially break down the metal before they ingest it. The mineral leech generally does not attack living creatures if not provoked or threatened. If someone attacks them or gets in the way when they feed, that individual will surely be attacked. These animals are similar to the Japanese giant spider crabs in appearance and size. Some are quite large while others are somewhat smaller, the males are generally larger than the females. They also sport two powerful claws and are capable of clinging to and climbing on most surfaces as spiders and insects do. While on a planet, they are quite harmless but there has been an increase of these animals on ships which is a spacefarers nightmare. The GIC (denying having anything to do with their creation of course) fear that they are spreading across the galaxy. Imagine being far out in the black with twenty of these eating through the hull. These beings can survive indefinitely in vacuum and whiteout air as long as they feed on metal (and fluids) as the metabolic process keeps them heated. It is unclear but it is believed that the creature is capable of breathing air as well as a verity of gases which are produced in the chemical reaction of their metabolic process. They are capable jumpers, fast and combined with their corrosive powerful bite, they can be quite dangerous. In most cases, they live in groups ranging from four to twelve. The female lays her eggs once a year. She produces about one hundred eggs clustered together. They look like golf ball sized chromed ovals with a rough surface. It takes a leech several hours to eat through a ship hull. Even if they are eating metal on other places on the ship, it is very dangerous as they will eat through cables, circuit boards and everything that is in their way. They expel a rust-like sludge as excrement and the hint of the smell of sulfuric acid. If you see hints of them on your ship you better find the stowaways and clear them out.

Attention: 2
Brains: n/a
Brawn: 1-2 (depending on size).
Clout: n/a
Cool: n/a
Gut Feeling: n/a
Quickness: 4
Reaction: 2
Defense: 2
HP: 6-12 (depending on size)
AR: 1
Movement: 20

Abilities: Athletics 2, Close Combat 1, Search 2, Stealth 2.
Attacks: Corrosive bite 3/1 (cause 1 point of corrosive damage one turn after the initial bite), Claws 2/2
Special: When they attack in droves they are capable of tearing off armors and COGs given time.

Ravaging Leech

These nasty critters are about ten centimeters long and they lie dormant for months in large clusters, ranging from twenty to eighty animals. They hibernate under the ground. When a suitable mammal (no smaller than a medium dog, if the leeches are not desperate) walks over them they burst through the ground propelled by methane gas they have siphoned and now release from their bodies very quickly in a coordinated effort. They cling to whatever warm blooded animal they land on in this explosion, attacking it. For a short period of time (about a minute), they are very fast and lively if in very close proximity (no further than one meter from the prey). They use small hooked barbs on their body to latch on and crawl if necessary while they spew forth a highly corrosive and muscle spasm inducing poison. This serves as a way to slow the prey down as well as to melt off skin so they can reach blood. It takes them about one turn to burn through clothing, two to burn through armor/COG which is not equipped with a corrosive shield and one to burn through skin. When they reach the actual blood and tissues beneath the skin, they latch on with a scolex and suck blood. Those who fall to the ground missing the prey die. Those who drink their fill crawl away, bury themselves, lay their eggs in the earth and die. The eggs hatch after about four weeks. A new cluster is born. They stay there, eating insects for months in order to build up enough methane to burst forth when a suiting mammal walks by and the cycle begins again.

Every ten leeches that have access to skin cause 1 point of lethal damage every segment (every other segment if less than ten). When they burst forward simply roll 1D x5 to determine the number of leeches that attaches themselves to the victim. The victim may make a Quickness + Athletics roll every segment. Each success brushes off five leeches. The creatures are incapable of eating though any kind of corrosive shielding.

Runners

These four legged animals are genetically engineered scientific marvels. The genetic main model is that of a camel and to this genome a plethora of additional DNA has been added. Runners have the capacity to store fat within their bodies in the same fashion a camel can. Each runner type has been genetically adapted to specific climates. Some for even weather, others for extreme heat or cold and so on. Their appearance differs somewhat depending on their particular adaptation. The most remarkable thing is that they can adapt to a new climate after living in it for three months, effectively turning into another runner type.

Runners are herbivores, fast, strong and agile. They can maintain a speed of 40 km/h for long stretches (30 km/h if carrying 50-100 kgs, 15 km/h if carrying more, maximum capacity 300 kilos). Another remarkable ability is their capacity to stand and walk slowly on their hind legs with good balance. They can actually use their forward legs to support themselves and retain balance by "grabbing" on to terrain in their environment. Camels are even-toed ungulates, but the genetic engineers spliced in some simian DNA into the runners which elongated their forward toes, giving them the ability to grasp reflexively. This ability allows these creatures to traverse terrain a horse or other four legged animal would not be able to. They can basically climb simple and not too steep rocks, navigate thick underbrush and cross deep bodies of water as their head is almost four meters up when they stand on two legs. Runners have an even temper and are relatively trusting, but it all depends on training and environment. They have a splash of canine DNA which gives them the same learning ability and intelligence as a border collie. They are often very loyal to their owner (s) and can be trained to actually guard the camp while the humans sleep. They kick very hard and have sharp jagged horns which can make them quite dangerous. How do they sound? Well, try to imagine mixing the sound of a camel, wildebeest and horse together and you got it.

Attention: 3
Brains: 2
Brawn: 7
Clout: 2
Cool: 4
Gut Feeling: 2
Quickness: 3
Reaction: 2
Defence: 1
HP: 25
AR: 1
Movement: 30
Abilities: Athletics 2, Close Combat 1, Search 2
Attacks: Impale/Ram, Kick 5/1, Standstill horn slash 4/2

Saber Toothed Ice Wolves

Massive, powerful and deadly. These predators are extremely dangerous and aggressive. It is possible to tame them but few manage to do so. If tamed, they are large enough to ride. They live and hunt in packs and look like



Shelled devourers emerge drawn to the vibrations.

massive wolves with a white coat with a bluish tint, crossed with black streaks. This gives them perfect camouflage in a snowy environment, especially in the woods and in the mountains. They are very capable climbers. Fully grown, they weigh 300 kgs and are about the size of a tiger. Their maxillary canines are 15 to 20 centimeters long. They prefer to hunt big game and what is unusual about them is that they hunt other predators as well. A pack has been known to take down tundra cephalopods. The only thing they seem to fear is fire and this breed is primarily nocturnal. They can cope with extreme cold and all have piercing blue eyes.

Attention: 4

Brains: 2

Brawn: 7

Clout: 2

Cool: 3

Gut Feeling: 4

Quickness: 3

Reaction: 3

Defence: 1

HP: 25

AR: 2

Movement: 30

Abilities: Athletics 2, Close Combat 1, Search 2

Attacks: Bite 6/2, Claws 4/2, Pounce.

Sand Tigers

These are basically tigers but they have the ability to retain fat and water in small humps on their back going days without water and weeks without food, if necessary. They are nocturnal and spend their day buried in the sand with their pride to stave off heat. They have a membrane they can flip over their eyes (very much like sharks) which keeps them from getting sand in their eyes, and they also have a special filter in their nose and mouth which allows them to breathe even when there is a sandstorm. Their coats are a solid sand color, perfectly matched to their surroundings. At times, they actually rest on spots where

they know prey will appear and spring forth from beneath, surprising the prey. This fascinating animal is capable of scooping up a mouthful of sand, storing it in a sack on their throat and blowing it out with fierce force. This has a reach of five meters (causes one fatal hit point on a hit). Those hit have to pass a Brawn roll or be knocked to the ground. If they are hit in the face they suffer a -3 on all actions for five segments. They can knock back animals the size of runners with this and those of a slight frame (Brawn 2 or less) will actually be taken off their feet by the force and tumble some meters if they fail the roll. It takes the tiger one segment to scope up the sand, one to store it and on the third they can blow it out. They usually have one blast stored and they hit using Attention + Athletics. For sand tiger stats use the above Saber Toothed Ice Wolves. This animal is of course predatory. These animals can never be fully tamed. They can live with humans but one can never turn ones back to them. Their predatory drive and instincts are simply too rooted.

Shelled Devourer

These animals are massive and insect-like. They burrow their way through the sands of Salin and eat everything from vehicles to humans. Very little is known about them as a dead one never has been found. Their hard shells seem near impossible to penetrate and they hunt through vibrations. These animals are not malicious by nature, they simply hunt by instinct. No one even knows how many of them there are, how they procreate or how old they are.

Note: These animals have very little actual stats as they are so massive that stats do not do them justice. They are not meant to be used as enemies as such but as a reality of living on Salin. Most attacks on these creatures are just distractions to them.

Attention: 4

Brains: n/a

Brawn: Enormous

Clout: n/a

Cool: n/a
Gut Feeling: n/a
Quickness: n/a
Reaction:
Defense: 0
HP: 300
AR: 20

Movement: 65 km/h

Special: Can sense vibrations from a range of 100 kilometers. Larger ground vehicles, mining activity, the activity of 50 or more people (walking/running) and explosions as small as a hand grenade can be sensed from this distance. When within 5 kilometers, they can sense the vibrations of a single human running. The more powerful the vibrations the likelier it is that they will come.

War Oxen

The hidden tribesmen of Zedo have shamans that are very capable herbalists. They have managed to come up with a concoction which simulates a specific bovine growth hormone. They feed this to the largest and healthiest oxen calves. This turns them into war oxen. These monstrously large oxen are tamable and are used as guard animals, for large game hunting and are ridden by the tribesmen. The tribesmen have constructed harnesses lined with spikes to fend off attackers. These animals are fiercely loyal, strong and fearless and will literally walk through fire for their tribesmen.

Attention: 2
Brains: 2
Brawn: 9
Clout: 2
Cool: 4
Gut Feeling: 4
Quickness: 2
Reaction: 2
Defence: 1
HP: 35
AR: 3 (+1 if wearing a harness)

Movement: 25

Abilities: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Search 4

Attacks: Power Impale/Ram (causes 15 points of damage on a success), Kick 5/2, Standstill horn slash 4/2

White Stalk Wasp

This is a predatory insect which is very dangerous. It is about as large as a falcon and similar in appearance to a wasp. It is a striking white with blue faceted eyes. It lives in sub-zero temperatures. They are often solitary hunters but can at times hunt in groups encompassing six individual animals. It stings its prey and takes off, keeping an eye on its intended meal. When the venom finally takes hold the victim is paralyzed. Once this happens, the wasp moves in and uses its powerful mandibles to eat its way through the abdomen and feasts away on the organs while the victim is still alive. They have two main methods of getting to prey. They hide under the snow and burst up and attack when the victim steps right close to them or they actually hunt prey down by flying over it in the sky

(they have good eyesight). It usually hunts smaller prey such as rodents with the flying method. The intestine of this animal is a delicacy on the planet Erandus, but it has to be cooked just right or it will lead to an agonizing death to whoever is eating it.

Attention: 4

Brains: n/a

Brawn: 1

Clout: n/a

Cool: n/a

Gut Feeling: n/a

Quickness: 4

Reaction: 2

Defense: 3

HP: 8

AR:

Movement: 40 (flight)

Ability: Search 4, Stealth 4

Attacks (use Quickness for all attacks): Bite & Sting 1/1

Special: Their poison is very potent. When stung, the victim has to make a Brawn roll. If successful he will suffer -3 to all actions and his movement is reduced to half. If the roll fails the individual will be completely paralyzed. It takes three hours for the poison to fully take effect and the effects lasts for an hour. For each additional dose the victim suffer -1 to his Brawn roll. It has an uncanny ability of finding weaknesses in most armors.

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COLD AND DARK BETTER WORLDS

For hundreds of years mankind has terraformed and populated the Sirius Galaxy. Some worlds are never known as their destiny is to be destroyed as a part of the GIC core harvester machine. There are nineteen official established star systems and this book explores them all.

Better Worlds is a sourcebook for the horror science fiction game Cold & Dark. It gives a deeper and much more encompassing look at all the star systems and their planets. Learn about forgotten tribes, dangerous fauna, new hidden horrific threats as well as new organizations. Better Worlds is packed with information that will expand your gaming experience and allow you to set up fantastic stories in the world of C&D. Explore the enormous Claret City or deep jungles of Zedo. Fight gang wars in on the cutthroat Xindos space station or hunt for riches in the irradiated Thajala Badlands on Salin while fighting off raiders and mutants.

Some Features

- *Dozens of story seeds which will allow you to set up your game.*
- *15+ new creatures and NPAs. Everything from raiders to the vicious blood moray and the RAW, Robotic Automated Weapon.*
- *New equipment such as the Mobile Mining Operation.*
- *A host of new threats and hidden secrets waiting to be fought and discovered.*
- *Several new organizations and groups such as crime syndicates and The Tribes.*

You need the Cold & Dark core book in order to use this supplement.